SOUTH AUSTRALIAN QUAKERS AND UNITARIANS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN MODERNITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provided a framework for a comparative enquiry into the cultural life worlds of South Australian Quakers and Unitarians. The stated broad objective of the research was to determine how Quakers and Unitarians negotiated their religious lives within a South Australian context. In doing so, it asked whether the values espoused by these two communities resonated with those embraced by Australia as a modern, secular State. The research, therefore, had three focuses: the location of South Australia, the practices of Quakers and Unitarians, and the values of modernity.

The colonial settlement of South Australia was heralded as a new convict-free experiment which promised a supposedly morally superior environment, freedom of worship and religious equality. Importantly, it was promoted as being sympathetic to dissenters—a factor which attracted several British Unitarian and Quaker settler families to its shores.

Quaker and Unitarian worshipping practices are demonstrably different in form and content: particularly in their respective use of sound. Whereas Quakers are comfortable with the sound of silence, Unitarians are much more comfortable with an abundant use of words, in addition to the use of sound in music and song. These rituals, however, must be understood mainly in terms of their transformative potential—an attribute which is made possible by the internal dynamics within the rituals themselves.

Through their rituals and other practices, adherents are encouraged to pursue personal and societal transformation. In both communities, the individual is given high value; a notion which is commonly associated with, and characteristic of, modernity. This insight led to consideration of the values espoused by Quakers and Unitarians and those characteristic of modern secular Australian society.

Quaker and Unitarian individualisms, in effect, could be considered variants within modern ideology—one resulting from a faith based more on Luther’s notions of spiritual equality and liberty, and the other based more on socio-political notions emanating from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. In a similar way, South Australia, with its colonial beginnings firmly situating it as a utopian experiment in modernity, can also be described as a variant relative to other Australian states.
1. INTRODUCTION

“For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure”

Ralph Waldo Emerson
1841

Thomas More’s 1516 tale *Utopia* about an imaginary island where religious tolerance and a shared way of life exist, was written at a time when the Roman Catholic Church had been the established Church in England for nearly a millennium. However, the winds of unrest were blowing and More’s tale stands as something of a commentary on some of the new ideas. Within a few years, the religious and political turmoil of the Protestant Reformation resulted in the separation of the Church of England from Rome and ultimately to More’s demise. From 1549, the Parliament’s Acts of Uniformity enforced the use of *The Book of Common Prayer* in churches throughout England, Wales and the dominions.\(^1\) The clergy faced imprisonment for nonconformity with this legislation which entrenched the Church of England as the established Church. However, there was a significant group of Puritan, Calvinist and lesser known Protestant sects, all of which dissented from the views of the established Church of England.

By the nineteenth century, the term “nonconformist” was commonly used to describe those religious organisations which dissented. These included Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians and Quakers.\(^2\) According to British sociologist, Linda Woodhead, these religions can be called “old-style”, because they were formed in the emerging nation-states of the sixteenth century and are now in decline in the West. She compares these religious organisations with the rise of alternative forms of contemporary spirituality which she calls “new-style.” She maintains that these religious organisations emerged in the late nineteenth century and flourished in post-Cold War market-based societies. According to Woodhead, these religious organisations draw on their own resources to provide their followers with religious teachings, welfare, education, entertainment and healing. In doing so, they demonstrate an openness to opportunities provided by

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\(^2\) The term came to be used retrospectively to include dissenters who did not conform to Acts of Uniformity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
globalisation and information technology, and reliance on business-oriented decision-making processes (2015:72-74). And yet, old-style religion, persists.

The theme of the research presented in this thesis involves the mapping of two old-style Australian religious organisations. In particular, it examines the ideas and practices of two communities that have historically belonged to the broad Protestant tradition, but dissented from its dominant theologies and practices. As non-conformists and rational dissenters, these religious organisations have always placed strong emphasis on social reform, peace issues and scientific inquiry. More specifically, this is a comparative study of how certain religious organisations confront the changing religious complexity of the contemporary world and maintain their legitimacy through their ability to convey their ideal of the autonomy of the individual—the keystone value of modernity itself. However, they do so in different ways, indicating articulation of variant forms.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1 Choice of Location

More’s utopian tale imagined a good place where new ideas were explored. South Australia was established as an experiment in free settler colonization which was linked to the processes of modernity. In many ways it fits the vision of a new world where new social alternatives were explored. It was a utopian experiment which offered large tracts of land for wealthy investors, free transport for labourers and religious freedom for dissenters. No doubt this vision of a self-supporting free colony has contributed to a feeling among its population that it is different in some way from other parts of Australia. Perhaps this perceived difference was what attracted many immigrants during the post-war period (1947 to 1965). South Australia had an influx of more than two hundred and fifteen thousand British and European immigrants during this time. My parents, too, decided to immigrate to Australia during this period, persuaded by the images of South Australia as a family-oriented, sunny land of opportunity, promoted in South Australia House, London.³

³ The government of S.A. still maintains an office in London headed by the Agent-General of South Australia. Its purpose is to increase awareness of South Australia internationally.
In the mid-1960s, according to historian Susan Blackburn (2012:12), more than half of Adelaide’s children were enrolled in Protestant and Anglican Sunday Schools; an enrolment record befitting a city known as the City of Churches. Also, South Australia at that time had a higher proportion of British immigrants than the eastern states. It was governed from the beginning of the Second World War to the mid-1960s by the Liberal Country Party, which was led by Tom Playford who was known for his puritanical views. At the same time, he played a pivotal role in opening up South Australia to a wave of British economic migrants and the transformation of the state’s rural economy to one which relied much more heavily on secondary industries.

In the decades that followed the Playford era, successive governments implemented significant social reform and offered support for the arts. Adelaide, in particular, became known for its more progressive social policies and artistic and cultural life which seemed at odds with its “City of Churches” image; but despite this, many South Australians still believed that they were, in some way, different from other Australians. Certainly, South Australia retains the distinctive attribute of having a higher percentage of Protestants per capita when compared with the Australian average, and as such, has proved to be a suitable site for researching non-conformist practices.

2.2 Choice of Research Groups

I experienced Quaker worship at an early age. Several years after immigrating, my parents began attending Quaker meetings for worship at the North Adelaide Meeting House; sometimes sporadically, but at other times regularly over a period of years. As a small child, I found the experience daunting. It was also somewhat intriguing. During meetings for worship, it was difficult to be silent and still; and yet, it was compelling. In my eyes, some elderly Quakers spoke with much wisdom and had an almost saintly demeanour. Their ministry was often evocative.

As a young adult, I resumed attendance and became a member, then gradually drifted away from the Quaker community over time. Nevertheless, I maintained continuing and close friendships with some of its members. I wondered what had

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4 As per Australian Bureau of Statistics Data 2016. Note though that South Australia has a lower percentage of Anglicans and Roman Catholics than the Australian average.
prompted Quaker settlers to come to the colony of South Australia in the nineteenth century and how such a small community was able to survive from colonial times into the twenty first century.

Later, when studying anthropology, my thoughts again turned to the South Australian Quaker community. Firstly, when reading Weber’s renowned book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, I was struck by the number of references he made to Quakers. Weber was concerned to outline the influence of Puritan and Calvinist religious ideas on the development of an “economic spirit.” He believed (2009: xxxix, 54, 95) there was a connection between this spirit and the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism and listed four important forms of ascetic Protestantism: Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism and sects (including the Quakers) arising out of the Baptist movement.

Having personally experienced the silence of Quaker meetings for worship, I was drawn to the relevance of Weber’s (2009:97) comment that God speaks only when the flesh is silent and wanted to centre my research on modernity around this aspect. However, because of my previous involvement with this community, it seemed prudent to conduct a comparative study with another community of practice in order to get more perspective. Both would be considered old-style. Nevertheless, as I demonstrate, old-style contains many possibilities. The group chosen for this comparison was the South Australian Unitarian community as both Quakers and Unitarians have been regarded as dissenters from mainstream Christian practices and notions. I was drawn to them because their practices are different from each other in ways that suggest variant aspects of modern individualism as these were discussed by Louis Dumont in his final work *German Ideology*. I discuss Dumont’s argument in more detail below.

### 3. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

The broad, overall objective of this study is to conduct a comparative enquiry into South Australian Quakers and Unitarians. This enquiry encompasses their membership and compares and contrasts their forms of practice, while investigating how they set about confronting the changing religious complexity of the contemporary world.
4. RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Quakers and Unitarians are both little studied groups and there appears to be no anthropological studies done on either Quakers or Unitarians in Australia. Much of the scholarship on Western Christian traditions has understandably been conducted under the rubric of religious studies and theology but there have also been sociological studies. Gary Bouma, for example, has studied various aspects of religious life in Australia and his work is of particular relevance for this study. Several of his edited volumes, published by the Christian Research Association, cover both the changing religious profile of Australia over the past fifty years and the religious settlement pattern in Australia (Bouma 1999, 1996). Additionally, a more recent publication (Bouma 2006) suggests that there is a characteristically Australian form of spirituality. These ideas are discussed in more depth in Chapter Two.

There is a recent burgeoning of literature in the Anthropology of Christianity, covering both Western and non-Western contexts, but primarily addressing the latter. John and Jean Comaroff (1985, 1991), Engleke (2007), and Fernandez write on Africa; Mosse, Stirrat, Caplan, Howell and Cannell write on Southeast Asia; Tomlinson and Robbins write on the Pacific; and Pace (1998), Nagle (1997) and French (2007) have explored South America, mainly its Liberation Theology. Some of these authors (e.g., Engelke and Cannell) have subsequently studied Western settings and thereby addressed other works such as Csordas (1994, 1997) and Luhrmann (2012). They reflect a growing trend for an anthropology at home that, as Robbins (2004:32) notes, remains focused on the pentecostal and charismatic branches of Christianity as these align with the spirit-filled rituals anthropologists have traditionally studied. At the same time, charismatic, pentecostal and fundamentalist Christianities are the most actively expanding in the world which makes their scholarly prevalence understandable. Recently though, there has been a willingness to broaden research interests to cover a wider range of Christianities in ways that will hopefully address Hann’s (2007:405) accusation that there has been a failure to engage with the full spectrum of Christian ideas.5

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5 Hann argues that there has been scant anthropological interest in the religious ideas and practices of Orthodox Christians. He notes that there are some two hundred million people in this category and states that it is remarkable that there should be such a lack of academic interest.
This study, therefore, is an attempt to engage with a wider range of Christianities by considering its non-conformist elements. Significantly, I contend that conducting fieldwork in Adelaide in a deliberately comparative framework of Quakers and Unitarians, provides a particularly suitable contrast for examining the kind of variants of modern individualism that Louis Dumont (1994) has identified in his study of modernity.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5.1 The main research question

Dumont’s ideas about variants of modern individualism were associated with the milieu of industrial capitalism and relative homogeneity of modern Western Europe. This milieu is vastly different from the more heterogeneous cultural environment of current Australian society. Notwithstanding this, Dumont’s notions are still pertinent in an assessment of how certain types of religious organisation confront Australia’s contemporary religious complexity and this is indicated by their practices which are actively constitutive of value.

5.2 Subsidiary questions

Why did Quakers and Unitarians come to South Australia? What is the significance of South Australia in this study?

What are the similarities and differences between the religious practices and ideas of South Australian Quakers and Unitarians?

What is it to be a South Australian Quaker or a Unitarian and do the values they espouse resonate with the values embraced by Australia as a modern, secular state?

Are South Australian Quakers and Unitarians still dissenting groups; and if so, how does this manifest itself in their practices and in their engagement with contemporary Australian society?

6. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In her article ‘The Christianity of Anthropology’ (2005), Fenella Cannell reviews how Christianity has been construed by anthropologists, arguing that this construction has been too narrow. Other anthropologists concerned with focusing on Christianity have also reported intra-discipline hostility. Harding, for example,
states that Western Christian fundamentalists are seen as a “repugnant cultural other” with the implication that it is Christianity rather than fundamentalism which is problematic (1991:375). Another response has been, “You’ll never convince me that those people are really Christians!” As a result, Cannell argues (2005:339-340) that the model of Christianity that anthropology has preferred is over-selective.

I accept Cannell’s argument and will further extend her boundaries of the Anthropology of Christianity to incorporate those churches whose historical basis is firmly entrenched within the Christian tradition, although their membership may no longer identify as Christian. One of these is the Unitarian Church in South Australia which removed “Christian” from its name in 1977. Many of its congregants no longer define themselves as such, instead embracing a variety of beliefs. Another example is The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) which is still Christian in orientation but many of its members also no longer define themselves as Christian and a variety of beliefs is tolerated. However, the practices of, and theological notions held, by both the Unitarian Church and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have more in common with those of liberal Christianity than with any other type of religious affiliation. Therefore, I believe that my comparative study of the practices of Quakers and Unitarians in South Australia will quite properly build on the growing body of knowledge surrounding the Anthropology of Christianity. It is thus a contribution to the study of Christianity and spirituality in contemporary Australia.

7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a growing interest among anthropologists in new Christianities in the Global North; particularly in the following categories: embodied practice and globalized religion. Csordas (1994a), for example, criticizes what he believes to be the tendency for anthropologists to be more concerned with representation than “being-in-the-world” and advocates that embodiment provides a better standpoint to view the nature of being human. He, therefore, suggests that the self, experience and the body should be central to analysis. To this end, Csordas develops a psychological approach which is heavily influenced by phenomenology in formulating a theory of the “sacred self”, in which the self is conceived as the
capacity to engage or become oriented in the world (1994b:5). He believes that perception and practice are central to the process of self-creativity and relies on Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) concept of the pre-reflective to examine the embodied process of perception, and Bourdieu’s emphasis on practice, to investigate the synthesizing of ways of acting and environment.

Approaching embodiment from the psychological viewpoint as well, Luhrmann’s research on evangelical Christianity led her to contend that a new emphasis on bodily and trance experience is shaping contemporary North American religion. She describes (2004:518, 523) the learning process through which evangelical congregants come to use language and bodily experiences and determines that it is through this process that congregants seek to build what they interpret as intimate relationships with God.

In addition to the literature on embodiment, globalization of religion has shaped up as another topic for anthropological research. Coleman (2000), for example, analyses how charismatic Protestants negotiate their own interpretations of global, and other processes of modernity, by using websites as a way of reaching out to potential converts and believers around the world. Continuing with the theme of globalization, two recent publications by Csordas (2007 & 2009) discuss the relationship between religion and globalization and explain how this has become a central concern for the social sciences and religious studies with a growing awareness of the implications of pentecostalism as a global social movement.

Although anthropological research into new Christianities of the Global North has developed much more over the past two decades, prior to this, in the 1980s and 1990s, anthropologists were more concerned with the consequences of Christianity and the influences of colonization in the Global South.6 More recently, studies have focused on issues connected to globalization, such as understandings of how

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6 During the 1980s and early 1990s, a rich body of work was developed by anthropologists on the consequences of colonialism, post-colonialism and missionary influence, including work by Fernandez (1982), Comaroff (1985 & 1991), Caplan (1988), Stirrat (1992), Mosse (1994 & 1996).
Christianity can be seen as locally specific and globally inter-related at the same time.  

Questions of meaning are the focus of many anthropological studies. Tomlinson and Engelke’s edited volume, for example, explores questions of meaning through studies of Christian communities, concentrating on cases of failure including the following: sermons that do not inspire, prophets who are marginal, members of the congregation who fall asleep from boredom, and converts who describe their previous religious beliefs as “meaningless”. In so doing, their volume addresses whether meaning is a concern of Christianity, and therefore, if issues of meaning are processes which have a more uncertain potential (2006:14-15).

Focusing on the topic “change and continuity” and issues of the inner life and morality, Robbins’s (2004) study of the Urapmin people of Papua New Guinea explains how this community adopted Christianity and why they live their lives largely defined by it. His purpose is to find a theory of culture change which is able to explain how this community is so easily able to grasp the logic of the new, without losing the coherence of its previous beliefs. Importantly, Robbins’s analysis is applied to the situation where people are converted to Christianity from indigenous belief systems and the difficulties this conversion then posed for them.

According to Robbins (2004:227), the core notion of Urapmin Christian ethical thinking is the inner condition of “a peaceful heart” which entails following the guidance of the Spirit and living a passive existence. People fail because the demands of their social life conflict with those of Christian morality and so they inevitably are seen as “sinfully exercising their wills.” As the Urapmin Christian ethical system concentrates on the inner life of congregants, there is no provision for the mediation of contradictions that inevitably arise from such a conflict. Robbins (2004:249) concludes that this leads people to believe they have failed morally and are, therefore, sinners.

Robbins’s study is an important contribution to the Anthropology of Christianity but focuses heavily on the state of human sinfulness which is not a concern for

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7 For example, Howell (2003) focused on four congregations of Baptists in the Philippines which identified fully as part of their local milieu although they also considered themselves a part of the larger global Baptist Church.
Quakers and Unitarians who concentrate more on the quality of human inherent goodness.

Another theme which has run solidly through much of the literature is conversion as a process of identity development. Buckser and Glazier’s edited volume investigates the insights that an examination of religious conversion can offer, concentrating on the small scale dynamics of conversion (2003: xiii). Changing religions, according to Buckser and Glazier, can be seen as a shift in the basic assumptions on which self and others are understood, involving an individual process of changing world-view and social relationships. Continuing with this line of thought, Austin-Broos (2003:1-2) believes that conversion can be seen as a form of passage, a “turning from and to” that is neither incorporation nor absolute alienation, but is a deliberate change of direction which requires re-identification and learning. Therefore, it can be seen as a continuous transformation, and a quest for human belonging which involves continuous embedding of ritual practices and dispositions. Glazier (2003:149), on the other hand, indicates that many Spiritual Baptists and Rastafarians on the Caribbean island of Trinidad understand conversion more as a reawakening of pre-existing beliefs.

In an entirely different setting, Norris (2003:173-175) considers conversion practices within a variety of faiths in New England, focusing on the continuities between the old faith and the adopted faith. She explains how one informant stated that Sufism was “inside me, waiting to be uncovered or released…it’s just there”, and one person who had converted from one Christian practice to another stated, “I feel comfortable, as though this is where I should have been.” So the new religion corresponded to something that already existed and concurred with pre-established viewpoints.

The reason that converts adopt only those elements of a new religion that correspond to pre-established viewpoints is, Norris believes, informed by Western cultural ideals of independence and freedom of choice, and explains how notions of one religion can be combined with that of others, for example, yoga and Zen Buddhism can be practised by someone identifying as a Christian. Norris (2003:175) calls this “individualized modular spirituality.” Her findings are relevant to a study of independently-minded non-conformist Quakers and
Unitarians and borne out by an article in the journal, *Quaker Studies*,\(^8\) which examines British “Quagans” (Quaker Pagans) and outlines how they are able to negotiate dual religious identification.

Importantly, not much research has been conducted on South Australian Quakers or Unitarians apart from local histories done by members.\(^9\) It is necessary, therefore, to look to international sources for more insight. An historical anthropological study was undertaken by Bauman (1983), for example, which explores the role of speaking and silence in Quaker ideology and action in seventeenth century England. His interest is in the use of speech in discourse and social interaction. He maintains (1983:22) that Quaker ways of speaking were their most distinctive and identifying features and that speaking and silence were key symbols in the early movement and continue to be so. Furthermore, he states (1983:25-30) that early Quakers believed that silence was important for encountering a direct personal experience with God. God spoke to, and through, believers so that there was communication of “Truth” within individuals, and between them, without the need for outward speech. Bauman’s study, though, is undeniably historical in nature and focuses heavily on language and communication rather than Quaker ritual process which, as I will demonstrate, is a priority in my study.

Dandelion’s\(^10\) edited volume *The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives* (2004), points to the growth in Quaker academic research undertaken by British Quakers. The book reflects on the nature of these studies which are substantially historical, but offer insights into the notions of “holiness” and sites of “alternate order.” For example, Pilgrim uses the concept of “heterotopia”\(^11\) to explain why there is still unity within contemporary British Quaker groups who have embraced a diversity of religious views from newcomers. She states that this concept not only provides an explanation for the contemporary situation but also a continuing.

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\(^9\) One historical study has also been done on the Melbourne Unitarian Church by a local Quaker (Scott 1980).
\(^10\) Pink Dandelion is a British sociologist and Quaker academic.
\(^11\) In Foucault’s essay, ‘Of Other Spaces’ (*Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), pp. 22-27), he discusses “utopias” and “heterotopias.” Whereas utopia is defined by Foucault as a site with no real place, he uses the concept of heterotopia to describe those spaces that unsettle or disturb—a counter site. This notion is appropriated by Hetherington (1997) who defines it as the space of an “alternate ordering” (1997:67). Building on these insights, Pilgrim uses the concept to describe those spaces where other ways of living and ordering can be explored and practised.
thread with early Quakers. The heterotopic space, she believes, must be both marginal and embedded in the surrounding social milieu, in juxtaposition. Early Quakers, she argues (2004:209-212), set up heterotopic spaces because they gathered in silence in ordinary homes and domestic barns rather than churches. But I contend that this argument can also be applied to other religious groups. For example, it can also apply to early British Unitarians, and others, who gathered in ordinary homes to listen to dissenting sermons.

Pilgrim also states (2004:216) that the campaign British Quakers carried out objecting to participation in the First World War demonstrated their alternate ordering and it could be claimed that without the threat posed by this conflict, and the elevation of the Quaker peace testimony as a central organizing motif in response, the survival of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain may have been threatened. She argues that conscientious objection restored a space that offered opportunities for protest and transgression and a space where it was possible to imagine, and attempt to create, utopia. It provided an opportunity to live out God’s vision of the world and could be seen as a liminal rite of passage for Quakers. She further argues (2004:216) that British Quaker unity now rests mainly on the heterotopic stance as an alternate ordering.

Although I do not doubt Pilgrim’s claims, there are some points that need to be made. Firstly, this is a study of British Quakers. Secondly, there appears to be too much emphasis given to the importance of a common belief system and too little recognition given to the importance placed by Quakers on their practice of meeting for worship. However, in a more recent edited volume (Dandelion & Collins 2007), contributors do point to shared practices rather than beliefs as being most important to British Quakers. In particular, there is further exploration of aspects

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13 According to Pilgrim (2006:206), early Quakers’ conversion experiences were transforming and this inward experience combined with the persecution they suffered, was a liminal rite of passage.
of identity, Quaker *habitus*, embodied practice, and heterotopic space raised in Dandelion’s earlier volume.14

Dandelion gives more prominence to Quaker ritual when he applies the term “liturgy” to Quaker practice and looks at how meanings are conveyed through external structures of worship such as silence, using the themes of “time” and “intimacy” in his analysis. He takes the view that although the un-programmed worship practices of Quakers in Britain look the same as those in the seventeenth century, the basic understandings of the liturgical form in terms of how they relate to the above themes are totally different (2005:123).

Undoubtedly, the anthropological work which is most pertinent to my study has been conducted by Peter Collins, a British anthropologist whose research interests include British Quakerism. His article, ‘Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Ritual’ (2005), examines the perspectives of Quaker participants in meeting for worship and compares, and contrasts, their views against theoretical views of ritual. He also enquires (2005:324-328) as to whether the negotiation of the meaning of a meeting for worship among its participants is critical in the formation of Quaker identity, noting that no single interpretation is able to account for the practice of Quaker worship.

Collins offers further insights into Quaker worship in Britain by drawing on Victor Turner’s concepts of “communitas” and “liminality.” He describes Quaker ritual as being liminal and generating communitas by means of binary opposition. This opposition, he suggests (2005:327), is implicit in Quaker discourse on worship practice. In his fieldwork, Collins notes, for example, how participants continually compared and contrasted their own practices with those of other religious groups, and he believes that this was a salient point in their maintenance of identity. This tendency, noted by Collins, forms part of their dissenting view; and in my fieldwork, I have found that it is different from the dissenting views of Unitarian congregants who are more likely to contrast, and compare, theologies, rather than practices.

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14 In another recent article (2014), Collins and Dandelion consider whether Quaker belief in continuous revelation can be understood in terms of what Zygmunt Bauman (2000) describes as “liquid modernity.”
Collins is drawn to the embodied nature of Quaker ritual. He notes (2005:328-329) the arrangement of the seating and how adherents avoid disturbance by minimizing shuffling. He suggests that there are particular ways of sitting, standing and speaking. I have also observed similar characteristics to those that capture Collins’s attention. Although Collins does not mention it, there are also ways of listening, which adds further credence to the notion of the embodied nature of Quaker ritual. Collins also collaborates with Coleman (2000) in research which compares British Quakers with Swedish Charismatic Protestants. The researchers were intrigued by the similarities they found and argue that among these two groups that the practice of formal ritual and everyday life are not always distinguishable. In particular, they examine the habitual expression of religious identity in everyday life and how both groups dissolve boundaries between religious practices and ritually informed quotidian experiences (2000:317-318).

Coleman and Collins’s usage of the term “ritualization” follows the approach taken by Csordas (1997) as referring to the process that facilitates the disappearance of boundaries between church and the everyday. Continuing to follow Csordas, they utilize Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* to demonstrate that religious practices can become embodied dispositions that remain even after the congregant leaves the place of worship. In addition, their research finds that both of these groups display experiential aesthetics.

The Quaker aesthetic is described by Collins (2000:318,321) as being “the plain” and, in his view, underlying this aesthetic is a theory of the self. Even more pertinent, from my point of view, is his suggestion (2005:335-337) that Quaker worship has transformative aspects for its participants, and it is this particular characteristic of their practice which will be explored more fully within this thesis.

As I have demonstrated, there has been some valuable sociological/anthropological research done on Quakers outside Australia, particularly with British Quakers, but there has been a paucity of Unitarian research. Most of the Quaker research appears to have been conducted by Quakers themselves and tends to be theological and historical in nature. The bi-annual journal *Quaker Studies* provides a forum for academic discussion on various Quaker-related topics — six recent examples of
which are the Quaker Peace Testimony, the history of shifting Quaker attitudes to art, Quaker language, Quakers and racial justice, a seventeenth century letter sent by George Fox to the Governor of Barbados, and the authority of scripture among early Quakers.

The aforementioned topics indicate the self-examining nature of Quaker research. Much theological and historical research into Unitarianism, on the other hand, appears to be more academic in nature. An academic journal produced by the Unitarian Historical Society, *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, focuses on aspects of the history of UK Unitarianism, whereas the *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History* published annually by the Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society concentrates on Unitarian Universalist and other liberal religious traditions mainly within the context of North America. An article on the ministry of Universalist minister, Orestes Brownson (1803-1876), is representative of this scholarship.

In addition, journal articles have been written that use sociological surveys to determine the theological ideas of Unitarian Universalist members and their character traits, and that analyse the political participation of Unitarian Universalist ministers. This participation is considered to be a “liberal dynamo” in American politics. Additionally, there are journal articles which discuss the pluralistic nature of Unitarian Universalism and the problems associated with

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cherry-picking rituals from other religious traditions. Although sociological insights are referenced within the thesis, there is a paucity of sociological research into Unitarians. Furthermore, Unitarians have been considered as having little anthropological interest. This study will seek to correct this perception.

Moreover, theoretically my study will also be situated in the literature on ritual because although sociological studies and interviewing participants are important, it is only through analysing practices that proper understanding can be reached. Thomas, for example, examines the practice of Quaker pilgrimage which seems to have started in the twentieth century. She notes that the pilgrimage appears to be multi-sited and visits are directed mainly to the “1652 Country” in Britain which was travelled by George Fox as he preached to gathered followers during the seventeenth century. She observes (1999:21) that Quakers who embark on this pilgrimage do not believe that these sites are sacred. Instead, there is an understanding that these sites provide an excellent opportunity for self-reflection and fellowship with other Quakers who are undertaking the journey.

Also, of particular relevance to my study which examines, among other things, silence within the context of Quaker worshipping practice, is the literature on ritual dynamics and practice. I agree with Handelman’s suggestion that there should not be a presumption that the phenomenon of ritual is representative of its socio-cultural milieu. He proposes (2004:1-4) that ritual’s internal dynamics and practice need to be examined autonomously of the surrounding environment.

Further considering ritual’s internal dynamics and practice, Kapferer notes (2004:36) the effects of ritual practice on its participants, and builds on Victor Turner’s insights by using the concepts of “virtuality” and “dynamics” to investigate how ritual changes, or intervenes in, ordinary realities. The insights of both Handelman and Kapferer will be given further consideration in the analysis of Quaker and Unitarian practices within the body of this document.

Although there has been a growing number of studies in the Anthropology of Christianity, this interest has mainly involved the increasingly numerous evangelical or pentecostal Christianities which are considered more worthy of

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academic interest. I have observed that there is much less research conducted on the rational dissenting old-style Protestant traditions, however, there is much to be gained by doing so. This study, for example, focuses on two non-conformist religious organisations and their practices because they offer a unique opportunity to explore certain aspects of modernity. However, in order to do this, consideration must be given to the concept of modernity itself. This discussion is necessary because it lays the foundation for the central point of the thesis which is to consider the relevance of Dumont’s contrast between variant individualisms.

8. THE CONCEPT OF MODERNITY

8.1 Overview

One of the foundations of modern ideology is the concept of equality which is no better inscribed than in Thomas Paine’s Rights of Man:

All men are born equal, and with equal natural right... every child born into the world must be considered as deriving its existence from God. The world is as new to him as it was to the first man that existed, and his natural right in it is of the same kind... Civil rights are those which appertain to man in right of his being a member of society... and has for its foundation some natural right pre-existing in the individual...28

I begin here because Paine has been described by some as being a Quaker. His critics though labelled him a Unitarian after he stated that he didn’t abide by any Church creed and that “his own mind was his church.”29 Paine is considered by some to be the Father of the American Revolution, and along with several other Founding Fathers of the United States of America, appears to have been influenced by non-conformist views.

Emile Durkheim, the founder of the French school of sociology, on the other hand, was more concerned with conformity to social norms rather than non-conformist religious ideas. Rawls (2012:351) correctly asserts that Durkheim believed that his view of sociology was able to explain how an orderly and peaceful modern


29 The Age of Reason by Thomas Paine, 1794. Chapter 1 – The Author’s Profession of Faith reproduced on Internet Sacred Text Archive Site [http://sacred-texts.com/aor/paine/aor/aor03.htm]
social life was possible. Durkheim’s ideas on modern social life were set out by him in *The Division of Labour in Society*, which outlined his perception of the relationship between the individual and society; and in particular, the division of labour and its relationship to the development of modernity.

In so doing, Durkheim perceived two forms of social solidarity: mechanical and organic. The first form, in his opinion, occurred in collective type societies with an organized totality of beliefs and understandings common to all members. The second form of social solidarity was described by him as being “a system of different, special functions which definite relations unite” ([1893] 1964:129). Durkheim’s main point here is that the mechanical form of social solidarity is not viable in industrialised, urban societies; whereas, the organic form has more viability because it is derived from the division of labour.

Durkheim’s views on the relationship between the individual and society were refined in his later work where he suggested, among other things, a new religion of secular morality which was based on individualism as the core value. He defined this as being the “cult of the individual”; a moral individualism which was collectively created by society but which focused attention on values such as universal human rights and justice, dignity and equality for the individual. Marske further asserts (1987:3-6, 10-11) that Durkheim envisaged that this relationship between the individual and society would provide the future foundation for social solidarity.30

Durkheim, Marx and Weber explored the relationship between economy and modern society. Where Durkheim associates the emergence of modern society with industrialisation, the division of labour and its associated organic solidarity, Marx (1867, 1885, 1894) connects it mainly with the development of a class-based economy associated with capitalism. Weber is also concerned with capitalism and the development of modernity, but links its unfolding to aspects of Protestantism—a factor which makes his work particularly relevant to my study.

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30 Lee also notes that Durkheim observed mainstream religion’s apparent displacement by the following contemporary notions: secularity, individualism and pluralism. He extracted from this observation that such diversity of views required a shift from traditional beliefs to a secular and ethical religion of the rights and dignity of the individual. This leads Lee (1995:379, 381) to postulate that Unitarian Universalism, through its major strand of humanism, embodies Emile Durkheim’s cult of the individual.
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism sets out what Weber believes was distinctive about modern capitalism, promulgating that interest in wealth accumulation could co-exist with disinterest in worldly pursuits. In particular, Weber is interested in the this-worldly asceticism of Puritanism and the concept of “the calling” because, in his view, there was an unusual display of self-control and frugality associated with the development of rational capitalism. In effect, Weber (2009:xix) argues that certain religious ideas have transformative force.

The views of Puritan leader, Richard Baxter, appear to epitomise Weber’s ideas about Puritanism and the importance of work. Baxter’s writings on Christian ethics in 1673 certainly consider “the calling” and the importance of labour (for those who are able) as paramount to ethical living. And yet, Richard Baxter was also very much opposed to the ideas of other dissenter movements. He stated, “no Christian, or reasonable man, should be a Quaker, or approve of, or excuse their way.” Moreover, Baxter (1673:2-4) accused Quakers of heresies and perverting the doctrine of justification. His accusations demonstrate that there was substantial disagreement among dissenting groups on some theological matters.

Quaker theologian, Robert Barclay, set out some of the early Quaker beliefs which included the following notions: continuous revelation through the testimony of the Spirit, the priesthood of all believers, universal redemption, privileging individual conscience, and regeneration and justification through receipt of the inner light. In Barclay’s view, it was the receipt of the inner light (or Christ) which produced the effect in works. The influence of Calvinism, Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Puritanism, and the Baptist movement can be detected in these Quaker beliefs; but Quakerism cannot be reduced to any one of these influences.

31 This development, according to Weber, was characterised by the existence of a disciplined labour force and the investment of capital (2009: x-xii).


33 One Sheet against the Quakers, Pamphlet written by Richard Baxter. Printed by Robert White, for Nevil Simmons, Book-seller, in Kedermister, Anno Dom. 1657. http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A26979.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext

34 An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People called Quakers, by Robert Barclay (first published in Latin in Amsterdam in 1676, and two years later translated into English by the author).
In effect, Weber posits that modernity arose out of a particular way of thinking—a rational calculation that he associated with Calvinist Protestantism. He also carefully differentiates between ideal types of religious attitude; and in particular, inner-worldly asceticism and world-rejecting asceticism. Inner-worldly asceticism involved the religious duty to engage with, and transform, the world in accordance with the ideals of the group and was an important part of his argument concerning the spirit of capitalism and the Protestant work ethic. In particular, he maintains (2009:479,542) that beliefs about predestination predisposed Calvinist groups to shift towards a rational meaning of economic gain in which worldly success became seen as a sign of salvation. Formal rationalism, for Weber, was associated with a structured bureaucracy which required a division of labour. Disenchantment, technology and bureaucracy were thus central features of modernity.

Undoubtedly, secularity is also commonly associated with the concept of modernity. In his book, A Secular Age (2007), Charles Taylor describes how in pre-modern societies political organization was in some way connected with beliefs in ultimate reality (or God), whereas in modern western societies this is not the case. In Taylor’s understanding, an aspect of secularity is that churches are separate from political structures. In early pre-modern societies, distinctions between religious, political, economic and political spheres were not made. Notwithstanding this point, Taylor (2007:3-4) notes that in the United States, which separated Church from state earlier than most societies, there is a high level of religious belief and practice. This indicates, he believes, that in a secular society there is not necessarily a reduction of religious belief and practice.

For Taylor, the most convincing interpretation of the notion of the “secular age” recognizes that the shift to secularity in modernity entails a move away from an unchallenged belief in God to a view that this is one option among others. He differentiates (2007:3-4) between what he calls believers and unbelievers. Unbelievers, he states, are those who do not believe in an after-life and salvation. Instead they believe that the purpose of life is human flourishing, i.e., to live life well and fully. He calls this a “self-sufficient humanism” which is, according to him, at the heart of modern secularity (2007:7-8).
Contemporary Australian society certainly displays these features of modern secularity and it also values individualism and its associated values of egalitarianism and freedom. The rise to prominence of these values undoubtedly has had particular historical roots. The principal author on these roots of modern individualism; where the individual is the paramount value, is Louis Dumont. 35

Dumont was an eminent sociologist and Indologist influenced partly by Weber, but more directly, by the ideas of Durkheim and Mauss within the French tradition of structuralism. Dumont (1977, 1986, 1994) departs though from the view of Durkheim, Marx and Weber that modernity is part of an inevitable progression because he contends that an earlier predisposition to holism, although repressed, does not actually go away.

More particularly, my comparison of Quakers and Unitarians suggests that a discussion of Dumont’s ideas is essential because of the contrast he makes between extroverted and introverted individualisms. In order to do this, his major works are discussed under three headings: Holism and Individualism/Non-modern and the Modern; the Christian roots of Modern Individualism; and Variants in Modern Ideology.

8.2 Holism and Individualism/Non-Modern and Modern

In interpreting the nature of the caste system, Dumont sought to understand the nature of non-modern hierarchical holism as a social value. In so doing, he argues (1980:184-185) that in non-modern societies such as ancient India, individuals are defined by the whole (society). He compares this with the situation which pertains in modern societies, in which society is seen as the sum of the parts (individuals). Importantly, Dumont builds on Weber’s distinction between inworldly and outworldly individualism in order to better understand the relationship between the caste system and renunciation.

35 Dumont sets out two contrasting concepts of the “individual”. The first involves the individual who is the subject of speech, thought and will—found within all societies. The second concept, involves the independent, autonomous being who, according to Dumont (1986:94), is the carrier of paramount values and its attendant ideals of equality and liberty.
In Weber’s analysis of religions, he contrasts two ways asceticism may be practised which relate to the way the adherent interacted with the world. He characterises asceticism as abstaining from worldly pleasures in order to pursue spiritual goals. He argues that asceticism can be termed inworldly or otherworldly. The latter practice involves withdrawal from the world in order to live an ascetic existence; for example, hermits or monks. On the other hand, inworldly asceticism, according to Weber (2009:150), does not require withdrawal from the world but the living of an ascetic lifestyle in the world.

Dumont (1980:185) argues that withdrawal from the world involves renouncing societal roles such as membership of a particular caste or familial responsibilities, in order to adopt the lifestyle of a renouncer—a role which has no equivalent in society. The renouncer\(^\text{36}\) still has some relationships with members of society but, at the same time, rejects the network of interdependence required when adhering to social roles. The renouncer lives an ascetic existence which can be described as an outworldly form of individualism which does not actually call into question the holistic society. As such, it is very different from the inworldly individualism of Western modernity.

Another important point made by Dumont is that in hierarchical systems, religion encompasses the mutually interdependent relation between politics and economics. The Varna ideology, for example, articulates this relation. Furthermore, Dumont (1980:66) determines that Indian society is characterized by its adherence to hierarchy as the paramount value and maintains that an examination of this social principle, as it applies within the caste system, can facilitate an understanding of the modern Western social principle of egalitarianism.

\(^{36}\) In Appendix B ‘World Renunciation in Indian Religions’, Homo Hierarchicus, Dumont sets out his understanding of a renouncer as someone who “leaves the world behind in order to devote himself to his own liberation...He thinks as an individual...But while for us the individual is in the world, here he is found only outside the world” (1980:275). In Essays on Individualism, Dumont further explains the relationship between holism/individualism and inworldly/outworldly distinctions. He states that outworldly individualism is hierarchically opposed to holism: superior to society, it leaves society standing, while inworldly individualism negates, destroys the holistic society and replaces it or pretends to do so (1986:57).
Importantly, in modernity, economy became disentwined from politics and religion and perceived as self-determining. In *From Mandeville to Marx*, Dumont describes the history of this development and argues that the notion of “economy as a value” is independent of religion and politics. The modern notion of economy concludes that a commodity’s use value determines its exchange value; a view which can be contrasted with Mauss’s (1925[1969]) earlier observations that exchanges involving non-modern commodities of total prestation cannot be reduced to economic, legal, religious, and political aspects. Whereas, in contrast, the modern contract between individuals can be imagined in that way.

Dumont outlines the progression of economic thought and new ideas about wealth in his further examination of how the individual became increasingly valued historically. He indicates (1977:5-6) that an important factor in development of modern ideology is that modern societies encouraged the development of a new conception of wealth which resulted in relations between humans and things becoming more important than relations between humans themselves. With this development of a new conception of wealth in mind, Dumont examines the beginnings of economic thought from the seventeenth century and its continuing growth toward economic liberalism; a form within which individualistic ideology is directly expressed. He anchors this progression toward economic liberalism through the themes of several chosen texts: Locke’s *Two Treatises*, Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*, Adam Smith’s *Theory of Value*, and the early texts of Marx (1977:30).

In Dumont’s view, the central theme of the influential *Theory of Value* is the notion that self-love works for the common good. This notion follows from Mandeville’s assertion that people live in society in order to satisfy their individual material needs. Ideas such as these, according to Dumont (1977:63-67), have played a significant role in modern ideology as they encourage the view that the relation between humans and material needs must take precedence over the relations between humans. In Dumont’s understanding (1977:113), this way of looking at the world places considerable value on the individual. Consequently, associated with modernity is the notion of valuing the individual as a stand-alone category in economy. Therefore, the modern human being is an economic being and
fundamentally the same as every other human being. That being the case, it follows that modern individualism is characteristically egalitarian.

8.3 The Christian Roots of Modern Individualism

*Essays on Individualism* seeks to identify further the key moments in the development of modernity. In Dumont’s view, the trend towards an individualistic view of life began before the Protestant Reformation; and consequently, he believes that the modern individual as an ideal value developed over a much longer time frame than Weber envisaged.

Undoubtedly, Dumont follows Mauss’s argument (1985:1-25) that the notion of the “person” can be traced to Roman and Stoic ideas in the pre-Christian era. As Dumont states (1986:17-19), the Romans believed that their free citizens were independent entities and this concept was further developed by Stoic thought which valued equality based on endowment with reason and an ethical personhood which was “conscious, independent, autonomous, free and responsible.”

Nevertheless, in Dumont’s view (1986: 95, 111-112), there were developments within Christianity which inevitably led to ordinary adherents becoming more oriented towards the world themselves. This was an important step in the historical transition to the conception of humans as individuals who were inworldly and bearers of the paramount value. He asserts that the early Christians conceived of humans as being “individuals-in-relation-to-God”, i.e., outworldly; but he also points out (1986:113-114) that at the same time, one of the most important figures in the development of Western Christianity, Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), believed that matters of the state should be judged from the perspective of the presumed relationship between God and the Church/humanity.

Dumont contends (1986:39) that Augustine’s stance was a step towards influential Church leaders imposing outworldly values to inworldly matters. As the number of converts to Christianity increased, the Church not only faced internal theological disagreements; but more importantly for Dumont’s (1986:106-107) argument, it also had to re-imagine its own role with emerging Christian states and their political
leaders, whose views often conflicted with those of the Church. These developments, in Dumont’s view inevitably led to ordinary adherents becoming more inworldly.

Another significant factor was the theological debate concerning God’s grace and the doctrine of justification—a debate which was important to the development of Protestant ideas. For Augustine, the removal of sin occurred through God’s grace, the receipt of which is predestined. As pointed out by Ramos (2014:34-38), the human desire to live a good life was, therefore, dependent on the inspiration of God. Clearly, these views on grace and justification are salient because they informed the ideas of two key figures of the 16th century Protestant Reformation: Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Dumont (1986:115) follows Weber’s argument that it is through the ideas of these key figures that the passage to the in-worldly individual is achieved. For Luther, salvation depended on the grace of God which was freely given. Faith alone, rather than merit, enabled a person to be restored to righteousness in the eyes of God. Faith in Christ removed the sinner’s guilt and this meant that good works were likely to follow. God was accessible to all individuals and this indicated that religious specialists were no longer needed as intermediaries. This meant that all believers had equal responsibility for their own, and others’, salvation—as expressed in the term “priesthood of all believers.” Unquestionably, Luther’s notion that religious specialists were no longer needed as mediators was pivotal in the development of Quaker ideas and practice.

Calvinism was one of the principal forms of ascetic Protestantism noted by Weber (2009:53). The other forms he mentioned were Pietism, Methodism, and diverse religious groups ensuing from the Baptist movement. In Weber’s view, Calvinism’s most important doctrine was that of predestination which stated that only some people were destined to have everlasting life. The chosen ones were given renewed will and an ability to discern that which is good. In this way, the

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37 William Penn’s “holy experiment” was an attempt at re-imagining the role of early Quakerism with the Crown and the emerging seventeenth century colony of Pennsylvania.
living of a good life was the outcome of God’s grace working in the life of the believer—a point also made by Ramos (2014:35).

The elect, according to Dumont (1986:55), were charged with the responsibility to work for God’s glorification and this was considered proof of their election. Here Dumont follows Weber’s understanding (2009:59, 64) of Calvin’s claim that the Church’s sacraments were not a means for attaining grace but for glorifying God. As the social world also existed for God’s glorification, even mundane labour had a useful purpose. In Calvin’s view, although good works did not bring salvation, it was proof that the person was one of the elect. Importantly, these good works had to be done regularly and this meant that there had to be a particular code of conduct. This way of thinking, according to Weber (2009:71), gave Calvinism its ascetic tendency.

Weber suggests (2009:74) there were two sources of Protestant asceticism: good works which evidenced being one of the elect, and the doctrine put forward by the Baptist movement that only those who have personally found faith can be baptized. This faith was available to any individual who waited for the Spirit and resisted worldly attachments, and it privileged quiet self-control. Furthermore, he maintains (2009: 94-96) that belief in waiting for the Spirit was developed more substantially by the Quakers. This was due to their notions of the “inner light” and the “inner testimony of the Spirit in reason and conscience” which led to the silent expectant waiting for the Spirit.

The Quakers, according to Weber (2009:96-97), made the doctrine of salvation through the Church’s mediation less relevant, because they eschewed its sacraments. Instead, signs of spiritual rebirth manifested as being conscience-driven together with avoidance of worldly pursuits. The notion that “God only speaks when the flesh is silent”, in his view, meant that there was an added inducement for Quakers to weigh up alternative courses of action in terms of individual conscience in dealing with the dilemmas faced in daily life. So although they were disqualified from accepting political office because of their refusal to bear arms or swear on oath, this did not stop members weighing up alternative
forms of political activism, as evidenced by their involvement with the colonial experiment in Pennsylvania.

Furthermore, Weber observes that Quakers were also conscience-driven in their daily business relationships. He believes that they developed an attitude towards their callings which became associated with moderation, conscientiousness and honesty in business dealings, and this, according to him (2009:98), was a significant factor in the development of the spirit of capitalism. As Cole (1956:51) also points out, by the end of the seventeenth century, Quakers were highly involved in the outside world and became successful pioneers in new financial and industrial approaches.38

Dumont clearly follows Weber’s argument that Luther and Calvin facilitated the passage to the in-worldly individual. Calvin, he notes, further articulated Luther’s concepts with notions that put added emphasis on the human will. Dumont states (1986:116) that with Calvin “the individual is now in the world, and the individualist value rules without restriction or limitation. The in-worldly individual is before us.” As outlined earlier, Weber considered that the concept of the economic was a pure activity in itself—a calling; however, I contend that Dumont gives more consideration to the further implications of Luther and Calvin’s ideas, including their egalitarian aspects.

In early Christian thought, notions of equality were premised on equality before God, not social equality. Augustine of Hippo’s greater stress on this notion can be discerned in the following excerpt from City of God:

\[(\text{God}) \text{ has not willed the rational creature made in his own image to have dominion over any but irrational creatures, not man over man, but man over beasts (cattle)…}\]39

38 In the eighteenth century, British Quakers were involved in the development of the iron industry, porcelain manufacturing, chocolate making, banking and other innovations including the use of railway timetables and tickets. Quakers in the World Website [http://www.quakersintheworld.org/](http://www.quakersintheworld.org/) Accessed 31/8/17.

39 City of God was written by Augustine of Hippo in the early 5th century CE. Quoted in Dumont (1986:41).
Dumont (1986:78) points out that Luther asserted that all believers—priests and laypersons—had equal authority in spiritual matters. Equality, therefore, was not just an internal condition. According to Dumont (1986:80), equalitarianism further expanded from the religious sphere to the political sphere in the mid seventeenth century; and most particularly, during the period of the English Civil War and interregnum. He attributes the idea of equality before the law as being due to the Levellers’ assertion of universal rights of man. Instead of all Christians being free and equal, it was asserted that all men are born free and equal.

During the English Civil War, the Levellers were considered to be a radical political movement using Christian and biblical teachings as inspiration for their political dissent. They used the term “freeborn rights” to distinguish between rights that all men had by birth as opposed to rights bestowed by legislation. Members of this group produced a document known as The Agreement of the Free People of England which advocated the following civil rights: universal suffrage for men over twenty-one, annual parliamentary elections, trials by jury, abolishment of tithes, abolition of military conscription and equality of all persons before the law.

Dumont doesn’t mention that there was a connection between the Levellers and the Quakers; however, many early Quakers were small traders and handicraftsmen who came into contact with Levellers in the course of their trade and some were sympathetic to the views held by members of this movement. When the Levellers were suppressed as an organized political force, some joined the Quaker movement. As mentioned by Cole (1956:39), one of the Levellers who converted to Quakerism was libertarian John Lilburne, who was the principal architect of the above manifesto.

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40 This manifesto was produced by John Lilburne (also known as “Freeborn John”) in conjunction with William Walwyn, Thomas Prince and Richard Overton—all of whom were Levellers or sympathisers with that movement. It was smuggled out of the Tower of London in 1649 by Levellers. See the website of the Constitution Society, [http://www.constitution.org/eng/agreepeo.htm](http://www.constitution.org/eng/agreepeo.htm).

41 Universal suffrage did not extend to women, servants, beggars and Royalists.

42 This document was also significant in the wording of political principles set out in the American Declaration of Independence.
Dumont (1986:94) observes a further important expansion of equalitarianism from the religious to the political sphere in the ideas of Thomas Paine, the author of *The Rights of Man*, who influenced the American call for independence and took part in the French Revolution. He was also a member of the Commission appointed to prepare the French Republican Constitution in 1793.

Having argued that modernity is associated with egalitarian individualism, in his later work it became more evident that Dumont has come to understand that blanket characterisations of societies as either non-modern or modern are not entirely accurate. He also understood that the passage of non-modern to modern is not as straightforward as he had previously thought. Dumont’s third publication, *German Ideology*, which forms part of his articulation of the “set of ideas and values characteristic of modernity” (1994: vii), is his corrective to such characterisations.44

### 8.4 Variants in Modern Ideology

Dumont (1994:4) maintains that from the seventeenth century onward there has been a common ideology held in England, France and Germany which not only values the individual foremost; but also, stresses the importance of equality and liberty. However, he also argues that the extent to which they stress certain aspects of this ideology is varied. According to Dumont, “each national pattern can be taken as a variant of the common ideology” (1994: 8).

Furthermore, Dumont posits that these differences manifested in the varying ways non-modern elements coexisted with modern elements and in the rate of change which occurred within different social environments. He asserts (1994:18) that the passage from hierarchical holism (the non-modern) to egalitarian individualism (the modern) was not straightforward because there were recursive loops. The two categories were not mutually exclusive but overlapped, blurring boundaries. This

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43 Paine’s *Common Sense* was influential on the push for independence from Britain and the American Revolution and in the wording of the US Constitution, his *Rights of Man* defended the French Revolution, whereas *The Age of Reason* dealt with the place of religion in society.

44 As a further corrective to Dumont’s comparative understanding of modern ideology, Kapferer (2011:8-9) argues that it may be that hierarchical elements are possibilities within the practice of egalitarianism itself and not based on a transformation of hierarchy. It is also important, in Kapferer’s view, not to deny the “great liberating ideals that are a feature of many egalitarian ideologies and also of hierarchical ideologies.”
meant that there were earlier non-modern elements within the modern (and vice versa). He argues also that this process was not uniform within different sub-cultural environments and as a result of this, these loops or folds created regional variations in modern ideology.

To explore these variations, Dumont (1994:50-53) notes that in France, the Revolution was against the socio-political hierarchy and the hereditary division of labour. The individual as a citizen was deemed to be equal to all other individual citizens, but not distinct from other individuals. Individualism, in this understanding, is at the political level and involves the Rights of Man, subordinating the religious level and the inner life of believers.

In the German instance, on the other hand, Dumont believes (1994: 19-21) that there was a decidedly inner development of individuality which originated with Luther’s ideas that the Christian believer’s relationship with God was paramount. Whereas French individualism took a decidedly political turn, the German variant was more religious and thus open to other possibilities. From the mid eighteenth century, political events, including those of the French Revolution, were channelled through this pre-existing introspective religious disposition enabling a particular German reaction to the later socio-political individualism which was evident in French culture and the Revolution.

Particularly relevant for Dumont’s argument concerning German distinctiveness, was the apparent surge in German intellectual and artistic ideas and values from the late eighteenth until the mid-nineteenth century. These ideas, according to him (1994:18-19), diverged from that of other modern European countries, and in so doing, began a process of cultural estrangement between Germany and other modern European countries which started at the time of the Enlightenment. For example, the eighteenth century German philosopher and theologian, Johann Herder, believed that the history of humanity is comprised of the interplay between

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45 This is also a post-modern point. See Dumont (1986:19).

46 The Sturm and Drang literary movement, for example, privileged feeling over rationalism in the late 18th century.
different cultures. Herder had a holistic perception of man, according to Dumont, which was “unmistakably German.” As Dumont points out (1994:9-10), Herder stated that all cultures have equal value, transferring the notion of “equality” from the individual person to the individual culture.

German ideology, according to Dumont (1994:20-21), developed from a combination of community holism, whereby there was identification with a cultural community (Gemeinshaft) rather than society (Gesellschaft); and self-cultivating individualism (Bildung), which developed from religious ideas about the inner self.  

This form of individualism initially was resistant to the development of socio-political individualism and, in Dumont’s view (1994:44), had two characteristics: an outworldly inner self and a propensity for cultural self-education or self-cultivation which was at the level of cultural belonging or community rather than at the level of society.

Dumont (1994:24) also noted two other features of German ideology: the prevalence of holism and a belief in the universal sovereignty of German culture. The prevalence of holism resulted in an adaptation through a movement of thought which produced a combination of elements of individualism and holism, both of which are implicitly identified with the other. The concept of Bildung, in Dumont’s understanding (1994:25), permeated German literature from Goethe to Thomas Mann—lauding the development of human potential in the pursuit of knowledge. This pursuit was for its own sake and for its contribution to society. It was not undertaken in order to further employment prospects, but instead, indicated a profound commitment to knowledge itself. Many intellectuals were dedicated to the development of this concept, including Kant, Goethe, Schiller and Mann. As explained by Kolata (2016:1-10), this dedication to Bildung was exemplified by the comment of the celebrated German writer and statesman, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who considered its pursuit to be “an exemplary human goal.”

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47 Luther insists that a Christian should be an out-worldly individual, i.e. a Christian was an individual as far as the inner self was concerned. In addition, an individual’s inner life requires devotion to self-development (Bildung) (Dumont 1994:19-20).
It is understandable, therefore, that Dumont (1994:82) chose to use the concept of Bildung as representative of German culture. This concept was an ethical ideal which arose initially out of theological ideas. Its original meaning was to educate a child. During the 18th century, its meaning was broadened and it became a value encompassing culture—characterized by literature and the arts. According to Dumont (1986:152), German writers of the period 1770-1830 became “mediators between German culture and the external world.”

Thomas Mann’s *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* confirmed Dumont’s belief that the German idea of an individualism which was internal to the person did not affect membership in the national community. For Mann, being a German implied introspectiveness and deepening and perfecting one’s own personality. Under this way of thinking, the political was profane. According to Dumont (1994:54), the line of thought from Luther to pietism and Bildung explained Mann’s connection between inwardness and disdain for the political sphere.

Undoubtedly, in Dumont’s view (1994:179-183), the literature most associated with the concept of Bildung is that of Goethe. Pietistic introspection was basic to the development of the individual accompanied by an inner contentment which was conducive to having a harmonious relationship between the self and the community. Each person is considered unique in this understanding of individualism. The incomparability of each person is seen in Goethe’s writing and is in contrast with the French idea of an individualism of equality and sameness. Goethe, according to Dumont (1994:187,193), had played a part in the transition from the Western Enlightenment idea of the individual to the German view which insisted on an introspective focus on self-development.

Dumont (1994:92) suggests that borrowing ideas from other cultures entails an inner predisposition and what is borrowed is in response to a need which is pre-existing. What is borrowed is necessarily changed to meet that need. For example, German classical writers idealized Ancient Greece but this idealization involved a German interpretation in which the individual was seen as undeveloped and

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48 This concept became widely influential not only in Germany but eventually throughout Europe and North America and informing the ideas of religious groups such as the Unitarians and Transcendentalists in the 19th century.

49 Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* was first published in German in 1918. An English version translated by W.D. Morris was published in 1983.
incomplete until transformed by self-cultivation. The individual of the Enlightenment in the German interpretation had to be transformed similarly. The goals of the French Revolution are, therefore, modified within the German milieu.

Dumont (1994:187) states that “individualism receives a curvature, which sends it back to the community.” In Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the main character who is involved with his own self-development is brought back into the community. Dumont (1994:188) maintains that there is a curvature in Wilhelm’s introspective individualism, when he is admitted into a distinguished circle at the completion of his development. In Dumont’s understanding, this loop allows a non-modern holistic orientation to the community to survive in modern times.

Another important factor within the German milieu is the way that religion and politics were intertwined in the period between the late 18th and early 19th centuries when activists were agitating for reform and unification of the German states. The three hundred year anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther became symbols of German reason, virtue and freedom. Landry (2014:5) suggests that a view emerged in Prussia that a unified German nation could only occur if this unification was based on a shared Christian religion. Landry calls that view an “ecumenical German nationalism.”

A National Assembly was convened to begin the process of creating a German nation state and a Constitution was adopted in 1849 to establish a unified state with a hereditary emperor as head of state. However, the King of Prussia declined his election and invoked the grace of God as the sole source of monarchical legitimacy. The king then called for a unification of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches in Prussia and proclaimed a Prussian Union on the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation initiated by Martin Luther. As stated by Landry

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50 This was Goethe’s second novel published in 1795-96.


52 The king marginalised Old Lutherans who refused to join the Prussian Union and this persecution had particular implications for South Australia. Although Old Lutherans emigrated from Prussia because they were seeking greater religious freedom, they were also trying to escape the politics of the German Revolutionary Period which was linked inextricably to religious difference. See Chapter One for further information of Lutheran settlement in South Australia.
(2014:30), ecumenical groups backed the king’s idea of uniting separate Churches and considered it a requirement for German national unification. The German unification was, therefore, enabled not by the political solution of the National Assembly but by the politico-religious intervention of the King of Prussia. There was, therefore, a decidedly religious element to the German Revolutionary Period (1830-1870s) and the subsequent unification of German states. This element was absent in the French Revolutionary period.

In the French view, the individualism of equality is a formal principle; and moreover, according to Dumont (1994:189), it is “externally applicable to take exception to any holism in political and social life.” This is a more political individualism. The German view, which is the individualism of difference, is internally applicable as it corresponds to the inner feeling of the believer, or subject of Bildung. Self-cultivation is asserted on the assumption of difference of inner selves. This is relevant because it conceives of an individualism which is unique to each person; and as a consequence, there is a duty to develop and nurture that difference. This is a less political form of individualism.

Although French and English culture exerted the most influence on modern European thought until the end of the 18th century, the development of German philosophy and literature, in turn, affected French and English thought.53 Dumont (1994:225) maintains that elements which are predominant in one ideological framework are submerged in other sub-cultural environments where they may be seen to emerge in a subordinate model. The French model of universalist individualism, for example, subordinated the holistic perception of a specific historical community, which is usually the view of traditionalists. As a result of his comparative analysis, Dumont concludes that Germany is more religious and introverted; whereas France is more secular and extraverted. Through this document I will be arguing that Quakers are more religious and introverted; whereas Unitarians are more secular and extraverted. These differences though are not absolute; they are relative differences. And notwithstanding this, Unitarians are still religious and Quakers are still very much secular. It is in the comparison between the two that the relative differences are able to be noted.

53 The impact of Marxist ideology is one such example of influence on thought in the twentieth century.
Having explained the relevance of Dumont’s contrast between introverted and extraverted individualism—a differentiation which will be examined further in connection with Quaker and Unitarian practices later in this document, I now set out the approach that I have adopted during the research process.

9. METHODOLOGY

9.1 Fieldwork

Rambo (2003:213) points to an important characteristic of anthropological research when he states that “anthropological researchers have attempted to fit their theories to the data, not force the data to fit their theories.” The approach adopted here takes this aspect into account. Importantly, this comparative study lends itself to the methodology of participant observation, but conducting anthropological and sociological research within the Australian setting does not allow much opportunity to observe and participate in everyday activities as peoples’ daily lives are widely dispersed and less accessible to a researcher.

Anthropologists who have done research on communities of practice in Western societies have sought to address this difficulty in several ways. Csordas concentrated on interviews and observation of ritual rather than everyday activities, contending that interviews, narratives and observation gave access to experience because language communicates the existential situation of others. He then used a theory of embodiment to abstract from experience (1994: xvii, 282). Luhrmann’s methodology included attending services and rituals for one year and reading various books and other sources of information provided by the groups. She interviewed the leaders of the groups and ten of their congregants as well as drawing on data from casual conversations (2004:520).

My approach was similar to that proposed by those two researchers. Also, it was similar to that of Collins, who used anthropological, ritual, historical and sociological insights in his analyses of British Quakerism.54

54 See Page 36.
Prior to commencement of fieldwork, I informally approached both communities with the intention of ascertaining whether there was any receptivity among members of the congregations to a proposed study. I first contacted several members of the Quaker community whom I knew and received a favourable response to the proposal. I then attended Sunday morning service in the Adelaide Unitarian Church and spoke to the minister afterwards. She was very receptive to the idea and introduced me to a few members of the congregation. I explained to everyone I met in the Unitarian community that I was not a new convert but was interested in conducting a comparative study. Everyone was very curious about it and interested to know just what I intended to do. Unitarians were chosen as a comparative group rather than (say) a pentecostal church because I wanted to look at similar old-style non-conformist religious organisations which allowed me to study small differences.

After making this initial contact, notices were placed in both groups’ newsletters explaining to the congregations what was intended to be done and details of the intended study were sent to the major decision-making groups of both bodies for approval. Once approval was given, fieldwork commenced. At that time, there were approximately one hundred and twenty members in each community, and it was apparent that there was a preponderance of older congregants, which immediately raised the question of how these groups were able to maintain their populations when there were so few young families.

Each fieldwork site (church or meeting house) was visited on average twice a month during regular worship for two years, and then intermittently for a further four years. The major goal was to learn about these two communities of practice in South Australia through directly observing their gatherings at their times of worship and on various other social occasions. This enabled relationships to be

Note 54 cont’d See Page 35. Collins has written a substantial number of articles and book chapters regarding British Quakers from 1996 onwards. The following work is representative of his scholarship.


built with congregants and provided opportunity for informal discussions on matters pertinent to the study. Fortuitously, both communities had major anniversary celebrations within weeks of commencement, which meant that there were opportunities to socialize with congregants from the outset.

In both groups, I was not only observing but actually participating as much as I could in their rituals. For Unitarians, this meant participating in, and experiencing, church services rather than observing and taking notes. I sat with the congregation and sang the hymns, listened to the minister’s address and participated in the order of service along with the rest of the congregation. This participation involved regular attendance at Sunday services and chatting with members of the congregation both before, and after, worship.

To situate the Sunday service within a larger context, it was also necessary to attend other activities organized by the congregation. This involved congregational lunches and dinners, fund-raising events, and various church group activities. I found that in the smaller informal gatherings it was easier to interact with congregants. I also attended and participated in a course run by the minister for congregants over a period of eight weeks.

For Quakers, fieldwork involved primarily attending and participating in meetings for worship and meetings for worship for business. I also attended weddings and funerals and various informal social gatherings and tried to broaden my knowledge of Quakerism by participating in a course run by local Adelaide Quakers over a period of twelve weeks. Additionally, I also participated in two Australian Yearly Meeting gatherings, one held in Canberra and another in Adelaide, and a mid-year residential retreat held in the Adelaide Hills.

Anthropologists have noted the difficulties with recording data in some worship environments. Engelke (2007:35), for example, found that no instruments for recording such as pens, notebooks and audio recorders, were tolerated within the space of worship of the Masowe Friday Apostolics. A similar situation applied in my fieldwork, because a Quaker meeting for worship is conducted mainly in silence. It seemed inappropriate to be taking notes and unnecessary to make an audio recording. Any field-notes from these occasions were made from recollections after the meeting was finished.
The Quaker community requested that I give an informal talk to members as they were interested in how the study was progressing and wanted to know if any difficulties were being encountered. The question arose about a researcher taking notes. It was generally agreed that taking notes during a meeting for worship might be distracting to participants. It was considered appropriate for me to note later what ministry there had been but not to mention names of people or be too specific about what people said.

Although it would have been possible to sit at the back of the Unitarian Church and take notes during a service, this was not a practice that I used. As notes were not taken during Quaker meetings, Unitarian services were treated similarly. The intention was to attend, experience, observe and participate respectfully in both groups’ worshipping activities, rather than just to observe. Any field-notes made were done from recollections after the Unitarian service of worship was finished. As soon as I left the church, I quickly made a few brief notes and within a short time of returning home used these notes to assist in recollecting and recording as much information as I could. Some sermons were downloaded by the church’s organisers onto the website and this also proved to be a useful source of data.

Using these sources, a substantial amount of fieldwork data was obtained, noted and transcribed. Quaker researcher, Peter Collins (2010:14) believes that memory can also play an important role in fieldwork as not all experiences in the field can be recorded and some information is stored as memory to be drawn upon as a future resource. This is undoubtedly the case.

9.2 Interviews

In addition to fieldwork observation and participation, fifteen members of each congregation were interviewed. Interviewees were between the ages of 40-90 which was representative of the congregational structure at that time. My focus was on learning from participants and so I was particularly keen to interview those people who had long-term involvement with the communities, as they were the most likely participants to throw light on social phenomena and processes.

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55 This figure represented approximately ten percent of the congregations at that stage
I commenced each interview by asking the interviewee how they came to be a Quaker/Unitarian. All people interviewed were very comfortable with this question and sometimes launched into very lengthy explanations. Although some members were born into Quaker or Unitarian families and were proud to relate long-standing multi-generational involvement, the majority of congregants either had not attended any church regularly before, or were “converts” from other churches. They had become members through conviction. Those that came from other church backgrounds said that they found the Quaker or Unitarian worshipping environment allows more flexibility in spiritual growth. It was apparent that there were noticeable similarities between the two groups of interviewees here because both Quakerism and Unitarianism are religions of becoming rather than being. Both believe in the possibility of continuing revelation rather than revelation through sacred texts such as the Bible, and this approach to spirituality requires ongoing personal discernment.

Enquiring how they came into membership often led to discussion on other matters that I had not intended to raise; but nevertheless, were important to the interviewees. People became much more relaxed after this as they realized that this was not a test of their knowledge. Several people were worried that their knowledge of the other group was not good enough. They had assumed that as this was a comparative study that they would be expected to know about the other group as well. They were relieved when they found out that this was not required.

Those congregants who were willing to participate were given the opportunity of explaining the importance to them of attending services/meetings for worship and the value of forms of worship such as silence and ministry. Participants were asked about the importance of rites of passage and celebrations, and how religious practices have influenced their daily lives and affected their sense of identity. Interviews were at least an hour long and semi-structured but everyone was given the opportunity to talk about what was relevant to their situation rather than being constrained by answering specific questions.

Although I had a prepared set of questions, I often didn’t get answers to all questions as people talked about other things which were more important to them. I allowed the interview to develop in this way with people giving scant attention to
some questions but expanding at length on others. On one occasion, I did not get a chance to ask any questions as the interviewee spoke very informatively, without prompting, for the entire interview time. So although there was some structure to the interview, each interview developed in its own way.\textsuperscript{56}

With each participant’s permission, all personal interviews were recorded and later transcribed for content analysis. Some participants asked for transcripts of their interviews which were provided to them. Transcribing interviews was an extremely time-consuming process but had a lot of merit because it meant that what was said during the interviews remained in my memory and I was easily able to recall contents of the interviews without constantly referring to my notes.

9.3 Other Resources

Both groups have their own websites. The Quaker website contains news of interest for the Quaker community but its main objective is to introduce Quakers to outsiders. The meetings which form part of South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting are listed, along with addresses and times of meetings for worship. There are links to local Quaker publications as well as information about the Adelaide Quaker opportunity shop. Links are also provided to Australian Quaker websites and information on overseas Quaker Yearly Meetings.

The Unitarian Church has recently redesigned its website in an attempt to make it more appealing to a wider range of people, and in particular, to young families. Its Home Page is headed “Open Hearts, Open Minds”. Visitors to the website are given a range of information, including details of the church’s history, famous Adelaide Unitarians, principles of Unitarian-Universalism, and the minister’s theology/philosophy. In addition, there are particulars of services, children’s activities, social justice projects, community outreach, and a link to a podcast site with recordings of selected addresses given by ministers of the church.

The websites are a useful source of information as they provide a snapshot of how Quakers and Unitarians in South Australia represent themselves to the wider South

\textsuperscript{56} One Quaker interviewee remarked that this was a very ‘Quakerly’ way of doing things.
Australian community. In addition, a considerable amount of information is produced by the groups themselves. Regular newsletters are circulated with details of services, meetings, and social activities; in addition to news of members and other items of interest to the communities. Quakers, in particular, circulate items of interest to members regularly by email. There are also pamphlets and publications on display in the foyers of the Quaker Meeting House and the Unitarian Church.

10. INSIDER/OUTSIDER RESEARCH

Although I was attending the Unitarian Church as a newcomer who was intending to do a study, it was inevitably going to be more complicated with Quakers. I have had a long association with the group, although I had not attended meetings for worship for many years. This meant that a few people knew me well but some people, who had been attending for many years themselves, did not know me at all or only slightly; therefore, I was a returning long-term member to some and a newcomer to others. In the same way, some people who had been attending for many years were newcomers to me. On top of all this, it was confusing to all concerned that I was also intending to do a comparative study.

My first fieldwork attendance with the Quaker community was at the meeting for worship at Eastern Suburbs Meeting. The techniques of self required for sitting and waiting in stillness and silence during periods of worship were familiar to me, although after such a long period of absence, I found it was quite difficult to do. Afterwards, I was able to chat with a few people who then expressed interest in assisting me with interviews later.

Because so much time had passed since I had close involvement with the meeting, those people who were the most prominent in the meeting ten years or so earlier were now taking more of a back-seat, and more recent members were now much more evident. I noticed that there were no children present in the meeting at that stage of fieldwork, which was quite different from earlier times when children (and some adults) sometimes played a game of cricket after meeting. I would agree with Quaker researcher, Peter Collins (2010:10), that the fact that you are a fieldworker is in itself enough to create a sense of difference even if there are shared remembrances with some members of the community of times past. This shared sense was only with a few members of the community of Quakers. With the
majority of the community, I was a lapsed member doing a study who perhaps was returning to the fold.

With the Unitarian community I was an outsider who was doing an academic study. I did not hide the fact that I had come from a Quaker background which resulted in me being referred to sometimes as the “Quaker lady”, but this name seemed to disappear over time. By attending services regularly, I soon become part of the congregation. So much so, that during interviews and informal meetings, participants made comments indicating that I was considered a potential Unitarian. In fact, several members of the congregation were genuinely shocked that I had not become a member of the church. People made comments such as, “You fit in so well here, why don’t you become a member?”

The importance of the study was more urgently felt among the Unitarians who expressed more interest. They often asked how my research was progressing and many people said they would be interested in reading the thesis. One congregant said that he would be willing to pay for whatever I wrote! Others were interested in knowing whether I wrote down everything I heard, and saw, each time I attended the church. Quakers were definitely more reserved at the start, but as fieldwork progressed, people said that that they thought that I had a compelling study ahead of me. Therefore, it has surprised me on several occasions when Quakers have enquired as to whether I have made up my mind as to whether I am going to become a Unitarian. There is some misunderstanding because I have been attending the Unitarian Church that it must mean that I am interested in becoming a member of that church, even though it was known that I was undertaking a comparative study.

According to Quaker sociologist, P. Dandelion (2004:234), the majority of research into Quakers is actually done by Quaker scholars. This does not seem to be so evident with social research into Unitarians. However the nature of Unitarian worship is that reference is often made to social scientific views during sermons. These factors seem to point to the suitability of the characterisation of Quakers and Unitarians along Dumontian lines of introverted and extroverted individualisms. Dandelion also speculates that the large amount of research done by Quaker scholars themselves may be partly because there is limited access given to non-Quaker researchers. There is no doubt that it is easier to be an insider researcher
as far as access is concerned, but perhaps this is the case with most groups and not just Quakers.

Insider research does also pose ethical dilemmas. Information that is gained through membership of a group is not necessarily meant for outsiders. There may be an expectation that certain information will not be divulged outside the group. It is also hard to draw boundaries between personal religious experience and the study. When is it a private experience and when is it an academic pursuit? When I attended the annual Australia-wide gathering of Quakers, I was asked by one member of the group whether I was attending for my study or because I was a Quaker. It was a difficult question to answer. I felt somewhat guilty. In effect, the reasons were two-fold: I was attending as a Quaker because I had never attended an Australia-wide Quaker gathering before and I was curious, but I was also attending because I believed it would give me valuable insights into Australian Quakers which would be useful for my study.

In Meyerhof’s (1978) study of a community of elderly Jewish people, Turner’s foreword mentions “thrice-born” anthropologists who return to their nation of birth declaring that anthropology’s “long-term program has always included the movement of return, the purified look at ourselves.” Nesbitt (2002:134-5) though notes that an insider/outsider dichotomy is complicated by geographical, social and generational distances between individuals and groups; and in addition, the beliefs and practices of both the ethnographer and those in the field are constantly changing over time.

Recollection of personal experiences is associated with introspection and reflexivity, and cannot be totally excluded from ethnography. As Collins states, “experience is unique and able to give a ‘peculiar purchase’ on the field” (2010:11). Collins (1994: 38) also mentions that continuous reflection on Quakerism, i.e., reflexivity, is intrinsic to being a Quaker, and this leads him to ponder whether being a Quaker and being an ethnographer involve similar skills.

Collins (2002) approached the difficulties posed by insider research by writing his research chapters in three parts: Quaker conversations at the meeting house, his reflections on these conversations as an insider of the meeting, and interpretation of this data as an anthropologist/outsider. I have not attempted this approach,
because I was pursuing a comparative analysis. Instead, all fieldwork notes on Quaker and Unitarian practices were written from the viewpoint of a researcher, albeit one who also happened to have some insider knowledge.

The data collected from the fieldwork process were analysed and interpreted using the insights of anthropological, sociological and ritual theorists. Fieldwork notes written after attendances at services or meeting for worship, interviews with church members and information produced by each group were carefully perused and then analysed into various categories such as rites of passage, ritual, history and theology. This was done individually for each group. These files were then further divided into sub-files which dealt with various aspects of rites of passage, ritual, history and theology. This information was then used to write ethnographies which form the basic data of this study.

11. UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF COMPARATIVE FIELDWORK

There have been unintended consequences arising from the experience of fieldwork, such as areas of cross-fertilization occurring between the two groups, so that I have sometimes felt like a bridge between the two groups. Inevitably, I have frequently been asked by members of each community about the beliefs and practices of the other group. Possibly this has had some unintended influence on some changing allegiances when congregants have switched membership and/or attendance from one group to another.

It is also possible that the presence of a researcher has inadvertently encouraged reference to Quakerism during Unitarian services, an address on Quakers being delivered during a service, a Quaker giving information on Quakerism during a Unitarian service, and a Unitarian approach to the Quaker community regarding the possibility of holding joint activities.

Collins notes (2010: 16) that the self of the anthropologist might also be a resource for others. This may explain why several addresses by ministers given during services of worship at the Unitarian Church mentioned anthropology, sociology and sociological concepts such as *habitus*. Although it is possible this would have occurred had I not been doing fieldwork at the church, it seems likely that the anthropological presence has influenced the choice of wording in ministerial addresses to the congregation on some occasions.
Regardless of these consequences, undoubtedly this focus on reflexivity and the self of the individual ethnographer is a product of late Western modernity and its thinking, which means that this study should be seen as very firmly rooted in the concepts of late modernity and its apparent need for greater transparency.

12. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions and explanations are offered to clarify some of the terms used in this document.

Attenders

Quakers call non-members who are part of their meetings for worship “attenders” rather than “attendees.”

Communities of Practice


Quakers/Friends

Australian Quakers are members of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Inc. The names “Quakers” and “Friends” are used interchangeably, officially and in conversation, although members themselves usually refer to each other as Friends.

Unitarians

The Unitarian Church of South Australia, Inc. is affiliated with the Unitarian and Unitarian-Universalist movement and a member of the Australia and New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association. The most recent South Australian Website is headed “SA Unitarians.” Although Unitarian-Universalist in orientation, the South Australian Church has not yet changed its name to indicate this.

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57 Accessed 19/1/17
Utopian

The definition of “Utopian”58 used in this thesis refers to a person, or group of people who hope for, or actively work towards, bringing about an ideal society, i.e. a society which embraces their particular values. The usage of this term is in no way meant to be derogatory.

13. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This Introduction has outlined the broad field of study and the justification for a comparative anthropological/sociological study of the South Australian Quaker and Unitarian communities. The literature review identified the research issues and demonstrated the links between the research question and the wider body of knowledge, including the important insights of Louis Dumont on the comparative study of modern ideology. In summary, this chapter has laid out the foundations for the thesis, the structure of which is now outlined.

The first chapter begins with the historical development of Quakerism and Unitarianism prior to the mid-nineteenth century and the European settlement of South Australia. The research area is then described through a history of the colony of South Australia, which was an experiment in free settler colonization, and is followed by a history of Quakers and Unitarians in that milieu.

The second chapter describes how Quakers and Unitarians fit into the contemporary Australian religious environment. It examines the difference between religion and spirituality, and compares how these religious groups are organised, both within South Australia and nationally. In order to do this, insights from sociologists and anthropologists who have studied religious organisations within western societies are called upon, with specific reference to the research into Australian religious organisations conducted by Gary Bouma.

The next two chapters contain detailed ethnographic descriptions of the current worshipping activities of Quakers and Unitarians in South Australia, highlighting the centrality of these activities in the lives of members of these communities.

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These descriptions will assist in understanding how these groups embrace contemporary spirituality and what they add to the mix of the current Australian religious/spiritual environment.

The fifth chapter considers what is meant by the term “ritual” and contrasts different approaches to the anthropology of ritual. In order to do this, I draw upon the insights of four ritual theorists: Roy Rappaport, Bruce Kapferer, Don Handelman and Catherine Bell. Following this analysis, I argue that ritual’s transformational and constitutive aspects are particularly relevant with respect to the contrasting phenomena observed within the South Australian Quaker and Unitarian communities and this suggests that their rituals are not just representational; but also, actively constitutive of particular value.
CHAPTER 1

THE COLONY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, QUAKERS AND UNITARIANS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

William Penn might, with reason, boast of having brought down upon earth the Golden Age, which in all probability, never had any real existence but in his dominions. Voltaire

1. Introduction

Although Quakers and Unitarians have been in South Australia since its colonial foundation, the history of both movements reaches back much further. This longer history is very important to some members of these communities who have family connections which stretch over many generations. The following comment made by a member of the Unitarian congregation illustrates this point:

I was born of Unitarian families on both sides. My father’s family was Unitarian for generations...I grew up knowing the history of Unitarianism in England because it was our history.

This chapter describes two religious organisations in South Australia through their histories and is divided into several sections. The first part examines the historical background of the Quaker movement in England and North America. This is followed by an exploration of the historical background of Unitarianism which can be traced back to early Christianity. The third section sets out the colonial history of South Australia noting some of its unique features. The final two sections discuss how the Unitarian and Quaker communities developed within their South Australian milieux.

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60 Quote extracted from interview notes.
2. Historical Background - Quakerism

The Quaker movement began during the political turmoil of the twenty year period of the English Civil Wars and Interregnum in the mid-seventeenth century. It formed part of the wider English Puritan movement that was comprised of disparate religious groups advocating reform of the Church of England.

There were many notable Quakers through the history of the movement but the most influential was its charismatic founder and leader, George Fox, who was born in Leicestershire in 1624. It was said that as a child he was religious, inward, still, solid and observing beyond his years.61 His father was a weaver and known for his religious ways, so much so that his neighbours called him “Righteous Christer” (Nickalls 1952:1). In his youth, George Fox was apprenticed to a shoemaker, but became restless and began to search for answers to religious questions. In his Journal, Fox explained (Nickalls 1952:7, 20) that he came to the conclusion that formal education qualifications did not equip people for the ministry. Instead, he believed that all people had an inner teacher and he was convinced that he was commanded by God to turn people inward in order to know their own salvation.

Fox frequently interrupted church services, telling those present that God did not dwell in temples. His outbursts were not welcomed and he reportedly encountered much resistance:

\[
\text{The people fell upon me with their fists, books, and without compassion or mercy beat me down in the steeplehouse and almost smothered me.}
\]

(Nickalls 1952: 44)

Fox did, however, convince his followers that they were to be at the forefront of an inward “Second Coming” of Christ in which heaven was to be created on Earth. He advocated an inward form of worship which he maintained enabled a personal relationship with God. This inward form of worship occurred within the meeting for worship (Dandelion 2005:4).

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Fox travelled afar and spread his message to all those who would listen. He first journeyed through the north of England sharing his insights with religious seekers. Victor Turner (1969:198) described Fox’s teachings as: “life-crisis liminality as the path of salvation” and suggested that this style involved plain living and high thinking. Fox’s followers called themselves “Friends of the Truth” or “Friends” but the name “Quaker” also came to be used very early in the movement’s history. 62

The first generation of Quakers was zealous and on a mission to spread Fox’s message throughout England. By 1660, it is estimated that there were sixty thousand followers throughout England. 63 Bauman states (1983:7) that Quakers were considered trouble-makers and many were arrested for their public preaching and disruption of church services. According to Mack (1992:1), in the middle of the seventeenth century there were up to three hundred “visionary women”—most of whom were Quakers—who preached and prophesized in churches and public places. Indeed, Quaker women were sometimes very conspicuous even when silent. The following account, related by Mack, demonstrates this point:

(Sh) sewed a full-length coat of sackcloth, which she put on with no other clothing save shoes, her hair hanging loose and smeared with ashes; on seven different days she walked through the streets and stood silently in front of the high cross before the marketplace as a sign against the pride of the city of Bristol (1992:168).

There was also great disquiet at the manner of worship of Quakers. Fox states in his Journal: “the priests and professors of all sorts were much against Friends’ silent meetings; and when they saw a hundred or two hundred people all silent, waiting upon the Lord, they would break out into a wondering and despising” (Nickalls 1952:446). He documented the predicament of English Quakers in letters sent to followers who had immigrated to the Maryland, Carolina, Virginia and New England colonies to escape the problems faced by dissenters under Charles II:

We are here under great persecution, betwixt thirteen and fourteen hundred in prison, an account of which hath lately been delivered to the King, besides the great spoil and havoc which is made of Friends’ goods by informers....many are imprisoned and praemunired for not swearing allegiance...And many are fined and cast into prison as rioters for meeting to worship God....and many are cast into prison because they cannot pay the priests’ tithes (Cadbury 1952: 738).

62 George Fox stated that it was: “Justice Bennet of Derby that first called us Quakers because we bid them tremble at the word of God” (Nickalls 1952:58).
63 Some of Fox’s followers became missionaries who subsequently travelled to other locations including New England, the American colonies, Caribbean Islands, Turkey, Malta, and Ireland (Mack 1992:1).
As a further response to this persecution, Quakers established a weekly Meeting for Sufferings in London and followers were cautioned to engage in ministry within the Quaker meeting house itself to avoid being subject to arrest for preaching in public spaces (Mack 1992: 274).

Early Quakers set themselves apart from others in society by wearing plain clothing with no superfluous trimmings and by refusing to show deference to those in authority or in a socially superior position. Quakers were thought rude because they did not “doff the hat” or use polite greetings, titles or pronouns. Their plain speech was seen as lacking in respect and designed to destroy correct social interaction (Bauman 1983:54-56). It was customary to use “thee” and “thou” when conversing with persons of lower social position, and to use “you” when conversing with others; however, according to Vipont Brown (1921:43), Friends deliberately did not observe these customs because they disagreed with social distinctions.

Quaker theology and practices also set them apart. They did not believe that individuals were inherently sinful. Instead, they favoured the view that God’s grace was universal and rejected Calvin’s view that God had pre-determined an individual’s destiny. They did not have christening and communion as a means to salvation and continuing revelation of the Inner Light was the means by which they preferred to discern “The Truth” (Weber 2009: 106,135-6).

The Quaker movement inevitably had internal disputes and the leadership of George Fox was challenged. One of his challengers was James Nayler. Although George Fox is considered the founder of Quakerism, Nayler vied for the position of being one of the most prominent, and controversial, Quakers of the mid seventeenth century. He was a charismatic Quaker leader who was well known for the spirited way in which he presented Quaker beliefs to the public, but his manner brought accusations of being “ensnared by flatterers” who lacked restraint. According to Sheeran (1983:9), Nayler entered Bristol on horseback in the midst of followers who sang “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Israel.” This was considered blasphemous and caused public outrage. Many onlookers called for the death penalty. After the Parliament had debated Naylor’s actions for six weeks, he
was imprisoned and severely tortured. Many Quakers, including Fox, also abandoned him or publicly decried his actions.\(^{64}\)

William Penn was less controversial, but very influential, among Quakers in the late seventeenth century. He was the son of a British naval commander, and as a child, his interest in Quakerism was sparked after his father invited Thomas Loe, a Quaker preacher, to speak at the family home. Later Penn started attending Quaker meetings for worship and was then disowned by his family.\(^{65}\) However, despite this, Penn was an entrepreneur and philosopher who became a leading advocate of religious tolerance in England. He mounted legal challenges against oppressive government policies and used his family connections to have many Quakers released from gaol. He became known as a defender of religious liberty and his public talks attracted thousands of people. After visiting Quakers in Holland he became interested in forming a new community based on freedom. He believed this was not able to be done in England and approached Charles II for permission to establish an American colony.\(^{66}\)

Penn is now best known for his founding of the Province of Pennsylvania. Many Quakers migrated to the new American colonies in order to escape persecution and they found refuge in Pennsylvania where Penn had established a settlement on land that had been granted to him by King Charles II in satisfaction of the payment of a debt. This utopian Quaker colonial settlement became known as “The Holy Experiment” as it was motivated by Quaker values, and had the approval of George Fox. Many Quakers, and other migrants, settled in areas around, or in, Philadelphia where land was being sold at low prices to attract new settlers. According to Henretta et al. (1997:72), the ethnic and religious diversity of these new settlers and the milieu of religious freedom soon gave the colony a reputation of being the most open and democratic of all the Restoration colonies.

Although initially successful, the dreams of a holy experiment did not eventuate. The colony struggled financially as settlers did not want to pay rent or taxes to

\(^{64}\) Nayler was eventually reconciled with Fox and died within a year of his release from prison. Website of ‘The Postmodern Quaker’
https://postmodernquaker.wordpress.com/2014/03/08/the-power-of-suffering-love-james-nayler-and-robert-rich/
Accessed 31/8/17.

\(^{65}\) http://www.quaker.org/wmpenn.html
Accessed 1/9/17.

\(^{66}\) http://www.quaker.org/wmpenn.html
Accessed 1/9/17.
support the government of the colony. Conflict ensued, and schisms soon emerged, within the Quaker community itself. In addition, there was a new English monarch on the throne who was angered by Pennsylvania’s refusal to participate in the defence of the colonies. The colony was seized, Penn was imprisoned and the king set up his own government. According to Bronner (1954:105), most settlers acquiesced to the king’s demands in exchange for retaining some of their political liberties.

Partly in response to the failure of Penn’s utopian experiment, the period between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries is frequently referred to as the “Quietist period” in Quaker history. Certainly, various practices including the formalization of plain style dress, upholding of plain speech, and the use of numbers instead of names for days and months, became more widely encouraged within the movement. At the same time, adherents were discouraged from participation in the arts or other “frivolous” pursuits. The practice of disownment also increased. As Dandelion states (2005:49-52), these notions and practices created a sense of separation from the world; and yet, Quakers were still actively involved in the world. In Britain, Quaker inventors, scientists and philosophers met regularly with like-minded people to discuss innovative ideas which impacted upon British society.

On the other hand, in North America, Quakers became more detached from worldly pursuits and more inward-looking, but over time, this introspection led to a growing concern for those who were oppressed or despised by others. Well-known Quakers such as John Woolman devoted their lives to alleviating the oppression suffered by African slaves and denounced slave-owning (Kelley 1986: 259,269). Woolman’s Journal tells his life story and his concern for equality and justice and the plight of those who were oppressed. In it, he was described as being a humble man and poor in appearance, wearing simple clothing which contrasted with the rich apparel worn by the representatives of commerce and plantation interests (1922:8).

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According to Dorsey (1998:397) through the actions of Quakers such as Woolman, the Society of Friends became one of the more prominent reforming and benevolent groups in North America by the end of the eighteenth century.

Quakers were also involved in benevolent works in Britain. Elizabeth Fry was of particular interest to early Australian Quakers because she was concerned for the welfare of women convicts who were being transported to Australia. She formed a group called “the British Ladies Society for the Reformation of Female Prisoners.” Among other things, the group offered women convicts needlework supplies to keep them occupied during their transportation and imprisonment. In return, prisoners on board the convict ship The Rajah produced a quilt which became known as the “Rajah Quilt.”

By the nineteenth century, Quakers were involved in more worldly pursuits. In her book, which details the one hundred and fifty year rivalry between the world’s chocolate makers, Deborah Cadbury states: “4000 Quaker families ran 74 Quaker British banks and more than 200 Quaker companies.” Quaker ownership also included the highly successfully chocolate factories of Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry (2010: xi). These family-owned businesses were run by Quakers who believed that wealth creation was not just for personal gain but also for the benefit of the workers, local community and society. It is notable, for example, that when Cadbury wanted to build its first factory outside of the UK, Claremont in Tasmania was chosen rather than Melbourne or Sydney, as the company reportedly wanted an “idyllic setting” for the factory.

68 This work is now held in the National Gallery of Australia’s textiles collection. See Appendix A for more details of the quilt.

69 The establishment of Bournville, on the outskirts of Birmingham, is an illustration of this public-spiritedness. This community was founded by the Cadbury family to create improved living conditions for their factory workers. It was to be a “model village”. Current residents say that they want to “preserve the Cadbury brothers’ vision for the perfect community. [http://bournvillevillage.com/about-2/]. Accessed 15/2/17.

3. Historical Background - Unitarianism

The origins of Unitarianism can be traced to early Christianity, and in particular, to the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. It was then that Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria, questioned the view that Christ was divine. However, it was many centuries later before this way of thinking gained more widespread acceptance. Undoubtedly, Luther’s disputations with the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches emboldened reformers such as Michael Servetus whose views inspired those who later founded Unitarian churches in parts of Eastern Europe. In 1531, after writing *On the Errors of the Trinity*, he was found guilty of heresy charges and was executed on the orders of Calvin (Scholefield 1954:32).

Despite persecution, Unitarian movements continued to slowly develop in different parts of Europe; and more particularly, in Hungary, Poland and Transylvania. The name “Unitarian” gained currency in Hungary where it was used to describe the followers of the mid-sixteenth century religious reformer, Francis David, who died whilst imprisoned for heresy. Another influential religious reformer, Faustus Socinus, was an Italian theologian who founded a non-Trinitarian school of thought known as Socinianism, which was embraced by the Unitarian Church in Transylvania (Scholefield 1954:32, 33).

By the seventeenth century, these ideas started to gain ground in Britain. The first influential person in this regard was John Biddle, who was an Oxford graduate and headmaster of a Grammar School. Biddle has been called the father of English Unitarianism. After publishing his theological views, he was persecuted and imprisoned for expressing heretical sentiments. His followers, according to Scott (1980:4), became known as “Biddelians” or “Socinians.”

Whereas Quakerism developed as an independent sect, British Unitarianism grew primarily out of a movement of dissenting thought within the existing Anglican and Presbyterian traditions. Dissenting chapels were few in number and restricted to more remote locations but dissenters overcame these difficulties by meeting

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71 The Unitarian church still exists in Transylvania, but unlike other Unitarian Churches, it does not have a congregational structure and is administered by a Bishop.

secretly in private houses or barns to escape persecution. After the passing of the Toleration Act of 1689, they were able to meet without persecution and by the end of the seventeenth century, plain style meeting houses were common throughout Britain.

Hague maintains (1986:9) that by the early eighteenth century, there were nearly one thousand plain style meeting houses erected in Britain. Some of the leaders of these dissenting congregations undoubtedly favoured a Unitarian interpretation of Christianity. This interpretation was not legalized in Britain until the nineteenth century, although according to Hague (1986:22), this did not deter dissenters engaging in political and theological debate nor did it prohibit the first London Unitarian congregation being formed.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, groups of inventors, scientists and philosophers, many of whom held dissenting or Unitarian views, met regularly to discuss innovative ideas. Some ministers also ran schools or dissenting academies to supplement their income. Influential Unitarians including scientist, Joseph Priestley, were educated at these academies as dissenters were unable to attend Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Hague 1986:52). Priestley was a theologian and Unitarian minister in addition to being a scientist. He objected to social privilege in England and openly supported the aims of the French Revolution; a stance which, according to Hague (1986:52) was unpopular and led to Priestley’s property being destroyed in the anti-French riots of 1791.

The nineteenth century was a period of consolidation and growth for Unitarianism. The British movement successfully attracted disaffected Anglicans, Presbyterians and Baptists. Ex-Anglican priests, in turn, influenced the Unitarian liturgy. Other groups such as the Free Christians, General Baptists and Christian Brethren also joined with the Unitarians to form a General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Unitarians were now accepted at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and became more involved in politics and civic life, where they were keen to promote better standards of education and health care in society.

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73 Unitarianism was not legalized in Britain until 1813 with the passing of the Trinity Act.

74 Uglow (2002) explains how dissenters including Watt, Boulton, Wedgwood, Darwin and Priestley formed a club to meet on the Sunday nearest the full moon for philosophical and scientific discussion.
The Parliament of 1832, as pointed out by Hague (1986:71) included six Unitarians and wealthy Unitarians were increasingly being accepted as part of the British Establishment. With their new-found status in society, Unitarians turned their attention to worshipping in more elaborate surroundings. According to Hague, it was the influence of Martineau, whose ideas were shaped by the romantic German style, which led to the building of neo-gothic style Unitarian churches in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Stained glass windows designed by artisans, he added (1986:55), became a “mark of success” for these Unitarian congregations.

The first non-conformist chapel in this style was the Upper Brook Street Chapel in Manchester opened by James Martineau in 1839. This meant that British Unitarianism during the nineteenth century had two major theological influences: the rationalism favoured by Priestley and the more liberal Christianity based on individual conscience promoted by Martineau (Hague 1986: 74).

Unitarianism developed quite differently in North America. In the early seventeenth century Puritans migrated to the West Indies and Massachusetts Bay, establishing settlements which they hoped would develop into a reformed Christian society. Their intention was to reform the Church of England by instituting a simplified church structure which was controlled by the congregation itself (Henretta et al. 1997:71). This structure, according to Baltrell (1982:363), appealed to some of the leading families in Boston who were in the forefront of this reform movement.

North American Unitarianism evolved from within the milieu of these New England Congregational Churches, attracting those who were seeking a rational, liberal form of Christianity. Unitarians offered an alternative view to the prevailing Calvinist theology and the increased religious enthusiasm following the first of the “Great Awakenings”; a movement which began in the eighteenth century. By the time Priestley had arrived in America, therefore, many New England Congregational Churches, including the influential King’s Chapel in Boston, had revised their liturgies to accommodate Unitarian beliefs (Scholefield 1954:34-5).

James Martineau was a Unitarian minister and an influential religious philosopher and educator.
Quakerism, on the other hand, did not evolve from existing North American Protestant congregations but was introduced to the colonies by English Quaker settlers and missionaries.

The nineteenth century heralded a period of growth and establishment for North American Unitarians and the movement spread from its stronghold in New England to many other areas throughout the United States. It attracted prominent politicians, educators and theologians, and as a result, became known as a religion of the educated and the elite. Tocqueville, for example, reportedly met with the most prominent Unitarian minister of that era, William Ellery Channing, to discuss aspects of Unitarianism and his personal assessment afterwards was that Unitarians were Christian in name only.76

Channing’s sermons encouraged the use of reason in religious matters. In 1819, he reportedly delivered a sermon on Unitarian Christianity at an ordination and urged his followers to honour their own minds rather than rely on scriptural authority (Scholfield 1954:37). Channing not only encouraged the use of reason in religious matters, according to Wach (1991:444), he also exhorted recently ordained Boston ministers to seek the friendless, the forsaken, the despondent and the lost.

Undoubtedly, one of the most influential Unitarians of the nineteenth century was the American poet, lecturer and essayist, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson followed in Channing’s footsteps but added emotional and aesthetic dimensions to Unitarianism so that sermons became more crafted productions (von Frank 1989:23). Emerson was a leading figure in the Transcendentalist movement and a champion of individualism. His essay Self-Reliance is considered influential in this regard (Lee 1995:382). Emerson was also greatly influenced by his personal experience of Quakerism, believing that self-reliance, individualism and reliance

76 Tocqueville’s views on Unitarianism are apparent in the contents of this letter:

On the confines of Protestantism is a sect which is Christian only in name, the Unitarians. Among the Unitarians, that is to say among those who deny the Trinity and recognize only one God, there are some who see in Jesus Christ only an angel, others a prophet, others, lastly, a philosopher like Socrates. They are pure Deists. They speak of the Bible because they do not wish to shock public opinion, still entirely Christian, too deeply... (They) read verses of Dryden or other English poets on the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. A discourse is made on some point of morality, and it’s done...it converts in the high ranks of society.

(Excerpt from Tocqueville and Beaumont in America by G W Pierson ‘Extracted from letter, Toc. To L., de Kergolay, Yonkers, 29 June 1831. (YT, quoted in part, O.C., V.312-319)’).
on individual conscience were similar focuses of both Quakerism and Unitarianism. This is an observation on Emerson’s ideas which is also made by Baltrell (1982: 453-4). In 1838, Emerson delivered an address to the Harvard Divinity School, which was considered a turning point for Unitarian thought.\textsuperscript{77}

Inevitably, differences of opinion arose within North American Unitarianism as to how the movement’s future should proceed. The American Unitarian Association favoured a more conservative approach and its leading figures encouraged adherence to the rules of good conduct and good taste (Burkholder 1986:8). Andrew Norton, who was an influential Unitarian in Massachusetts, even equated the new school of Unitarians with social upheaval. Norton stated:

\begin{quote}
They announce themselves as prophets and priests of a new future, in which all is to be changed, all old opinions done away, and all present forms of society abolished. But by what process this joyful revolution is to be effected we are not told (Burkholder 1986:2).
\end{quote}

Nevertheless, social issues such as abolitionism, women’s rights and temperance were hotly debated in cities across North America in the first half of the nineteenth century. There were also a number of utopian communities which were developing their own vision of a new society. The Shakers were the most successful group; however, others were also intent on changing society, including social reformer and Unitarian minister, George Ripley, who founded the ill-fated communal living experiment known as “Brook Farm” which was inspired by the philosophy of transcendentalism (Preucel & Pendery 2006:6).

Reformers such as Theodore Parker, who was an abolitionist, built on the insights of Channing and Emerson. His interest in transcendentalism led him to believe that inspiration should not be confined to Christian revelation. This, according to Scholefield (1954:39), added an additional dimension to Unitarian theological thought which led to a range of theologies and notions which further influenced

\textsuperscript{77} An article by C Walsh in the Harvard Gazette (16/2/2012) argues that Emerson’s Address was a “turning point” for Unitarianism – transforming it from a liberal form of Christianity to a form of religious liberalism independent of specific historic traditions. [https://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2012/02/when-religion-turned-inward/] Accessed 31/8/17.
Unitarianism in the nineteenth century and beyond; including atheism, deism, Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism.\(^78\)

The writings and ideas of prominent North American Unitarians were undoubtedly hotly debated among British middle-class Unitarians. In Wach’s view, Unitarians were a small, but nevertheless, important and influential group within cities such as Manchester in the early nineteenth century. Their chapels were, according to Wach (1991:427), not only places of worship for bankers, merchants, and professionals; but also, a milieu for the recruitment of civic leadership.

Wach also claims (1991:444) that nineteenth century Manchester provided an environment in which dissenters enjoyed a degree of respectability and this engendered a growing concern among them to promote their religious values and morality among the poor, and to this end, they established the Manchester Domestic Mission. Undoubtedly, Wach envisions Unitarians as positioned on the margins of the newly industrialized British society; often wealthy, well-educated and accomplished members of the elite, but also adherents of a form of Christianity which was disputed and resented. They were, he says, “at once privileged and precarious” (1991:428).

The longer-term histories of the Quaker and Unitarian movements have been set out to provide context for the sometimes privileged, and often precarious, future faced by Quaker and Unitarian families after immigrating to a new colony in the nineteenth century.

4. The Colony of South Australia

\textit{Bound for South Australia}

\textit{Chorus}

\textit{Heave away, you rolling king}

\textit{Heave away, haul away}

\textit{Heave away, oh hear me sing}

\textit{We’re bound for South Australia}\(^79\)

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\(^78\) This widening of the theological base eventually encouraged the consolidation of the American Unitarian Association and Universalist Church of America in the mid twentieth century and many Unitarians world-wide now identify as Unitarian Universalists.

\(^79\) This is an English sea shanty which became an Australian folk song. It was originally part of a compilation by Laura Smith and published in \textit{The Music of the Waters} in 1888 and was believed to be collected from sailors’ songs in Tyneside, England. It has been recorded by many different artists since [http://boundforsouthaustralia.com.au/historical-background/bound-for-south-australia-the-song.html](http://boundforsouthaustralia.com.au/historical-background/bound-for-south-australia-the-song.html) Accessed 31/8/17.
Havemann argues convincingly that colonization is a key feature of modernity and then goes on to say that settlers were “surplus people transported from Europe and dumped into the colonies” (2005:59). The settlers were, in this view, human waste created by modernity. This perspective of early Australian settler society downplays any utopian aspirations which could also be considered a key feature of modernity. In particular, this view of early Australian settler society appears to be challenged by the notions and events surrounding colonization within the South Australian context.

Ironically, a major architect of the utopian plans for the new colony was an inmate at Newgate prison. During his incarceration, he produced a study of systematic colonization which was printed in 1829 as a “Sketch for a Proposal for Colonizing Australasia” (Foster & Nettelbeck 2012:14). The prisoner concerned was Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a well-educated man from a Quaker family, who had been sentenced to prison for abducting, and eloping with, a fifteen year old girl.

Wakefield contended that the problems which had arisen in the Australian colonies were mainly due to two factors: land had been given too freely to settlers and there had been over reliance on convict labour. Initially, these points were not received enthusiastically, either in England or in the penal colonies. However, Wakefield’s solution to the problems were persuasive. He put forward a plan for a particular kind of non-penal colony that allowed land to be sold at a price which would attract middle-class capitalists, but would be too expensive for the working class to purchase. He proposed that a percentage from the sale of land should be placed in a fund to assist the emigration of working class families who would provide the labour for the middle class capitalists of new colony.80

80 ‘Arrival of the Utopia with Government Immigrants’ Article in South Australian Register, 9 Feb 1864. The article states that the immigrants are “selected with care” and the captain and surgeon bear testimony to “their good conduct and willingness to conform to the rules and regulations” during the voyage. The immigrants were classified in the article as:

- Agricultural labourers 36, brick-makers 3, labourers 45, carpenters 7, butchers 1, domestic servants 19, housemaids 9, general servants 15, confectioners 3, dairymaids 1, smiths 5, bakers 1, grocers 1, ploughmen 11, shopman 1, plasterers 2, coach smith 1, butcher 1, cooper 1, brewer 1, gunsmith 1, gardeners 3, masons 3, sawyers 1, sailors 5, wheelwright 1, shoemakers 3, porter 1, carver 1, painter 1, mining engineer 1, machinist 1, female farm servants 3, laundress 1, schoolmistress 1, nurserymaids 3, cooks 2, matron 1. “National selection” was described as English 198, Irish 18, and Scotch 108. [http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/39115956] Accessed 31/8/17.
Foster and Nettelbeck state (2012:14) that it was fortuitous that Wakefield’s plan coincided with the news of further European exploration of the Murray, which was the subject of much interest in England. This interest meant that Wakefield’s ideas were given due consideration and this led to the dissemination of promotional pamphlets on the proposed new colony of South Australia. Robert Gouger assisted Wakefield in the organisation of those people who were interested in the scheme, and following the promotion of the colony, *The South Australian Colonisation Act* was passed by the British parliament which provided for the foundation of the colony.\(^81\)

The Proclamation of South Australia took place two years later in 1836 when the first colonial settlers arrived.\(^82\) Within a few years of the establishment of the colony, it became apparent that the leading colonists preferred to live in the growing township of Adelaide, rather than outlying areas. This allowed them to be involved with its early politics and to enjoy membership of its exclusive clubs. They lived in Adelaide and it was from there that they also ran commercial enterprises which included grain growing, farming and grazing pursuits. Consequently, it was soon reported that “no capital city dominated its colony as Adelaide did South Australia” (Prest et al. 2001:257-8).

\(^81\) The Act described the land as “waste and unoccupied”. No mention was made of its indigenous inhabitants. The Kaurna people are the traditional owners of the Adelaide plains. Their land extends north to Crystal Brook and south to Cape Jervis and is bounded by the Mt Lofty Ranges. Others who inhabited South Australia prior to European colonization include the Adnyamathanha, Arabana, Dieri, Narungga, Ngarrindjeri and Pitjantjatjara peoples. State Library of South Australia Website [http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/Aboriginal_peopleSA/Arabana](http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/Aboriginal_peopleSA/Arabana) Accessed 31/8/17.

\(^82\) Excerpts from the Proclamation of South Australia demonstrate its utopian (see definition Page 46) intent:

*In announcing to the Colonists of His Majesty’s Province of South Australia, the establishment of the Government, I hereby call upon them to conduct themselves on all occasions with order and quietness, duly to respect the laws, and by a course of industry and sobriety, by the practice of sound morality and a strict observance of the Ordinances of Religion, to prove themselves worthy to be the Founders of a great and free Colony.*

*It is also, at this time especially, my duty to apprise the Colonists of my resolution, to take every lawful means for extending the same protection to the Native Population... who are to be considered as much under the Safeguard of the law as the Colonists themselves, and equally entitled to the privileges of British Subjects. I trust therefore, with confidence to the exercise of moderation and forbearance by all Classes, in their intercourse with the Native Inhabitants, and that they will omit no opportunity of assisting me to fulfil His Majesty’s most gracious and benevolent intentions toward them, by promoting their advancement in civilization, and ultimately, under the blessing of Divine Providence, their conversion to the Christian Faith.* (Excerpts from South Australia’s Proclamation signed by the Colonial Secretary in 1836 [http://adelaide.sa.gov.au/subjects/the-proclamation](http://adelaide.sa.gov.au/subjects/the-proclamation))
Adelaide has been described as the most English of the capital cities. Its old mansions were said to be “marvellous colonial extravaganzas exuberant with Adelaide Lace: as over-dressed and over-decorated as the ladies of a wealthy family of the 1880s” (Page 1986:115-116). Adelaide has also been described as the “city of churches”. The first time the description was used is unclear but English novelist, Anthony Trollope, referred to it in 1872, and it was used in a letter to the editor of the *South Australian Register* on 15 March 1867. One explanation for this designation could be that from the earliest days of European settlement, churches seemed to dominate Adelaide’s landscape. The city’s oldest buildings are churches, one of which is the Quaker Meeting House; and this inspired local Quaker, John Whitehead, to publish a book called *Adelaide, city of churches* (1986) which showcased the varied architecture of Adelaide’s churches.

Regardless of the veracity of claims that Adelaide has more churches per capita than other Australian cities, there is no doubt that there is a feeling among its population that Adelaide is different in some way from other parts of Australia. Undoubtedly, one of the major reasons that South Australia was considered a different Australian colony was that convicts were never transported to its shores. Paradoxically, the colony was not opposed to transporting its own. By 1850, over two hundred criminals sentenced by the colony’s courts were transported to neighbouring colonies (Hamilton 2010:10).

The colony’s promoters were keen to develop a particular image in order to attract capital and labour, and to this end, artists were commissioned to illustrate its attractions (Finnimore 1998:6). Surveyor, Colonel William Light, was appointed to plan a well ordered city which was to be surrounded by parklands, arranged not

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83 A Scottish visitor to South Australia in 1845 commented on the colonial character of the settlement:

*It is the very want of colonial character in South Australia that constitutes this peculiar feature of the province, and to our taste, English society, manners, language and habits have been successfully transferred; and most heartily ashamed and sorry should we be if the children of our colonists were ever to degenerate into the variety of animal which has occasionally exhibited itself in our streets in all the vulgarity of rings, red hair and tawdry waistcoats, as the young ’currency’ of the neighbouring colonies* (quoted from Gazette and Register 9-viii-1845 in Pike 1957:496).

only for convenience, but also “beauty and salubrity” (Somerling & McDougall 2006:7). In 1840, when the first road in the colony was built (from Adelaide to Port Adelaide) it was estimated that over one third of the population came to its opening, which indicates the level of interest and pride in the new colony displayed by the city’s settler inhabitants.

The biggest buyer of land was the newly formed South Australian Company headed by George Angas. Along with Robert Gouger, Angas was enthused by the land scheme because he stood to make substantial financial gain. However, the new colony was not just a capitalist experiment; there was an expectation that it would provide civic and religious freedom (Kwan 1987:12). In particular, the colony was assumed to appeal to dissenters.

South Australia was, according to Pike (1967:21), the site for a utopian social experiment in colonization driven by an idea of a virtuous capitalist prosperity, but also, with a concern for particular religious and civic freedoms. To this end, the emigration of German settlers was also supported by a director of the South Australian Company. This small group of rural workers had a large impact on the pattern of early colonial settlement in South Australia as they brought with them their own traditions and style of architecture which they adapted for the new environment. They also began much needed market gardens in the new settlement.

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86 An appeal was made directly to dissenters by George Angas who sought support for the new colony in a letter written in 1836:

We appeal to the Dissenters more particularly because those of their body who may settle in this new colony will have the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty whatever may be their peculiar opinions, since no one sect or denomination will be put in possession of any exclusive advantage; all classes of Christians being placed in an equality. It therefore follows of course that the more numerous and intelligent the body of Christians are who shall emigrate to South Australia, and who understand the true nature of civil and religious liberty the greater will be the security, for the perpetuation of those...blessings which are now guaranteed to them by the act of Parliament on which the Colony is founded... (G. F. Angas, letter to Thomas Dick, or the editor of a journal or paper, probably mid-1836, from Angas family papers, SSLM,PRG 174/1/1518/19. Quoted in Kwan 1987:12-13).

87 These German immigrants were “Old Lutherans” who had been suffering persecution in their homeland (Young 1985:43). South Australian towns such as Lobethal (also known as “Praise Valley”) were settled by Prussian Old Lutherans the first of whom arrived in Port Adelaide in 1838. Two pastors: Fritzsche and Kavel were instrumental in securing emigration from Germany for themselves and their congregations. Kavel had met George Fife Angas in London who offered financial assistance for Kavel’s congregation to immigrate to South Australia. Pastor Fritzsche’s congregation could not raise the funds for immigration and were assisted with loans from British Quakers who had heard of their plight. http://www.lobethal.sa.au/history/european-history. Accessed 31/8/17.
These immigrants thrived in the South Australian environment and by the beginning of the twentieth century comprised about ten per cent of its population (Young 1985:43-44). However, most of the colonists who arrived in South Australia were from England, with only 30% (10% each) coming from Germany, Scotland and Ireland. This mix of immigrants is quite different from that of other Australian states. In New South Wales, for example, there was nearly double the number of Irish settlers.

By 1841, the population of South Australia was estimated to be more than fifteen thousand people but prosperity proved elusive for many settlers. There was concern because public expenditure greatly exceeded public revenue. As a result, public expenditure was cut and unemployment rose. As pointed out by Finnimore (1998:13), economic depression hit the nascent colony hard; and accordingly, the assisted migration scheme was suspended. The population of the city of Adelaide dropped substantially during this recession.

Fortuitously, the discovery of copper in the mid-north, as well as gold, silver and minerals in other parts of the new colony, assisted financial recovery. Immigration numbers increased substantially, including some Irish orphans who, as victims of the famine, were given assisted passages to fill the demand for servants (Somerling & McDougall 2006:10). However, the discovery of gold in Victoria in the mid-nineteenth century, and subsequent discoveries throughout Australia, adversely affected the new colony. Many South Australian settlers went to Victoria to find their fortune. According to Pike (1967:444), except for women and children, Adelaide was “deserted” during the gold rushes. As a consequence, within a few years Victoria’s population had grown to four times that of South Australia.

However, Protestant dissenters were attracted not only by the promise of prosperity, but also, by the prospect of civic and religious freedom. In 1825, British dissenters still could not legally marry in their own chapels. Quakers were exempted from these requirements, but other dissenters were not. Burials of dissenters still had to be done according to rites of the Church of England Book of Common Prayer; and records of baptisms, burials and marriages kept at a dissenting chapel were inadmissible as evidence in courts of law.

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As Pike states (1967:21-27) British dissenters still did not have religious equality. Those who immigrated were, therefore, keen to ensure that the new colony would deliver religious freedom; and accordingly, the colony became the first in the British Empire to reject the institution of a national church, which meant that the Church of England did not enjoy special status within South Australia (Hamilton 2010:8).

Hamilton’s account of early colonial South Australia suggests that the new colony was the most modern of the Australian colonies and one of the earliest modern democracies. His use of the term “modern” here refers to the level of citizen participation in government. In 1840, a polling booth was erected to elect Adelaide’s first councillors and mayor. This was, Hamilton maintains (2010:1), the first democratic election held in Australia. By 1856, the early colonists had the secret ballot, adult male franchise and religious freedom; and a year later, self-government by an elected parliament. Hamilton points out (2010: viii, 2) that no other significant mid nineteenth century British colony could offer all these things to its citizens.

There was also a suggestion that the new colony exuded an air of moral superiority. This is demonstrated in the following correspondence from a Congregational minister, who tendered a plan for religious instruction on “Congregational principles”, and recommended the new colony as a suitable place for settlement:

> Incomparably superior in physical features to the old convict colonies of the great Australasia, South Australia will also, I think, maintain a superiority morally, socially and religiously, being the chosen home of many of the good and free upon this earth... \(^{89}\)

South Australia did not have an upper level of naval and military officers and most of its leading colonists were used to an urban environment. They were, according to Pike (1967:499-502), “consciously striving to be English provincials”, and to this end, they built large villas and planted European trees. In Pike’s opinion, this meant that South Australia’s leading colonists relied to some extent on the

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established colonies to supply personnel to assist them in ways to deal with the harsh environment.

In reality, South Australia could not isolate itself from other Australian colonies. Although convicts were never transported directly to South Australia, it is very likely that South Australia was used as a safe haven for escapees from the penal settlements in the eastern states, and some may have risen to hold prominent positions in the new settlement, whilst hiding evidence of their convict past. In addition, emancipated convicts may have travelled to South Australia. Regardless of whether these events occurred to any extent, after transportation was ended, South Australia’s colonists were no longer able to boast about being the only non-penal colony. Pike maintains that despite this, the colony still retained its uniqueness with many in the colony seeing their new home as an outlying English province which had its own national song and commemoration day. Its parochialism, according to Pike (1967:495), was “almost exclusive.”

In 1899, a contingent of one hundred and twenty five volunteers was sent to the Boer War. A parade was held in the heart of the city which was witnessed by thousands of citizens. It was a dramatic display of South Australian patriotism to the British Empire (Somerling & Vines 2006:118).

Despite loyalty to Britain, South Australians were at the forefront in preparations for federation and the drafting of Australia’s Constitution. Although the primary draftsman of the 1891 Constitution was Queenslander, Sir Samuel Griffith, he was highly influenced by the drafts provided by fellow members of the drafting committee at the 1891 Convention, including former South Australian Attorney-General, Charles Cameron Kingston (Bannon 2013:15-20).

By 1910, South Australia’s population had risen to more than a third of a million people, the vast majority of which (75%) were born in South Australia. Only 5% had been born in the former penal colonies. Pike states (1967:496) that this suggests that differences between South Australia and the other states persisted to some extent until the twentieth century. This sense of difference was due mainly to its policy against transportation of convicts, planned systematic colonization, and its establishment upon liberal ideals of democracy and religious freedom.
As a result of its planned colonization process, the colony of South Australia’s immigrant population had a distinctive religious make up. Hilliard (2005:38-3) believes that for the first one hundred and twenty years after the colony’s foundation, it retained that distinctiveness. He explains that in the census of 1901, over fifty per cent of South Australians described themselves as Protestant (not Anglican), and this can be compared to thirty nine per cent in Victoria and only twenty five per cent in New South Wales. Responders identifying as Methodist in South Australia were higher than the eastern states, but those identifying as Anglican or Roman Catholic were much lower.

According to Bouma (2006:39), Australia’s orientation towards religion was established in the early years of its colonization (between 1788 and 1840) because its convicts and free settlers during that period were religiously inarticulate. By making this statement, he indicates that both convicts and free settlers were not adherents of organized religion prior to arrival in Australia, and remained so, following transportation. Although his research is undoubtedly correct in its findings, there were exceptions.

One notable exception, Thomas Fyshe Palmer, a Unitarian minister and political reformer, was convicted on a charge of seditious practices and sentenced to seven years’ transportation to the colony of New South Wales in 1793. He was allowed a certain degree of freedom in the colony and engaged in several enterprises, but his views on politics and religion continued to raise suspicion with authorities until he left the penal colony at the end of his sentence.90

Another exception was the Clark family, who were free settlers in early Hobart. Andrew Inglis Clark was a barrister and judge, specializing in constitutional law. He was an influential citizen of Hobart, born in the era of convict transportation to Tasmania, who later became part of the committee charged with drafting the Australian Constitution. His drafting is said to have reflected his strong Unitarian and republican views. Clark’s parents immigrated to Hobart as free settlers in 1832

and his mother was a founding member of the Tasmanian Baptist Church. The Clark family could not be described as religiously inarticulate.

More particularly, the promoters of the planned settlement of South Australia openly courted dissenters, many of whom would be considered religiously articulate. Among those dissenters were several Unitarian and Quaker families who arrived in the early years of European settlement.

5. Unitarian Settlers

5.1 The Adelaide community

A glass window situated at the back of the nave of the current Unitarian Church commemorates two English Unitarian families who immigrated to the colony of South Australia in 1851 aboard the “Anglia” in order to escape discrimination against dissenters. Just three years later, according to McCallum et al. (1994:1), there were enough interested persons to hold a public meeting in which a resolution was passed to form a congregation and to raise a subscription to pay a salary to a minister for three years.

The first minister of the Adelaide Church was the Reverend Crawford Woods, who was sent out by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association at the request of Adelaide Unitarians. He arrived in 1855 and his services of worship were held in the homes of the members of his congregation. The number of people attending grew too large for this to continue and his first public service was held at an Adelaide auction house with several hundred people present. As pointed out by McCallum et al. (1994:1), buoyed by this level of interest, a decision was made by the congregation to build a church in the heart of the city.

Adelaide’s first Unitarian Church was built in the following year. It was a bluestone church with an octagonal tower, said to be adorned with stucco trim and ornamentation. The style of its architecture followed that which was common in Britain in the nineteenth century, i.e., the Gothic revival style of architecture during

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93 [http://www.salife.com.au] and see Figure 1 Appendix B. Accessed 30/9/16.
the period 1840 to 1915. This style, according to Hague (1986:11), reflected the practices and notions of the British Unitarian Church at that time.

The Reverend Crawford Woods was minister at the church until 1889. His preaching style, according to Scott (1980:34), appealed to liberal minded, educated and well to do people; as a result, the Unitarian community had a visible presence in Adelaide. The congregation, therefore, included prominent leaders in business, education, and politics. In addition, as pointed out by Scott, by the end of that century, the church had produced seven members of parliament.

The Unitarian Church of South Australia’s most famous congregant though was Catherine Helen Spence, who became a member in 1856. Spence is well-known nationally as the first woman political candidate in Australia, and as an active campaigner for electoral reform and the rights of women and children. According to McCallum et al. (1994:7-8), she was also known among the Adelaide Unitarian community for the quality of her addresses from the pulpit. The current Unitarian Meeting House has a room dedicated to her memory as the Unitarian community is proud of her contribution to Australian society.  

*Figure 1.1 Catherine Helen Spence*

![Image of Catherine Helen Spence displayed on Australian five dollar note.](http://www.adelaideunitarians.org.au/)

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94 Catherine Helen Spence became known as “The Grand Old Woman of Australia”, and public memorials to her include a statue in Adelaide’s central business district, and the five-dollar note issued in 2000 to commemorate her life and work (Prest et al. 2001:510).

In the nineteenth century, members of the Unitarian community actively worked for reforms which were seen as achieving betterment of the individual and society. The South Australian Institute, and a Mechanics’ Institute for the educational and moral enlightenment of workers, were established by members. In addition, Caroline Emily Clark and Catherine Helen Spence were instrumental in the establishment of the Boarding Out Society, which organized foster families for neglected children to prevent institutionalization (Prest et al. 2001:500). Also, as stated by Scott (1980:69), one of the Church’s congregants, William Everard, was appointed Minister for Education in the South Australian government in 1876.

The city’s Unitarian Church flourished in the nineteenth century and in 1901 a new organ was purchased, and this, along with the stained glass windows and architecture of the building, symbolized the success of the congregation. Regardless of this early success, in the early twentieth century, the church’s membership started to decline. This decline was probably because other Protestant denominations were also becoming more liberal in their views, and so there was more choice available for liberal-minded Christians. Nevertheless, the Adelaide church was still well attended up until the period of the Second World War and there appeared to be a number of young attendees. One member of the congregation remembered the Wakefield Street Church when it was decorated for a Sunday school anniversary in the early 1930s:

It was very pleasant but fairly austere, I think. I can remember when it had gas lighting so that there were brass posts along the pews. There were two aisles and it was quite a sight at Sunday school anniversary. They went completely mad with the flowers which had to be white. The pulpit was decked out in Arum Lilies and there was bridal creeper or asparagus fern entwined up these vast pillars and there were window boxes which were full of flowers....

96 An extract from the South Australian newspaper The Register (6th August 1901) describes the newly purchased church organ:-

The new organ, which with its richly illuminated pipe front forms a handsome addition to the decoration and furniture of the church, is a moderately large instrument of splendid resources. Though containing only 16 speaking stops which are distributed over two manuals and pedal, it affords a large variety of striking solo effects, and its full power is rich and pervading without any suspicion of screeching or hoarseness. (Extract from The Register (6/8/1901), quoted on the Unitarian Church of SA Inc.’s. Website: http://users.pucknowl.com.au/~unitariansa/)

97 Interview notes.
The Wakefield Street church was used until 1971 when it was sold because of the rising costs of maintenance. The proceeds from the sale were used to purchase land in the suburb of Norwood in order to build a more modern meeting house/church with a garden courtyard and adjoining manse. The organ and five stained glass memorial windows were transferred from the original church to the new church.98

The Unitarian community’s history has been shaped by the members of the congregation, but most importantly, by its ministers, who have been very influential in the development of the church. The congregational attendance records rise and fall according to how the members respond to the personality of successive ministers, the style and content of their addresses, and the ideas they have about the future direction the church should embrace. Two plaques in the current church are in remembrance of its two longest serving ministers: the Reverend J Crawford Woods and the Reverend George Hale. One congregant explains the fondness felt for prior ministers of the church:

I find it good to be able to look out of the large western window of the church to see on the wall the brass plate to the Reverend George Hale who married my parents so many years ago.99

Together, Woods and Hale gave fifty eight years’ service to the church. Both men were known for the quality of their addresses, providing charming oratory or giving sermons that were considered thoughtful and well-presented. Moreover, the length of their service to the church brought stability to the Unitarian community. In addition, Woods commenced a Mutual Improvement Society at the church. This was an in-reach activity partly for social purposes but also to sharpen the minds of members of the congregation. Hale also introduced a bible class, and an optimists’ group, as well as drama classes and a reading club. Furthermore, his activities as an adult education lecturer and appearances on radio programmes attracted people to the church, and during his time as minister, according to McCallum et al. (1994:12-15), attendances rose substantially.

There have been many special interest groups attached to the church including the Unitarian Christian group, Women’s Friday Night group, circle meals held in members’ homes and the Social Justice Concerns group. The Adelaide Unitarian

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99 Interview Notes.
Women’s League is a particularly important group because of its longevity and the completeness of its records, which provide insight into some of the activities and concerns of the church, and its membership, during the twentieth century.

The Women’s League was formed in Adelaide in 1912 after the British League of Unitarian and other Liberal Christian Women suggested that the formation of branches around the world would be a good way to link Unitarian churches in different countries. Its original aims were social service and facilitating a closer cooperation and friendship between liberal Christian women in South Australia. Its members, according to Kowalick (2007:1-8) were fiercely Unitarian in their theological views. In 1964, the group withdrew its membership from the Women’s United Church Association, and two years later, from the Women’s World Day of Prayer Committee, refusing to acknowledge Jesus Christ as “God and Saviour.”

The members of the League were staunchly patriotic. During the First World War, they raised funds, made garments and sent food parcels and blankets to Britain and Europe. Kowalick also maintains (2007:1-8) that during the Second World War, as a show of support for Britain and the royal family, each meeting of the Women’s League was begun with the National Anthem and parcels were sent overseas for the war effort.

Kowalick (2007:1-8) also reports on the other activities of the League. In 1920, for example, in an attempt to extend the influence of Liberal Christian Churches, members of the League printed an article called “A Commonsense View of the Bible” in twelve Australian newspapers. A year later, the League became affiliated with the Travellers Aid Society with the aim of keeping in touch with Unitarians travelling to Adelaide from other States and from overseas. This role expanded to greeting non-Unitarian travellers and providing them with advice and assistance. Also, for many years, donations were sent to the Kharang Rural Centre in the Khasi Hills in India—a project initiated by British Unitarian, the Reverend Margaret Barr, and supported by various branches of the Unitarian Women’s League.

From the middle of the twentieth century though, attendance at the League’s meetings decreased as the congregation reduced in size, married women in the congregation returned to the workforce, and due to changing attitudes within the
membership itself. During the fieldwork period, the decision was made to disband the group and it has recently been replaced by a seniors group.

5.2 Adelaide Hills Unitarians

In the first few years after the establishment of the colony, two Unitarian families were granted land in the Adelaide hills on two adjoining properties, and together they founded a small Unitarian community. According to Duffield et al. (1989:17-20), these settlers were quite isolated. The nearest school was four miles away and this was considered too far for young children to travel and so the families erected a school building on their land, which they called “Shady Grove”. The school building was completed in 1858. When the building was no longer needed as a school, it was opened for worship by the Reverend Crawford Woods; and reportedly, became one of the few places in the colony to have a chimney place and fire for the comfort of worshippers. It provided a perfect venue to hold Sunday services for the two families as it was too far to travel to attend the newly established Unitarian church in Adelaide.

Duffield et al. (1989:29-30) claim that the two families were intent on building an active spiritual community at Shady Grove. The property was referred to as “Tadmor in the Wilderness” by early settlers who saw its potential as an oasis of Unitarian ideas. These ideas, it was hoped, would flourish in that hills community and then spread to other parts of South Australia and beyond. To this end, Francis Duffield published and circulated his sermons in an effort to attract more attendees, but it was difficult as local settlement was too sparse (McCallum et al. 1994:3). Nevertheless, Francis Duffield conducted services for seventeen years, followed by the Reverend F C Smith100 who conducted services for at least another twenty five years.

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100 A self-published historical account of the Smith family and its connections to the Shady Grove Unitarian Church includes a photo (taken at the beginning of the twentieth century) of the chapel and its congregation of about twenty people. The book explains that the name “Shady Grove” has become part of the Smith family history because of the involvement of members of the family with the chapel and the links with the other founding families: the Monks and the Duffields (Mundy & Soroka 1986). Members of these founding families are buried in the bushland cemetery near the chapel.
The surviving members of the families continued to form a large part of the Shady Grove congregation over the years, although their numbers decreased as younger family members left the district. The chapel is now classified by the National Trust as a building of historical interest and is cared for by the Adelaide Unitarian Church.

5. 3 Sesquicentenary Celebrations for Shady Grove

In 2008, South Australian Unitarians celebrated the one hundred and fifty year anniversary of the founding of Shady Grove. The celebrations began at a hall in a nearby country town. Descendants and friends of the founding families as well as many members of the Shady Grove and Adelaide congregations were present for the celebrations.

After a generous morning tea, everyone was ushered into the old-fashioned country hall. There was a clock on one wall which had been stopped at 11am and there was a sign across it saying “Lest We Forget”. A chalk written notice on one side of the stage said “Next Dance 18th October” and small chandeliers hung from the ceiling. At the back of the hall was a small alcove where souvenir mugs with Tadmor in the Wilderness printed on them were being sold, and orders for souvenir bottles of wine were being taken. The hall was totally full with about two hundred people present.

A member of the church, who is a direct descendant of one of the founders of Shady Grove Church, was the master of ceremonies. Proceedings started with a re-enactment of the first day at school in the nineteenth century Monks School House. The minister then gave a talk to those gathered on the history of Unitarian thought, and explained how Unitarian ideals were applicable universally. The history of Shady Grove from its earliest times as a schoolhouse, and its subsequent use as a chapel, was retold. Members of the Adelaide congregation recollected family trips to Shady Grove Chapel in their youth. It was considered a “day in the bush” and they remembered, among other things, the wild flowers around the church and the sumptuous afternoon teas provided. Others remembered staying overnight in the hostel, hikes in the bush, and ghost stories being told in the cemetery at night.

The South Australian Unitarian community has much fondness for Shady Grove. A descendant of one of the pioneer families said that it was a sacred place. The long drive leading to the grounds, it was said, led to that sacred place and divided
it from the secular world. It was an opening to the divine and within the boundary of that sacred space was the cemetery, the hostel and the chapel.101

After the reminiscences, a commemorative plaque was unveiled to mark the occasion and then a service was held in the historic chapel, attended by about one hundred people. During the service, a nineteenth century hymn, “Where Ancient Forests Round Us Spread” added to the sense of occasion. In her address, the minister said that Shady Grove could be considered the sacred trinity for South Australian Unitarians. This was an allusion to the anti-Trinitarian stance of Unitarians. The sacred trinity here was: the chapel, the cemetery, and the hostel.

The Unitarian Church in South Australia has inevitably been shaped historically by its imposing presence in the earliest days of the colony and the utopian views of its adherents which fitted in well with the modernist project of the colony. It has also been shaped by its ministers, the influence of its more well-known congregants, and the family connections within its membership. Another factor in its history has been the congenial relationship which exists between the two congregations.

For several years, a “Unitarian Pilgrimage” was held which consisted of a thirty kilometre walking route from Shady Grove to the Unitarian Meeting House in Adelaide to acknowledge the difficulties the settler families faced in travelling from the hills to the city. This walk has now been abandoned due to risk of injury of participants, and the considerable effort needed to organize such an event; however, it does demonstrate the closeness of the relationship between the two congregations, both historically and currently.

6. Quaker Settlers

Similarly to the Unitarian community, some South Australian Quakers have family connections with the movement which stretches over many generations. Even among those members who have no family history of Quakerism, there is familiarity with the history of Quaker thought as it is encapsulated within *Quaker Faith & Practice*. However, the first Quaker to set foot on Australian soil was not a South Australian settler. It was Sydney Parkinson, an artist assisting botanist Joseph Banks, who accompanied James Cook in 1770. His work, and the concern

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101 Fieldwork notes.
of Elizabeth Fry for women prisoners during their transportation to the colonies,\textsuperscript{102} meant that English Quakers were well aware of Australian conditions. In addition, English Quaker missionaries, Backhouse and Walker, visited the Australian colonies between 1832 and 1838 to provide support to Friends who had settled in the colonies and to report to English Quakers on the treatment of Aborigines and convicts (Oats 1985:195).

Quakers arrived in South Australia not long after its foundation. Many were attracted by the prospect of a colony which offered the granting of land and the promise of prosperity, in addition to the potential for more religious freedom. Some even hoped that the new colony might provide the environment for a Quaker stronghold which would develop into a Pennsylvania of the South. According to Oats (1985:214), most were already committed Quakers who immigrated to the new colony with the blessing of their English Meetings.

6.1 Adelaide and Hills Community

The first Quaker meeting for worship in South Australia was held in 1837 at the home of the Hack family\textsuperscript{103} who were the first Quaker settlers in Adelaide (Prest et al. 2001:454). The family also owned a large farming estate in the Adelaide hills which was considered by some to be the showplace of the colony. Hack proudly wrote to his relatives in England about his estate:

\begin{quote}
...the showplace of the colony [with fruit trees and vines] of which there are 1200 planted...and 5000 ready to plant out this winter...As no one else has done gardening we shall command the market for two years to come and in consequence I shall recover my outlay...which has been very large.
\end{quote}

Letter from John Hack to his mother Maria Hack at Southampton, 30 April 1842, SSL: M, PRG 456, 1/12 reproduced in Finnmore (1998:11).

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{102} See Appendix A for details of Elizabeth Fry and the Rajah Quilt.

\textsuperscript{103} Hack family correspondence demonstrates their middle-class background:

\begin{quote}
We have been here three months and have all English comforts about us... Our little parlour is the pride of the colony. It looks so neat and cheerful now that the pictures are up and the ornaments on the chimney piece, and indeed, I believe it is the only chimney piece in the colony; it is a very handsome one of cedar. We have today a white tablecloth for the first time and the luxury of silver spoons is great indeed. It is delightful to have teacups and glass tumblers to drink out of once more (JB Hack 9-iii-1837 (H Watson: op.cit. p.13) quoted in Pike (1967:497)).
\end{quote}
Hack was soon appointed chairman of the Chamber of Commerce. Prior to emigrating from England, he had been the owner of leather works and his family was involved in mercantile and banking interests. According to Finnimore (1998:12), Hack was typical of many of the colony’s early settlers who aspired to becoming “landed gentry.” Importantly, Hack was one of the leaders of the new Quaker community and played a role in persuading other English Quakers to emigrate, and even provided assistance on their settlement.

As Oats states (1985:195), although a few Quaker settlers had farming backgrounds, there was also substantial reliance on the influential Hack family. Some settlers, such as the large May family, had no prior experience of rural life as this description indicates:

(They were a) Quaker family of the olden time, and had brought with them from the old country the language, manners and principles and to some extent the dress of the early Friends, and here they began their colonial life, farming, gardening and dairying, all putting their shoulders to the wheel, even the little girls helping. And what a life it was. The work was all new to them, for they were town, not country people.

**Figure 1.2 May Family Panel for the Quaker Tapestry Project**


English Quakers offered assistance to the newly arrived Quakers, and to this end, shipped a prefabricated building to provide a meeting house for the new colony. According to Prest et al. (2001:237), the building materials arrived in 69 packages aboard a sailing ship from England.

The building was originally intended to be erected in the Adelaide hills where several Quaker families had settled; however, the transportation difficulties proved to be insurmountable. In Stevenson’s opinion (1987:3-5), this caused anxiety among the settlers and temporarily affected relations with their English supporters. Eventually, it was decided to erect the building on urban land owned by Hack which had earlier been set aside as a Quaker burial ground. However, as Stevenson observes (1987:10), the Adelaide hills area remained an important centre for early Quaker settlers and another meeting house was built a few years later in Mt Barker106 with further financial assistance from English Quakers.

Unfortunately, in 1841, the young colony suffered a serious financial crisis that caused severe cash shortages and property values to crash. The Quaker community was hit hard in this crisis because Hack was forced to sell his properties in an effort to pay creditors.107 When he was made bankrupt in 1845, the South Australian Quaker community was devastated and several members were ruined because of their financial entanglement with Hack. Some returned to England, but as Prest et al. (2001:454) state, most stayed and tried to repair the damage done to their reputations. Quakers historically have guarded their reputation for honesty and fair business dealings, so this crisis severely tested the cohesion and survival of the small community.

There were other difficulties in addition to the financial crisis, including apparent breaches of Quaker procedure and discipline. Members of Hobart Quaker Meeting were sent to report on what was happening in South Australia following concerns

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106 See Fig 1.2 Page 78.
107 An elderly Unitarian interviewee, whose Unitarian forebears arrived in the early days of the colony, was keen to recall an entry that she had found in her great grandfather’s papers mentioning Hack’s financial situation:

_He mentioned that Barton Hack went bankrupt and all his stuff had to be sold but some things didn’t come into the auction which my great grandfather commented on rather wryly, “Not the behaviour of Quakers!” The Quaker emphasis on absolute honesty is less emphasized in Unitarianism. That was always what I was brought up to admire in Quakers._

(Extracted from Interview Notes October 2008).
that some Quakers in more isolated areas were attending other churches because they were too far away from any established meetings for worship. These members subsequently suffered admonishment for neglecting their responsibilities to the South Australian Quaker community (Oats 1985:21-29, Stevenson 1987:14, 21). In addition, younger members were often unable to find suitable marriage partners within the small Quaker population. As Oats (1985:222-223) states, this meant that some young members “married out”; and consequently, were disowned by the Meeting.108 Concerns about all these matters, as well as falling numbers, led to the focus of the Quaker community eventually moving from the hills to Adelaide itself.

By the end of the nineteenth century, an evangelical turn in religious activities started to attract more young families to Protestant churches. This also affected the Quaker community to a limited extent, and numbers rose sufficiently for a Sunday School to be established. As Stevenson (1987: 14, 17) points out, the group’s focus was now located in the city and this enabled its members to reach out more to the wider community. As a result, Quakers also became involved with local mission work activities, temperance and other social concerns.

Although the focus was located in Adelaide, some Quakers still lived in the hills. One member, who was interested in preserving native flora and fauna, built up a large collection of plants on his land and then sub-divided adjoining land, which he advertised as “Eden in the Hills.” The Adelaide suburb of Eden Hills, as it was later called, was thus Quaker founded. A meeting house was erected nearby which was attended by local Quakers until it was irreparably damaged in an earthquake in 1953. It was set in grounds covered by native plants, and according to South Australian Quaker historian, Charles Stevenson, had been envisaged as a “place of vision of a great people to be gathered” (1987:43-44).109

108 This was still common practice at that time.

109 One member remembered attending this meeting house in her childhood:

My first memory of coming to Meeting was at the Meeting House at Eden Hills… my elder sister and I used to count the ants that were walking across the floor. It was a lovely meeting house because the windows opened wide and butterflies flew in through the window and you looked out over the top of gum trees and you could see right down to the sea…. (Interview notes November 2009).
Although this prediction of a Quaker utopia did not eventuate, by the beginning of the twentieth century, South Australian Quakers were feeling much more settled. The isolation they had felt earlier began to lessen and the bonds between members in different parts of Australia were strengthening. According to Stevenson (1987:19), two visiting Quakers from Britain were instrumental in forming Young Friends’ Camps which strengthened networks between young members and re-invigorated Australian Quakerism. A prominent South Australian Quaker at that time stated:

*Now we Friends have the opportunity of our life time. It is given to us, now to determine what the future of Quakerism in Australia will be* (Stevenson 1987:27).

In Stevenson’s view (1987:27), the future of Australian Quakerism was closely involved with its continuing commitment to peace and anti-violence. In the twentieth century, Australian Quakers were very active in social movements advocating non-violence, peace, anti-war, anti-conscription, the abolition of capital punishment and draft resistance. In the 1970s, Lynn Arnold, a committed young South Australian Quaker, led the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign. This was a highly controversial campaign involving three demonstrations; one of which led to dramatic scenes as demonstrators and police clashed in the heart of the city of Adelaide (McDougall & Vines 2006:113).  

The Vietnam war years were important for South Australian Quakers. The stance taken by Quakers attracted many young people so there was an increased attendance at meetings for worship which caused difficulties for the small community. The problems associated with this, as well as other disagreements among members, led to a decision to start a second Quaker worshipping group, which became known as Eastern Suburbs Local Meeting. Stevenson claims (1987:76) that this was a controversial decision at the time, and a major

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Arnold subsequently became Premier of South Australia in 1992-3. Whilst serving as Premier, Arnold officiated at the launch of the first Collins class submarine built at Port Adelaide. The submarine project caused disquiet among South Australian Friends, and this caused a rift in his relationship with the Quaker community for many years. This rift has since healed and Arnold is now an Anglican priest.
development for South Australian Quakers. Until recently, there was still some disquiet over this decision.

6.2 Eastern Suburbs Meeting 40th year celebration and reminiscences

When the Eastern Suburbs Meeting had its 40th year celebration in 2008, about fifty people attended and five of the thirteen original attendees were present for the celebration. A meeting for worship was held and this was followed by shared lunch and talks by past and present members of the meeting, with much reminiscing about the previous forty years. This celebration was quite different from the Unitarian Shady Grove Sesquicentenary celebration, which was an event for the whole Unitarian community in South Australia, and for the descendants of the pioneer Unitarian families who arrived in the early years of the colony. It was an opportunity also to showcase the Unitarian heritage and its ideals. The Quaker celebration, on the other hand, was held for the people who attended this meeting for worship, both in the past and currently, and did not encompass a wider audience.

Perhaps with their interest in history sparked by this event, individual Quakers on other occasions recalled the community’s history and achievements. At one social gathering, a member gave a talk about the previous fifty years of South Australian Quaker history from his own recollections. He titled his talk: “The more things change the more it is the same.” He said that the past fifty years had contained many ordinary events and challenges but there were constraints because there were insufficient members with the time and energy to devote to the group. This led him to note that Quakerism is not an easy option. Some of the events that had, in his opinion, shaped the South Australian Quaker community over that fifty year period, included the opening of the Quaker shop and the establishment of regional worshipping groups.

At another social gathering, one member retold how in the post Second World War period, her family had welcomed Japanese sailors arriving into South Australian ports. These sailors were scorned by most Australians but they received a warm welcome by this family who boarded the ships, with the approval of the Japanese captains, in order to offer the crew friendship and hospitality. 111

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111 Extracted from fieldwork notes.
Quakers often hold opinions which are at variance with those commonly held in Australian society, particularly on matters related to the military, and would have been highly concerned when a government poster was circulated encouraging South Australians to enlist.

**FIGURE 1.3 WW1 GOVERNMENT POSTER**


7. **Responses to World War One, Military Training and Conscription**

The response of Australian Quakers to the nation’s involvement in the First World War and related military matters made them highly visible. Their stance can be demonstrated by the pivotal role they played in the campaign against the introduction of compulsory military training for boys aged between 14 and 17. This provision was made under the 1909 Defence Act which was due to come into effect in 1911.

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Quaker opposition to this legislation was driven by their belief that their actions were for the betterment of society. According to Stevenson (1987:28-35), the Anti-Military Service League (which became the Australian Freedom League) was formed during a public meeting held in the North Adelaide Quaker Meeting House and during the ensuing campaign, local Quakers distributed leaflets, made placards and addressed rallies in South Australian country towns. The League opened branches in other states but was always most active in South Australia and Victoria. It is claimed that more than a million pamphlets were distributed by members of the League throughout Australia in their campaign against compulsory military training.\footnote{113} Quakers were publicly vocal in their opposition to war, military training and conscription, and were widely condemned in the media for their stance.\footnote{114} Stevenson notes (1991:165) that in 1915, one Adelaide Friend, John Hills, was nearly thrown into the river by a hostile crowd when he was making a speech against the war. At that time, anti-war views were banned by military censorship as it was thought that they might prejudice recruiting.

Although Quakers received condemnation for their opposition to war and conscription, in the 1920s, the Quaker War Victims’ Relief Committee received favourable coverage in the Adelaide press and this encouraged support from a group of influential Adelaide citizens who formed a public appeal organisation in support of this relief. Much work was done in sending food and provisions to

\footnote{113} An extract of minutes taken at an Adelaide Quaker Business Meeting in 1914 demonstrates that community’s commitment to conscientious objection:

\begin{quote}
At this time we have considered the case of Herbert Ambrose Ingle, son of William Ingle and a member of this meeting, and our hearts go out in sympathy to both boy and parents. We deeply deplore the fact that through fear of continued persecution of their sons for conscience sake, under the Defence Act, the family have been driven out of this country and return to England. We give thanks to our heavenly Father that both father and son were enabled to stand firm to their conscientious convictions against all war, the father suffering 14 days hard labour in the Adelaide gaol and the son 15 days at Fort Largs Detention Camp, during which time he obeyed no order under the military and did no drill although he was given practically solitary confinement in a cell with a bread diet for two days.

(Extracted from Minute 12 of Two Months Meeting of Friends in Adelaide, Second Month 1914 and reproduced in Walking Cheerfully May 2013 Editor Charles Stevenson)
\end{quote}

\footnote{114} An editorial in The Advertiser told its readers:

\begin{quote}
Those peace-at-any-price people have been greater enemies to the real welfare of the Empire than all the host of German spies in England... Quakers whose voice is ‘heard shrieking still against conscription’ by the tactless advocacy of their views frequently cause just the embittered feeling and the bellicose actions which they deprecate (Quoted in Stevenson 1991:166-167).
Europe, Russia and Armenia. Stevenson maintains (1991:167) that as a result of this effort, South Australian Quakers became more respectable in the eyes of Adelaide citizens and the media.

The Unitarian response to World War One and military commitment was quite different from the Quaker reaction. The congregation and its minister would have been strongly influenced by the attitudes of British Unitarians at that time. Ruston notes (1998:269-277), for example, that many British Unitarian ministers were initially quite ardent in their support of the war, using it as an opportunity to preach righteousness, and the sweeping away of a wayward society. These ministers believed that a new moral order would emerge after the defeat of Germany.

British Unitarianism, according to Ruston (1998:277), had never been so committed to government policy, particularly policy which did not accord with its traditional principles. Reverend Joseph Wood, retired Unitarian minister of the Old Meeting House, Birmingham, called it a holy war that involved “freedom and justice and righteous dealing between nations.” Notwithstanding this, Ruston notes that many Unitarians had their faith tested because of their belief in universal human goodness and their insistence on individual, civic and religious freedom. Increasingly, the duties required of the state did not sit well with some ministers, and the members of their congregations. As a result, Ruston reports that the Unitarian Peace Fellowship was founded in Britain in 1916 to witness for peace and against the futility of war.

The Rev. Wilfred Harris was the minister of the South Australian Unitarian congregation during the First World War and it would appear that members of his congregation were generally supportive of the war effort.115 The Unitarian Women’s League certainly was staunchly patriotic towards Britain, but this view may not have been representative of all the members of the Adelaide Unitarian Church, some of whom may have had quite different views.

115 On the 14th July 1917, the Adelaide press noted that the diamond jubilee of the Unitarian Christian Church was celebrated with a special service (Article in The Mail 17/7/17, p.1  www.trove.nla.gov.au Accessed 12/3/16. The 63rd annual meeting of members of the church was reported in an article in The Register of 8 November 1918 (p.5). It noted that the church would erect a roll of honour containing more than forty names, six of whom paid “the supreme sacrifice” and six of whom have been welcomed back after faithful service  www.trove.nla.gov.au Accessed 12/3/16.
War has always been a contentious subject for South Australian Unitarians. During the Second World War, the minister of the Adelaide Unitarian Church was the Reverend George Hale, who was noted for his pacifism, and this was considered highly controversial. Members of the church have estimated that nearly half the congregation left the church in response to his stance. Also, during the Vietnam War, the views of the minister at that time caused similar consternation among members of the congregation, which again highlights the differences between South Australian Quakers and Unitarians on matters of public policy.

8. CONCLUSION

The history of Quakers and Unitarians spans several centuries in Britain, Europe and North America, but in the early nineteenth century, a few Quakers and Unitarians joined other emigrants from Britain and Germany who were prepared to endure the arduous sea voyage to South Australia in search of a better life.

The new colony of South Australia was undoubtedly a planned, modernist colonial project which courted non-conformists and dissenters, and this was a factor in South Australia retaining a distinctive religious character over a long period of time. Quaker and Unitarian settlers had utopian social visions which accorded with the new colony’s modernist agenda of proposed free settlement, promises of prosperity and land grants, and the prospect of religious freedom and democratic reforms.

The settlers had differing experiences in the early days of the new colony. The Unitarian community thrived from the outset, and had people of influence within their membership; however, Quakers had internal difficulties to overcome in the first fifty years of colonial settlement. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the surviving Quaker community was more emboldened and this was evident in its response to the Australian government’s emphasis on military considerations prior to, and during, the First World War. Undoubtedly, the two communities’ dissimilar responses to those circumstances demonstrated their different imaginings of how a better society might be brought about.

116 Extracted from fieldwork notes.
I have demonstrated that a grasp of the utopian nature of the colonial settlement of South Australia is important for understanding why Quakers and Unitarians settled there in the nineteenth century and, in doing so, have provided the historical context for the study of contemporary South Australian Quakers and Unitarians. The next chapter considers how these two communities fit within the current Australian religious and spiritual milieu.
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH SETTING AND DESIGN

Understanding the nature and operation of Australian religion and spirituality is important to an understanding of Australian society. G Bouma (2006:xv).

1. Introduction

Calhoun and Modood (2015) argue that religion has taken on a renewed role in global public debate. In making their case, they cite the political influence of the religious right in the USA and Pope Francis’s criticism of world leaders for their failure to address problems associated with climate change. Similar debates are also evident in the Australian context. Bouma (2006:161), for example, suggests that in Australia there is religiously structured social interaction and involvement with political reform in order to shape society according to religious principles. Religious ideas, such as proper stewardship of the Earth, are now considered in a much wider socio-political context and religious language is often used in political rhetoric. An article by Sherlock (2013) for instance, notes that the Australian Prime Minister called upon the Labor Party to “repent of its introduction of the carbon tax.” Additionally, according to Bouma (2006:145), there has been a renewed interest in religion and spirituality since the mid-1980s, led by a rise in the number of new spiritualities, global religious revitalization movements and fundamentalisms, including the Protestant “religious right” and Pentecostal Christian churches.

The aforesaid factors contribute to the view that an awareness of the characteristics of religion and spirituality is important to an understanding of contemporary Australian society. Gary Bouma would concur with this perspective because he has extensively studied aspects of Australian religious and spiritual life in its increasing diversity and in its movement away from organised religion.

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117 An example of religiously structured social interaction can be seen in a Quaker media release (23/1/13) when Australian Quakers called on political leaders to take climate change into the next federal election as a key plank of their party’s platform for action. Australian Quaker Website [https://www.quakersaustralia.org.au/] Accessed 31/8/17.

118 See Bouma (1999, 2006 and 2017). Gary Bouma AM is the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Relations – Asia Pacific, and Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Monash University. He is the author or co-author of more than 30 books and 360 articles. He is also an Associate Anglican Priest [http://profiles.arts.monash.edu.au/gary-bouma/] Accessed 28/12/17.
In order to examine the nature and operation of Australian religion and spirituality and to determine how Quakers and Unitarians fit into this understanding, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section considers the character of Australian religion and spirituality, drawing upon Bouma’s insights. The second section examines the types of religious organisation found in Australia, drawing on Bouma’s understandings of religious authority and organisation.

These observations are then compared with how Quakers and Unitarians formally organise their structures. In the third section, Quaker and Unitarian memberships are profiled, and in order to give further insight into the membership of the congregations, vignettes describe some of the reasons people were drawn to join, and become involved with, these religious organisations. Finally, the thoughts of Luhrmann, Csordas, Engelke and Collins will be outlined to add anthropological insights into the research design in order to further understand these two South Australian communities and their practices.

2. The character of Australian Religion and Spirituality

Durkheim defined religion as foundationally social:

>a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them (1912:62).

This definition of religion can be compared with that of William James, whose influences came more from the disciplines of physiology, psychology and philosophy, and is inherently individual:

>the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine (1960:50).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, on the other hand, defines religion according to the 1983 ruling of the High Court, which states:

>For the purposes of the law, the criteria of religion are twofold: first, belief in a Supernatural Being, Thing or Principle; and second, the acceptance of canons of conduct in order to give effect to that belief...\(^\text{119}\)

In Bouma’s view (2006:12), religion refers to organised or structured ways of being spiritual. The term “spiritual”, on the other hand, refers to personal experiences of perceived encounters or relationships with forces or beings beyond the scope of everyday life. It can be seen that Bouma broadly follows Durkheim’s definition whereas his usage of the term “spirituality” stems from William James’s more psychological and philosophic view of religion. These terms are often used interchangeably within Australian society but there does seem to be consensus that religion is more organised; whereas spiritual practices may be more free-form and can be undertaken either alone or as part of a group. What is particularly relevant is that Bouma (2006:2) believes that Australians have a distinct approach to religion and spirituality.

Bouma contends that Australians are circumspect in accepting a faith which is too certain of its own tenets and are often happier with the questions raised than with answers provided. Australian spirituality is also, according to Bouma (2006:2), grounded in its physical surroundings and held tenderly as a “shy hope in the heart.”

There is discomfort, he believes, at intense religious fervour, but nevertheless he maintains that religious and spiritual life in Australia is thriving. The Australian approach to religion as outlined by Bouma can be seen as quite different from that favoured by the following American sportsman:

*Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow has polarised American audiences with his on-field displays of religious fervour. Think singing psalms on the field, thanking God in press conferences...Tebow’s penchant for the on-field stop-and-pray has even spawned peculiar phenomenon known as Tebowing: a kind of planking, for Christians with cameras (L Rosewarne 21/11/2011).*

In her article (21/11/11), Rosewarne confesses that she found Tebow’s affirmation of faith confronting and disconcerting. Most Australians would share her discomfort at such an open display of religiosity and her response appears to confirm the validity of Bouma’s characterisation of Australian religious and spiritual life as being more tentative.

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120 Manning Clark (1915) described a key characteristic of the Anzac Spirit as “a whisper in the mind and a shy hope in the heart”. Bouma (2006:2) has used the phrase “a shy hope in the heart” to express the nature of Australian religion and spirituality.

Bouma (2017a:2) notes that there are many ways of being religious or spiritual. Firstly, there are adherents who are associated formally with religious organisations and this affiliation not only informs their way of life; but also, how they seek to reshape the lives of others. Secondly, there are diverse ways of belonging to a particular religious group, with varying degrees of commitment to tenets. Thirdly, there are those who are not affiliated with any organised group but consider themselves to be spiritual, and may be actively involved in enhancing their own and others’ wellbeing. As Bouma points out, although these people may not be affiliated with organised religious groups, they are still organised and networked.

Australian society has a set of norms that determines religious practice and belief, relationships between religious groups and how they deal with religious diversity. These norms, in Bouma’s view (1999:10), set the context within which any Australian religious institution operates. He points out, for example, that the United States has higher norms of church attendance so rates of attendance there would be expected to be higher than in Australia. Nonetheless, he notes that a surprisingly high number\(^\text{122}\) of Australians attend Christian forms of worship each year. Although this figure could be considered somewhat misleading as much involvement could be minimal.

Bouma’s research has led him to conclude that Australia is a particular postmodern, secular and multicultural society which also has a rich Aboriginal heritage. In addition, he notes (2006:3) the considerable religious influences from Britain, Europe, North America and Asia. All of these factors, he believes, provide a unique context for the study of religious practice and spirituality. The international influences he mentions, which followed from the ending of the White Australia Policy, are also indicated in the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ data on religious affiliation with substantial increases in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, as well as in the categories of “Other Religions” and “Other Christian.”\(^\text{123}\)

Bouma observes (2006:211) that in Australia there has been a shift from depending on rational meaning in religion to a religious life characterized by occasional church

\(^{122}\) Bouma states (1999:5) that a study of Australian religious life at the end of the twentieth century indicated that 78% of Australians were involved in some form of Christian worship each year.

\(^{123}\) See Table 2.1
attendance and less commitment, and adherence to experiential spiritual practices where elements are drawn from many different spiritual sources.

Focusing on a comparison between Australia’s multi-cultural society and that of Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, Bouma argues (1999:7) that the emergence of multiculturalism in the late twentieth century has seen a rise in institutions of religious diversity. He maintains (2007:1-2) that this has meant that the nature of religion in Australia has changed considerably in the past fifty years due to the increasing number of people who are affiliated with non-Christian religions.

One of the predominant movements of the twentieth century which has shaped the norms and expectations of Western modernity’s institutions of religious diversity is ecumenism. This movement emerged in the late nineteenth century as a way to manage religious diversity in respect of Christian doctrine and practice. After World War I, an international fellowship of churches was suggested. Following on from this suggestion, after World War II, the World Council of Churches was formed. Member Churches of this organisation included the Quakers but not the Unitarians. The Australian committee for the World Council was previously known as the Australian Council of Churches and, in 1994, it was renamed the National Council of Churches in Australia. Currently, there are twenty one churches which are members of the Council.

Bouma (1999:16) points out that this interdenominational movement has been influential within Australia since its inception. Its promotion of Christian unity and co-operation has attempted to re-shape the institution of religious diversity in

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124 Bouma differentiates between “religious institutions” and “religious organisations”. He states that institutions are sets of norms governing aspects of social life; whereas, organisations are structures of relationships set up to accomplish some end (1999:9).

125 In 2013, the Moravian and Historic Peace Churches (Mennonites, Brethren and Quakers) decided to be represented jointly as one body within the World Council. World Council of Churches Website, http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches. Accessed 1/9/17.

126 The twenty one members include the Anglican Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Lutheran Church, the Uniting Church, the Roman Catholic Church, The Salvation Army, Churches of Christ, Congregational Federation, and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). National Council of Churches in Australia Website, http://www.ncca.org.au/about/memberchurches. Accessed 1/9/17.
Australia by minimising differences. Initially these differences were between liberal Protestant denominations, but later this was extended to the unity of all Christian groups. According to Bouma (1999:86), despite the attempt to minimize differences between member churches in the ecumenical movement, nationally there is a high level of religious identification. The Australian Bureau of Statistics released the following figures which show a comparative view of Australian religious affiliation before, and after, the beginning of the third millennium.

**Table 2.1**  
**AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION**

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<td>1.3</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>497.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>529.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>553.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal &amp; Apostolic</td>
<td>174.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>194.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>872.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>675.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>637.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>526.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church</td>
<td>1334.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>1246.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>870.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>420.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>497.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>295.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>199.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>357.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>563.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>440.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>200.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>281.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>604.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>221.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>2948.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>2906.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>7040.7</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>1604.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2187.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>2238.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                    | 17752.8| 100.00 | 18769.2| 100.00 | 23401.9| 100.00 |


Also, analysis from Bouma and Halafoff (2017:131)
The data indicate that an increasing percentage of the census population either did not wish to reveal, or did not have, any religious affiliation. Of those who did reveal their affiliation, 39.6% indicated identification with the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Church in the 2016 figures. This identification has dropped from 54% in the 2001 figures. The statistics reveal that there is a strong trend away from affiliation with some established Protestant churches, but an increase in pentecostal, charismatic and emerging churches. These churches have been combined into one category, as suggested by Bouma & Halafoff (2017:132). Additionally, the data seem to suggest that although there is a trend away from mainstream churches, the majority of Australians who do affiliate with a religious group, still identify as being Christian.

Although pentecostal churches and charismatic streams within mainstream churches have increased their congregations substantially since the mid twentieth century, a surprisingly small percentage of the Australian population appears to identify with them. An Australian Broadcasting Commission news report on the rise of pentecostalism makes the point though, that despite the small numbers of pentecostalists and charismatics compared with the adherents of mainstream Christian churches; the level and frequency of attendance at these churches is much greater than with the mainstream churches.127

This observation indicates, among other things, that identification with a religious tradition is not the same thing as participation or commitment. This is a point also made by Gary Bouma (1992:86) when he suggests that religious identification refers to the answer to the question, “What is your religion?” It does not, he believes, indicate belief or participation or commitment. It is the religion with which the person chooses to identify and there could be differing explanations for that identification.

Statistical data may also be misleading because they represent how respondents identify themselves vis-à-vis the Australian state. This may result in a more

respectable identification rather than a potentially more dynamic one which may be fluid and more responsive to changing personal circumstances. Also, the data do not reflect the situation of affiliation to more than one religious group. Religious identification is a variable in its own right rather than being used to show adherence to belief or practice, which is a point also made by Bouma (1992:86).

3. Types of Religious Organisation

Bouma (1992:68) names the three commonly used types of Christian religious organisation as episcopal, presbyterian and congregational, and states that these organisational types fit with Weber’s three types of authority: traditional, rational and charismatic. Bouma notes that religious groups can use all types of authority, but he stresses that each type of organization relies on one type of authority more than the others.

Episcopal-type churches include the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church and the Anglican Church. This type of organisation is deemed traditional and vests ultimate authority in bishops. With presbyterian-type organisation, on the other hand, the ultimate authority is rational-legal and there is a regional body consisting of members of the clergy and delegates from their congregations. Decisions are made by majority vote. Bouma states (1992:78-80) that under this second type of authority, the regional body owns property, chooses the clergy and determines correct interpretation of theology. There is also particular emphasis on the sermon, including its content and delivery. Clergy are respected for their ability to argue church doctrine; therefore, heresy is a breach of faith. Recourse tends to be made to the scriptures and the interpretation of creed and church members are expected to concur with generally accepted beliefs.

The third type of authority, according to Bouma, is charismatic. Charismatic leaders, in his view, can earn respect for evoking both emotions and trust among members. This kind of response is enhanced in worship through the use of music, sound systems, lighting and presentation. The stage, vocalists and musical instruments are all considered important. In Bouma’s opinion, this type of authority fits with the congregational organisational form, in which the congregation is the basic governing unit and centre of decision-making, retaining the right to determine its own worshipping framework, the terms of employment of its pastor, and control
over its own property. Bouma maintains (1992:78) that under this structure, any association between the local congregation and regional or national bodies is not necessarily binding which means that the congregation retains a degree of autonomy.

3.1 Australian Quakers

How the Religious Society of Friends in Australia formally organises its structure is now set out, and compared with, Bouma’s assertions regarding religious authority and organisation. Australian Quakers estimate that there are about 338,000 Quakers world-wide although some sources put the figure at closer to 500,000. In Australia, there are approximately one thousand Quakers in membership and the same number of regular attenders who are not in membership (Farrall 2000:549).

Most Quakers around the world attend programmed or semi-programmed worship led by a pastor; however, meetings for worship in Australia are not programmed or led by a pastor and are based on silence. These two different worshipping styles, programmed and un-programmed, are partly reconciled through international Quaker organisations which stress Friends’ common heritage and bring different traditions and experiences together.

Quakers have always placed emphasis on the importance of education. Australian Quakers, for example, have a Retreat and Conference Centre known as “Silver Wattle Quaker Centre” and a Friends’ School. Silver Wattle is situated near Canberra and provides spiritual guidance through workshops, silent retreats and short courses promoting peace, social justice, and care for the environment. Its vision is to build an intentional and transformational community, engaged with environmental and cultural renewal, inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding, and communal sharing and support.129

The Friends’ School in Hobart is the only Quaker school in Australia and the largest in the world. It has students from Kindergarten to Year 12. Its students are not

127 [http://www.quakers.org.au](http://www.quakers.org.au) Nearly 50% of Quakers are in Africa; 35% in North America, the Caribbean and Latin America; and the balance in Britain, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-West Pacific region. Un-programmed worship is also still used by Quakers in Britain, Europe, parts of North America and in former British colonies. Accessed 31/8/17.

necessarily from Quaker families. It was originally founded in 1887 by British and Australian Friends with the intention of providing education for spiritual and intellectual growth. The school’s motto is “No-one is born for self alone” and it encourages a commitment to service among its students. The Board of Governors of the School includes members from Tasmania Regional Meeting and the Presiding Clerk of Australia Yearly Meeting is an ex Officio Member. The school is run independently from, but closely connected to, the Society of Friends.

### 3.1.1 Australian Quaker Organisational Structure

Each country has its own autonomous internal organisational structure and membership, which is called a Yearly Meeting. Australian Friends did not have their own independent Yearly Meeting until 1964. Prior to this, there was a General Meeting for Australia which formed part of London Yearly Meeting.

Australian Quakers have a well-organised national structure. “Yearly Meeting” is the term which describes that structure but, at the same time, it is also the name used for the annual gathering of Australian Quakers. Every Quaker in Australia is a member of the Australia Yearly Meeting structure and also a member of a regional meeting, depending on which State or Territory the member lives. Each regional meeting is financially separate but contributes funds to Australia Yearly Meeting based on its membership.

There are Quaker meetings for worship held in every Australian state and territory. Some of these meetings are very small and held in members’ homes and many are held only once or twice a month.

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George Fox reportedly set up the first Quaker school in 1668. The oldest continuously operating Quaker school is the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia which was founded in 1689. There are Quaker schools throughout the world, mostly located in the United States, the Americas, Africa and in the Middle East. Quakers in the World Website [http://www.quakersintheworld.org](http://www.quakersintheworld.org) Accessed 15/12/15.

131 See Table 2.2 on Page 98.
Table 2.2
Numbers of Quaker Worship Groups within Regional Meetings in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Meeting</th>
<th>Worshipping Groups</th>
<th>Recognised Meetings</th>
<th>Local Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:

Yearly Meeting provides a number of services to Australian Quakers, such as Quaker Learning Australia, which is a committee set up under the auspices of Yearly Meeting which provides information and study courses on Quaker spiritual practice. In conjunction with Quaker Learning Australia, Meeting for Learning provides twelve Australian Quaker participants each year with guidance and support for a year of living intentionally “in the spirit”.

Yearly Meeting has a presiding Clerk and the currently serving Clerk is a member of South Australian Regional Meeting. Each regional meeting has many functions. It supports the various worship meetings within its area and represents its region at the annual gathering of Australian Quakers, and at Standing Committee. This committee is convened between annual gatherings in order to follow up decisions made at the annual gathering, as well as dealing with many administrative matters. Representatives from each regional meeting attend this committee meeting and then report back to their own regional meeting. Various regional meetings also are
responsible for hosting Meeting for Learning. South Australia & Northern Territory Regional Meeting was the host during part of the fieldwork period.

Each Quaker also is a member of a worship meeting. There are three types of worship meetings: worshipping groups, recognized meetings and local meetings. Worshipping groups consist of a few people who meet together informally in their homes—possibly only meeting occasionally—whereas recognized meetings hold meetings for worship regularly. Recognized meetings are larger worshipping groups, in which at least one participant is familiar with Quaker procedure and worship practice. Both these types of worship meetings maintain contact with their local meeting and regional meeting. Local meetings differ from worshipping groups and recognized meetings because they are larger and have their own office-holders and committees; and as a result, they are able to offer a range of activities to their members. Members are usually deeply committed to their local meeting which generally offers them weekly meetings for worship, regular business meetings, and arranges any weddings or funerals as required for members.

At the time of commencement of fieldwork, there were seven Quaker meetings for worship which were under the wing of South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting. There are two major meetings held in metropolitan Adelaide: Adelaide Local Meeting and Eastern Suburbs Local Meeting. The Hills Recognised Meeting meets in private homes, and the Fleurieu worshipping group meets in Council Chambers on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

The two local meetings are responsible for providing pastoral care and social gatherings for their members, encouraging their members to attend regional meeting, providing encouragement and assistance to worshipping groups and recognized meetings, and producing the local meeting’s annual activities report for the purposes of Yearly Meeting. If a member feels strongly about a social justice or other matter, it can be brought to the local meeting. If it is considered a religiously valid concern, it is carried forward to be considered at regional meeting and possibly forwarded to Yearly Meeting.

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132 There are two meetings for worship in the Northern Territory: Darwin Recognised Meeting and Alice Springs Recognised Meeting.
Also under the wing of South Australian Regional Meeting, and unique to South Australia, is the Quaker shop which sells donated clothing, books and bric-a-brac to members of the public and is run by volunteers from within, and outside, the Quaker community. Money raised is sent to Quaker Service Australia (QSA), which is the aid and development agency of Australian Quakers. Funds are distributed to recipients in Australia, Africa and Asia in support of economically and environmentally sustainable projects.

All members are entitled and encouraged to attend the week-long annual gathering of Australian Quakers (Yearly Meeting). Non-members who are interested and have attended for some time are also encouraged to participate. More than two hundred people gathered from various parts of Australia for the 2015 Yearly Meeting which demonstrates a high level of commitment from adherents. The location for holding the annual gathering also changes each year so that different regional meetings have the opportunity of hosting the event.

The agenda for Yearly Meeting (which is mainly a business meeting but also provides sessions on spiritual matters, and opportunities for socializing) is circulated in advance to the various regional meetings throughout Australia. All Quakers have an opportunity to provide input into any matters that arise from items on the agenda through their regional meetings.133

A participant explained why Yearly Meeting was important to her:

*Yearly Meeting serves several purposes. I suppose it is a chance for corporate decision-making. I think it is also a chance for people to get together and talk again with a wider group of people and they may not be someone in your Meeting... (Also) children like to be involved in Young Friends or Junior Young Friends.*134

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134 Extracted from fieldwork notes.

Younger Australian Quakers are divided into the following age groups: Junior Friends (up to age 12), Junior Young Friends (aged 12-16) and Young Friend (aged 16-30). Programs are held at annual gatherings for those under sixteen and Young Friends hold camps for themselves at Easter, and prior to, Yearly Meetings.
Australian Quakers have a sophisticated national organisational structure. This raises the question of whether this structure fits within Bouma’s sociological typology. Quakers clearly do not have an episcopal or presbyterian organisation. The third type of authority, according to Bouma (1992:78), is charismatic and the organisation which he suggests embraces it, is congregational. Charismatic leaders, in his view, can earn respect for evoking both emotions and trust among the congregation. His description of charismatic leaders and emotional response is not applicable or representative of current Quaker practice. However, I agree with his contention that the silence of a Quaker meeting can convey the same emotional potential as a pentecostal service which arouses response not by silence but through the use of music and sound effects.

Under Bouma’s model, the local congregation is the basic governing unit and locus of decision-making. Although this is characteristic of Quaker structure in some ways, it does not give a full assessment of Quaker organisational framework which is altogether much more complex. There are no pastors employed and the relationship between regions and each succeeding level of decision-making has been carefully ordered nationally in order to allow small meetings to retain some control locally and also nationally. One Quaker described the organisational structure as being like a web:

> A web that links every meeting so each meeting is not a little thing in itself ... there is a strong horizontal web or network and when you turn up at another meeting there is usually a very warm reception ... It is like you are visiting a member of the extended family and that is not the same as visiting your own immediate family and it is the people in your Local Meeting to whom you are very deeply connected. 135

More specifically, Bouma states (1992:78) that in Australia, Quaker organisational structure is congregational and relies on charismatic authority. He includes pentecostal groups and Quakers as part of those he considers are grounded in charismatic authority. He correctly includes Quakers because they have no set

135 Extracted from interview notes.
liturgy or formal creed and rely on the authority of the inner workings of the spirit. That being said, there are substantial differences between a pentecostal service and a Quaker meeting for worship which are not captured by the typology.

3.2 Australian Unitarians

How Unitarians in South Australia formally organise their structures is now set out and compared with Bouma’s assertions regarding religious authority and organisation; and also, compared with the structure used by Australian Quakers. Similarly to Australian Quakers, Unitarians have an affiliation with several international organisations, one of which is the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) which builds relationships between various Unitarian and Unitarian Universalists through the world and nurtures spiritual growth. This organisation reports that there is a worldwide membership of about 350,000 which is similar to international Quaker membership figures; although there appears to be about 500,000 people who identify as Unitarians.136 This is also comparable to the number of people world-wide who identify as Quakers.

Unitarian adult membership is particularly concentrated in North America (62%) and Transylvania (27%). Unitarians flourished in the North American milieu and their numbers increased substantially after the amalgamation with the Universalists. Some North American Unitarian Universalist churches have quite large congregations by Australian standards. One Adelaide congregant explained how she first experienced a Unitarian service of worship when her family moved temporarily to the United States. The family was looking for a church to attend and the Unitarian church happened to be the closest to where they lived. She explained her experience of North American Unitarian worship:

*It was so huge a church in term of its physical size and in terms of the number of people there. There were three or four hundred people there in winter because Tucson was where the “snow-birders” come from the northern states to enjoy the wintering in the warmth... So hundreds of people would be there for six months and then they would return to their Unitarian churches where they had their summer homes.*

There were about 5 classes for Sunday School.... The minister was like a CEO. He had a Sunday School Director and a Music Director....

Attending a Unitarian Church in Australia, therefore, provides a different experience from the North American setting where Unitarians have a higher profile and are better known. In contrast with the American situation, there are much smaller numbers of Australians who call themselves Unitarians and the general population is largely unaware of the church’s existence.

### 3.2.1 Unitarian Organisational Structure

The Australia and New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association (ANZUUA) was established in 1974. It succeeded an earlier organisation called the Australian Assembly of Unitarian and Liberal Christian Churches. The organisation reports a combined membership of about five hundred people. This combined membership figure is half that of Australia Quakers. So it has a much smaller population of adherents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>ACT AND NT</th>
<th>NZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITARIAN COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figures extracted from [www.anzuua.com](http://www.anzuua.com), Accessed 3/1/16)

There is no Unitarian equivalent of Australian Yearly Meeting and no expectation among members concerning national decision-making processes. ANZUUA is a collective of churches and fellowships from Australian and New Zealand which assists in the founding and growth of congregations and fellowships in both countries, promoting co-operation between congregations and sharing communication and joint social justice initiatives. Extracted from Interview Notes.

Australia and New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association Website [www.anzuua.com](http://www.anzuua.com), Accessed 20/1/16.
quarterly journal and organises a biennial conference where Unitarians can meet and share ideas.

The theme of the 2015 conference was “The Church and Social Justice.” This conference produced social justice statements on inequality, peace, environment and refugees which it believes that Unitarians in Australia and New Zealand will be happy to agree upon, so that they can be used by the member churches to collaborate with other groups interested in social justice and in the media. A long-term member of the Adelaide Unitarian congregation serves as the church’s representative on the ANZUUA Committee.

All the Unitarian communities in Australia are in urban areas. Several of the communities are quite small and meet once or twice a month. Many services are led by members of the congregation or visitors to the church. The Adelaide community appears to be the only group which employs a professionally trained minister although several other groups have ministers leading services on a regular basis. One congregant described the Adelaide church as being “the wealthiest small church in South Australia and possibly in Australia”. Although this may not be the case, it does indicate the perception that congregants have regarding the financial position of their church.

The Unitarian Church of South Australia states that it is a non-profit church affiliated with the world-wide Unitarian and Unitarian-Universalist free church movements and it is independent and self-governed. Each Unitarian Church or Fellowship in Australia is likewise autonomous and governs its own affairs.

The business affairs of the Adelaide Church are managed by its Committee of Management which consists of six members and meets monthly. The minister is on this committee but has no voting rights. A summary of what has been discussed by committee members is noted in the church newsletter and full minutes posted on the church’s notice board. Most matters discussed relate to maintenance of the

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139 An upcoming 2017 conference is themed ‘Unitarianism in our Region – Flourishing in the 21st Century’ which is to be hosted by the South Australian congregation. The keynote speaker is Hugh Mackay (social researcher, sociologist and psychologist).

church, bookings by other organizations to use the church’s facilities, and matters relating to the minister. A finance subcommittee and a worship subcommittee meet separately.

The church allows its premises to be used for various outreach activities, some associated with the congregation, and others not. The church’s outreach program allows the members of the congregation to interact with the wider community in various ways, such as volunteering for St Vincent de Paul, or the ruggers group which meets regularly to produce hand-knitted rugs for families in need. Also, a few programs are sponsored by the church, such as a hospital program working with mothers and babies, and the Terrace Singers; a group of women singers mostly from outside the church community which is led, and conducted by, a member of the church.

Committee members are elected at the annual general meeting of the church for a three year term. Any financial member of the church of at least twelve months’ standing is eligible for appointment to the committee. The committee is responsible for electing the president and vice-president of the church and appointing sub-committees to deal with specific issues. An annual general meeting of the members of the church is held every 12 months when the annual report of the church and the president’s and treasurer’s reports are endorsed. At the meeting, committee members and office-bearers are elected and the auditor is appointed. Contentious matters are discussed at length and if a vote of members is necessary, it is done by secret ballot.

In his analysis of religious organisation, Bouma mentions two organisational structures in addition to the congregational organisation. The first is episcopal organisation which vests ultimate authority in bishops and clearly this is not the form of organisation used by South Australian Unitarians. The second form mentioned by Bouma (1992:78) is presbyterian where the ultimate authority is rational-legal. There are clear differences though between this type of church and the Unitarian model. Although Unitarian authority is most certainly reason, the type of government they use is congregational as the local congregation is the basic governing unit. Unitarians certainly prefer a properly trained minister and the central element in worship is the sermon; and consequently, the pulpit is its focus.
The minister can be charismatic, and emotional response is often aroused through the use of music. On the other hand, the minister doesn’t teach doctrine and there is no assent expected to orthodox beliefs. The source of salvation is not correct belief. Clearly, Unitarian organisation and practice does not fit neatly within Bouma’s typology.

However, the Unitarian organisational structure is similar to many small non-profit organisations and sporting clubs in that it has a president, treasurer, honorary auditor, sub-committees, etc., and members vote on various matters at an annual general meeting. In many ways its formal structure is secular in nature, including a division between “operations” and “governance” whereby the minister is unable to vote at committee level. I mention this because the Unitarian structure is very different from the Quaker model which is much more egalitarian and loosely structured at a local decision-making level.

4. Profile of the Quaker and Unitarian communities

Bouma (2006:73,79) asserts that those people who are most likely to participate in, and attend, mainstream Christian churches in Australia are the people he labels the educated middle classes, and these regular attendees tend to be older (with more than a third being over 60) and more than 60% are female. This poses the question of whether a similar situation applies to communities of practice that are not considered part of the mainstream, such as the Quaker and Unitarian communities.

When I first commenced fieldwork, there were 116 members of the Adelaide Unitarian Church and attendances of between 40 and 60. There were a few younger families but most of the congregation was middle aged or older. Similarly, there were 118 adult Quakers in South Australia and most of them attended worship at the two Adelaide locations.
A random sample of twenty congregants (ten male and ten female members) from each community revealed the following data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Prior family connections with community</th>
<th>Prior affiliations with other Churches</th>
<th>Tertiary Education</th>
<th>Affiliated with Teaching Profession</th>
<th>Affiliated with Health Professions</th>
<th>Av Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quaker</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>High 60s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitarian</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Low 60s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, much of the data for the sample populations are quite similar. Bouma’s statement (2006: 73,79) on the relationship between participation in religion and spirituality and the Australian educated middle classes, is borne out in the data set out in Table 2.6, which indicate a high percentage of tertiary-educated congregants who are affiliated with teaching and health related professions currently, or prior to, retirement.

Both the Quaker and Unitarian communities have a high average age and both consistently have a higher number of female congregants attending church. A perusal of the financial membership records of the Unitarian Church for 2012-13 indicated that 60-65% of the membership was female. A similar situation applies to the Quaker membership. These figures tie in with the older South Australian

141 Collated from Interview Notes.

142 See Table 2.6 on Page 107.
population shown in Table 2.5 and are similar to the experiences of mainstream Christian churches noted by Bouma (2006:73).

Bouma maintains that there is a distinctive Australian approach to religion and spirituality which he describes as being, amongst other things, tentative and questioning, and which offers “a shy hope in the heart” (2006: 1-2). Seemingly contrary to Bouma’s view of the Australian approach to religion, members of the congregations who were interviewed were not at all tentative and did not seem to harbour a shy hope. Instead they were keen to retell how they originally became involved with their religious communities. Unitarians, in particular, were very open about their spiritual journeys. They were not, however, fervent in their religiosity. In addition, although there was much questioning of Christian doctrine, there was certainty regarding the need for social justice.

Using the same random sample of twenty congregants (ten male and ten female members) from each community, the question of why that congregant originally was drawn to that particular religious group was posed. This sample group of congregants had previously disclosed many similarities, but this question uncovered much more distinction between the communities, as is now revealed in the data shown in Table 2.7.

**Comparison of Congregants – B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Drawn by spiritual practice and philosophy</th>
<th>Drawn by commitment to social issues/conscientious objection</th>
<th>Brought up in family with ties to community</th>
<th>Drawn by liberal ‘sensible’ theology and freedom of religious views</th>
<th>Drawn by Service of Worship, Hymn singing, etc.</th>
<th>Drawn by need for support group and being part of community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quaker</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitarian</td>
<td>0% -</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

143 See Table 2.6.
Quakers who were interviewed were drawn by the form of worship, i.e., silent waiting, and by commitment to social issues; whereas Unitarians were more drawn by the liberal theology and freedom of religious views that the church offered.144

However, there are many reasons why a person might be drawn to join a particular religious organisation. The following vignettes give a greater indication of some of the people who have attended worshipping activities on a regular basis during the period of fieldwork.

FIRST VIGNETTE - A QUAKER

B was born in 1921. She was an extrovert and loved to talk about her life experiences. She came from a well-off family and her grandparents were, according to her, very religious Cornish Wesleyans. Her father had been traumatized by his experiences in the First World War and left the family to live in Canada. Her mother brought her up within an extended family situation and B’s childhood was happily spent in a very large house near Crystal Palace, London, where she, her mother, siblings, grandparents, and an unmarried uncle and aunt all lived together.

The family was very loyal to the Crown and as a small child B was taken to the public mourning ceremonies after the death of George V1. In her youth, her world had revolved around dancing and the stage. Her sister had been a professional dancer who knew many of London’s stage actors and had taught her to dance. When she left school she worked at the bank and then in the office of a company manufacturing RAF component parts during the Second World War. She was also part of a concert party which entertained the troops. B explained, “Well, I wasn’t a pacifist then, I didn’t know anything about it.”

After the war, B’s life changed when she met a young insurance assessor who had spent some time in prison because he was a conscientious objector. She learnt that he had just joined the Quakers and she told him that the only thing she knew about Quakers was what she had learnt from an Edwardian musical comedy called The Quaker Girl. After a while, they became close friends and he explained that he thought Quakerism involved living a particular way of life. B became curious and she attended a Meeting for Worship with him. She stated that this experience was a “real eye-opener”.

144 These tables were drawn from data collected at the time of interviewing participants and this was early in the fieldwork period. In any group of people, there are inevitable changes over time. This was evident during the fieldwork period, as over time, long-term members died or became too incapacitated to continue involvement with the community. On the other hand, newcomers sometimes rapidly gained influence within the communities.
Within a short time, they decided to get married and did so “in the manner of Friends” at the Meeting House in London. She said that her family had never attended a Quaker wedding before and didn’t know what to make of it. Many members of the Meeting attended their wedding though because the groom was held in high regard for being a conscientious objector. She described him as being a real pacifist.

After they were married, they immigrated to South Australia in the post-war period. Soon after they arrived they went to the Peace Pledge Union which held their meetings in the Friends Meeting House, and before long, they started attending meetings for worship. The family soon became an important, and much loved, part of the South Australian Quaker community. They were very actively involved in many social justice issues and also worked for many years with the local United Nations Association and UNICEF groups. Along with several other Quakers, they were instrumental in the setting up of the second largest Quaker group in Adelaide in the late 1960s. B had a very great attachment to the people who attended her local meeting and described them as being like a family. After her husband’s death, she continued to be involved in the Quaker community and was interested in peace issues into old age.

SECOND VIGNETTE - A UNITARIAN

A was born in South Australia in 1917. There were Unitarians on both sides of her family. Her mother’s family had become Unitarians after they arrived in Australia but her father’s family had been Unitarians for generations. She explained, “My father’s great-grandfather was a Unitarian minister at the time of Wesley in Yarmouth, I think it was, and there was this splendid story of him having a brawl with Wesley, who referred to him as that boisterous young man who has become a rank Socinian.”

A’s great-grandfather had a factory in London which burnt down, and he was not insured. His cousins lent him the money to come out to Australia. However, A believed he would have heard of it as a place for dissenting migrants. She said, “It was certainly part of the reason that a lot of people came to South Australia as it was really very different from the rest of Australia in as much it was founded in an atmosphere of idealism rather than a convenient place to put convicts and so on.”

A had a privileged upbringing and thought that due to the influence of the church she was given more intellectual freedom to make her own choices in life. She said that religion was not discussed at home particularly but the family went to church as a matter of course and she and her five siblings all went to Sunday School. As the extended family was mostly Unitarian, she said that it was an opportunity to also hob-nob with their cousins.

During her life, A had worked as a physiotherapist and had been in the army at some stage. She was an active member of the University of Adelaide community for more than sixty years and a well-known
philanthropist. In her leisure time, she loved to go fly fishing, even when she was quite elderly.

A was a committed Unitarian. In her youth she taught at the Sunday School and regularly attended church all her life. She said that one of the defining things about being a Unitarian was that they are critical of what they hear. The Sunday sermon was very important to her. She said “I’ve never sat under a minister who I didn’t criticize.” She thought of herself as a sensible Christian whose beliefs were tempered by what she thought was reasonable or possible.

THIRD VIGNETTE - A UNITARIAN AND A QUAKER

C was torn between being a Quaker and a Unitarian. He had a long history of Unitarians on his mother’s father’s side going back five generations. His mother had explained to him when he was about six years old what Unitarianism was all about and had emphasised that Unitarians believed that Jesus was not divine and was just a very good man. C said that his mother’s explanation remained the essence of his belief all his life but he didn’t take much interest in religion until he was about 40.

C felt that the Church was important to society because it was “keeping the flag flying” and represented values that were important in society. He thought it was good for his children when they were young and so his family attended the local Protestant church. When the children had grown up, he became disillusioned with that church and made the decision to find out about Quakers. He began attending the nearest meeting for worship, and after a while, his wife agreed to accompany him. This led to regular attendance at, and commitment, to Quaker meetings in England, and later in Australia. This commitment continued for thirty five years.

A recent disagreement between local Quakers over what was proper process led to C’s disillusionment. He stated, “Now the Quaker concept is very wonderful. I will never betray that. I mean I have always said to myself that I may have to walk out of this meeting but I will never resign from the Quaker movement. I think that is no longer true and I may have to resign. But I will only have to resign because of local circumstances and I’m not prepared to belong to two churches at once.”

C was finding it difficult to break from Quakers after such a long association but decided to return to his roots and attend a Unitarian church. I was present one day when he attended. He recognised me but had forgotten I was doing research and asked me whether I was also a “refugee” from the Quaker group.

C felt that Unitarians were less religious than the Quakers. He explained that one of his ancestors was a Unitarian missionary in the nineteenth century. He had a book of his sermons, the content of which he maintained bore no relationship to current Unitarianism which he believed was “free and easy humanist.” Unitarianism in his view had changed very profoundly and more so than Quakerism.
C was fulsome in his praise of the current minister’s sermons and was particularly impressed with one on climate change which he felt was secular and not much to do with religion. He felt that Unitarian services generally were very charming – noting the performance of a piece of Bach in a recent service. He missed the silence of the meeting for worship though. He also missed Quaker literature and he said, “With Quakerism we have these wonderful books. We’ve got Quaker Faith and Practice which has evolved over the years. And we’ve got the wonderful Advices and Queries. The Unitarians haven’t got anything like that. So that’s a loss, in my opinion, thinking in terms of going from one to another. I’ve been at the Quakers for 35 years. It’s a terribly painful business.”

C had come to the conclusion that the common factor between Quakers and Unitarians was the emphasis on right conduct. He felt that the Unitarians had made a bigger break with conventional religion. He also concluded, “I think that there is a bit more feeling in the Quaker version of this sort of humanist religion. I may be quite wrong about that. That is my initial impression and it is going to take me weeks and months before I get to grips with it.”

It is evident from these vignettes that these members have a very high commitment to their religious organisations. Bouma maintains that the children of such regular attendees often maintain an interest in religion and spirituality in adulthood but the majority do not continue attending their parents’ churches, preferring instead non-denominational, pentecostal and mega-churches which offer what they consider to be a more family-friendly environment for themselves and their children. These churches, Bouma asserts (2006:73-73, 97), are well-organized and concentrate on providing activities for the members of young families; and at the same time, offer a different experience, including a more emotionally charged worship style.

Although the adult children of Quakers and Unitarians often do not continue attending their parents’ churches, I have not noticed a particular preference among them for pentecostal and mega-churches either. However, Bouma’s assertion would appear to be correct for many other churches as Adelaide has a growing number of pentecostal churches, particularly in the outer suburbs. These churches often have young couples as lead pastors and a lot of the activities they offer are family-oriented.146

145 Fieldwork notes
146 The C3 Church in Adelaide’s southern suburbs, for example, offers groups for women and “blokes” as well as “Nxt Gen”— a once a month night “the church is turned into a fun zone for all the kids…dancing, games, food, prizes and much more.” [http://www.c3oh.org.au] Accessed 16/1/16.
The more established churches which have smaller congregations, such as the Quakers and Unitarians, cannot offer these kinds of activities. Sometimes they have quite a few children in the congregations and at other times none. Notwithstanding this, both communities whole-heartedly welcome children and offer planned activities to encourage young families to participate. During the period of doing fieldwork, both communities had begun to attract some younger members and families, so although both groups have changed, they do not appear to have changed significantly in relation to the other group. Both have attempted to accommodate the needs of younger members. The Unitarian community now has a Young Unitarians Group which meets informally, in addition to having a crèche and Sunday Club for children during worship times. One Quaker Local Meeting, which earlier had no children attending, now has some regularly attending, and holds an All Ages Meeting several times a year, in which activities are mostly directed by the children.

When asked whether they thought that there were any differences between South Australian congregations and those elsewhere, participants expressed different viewpoints. Quakers considered that they could attend any un-programmed meeting for worship anywhere in the world and feel at home, although they thought that each regional meeting had a slightly different “flavour.” Notwithstanding that, there was a feeling among some South Australian Quakers that perhaps their local community was rather inward looking.¹⁴⁷

A member of the Adelaide Unitarian community, on the other hand, felt that the Adelaide church group was more conservative than Unitarian groups elsewhere.¹⁴⁸

At a Unitarian social event, discussion turned to what was special about Adelaide. Those present felt fortunate to be living in Australia, and Adelaide, in particular. There was a general belief that Adelaideans were more refined than those living in

¹⁴⁷ I think South Australian Quakers are very comfortable and very inward looking and parochial. I think it might always have been like that. I think that there are fewer South Australian Friends per capita that attend Yearly Meeting. Extracted from Quaker interview notes.

¹⁴⁸ This congregation is extremely atypical. Unitarianism in Australia is atypical. There are only a couple of hundred of us in Australia and New Zealand. Unitarians, particularly in Australia, are less engaged on the civic front than their counterparts in the USA and Canada... The Melbourne group is quite socially engaged to the exclusion of religious practice... Our congregation tends to be very Church-centred. Extracted from Unitarian interview notes.
the eastern states. Similar sentiments were expressed by one congregant during an interview:

Sydney has the oldest Unitarian Church in Australia and was formed a couple of years before Adelaide but Adelaide does have this establishment... People in the eastern states hate it if you say, “Well in South Australia we are a bit different because we didn’t have the convict background – free settlers” … but I do think it makes a difference even though there would be people from all over the place in Adelaide. There is this sense of rootedness…

Although there are differences between the communities studied and Quaker and Unitarian communities in other parts of Australia, there are many more differences between the religious practices of the two communities themselves which must be explored with recourse to anthropological insights. Whereas Bouma’s analysis derived mainly from Durkheim’s sociological definition of religion, the ways that anthropologists have researched the religious practices of Christian religious groups provide different understandings. With that in mind, anthropological approaches to the study of religious practices are now considered.

5. Anthropological Analysis of Communities of Practice

Luhrmann, Csordas, Collins and Engelke have special interest in the research area of the Anthropology of Christianity. Their insights are outlined in order to give further understanding to the content of chapters three and four which describe Quaker and Unitarian practice in South Australia.

5.1 Luhrmann’s Approach

Luhrmann (2004:519) points out that the New Age Movement, and evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity have expanded rapidly since the 1970s. Although her research and comments refer to the North American context, a similar increase in attendance at evangelical and fundamentalist Christian churches is apparent in Australia. This trend can be seen in the attendance at one Adelaide Assembly of God Church which rose from several hundred in the 1970s to reportedly the fifth largest church in Australia. The church describes itself as being a multi-site mega church ministering to many thousands of people every weekend. Adelaide is one of its major hubs for recruitment of leaders and for initiating the establishment of

Extracted from Interview Notes.
new churches. The church’s vision is to influence people towards greater connection with God.150

Luhrmann’s research among congregants of a North American evangelical Christian church convinced her that ritual practices and psychological techniques are central to adherents’ spirituality. Luhrmann’s viewpoint (2004:522) follows William James’s approach to religion in terms of feelings, acts and experiences and is undeniably psychological in orientation. Relying on this approach, she determined that among that church group, exposure to the Gospel message was important for conversion and congregants felt the need to experience that message in an intensely physical way to make it relevant for them personally.

Importantly, Luhrmann maintains that members of that congregation learnt to utilise language and physical experiences in order to build what they believed to be intimate relationships with God. This was done through a learning process which she named cognitive/linguistic, metakinetic and relational. Converts, Luhrmann explains (2004:522), learn to use phrases such as “to walk with God” and “Word of God” to describe the way they have incorporated God into their lives and to use these phrases as a personal narrative to describe their commitment to their faith.

Luhrmann employs the term “metakinesis”151 to portray bodily and emotional states experienced by members of the congregation. She believes that these spiritual experiences, which are considered possible through the conduit of prayer, are central to adherents’ perceived relationship with God (2004:518). Her main point is that the congregants she interviewed during fieldwork were learning in the church environment to create a personal relationship with God and to recognize divine presence. She maintains (2004: 522, 525) that congregants’ emotional states and uncontrolled movements were interpreted by them as evidence of divine presence. Congregants, for example, who had answered the altar call found it overpowering emotionally and reported a loss of control as God seemingly pushed them up to the altar.


151 This term was coined by dance critic, John Martin, in his 1936 book, America Dancing, to describe the way dancers convey emotion through expressive gestures.
Furthermore, Luhrmann suggests (2004:527) that attendances at evangelical and fundamentalist Christian churches have increased because technological advances with music, virtual reality and communications have altered people’s perception generally. This fits in with Bouma’s contention (1992:78) concerning dynamic presentations made by charismatic leaders within the congregational form of church organisation. What Luhrmann’s analysis adds, is that this milieu provides adherents with the means to build what they believe to be an intimate relationship with God, in which there is an imagined sense of participation and interaction.

5.2 Csordas’s Approach

Csordas researched the development of the North American Catholic Charismatic Renewal religious movement. In his research, he follows the view of William James in taking a psychological approach. Csordas (1990) is also influenced by phenomenology and relies on a paradigm of embodiment which he derives from Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) ideas on perception, combined with Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) ideas on practice. These perspectives are evident in his comprehensive research into the Catholic Charismatic Renewal’s rituals and, in particular, their healing rituals. His research leads him to conclude that Charismatic ritual healing is about the “self” (1994: vii-viii); however, he is also convinced that there is no self as such, only self processes. These self-processes as detailed in the Catholic Charismatic healing system are, he believes, different from those self processes encountered outside this milieu and yet are still clearly recognisable in the context of North American culture (1994:276).

Csordas takes a phenomenological approach to defining “self” in terms of what he calls “orientational processes” such as imagination, memory, language and emotion (1994:ix). These processes, he maintains (1994:24) manifest themselves through psychocultural themes such as spontaneity, control and intimacy which he believes are important themes for participants who are living in the North American milieu. As is the case with Luhrmann, bodily experience is paramount in his understanding.

For Csordas (1994: vii), the practice of Charismatic healing provides the means for a discourse about the self. He suggests (1994:24) that the self is sacred as it is
oriented in the world and defines what it means to be human in terms of “the other than human.” Furthermore, adherents believe that it is possible to understand that “other” through participation in the ritual process as it creates the environment in which participants are able to embody dispositions which allow the sacred self to come into being.

There are, in Csordas’s view, three main types of rituals within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement: prayer meetings, initiation ceremonies, and healing services. He states that spiritual growth is believed to be hampered by temptations of the flesh and original sin. Belief in these notions, according to Csordas, means that everyone is considered to be in need of healing. So, in his understanding, ritual healing requires the self to have the following abilities: the potential to be broken, the possibility of being healed by divine power, and the capacity for spiritual growth (1994:21, 26).

According to Csordas (1994:32), the term “resting in the Spirit” refers to a sacred swoon in which the adherent is believed to be overwhelmed by divine power which enters the body. Divine presence is evidenced when there is a sense of being loved, nurtured, communicated with, and healed. The act of falling backwards, claims Csordas (1994:247, 261), is believed to be conducive to receiving divine power because bodily control is perceived as being in the hands of divine intervention. Any physical displays of discomfort or changes in facial expression are indicative that the healing process has begun. So the presence of divine power is highly visible to other congregants through such physical display.

How members of charismatic Christian churches in western societies recognise, and react to, perceived signs of divine presence has been considered in the work of Luhrmann and Csordas. Engelke’s work (2007) examines the dilemma posed by divine absence.

5.3 Engelke’s Approach

Engelke researched the members of the Friday Masowe Church in Zimbabwe in order to understand how their particular practices facilitate dealing with the theological dilemma posed by divine absence. In his analysis he relies mainly on
insights derived from semiotic anthropology in his investigation of language as a medium for accessing and experiencing the divine. In particular, he argues (2007:11) that semiotic ideology underpins the Masowe apostolic faith which insists that the Bible, as an object, cannot be a sign of the divine.

Engelke (2007:2-3, 8) points out that this group is distinguished from other apostolic Christians in a number of ways. Firstly, its members recognize Friday as the Sabbath. Secondly, they are distinct because they do not read the Bible. Thirdly, they believe that material things are a barrier to faith; therefore, they place no importance on the written word. They prefer to rely on the “Word of God” which they perceive as being able to be received directly from the Holy Spirit. As they feel no need for material objects in order for this receipt to occur, they meet to pray in the fields with no liturgy or hymn books, removing their shoes and jewellery and leaving material possessions behind.

Although members of the Friday Masowe Church do not rely on the written word, they do have a set of unwritten guidelines, called Mutemo, to which adherents are expected to strictly adhere. These guidelines attend to the basics of their faith and practice including food taboos, times for prayer, and testifying about sins. Engelke (2007:8) calls these guidelines a set of unwritten laws which involve “a way of knowing and a process of becoming.”

More broadly, Engelke believes that one of the central quandaries for all Christians is how to understand God’s simultaneous presence and absence. He states that the language used by Christians often sets out the comfort that can be found in the perceived closeness of divine presence. This presence may be perceived in sacraments, through the Holy Spirit, Inner Light or grace, within the Bible; or as Engelke (2007:16) points out, through live and direct faith. The ritual process for the Masowe Apostolics, therefore, involves listening to sermons which are believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. The most important medium through which the problem of presence is overcome for them is through words, spoken or unspoken.

Engelke’s research (2007:180) reveals that there are ways of speaking which indicate particular proximity to the divine, for example, speaking in ancient
languages. Engelke explains that Masowe Apostolics use some words of ancient Hebrew frequently but only their prophets are competent speakers and can reveal the meaning. This ability is an important measure of the proximity of the divine presence.

Moreover, Engelke (2007:2-3) proposes that the specificities of live and direct faith which he encountered during his fieldwork among apostolic Christians in Zimbabwe, can be compared with the more liberal forms of Protestantism, such as Quakerism. He suggests that this is because Quakers do not rely on sacred texts such as the Bible and favour an experiential, unmediated faith. Certainly Quakers value silence and the inner voice. The spoken word is also used for expressing religious ideas. Quakers value guidelines for current practice and procedure, but unlike the Masowe Apostolics, these procedures are all recorded through the medium of the written text and used as guiding principles for present experience.

5.4 Collins’s Approach

Collins’s ideas are relevant to sociological or anthropological studies of Quaker communities. Although his analysis of Quaker ritual is restricted to Britain, Australian Quakerism has developed from the same source, and so there are considerable similarities. In the Introduction, it was noted that Collins has done substantial research relating to British Quaker identity and aspects of practice and ritual.\textsuperscript{152} He notes that Quaker identity is sociologically problematic because Quakerism has managed to survive since the seventeenth century even though it has no creed. He believes that it has been able to do so because of three concepts: narrative, plaining and habitus (2008:38). These are three concepts which he returns to through much of his research.

In Collins’s view, Quaker worship cannot be fully understood in terms of one overarching theory and this leads him to prefer a multi-perspectival approach to ritual which represents the attitude of the participating group. He maintains (2005:338) that there are many possible ways of understanding any particular ritual.

\textsuperscript{152} In addition, Collins has examined the historical codification of Quaker practice (2002a) and aspects of political resistance and dissent among 17th century Quakers (2009b).
and states that the way Quakers make sense of their meeting for worship may overlap with anthropological or sociological approaches. He also notes that a Quaker meeting for worship has many attributes, for example, it has three phases of worship: the greeting when members arrive at the door, closure by a handshake between two elders, and the after-meeting gathering for refreshments and chatter (2005:325-328).

The most important attribute though for the purpose of this study is that meeting for worship has the potential to transform its participants. It is this aspect which is explored further within the thesis.

6. Conclusion

I have set out Bouma’s insights regarding the characteristics of Australian religious and spiritual life, and his modelling of types of church authority and organisational structure. I have extended his analysis by concentrating on two religious communities that structure their respective organisations and practices somewhat differently; therefore, their models of church authority and organisational structure do not fit neatly within his sociological and analytical design.

Anthropologists have tended to favour the study of charismatic and pentecostal Christianities. Often, their insights are unhelpful, or of limited use, for an anthropological study involving mainstream religious groups or non-conformists such as the Unitarians or Quakers. I have included vignettes of the experiences of members of both communities to provide information on their religious/spiritual lives. In doing so, I demonstrate the differences, not only between Quakers and Unitarians, but also between these groups and the Christianities which are usually the subject of anthropological study. The vignettes also highlight the variety of spiritualities in contemporary Australian society.

Bouma posits that Australia, as a particular postmodern, secular and multicultural society provides a unique context for the study of religious practice. I have extended

153 Other attributes mentioned by Collins include commitment, meaningfulness, playfulness and the ability to be self-referential, storied, confessional, performative, ideological and moral (2005:332-337). See Pages 13-14, & 221-223 for further discussion of Collins’s ideas.
his analysis by concentrating on South Australia, and Adelaide in particular, which historically had a perceivably different colonial environment which encouraged those attracted to nonconformist Christian religions. Arguably, this setting also provides a unique milieu for the study of religious practices, particularly those which do not fit into the category of mainstream Christian religion.

Importantly, Quakers and Unitarians confront the idea of ecumenicalism through their history of non-conformism. In the Introduction, I demonstrated how Quakers refuse to engage politically and Unitarians confront the idea through their embrace of secularism and nationalism. Nevertheless, both accept aspects of non-denominational world religions in their experience of contemporary religion in multicultural Australia where Asian religions are major growth areas due to changing immigration policies.

Bouma notes a move away from organised religion to spirituality—a label which can be applied to this new diversity of world religions. He contends that the usage of the term “spiritual” rather than “religous” as a form of personal identification has become more acceptable in Australia in late modernity, and undoubtedly, contemporary Quakers and Unitarians are more comfortable with describing themselves as such. Quakers and Unitarians, through their practices, endorse this multiplicity whereas more mainstream religious traditions are only able to advocate tolerance. This endorsement will be demonstrated in the ethnographic descriptions of both groups’ practices, rituals, and celebrations. These descriptions, and the subsequent investigation of this data, form the majority of this comparative study.
CHAPTER 3

QUAKER WORSHIP PRACTICES

1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to determine how central Quaker practices are to the life of that community. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, an understanding of the sociological character of Australian religious and spiritual life facilitates understanding of the organizational structures of Quakers and Unitarians in South Australia. Although there are considerable differences between their organizational structures, commonalities certainly exist between the two communities in terms of their histories of dissent within the broad Protestant tradition, their early colonial settlement in the State of South Australia, the size of their congregations, and the location of their places of worship. They are indeed both religions of “becoming”; but notwithstanding these similarities, there are many differences in their religious practices. An examination of these differences will form the majority of this thesis.

The basic tenets of Quaker philosophy have been defined as “the substitution of instinct for convention and conscience for conformity—in short, a moral passion or an inner light” (Nathan 1971:119). With these words in mind, a description of the practice of Quaker worship and its moral passion will be set out; including the right ordering of business meetings, as these are held within the framework of a meeting for worship and are considered an important part of spiritual life.

Although Australian Quakers do not practice some Christian rites, such as baptism or christening, they do have particular ways of celebrating marriages and marking the death of members. Accordingly, the procedures and practices surrounding both of these events will also be described.

2. Meetings for Worship

Come regularly to meeting for worship even when you are angry, depressed, tired or spiritually cold. In the silence ask for and accept the prayerful support of others joined with you in finding a spiritual wholeness which encompasses suffering as well as thankfulness and joy. Prayer, springing from a deep place in the heart, may bring healing and unity as nothing else can. Let meeting for worship nourish your whole life.154

154 Australian Advices & Queries 11, as described on the Quakers Australia Website [http://www.quakers.org.au]
The above advice given to Australian Quakers would be understood by Quakers globally; however, the majority of Quakers throughout the world have a form of programmed worship which developed out of the nineteenth century North American revivalist movement. This form of worship has the pastor’s sermon as its focal point and is similar to the form of service used in many Protestant churches. Australian Quakers, on the other hand, form part of a much smaller minority which follows the un-programmed tradition based on silent worship which developed in England in the seventeenth century. 155

Within the Adelaide metropolitan area there are two locations where un-programmed meetings for worship are held each Sunday morning. The main venue is the Friends Meeting House in North Adelaide.

2.1 Friends Meeting House

Friends Meeting House156 is a heritage-listed, plain wooden building which is painted a bluish grey. It is the only meeting house in South Australia which is owned by the Religious Society of Friends and its structure is of historical significance. A 1925 newspaper article described the meeting house as follows:

*The only wooden structure now in use in Adelaide as a house of worship is the Friends’ Meeting House (dating from the ’forties) beside St. Peter’s Cathedral, North Adelaide, and within its grounds are several graves, for the Friends had a cemetery there in the earliest years of the State.*157

Meeting for worship is held every Sunday morning for an hour. It is called a meeting because adherents meet in an assembly for worship. When people arrive, they are formally welcomed by someone stationed outside the building. Usually, people know each other quite well and warmly greet each other. Regular attendees walk over to a small board positioned outside the porch and take name tags which are attached, and then pin them to their clothing, before entering the building. This is done for the benefit of visitors or newcomers who might not know the names of those people attending.

155 See Chapter One for Quaker historical background.
156 See Appendix A Figure 2.
Visitors are well received and when greeted are asked whether they are visiting and if they have attended a Quaker meeting before. If it is the first time they have attended, they will be given a temporary name tag and may be offered leaflets or other information in order to prepare them for the experience.

On the occasion now described which was early in my fieldwork, I was also formally greeted on arrival and asked whether I was a visitor. The greeter had not remembered me from previous visits and I was given a temporary name tag to wear.

People don’t often congregate outside the building before the meeting commences and so it was unusual that there were several small groups of people, most of whom I recognized as members of the meeting, standing in the courtyard deep in quiet discussion. They were too engrossed in this activity to notice my arrival. In conversation later, it was revealed that there had been a business meeting held earlier which had been rather gruelling, and some people were upset and had congregated afterwards to talk.

I made my way into the building through the porch, which has a small display of Quaker literature and a visitors’ book. Inside the porch, there is another doorway which leads directly into the meeting house proper. This door was slightly ajar and so I opened it and then quickly entered and took a seat on a vacant pew among the twenty or so people who were already quietly seated.

Traditionally, the meeting begins as soon as the first person arrives and sits down in silence. This can be before the scheduled starting time. Because I had attended many meetings for worship, I knew what to expect, and sat as still as I could; but at the same time, my eyes were roaming the room, looking for familiar faces amongst those who were assembled. It was also hard to ignore the stark beauty of this simple wooden building with its bluish-grey walls which have no adornment apart from a clock and an air-conditioner.

There is carpet on the floor and a small central table on which there are placed a few Quaker books. There are several rows of long wooden benches with loose cushions. The benches all face towards the centre. There is also a slightly raised platform at the other side of the room opposite the door, which has benches that also face towards the centre. There are several upholstered chairs positioned half way along the wall for older, or disabled, members who require more comfort. The
configuration of the seating and the aesthetics of the building appear to mark this as Quaker space.

The first fifteen to twenty minutes of the meeting is often the most difficult for participants. This is the time when they are trying to centre-down, or find an inward stillness, as they settle into the silence. It is also the time when late-comers arrive, which some find disturbing to this process. After about ten minutes, the greeter comes inside the meeting house and shuts the door before taking a seat. People do still join the meeting after that time, but most people have arrived by the time the door is shut. On this occasion it took longer because so many people entered the room after the scheduled starting time. When everyone had taken their seats, the attendance had increased to about thirty.

People sit facing the centre, but not necessarily facing each other, as those sitting closer to the centre cannot see the faces of those sitting on benches behind them. There is no prescribed way of sitting although people usually sit in an upright position. Some have their eyes closed or look downwards, whereas others look straight ahead. People sit with their hands clasped in their laps, with their arms folded, or with their hands in their laps, palms facing upwards. Legs may also be kept crossed or uncrossed. The most important things are silence and stillness. This requires self-discipline and control over bodily movement.

The core of the un-programmed meeting for worship is undeniably silent waiting. Participants are waiting for promptings or inspiration which some believe are Spirit-led. It is difficult to be still and silent during this process. The body sometimes cannot be controlled as people cough, stifle a sneeze or a yawn, or feel uncomfortable and change position in their chairs. Although the meeting may be described as silent, there is never a complete silence, just an absence of spoken word; and remarkably, the background noise coming from the outside world, or the occasional cough, does not seem to intrude too much.

During the initial phase of worship it is unusual for spoken ministry to be offered. It is a time when people find it more difficult to centre their thoughts, and silence and stillness are sought. As the absence of spoken word continues, a sense of calmness seems to prevail and a feeling of settling into the silence itself ensues. One participant, who had attended meetings since childhood, explained that during
the silence it was possible to go to what was described as “a personal centre of inner peace.” What was sought was a deep stillness within or “that place that you go to just before you go into a deep, peaceful sleep.”

Participants are often distracted by intrusive thoughts and have reported that it is difficult to get rid of what they describe as mind chatter. Sometimes that distraction appears less, and it is then that the silence seems more intense, and congregants say that there is a feeling of warmth for, and closeness towards, others who are present.

Sometimes a meeting is totally silent, but more usually, there will be some spoken ministry. When someone does stand up to speak, this provides an opportune moment for others to uncross the legs, stretch the foot, or wriggle on the seat to a more comfortable position. The hard wooden benches do seem to become more uncomfortable as the time progresses. So in this regard, the break from the silence is welcome.

Typically, there are several offerings of spoken ministry during the hour of worship. On this occasion this proved to be the case, as there were three people who offered spoken ministry. All speakers were long-term members of the community and there appeared to be no gendered aspect to offering spoken ministry. The first speaker stood up, rising slowly and deliberately from the chair and stood still with head slightly bowed. He spoke for a few minutes about the virtues of being a peace maker. This ministry was not delivered as oratory. There was a certain humbleness and reverence in delivery, and when Quaker terminology was used, it seemed to add more weight to what was said. When finished, the speaker quietly resumed his seat.

On this occasion, as is usually the case, participants in the meeting sit still and silently whilst someone ministers. Sometimes people will open their eyes and concentrate their attention on the speaker, but generally people remain in the same position as they have been whilst meditating. Some people believe that ministry can be inspired by the Spirit; and all believe that ministry should be from the heart and not an intellectual project. Whilst ministry is being given, it is not difficult to

158 Extracted from Interview Notes.
be struck by the contrast between the controlled silence of those assembled and the sometimes emotional delivery of spoken ministry.

After about ten minutes silence, the second speaker stood up in a similar manner to the first speaker and spoke for a few minutes about the importance, and value, of following Quaker decision-making process correctly. When he had resumed his seat, another period of silence followed, which was interrupted when a parent brought a small child into the meeting. This interruption did not appear to disturb the meeting, which continued in silence. After a few minutes the final speaker stood up, mentioning with approval that a small child had joined in the silence and the value of that silence for all. After the final spoken ministry, the meeting returned to silence.

Equal importance is assumed for ministry and silence; nevertheless, a meeting will always be based on silence not ministry. Subsequent ministry often builds on earlier ministry. On this occasion, ministry was themed around the Quaker notions of peace-making, silence and correct Quaker process. This was understandable given that there had been a disturbing local business meeting preceding the meeting for worship, in which it was contended that proper Quaker procedure may not have been followed.

A collective silence has been described by participants as a more intense experience than individual meditation. Certainly, it seems that the intensity of silence increases as the meeting continues and many Quakers feel that this intensity is highest towards the end of the meeting.

As the end of the hour approaches, two members of the meeting turn to each other and shake hands which signifies that the meeting is finished. This gesture is pre-arranged and signals to all present that it is now time for them to shake hands with those seated closest to them. This is done with a degree of warmth, but fairly quietly, as formal proceedings have not yet quite finished.

The Clerk of the meeting must read out any announcements which are usually about business meetings, social activities, social concerns, or news of members who are

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159 Young children are not expected to sit through a whole meeting but sometimes sit next to their parents for fifteen to twenty minutes. When there are a number of children regularly attending, they all leave the meeting after about twenty minutes under the care of a member who supervises activities for them whilst the rest of the meeting continues.
ill. Visitors are welcomed, and if anyone has come from an overseas meeting, that person may offer greetings from that meeting in return. When this formality is completed, everyone is reminded that refreshments are now available in the meeting house library. People now freely talk to one another as they leave the building.

The library and kitchen are in a separate building across the courtyard. There are Quaker books on the library shelves which can be borrowed and various other displays and leaflets on Quaker-related activities and social justice concerns. Tea and coffee is served from the small kitchen area. Silence is no longer observed and people chat readily, often gathering into small groups, if they have a matter they wish to discuss. Some members approach me and enquire about my study, eager to know what has been discovered.

I left after having some refreshments and walked past the Anglican cathedral adjacent to the meeting house. On the steps of the cathedral, there was a procession of people dressed in gowns with a big black and white insignia. It appeared to be some sort of investiture. The officiating priest wore very elaborate robes. After attending the Quaker meeting with its lack of outward elaboration, I was struck by the enormous contrast in ritual aesthetics.

2.2 Other Meetings

The Friends Meeting House is the major venue for Sunday morning worship; however, the Eastern Suburbs Meeting, which is the second biggest Quaker worshipping group in South Australia, also meets each Sunday in a local Guide Hall. This meeting has been operating for over forty years in this same location. The small hall is situated in one of Adelaide’s more affluent suburbs and is set on a small reserve with a creek running through it. A small bridge across the creek and a pathway lead to its entrance.

I have been a member of this meeting since joining in the 1980s, although I have not been substantially involved for some time. Most of those attending have been doing so for many years, and some, since its inception. There are no official greeters here, and early arrivals chatter as they arrange about twenty chairs in a circular shape ready for the commencement of the meeting. People are
acknowledged as they enter the room, but when it is the scheduled starting time, the room falls silent and people take their seats.

People who arrive after the start of meeting make their way to a chair as quietly as possible and are usually greeted by a smile from those already seated. Because the chairs are placed in a circular shape, those assembled sit facing each other around the circle. In this configuration, there is a levelling effect and participants are very aware of each other’s presence. In the middle of the circle is a small wooden table on which there is a small vase of flowers and several Quaker books.

The hall has one main room with adjacent amenities and small kitchen area. One member is responsible for heating the kitchen urn and putting provisions on a bench in readiness for the after-meeting tea and coffee.

Whereas the inside of the meeting house is unadorned, these walls have white boards which have been decorated by the guides to promote, and display, various guide-related activities. It is impossible to ignore the splash of colour around the walls.

There is nothing about the hall which would indicate a Quaker presence, although plans are in progress for placing a small notice on the outside door whilst the meeting is in progress. The hall is rented for a few hours each week by this group, solely for the purpose of worship. At other times, there is no sense that this is Quaker space. All books relating to Quakers are placed in a corner cupboard out of sight. Every Sunday; however, for a few hours the space is transformed, by the placing of chairs, a table, a display of several Quaker books, and by the presence of a small group of worshippers.

There were fourteen people present for the Sunday meeting for worship which is now described. Most of these people have been coming to this meeting for many years. It was a hot day and so the air-conditioner was welcome. After ten minutes or so of bubbling away, the urn is deemed hot enough, and the person responsible stands up and leaves the circle to turn it down. This somehow does not disturb the meeting’s silence and it continues.

Participants observe the silence in the same way as those at the Adelaide Meeting House. Sometimes, a person will open a Quaker book and read. All this is expected
and embraced within the meeting, but most people strive for the silence and stillness of body. In the same way that participants at Adelaide Meeting House sit during the silence, those assembled in the Guide Hall sit with their hands clasped in their laps, with their arms folded or with their hands in their laps, palms facing upwards. Although there is no correct way of sitting, ideally there is stillness. People tend to arrive later for meeting at this location, which makes the settling in period sometimes longer, but there are only minor differences in the form of the meeting.

The small circle of participants gradually becomes a space of gathered stillness and silence. One thing that strikes the observer is that there is a total contrast between what happens in a meeting for worship and what is happening in the outside world. Inside the building, everyone is intent on keeping as silent and still as possible because every movement can be heard. The body has to be kept in check and under control. There cannot be absolute silence because there is almost constant noise from outside the building as cars pass by, birds sing or the wind blows through the large gum trees situated nearby. People ride their bikes on the path outside the door, or walk past deep in conversation, totally unaware that a meeting for worship is being held inside the small building.

It was Palm Sunday—an important day in the Christian calendar— but no recognition of this was made during the meeting for worship or in conversation afterwards. This was a totally silent meeting. This is not unusual, but on most Sundays there are three or four spoken ministries arising out of the silence. A totally silent meeting can be difficult to attend. The hour seems to take longer to pass when it is not broken by ministry. It seems easier to be distracted by mind chatter and by the colourful guide displays. There are periods during the meeting though when these distractions lessen and then the silence seems to intensify, especially in the final ten to fifteen minutes. The perceived depth of the communal silence, which is termed “a gathered meeting” is highly valued by participants.

After an hour of silence, the Clerk turned to those on either side of her and held their hands. This signalled the end of the meeting. Then everyone held hands standing up in a circle for a short time, in silence and with eyes closed. The silence was broken by the Clerk welcoming everyone and then everyone sat quietly as she
read out notices relating to news of Friends and activities for the coming week. Everyone was then encouraged to stay for light refreshments and to chat for a while.

The time allocated for refreshments was shortened this particular day because there was a scheduled informal “Getting to Know You” session to be held. After refreshments, people returned to their seats and the group returned to silence for a short time. The purpose of this silence was different from that of a meeting for worship. Instead of being an expectant silence waiting for inspiration; this silence was to put people in the right frame of mind, as one participant explained.

The person leading the session decided when the silence could be broken and then gave a friendly and informal talk explaining how she came to be involved with Quakers, and then talked about her work and family. The idea of these sessions was so that people could get to know each other better, particularly those who have not been attending for very long. When the talk was finished, the person leading the session was thanked for her contribution and then people started to stack up the chairs, put the books away and remove the tea and coffee making facilities. Within a short space of time, the hall returned to being Guide space once again.

There are differences between the two meetings. Most obviously, the spaces in which the meetings are held are quite aesthetically different, and the atmosphere in the Guide Hall seems to be less formal and a bit more relaxed.

This meeting was originally started in the 1960s by disaffected members of Adelaide Meeting House and has remained as an alternative venue since that time. People who attend here have remarked that they feel at home, comfortable, or have a sense of cohesion and harmony when worshipping at this meeting.160

There are a few smaller meetings which are located in the hills, southern suburbs, and the Fleurieu Peninsula. These are also less formal, and the attendees have a strong commitment to each other and their meeting. The smaller groups have few contentious business matters to consider and so there is a supportive and friendly milieu. Any newcomers are warmly welcomed. The further a small meeting is located from the Adelaide city centre, the less connectivity to the wider Quaker

160 Fieldwork notes. The disaffection was not caused by a doctrinal dispute. See Page 81 for further details.
community there appears to be; however, all meetings in South Australia and the Northern Territory fall under the protection of the same regional meeting structure.

Undoubtedly, factors such as location, the furnishings of the meeting place, number of people assembled, and the participants themselves, all ensure that no meeting for worship is quite the same as another; however, the basic form of silence, stillness and ministry is common to all. On the South Australian Quaker website, a local member offers this explanation of his experience of attending a meeting for worship:

_There is no ritual or order of service. We gather together, in a silent meeting, usually for an hour or so. The silence may continue for the whole time. Or, after a period of settling into the stillness, one Friend may feel led to speak to the group. This will be followed by a period of reflection on that ministry. Others may subsequently be led to speak as well; or may not. At the end of the hour, we shake hands with each other and the meeting has come to an end._

This simple description could apply, with minor variations, to any of the meetings held in South Australia; and undoubtedly, to all other un-programmed meetings held in Australia and overseas.

3. Meetings for Worship for Business

_Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity (Advices & Queries 1.02.14)._  

Business meetings are held regularly within the Quaker community. There are two types of Meetings for Worship for Business held: South Australia/Northern Territory Regional Meeting and Local Meetings for Worship for Business. Regional meetings are held bi-monthly and are most often held in the meeting house; but several times a year they are held in other local meeting venues, either within the Adelaide metropolitan area, or in nearby locations such as the Fleurieu Peninsula, in order to provide a more inclusive approach to decision-making.

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The local business meeting deals with issues affecting it, and its membership, in addition to discussing wider matters of interest to Quakers in South Australia and nationally. Local business meetings are usually attended by members of that particular group and tend to be less formal, whereas the regional meeting is attended by members from all the South Australian meetings.

Regional meeting deals with matters affecting all Quakers in South Australia and Northern Territory as well as making decisions which also impact on decision-making at the Australia-wide level. It is open to all members who belong to local meetings within the responsibility of the regional meeting. Attenders who are not in membership can also receive permission to attend.

*The Quaker Handbook of Practice and Procedure*\(^{162}\) states (2011:1.4.4) that its business meetings are to be regarded as occasions of prayerful worship. Decisions are meant to be reached collectively to discern the will of God. It is traditionally considered a Spirit-led process. The *Handbook* also notes that the importance of the “worshipful seeking of God’s guidance” is reflected in the name itself, i.e., “Meeting for Worship for Business.”\(^{163}\) Most importantly, Quakers believe in corporate decision-making in their business meetings. Those wishing to speak on a topic, stand to attract the Clerk’s attention. There is no voting. As explained in the *Handbook*, group unity is sought rather than unanimity, consensus, or the will of the majority holding sway.

Silence is maintained whilst other members of the meeting are speaking. Once members have spoken on a topic, the Clerk drafts the minute according to what is considered to be the sense of the meeting. This is the most important duty of the Clerk and considerable effort is made to reach a well-worded minute, which is then read out to the meeting. This first draft is then amended, if necessary, after listening to the comments of those present. Whilst the Clerk is drafting the minutes, those present sit in silence. The Clerk is not expected to express a personal view on the

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\(^{162}\) Henceforth referred to as the “Handbook.”

\(^{163}\) Michael Sheeran (a Jesuit priest whose research concentrated on the practice of communal discernment) notes that in the seventeenth century, local meetings held irregular business meetings to give assistance to impoverished members or to ensure discipline was meted out to “disorderly walkers” amongst its membership. As persecution increased, more regular business meetings were held to give support to those affected and as the movement expanded, it became even more necessary to arrange regular regional meetings (1983: 6-10).
matters to be decided. Instead, the decision-making process is one which, according to Jones (1927:68), gathers up the corporate wisdom of the body.

Regional and local business meetings have a similar format. Typically, there are fifteen to twenty members in attendance for regional meeting, and generally they are members of the two largest local meetings. All members are encouraged to attend business meetings but some members never attend, and others attend very regularly.

The seating arrangements for business meetings are not different from an ordinary meeting, except that the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk are seated centrally at a table so that they can record the proceedings. Business meetings do differ substantially though from an ordinary meeting because there is a set structure in the form of an agenda. The items on the agenda necessarily vary for each meeting, but the following structure for a regional meeting is fairly typical.

**Opening Worship**

The business meeting begins with a period of silence, followed by a reading which is often taken from a Quaker source, such as *Quaker Faith & Practice*, but it can be from any other source. After a period of opening silence, the Clerk read out the following words:

> When early Friends affirmed the priesthood of all believers it was seen as an abolition of the clergy; in fact it is an abolition of the laity. All members are part of the clergy and have the clergy’s responsibility for the maintenance of the meeting as a community. This means helping to contribute, in whatever ways are most suitable, to the maintenance of an atmosphere in which spiritual growth and exploration are possible for all (*Quaker Faith & Practice* 2005: Para 11.01).

**Acknowledgement of country**

The Clerk acknowledged the Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri peoples.

> As our nation once again turns its attention to reconciliation, we acknowledge that this is whitefella business, and does not necessarily deal with the very real political and historical injustices still being experienced by Aboriginal Australians. Today we acknowledge the lands of the Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri peoples on which we meet,
and pay our respects to their traditions, their culture and their elders. We acknowledge our responsibilities as a Regional Meeting to working towards greater justice for First Nations people, and to listen to their desires for the future of this place.

Membership Matters

Regional meeting is the forum for the consideration of requests for membership from attenders; in addition to the resignations, and transfers of membership to, and from, different regional meetings. For new members, there are no membership induction ceremonies but there is a procedure which is followed on receipt of applications. Written membership applications are received by the Clerk of the meeting and then tabled at regional meeting.

The application is read out by the Clerk and it typically states why the person has been drawn to Friends, e.g., “it feels like I’ve come home.” Generally, the person has attended for many years before seeking membership status and is well known to those present and so the application is received warmly. Once the meeting has approved that the application be considered, two Friends are appointed as visitors to the applicant.

At a subsequent regional meeting, a report written by the visitors is read out to the members present. The report often notes the applicant’s spiritual journey prior to making the decision to apply for membership and how the applicant wishes to live life in the Quaker way. The Clerk then asks those members present whether the applicant should be accepted into membership. It is usually the case that everyone is delighted by this prospect and calls of “I hope so” are clearly heard amongst those present. It is usually decided to present the applicant with a Quaker book to mark the occasion of acceptance into membership.

It is unlikely that any applicant would be denied membership, but if the applicant is a newcomer with very little knowledge of Quaker ways, it is possible that the person may be counselled to wait a little longer before applying. Quakers don’t consider new members to be converts and use the term “Quaker by convincement” instead.

164 George Fox’s followers in the seventeenth century were not called converts, instead they were considered as “being convinced of the truth” (Vipont Brown 1921:13, 15). Convincement for early Quakers was dramatic, involving death and
Importantly, the formal application of membership procedure provides the community with the opportunity to welcome a new member. Although there is no formal ceremony in which the prospective member takes part, there is formalization and acknowledgement of the convincement process by the group.

This We Can Say

This section is a more recent addition to the agenda, and in this part of the meeting, participants are able to share with others how “the Truth” has prospered in their lives since last regional meeting. Members are reminded that these offerings are not decisions of the meeting but personal ministry about Quaker life. Members may offer ministry on the power of Quaker silent worship, for example, or how to respond to current problems facing disadvantaged sectors of Australian society.

Treasurer’s Report

The treasurer reads out the report on the meeting’s financial situation and then answers any questions from those present.

Ministry and Oversight

A report by the Ministry and Oversight Committee is presented to the meeting. This committee has responsibility for a range of matters affecting local members and also covers issues involving the whole Australian membership.

Correspondence

The Clerk tables any correspondence received or sent since the last regional meeting.

Any other matters to consider

One such matter which comes before regional meeting is the organization of the annual weekend get-together for South Australian and Northern Territory members and attenders. This meeting also has responsibility for discussing matters which

rebirth of self as a step towards a deepening relationship with God. Early Quakers believed that their lives could be transformed by this experience. The term “convincement” rather than “conversion” denoted a change of heart (Spencer 2004:155). This term is still in use.
affect Quakers Australia-wide. It could involve a request by the Australian Yearly Meeting for South Australia to adopt particular policies on child protection, for example, or preparations for the holding of future Yearly Meetings.

Once the agenda has been considered, the Clerk leads the group into the final section of the meeting.

**Silent worship**

The Clerk asks that there should be a period of silent worship to end the meeting. This is usually a fairly brief period of silence, after which members quietly leave and make their way out of the building.

The most obvious difference between an ordinary meeting for worship and a business meeting is that the latter is held with a different purpose in mind, i.e., conducting the business of the organisation, and this necessitates having a structure set by an agenda. Although there are periods of silence at the beginning and end of the meeting, and an opportunity for congregants to minister in another section of the meeting, there is limited time for silence or reflection during proceedings as there are usually many items on the agenda.

Although the major purpose is the conduct of business, it is clear that Quakers still consider that conducting their business is a form of spiritual practice. Due to the importance placed on business meetings, from time to time there are differing opinions among members as to what is correct Quaker procedure, and this has led to disagreements within the community which have been difficult to resolve.

Although meetings for worship and business are regularly held, rites of passage are much less frequent occurrences. When I mentioned to a long-term member that I intended to explore rites of passage, I was told, “Good luck with that one!” Another member replied, “We don’t have any rites of passage at all. There are no rites of passage…”

These rejoinders were made because Quakers have little outward elaboration in their practices and, as a result, do not consider them to be rites. The birth of a
Quaker child, for example, although welcomed with delight by the meeting, is not accompanied by any formal rite such as baptism or a naming ceremony. However, Friends do mark two important life transitions among their community: the marriage and death of members. Of these two life transitions, the one least likely to be encountered is marriage.

4. Marriage and Committed Relationships

4.1 Historical Background

In mid seventeenth century England, the only religious marriage ceremony sanctioned by the Church was that solemnized by Church of England clergy. In 1653, when the Puritan government was in a position of power, it declared marriage to be no longer a sacrament. Instead, marriage was decreed to be a civil contract which no longer needed the services of a priest and could be performed by a justice of the peace or registrar (Monger 2004:225). In response to these declarations, a pronouncement was made by George Fox (1669) regarding marriage and Quakers which has resonated with Friends since that time. He stated:

*For the right joining in Marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests or magistrates; for it is God’s ordinance, not man’s; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord’s work, and we are but witnesses* (George Fox 1669 quoted in Handbook 2011: 4.3.5).

In response to the de-sacralising of marriage, Quakers formulated their own procedures. According to Monger (2004:225), an epistle sent to fellow Quakers by Margaret Fell in 1656 set out three requirements for marriage: proper preliminary procedures, a wedding ceremony which included an exchange of declarations by the couple and the subsequent signing of the document by witnesses to the ceremony. An efficient method of registration of the marriage was also recommended.

The betrothed couple were required to appear at the monthly meeting where the prospective bride was a member, to declare an intention to marry. The meeting appointed several members to investigate and report as to whether there were any impediments to the marriage proceeding. At the next monthly meeting, the couple

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165 Margaret Fell was the wife of George Fox.
had to again make clear their intention, and if no impediment had been reported, they were given approval to marry at a meeting for worship scheduled for that purpose (Monger 2004:226).

According to Dandelion (2005:52), the need for strict marriage procedures and meticulous record keeping became even more apparent after the Restoration, when the legality of Quaker marriages was disputed by the Church of England, although successive civil law judgments confirmed their legality. Although subsequent legislation only recognized marriages conducted by the established church, it made exemptions for those ceremonies conducted by Quakers or those of Jewish faith.

As stated by Dandelion (2005:52), Friends were aware that they had been given a privileged position regarding their marriage procedures and were very diligent in abiding by legal requirements, carefully recording details of their marriages and reporting them to the appropriate authorities. Strict regulations regarding marriage were enforced. Not only was it difficult to marry within the Quaker community, practices such as disownment discouraged members from marrying out of the Society. Other marriage-related events which attracted the penalty of disownment, according to Dandelion, included being married by, or attending a wedding performed by, a priest; or entering upon marriage without parental or the meeting’s permission.

Most importantly, to comply with legal requirements, marriage could only take place if the bride and the groom were both Quakers. This stipulation was still in force when the first group of Quaker settlers arrived in South Australia and proved a difficulty, as often suitable partners could not be found among the small number of Quakers in the new colony. One of the major reasons for disownment in South Australia was marrying out. Friends who found a partner who was not associated with the Quaker community were pressured by the meeting to resign; if they did not resign, a disownment document was sent (Stevenson 2010:13-14, 34).

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166 An unpublished historical novel (Stevenson 2010) which details the plight of early Quaker settlers in the colony has been written by a South Australian Quaker. The book is intended as a tribute to those who were disowned, or pressured to resign, their membership of the Society of Friends because they did not abide by the Society’s rules.

Disownment meant exclusion from the decision-making processes although attendance at an ordinary meeting for worship was still allowed and, as pointed out by Stevenson (2010:57), an application for membership could be made again after a period of time had elapsed.
Even leading members of the South Australian Quaker community were affected by the policy; however by 1859, the practice of disownment was discontinued and this made it much easier for Quakers to find a marriage partner. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Stevenson (2010: 30), the process of getting married was lengthy as the marriage had to be approved by monthly meetings which were held in Britain and this approval could take more than a year to obtain.

Although Quakers had obstacles to overcome before they could marry, historians (Mack 1992:157, Davidoff & Hall 1991:216) have also pointed out that Quakerism was a movement which involved the family and local neighbourhood, and which drew on ethical norms associated with kinship and friendship. Davidoff and Hall (1991:216, 86, 56) demonstrate how historically English Quaker ideas of kinship and friendship overlapped, so that the local meeting and Quaker family homes both became sites to build up trusted business networks and social networks to find suitable marriage partners.

Other religious groups also used notions associated with family, friendship and kinship, but in an entirely different way. According to Andrews (1963), the Shakers, who had a tenuous historical link with Quakers, called all adherents by the kinship terms “brothers and sisters” and their founder was called “Mother.” However, the Shakers disallowed marriage and the bearing of children. Instead of bearing their own children, they took in orphans and brought them up in the faith. Quakers, on the other hand, historically often had large families.

The importance placed on family life is indicated by the depiction of two Quaker settler families on panels created by the South Australian Quaker Tapestry group, as part of the Australian Quaker Tapestry Project, which portrays the history of Australian Quaker values and accomplishments. It is also indicated in an informal code of conduct between spouses and between family members, which is spelt out in the Handbook, and often re-enforced within ministry offered in a meeting for worship.

In his examination of American kinship, Schneider remarked (1980:54) that friends are relatives who can be ditched if necessary. The term “Friend” used by Quakers to reference themselves means something more than the usual definition of

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167 See Figure 1.2
friendship. Among Quakers, along with the usual ideas of friendship there is the commitment to spiritual friendship within the meeting and within committed relationships. The most important committed relationship is that of marriage.

4.2 A Contemporary Quaker Wedding

The process of getting married for current Quakers is nowhere near as arduous as it was historically but there are certain procedures that must be followed. According to the *Handbook*, the couple intending to enter into marriage must write to their regional meeting Clerk requesting that the meeting will agree to recognize their relationship and to make arrangements for a special meeting for worship to be held for that purpose. This special meeting can be either for a marriage, or alternatively, a celebration of commitment.

The wording of the vows to be exchanged must also be agreed upon if they are very different from that set out in the *Handbook*. The regional meeting establishes whether the couple understands the nature of the commitment being made and ascertains that no impediment to the marriage exists. Australian Quakers treat all requests for celebration of marriage within the meetings equally, regardless of gender of the partners. If marriage is not able to be legally recognized, Friends still celebrate the spiritual aspects of the ceremony.\(^{168}\)

As many Quakers are middle-aged or older, a Quaker marriage is not a frequent event in South Australia, or indeed anywhere in Australia; but when it does occur, it is an opportunity not only for celebration for the Quaker community, but also, an opportunity to demonstrate Quaker practice to the wider community. Nevertheless, Quaker wedding ceremonies are not available to all. Weddings are usually restricted to couples in which at least one person is a member or attender, although exceptions may be allowed for those who are in sympathy with Quaker ideas. The Adelaide Meeting House is usually not available for the weddings of non-Quakers who are attracted to the venue for its historic or aesthetic value alone. This is because Quakers are convinced that marriage is a spiritual commitment.

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\(^{168}\) *Handbook* (2011:4.3.5). This was particularly relevant prior to changes in *The Marriage Act* regarding same sex couples.
I attended a Quaker wedding at the historic meeting house on a warm and sunny autumn morning. As I made my way through the grounds surrounding the Meeting House, I noticed that there were quite a few people, including members of the wedding party and family and friends, who were waiting outside for the bride and groom to arrive. Among those gathered, there was some uncertainty as to what to expect, as many had never attended a Quaker wedding before.

As I entered the meeting house, I noticed that there were ten people sitting quietly inside the building. I recognized them as being South Australian Quakers and most were members associated with the meeting for worship attended by the couple about to be married. They smiled in acknowledgement when I sat down quietly with them.

When the wedding guests walked into the meeting house, they were surprised to see people sitting silently inside. Most hesitated as they entered the room and appeared to be a bit confused as to where they should actually sit. The seating was in a different configuration from what they were used to seeing at a wedding. Seating was arranged on long wooden benches on all sides of the room so that all present could face the centre. There was no apparent division between where the bride or groom’s guests should sit for the ceremony and no pulpit for a minister.

Experienced Quakers know that the meeting commences as soon as one person sits down quietly, but the guests attending the wedding would not know this. The Quakers who were present did not seem unduly concerned with the chattering of wedding guests, but they maintained silence and stillness themselves.

The couple intending to marry was middle-aged and well-known to members of their Adelaide meeting for worship. They arrived together for their wedding without any ado or formal procession. The bride carried a small posy of flowers which she carefully placed on a central table. This was the only wedding decoration in the room. The meeting house looked surprisingly unadorned for the occasion.

The bridal party, including the attendants, wore formal but not elaborate attire. Apart from the bride and groom themselves, the members of the Quaker community were dressed as they would for an ordinary Sunday meeting and were easily
distinguishable from the non-Quaker guests who, along with the bridal party, were much more formally attired.

Although the bride and groom arrived together, they did not sit together. Instead they took seats in separate front pews, facing each other. The attendants also sat down alongside them. The only person not seated was the Registering Officer of the Religious Society of Friends, who introduced herself by explaining that she was performing this role in order to comply with Australian law.

As soon as it was believed that there were no more guests likely to arrive, the meeting house door was closed. The Registering Officer explained that this gathering was to be a special Meeting for Worship for Marriage; and all present would not only be part of the celebration, but also, its witnesses. She stated that her role was to guide the congregation through a traditional process dating from the middle of the seventeenth century. Since that time, she explained, the Religious Society of Friends has maintained a simple marriage ceremony in which the couple, in the presence of a worshipping group, takes one another as partners in a life-long commitment, seeking divine assistance in the fulfilment of this promise.

For the benefit of those wedding guests who have never experienced Quaker worship, the Registrar outlined what happens at a Meeting for Worship for Marriage. She explained that its form is similar to that of an ordinary meeting for worship, but it would only be for half an hour. She stated that this special meeting, like all Quaker meetings, is based on silence although spoken ministry can be given by anyone present. It is important, she said, that this vocal ministry is received in silence as its message is absorbed. After this explanation, the Registrar announced that the meeting would now begin in silence.

Some of the younger wedding guests glanced around the room, and at each other, no doubt feeling somewhat unsure as to whether they would cope with sitting in silence. For the Quakers present though, it was re-assuring that there were other experienced Quakers in the room to maintain proper procedure.

After a short period of silence, a Quaker stood up and offered spoken ministry to those assembled. She said that marriage was worthwhile because it gave two people the opportunity to promise to love each other for the rest of their lives—an act which affirmed two peoples’ love for each other and thus for all people.
pointed out that it was important within a relationship to be also aware of each other’s differences, and to succeed in loving the expanse between the two, which allows the possibility of seeing each other as a whole. Her ministry ended, she then quietly sat down and the room again became enveloped in silence; but this time the silence seemed less forced, as if the congregation was now more comfortable within the silence and re-assured by the content of ministry.

After a few minutes, the bride and groom stood up quietly when they felt that the time was right, and stepped towards each other. Facing each other and taking each other’s hand, they in turn made their vows to each other and exchanged rings. The couple and their witnesses then signed the Quaker Certificate of Marriage as the congregation remained silent and still. The Registrar then read out the Quaker Marriage Certificate script which stated the vows that had just been exchanged by the couple.

On this day... at the Meeting House of the Religious Society of Friends, North Adelaide, South Australia, (the bride and groom), taking each other by the hand, each exchanged the following vows:

**In the presence of the Light and the love of family and friends**
I take thee to be my beloved, promising to be a loving and faithful partner. I ask you to be no other than yourself. I promise to cherish and delight in your spirit and individuality. To face life’s challenges with patience and humour, to respect our differences and nurture our growth.

This commitment is made in love, kept in faith, lived in hope, and made for all time. In celebration of this commitment we set our hand....

The bride and groom then resumed their seats but instead of sitting on opposite pews, as before, they now sat side by side on the pew together. The meeting then continued in silence. After a short time, another Quaker stood up quietly and spoke about how the strength of a relationship can be measured by whether a couple can sit together in silence, opening to one another without the necessity for words. He explained that a meeting for worship was a good place to learn how to do that.

After this ministry, the group again fell silent. Then, between short periods of silence, several friends of the bride and groom, who were not members of the Quaker community, gathered courage to stand up and offer words of congratulations to the couple. Then a Quaker stood up and offered ministry about the importance of home as a place where one could go from the strains and stresses of life, and just be oneself. He said that a home should be a place of refreshment and renewal. A further period of silence ensued which was broken briefly by
several wedding guests offering more congratulations and words of encouragement to the couple.

After a final period of silence, the Registrar checked her watch and then glanced at two fellow Quakers who nodded to her. The conclusion of the meeting was then signalled by two experienced Quakers turning to each other with a handshake. Then all present followed suit and shook the hands of others nearby as a sign of friendship and peace. The Meeting for Worship for Marriage was now ended, and the bride and groom, with their witnesses and the Registrar, left the meeting house and went to another room to sign the legal certificate of marriage.

Although the meeting for worship was finished, an important part of the process still had to be performed. After the wedding party left the meeting house to complete legal requirements, all others who were present at the ceremony were asked to be the witnesses and supporters of this marriage. This was signified by their signing the Friends’ Certificate of Marriage which was left in the meeting house for that purpose. Although this formed an important part of the proceedings, it was not enveloped in silence. Instead, people lined up to sign the certificate which was placed on the central table, and chattered whilst they waited for their turn to sign the large document, which included the wording of the wedding vows. I asked an experienced Quaker about the wording on the document and was told that Friends could choose their own wording, as long as it was in accord with Friends’ principles.

After the signing of the Friends’ Certificate of Marriage was completed and the bridal party had signed the legal certificate, all were invited for light refreshments in the courtyard where tea, coffee and biscuits were offered. The bridal party and guests also were present for refreshments, before departing for a private wedding reception for the couple’s family and friends.

The conviction that marriage is more than a civil contract is demonstrated by the fact that there are two marriage certificates: civil and Quaker. The Quaker certificate has no legal recognition. Its value lies in its spiritual recognition of the marriage by the Quaker community. Quakers believe that an enduring and loving relationship provides spiritual enrichment and they seek to support couples who
make long-term commitment to one another. Importantly, in all cases, the marriage is solemnized within the framework of a meeting for worship.

It is considered essential that enough Quakers are present to conduct the meeting correctly, to show by example what should be done during worship, and to come “concerned for the spiritual depth of the occasion.” Members also need to be present to witness the couple’s commitment to each other, and to show their acceptance, and encouragement, of that commitment. The relationship is then said to be under the care of the Meeting (Handbook 2011: 4.3.4).

The complexities of the written procedures pertaining to marriage and committed relationships are in stark contrast to the Quaker wedding itself, which is a celebratory practice that demonstrates a commitment to simplicity through its lack of outward elaboration in style of worship, wedding decoration, clothing and speech. These ideas about simplicity are very similar to those of the Shakers who believed in good craftsmanship in their design of buildings and furniture, but decried ornamentation. The historical Shaker Millennial Laws prohibited “fancy” articles for adherents:

_Fancy articles of any kind, or articles which are superfluously finished, trimmed or ornamented, are not suitable for Believers, and may not be used or purchased..._

(Extracted from Millennial Laws quoted in Andrews & Andrews 1974:137)

Although simplicity has been mostly associated with the Shakers, Quakers also have a testimony to simplicity. In the past, this led to plain style in dress and speech. A Quaker mother in the seventeenth century advised her children as follows:

_Be careful and take heed that you do not stain the testimony to Truth that you have received by wearing needless things and following the world’s fashions in your clothing and attire, but remember how I have bred you up_  
(Lapsansky 2003:1)

As Lapsansky (2003:1) points out, this mother’s advice to her children would remain as an historical note if it wasn’t entered as a guideline in Quaker Faith & Practice (1995:19.41); a book which is used by current Australian Quakers.

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169 A Quaker bride in 1838 was described as wearing “a pale gray gown, a cap and a white shawl, with a large veil thrown over her head” (Monger 2004: 225). Although the style of dress described is very different from contemporary standards, the lack of elaboration is common to both eras.
Undeniably, one of the most important characteristics of a Quaker wedding is its simplicity. This is understandable as the value placed on simplicity has been historically one of Quakerism’s central tenets, and is expressed outwardly by the lack of ornamentation, and inwardly, through the silence of meeting for worship.

5. Quaker Practices on the Death of a Member

Quakers place emphasis on life itself rather than what happens after death. As funerals are about the departure of the body of the deceased after life has gone, Friends do not place much importance on them. There is no prescribed pattern for a Quaker funeral, but if the deceased person was a member or attender, it is likely that there will be a short meeting for worship held. This meeting could be at the meeting house, the funeral home, crematorium or graveside. Although there is no set pattern for the funeral, there is an acknowledgement of the need to show sympathy to the bereaved and thankfulness for the life of the deceased.

5.1 The Funeral

The funeral described here was held at a funeral home so its setting was secular; but it was, nonetheless, transformed temporarily into Quaker space when an officiating member stated to those assembled that this funeral was to be held in the manner of Friends. This, he explained, entailed the importance of silence. There was to be no planned service. The funeral was to be held in silence, but anyone could get up and speak, whether they were a member of the Society or not. Those present were told that they could share kind thoughts or memories of the person who had died. There were only two things that were asked of speakers: they should speak only once and there should be a period of silence between contributions.

Although the funeral had the same form as a meeting for worship, it differed because the spoken contributions were more frequent and the silent periods were much shorter. The normal convention of allowing a suitable period of silence between spoken ministry was relaxed. This was not frowned upon by the Quakers who were present. It is believed that the funeral is for the benefit and comfort of the mourners and ministry can assist in this process. Non-Quakers were encouraged to make contributions for this purpose.
Quakers who attended the funeral offered spoken ministry which recalled the deceased’s contribution to society at large, her success in the teaching profession, service as a Clerk of the meeting, and how she had extended kindness to new arrivals in Australia. It was mentioned that she was courageous, and had never lamented the fact of having to give up her home and possessions to move into the nursing home; but instead, had built a new life for herself and had helped other residents. Friends and family of the deceased also recalled various activities that the deceased had been involved in through her life, including years of service to community groups.

There was a recurring theme within the ministry that this was a life well lived and her family and friends were far richer for having known her and this was a cause for celebration. The funeral ended with silence and then members of the congregation were invited to stay for light refreshments.

5.2 The Memorial Meeting

Friends place more emphasis on the Memorial Meeting for Worship which acknowledges the life of the deceased, and in particular, as stated in the Handbook (2011:4.8.2), “the evidence it contained of God’s working in the world.” The memorial meeting is held at a convenient time which may, or may not, be soon after the death of the member and tends to be less formal than a funeral. Its purpose is two-fold: to support the mourners and to give thanks for the “grace of God in the life of the deceased” (Handbook 2011: 4.8.4). It is most likely to be held at the local meeting attended by the deceased member.

At a memorial meeting held for a long term member who had recently died, there were about thirty people present; two thirds of whom were members of the deceased’s family and friends, and the rest being members of the meeting. It was held instead of the usual Sunday meeting for worship and a member of that local meeting officiated.

Proceedings started with silence and then the officiating member explained to those present what occurs at a memorial meeting. After another short silence, he then read out a testimony to the life of the deceased which detailed the member’s early life; and in particular, how he had met his wife whilst they were both involved with the Friends’ ambulance service during the Second World War. The meeting was
told how the deceased’s work had been of use to the community, and how in later life he had joined the local Quaker group and became a much valued member. It was said that his concern for the welfare of others was shown in his devotion to social causes. The meeting then proceeded in silence, interspersed with various contributions from members of the Quaker community, and family and friends of the deceased. Periods of silence were briefer than usual and more time was devoted to spoken contributions.

Out of the silence, several Quakers stood up and spoke of the deceased’s wisdom and ministry, which would be sadly missed by the group. After a further period of silence, a member of the deceased’s family thanked the Quaker community for holding the memorial meeting, adding that the family had been unaware of this part of his life, and so it was good for them to now hear about his ministry. After another period of silence, the meeting closed with everyone standing and holding hands briefly. Afterwards, people stood around chatting and having morning tea as they would at the end of an ordinary meeting for worship.

5.3 Internment of Ashes at the Quaker Cemetery

Quakers are encouraged to observe simplicity in their choice of funeral arrangements and type of headstone. In Friends’ burial grounds it is recommended that there be uniformity in size and type of headstones. This is to ensure there is no distinction made between people beyond name and date (Handbook 2011 4.8.2). Some Friends are now opting for a natural burial, which could involve a cane or wicker casket, rather than the usual elaborate wooden casket. Some feel that this is a more environmentally sound choice rather than cremation or usual burial methods. It fits well also with the community’s commitment to simplicity.

I attended the internment of ashes of a woman who had been associated with the Society of Friends, but who had died over a year earlier. It had been her wish that her ashes should be interned underneath a tree on the border of the Quaker section of the city’s historic West Terrace Cemetery, which is South Australia’s oldest cemetery. It has a number of areas which have been set aside for various community groups including Catholic, Jewish, Afghan, Islamic and Quaker sections.
The Quaker section has quite a few grave sites. Although Quaker headstones are recommended to be all the same height, this did not appear to be always the case, because some were much larger than others. Although there are quite a few burial sites, not many people have been buried in the Quaker section of the cemetery for some time. A brick memorial wall has now been constructed which has small plaques attached (all the same size) for Quakers who have died in more recent years. There is a little stone rounded bench facing the Quaker wall and a tree that has been planted for eventual shade.

A few people were seated on this bench when I arrived at the cemetery for the internment of ashes ceremony. The family had not publicized the internment and so only those within the Quaker community, and a few close members of the family, knew about it.

The Friend who was officiating at the internment explained to those present how the ceremony would proceed. After her explanation, everyone then sat in silence for a short time until it was announced that it was time to start. The officiating Friend then welcomed everyone to the meeting for worship for the internment of the ashes of the deceased. This internment was to show respect to a faithful friend and offer support to her family. The gathered group was told that the deceased’s life had been guided by Quaker testimonies, particularly those related to peace and to simplicity. This, it was said, was demonstrated by her strong support for the aims of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union throughout her life.

The gathering was told that the deceased’s spirit continued to live on in the lives of those who knew and loved her, and that the final act of compassion for her was now to place her mortal remains here in the Quaker burial ground, which was her wish. A plaque on the memorial wall now records, according to Quaker tradition, simply her name and date of birth and death.

The small group was reminded to begin in silent worship but was encouraged to feel moved to speak afterwards, as to do so was a source of comfort to family and friends. The silence seemed very powerful in this setting, being broken only by the sound of birdsong very close by, and the distant sound of traffic and sirens coming from one of Adelaide’s busiest roads.
After the period of silence, a member of the family stood up and walked around to the back of the wall, where the ashes had earlier been placed on a stand. Everyone then stood up and followed him silently in single file, then stood beside him as he placed the container of ashes into the ground which had been prepared for this purpose. No words were spoken whilst the ashes were placed in the ground. Another member of the family put a small bunch of flowers into the grave on top of the container. Everyone then returned to their seats again in silence and the meeting for worship continued for another fifteen minutes.

Out of the silence, a Quaker spoke of gratitude towards those Friends who thought of having a memorial wall in the Quaker cemetery, and how lovely it was now to sit in that place and see the names of Friends. This, it was said, inevitably led to self-reflection. Silence then fell again over the small gathered group. Another Quaker spoke of keen memories of the deceased; and then, after another period of silence, a member of the family reminded those present that the deceased was the last of the entire generation within that family.

Birdsong again interrupted the final few minutes of silence, and then the officiating Friend shook the hand of the person next to her, which signalled the conclusion of the meeting for worship. Everyone then held hands for a short time in silence. Subdued conversation took place as people started walking away from the site.

5.4 Life Testimonies

When a member of the meeting dies, the regional meeting makes arrangements for the writing of a biographic note called a “testimony to the grace of God in the life of …” This testimony covers aspects of the deceased Friend’s life that reveal the workings of the Spirit in the world. As well as providing comfort to mourners, the testimony’s content is often inspirational. The document is prepared by one or more members who have good knowledge of the person who has died. It is carefully written and can take several months to produce. It includes a biographical component; but it is not just an historical account, as it also concentrates, according to the Handbook (2011:4.8.5), on “that of God” in the deceased person’s life and evidence of religious learning and right living.

Virtues that have been highlighted in testimonies include independence, discipline, quietness, thoughtfulness, living simply with integrity and compassion, quietly
achieving, and showing kindness. Often it is mentioned that the deceased member worked in social justice, served on various Quaker committees, or volunteered at the Quaker Shop. One testimony printed in the Quaker newsletter\(^{170}\) noted the service given by the deceased Friend to the Society, mentioning that she had been an excellent Clerk of Friends’ meetings and convener of committees; she was orderly, chose her words well, was concise and her writing was always neat and legible.

As another indication of the importance of these testimonies, at the annual business meeting held for Friends throughout Australia (Yearly Meeting), all formal sessions begin with several minutes of silence; and the majority of sessions then include the reading of testimonies for Australian Quakers who have died during the past year and have given service to their meeting and to Australian Quakers generally.

For Quakers, the world of the dead holds very little interest. The incorporation of the deceased into the world of the dead is not emphasized. Instead the values of the deceased, demonstrated in the way that person approached life, are re-incorporated into the world of the living through the lasting legacy of the written testimony. The deceased member, through the agency of the testimony, is able to offer a final gift of ministry to the community.

### 6. Conclusion

Meetings for worship are regularly held on Sunday mornings, but they also frequently held for business matters; and less frequently, for memorial gatherings and the celebration of marriage. Undeniably, Quaker practice is minimalist in approach; but nevertheless, integral to adherents’ spiritual lives. Allied to its minimalist approach, is the Quaker use of silence. The core of the un-programmed meeting for worship is undeniably silent waiting, but I have demonstrated that silence is also used in so many instances, for example, in business meetings and rites of passage; or on occasions when there appears to be no need for it. This unusual Quaker reliance on silence necessarily raises the question of how Quaker practice differs from that of the Unitarians.

\(^{170}\) Quaker Newsletter *Walking Cheerfully* (February 2009:6).
CHAPTER 4
UNITARIAN WORSHIP PRACTICES

1. Introduction

Unitarian services of worship are held regularly in two locations in South Australia: in the Adelaide suburb of Norwood and in the Adelaide Hills at Shady Grove. Although South Australian Unitarians do not practice Christian rites such as baptism or christening, they do hold child naming and membership ceremonies. Apart from regular services of worship, they also conduct weddings, funerals and memorial services; and when the occasion arises, a ceremony to welcome a new minister.

The ethnographic description begins though with the Sunday services as these form such a large part of the worshipping experiences of the two interconnected congregations.

2. Services of Worship

The main venue for Unitarian practices in South Australia is the Adelaide Unitarian Meeting House. It is the only venue which holds weekly Sunday services.

2.1 The Adelaide Unitarian Church

The Unitarian Meeting House is located on a quiet street in a well-to-do neighbourhood in the eastern suburbs of Adelaide, close to numerous chic outdoor cafes. In front of the building is a courtyard which allows parking for a few cars. Until recently, a brick wall divided the courtyard from the footpath outside, but this has now been removed to give the impression of a more open approach to the outside community. A sign indicates that this is the “Adelaide Unitarian Meeting House” and a noticeboard displays Unitarian principles and insights to passers-by.

The cream brick building is contemporary in style with no steeple, tower or other distinguishing feature, apart from a symbol representing a chalice on the outside of the building — a symbol which marks it as Unitarian space. The building has been

\[ See \text{ Appendix B Figure 2] } \]
positioned parallel to the road and its entrance is midway along the side. It has
certain simplicity in design but is, nonetheless, substantially different from the
Quaker Meeting House.

The Unitarian building is called a church and a meeting house inter-changeably by
the congregation and its minister. The practice of using the name “meeting house”
instead of “church” developed historically in England from the period when
dissenters met in each other’s homes because dissenting churches were prohibited.

Whereas the North Adelaide Quaker Meeting House was easily described in terms
of its simplicity, the current Adelaide Unitarian church is much more difficult to
describe. In order to understand the building and its interior eclectic style, it is
necessary to know something of its history. The original Unitarian church built in
Adelaide in the mid-nineteenth century was an imposing building situated in the
city centre and was considered a landmark.\textsuperscript{172} It was a bluestone church with an
octagonal tower, adorned with stucco trim and ornamentation.\textsuperscript{173} In Hague’s view
(1986:11), its Gothic revival style followed what was common in Britain during the
nineteenth century, reflecting the practices and notions of the British Unitarian
Church at that time; embracing Unitarian ideals of scholarship, rationality and
individualism, but firmly within the context of Christianity.

This original Unitarian church was in complete contrast with the simple wooden
Quaker meeting house which was also built close to the city centre during the
nineteenth century; however, unlike the Quaker building which is still used today,
the Unitarian church was sold in 1971 and subsequently demolished. The
proceeds from the sale allowed the Unitarian community to purchase land to build
the current contemporary style meeting house with its garden courtyard and
adjoining manse.

The interior aesthetics of the current building partially reflect its South Australian
history. The impressive organ was transferred from the original church along with

\textsuperscript{172} See Appendix B, Figure 1.

five stained glass windows which now form a feature of the northern wall of the church. The iconography on the stained glass reflects the Judeo-Christian heritage of Unitarianism. These windows also serve as memorials to members of four influential families who were part of the congregation in the nineteenth century. Remarkably, some of their descendants still attend the church.

In the chancel, the altar is situated in a central position next to the southern wall. The altar itself, and the area around the altar, are not seen as endowed with special significance. However, placed on the altar is a small chalice—a potent symbol of Unitarianism. The simplicity of the plain altar is somewhat overshadowed by the presence of an imposing painting at the front of the church; a donation from the artist who was a congregant. The aesthetic theme of Unitarian history reflected in this altar-piece represented the essence of Unitarianism—Truth—as an essential Unitarian attribute juxtaposed to truth as it is conventionally understood by other Christian denominations.

The historical figures represented in the art work include the first minister of the Adelaide congregation, a Spanish Unitarian martyr, two influential English Unitarian ministers, Sir Isaac Newton, Caroline Emily Clark (Australian worker for children’s welfare) and Catherine Helen Spence. These figures represented “Truth” for Unitarians, whereas the figure of a priest with supplicant parishioners represented “Truth” for other religious traditions.

The eclectic nature of the church’s interior aesthetics is demonstrated further by other items on its walls. On the eastern wall of the nave, there is a tapestry made by two former members of the congregation which depicts the story of Persephone, who in Greek mythology was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, and was both the goddess of the underworld and of the harvest. On the western wall, opposite the tapestry, is a mosaic of an angelic figure which was made by children of the church which features a chalice in the centre and on the perimeter, Sturt Peas—the official

174 See Appendix B, Figure 3.
175 More recently, in an attempt to make the Unitarian Church more appealing to newer members, the painting was removed from its central position and placed on a side wall in the nave. In its place, a screen for audio-visual presentations was attached to the front wall of the chancel above the altar table. The screen is intended for use during services and for community groups who rent the space for non-church activities.
floral emblem of South Australia. The unusual combination of artistic embellishment, historical values and practicality displayed in the interior of the church, provides the setting for the Sunday service of worship.

2.1.1 Sunday Morning Service at the Unitarian Meeting House

When members arrive they take their name tags from a board placed in front of the church and pin it to their clothing before entering the large foyer, within which there are displays of leaflets, church newsletters and other reading material. There is also a library of Unitarian books in the church office which is alongside the foyer. This is accessible to members of the congregation but people tend not to go into the office unless they are involved in church administrative matters.

Each week, two appointed members act as official greeters who meet people with a smile as they enter the foyer and offer them a copy of the printed order of service and the church’s hymn book. Apart from the official greeters, the minister is often on hand to also welcome people. On this occasion, this was the case, and I was welcomed by the minister with a warm handshake when I arrived. I had been attending services for some time at this stage, and so I was well-known to the minister.176

It was about ten minutes prior to the start of the service and there were quite a few members of the congregation already assembled; some seated and chatting to those around them, and others still moving around the church, hurriedly making final arrangements before the proceedings began. The atmosphere inside the nave was relaxed and some people smiled at me as I entered. I found a seat on a pew near the back, which is a position I preferred because it was possible to participate in proceedings, but also, observe more of the congregation. It also allowed me to more easily have a quiet conversation with the congregant closest to me, prior to, and after, the service.

The congregation attendance ranges from forty to sixty on any given Sunday, which is about half its membership. As I looked around the room observing the other

176 There were two professional ministers whilst I was attending church activities, and this particular occasion was during the tenure of the second minister.
congregants, it was obvious that there were no discernible differences between this assembled group and the congregation of any mainstream Protestant church in Adelaide on a Sunday morning.

I noticed that there were more people present than usual. This morning’s service of worship was one of only a few throughout the year in which a locally organised women’s choir (most of whom are not members of the church) was set to provide choral accompaniment to the service. Members of the congregation look forward to these occasions and the congregational numbers are always higher as a result.

Whereas with the Quaker meeting for worship it was said that meeting began as soon as the first person arrived and sat down in silence, this was certainly not the case with the Unitarian service of worship; particularly on the occasions when the choir was present, as there was much pre-service chatter. However, when the church president made her way to the pulpit, the chatting in the congregation immediately lessened. Everyone was now reasonably settled and seated on the wooden pews and chairs arranged on either side of a central aisle. All seating faced towards the front of the church with its altar, pulpit, organ and grand piano.

The president read out congregational notices of church activities and items of interest to those present and then returned to her seat among the congregation. The minister was now set to start proceedings, following the printed order of service. This divided the service into four sections and was printed each week; as although the order was usually the same, different sources of inspiration were used each time. There was no need for further explanation about the service to church newcomers, as this leaflet set out clearly how the service would proceed.

The Sunday morning service of worship is now described, commencing with the initial part, which is called the “Gathering In” section, as per the order of service.

**Gathering In Section**

**Sounding of the Bell**

The minister, who had been seated in the chancel whilst the notices were being read out, now stood and rang a bell. This signified that the service proper was about to begin. The congregation was quiet and settled at this stage, allowing a short silence prior to the musical prelude.
Prelude

Usually the musical prelude was played by the church organist on the nineteenth century organ, or by one of two church pianists, on the grand piano. The music could be church music, or it could be classical, jazz or popular, and was especially chosen to suit the theme of the service. Typically, the music was played professionally and with flair, and was often highly entertaining. On this occasion, the pianist was accompanied by the visiting women’s choir. The congregation listened attentively and approvingly to the choir and then sat quietly for the next part of the service which included the lighting of the chalice.

Invocation and Lighting of the Chalice

The chalice was placed centrally on the altar in the chancel. It had a large candle which was lit by the minister as opening words were read out by a member of the congregation.177 The words are chosen by the minister and are usually relevant to the theme of the service. On this particular occasion, they were words chosen from a well-known Unitarian Universalist source.178

Come we now out of the darkness of our unknowing
And the dusk of our dreaming;
Come we now from far places.
Come we now into the twilight of our awakening
And the reflection of our gathering.
Come we now all together.

We bring, unilluminated, our dark caves of doubting;
We seek, unbedazzled, the clear light of understanding.
May the sparks of our joining kindle our resolve.
Brighten our spirits, reflect our love,
And unshadow our days.
Come we now, enter the dawning. 179

Words of Welcome

The minister then read out the words of welcome to those present. He welcomed the congregation on behalf of the Unitarians who have worshipped with this fellowship since the establishment of the South Australian congregation in 1854. He particularly welcomed those who were present for the first time or who have

177 A different member of the congregation does this each week.
178 Words written by A. Foerster.

179 Excerpt from Service conducted by R MacPherson on 8/12/13.
returned after an absence from the church. He then acknowledged the Kaurna people who are the traditional owners of the land and their spiritual relationship with their country. This spiritual relationship was then likened to the church’s spiritual community and its commitment to its members to support them in their individual spiritual paths.

The words of welcome ended with an invitation for all present to join the congregation after the service, for refreshments and conversation. The welcome having been made, the minister asked the congregation to join in singing the first hymn, which signalled the final part of the first section of the service.

First Hymn

The congregation waited for the pianist to play at least one verse first, so that the melody could be heard, and then stood to sing the hymn. On this occasion, the congregation was joined by the choir. Whilst this was happening, several young children took a large basket filled with various items of donated non-perishable food along the aisles for members of the congregation to add their contribution. This offering of food allowed the children to be involved in the service and feel part of the church community, as well as giving each member of the congregation an opportunity to contribute to the church’s collective donation to those in need.

Once everybody was again seated after the hymn, the second section of the service then followed. This section was intended to “grow and bind up” community and began with the children’s story.

Growing and Binding Up Community

Story for all Ages

The Story for all Ages was the part of the service set aside for the children. The number of children varied from week to week, but there were usually at least five

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180 The hymns chosen were usually those within the Unitarian Hymn Book, *Hymns for Living*, a copy of which was handed to congregants when they first arrived. Hymns that are well-known by the congregation are sung enthusiastically and it was obvious that the majority of members enjoyed singing. One participant explained the relevance of hymns for her as follows:

*I enjoy the words of the hymns and singing those words fulfils a need for spirituality in me which perhaps is not particularly met, or not at such a level, in other parts of the Service.* (Fieldwork Notes)

181 The food which was collected was later given to a local charity.
children present. For the first part of the service, the children sat with their parents amongst the congregation, usually in the first few rows. When it was time for the story, the children gathered together at the front of the church facing the congregation.

A pre-arranged story reader from among the congregation joined the children and read them a story. After the story-telling, the children were ushered out of a side door to the Sunday club room where they have supervised activities. An important part of the service then commenced which involved some members of the congregation taking turns to speak briefly from the pulpit.

**Candles of Sharing**

In this part of the service, the minister asked members of the congregation whether they had any joys or concerns which they wanted to share with the congregation. The stated purpose of this was to deepen and bind the relationship between members of the congregation. The minister explained that opening the worship space for this purpose could be considered a sacred act.

The first person walked to the front of the church and lit a small candle from the larger chalice candle on the altar. The lighted candle was placed on the altar. The congregant then walked to the pulpit and spoke briefly on why the candle was lit. When the speaker returned to the congregation, the next person then also lit a candle and spoke briefly. Sometimes, a congregant would light a candle in silence and then return to the congregation. When it appeared that no-one else wished to light a candle, the minister lit one more candle to represent those joys and concerns which were unspoken. No comment was offered on any matter aired by congregants and the lighted candles were allowed to burn until the end of the service when they were extinguished by the minister.

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182 A few younger families joined the congregation when a new minister was appointed and this increased the number of children attending.

183 Typically, three or four people respond to this invitation.

184 Usually, it was in response to joys such as the birth of a grandchild, a member of the family recovering from illness or perhaps an academic achievement. On the other hand, it could be because of concerns about sickness or death of friends or relatives, and sometimes it involved matters of social justice.
Prayer

The purpose of the candles of sharing was to allow the congregation to open to one another in fellowship. The stated purpose of the prayer, on the other hand, was to “open to the greater presence outside ourselves, known by many names.” According to the minister, this prayer was uttered not to influence a God but to change individual congregants. The congregation remained silent, and many people kept their eyes closed or heads bowed, as the minister then read out the following prayer:

Spirit of love be present with all who are suffering
lift up the hearts of those who fear and inspire courage
in peacemakers. Be present with leaders, ensuring progress
towards peace. Let the Spirit of Love open our own hearts
to compassion. Remind us of our complicity and responsibility
and lead us towards generous engagement —always towards
a vision of peace. Amen.185

Musical Interlude

On this occasion there was a choral performance by the choir instead of the usual instrumental interlude. The effect was the same, as it prepared the congregant for the next section of the service which was called “Deepening Thought and Feeling”— arguably the most important part of the service because it included the minister’s address to the congregation.

Deepening Thought And Feeling

Readings

On this occasion, the readings were from The Story of Mary186 and Hope in the Age of Looming Authoritarianism.187 The readings, although chosen by the minister, were read by members of the congregation.

Second Hymn

After the readings, the minister asked the congregation to join with the choir in singing the second hymn. When this was done, the congregation again settled into

185 Excerpt from Service conducted by R MacPherson on 8/12/13. Prayer attributed to the words of the Rev. Eric Cherry.

186 Reading sourced from the Passionist Fathers, a Roman Catholic religious community.

187 Reading sourced from Henry Giroux, American and Canadian scholar known for work on critical pedagogy.
their seats as the minister prepared to deliver his address from the pulpit. This was considered the core of the service and the major reason many members attend.

**Minister’s Address**

The minister wore no gown or vestments, as he stood at the pulpit. His oratorical skills were evident in his delivery of the address, which was the centrepiece of the service. His address was on the Christmas story and he presented the argument that it was the ethical and spiritual essence of this tale which was paramount; an essence which offered hope for a better world. The congregation was reminded that Mary was a woman in need of shelter and protection, and the over-riding message of the story was that hope is born out of suffering. He stated that Unitarians can choose to work to dismantle the structures of oppression and play their own role in the birth of hope. The minister ended his address with the words: “So may it be. Amen.”

The address included a moral imperative which was designed to give the members of the congregation food for thought. When it had been delivered, the service started to lose momentum and began to wind down. The final section of the service called “going forth in commitment” then began.

**Going forth in commitment**

This section began with the Offertory.

**Offertory**

The minister stated:

> This offering is but a part of our gift to the community, in recognition of all we receive from it. May this and all our gifts be used to holy purpose, so that in giving and receiving we make contact with the sacred, and this congregation might flourish to the benefit of all.  

The choir sang Ave Maria as the small collection bag was passed around the congregation. Members of the congregation who preferred not to make an annual

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188 Excerpt from service conducted by R MacPherson on 8/12/13, when he gave an address “Full of Grace: Reimagining Mary”.

189 Interview Notes, November 2008. One congregant explained that the minister’s address allowed him to “react mentally and positively to various aspects of it and integrate that into what I am.”

190 Excerpt from Service conducted by R MacPherson on 8/12/13.
contribution to the church were encouraged to place their offering in the collection bag as it was passed around.¹⁹¹

**Third Hymn**

The final hymn was then sung by the congregation, accompanied by the choir. This was followed by the minister giving the benediction, which on this occasion reflected the Christmas theme of the rest of the service.

**Benediction**

The minister stated:

>This Christmastide let us rejoice
And celebrate our human worth
Proclaiming with united voice
The miracle of every birth. ¹⁹²

**Extinguishing the Chalice**

The minister formally ends his part in the service by extinguishing the chalice candle and the candles of sharing. The service then ends with the postlude.

**Postlude**

The choir sang a traditional Calypso carol with much enthusiasm. Afterwards, the congregation applauded the choir for its performance and the service was formally over.

Once the service was finished, congregants started to move around to talk to other members of the congregation. The door to the kitchen was opened and refreshments were prepared. People remained in the pews for ten minutes or so, talking to those near them. Others gathered into small groups deep in conversation. Several members of the congregation approached me and wanted to chat about how the study was progressing or to make comment about the content of the minister’s address.

¹⁹³ The Offertory was an addition to this part of the service. Previously, there was a bowl positioned in the foyer of the Church in which congregants could place any contributions. There was now much more focus on the receipt of funds for the church, a change of attitude which was due to several factors; including changes in membership, committee of management, church officers and the appointment of a new minister. This apparent focus on receipt of funds could be confronting to some members of the congregation, particularly those who were not financially secure.

¹⁹² Excerpt from Service conducted by R MacPherson on 8/12/13.
This service of worship was held during the traditional Christian season of Advent. It should be noted though that the Unitarian Church in South Australia doesn’t have a fixed liturgical calendar. This can be contrasted with the Anglican Church of Australia, for example, where principal holy days such as Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, All Saints’ Day, Christmas, Epiphany, the Baptism of Jesus, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are all observed. Nevertheless, Unitarians still keep some Christian celebrations such as Christmas and Easter Sunday.

Although these days are not necessarily considered holy days, they still form part of the church calendar. The order of service is not usually changed on these occasions but the minister’s address and readings follow a theme associated with the celebration, albeit with a Unitarian interpretation of its significance. However, there are some observances which are uniquely Unitarian and these occasions are now described. The first of these celebrations is the flower communion.

### 2.1.2 Flower Communion

This service is an annual event which is celebrated in Unitarian churches throughout the world. In South Australia, this service involves members of the congregation bringing a flower and placing it in a common receptacle when they arrive. At the end of the service, a basket with all the flowers is brought around to everyone in the congregation. Each congregant takes home a flower other than the one which they have brought themselves.

The service follows the usual order of service, but the minister’s address typically focuses on the theme of the flower communion and its instigator, Norbert Capek—the founder of Czech Unitarianism. Capek, who championed freedom and justice, was executed at the Dachau Concentration Camp during the Second World War.

So the service is primarily a celebration of the bravery of a Unitarian who fought for social justice and paid the ultimate price, but it also has other meanings. The minister suggested that it was also a celebration of beauty, justice and community.
The giving and receiving of flowers though symbolises more than this. The following short excerpt from the minister’s address during one such service indicates this further meaning.

*Let us rejoice in our unique colours, aromas, and sounds.*

These different flowers symbolized that each person was a unique individual who had gathered with other unique individuals to share this uniqueness. It was, therefore, also a celebration of both individuality and the value of community. The diversity of flowers also symbolized the diversity of ideas held among members of the congregation. The act of giving and receiving flowers was symbolic of how each individual both received from, and gave, spiritual insights to others in the congregation. In addition, by stressing the importance of taking home a different flower from the one which was brought, it demonstrated that members of the congregation should be open to new ideas.

### 2.1.3 Water Communion/Ingathering Service

This service is held after the end of the summer holidays to welcome back those members of the congregation who were absent during the summer break and the minister, who returns from annual leave. It also heralds the resumption of the ordinary church calendar. Members are typically asked to bring a small vial of water taken from where they spent their summer holidays, and pour it into a communal bowl at a designated time during the service. The minister then stirs the water, symbolizing the bringing back of gifts from afar and offering them to the community. During one such service, there was a guided meditation in which the following words were spoken by the minister:

*We gather here as a community of people who are more than categories. We gather here—each ministering to the other, meeting one another's strength, encouraging wholeness. We give thanks for this extraordinary blessing—the gathering together of separate, unique individuals as one whole, one body, our church. Here may our minds stretch, our hearts open, our spirits deepen... May all that we have received over the gift that is summer be held here, protected, watched over, nourished and encouraged to the benefit of our blessed community.*

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193 Excerpt from Rev Jo Lane’s Address Flower Communion Service 18/11/07.

194 Extract from Ingathering Service conducted by Rev Jo Lane on 1/2/09.
Similar to the flower communion, the ingathering service stresses the value of the coming together of individuals into community.

### 2.1.4 AGM Sunday

The Adelaide church, like many other Unitarian churches, combines their annual general meeting with a service of worship which precedes the meeting. There is usually a large congregational turn out for this important event. The service follows the usual form but the minister’s address often focuses on the topics of democracy, freedom and discernment. Democratic process is very important to Unitarians and this was demonstrated by the minister commenting on one AGM Sunday: “The nearest thing Unitarians have to a holy day is election day.” Hand-in-hand with voting came the process of discernment; and Unitarians, the congregation was told, “Must discern what decision leads to the promotion of ‘the good’.”

### 2.1.5 All Heretics Day

This was a service designed to celebrate the Unitarian history of heresy, i.e., notions which were contrary to accepted mainstream ideas of Christianity. During these services, members of the congregation have taken part by reading out transcripts on heretics. Members of the congregation have been encouraged repetitively on these occasions to “carry forward the gifts of Freedom, Reason and Tolerance, and our glorious tradition of heresy.”

### 2.1.6 Mid-Winter Solstice Service

The church also held some more unusual services such as an evening celebration of mid-winter solstice. The service commenced with all the members of the congregation standing in the foyer and then filing into the darkened church one at a time carrying lit candles. At the same time, a procession of singers also carrying

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195 Extract from AGM Sunday Service address by Minister R MacPherson, 30/10/11.
196 Unitarians such as John Biddle, a pioneer in British Unitarianism; Dr Channing, a Unitarian theologian from USA; Thomas Fyshe Palmer, a Unitarian minister and political reformer who was transported to the penal colony of New South Wales; Martha Turner, who was minister of the Melbourne Unitarian Church in the nineteenth century; and contemporary “heretic”, Tim Berners-Lee (inventor of the world wide web) have all been mentioned as “heretics”.
197 Fieldwork notes.
198 Winter Solstice service conducted by Rev Jo Lane 21/6/09. This service was held only once even though it appeared to have been thoroughly enjoyed by participants. This was due to a combination of factors including a change of minister, changes in the worship committee, and the loss of pivotal members of the congregation.
lit candles entered the church through another door. The impressive entrance of participants into the church was designed to set the scene for the rest of the proceedings.

The pews were arranged in a “u” shape with trestles set out with plates and forks. This was in readiness for the communal meal of home cooked stew. The eating of this food, which could be described as peasant fare, was accompanied by the drinking of mulled wine. This repast was enjoyed by the congregation and there was much talking and socializing whilst consuming food and wine. When the food and wine had been ingested, the minister rang a bell to signify that socializing was over and that the formal proceedings were to follow.

The minister stood near the pulpit and was wearing a long black coat, a scarf and a large sparkling brooch. She gave no address to the congregation but read out some prepared material on welcoming “the dark” and referred to the rituals of various religious traditions, such as the Hindu Divali/Dipavali Festival of Light, Buddhist celebrations and ancient pagan rites; all of which welcomed the winter and gave thanks for food.

This mid-winter celebration was held at the Unitarian Meeting House which is the major venue for worship. The second venue for worship is the Shady Grove chapel which is situated in the Adelaide hills and is closely associated with the city church. Its congregation meets on the first Sunday of each month for a vespers service and jointly with the Adelaide congregation quarterly and on Christmas Eve.

### 2.2 Shady Grove Chapel

Shady Grove chapel is situated about ten minutes’ drive out of the historic Adelaide hills township of Hahndorf. The road to the chapel marks a departure from the busyness associated with Hahndorf as the road is not well sign-posted; and although most of the road is paved, it still has gravel sections. The chapel cannot be seen from the road but there is a small sign alongside a laneway, indicating its existence. The lane leading to the chapel grounds is surrounded by native plants and overhanging gums.199 On the left, at the end of the lane, is the historic Unitarian

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199 Members of the church are encouraged to be involved in a bush care initiative which maintains the native plants and removes any non-native species, particularly in the cemetery section.
graveyard and straight ahead a small hostel which has basic amenities. This building is used for after service refreshments and congregational shared meals. A small walking path then leads to the right, past the hostel and towards the historic chapel.

The chapel building is of simple design and seats about seventy people. It is situated in a delightful bush land setting. On the small table at the front of the inside of the chapel, there is a large candle which is lit to mark the beginning of the service. There are also candles on the old wooden organ, which is played by a member of the Adelaide congregation during services, as well as two candles on the pulpit and more on the low window sills.

On its walls there are three framed photographs of South Australian pioneer Unitarians responsible for building the school house which was subsequently converted into a place of worship. These photographs are remarkable in themselves as they are in such a prominent position in the chapel and seem to define it. A small inscription on the pulpit, states that it was donated to the church as a dedication to the granddaughter of one of its founding fathers. This inscription further exemplifies the historical family connections with the building.

2.2.1 Vesper Services

The Shady Grove chapel is much loved by Adelaide Unitarians and some congregants regularly attend services there. I attended a vesper service with a congregant from the Adelaide church who accompanied me for the trip to the Adelaide hills. Two official greeters were outside the chapel to greet us as we arrived. A musician with a stringed instrument was positioned inside the door and began to play as arrivals were taking their seats. This added to the charm of the setting. There appeared to be no mains electricity to the building and the service was held by candlelight.

There was a scent of incense in addition to the scent of the gums outside in the surrounding bush-land; the outline of which was still visible in the fading daylight through the small low windows. The chapel has no grand piano or impressive organ, but there was a small organ for musical accompaniment. An impressive flowering eucalypt floral arrangement added decoration. There was a feeling of relaxation and informality among the gathered congregation, but also a sense that
this was a special, and perhaps, sacred space. This sense was heightened by the presence of the heritage-listed cemetery nearby which contained graves of many of the pioneer families.

When it appeared that no more congregants were going to arrive, the musician ceased playing and the minister stood and walked to the pulpit. He welcomed the thirty people who were now seated on the wooden pews. Those present were reminded that this chapel had been used for the purposes of worship for at least one hundred and fifty years. A member of the congregation was then asked to light the chalice candle and to read the opening words.

The service which followed was substantially the same order of service used by Adelaide Unitarians and the minister’s address was certainly at its core, but the proceedings were conducted more informally. Perhaps this was because of the more intimate setting. The minister still stood at the pulpit, but there was no chancel in the small chapel and so the pulpit was closer to the congregation. The informal nature of the gathering was further exemplified by the bushland setting and by the relaxed sharing of food after the service.

2.2.2 Joint Services

In addition to the vesper services, joint services with the Adelaide congregation are held at Shady Grove quarterly. On one occasion, when the service was conducted by the visiting president of the Unitarian General Assembly, there were about forty people present. Prior to the commencement of the service, the minister of the Adelaide church was presented with a white chalice badge, which was given only to Unitarian ministers. The congregation applauded approvingly after the presentation. The minister of the Adelaide church then returned to her seat in the pew and played no further official part in the service, whilst the guest minister welcomed those present with the following words:

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\text{To a day of hope today and a day of promise, to a place of peace and a place of comfort, to a journey towards truth and justice, welcome to a community of love and courage that will help us along our way today.}
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200 This is the governing body of the Unitarian Church in the U.K.

201 Excerpts from Father’s Day Service held 6/9/09 and conducted by the Rev Bob Wightman and his wife, Mary.
This joint service between the two congregations was held on Father’s Day. The visiting minister lit the chalice and told the attendees: “This chapel was somewhere to come to share, to learn, to speak, to listen and to grow together in the spirit of peace, harmony and also love.” Members of the congregation were then invited to come up to the front of the church and light a candle. The minister explained: “This was a church which interpreted the truth in the terms of its own times, and challenges its own times and its terms of the truth: a church that inspires thoughtful living.”

A member of the congregation read the children’s story with theatrical flair. One father stood up and took several flash photos of his children who were sitting with the storyteller at the front of the church. The congregation applauded at the end of the storytelling. The children were then led outside to do their supervised activities. A musical interlude followed and all the men in the congregation were given a small bar of chocolate to celebrate Father’s Day.

The wife of the visiting minister, who was also the National President of the U.K. Unitarian Women’s League, approached the pulpit and brought greetings from the League’s central committee in the U.K. The visiting minister then returned to the pulpit to introduce the next hymn before giving a short address. The service then ended with a final hymn and the benediction. After the service, the congregation enjoyed a shared lunch and conversation. Much effort had been put into providing an appetizing array of food.

There are clear differences between services held here and those held at the Adelaide Unitarian meeting house. As with the two larger Quaker meetings for worship, the most obvious difference is that the spaces in which worshipping activities are held or conducted are quite aesthetically different. The aesthetics of the building undeniably display a uniquely South Australian Unitarian historical presence, but in a different way from the Adelaide Unitarian Meeting House. The contemporary styled Adelaide building celebrates its past with its memorial stained glass.

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202 Fieldwork notes.

203 Older members of the Adelaide congregation reminisce about get-togethers at Shady Grove attended in their childhood and youth. They remember these occasions with fondness and retell how young congregants would play tennis in the grounds after the service.
glass windows and grand organ, and its diversity, with the eclecticism demonstrated in its artistic embellishments. All this is absent in the Shady Grove Chapel which is an historic building with furnishings that reflect its past. As such it has an intimate, less formal milieu. The chapel was not built by disaffected members of the Adelaide church but by early Unitarian settlers who lived in the hills. There are continuing family connections with the descendants of those early settlers and no sense of competitiveness with Adelaide Unitarians.

Undoubtedly, factors such as location, officiating minister, and members of the congregation, all ensure that no service is quite the same as another; however, the basic form of the service is common to all. Although there are services, such as the Winter Solstice celebration, which do not follow the usual order of service, such occasions are the exception.

Several families with young children have become regular attendees and this has changed the composition of the congregations. This shift seems to have occurred at about the same time as the commencement of the tenure of the second minister. This has resulted in younger families having more influence within the group and the children taking centre stage on occasion. This has provided an enhanced sense of community which is highly valued by congregants.

One older congregant expressed the following views which demonstrate this point:

*Some people may go to the Church because the music is so good…but I also enjoy other things like the children’s story and the candles of joy and concern, I think that is a very important part in thinking you are part of a community.*

Undoubtedly, one of the major reasons most people attend services is to hear the minister’s address. Quaker ministry is not delivered as oratory and is heartfelt. The Unitarian minister, on the other hand, is a trained orator and a paid employee of the church. The South Australian Unitarian congregation has prided itself in having a professionally trained minister. Their ministers have been articulate and academic in their approach to conducting services and in the preparation, and presentation, of their address. In addition, each minister has a different style and

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204 Extracted from fieldwork notes.
205 Often ministers have undertaken theological education at Colleges situated in Manchester or Oxford, as no training has been available in Australia.
this is reflected in the content of their addresses, minor changes made in the order of service and types of celebrations held.

There are also marked differences in style, professionalism and content when members of the congregation take the service. This happens when the minister is unavailable. It is an occasion enjoyed by the congregants as this provides an opportunity to learn about a fellow congregant’s views on religion. Members do not always agree with what their fellow congregants say from the pulpit but it is generally understood that attendees should be able to express different views, and much appreciated when special effort is put into the content and presentation of the address.

Quakers don’t usually discuss individual ministry after meeting for worship but Unitarians often discuss aspects of the service and, in particular, the content of the address. This discussion usually takes place with the person sitting alongside them and it is usually because the address is particularly thought-provoking, well-crafted or informative. If views diverge sharply from what Unitarianism promotes, people can show their distaste. On several occasions, people have walked out of such addresses, but this is not usual.

A congregant remarked that one of the advantages of being a member of the Unitarian church is that there is no compulsion to agree with what is said in the pulpit and the speaker can be challenged in a polite manner. The address is considered a personal statement by the person presenting it and a diversity of views is encouraged because it is believed that the more views to which the members of the congregation are exposed, the more likely they will get closer to their own personal truth.

3. Rites of Passage

The minister expressed his view that rites of passage are very important in an address he gave to the Adelaide congregation:

> From earliest recorded time, and across all cultures, humans have regarded the beginning of living companioned as one of the central experiences of life, right up there with the significance of birth, coming of age, and death. In the flow of life’s many days these are days which distinguish themselves from others, days when we reach significant junctions, important transitions in our lives.
Over time and across cultures, humans have rightly collected and ritualized actions and words which proclaim the importance of these experiences...

Like a hand painting on a cave wall, such ceremonies proclaim “We are here and what we do here is significant.”

Since people of every age and clime have marked these passages, they constitute common a human will to see our lives whole, and take our actions seriously. This broad perspective on rites of passage is the UU starting point for ceremonies like...weddings.

This view can be contrasted with that expressed by an experienced member of the Adelaide Quaker community:

We don’t have any rites of passage at all. There are no rites of passage and the reason why we don’t is because it is an inward religion and God is supposed to speak to the individual so you don’t have to have outward ceremonies to do that.

Unitarians welcome outsiders coming to the Unitarian Church for rites of passage such as weddings or naming ceremonies. It is attractive to outsiders because they are given the freedom of choosing their favourite readings, hymns and music as well as their own vows. A Quaker wedding is intended for members and long-term attendees; however, a Unitarian wedding is not so restricted. It is primarily a private family celebration and attendance by other members of the Unitarian community is not expected.

It is generally accepted that the couple should write their own wedding ceremony with the advice and guidance of the minister. The couple are given a lot of freedom in their choice of wording and symbolism, provided the content isn’t provocative as it is considered that the planning process is the best preparation for making a commitment to the relationship. It is expected that the couple be seriously committed to the relationship.

Historically, Unitarians were probably encouraged to marry fellow members of the congregation but there were no serious ramifications if they did not. Undoubtedly, Unitarians also had extended networks of family and friends. The Unitarian feminist network in nineteenth century Birmingham, for example, was based not only on religious and friendship ties, but also, with the kinship ties which bound many of the well-respected middle-class Unitarian families. These families often

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206 Excerpts from an Address to the Adelaide Unitarian Church 14/10/12 by Pastor Rob MacPherson

207 Extracted from fieldwork notes.
shared social, economic and political values which underpinned a practical commitment to reform. According to Plant (2000:724), Unitarians developed such networks because they were barred from many positions of power.

Weddings are sometimes held in the Unitarian Meeting House for people not involved with the congregation, these events are not publicized and are considered private ceremonies. Although rites of passage are considered important by Unitarians, there was only one opportunity for me to attend a Unitarian wedding. As with the Quaker ceremony, this marriage was between two people who were connected with the church community.

3.1 The Wedding

The bride was a member of a well-respected South Australian Unitarian family and had long-term membership of the church. Despite this, there were only three other people present who were regular members of the congregation, and one of these belonged to the bride’s family. This was quite different from the Quaker wedding which I attended. It was evident that the Unitarian wedding was not considered a congregational celebration; whereas the Quaker wedding was a celebration for its community as well as the couple’s circle of friends and family.

The doorman who greeted visitors as they arrived was a well-known member of the church. He recognized me and when his duties were complete came and sat next to me in the pews. The wedding party was already seated in the front pews in the nave and remained seated there for the whole service, only standing to make their vows. The bride and groom were both middle aged and dressed formally. Although the church was not particularly decorated for the occasion, there were two displays of flowers in the chancel, along with two glasses of wine and the symbolic chalice which were positioned on a table.

The minister sounded a gong, which indicated that the wedding service was about to begin. The pianist stopped playing and the congregation fell silent. After a short period of silence, the pianist began to play again whilst the minister lit the chalice.
The service began with words from the *Song of Solomon*:

> For, Lo! The winter is past, the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land.  

The minister introduced herself, and then welcomed those present on behalf of the Unitarian Church of South Australia. The purpose of this gathering, she explained, was to acknowledge, witness and celebrate this wedding which was a public recognition of the private experience of the couple’s love. She offered the couple encouragement in contemplating their ability to allow for shifts of the imagination. This, she said, was necessary for the development of deep soulful relationships, and this celebration of marriage was to be a formalization of their commitment to a lifelong relationship. The bride and groom were congratulated by the minister on their strong sense of self and their pride in each other’s talents and achievements; as well as their commitment to working together and taking their talents out into the world and using them for the greater good of humanity.

The minister then addressed the congregation, explaining that it was fitting that the couple’s family and friends were gathered to witness and participate in this marriage, as the qualities that the couple brought to it had their foundations in the friendship and guidance of those present. The couple, she stated, would continue to draw its form from such associations, as well as from the guidance of family and friends who were not able to be gathered for the wedding. A candle was then lit for those who could not be present.

Two young children were then invited to come forward to sing *The Man with the Child in His Eyes.* The children returned to their seats and a member of the congregation was invited to come forward and give the first Reading, *The Two Pigeons,* after which the congregation was asked to sing *Morning has Broken.*

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208 *Song of Solomon,* Chapter Two, Verses 11-12. Excerpt from Wedding Ceremony held at Unitarian Church by Rev. J. Lane on 18/12/10.

209 Popular song written by Kate Bush.

210 Reading by Charles Aznavour based on *Les Deux Pigeons,* a 17th century fable by Jean de La Fontaine.

211 Popular song by Cat Stevens from the album *Teaser and the Firecat,* 1971—a song which is in the Unitarian Hymn Book.
The minister offered advice to the couple to “let the winds of heaven dance between you” in order to allow spaces in their life together. The times of brightness and shadow experienced through life were then symbolized with the couple sipping wine—both bitter and sweet. The couple remained seated as each one sipped this wine. At this stage, a few people left their seats and walked around the church to take photos of the couple.

The minister invited the bride’s father to come forward and read a passage from the New Testament which detailed the virtues of love. The attributes of the bride and groom: kindness, good sense of humour and love of life and freedom, were then listed by the minister before she closed that part of the ceremony with the following advice:

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance...and is built on some of the same rules.... There is no place here for the possessive clutch, the clinging arm, the heavy hand, only the barest touch in passing, now arm in arm, now face to face, now back to back. It does not matter which because they know they are partners moving to the same rhythm, creating a pattern together, and being nourished by it... Lightness of touch and living in the moment are gracefully intertwined. Amen.

The pianist played Fur Elise and then the minister read out the legally required declarations to be made by the bride and groom. She requested that the couple come to the front of the church whilst she explained that marriage according to Australian law was the union of one man and one woman voluntarily entered into for life to the exclusion of all others. She then asked whether anyone present had any lawful reason why the bride and groom should not be legally married; asking the bride and groom separately whether they were legally free to marry. The bride and groom were then asked to join hands and face each other and repeat the following words after the minister:

I call upon these persons here present to witness that I ...do take thee to be my lawful wedded wife/husband. You are the person I love. I want to care for you, to respect you, to honour you and I will try to do so for the rest of my life.

The minister then added the following words:

In the presence of this good company by the power of our love, because you have exchanged vows of commitment we now recognise you as married....

212 Excerpt from Wedding Ceremony held at Unitarian Church by Rev. J. Lane on 18/12/10.
213 Excerpts from Wedding Ceremony held at Unitarian Church by Rev. J. Lane on 18/12/10.
The groom was told that he may kiss the bride and this was accompanied by loud clapping from the congregation. The minister stated that the register was now going to be signed. The pianist began to play again and the wedding guests started to talk quietly among themselves. The minister explained that the couple were going directly to the wedding reception and would not be stopping in the church or its grounds. The wedding guests were asked to wait to congratulate the couple at the reception venue and to now remain seated. She then thanked all present for sharing in the couple’s special celebration and wished the wedding guests an enjoyable day.\textsuperscript{214}

As soon as the wedding party left, the minister said to me, “Was that different?” Others commented that the service was different and beautiful, and the music was wonderful.

Another rite of passage which is celebrated by the community is the welcoming of new members.

3.2 Welcoming New Members

Becoming a member entails filling out a form and paying a membership fee. The minister usually talks to perspective members about Unitarianism and then the membership application is discussed at a Committee of Management meeting. A prospective member is encouraged to have a personal commitment to finding religious “truth”, to seek justice, and to foster a loving relationship with other members of the Unitarian congregation.

Membership confers voting rights at the Annual General Meeting, and lapses if the small annual membership fee is not paid. There is a mentor system in place for new members to assist them and answer any questions they might have regarding the church.

\textsuperscript{214} Excerpt from Wedding Ceremony held at Unitarian Church by Rev. J. Lane on 18/12/10.
The welcoming of new members is incorporated within an ordinary service of worship several times a year. I was present during one of these services and the minister welcomed new members with the following words:

We don’t have a creed for you to pledge allegiance to, but we do agree that we must be tolerant of one another’s varying understandings of the religious life, while we work together for these aims. You have gifts, we ask you to share them with us in this quest, as we pledge to share ours with you...

The new members were then invited to come forward and stand with the minister at the front of the church facing the congregation, where they were then introduced to those assembled. The minister continued with his welcome:

With joy we welcome you as members of the congregation. We do not ask you to abandon anything in your past, or to surrender any conviction forged by your experience as a price of our fellowship. We ask only your willingness to share with us the richness of your life as we will share ours with you. Welcome to all of you, with all our hearts.

The minister shook the hands of the two new members. The congregation then clapped approvingly as they were given a badge before returning to their seats in the pews.

3.3 Welcome service for new Pastor

When the incumbent minister did not renew her employment contract, this caused much soul-searching for the members of the church and its management committee. There was considerable division among the membership regarding the circumstances surrounding the minister’s decision. This disquiet continued during the process of searching for, and appointment of, a new minister. Some well-regarded stalwarts left the church in protest because they believed that the usual procedure was not followed. There was considerable relief in the congregation when a new transitional pastor was officially appointed despite earlier protest. He was well-known by the congregation as he had often held services in a lay capacity.

A welcome service was held which was led by the president of the church and attended by the congregation. The church president welcomed the congregation to a special service which she stated was an acknowledgment of the commencement of the transitional minister’s one year pastorate with the church. She read out a

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215 Excerpt from ‘Welcome to new members’ from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia conducted by R MacPherson on 16/12/12.
message which was addressed to the new minister from the President of the Australian and New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association (ANZUUA). He used words of welcome to the pastor and purposefully reminded the Adelaide Unitarian community that they were not a uniform member congregation:

We are a liberal church of diverse individuals and families where you come together to celebrate your unity as well as your diversity. In society which has been atomised and where traditional ties are broken down Unitarians offer a welcoming sense of unity and that is certainly one of the most valuable things that we can do as we gather in a community to support one another’s spiritual journeys...

The pastor was told he must offer an unconditional welcome to all people of goodwill regardless of religious and cultural background and he was reminded that his pastorate must be shared with the congregation. The church president then asked the new pastor to come forward, as she gave him this charge:

Today as the President of the Unitarian Church of SA it is my privilege to welcome you to be our pastor in a year’s transitional ministry. Your role is to lead by example and also by enabling people to give expression to their beliefs in acts of love in the world. You are not called just to be a helper, a carer, you are called to exercise leadership in caring. You will tell the truth, you will trumpet at injustice and others will follow you. You will stride out with grace in the complex world in which we live. Do not allow yourself to be penned up by those forces who would reduce your pastorship to niceness and kindness.

The work to be done is endless and you can only do your part. This congregation also has its part to play to support you in your care of us and others...

We ask you to lead us in caring service, to hold the hand of the needy, to sit with the dying, weep with the bereaved for the spirit everywhere urges the fruits of compassion.

I welcome you to our congregation as pastor.

The pastor then delivered his testimony to the congregation:

I have been appointed pastor at a time of revolution, of conflict in this church, in this community – a passage of play that would have split and finished other churches...

Now how can I not yet fully ordained hope to rise to that challenge and make a difference for the good in this community? ...Like bread, everyday ministry is the staff of spiritual life and is made and eaten not magically but by the sweat of one’s brow. And although we as Unitarians have no communion ritual, the bread of ministry is offered for all to partake regardless of whether you support or approve of the person offering it. That bread is offered anyway...

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216 Words spoken and delivered by church president at the ‘Welcome Service for the New Pastor’ held at the Unitarian Church of South Australia on 16/10/11.
Ministry ... is a professional relationship: another one of those complex human relationships but one which I vow will be about mutuality rather than control, about give and take rather than power...

The verb 'minister' means to serve... 217

The minister stated that his authority to undertake this role came not only from the church’s elected officials who have appointed him or his approval by the British Unitarian Church for training; but also, because “Unitarian tradition says that religious authority is located nowhere than the individual conscience.” By undertaking this service to the church, the newly appointed minister hoped, he said, for personal transformation. He stated: “If any religious practice isn’t in the business of transforming you, it is no religious practice at all.” The welcome ceremony then concluded with a hymn, benediction and postlude, as in the usual order of service.

Several months later, a Special General Meeting of Members was held to look at the motion put at the previous Annual General Meeting that the committee charged with finding a new minister be disbanded, and that the congregation accept the transitional minister as a settled minister. This was considered a controversial move and upset some members. However, a secret ballot was duly held and the vote for the motion proved successful. This then ended a very divisive period for the church and highlighted how central the minister is to the spiritual lives of the members of the South Australian Unitarian Church.

Another much loved “welcoming event” at the church is the Baby Naming Ceremony—the main purpose of which is to welcome the baby into the wider family of the church and to support the family in their nurturing of the spirituality of the growing child. Traditionally, this ceremony draws on the parents’ values and hopes for their child’s future, which are usually in line with those of the Unitarian Church in principle. The minister may give the parents a choice of a range of different readings or may leave it to the parents to make their own choice.

217 Extracted from Words Spoken by Pastor Rob Macpherson at his “Welcome Service for the New Pastor” held at the Unitarian Church of South Australia on 16/10/11.
3.4 Baby Naming Ceremony

One mild Spring morning, I arrived about five minutes before the start of the service. There were about fifty people already seated, including several young families with children. The printed order of service indicated that this morning’s service was to include a naming ceremony for the baby son of members of the congregation. The liturgical form was the same as an ordinary service, with the naming ceremony forming part of the “Growing and Binding Up Community” section. It was introduced with the following words by the minister:

We are fortunate today to witness and share in a special rite of passage to bless and to name and to welcome……..into the family of love and of life – a ceremony that is both ancient and timeless.

In all parts of the earth, and from the earliest days of recorded history, parents have brought their children at an early age to a place of worship to share their joy and dedication with those closest to them.

Traditionally, the element of water has played a symbolic part in the ceremony, for all life has risen from the waters, and it is through water that life is sustained.

Traditionally this also is the time to recognise a child by name, for it is by name that each of us is acknowledged as a separate person unique in all the universe as any snowflake.

The flower we shall present to the child is also a symbol and memento of the individuality we wish to affirm.218

The church president then came forward and made the following statement:

The coming of a child into the family circle widens its dimensions far beyond the simple addition of a new member. It brings the miracle of a new personality struggling for its own fulfilment. Therefore it is quite natural for us to be thrilled at the sight of new birth.

However, as the years pass it is too easy for us to take our children for granted. Whatever their ages they deserve the tender love and firm guidance, which only we as parents, teachers, and friends can give.

Moreover, these children have a right to a faith in themselves, in the story of mankind, in their particular heritage, and in the vast universe-home which is theirs. It is to symbolise these possibilities and responsibilities that we have come to this ceremony.

The child’s parents looked around the congregation, and at the church entrance, nervously. Apparently, the godmother had not yet arrived. Within moments, the godmother arrived and the minister smiled in relief. The godmother did not have time to even sit down before the minister called her forward, much to the merriment

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218 Excerpts from a Naming Ceremony and Service held at the Unitarian Church of South Australia and conducted by R MacPherson on 24/11/13
of the congregation. With a flourish, the minister invited the child’s godmother to come forward. He said:

An old Jewish proverb says: “In times of trouble, go to the friend of your father, go to the friend of your mother.” From this ancient wisdom comes the idea of godparents, special people who dedicate themselves to watching out for the welfare of other people’s children. It is a noble and loving tradition to which the godmother commits herself to today…..

Do you then, (the godmother), to the best of your abilities, intend to supplement the care and love of these parents, both in the day-to-day development of the child, and especially in the event of any extraordinary need?219

The godmother replied: “I do.” The minister then turned to the child’s parents and sister and asked them to step forward. The minister told them of the blessings and woes of being parents and a sibling, and the important bonds formed by these relationships.

He then addressed the parents:

Do you, then...standing in the midst of your family and friends, commit yourselves to the upbringing of this child, dedicating yourselves to make his a healthy body, a reasoning mind, and a feeling and luminous spirit?

The parents replied: “We will.” The minister then held the child and gave the sibling a rose to hold. The minister then delivered the “Water Blessing”.

The baby, mother and father, and friends and relations bring with them blessings to this water. Spirit of Life that flows through all things: add your blessing to this water, and teach the baby and us its wisdom. Teach the baby the wisdom of water, that life will have its falls....

Teach the baby the wisdom of water, that each fall is finite, each ends in contact with earth. May the baby be ever reminded that we gathered here today are as earth for him. May his parents, friends and relations cushion his falls. For we here gathered are the ground of blessed community for him.

Teach the baby the wisdom of water that he will rise again from each fall, sometimes like mist breathed from the trees, sometimes like a geyser spouting from the earth, sometimes as imperceptibly as evaporation from the sea.

Spirit of Life and Love, may you be with the baby as he moves with us through life. Nourish him in the dry times and flow into him the simple abundances of life, loving, patience and compassion.220

219 Excerpts from a Naming Ceremony and Service held at the Unitarian Church of South Australia and conducted by R MacPherson on 24/11/13
The minister took the baby in his arms to a large blue bowl which contained water. He put one hand into the water, cupping some water in his hand. He then poured some of the water onto the baby’s head, wetting the baby’s head whilst saying: “Blessed be this child.” This he did three times. He then asked the child’s sister to give him the rose and he presented it to the baby, who tried to grab it and then push it away. Undeterred, the Minister smiled as the congregation laughed, and he then said:

*Baby, on behalf of those gathered here today, I give you this rose.*
*We have taken the thorns from the rose, but we cannot, alas, take them from your life. In the journey of life that lies before you, you will find sublime beauty and stinging pain are mingled, as your parents’ love is mingled in you.*

*But the loving community gathered here today—your parents, relations and trusted friends, and this church—we pledge to do all we can to multiply those joys and divide those trials by our love and care of you.*

*This rose is but a token of the love that brought you into this world, and of the love that will sustain you through it. This rose may wither, but our dedication here will renew itself whenever you seek our fellowship.*

*And so baby (name is used), we welcome you among us. Would the congregation please recite the commitment on your order of service?*

The congregation recited the following words:

*We will delight in your accomplishments, we will share in your sorrows, and we will encourage you in every way as you grow into adulthood. And whatever may come to you, whether misfortune, affliction, or wrongdoing, we promise never to close our hearts against you.*

The minister then said: “This we pledge. Amen. Allow me to present…baby.”

The minister took the baby in his arms, and presented him to the congregation; stopping to allow members of the congregation to speak to, and touch, the baby. Whilst this was going on, a tape of *Little Man* by singer/songwriter, Tom Waits, was played.

The service then continued in its usual order. In his address to the congregation, the minister talked of the value of rites of passage. 221

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220 Excerpts from a Naming Ceremony and Service held at the Unitarian Church of South Australia and conducted by R MacPherson on 24/11/13

221 See page 184.
As the whole of a rite of passage like today is a sermon, the remarks will be brief. I would only add this thought: it’s a great pity that we do not mark the significant changes of our lives much anymore in the Post-Christian era, by lifting those threshold moments up to worth...

Something deep in our collective memory seems to know that ritual—a symbolic set of actions— is called for to help us cope with these changes. For these are changes that abide.

As UUs, our rituals are served a la carte, so to speak; they are what you want to make them. And so in not raising the significant changes in life to worth, not wanting to make something of a fuss (whether it involves church or not), to recognize life’s passing, we cheat ourselves of the opportunity to invest our own lives with a greater dimension, a dimension some might call spiritual or holy....

The minister then addressed the family and gave a blessing to the child to which the congregation replied: “Amen.”

3.5 Unitarian Practices on the Death of Member

The final rites of passage to be described are those surrounding the death of members.

3.5.1 Funeral Services

Not all funeral services are held in the church, but on this occasion, it was. A well-known, long-term member had died and the church nave was packed with his relatives and friends who were seated in the pews. Members of the congregation were seated in chairs under the annexe attached to the church.

The service was conducted by the minister, with the assistance of the minister emeritus and a member of the deceased’s family. It began with the usual lighting of the chalice but the rest of the service did not follow the usual order. The motif used by the minister was that of shared grief, but tempered with a sense of happiness for the deceased’s life, which was “well lived and productive.” The deceased had been a prolific artist, producing many works of art. The minister said that it was hard to encapsulate what being a Unitarian was; but nevertheless, the deceased had managed to do so. She talked of the healing power of art, and how the deceased’s

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222 Excerpts from an Address ‘Rites of passage: What’s in a Naming Ceremony?’ on 24/11/13 and conducted and written by R MacPherson.
work had comforted many people and praised his love of philosophical discussions, poetry and nature.\footnote{Extracts from a funeral service held for a church member at the Unitarian Church of South Australia by the Rev J lane on 1/4/08.}

After the service, wine and refreshments were served, and this was followed by a private burial later that afternoon at the Unitarian burial ground at Shady Grove.

### 3.5.2 Memorial Services

A well-attended memorial service was held for a local philanthropist who was a stalwart of the church and a fifth generation Unitarian. Government ministers were among the mourners to hear the minister describe the deceased as being “born into the Unitarian Church.” The deceased had pre-organized the order of service and chosen her own hymns and readings. She had worked as a physiotherapist during the Second World War and had been decorated for her service. She had supported the church generously: financially and practically with Sunday school duties, fundraising and charity work. It was said that her loss would be keenly felt among the congregation and the minister praised her for her commitment to the institution of Unitarianism. The minister stated:

\begin{quote}
Hers was a courage rooted in an unshakeable faith—faith in her humanitarian values which constituted her personal Unitarianism, and an uncommon faith in the institution of Unitarianism…the usual vagaries of an evolving, democratic church did not matter…In a truly free church, all would unfold as it must. Her unshakeable commitment was to principles— unseen, intangible, but real... That, my friends, is faith... If we would honour her memory, we as a church might emulate that faith she stood for, stood by, and stood upon, embodied by this Unitarian church and the values it has upheld. The condolence our community can offer to her family and friends today is our own unshakeable faith in it, and a commitment to carry on the work of this church she has so far advanced...\footnote{Extract from a Memorial Service for a Church Member held in the Adelaide Unitarian Church by Minister R MacPherson in March 2014, and reprinted in the April 2014 \textit{Adelaide Unitarian Newsletter}.}
\end{quote}

#### 3.5.3 Unmarked Graves Ritual

It was announced that a ceremony was to be held for the children of pioneer South Australian Unitarians who were buried in unmarked graves at the Shady Grove burial ground. I decided to attend even though it was a cold, rainy day and the water overflowing over the unpaved road leading to the Shady Grove Chapel grounds...
made the negotiation of potholes rather hazardous. It was good to reach the chapel which was being warmed with a radiator. Large candles placed on windowsills, and on the table at the front of the chapel, added a further welcome touch. The three framed photographs of the South Australian pioneer Unitarians who founded Shady Grove loomed large in the room and seemed to watch over the proceedings.

A combined service for members of the Adelaide and Shady Grove congregations was then held. Afterwards, the minister announced that there would be another short service held for the occupants of previously unmarked graves who were buried in the adjacent cemetery. She explained that many of these unmarked graves were for the infant children of nineteenth, and early twentieth century, South Australian Unitarians. She stated that there would be a short service in the chapel and then a walk with umbrellas, if needed, to the cemetery. There would be a walk past the graves to dedicate the children and babies who were not afforded a marked burial for so long. She requested that the congregation should remain in respectful silence whilst in the chapel and in the vicinity of the graves.

The minister gave members of the congregation the option of leaving the chapel if they didn’t wish to be part of this ceremony. About half the congregation left at that stage and the remainder stayed seated quietly.

The minister continued:

This is a special ceremony for the graves of our ancestors’ children who died and were put in unmarked graves... The mothers of these children are long gone but we carry the torch for them. We acknowledge these children now...Length of days is not what makes age honourable nor number of years a true measure of a life.

I am now going to go up to the cemetery and I will read out at various intervals the names of the children buried there and then I will say a prayer and say, “We will remember them.”

And then, if you could repeat after me, “We will remember them” and we will walk around where all these graves are...It is a symbolic walk.

Members of the congregation then filed out of the chapel and followed the minister up the steep path to the cemetery and around the graveyard in silence. The minister stopped at various grave sites and read out the names of children and stated: “We will not forget you.” The people repeated this and then the minister read out the following words, each line of which was repeated by the congregation:
In the rising of the sun and in its going down, (children’s names) we will remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter...we will remember them.
In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring...we will remember them.
In the blueness of the sky and the warm of summer...we will remember them.
In the rustling of leaves and the beauty of autumn...we will remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends...we will remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength...we will remember them.
When we are lost and sick of heart...we will remember them.
As long as we live they too shall live for they are now part of us as we remember them.225

In a further memorial to deceased members of the congregation, on All Souls Day, a service of remembrance was held to remember those members of the congregation who had died during the previous twelve months. As the minister called out the names of loved members of the church who had died that year, it was clear that many members of the congregation were unable to hide their grief. That service of remembrance was in stark contrast to the “unmarked graves ritual”, where some of the children had been dead for over one hundred years and the participants did not appear to be descendants of their families. That ritual was to honour life itself—no matter how brief.

4. Conclusion

The practices of the Quaker and Unitarian communities are quite different, particularly in their respective use of sound. Quakers use silence in their practices even in instances where there appears to be no need for it. Whereas Quakers are comfortable with the sound of silence, Unitarians are much more comfortable when there is an abundant use of words, music and song. Unitarian services and rites of passage are eclectic in nature and draw on a wide range of sources. They are neither endowed with simplicity nor elaboration; but display a certain consistency in their practice, and adherence to, Unitarian notions and values. Unlike the Quakers, spiritual leadership is provided by a minister. These dissimilarities raise the question of whether Quaker and Unitarian practices can both be considered rituals.

225 Extracted from a Service conducted by Rev Jo Lane at Shady Grove Unitarian Church on 6/9/10 for children buried in unmarked graves at Shady Grove Cemetery.
CHAPTER 5
RITUAL THEORY AND ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

The South Australian Quaker and Unitarian communities have different, and contrasting practices. I now consider whether because of these dissimilarities, both practices can be regarded as rituals. In order to do this, I compare three different approaches to the anthropology of ritual—communicative, functionalist, and constitutive and transformative—using the insights of Roy Rappaport, Don Handelman, Bruce Kapferer and Catherine Bell. Rappaport, for example, contends that ritual is a mode of communication, whereas Bell focuses on determining a particular framework for the analysis of ritual, placing emphasis on practice and relations of power. On the other hand, Handelman argues that ritual is constitutive, and Kapferer adds that it can enable transformation of life processes.

Following a review of these approaches to ritual, there will be a synthesis of their understanding to contrasting phenomena observed within the South Australian Quaker and Unitarian communities. I aim to show that Quaker and Unitarian worshipping and other practices are not just representational but actively constitutive of value. Moreover, I will demonstrate how the ideology they have adopted is practised. This will be done with regard to the ideas espoused by Louis Dumont on the concept of “modernity” and introverted and extraverted individualisms—notions which were first outlined in the Introduction.

2. Ritual as a Form of Communicative Action

The Unitarian service of worship has an outward form which is organised through a prepared order that uses silence only minimally. This can be seen in the following liturgy:
The service is very quickly established as being Unitarian through the minister’s choice of opening words and through the presence, and lighting, of the chalice; a widely used symbol in Unitarian churches. The chalice is lit at the beginning of the service and extinguished at its ending. The most identifiable feature of the service though is the abundant use of words, whether this be the careful choice of readings and hymns, or the crafted address presented by the minister.

The non-programmed form of worship used by South Australian Quakers is very different from the Unitarian service. Quakers do not consider their practice to be a ritual; on the contrary, as Collins states, “(they) can and do understand worship as not only ‘not ritual’, but as something more like its opposite” (2005:324). This self-understanding has arisen because worship takes place in a gathering in which there is no officiating minister, no prepared sermon, hymns or music. Instead, it is characterised by silence and stillness. There is no set format for ministry or apparent outward form of liturgy. These factors, therefore, raise the question of whether Quaker worship can be considered a form of communicative action.

2.1 Rappaport’s Approach

Roy Rappaport\textsuperscript{226} is an influential proponent of ritual as a form of communicative action. He defines ritual (1999:24) as denoting “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.” He (1999:31) then emphasises five features which he believes are universal, and indicates that these features allow ritual to be recognisable as such because they lie at the ritual’s surface rather than being hidden in symbolism.

\textsuperscript{226} Rappaport’s ethnography, \textit{Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People}, printed in 1968, was considered ground-breaking for its ideas on ritual regulation of human ecology. In 1979, he delved further into ritual and ecosystems in \textit{Ecology, Meaning, and Religion} as he focused on the role ritual played in Tsembaga social life, regulating relationships with their environment. He later conducted further research into ritual, religion and the sacred, and this led to his most important contribution to the anthropological treatment of ritual, \textit{Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity} which was released in 1999.
The first feature, according to Rappaport (1999:33), is that participants follow orders established by others. New parts may be subsequently added or its elements re-arranged, but the validation of previous performance is still maintained.

The second feature is adherence to form so that ritual is repetitive, stylized and held at specified times and places. Rappaport acknowledges (1999:34) that some rituals allow spontaneity, but others are more restrictive. In marriage celebrations, for example, he notes that invariant formal aspects such as the wording of traditional wedding vows are more dominant. The variant aspects, according to Rappaport, include the minister’s sermon, which he refers to as “mere embroideries, elaborating events.”

Rappaport suggests (1999:37) that ritual’s third feature is that it can have mutable invariance. He states that participants in a ritual all differ in their performance of liturgical orders and ultimately can choose whether to take part. So that even in the most invariant of liturgical orders, according to Rappaport, there are still possibilities for variation. Notwithstanding this, Rappaport posits (1999:40-41) that ritual flaunts its invariance as participants have limited scope to act in ways contrary to the ritual’s order otherwise they would be classed as disruptive or heretical.

The fourth feature is performance and Rappaport observes (1999:39) that without this feature there is no ritual. Participants though have different roles to perform. If there is a ritual specialist, such as a priest, that person plays a different role from congregants whose participation includes responding to the liturgy with silence, singing, dancing, kneeling, listening, or other activities.

Subsequent to making the point that ritual has mutable invariance, Rappaport notes (1999:50) his final feature of ritual, i.e., conformity to form, with emphasis on propriety and precision in ritual utterances.

Following from his insistence that these five features are universal, Rappaport distinguishes between self-referential and canonical messages transmitted during ritual proceedings. The example he provides (1999:54) of a canonical message is the wording used during the Catholic Mass. Here the message presented is invariant and encoded in the liturgical orders which have been performed on numerous occasions over a period of time, thereby transcending the present.
Although the message is invariant, individual ritual participants do vary. The messages they convey are self-referential and are dependent on the present circumstances and locality, as well as being limited to what variation is allowed by the liturgical order itself. He suggests (1999:55) that the canonical messages, on the other hand, represent the continuing aspects of universal orders.

According to Rappaport (1979:111,126), to participate in a liturgical order is to conform to its authority or directives. Its performance is comparable to public acceptance of the canonical messages, and this acceptance is a self-referential message to other members. A participant may harbour doubts about notions expressed in the liturgy, or be insincere, but these factors do not affect acceptance which is signalled by conformity. In Rappaport’s view (1979:194-5), acceptance does not ensure compliance with notions expressed therein, but it does mean that the participant feels obligated to act in a particular way.

Undoubtedly, Rappaport considers ritual as important for establishing conventions of obligation. Whereas Victor Turner, on the other hand, understands performance to be challenging social conventions rather than establishing them. So Rappaport advocates a different approach to ritual from that taken by Turner, even though there is some agreement. This is a point which is also made by Grimes (2006:142). Rappaport’s viewpoint implies that morality is thus linked to participation in liturgical orders as this entails commitment and obligation on behalf of participants—an observation also made by Lambek (2001:251) in his discussion of Rappaport’s stance.

Important for Rappaport’s argument (1999:346) is that sacredness, and how it is related to liturgy, is considered in terms of “ultimate sacred postulates” which are unquestionable. Although such postulates are commonly thought to be creeds or canons, he suggests that non-creedal “truths” can actually have the same quality of unquestionableness and sacredness. Undoubtedly, his view of religion and ritual has been strongly influenced by the ideas of Durkheim. Both theorists privilege the

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227 Rappaport’s (1979:192) use of the term “liturgical orders” in an earlier publication covers a wide area, including not only postulates and cosmological notions, but also, the organisation, form and regularity of rituals; in addition to rules for social action expressed in the postulates.
concept of “the sacred”, although for Rappaport, there is not a dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. Nevertheless, his focus (1999:371) is on the centrality of what is thought to be sacred by adherents and he believes this is found within religious discourse and the unquestionable postulates that are articulated in ritual.

Clearly, Rappaport concentrates on the more elaborate, invariant, formal rituals which focus on liturgy and his theory does not fully encompass the diversity of ritual forms, which is also a criticism levelled by Handelman (2004b:17). Nevertheless, Rappaport’s communicative action approach is still valuable in analysing religious practices. Therefore, his proposals will now be considered in an examination of Unitarian and Quaker practices.

2.2 Unitarian practices

Unitarians have neither creed nor canon but this absence is countered by multidimensional spirituality. The chalice, for example, symbolizes for some the courage of heretics who were martyred. For others, it symbolizes freedom of religion and values such as sharing and generosity. The chalice is not itself considered sacred but its value lies in the individual’s interpretation of its multi-layered symbolism, representing the canonical message of the shared stated principles; and in particular, the promotion of a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

There is inevitable tension between the celebration of a diversity of spiritual viewpoints, expressed both from the pulpit and individually by congregants, and the commonality needed to be shared by a community of worshippers. This tension is resolved in part in the ritual process itself; for example, in the symbolism of the chalice and in the Water Communion and Flower Communion services. And also, it is resolved by the shared stated principles of Unitarianism which are reinforced and expressed in readings and addresses. It is these shared stated principles, or sacred postulates, which give the service of worship its religious content. In Rappaport’s view (1999:278-281), where there is an absence of formal creed (as is the case with Unitarians) postulates can be implied rather than explicit; and

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228 Handelman further suggests that because different rituals have diverse internal complexity and self-organizational qualities, this can blur the distinction between what is considered ritual and non-ritual, thus making a universal definition of ritual, such as the one promoted by Rappaport, undesirable (2004b:17).
therefore, sanctity involves the attribute of unquestionableness imputed to these precepts.

In their services of worship, Unitarians clearly follow a liturgical order which has been established by others. Inevitably, elements of this order are varied from time to time, but for the most part, in Rappaport’s terms, “the sanction of previous performance is maintained” (1999:33). The service of worship is unquestionably a performative ritual. The minister plays the principal role, conducting the service and directing its performance. The address is the centrepiece of the performance—well prepared and presented in academic style. It is always informative and frequently includes a moral imperative.

Rappaport’s comment (1999:34) that in rites of passage, the minister’s sermons are insignificant elaborations, is not valid for Unitarians. This was evident in the remarks made by the minister in his address during a memorial service, when he called for the members of the church to emulate the faith and commitment of the deceased member. It was said that her faith stood upon, and embodied, the values upheld by the Unitarian Church. It was a call for other members “to now carry on the work of this church that (has) so far been advanced.”

During services, the performances of the instrumentalists are proficient and often entertaining. Various members of the congregation also play subsidiary roles as readers, storytellers, and sharers of personal joys and concerns. Congregants also play a crucial part in the worship process, sharing responsibility for upholding the proper conduct of the service by being attentive and by joining the hymn singing when required. They show approval or disapproval of what is being said by smiling, whispering, nodding, and fidgeting during the service.

Rappaport (1999:55) distinguishes between self-referential and canonical messages transmitted during ritual. Canonical messages, he states, are invariant whereas self-referential messages are conveyed by individual participants; and as such, are considered variant. Although in mainstream churches most of the messages transmitted are canonical; the messages within a Unitarian service of worship are both self-referential and canonical—interwoven together.

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229 See Note 219. Extract from a Memorial Service held by Unitarian Church. Minister R MacPherson.
In Rappaport’s terms, there can be no doubt that the service of worship is a ritual as it contains all of ritual’s features: liturgical order, regularity, performance and sacred postulates. Notwithstanding this, on what basis can the sermon itself be considered a ritual compared with other aspects of the service? Manifestly, there appears to be a different ritual weight attached to ritual activities within the Unitarian service of worship compared with the Catholic Mass, for example, which tends to place emphasis on the ritual itself and the sermon is less important and mostly relates to biblical readings relevant to the church’s liturgical calendar.

I argue, similarly to Iteanu (1990), that ritual can enable. In the Unitarian context, the ritual in the service of worship enables the sermon. Whereas, it could be argued that in the Quaker meeting, silence gives salience to spoken ministry; in the Unitarian service, sound—in the form of ringing the bell, music, readings and singing—enables or empowers the sermon.

Kapferer posits (1997:179) that ritual is organized sequentially in a predictive pattern so each subsequent act in the rite is indicated by preceding acts. In a similar vein, in the Unitarian services of worship it is apparent that there are a number of ritual activities prior to the minister delivering the sermon. The sounding of the bell, for example, directs attention to the start of proceedings and alerts people to the fact that they must stop chatting and take their seats. The musical prelude then provides a pathway into the ritual, often introducing the theme which will be explored further in the readings and address. The lighting of the chalice distinguishes the service as Unitarian through its multi-layered symbolism, thereby adding solemnity and sacredness to the process. The invocation accompanying its lighting also has relevance to the theme of the service.

The singing of hymns, the reading of the children’s story and the candles of sharing are all ritual activities which allow congregational participation. This is followed by the prayer and musical interlude which allow for a period of reflection. The readings are directly related to the content of the minister’s address which they

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230 Iteanu found that ritual enabled exchange in Orokaiva society. Ritual was able to do this by establishing the distinction between subjects and objects of exchange so that pork could be circulated in ceremonies of exchange, thereby founding the relations on which their world was composed (1990:49).
precede. All these ritual activities add weight to, and enable, the minister’s address. They also add to the efficacy of the ritual by preparing participants to receive its messages which are delivered mainly through the address itself.

Bastin, who also follows Iteanu, explains (2014:2) how the Indian priest-king relation entails a sacralisation of the secular through ritual, thereby enabling that which is commonly understood as quotidian to be given special significance. In a similar vein, the Unitarian ritual activities which precede the sermon, and the ritual milieu itself, are able to sacralise what would usually be understood as secular. A sermon which is delivered, and argued, much like a secular academic lecture is transformed by the preceding ritual activity into a piece of reasoning endowed with special significance; thereby allowing it to form part of the ritual itself.

Once the address has been delivered the ritual activities are designed to return the participants back to ordinary everyday activities, but transformed by the messages transmitted during the service. The offertory is the first step in this transformation. The benediction sends people forth with a further reminder of the theme of the service. Finally, the chalice candle is extinguished and the solemnity and sacredness of the service ends. The postlude provides a pathway out of the ritual and the congregation applauds at the end of the performance and then returns to socializing and having refreshments.

The importance placed on the address within the Unitarian liturgical order plainly indicates the role that communication plays within their practices. Undoubtedly, Rappaport’s communicative action approach to ritual appears to prioritize Unitarians over Quakers because speech, discourse, and the transmission of messages play such an important part in Unitarian ritual. This poses the question of how suitable Rappaport’s approach is in explaining Quaker practice.

2.3 Quaker Practice

Quaker worship could be thought of as an “anti-ritual”, or a minimalist ritual, because it is based mainly on silence. This silence is, according to Quaker sociologist, Dandelion (2005:2), a liturgy itself—a silent liturgy or liturgy of silence—in which the presence of the Spirit is believed to be more readily discovered in the absence of outward liturgy. However, the meeting for worship is
held at the same time and location on a regular basis, and this regularity would demonstrate for Rappaport the existence of a liturgical order established by others regardless of the fact that it may be a totally silent meeting.

The meeting for worship is also undeniably performative, with all participants playing a crucial part in the performance. Although it is un-programmed, it follows a set format of silence punctuated by the possibility of individual ministry. Silence is essential within the ritual, but equally important is spoken ministry, and there are common understandings as to the appropriate length, content and timing of ministry.

Ministry, like silence, is performative. For example, people sometimes comment afterwards that it was a “good meeting.” Performance relates to both self and other. It could refer to how easy it was to settle into the meeting, the quality of spoken ministry or the perceived depth of the communal silence. Individual performance is believed to be enhanced by spiritual practices such as meditating or reading inspirational texts and by regular Sunday attendance. This preparation is referred to as coming to meeting with heart and mind prepared. Spoken ministry is given the same value as collective silence and is meant to arise out of that silence, breaking it, but not interrupting it. According to the Handbook, the ministry’s message should be from personal experience and be simple, audible and not too long. It is not considered appropriate to question the content of previous ministry or to be provocative. The content of spoken ministry is mainly self-referential, but also canonical, interwoven together.

Although anyone may give spoken ministry, there is a tension between spontaneity and the perceived fitness and timing of its presentation. There is a perception that too much ministry is not appropriate. People have mentioned that they don’t like a “popcorn” meeting, i.e., when there is not enough silence between ministry and people add to, or controvert, previous ministry. There is expectation that spoken ministry be unprepared and spontaneous, but there is also an expectation of personal discernment as to its timing and content before it is shared with the group. Participants have quite different ideas about what constitutes good ministry. One member stated that he felt that good ministry was delivered against the background

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231 Handbook of Quaker Practice and Procedure in Australia (6th Ed), 2011, 4.4.0 & 4.6.0
of the whole Quaker movement and its literature. In his view, this provided understanding of what ministry was about and how it “fitted into the whole picture.” On the other hand, a visiting English Quaker described ministry as a sharing of revealed truth which need not be well-crafted or well delivered but must be sincere and heartfelt.232

It is clear that spoken ministry in the meeting for worship can be interpreted as a form of communication, transmitting both self-referential messages and canonical messages. However, Quaker silence is not so easily glossed as only communicative action, despite Rappaport’s insistence (1999:51) that meditation and similar practices are still forms of communication; albeit auto-communicative rather than communicating with others.

In Rappaport’s terms, the meeting for worship contains ritual features: liturgical order established by others, regularity, performance and shared stated principles. However, his understanding of Quaker practice would hold that its silence is symbolic of something else, i.e., he believes that a symbol is always a representation. He states (1999:67,354) that dominant symbols are representations central to liturgical orders and they tend to be simple rather than complex because their very simplicity allows for the encompassment of further possibilities and new ideas.

Certainly, silence can be a powerful symbol and researchers have been drawn to this aspect. Bauman’s research (1983), for example, concentrates on the use of speech in Quaker discourse and social interaction. He maintains that particular ways of speaking were the most distinctive and identifying features of seventeenth century Quakers. He also believes (1983:22) that ways of speaking and the use of silence have continued to be key Quaker symbols. In addition, Bell & Collins state (2014:17-18) that silence can represent the numinous and also be a symbol of group identity because it sets apart Quakers from other religious groups. Flanagan, on the other hand, points out (1985:213) that silence as it is used in the management of liturgy in the Catholic Mass is laden with ambiguity and risk. A Quaker silence, though, is not used for the management of liturgy and can be considered a liturgy in itself. As Dandelion states (2005:2), it is a silent liturgy or liturgy of silence.

232 Extracted from Interview Notes.
Silence undoubtedly does play an important role in communication. In an article aimed at law practitioners, Krieger (2001:211-212) considers the relationship between speech and silence and concludes that “lawyering requires an awareness of the significant role that silence plays in communication.” He explains that silence can communicate an assertion of power when used to demonstrate dissent or in situations where words are inadequate to express feelings. Nevertheless, he also cautions (2001:225-228) that any discussion of the functions of silence needs to acknowledge that not all silence is communication. This undoubtedly is the case with Quaker silence.

During the Quaker meeting, silence is collective and there is a heightening of awareness which could be described in Turner’s terms as “communitas”, with the connotation that this is a homogenous group not bounded by structure (1969:126); and undoubtedly, participants experience a revitalisation through the maintenance of group silence. Presence is considered a form of ministry in itself because one individual can give verbal ministry, but it takes the co-operation of everyone to create the silence and the stillness. Stillness is a deliberate holding back of movement rather than absence, as movement happens even involuntarily. As with the silence, there is not an absence. It is part of the waiting for inspiration.

The most defining feature of Quaker worship is the dearth of outward liturgy. The lack of any outward manifestation of the Spirit is countered not by outward elaboration of liturgy but experientially within the silence itself. In his work on memorialism of national death in Israel, Handelman (2004a:166) discusses how Israel turns the absence of those killed in war into a presence in order to promote the notion of nationalistic self-sacrifice which is deemed necessary for its survival. He further suggests that there is an apparent inverse relationship between the actual presence of the buried dead and the absence of representation of their presence, and concludes that the greater the absence of presence, the more elaborate is its representation. However, in Quaker worship, any elaboration is not outward, but inward, embodied within the silence.

Clearly, Rappaport contends that ritual is a mode of communication and this approach does raise the question as to whether enough attention has been given by him to the embodied nature of ritual process—which is an observation also made
by Csordas (2001:228-230). My assertion here is that although Rappaport’s approach to ritual does offer some assistance in understanding silence’s communicative role, Quaker silence within a meeting for worship cannot be reduced to this understanding alone. Rappaport’s communicative action approach to ritual is able to assist in the understanding of Unitarian ritual because of the role that communication plays within that practice; however, his approach is less convincing in the case of Quaker practice.

My point here is demonstrated by the Quaker response to a matter which caused disunity and major disagreement within its South Australian community. This disagreement centred on the question of whether certain actions were Quakerly and whether business meetings were being held in the right manner. When the issues were found to be difficult to resolve, the Clerk decided to hold an intentionally silent meeting. Leaflets were placed on the seats to notify people who arrived for meeting that no ministry was to take place. It was hoped that a silent meeting would assist in healing rifts within the community. Silence as the dominant symbol, was being used here strategically in order to promote a sense of unity and solidarity.

The way Quaker practice was used to deal with this major disagreement highlights the fact that in Rappaport’s approach the functional aspects of ritual, apart from ecological functioning, are not spelled out. Bell (1992:216), on the other hand, places much more emphasis on that aspect. She would argue that silent worship used in the context mentioned above is a ritualised practice used to maintain the sense of a community’s power by promoting social solidarity and a sense of unity through the recognition of this dominant symbol.

3. Ritual as a Strategic Device

3.1 Bell’s Approach

Bell’s objective is to introduce a new framework for critically rethinking the concept of “ritual.” This, she believes, requires deconstructing historical

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233 See Note 222.
234 American religious studies scholar, Catherine Bell, has two well-known publications on the subject of ritual. The first publication Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice (1992) is arguably her most important book which she followed up with Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions (1997) which provides a comprehensive history of ritual theory prior to examining “multiple dimensions of the phenomenon of ritual” including genres of ritual actions, ritual-like characteristics and the underlying structure of ritual life (1997: ix).
definitions. Therefore, she outlines (1992:6) the development of anthropological theoretical discourse to demonstrate how the notion of “ritual” has been constructed as a focus of analysis, and the part this construction has played in organizing a broader discourse on religion, culture and society.

Bell argues (1992:20, 23) that Durkheim and the *Anneé Sociologique* School developed a discourse which views ritual as crucial to social integration. She points out that Durkheim (1912) asserts that religion is composed of both beliefs and rituals. In this view, beliefs are representations of the sacred and rituals are ways of acting in terms of those representations. As a result, rituals facilitate the generation and affirmation of collective beliefs and values; a view in which beliefs are primary and ritual is secondary. Bell’s main point is that theoretical discourse on ritual developed by Durkheim and the *Anneé Sociologique* School is predicated on an underlying opposition between thought and action.

Bell implies that in the traditional discourse on ritual, action is subordinate to thought, but she also argues that because ritual can be considered as meaningful, it can provide a re-integration of thought and action. In the same way, according to her (1992:47), discourse on ritual is seen “to afford special access to cultural understanding by integrating the subject’s (theorist’s) thought and the object’s (participant’s) activities.” In order to introduce a new framework, Bell (1992:67) puts much more focus on ritual activity, relying substantially on Bourdieu’s theory of practice. She outlines her own theory under three headings—action and practice, the ritual body, and ritual traditions and systems—in order to introduce the concept of “ritualization” as an alternative framework for understanding ritual action.

Bell maintains (1992:81-84) that human activity (or practice) has four features: it is situational or related to a specific context, strategic and expedient, embedded in misinterpretation of actions, and has the ability to reproduce or alter a vision of power. This fourth feature she calls “redemptive hegemony.”

The term “ritualization”, according to Bell (1992:140), is concerned with the production of ritualized acts, and as such, draws attention to how rituals are distinguished or set off from other practices. In her view (1992: 74,93), rituals are intentionally designed strategies for distinguishing what is done from more every-
day practices, thereby creating a distinction between the sacred and profane. Indeed, Bell (1992:90-91) maintains that when viewed as practice, ritualization involves drawing a distinction between ways of acting, i.e., between those acts being performed and those being contrasted. Fundamental to this concept, in her view, are strategies for differentiating a way of acting from other ways of acting. She states that ritualization is the production of this differentiation. And furthermore, she declares that ritualization is a way of acting that establishes a privileged contrast, differentiating itself as more important or powerful.

Undoubtedly, in Bell’s view (1992:92-93), ritual is always defined by difference and the degree of difference is a matter of strategy. This leads her to posit that characteristics such as formality, stability and repetition are not qualities that define an act as ritual so much as they are strategies for producing ritualized acts. She maintains (1992:98) that the ritualized body has a sense of ritual and this sense has an implied diversity of schemes which can produce situations that the ritualized body can have mastery over. This sense of ritual is not, according to Bell (1992:116), knowledge of its explicit rules so much as a cultivated disposition. Accordingly, she defines “ritual mastery” as the ability to do the following:

- take and remake schemes from the shared culture that can strategically nuance, privilege, or transform...
- deploy them in the formulation of a privileged ritual experience, which in turn impresses them in a new form upon agents able to deploy them in a variety of circumstances beyond...the rite itself (1992:116).

Bell contends (1992:141) that ritualization is embodied in the sense that it gives participants ritual mastery involving incorporation of schemes. This, in her view, enables participants to perceive and experience reality in terms of a redemptive hegemonic order.

Engaging further with the topic of when, and why, strategies of ritualization appear to be appropriate, Bell analyses theories that present ritual as a form of social control and then presents an alternative way of looking at the social functions of ritual. In particular, she considers (1992:181) how the strategies embodied through ritualization relate to the larger question of power relations within society. In her view (1992:169-170), ritual is a strategic device in power relations, ordering and reproducing power relations through embodiment using bodily movement and
sound. It is this strategy, she maintains, which allows participants to acquire practical knowledge. She contends that ritualization is not a strategy for controlling ritual participants but a “particular dynamic of social empowerment” and views ritual practices as producing and negotiating power relations.

Bell lauds Foucault for his notion that power is socially embedded and embodied, and uses his ideas to demonstrate how she believes that ritualization produces power relations defined by characteristics which she describes (1992:196-197) as acceptance and resistance, negotiated appropriation and redemptive reinterpretation of the hegemonic order. She is critical of a definitional approach to ritual, but nevertheless, insists that ritual (as a way of acting) has a set of universal characteristics: focus on the body, strategies of differentiation, ritual mastery and the negotiation of power (1992:70).

Ritual mastery, according to Bell (1992:219), is essential for maintaining micro-relations of power rather than transmitting shared beliefs, concepts or ideology. Crucially, her main point (1992:221) is that practical knowledge which is gained by ritual participants does not entail a set of beliefs or body postures but an understanding of how to act to maintain relations of power. Moreover, this empowerment may be retained by participants when they return to their everyday lives. Her view of ritual as a strategic device in power relations is now considered in relation to Quaker practice.

3.2 Quaker Practice
Bell’s view of rituals distinguishing, or setting themselves off, from other practices is a useful way of explaining an un-programmed Quaker meeting for worship, because it is undoubtedly a ritualised practice which sets itself off, and differentiates itself, from other practices by its use of silence. In Bell’s terms, silence is able to “trigger the perception that these practices are distinct and the associations they engender are special” (1992:220).

As there are no priests or pastors in un-programmed meetings, all participants are deemed ritual specialists. Nevertheless, some participants do have more authority unofficially because of their perceived knowledge of Quaker procedure, valued ministry or level of “ritual mastery.” Ritual mastery for Quakers involves knowledge of how things should be done and said, rather than knowledge of
theology. Notwithstanding this, where all participants are deemed ritual specialists, as is the case in Quaker practice, it is difficult to totally agree with Bell’s contention (1992:214) that non-specialist ritual participants are differentiated from ritual specialists and this differentiation is displayed in, and produced through, ritual.

In his ethnographic research among English Quakers, Collins (2005:323-336) points out that the experienced Quaker knows “the rules of the game”—such as ways of sitting and standing during worship and the timing of ministry. Here he is relying on Bourdieu’s notion of the “habitus.” Such dispositions can also be observed when South Australian participants in meeting for worship give spoken ministry. The speaker stands up, rising slowly and deliberately from the chair and stands still with head slightly bowed. Ministry is not delivered as oratory but with a certain humbleness. This habitus, along with the knowledge of how to maintain the silence and timing of ministry, is learned through attending meeting for worship and observing other more experienced participants.

Although there is no particularly correct way to sit or stand, maintaining silence and stillness of body is important. This requires repeated self-discipline and control over bodily movement. Experienced Quakers are very tolerant with newcomers as people realise that it takes time to “learn the ropes.” Nevertheless, attendance at meetings for worship when you are a newcomer can be difficult and tiresome, as can be seen in the following explanation of a participant:

My first meeting for worship was in total silence.
I found that troubling and anxiety provoking...
I found silence disturbing for a while...After the first few months I didn’t become bored and restless and having to discipline myself to remain there...236

Through stillness and the use of sound and silence, Quaker ritual participants demonstrate the practical knowledge they have acquired through ritualization; but for Bell (1992:221), the purpose of this is the production of ritualized agents who

235 Collins noted elsewhere how bodily techniques and dispositions which are evident in the Quaker meeting for worship remain with the participant after the ritual has ended. In particular, the Quaker aesthetic which he calls ‘the plain’; the embodiment of which invokes what he describes as ‘a non-conformist attitude’ (Coleman & Collins (2000:317-318).

236 Extracted from Interview Notes.
understand how to act in ways that maintain and qualify “the complex microrelations of power” rather than the transmission of shared concepts. When contentious issues within the Quaker community were difficult to resolve, ritual silence was certainly employed to promote a sense of unity and solidarity through the perceived passivity of its participants, as Bell (1992:216) would argue. However, more importantly, it was an opportunity for each individual worshipper to un-interruptedly access an “inner teacher”, usually silenced by the busyness of day to day life. Therefore, I contend that silent worship is not primarily used for enabling the construction of a power relationship.

Bell’s functional approach to ritual also suggests that ritualization promotes social solidarity through recognition of dominant symbols. In Unitarian practice, for example, the dominant symbol is not silence; it is the lighted chalice.

### 3.3 Unitarian Practice

The chalice is lit at the beginning of a service for worship and extinguished at its end. The stated purpose of the candles of sharing during the service is to deepen and bind the relationship between members of the congregation, which the minister considers to be akin to a sacred act. During a service, small candles are lit from the main candle by members of the congregation and the minister. The main candle represents the chalice, and when the smaller candles are placed around it, this symbolises the bond between those present.

Certainly, ritual does perform many functions, one of which is bringing people together. On the other hand, ritual can also promote the opposite of social solidarity and actually pull people apart. This was demonstrated by congregational differences regarding content of children’s stories and sermons, and disagreement surrounding the appointment of the minister.

Bell’s contention (1992:214) that non-specialist ritual participants are differentiated from ritual specialists and this differentiation is displayed in, and produced through, ritual is relevant to Unitarian practice. The Unitarian minister is a ritual specialist and as such is differentiated from members of the congregation who are ritual participants. As a ritual specialist, the minister is held in high regard
by the congregation and its committee of management for his academic training and knowledge. The power relationship between the minister, the committee of management and the congregation though is far from uncomplicated. In his welcome service, the newly appointed minister stated:

Ministry ... is a professional relationship: another one of those complex human relationships but one which I vow will be about mutuality rather than control, about give and take rather than power...

The verb ‘minister’ means to serve...

The minister’s role is not only to conduct services of worship and rites of passage, but to lead by example. This puts the minister into a powerful position, but there are limiting factors to this power relationship. The minister is an employee of the church who is appointed by elected church officials. The employer-employee relationship brings attendant considerations such as negotiating appropriate remuneration and leave entitlements, and providing a safe working environment. As an employee, the minister has obligations to his employer. On the other hand, trained ministers are difficult to replace in Australia and this puts the minister in an advantageous position as an employee.

If ritual mastery, in Bell’s terms, is knowledge of how things should be done rather than knowledge of theology, the minister’s knowledge of how to compose and deliver an address to the congregation, and how to conduct a service, are all part of this mastery. The minister has an advantage having learnt the rules of the game not only from attending services, but also, from the academic training that has been undertaken. However, long-term members of the church also have an advantage because they have seen ministers “come and go” over the period of their involvement of the church.

Bell’s concept of “ritualization” provides useful insights into Unitarian and Quaker practices, and the role of ritual specialists and ritual mastery in the process. In Quaker practice, in particular, the concept accentuates the ritual’s embodied nature. Undoubtedly, rituals do also bring people together, or tear them apart; but neither Unitarian nor Quaker practice can be reduced to this. There is more to their practices than that. Ritual cannot be reduced to its functions. Just as their practices

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237 See Note 83.
cannot be reduced to being communicative only; neither can they be reduced to micro-relations of power.

Quaker, William Penn, wrote in 1699: "True silence…is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment."²³⁸ It is difficult to gloss Penn’s understanding in terms of communicative action or micro-relations of power. Bell’s ritualization framework involves concentration on relations of power and does not give enough consideration to participants’ reflections on ritual, which is a point also made by Oosten (1993:107). Nor does it engage sufficiently with the notion that ritual orientates participants toward the possibilities of “being” and “becoming”.

Quakerism and Unitarianism are religions of “becoming” in two senses. Firstly, membership is not attained through birth or marriage but from personal convincement. Some older Quakers are birthright Quakers, but it is said that they must still find “the Truth” for themselves, regardless of birthright membership. Secondly, “the Truth” is sought through a process of continuous revelation which may be discovered from diverse sources: religious and secular. As this process is continuous, members of both communities are always in a state of becoming and this raises the question as to whether Quaker and Unitarian practices should be examined as dynamic processes.

4. Ritual as a Dynamic Process

It is clear that neither Rappaport’s nor Bell’s theories are able to capture all that is going on in ritual process. Silence, for example, seems to be used for quite a few different purposes in Quaker practice and sometimes for no apparent reason at all. Quaker practice, in particular, suggests that ritual theory should be looked at in another way which highlights its transformative possibilities. This is a perspective favoured by Don Handelman and Bruce Kapferer.

4.1 Handelman’s Approach

Handelman (1990, 2004b) claims that ritual should be examined as a phenomenon in itself rather than assuming that it is representative of its surrounding socio-cultural milieu. This understanding leads him to describe public events, including

rituals, as fitting into two categories—the model and the mirror. His particular interest is with the internal ordering, or organisation, of these events. He regards (1998:3) the event-that-mirrors as having an internal ordering that is planned to represent or reflect the world as it is experienced by participants. This can be compared with the event-that-models, which he notes (1990:27) has an internal ordering that is devised to transform the lived-in world.

The event-that-models, in Handelman’s view (1990:27, 29) has certain characteristics. It both simplifies and retains connectivity with the phenomena of the lived in world so that it can be thought of as a microcosm of its milieu. At the same time, it tends to include some aspects of the lived in world whilst excluding others. Nevertheless, the model retains some autonomy from its surrounds because it functions within its own system of rules.

Moreover, Handelman suggests (1998:13) that some rituals have a recursiveness; a property which he explains as being similar to a “moebius strip.” Whereas the event-that-models is a simplified version of the lived in world, Handelman’s (1998:14) moebius model appears to be more expansive because it reaches towards horizons of potentiality and demonstrates an “on-going condition of becoming.” Rituals which have such potential, according to Handelman (2004b:12) are more complex in their organisation. At the same time, he notes that qualities of self-organisation and interior complexity of ritual tend to go hand in hand.

In addition, if there is a greater capacity within ritual to interiorize the distinction between itself and its surroundings, then it is also more able to act on that milieu through the dynamics of its process. Handelman (2004b:4) consequently points out that ritual “may have constituting (and self-constituting) features—structural, processual, transformational.” This is a view which is also held by Kapferer.

4.2 Kapferer’s Approach

Similarly to Handelman, Kapferer insists that rituals are not just communicative acts; and furthermore, they should be examined for themselves rather than as

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239 A “moebius strip” is a two-dimensional surface with only one side. Merriam-Webster defines it as: a one-sided surface that is constructed from a rectangle by holding one end fixed, rotating the opposite end through 180 degrees, and joining it to the first end. [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/M%C3%B6bius](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/M%C3%B6bius). Accessed 1/10/17.

The symbol for “infinity” is one example.
representations of something else. Although he discusses ritual in many of his publications, in *The Feast of the Sorcerer: Practices of Consciousness and Power* (1997) Kapferer addresses the characteristics of sorcery practice. He does this in order to investigate issues central to the anthropological understanding of how humans form their worlds and, in particular, the human proclivity for “embodied passionate extension towards others” (1997:2).

In Kapferer’s analysis, he gives (1997:24) the sorcery practices themselves authority in his exploration of the dynamic conditions of human existence. In this viewpoint, the Suniyama is a rite of “reconstitutive power” (1997:96). It transforms the victim of sorcery into someone who has not only the power of self re-creation, but also, someone who has the power to reform social and political relations. Kapferer notes (1997:108,115) how the sorcery victim remains silent and composed during the performance; a calmness which demonstrates that the ritual has reconstituted the victim as someone who is able to control and withstand the passion of sorcery.

Kapferer’s views on ritual can be interpreted as an extension of Turner’s ideas on process and liminality, but instead of emphasising Turner’s ideas on process and the liminal, he uses the concepts of the “dynamic” and the “virtual”. Kapferer retains Turner’s insistence that ritual has creative and generative dimensions by positing that the concept of “virtuality” can illuminate ritual’s ability to enable

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240 Methodologically, Kapferer is committed to situational analysis and the extended-case method—developed and embraced by the Manchester School. With this approach, practices are not used as a way of explaining abstract theoretical ideas. Instead, ethnography forms the basis for analytical and theoretical construction.

241 Although this is a self-contained ethnography, it builds on arguments that the author developed in his earlier work, *A Celebration of Demons* (1983), in which he explored the aesthetics of exorcism.

242 Kapferer argues convincingly that within the process of sorcery rites, myth becomes a reality. According to Kapferer (1997:63,82), sorcery myths which tell of the origin, destruction and restoration of humanity and the world order, and convey the inevitability of suffering and human failure, provide the framework for the activities of the anti-sorcery ritual known as the Suniyama.

243 Kapferer was undoubtedly influenced by the work of Victor Turner whose early studies of the Ndembu of Zambia, and later work, were all definitive in increasing anthropological understanding of ritual process. In particular, Turner utilized Van Gennep’s (1960) insights into the liminal period of rites of passage to advance knowledge on the transformational aspect of ritual, including its effect on status and identity. Most importantly, Turner considered that the liminal period offered time and space for withdrawal from ordinary life to allow examination of society’s most important values (1969:167).
transformation of life processes. These concepts are based on the ideas of Langer (1969) and Deleuze and Guattari (1994).

In Kapferer’s understanding (2008:18-19), the virtual can be described as being in-between reality (that which has already occurred) and actuality (the diversity of what will become). He stresses that virtuality in this usage and understanding is not a representation of reality; it is reality itself. This reality though is different from, but no less real than, the ordinary realities of life. It is a self-contained, imaginal and dynamic space which allows the potentialities of human experience to take shape because it removes participants from everyday constraints.

Kapferer explains in what sense he believes that the Suniyama can be termed a “virtuality.”

*It is an organization of activities that are integral to the routine activities of the lived-in life world but not subject to the indeterminacies of its processes* (1997:179).

Indeterminacies arise from political, economic, historic and other events that impact everyday lives. Virtuality, on the other hand, has a discernible form that is repeatable, thereby presenting opportunity for the adjustment of the reality of actuality. Importantly, Kapferer stresses (1997:179,181) that the Suniyama is ultimately oriented to “generating the capacity of victims to generate in actuality and not in virtuality.” For example, the repeated recitation of the Buddha’s virtues by the victim are embodied and produced through right ethical and moral practice which enables the re-establishment of social relations and activities. Observers of the rite are invited into the victim’s home and offered food, and in the process of giving, according to Kapferer (1997:201), “the person of the victim is progressively recreated.”

Much of what Kapferer argues is dependent on his interpretation of Deleuze’s argument concerning the nature of difference. This interpretation insists that the dynamics of the rite repeats, but there is always difference in the repetition over

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244 Kapferer is influenced by the work of Langer (1969) on the symbolic and dynamic properties of aesthetic forms and has applied some of her ideas in his exploration of ritual dynamics. In particular, he argues through the ideas of Turner and Langer that rituals are oriented towards producing effects.

245 This view of “virtuality” does not correspond to the popular usage of the term in cyber technology.

246 *Difference and Repetition* (1994).
space and time because of historical and social circumstances. Bastin usefully adds to this interpretation of the dynamics of the rite when he describes “the virtual” as “the space and structure of becoming and it can be marked by repetition, not as the return of the real, but as its actualisation as something different” (2013:29-30).

Unquestionably, Kapferer views ritual and religious practices as raising critical questions about sociocultural process. Undoubtedly, the concept of “virtuality” which he successfully applies in his analysis of the Suniyama has the potential for wider application, and this raises the question of whether his ideas can provide insights into the practices of South Australian Quakers and Unitarians.

4.3 Quaker Practice

All meetings for worship have periods of silence. Some meetings have extended periods of silence, and occasionally, the meeting is held in total silence; all factors which seems to challenge the idea that Quaker worship is dynamic. In their everyday lives, Quakers do not maintain silence or sit still for long periods of time, although a short period of private meditation may be valued. Conversation and physical activity are usually enthusiastically embraced, so the meeting for worship does not model or represent quotidian reality for Quakers themselves. Although it does not represent everyday reality; it is nonetheless, a reality in itself for its participants.

The reality of everyday experiences for the Adelaide Quaker community is that their lives are not ordinary. Unexpected events occur. Life’s circumstances are often chaotic and can change direction radically and suddenly. There are joys but also disappointments and stress, and within an ageing community there is sickness and disability. Kapferer calls this the reality of actuality (2008:19). Quaker worship, on the other hand, forces the tempo of life to slow down and suspend some indeterminacies of every day realities in order that some of the dynamics of reality formation can be entered into, and then readjusted. In contrast with events in people’s everyday lives, the meeting for worship’s repetitive format of silence,
stillness and intermittent ministry—always beginning and ending in silence—is a predictive pattern. This predictive pattern is able to suspend the reality of actuality by slowing down the pace of life, thus providing a virtual reality through the media of silence and stillness.

The meeting provides a safe, supportive environment which allows meditation, reflection and self-reflexivity to take place without subjecting those activities to some of the indeterminacies of everyday life. In Kapferer’s (2008:18, 2006:676) terms, ritual as a virtual reality can be considered as scaffolding which is erected at a particular location and time within the flow of ordinary life, interrupting and slowing down that flow.

The meeting has a predictive pattern which organises activities such as correct practice—including the timing of ministry, positioning of the body during meeting, and the right ordering of Quaker business meetings. This attention to detail can be puzzling to newcomers, but as Kapferer (1997:177) found in the activities of the Suniyama rite, it is possible that participants believe that a meeting’s meaning and power is contingent upon such correctness, attention to detail and technique.

The un-programmed tradition has retained a similarity in form since the mid-seventeenth century. There have been changes during this time, but the perception among adherents is that the form of the ritual, and its media of stillness, silence and ministry, have had continuity over time. What has changed over the past three hundred and fifty years is the understanding of that ritual. Early Quakers believed that inward stillness and silence were necessary because there was to be a new relationship between God and humanity—an inward Second Coming of Christ which unfolded in their time. Contemporary Quakers undeniably have a much different understanding of cosmology, and many do not profess to be Christian and find early Quaker ideas unhelpful. It is commonly held by present-day adherents that early Quakers used Christ-centric terminology because they lacked the vocabulary of subsequent generations; therefore, earlier historical realities are irrelevant to current practice.

Nevertheless, the purported lack of change in the meeting’s form over time, despite the irrelevance of historical realities to present understandings, may partly explain why it is still considered relevant for adherents. There has seemingly been a strong
desire to maintain its historic form, if not the meaning behind the form. Following from this point, I contend that cosmological notions can change without the potential for self-transformation being affected because transformation occurs within the internal dynamics of the ritual itself; which is a point also made by Kapferer (2008:47, 2006:672).

Although the un-programmed meeting’s form has remained relatively unchanged over time, that form is nonetheless dynamic, and it is in that dynamic that adherents have found the potential for self-formation so effective. The repetitive format of the meeting for worship is necessary for what Kapferer termed “the dynamic play from which the constructions of reality take form” (1997:180). The act of sitting still in silence surrounded by others, all of whom are intent on doing the same, has its own dynamic. Clearly, the silent waiting in a Quaker meeting for worship is not to achieve union with the divine but to receive spiritual guidance.

The meeting for worship provides the milieu for adherents to receive the guidance necessary for ethical self-formation; however, for that to occur there must be openness to receiving that guidance. Being open to the Spirit can be risky as known ways of being could be challenged; therefore, according to Spinks (2007:21), participants hold the space for each other to be open to the Spirit. Every day “clutter” blocks receipt of spiritual guidance but Quaker worship provides a space, away from the chaos of everyday life, in which people can work on themselves to rid themselves of clutter. Clutter is internal—in the form of the distractions of the mind; and also, external—in the form of distractions of the world. This process of removing distractions involves ongoing work on the self throughout worship, but is most evident when people are trying to settle into the silence at the beginning of worship. Removing these distractions allows the body to rest in silence and stillness.248

248 Resting in silence is separate and distinct from the Charismatic notion of “resting in the Spirit” noted by Csordas (1994:247), who refers to a “sacred swoon” where participants are overwhelmed by divine power and lose control. The Quaker notion, on the other hand, requires control over mind and body.
A participant offered the following explanation of silence and stillness, from his own experience:

> There is a distinction between silence and stillness. I was anchored one night not far off the beach and there was a lapping of water on the sand and there was the lapping of the water on the ship’s side and a raucous performance from all the seabirds who roost on the island. I was woken about midnight and there was no moon, the whole dome of heaven was black and all the stars were out because there is no pollution. ....It was actually very noisy, there was a lot of noise but I was struck by the stillness of the whole event. There was this brilliant canopy of stars against the blackness of space. .....So what I am drawing is kind of a parable of noisy silence....There was that stillness.  

What the participant was trying to convey was a stillness of mind which leads to an inner peace and simplicity and an openness to the leadings of the Spirit.  

This is difficult to do within the reality of actuality, but within the virtual space and structure of the meeting for worship, it is more possible; thereby revealing the potentiality for “becoming”.

I have demonstrated that although it is characterised by silence and stillness, the Quaker ritual is nevertheless a dynamic process. In addition to the leadings of the Spirit, the timing and content of ministry is always unknown in advance by participants, and although ministry is ideally spontaneous and Spirit-led, it has strong moral imperatives. Ministry will be listened to respectfully by others in silence, but the listeners are also discerning whether what is said has a message for them. The dynamics of reality formation are entered into when previously held ideas are challenged during the process of discernment and this can impact on the reality of everyday lives. Participants can engage with such processes which are less able to be tackled within the reality of actuality, allowing the dynamics of self formation to be entered into.

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249 Extracted from Interview Notes.

250 Interiorty was examined in Handelman’s edited volume on ritual, when Nagy examined the phenomenon of medieval religious weeping, which indicated God’s internal presence. The individual had an internal transformation which included the removal of sin and purification of the soul. By directly communicating with God and circumventing intermediaries, individuals could self-transform (Nagy, P. 2004:p.119-137).

In the same volume, Lindquist discusses the neo-shamanic theory of soul loss and retrieval in which it is believed that the self splits during trauma and becomes incomplete. The shaman searches for the lost part of the patient’s self and persuades it to return and then explains the process of retrieval to the patient who acquires new memories of the trauma. Lindquist understands this process as “rituals of the mind” which unfold within the individual (2004:157-173).

251 A participant made the following observation: Sometimes ministry really does strike a chord or challenge me. It is almost as if a message can come out of the silence. I think at its best, a silent meeting or spoken ministry out of a really intense silence can be powerful stuff (Interview Notes).
Spoken ministry is given the same value as collective silence and is meant to arise out of that silence, breaking it but not interrupting it. It should be from personal experience and be simple, audible and not too long. It is also not considered appropriate to question the content of previous ministry, to be provocative or to minister more than once.\textsuperscript{252} Anyone may give spoken ministry but there is a tension between spontaneity and the fitness, timing, length and content of its presentation. In addition, participants use discernment to test their own moral positions. The ritual dynamic is, therefore, experiential and facilitated by the tension between the moral imperatives of ministry and the need for silence.\textsuperscript{253}

There is not only a dynamic between the ministry and silence, there is tension within the silence itself; so that experiencing the silence may be described variously by participants as being alive, intense, active, creative or profound. Participation in the silence is essential to the ritual. Although ministry is welcomed, it is well understood that it takes the co-operation of everyone in the meeting to create a collective silence.\textsuperscript{254} The explanations offered by participants indicate that there is not just a tension between the silence and ministry but within the silence itself, and this allows experience to be shaped and formed. Participants have said that there is a transference of vibes or heightening of spiritual awareness which can occur during this process. When this is felt by most, if not all, of those present, it is called a “gathered meeting”—a more intense experience which is highly regarded.

\textsuperscript{252} \textit{Handbook} (2011:4.4.0, 4.6.0).

\textsuperscript{253} Participants explain the dilemmas faced in deciding whether to minister during the meeting for worship:

\textit{Sometimes I get perturbed physiologically while in Meeting, particularly if I have ministered and so on... when I have the promptings to minister in a Meeting that's like an earthquake that is not controllable. It is like I can't not say it, whatever it is that I have got to say... I am sure that the prompting comes from somewhere else} (Interview Notes).

\textit{I sometimes wonder whether someone has applied some form of test before they stand up and speak. I know, myself, if I feel or get some urge to say something, I usually sit on it so long that I don't get up because I go over and over it in my head, "Is this from me or is it from some other place. Is it just what I want to say or is it something else?"} So I don't minister often, perhaps once a year if I was lucky or once every two years. (Interview Notes)

\textsuperscript{254} One participant shared his thoughts on his experience of collective silence:

\textit{Collective silence is very different from individual silence and in a way that is a bit like modern jazz. Someone can be just extemporizing in jazz on their own but it is very different if they are with a group of musicians and they are all doing that. The improvisation becomes very different because they are bouncing off each other and that's a bit like Quaker silence; I think—a collective silence} (Field Notes).

Notably, this participant is not referring to the spontaneity of ministry but “bouncing off each other” in the silence.
In examining the Quaker meeting as a virtual space, it is possible to express how the dynamic process is facilitated, not only by the tension between silence and ministry and in the communal silence itself, but also by the aesthetics of the ritual. The Adelaide Quaker Meeting House is known for its simplicity or plain style of architecture. The walls are painted a bluish-grey and unadorned, and furnishings are utilitarian. In a similar vein, the form of a meeting for worship is very simple and although congregants do not wear Quaker grey, they do tend to dress simply. There is an underlying asceticism in the ritual process, and in ritual space, which is based on the notion that indulgence or embellishment distracts from concentration on an inner awareness which can nourish the conscience. Distraction can clutter the mind, thereby blocking receipt of guidance from the Spirit. There is similarity here with Kapferer’s finding (2005:133) that practices centring on the key objects of Buddhist worship used the colour of white so that the senses were quietened, thereby facilitating concentration of the mind and its transcendence.

In Handelman’s terms (2004b:10), the Quaker meeting has interior complexity and self-integrity. The concept of “virtuality” enables the complexity within the simplicity of a Quaker meeting to be uncovered, including insights into the self-forming and re-forming processes inherent in Quaker worship. However, Unitarian practices are arguably very different from Quaker practices and this poses the question of whether the concept of “virtuality” is also able to give insight into Unitarian practices; a question which is now explored.

### 4.4 Unitarian Practice

My research indicates that the liturgical form of the Unitarian service of worship, although very different from the Quaker experience, is still able to suspend the reality of actuality by changing the pace of life and providing a virtual reality—not through the media of silence—but by its absence. The Unitarian virtual reality is characterised by music, singing, readings, prayer, stories and sermons. In contrast with the chaotic conditions in people’s everyday lives, the service provides a safe,

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255 Handelman (2004:10) states that social phenomena have self-integrity if they have the interior capacity to sustain themselves.
supportive and ordered environment which is conducive to self-formation and re-
formation.

Whereas the Quaker meeting provides a substantial amount of time for personal reflection and reflexivity, this is not the case with the service of worship. Instead, the service creates a stimulating space so that its participants are able to feel a release from the pressures of life. This allows them to engage in a search for meaning by listening, learning and critically assessing what is said in the pulpit. The stillness of mind which is valued by Quakers is replaced by stimulation of the intellect in the Unitarian setting. A service of worship plainly does not model or represent quotidian reality as such; nonetheless, it is a reality in itself.

The Unitarian service of worship as it was experienced by Unitarians in nineteenth century Adelaide was a traditional form of worship based on the Book of Common Prayer used by Pre-Tractarian Anglican Churches (Hilliard 2005:3). However, the perception among current adherents is that the repetitive format of the service with its media of music, hymns, readings, storytelling and ministry have had continuity over time. What has changed more over time, and continues to change, are the cosmological notions which form part of its content. I suggest that despite the change in cosmological notions, the potential for self-transformation remains because of the internal dynamics of the service of worship.

Although the form of the service is Protestant in style, it is characterized by a degree of eclecticism; encouraging a diversity of ideas and opinions. Notions are taken from many different sources: religious, philosophical, sociological, science, nature and personal experience. These sources provide a never-ending supply of ideas for the individual to draw upon in pursuit of spiritual wholeness. These notions are then exposed to the individual authority of congregants who valorise reason and rationality as a guidepost in critical evaluation.

As Kapferer points out (2008:43), the hybridity of borrowed rituals can be a vital part of their potency. The embrace of a diversity of religious and other ideas both within the service of worship, and in the different spiritual orientations of fellow congregants, creates the milieu for potential self-formation to be effective. As Grigg states (2004:26), Unitarian embrace of multiple spiritual perspectives is “a
motor of participation and self-transcendence.” Undoubtedly though, if multiple spiritual perspectives are the motor; then rationality provides the brake. Congregants put a high value on the power of reason as the following statement from a church member demonstrates:

If you have got faith it has got to be either something you can prove, either scientifically or by reason, or it has got to be something that makes total sense, or reasonably total sense….I cannot have a faith that is contrary to reason.\textsuperscript{256}

The importance of the minister within the ritual process cannot be under-estimated. The minister organises and directs the service. Although the address is considered a personal statement and there is no compulsion to agree with the views expressed from the pulpit, the minister is unquestionably influential and plays a pivotal role in the dynamics of self formation. During the fieldwork period, the service was consistently characterised by professionally delivered oratory; and according to one elderly congregant, of equal importance is the evaluation of that address. She said:

I never sat under a minister who I didn’t criticize. I think it is an important part of Unitarianism to make up your own mind about what you are hearing or learning….Criticism doesn’t mean you disagree – you evaluate.\textsuperscript{257}

Previously held ideas are challenged during the process of assessment of the address and this can impact on the reality of congregants’ everyday lives. Participants can engage with such processes which are less able to be tackled within the reality of actuality but are encouraged within the milieu of the service of worship, allowing the dynamics of self formation to be entered into. The dynamic process is facilitated, not only by this tension between individual members and ministry, but also by the aesthetics of the ritual space. The eclectic nature of the Adelaide Unitarian Church’s interior aesthetics is demonstrated in the iconography of its artwork and its stained glass windows.

There is not the same sense of plainness inherent in the Quaker ritual space which is designed to quieten the senses and create an inner simplicity. The Unitarian

\textsuperscript{256} Extracted from interview notes.

\textsuperscript{257} Extracted from interview notes.
meeting house is more designed to engage the mind and the senses. The plaining aesthetic which is essential to Quaker ideas on morality is demonstrably different to the eclectic aestheticism promoted by the Unitarian church milieu, inherent in both the internal dynamics of the Unitarian service of worship and the complexity of Unitarian spirituality.

Unitarians and Quakers place great importance on the freedom to choose their own spiritual paths. This freedom is seen as a prerequisite for living an ethical life. Quaker worship, for example, has a strong moral imperative. Its purpose is not salvation but the creation of a better world in the here and now. George Fox, for instance, charged his followers to “be patterns, be examples…that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them” (Nickalls 1952:263). Contemporary Quakers may not be so zealous in their approach, but there is strong belief that Quakerism is a way of life guided by a commitment to its testimonies of peace, simplicity, truth and integrity, community, and equality. Undoubtedly, this requires a commitment to an ethical life.

Through their practices, Quakers and Unitarians are encouraged to pursue continuous personal spiritual transformation and to strive for a better world. This pursuit is suggestive of Lyotard’s (1979) understanding of modernity as “a cultural condition characterized by constant change in the pursuit of progress.” Regardless of whether this is the case, a quest for personal and societal transformation is at the heart of the two communities’ contemporary embrace of spirituality. Members of the South Australian Quaker and Unitarian communities aspire to the personal goal of continuous spiritual progress but, nevertheless, they are also part of a modern western secular society which has, as suggested by Bouma, religiously structured interaction and involvement with political reform in order to shape society according to religious principles.258

Modern Australian society has from its inception, according to Kapferer and Morris (2003:81), been a modernist creation. This assertion refers to the creation of a settler society born out of European colonisation.

258 See Chapter 2.
To unpack what is meant by the statement that Australia is a modern western secular society, the following is a declaration of what are commonly held to be contemporary Australian values, as detailed by the Australian Government’s Department of Immigration and Border Control in the information it provides to prospective visa holders.

5.1 Australian values statement

Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good... Australian society values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background.  

5. Practising Modern Ideology

5.1 Quaker Ideas and Practice

The Quaker community is very much a part of modern secular Australian society; but nevertheless, they are often portrayed as quaint, and perhaps belonging to a distant past, as is demonstrated in the following image displayed on the Quaker Oats Website, where its product is marketed as “Old Fashioned Quaker Oats.”

5.2 Image on Quaker Oats Website

[Image]

259 Australian Government, department of Immigration and Border Protection, accessed 15 June 2016. Notably, the secular values which are set out for prospective visa holders by the Australian government bear a remarkable similarity those principles which are espoused by the Unitarian Church of South Australia.

260 Note that there are no apparent Quaker connections with the product “Quaker Oats”.

Making a similar observation in her dissertation on the historical representation of Quakers in the United States, Connerley states (2006:11) that the Quaker “is often figured as the static remainder of a simpler time—curious and quaint…” This representation of Quakers as being old-fashioned (or non-modern), is seemingly confirmed by current Quaker practice in the un-programmed tradition, which is still characterised by the inward complexity of silence and an outward simplicity of style; both of which are set within an intricate codification of practice.

This codification of practice, noticed by Quaker sociologist, Peter Collins in his study of British Quakers (2002a), is also very evident in Australia. South Australian Quakers, for example, are careful recorders of minutes for business meetings. The Clerk drafts the minute according to what is considered to be the sense of the meeting. Considerable effort is made to reach a well-worded minute which is then read out to the meeting for approval. Sometimes this can be a lengthy process during which those present remain in silence and this appears to outsiders as an old-fashioned and time-consuming way of proceeding. However, this codification of Quaker practice has been interpreted by Collins (2009:213) as being a purification process.262

Notwithstanding Collins’s insightful observation into historical Quaker process, contemporary South Australian Quakers would not identify with the process of purification or plaining. Instead, they are advised to try and live simply; and this advice is more closely linked to ideas of equality and conservation of resources rather than notions of purification. What is more pertinent here is that Collins concludes (2002:86) that the advice that adherents are given requires an “extraordinary interpretive effort on the part of individual Quakers.” He points out that although early Quakers were given practical guidance on what was plain, in

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262 According to Collins (2009:211-213), historically Quakers purified religious worship by replacing rituals by their practices and not by belief. The process of plaining, in his understanding, also purified language.

Collins has taken this view from Latour (1993:13,30) who argues that the concept of “modernity” should not be defined only in terms of humanism, but also by the development of a view of God as being “indwelling”, concomitant with a view of “non-humans” as being the source for a new type of authority. The failure to take these three factors together and instead treat them separately (through the work of purification) has, according to Latour, resulted in “a proliferation of hybrids.” The modern paradox, according to Latour, is that “hybrids” are a combination of nature and culture whereas purification entails separation between nature and culture.
the early eighteenth century, there was a movement towards a more individual interpretation with the codification of everyday practices. He interprets this as a way that the Society of Friends monitored and controlled its members.

Collins’s explanation is undoubtedly substantially correct, but more importantly, the individual interpretive effort required, invigorated a movement towards a more individualistic view of life which charged each adherent with the responsibility of living a particular kind of life. Collins also acknowledges this when he remarks (2009:206) that “with its explicit avowal of the importance of individuality, Quakerism would seem to be a religion for today.”

Personal responsibility for living a particular kind of life is burdensome so guidance is offered to members in interpreting, and living, the Quaker way. One way this is done is through participation in a twelve week spiritual development course called *Hearts and Minds Prepared.* Participants are led into examining the experience of meeting for worship and topics such as personal spiritual discipline, reflection on ministry, testimony, individual and corporate discernment, and personal spiritual journeys. The course requires self-discipline and introspection, and sometimes it can be intense and even emotionally draining. Its orientation is towards preparation for a more spiritual experience within meetings for worship and right conduct, both within that context and beyond that, in the world itself. In doing so, it places less stress on the dictates of reason and much more on moral conscience or an inner teacher.

Collins also proposes (2009:206) that Quaker ministry and socialising is characterised by storytelling which he believes tends to be couched in terms of tensions such as inward/outward, faith/practice, individuality/corporate, tradition/change, and equality/hierarchy. I contend that Quaker storytelling is more often characterised by the statement, and exchange, of common values and ideas among members rather than in terms of tensions. In addition, these ideas and practices appear to display forms of individualism and values that are characteristic

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263 This course, which is open to members and other interested persons, is based on a learning package prepared by the Quaker Study Centre in England, with the express purpose of grounding the faith and practice of contemporary Quakers.
of modernity. This proclivity can also be seen in Quaker publications which set out the contemporary beliefs and practices of Australian members. One example, although couched in different terms from those of early Quakers, still refers to George Fox’s words, which point to individual spiritual responsibility:

Quakers don’t look to a leader or a book for the answers, we turn to the Spirit. Listening to others who are experienced and reading books where people have explored their experience with the Spirit provide important groundwork for all of us, but in the end we come back to George Fox’s: “What canst thou say?” 264

Quaker notions such as these have developed from a religious attitude which Weber described as “inner-worldly asceticism.” 265 Early Quakers were vehemently anti-clerical, and put great value on the idea of the priesthood of all believers. As Dumont points out (1986:140), this means that all believers have equal spiritual authority and this is an internal property applicable to all. Current South Australian Quakers have retained this strong predisposition towards individual spiritual responsibility, as demonstrated in their literature, self-development courses and meetings for worship. 266

In addition, I argue that Quaker worship is self-organising and has interior complexity. A meeting for worship consists of a group of interacting members, who are quite diverse, and the resultant interaction is unpredictable. However, the meeting tends to self-organise so that interactions (including silent interactions) produce co-ordination. This means that it tends to move away from its sociocultural surround and towards self-enclosure and integrity. This is a point also made by Handelman (2004b:12) in his discussion on recursive rituals. This is


265 See Introduction.


Quakers seek to express in their lives principles of simplicity, equality, compassion and peace, based on the conviction of the presence of the Spirit in every person... Quakers believe that each individual must find his or her understanding of God and must be guided by his or her conscience in finding the right way to live.
relevant because recursivity is related to self-reflexivity and a self-awareness conducive to transformation, which is a point also made by Hibbert et al. (2010:47). 267 Importantly, Handelman (2004b:218) also acknowledges that interior recursivities within ritual are “at their densest” in modern individuals who see themselves as autonomous beings in and of themselves.268

5.2 Unitarian Ideas and Practice

South Australian Unitarians have a diverse range of beliefs and practices. This has not always been the case. In the first one hundred years of the new colony, the South Australian Unitarian Church had close ties with Britain. During this period, it was shaped most strongly by the ideas and values of British Unitarianism. Since the middle of the twentieth century, however, American Unitarian Universalist ideas have also been incorporated into South Australian practices, particularly when American trained ministers have led the congregation. These ideas include liberal rational Protestant, transcendentalist and humanist influences.269 This raises the question of why these various strands of thought appear to be so compatible. I contend that the common factor is that in all these strands, primacy is given to the individual. This is a view also shared by Lee (1995:394).

Similar to the Quaker community, the Unitarian Church holds a spiritual development course called Build Your Own Theology. This course is facilitated by the pastor and follows a liberal religious theological model, exploring topics such as ultimate reality (God), how to create purpose and meaning without recourse to God, and how to ethically relate to others. Emphasis is placed on spiritual progression whereby childhood beliefs are critically examined to determine what should be discarded. Participants are encouraged to write their spiritual

267 Hibbert et al. (2010:47) notes that reflexivity involves a questioning how things are done and is, therefore, more than reflection.

268 Note also Innis, R. 2004. ‘The Tacit Logic of Ritual Embodiments’ in Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice, Vol. 48, pp.197-212. Innis states that modern individuals contain ritual within themselves as “the intimacy of self-giving integrity” and gives the example of Emerson (a well-known Unitarian) who carried ritual prayer within himself, and Larkin, who preferred the silent solitude of an empty church. According to Innis, these modern individuals find themselves through themselves (2004:197-212).

269 Lee notes (1995:382) that nearly one half of the total signatories to the 1933 Humanist Manifesto were Unitarian ministers.
autobiographies, personal ethical precepts and “credos” to present to the group on the final week of the course. A willingness to intellectualise innermost thoughts, and then articulate those thoughts to others, is required—a difficult and quite uncomfortable exercise. There is individual responsibility to formulate a set of beliefs and an encouragement to engage with self-directed thought processes.

There are discernible differences in the way Unitarians and Quakers approach spiritual self-development. The Quaker course is oriented towards the experience of being a Quaker and personal spiritual discipline; whereas Unitarians are encouraged to build their own theology. Although this theology is assumed to be liberal in its approach, any source within this framework—religious or secular—is considered to be equally valid. A strong belief in the freedom of religious expression is demonstrated, whereby individuals are encouraged to develop their own personal theology and to openly express their personal religious opinions. Reason and conscience come to the fore in an exercise of individual responsibility to formulate a set of beliefs. There appears to be an “implicit creed of the paramount value of the person” or individual—an observation also made by Lee (1995:381) on his discussion of Unitarianism.

Support for the development of individual spiritual paths is also given within the Unitarian service of worship, through rites of passage, pastoral work of the minister and various church-related activities. The giving and receiving of flowers in the flower communion service symbolises more than the recognition of historical martyrdom, it also symbolises individual uniqueness and the giving and receiving of spiritual insights. A brief excerpt from the minister’s address during one such service indicates this further meaning.

*Let us rejoice in our unique colours, aromas, and sounds.*

In a similar way, the water communion/ingathering service stresses the coming together of individuals into community. This service is held at the end of the

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270 A 1988 survey of Unitarian Universalists in North America asked respondents what was the most important role their congregation had played in their lives. The response overwhelmingly was that the congregation supported “my views and upholds my values.” This, as Rasor points out, is “the most individualistic of the possible choices” (2005:87).

271 Excerpt from Rev Jo Lane’s Address at the Unitarian Church of South Australian on 18/11/07.
Christmas holiday period to mark the resumption of the church calendar. Members
of the congregation pour water into a communal bowl, symbolizing that there is
“the gathering together of separate, unique individuals as one whole.” 272 Rites of
passage such as baby naming ceremonies also display an emphasis on the individual
as can be seen in the following excerpt from a naming ceremony:

Traditionally this also is the time to recognise a child by name, for it is
by name that each of us is acknowledged as a separate person unique
in all the universe as any snowflake.
The flower we shall present to the child is also a symbol and
memento of the individuality we wish to affirm. 273

An individualistic approach to spirituality is also exhibited by members of the
South Australian congregation, as can be seen in this comment by a congregant:

Really what I seek in the Church, in the minister’s address anyway, is
assistance in my own personal development in getting to know myself
and someone who can...bring together a lot of ideas and weave it into
an intelligent address, as (the minister) does, and that helps me and
enlarges my understanding of the world, myself and other people. 274

Importantly though, the congregation is also seen as a group of individuals who
come together to share a common goal. The minister, in his address, explains this
relationship by using the example of birds flying in formation. 275

The flock adds at least 70% greater flying range than if each bird flew
on its own. Therefore, people who share common direction and sense of
community can get to their destination quicker because they are travelling
on the thrust of one another...

So although the individual is primary, there is a perceived need for individuals to
come together in ritual to accomplish the common goal of individual spiritual
growth. Although Dumont identified individualism with modernity, he also
acknowledged (1986:18) that some ideas and values which appeared to be contrary
to individualistic value-ideas had survived from earlier eras and subsequently
became combined with individualistic values. This means that some elements of
holism remain. The inclination to live “ethically”, for example, can also be seen as
a curvature back to the community, in Dumont’s terms. 276 Notwithstanding this,

272 Excerpt from Ingathering Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia and conducted by Rev Jo Lane on 1/2/09.
273 Excerpt from a Naming Ceremony and Service held at the Unitarian Church of South Australia and conducted by R
MacPherson on 24/11/13.
274 Extracted from Fieldwork Notes.
275 Excerpt from service held by Pastor R MacPherson 16/9/11 at Unitarian Church of South Australia.
276 As Dumont (1994:187) states “individualism receives a curvature, which sends it back to the community”. See
discussion on modernity in Introduction.
the dominant value prevails and is the encompassing principle which embraces and defines the whole—a point also made by Kapferer (2011: 196).

6. South Australian Quakers and Unitarians: Variants on a Modern Theme

Members of the Unitarian and Quaker communities often cross paths through common social justice concerns. Some members have been drawn to both communities and for a period of time have alternated Sunday worshipping activities; attending Unitarian services of worship one week and Quaker meetings for worship the next. This inter-group interaction again throws up the question of what differences there are between these two communities.

As pointed out by Robbins (2013:457-9), people often organize their lives in order to promote what they believe is the “good”; however, ideas of what this is and how to achieve it, differ significantly. Quaker worship has a strong moral imperative. Its purpose is not salvation but the creation of a better world in the here and now. George Fox charged his followers to be exemplars. Contemporary Quakers may not be so zealous in their approach, but there is strong belief that Quakerism is a way of life guided by a commitment to its testimonies of peace, simplicity, truth and integrity, community, and equality. Undoubtedly, this requires a commitment to an ethical life.

Although Quakers value their inner lives, from the movement’s beginnings they have also been firmly in-the-world. Leading eighteenth and nineteenth century Quaker families, for example, were visibly involved in capitalist ventures. This involvement in the growth of business enterprises and capitalism was accompanied by increased emphasis by Quakers on social responsibility, honesty and integrity towards others. Therefore, Quakers placed considerable value on individual responsibility; so much so, that honesty and integrity in business dealings became important central precepts of Quaker practice. Importantly, belief in an inner teacher directs adherents towards horizons of action; and in particular, to forms of

277 This lends weight to Weber’s (2009) assertions regarding the linkage between asceticism and the Protestant ethic to the spirit of capitalism.
action which will assist in bringing about what they believe to be a more ideal society. ²⁷⁸

Public statements are often made on behalf of Quakers Australia-wide. These are agreed at gatherings of Friends and carry the signature of the presiding Clerk. The content of these statements refer to matters of concern to Quakers—such as support for marriage equality, protesting against treatment of asylum seekers and cuts to the overseas aid programs. These public statements often take the form of letters to politicians, the Australian Human Rights Commission, or by releases to the media, as shown below. ²⁷⁹ Quakers also regularly participate in public demonstrations, vigils and rallies on matters of peace and justice which are of concern to them. Although levels of commitment undoubtedly vary among members, all Quakers would be in broad agreement with the principles involved, and the desire for a more ideal world.

Although Quaker worship practices are more self-reflective and have more interior complexity, an analysis of Unitarian ritual practices has revealed that the internal dynamics of these practices have transformative possibilities for their participants. Moreover, there is potentiality for re-forming the self as an “ethical self.” This self seeks to bring about a more ideal world, which leads to consideration of what that ideal world might embrace and how adherents should act in, and engage with, that world; and more particularly, with the wider Australian society.

Although Quaker response often emanates from decisions made at group gatherings, Unitarians have more often responded individually to matters involving

²⁷⁸ An example of Quaker involvement in the wider Australian community is the Quaker Shop (See Appendix A Figure 2), which provides a valuable service to the South Australian community and raises substantial funds which are distributed to charities such as Quaker Service Australia and the Australian Refugee Association.

²⁷⁹ Figure 5.3 Australian Quakers’ Media release

Quakers want Climate Change Action as Nation Burns ²³ Jan 2013

Australian Quakers have called on the leaders of all political parties, as a matter of urgency to take the impact of climate change into the upcoming federal election as a key plank of their party’s platform for action. At their annual gathering in Canberra this month, Australian Quakers affirmed that lasting peace can no longer be contemplated in isolation from the significant ecological and environmental challenges facing the world today and in the future.

However, there is an active group which has been formed at the church which, among other things, has raised funds for disaster relief and arranged speakers on the topics of poverty alleviation. Members of the congregation also attend public demonstrations and vigils in support of human rights issues. Similarly, to the Quaker community, Unitarians desire a “best possible” world— a vision which is based on ideals born of modernity.

Notwithstanding this similarity of intent, I claim that there is a different emphasis on the two related values which are encompassed within Quaker and Unitarian individualisms: equality and freedom. For Dumont (1986:7, 9), these are the two cardinal ideals of modernity and are based on the idea of the individual as a rational being whose rights are only limited by the identical rights of others. The individual, in this understanding, is the all-embracing and encompassing value. Undoubtedly, both groups highly value equality and freedom, but a comparison between the two communities of practice is able to discern a difference in emphasis—a difference which requires further exploration.

In a statement posted on the South Australian Unitarian website, the pastor makes it clear that he believes that freedom is the defining impulse of the Unitarian movement. This, he states, entails being “free of coercive creeds, free of any authority outside our own best, considered judgement. That considered judgement weighs both the dictates of reason and moral conscience, we are a thinking, reflective person’s church, rightly sceptical of dogma.”

The church through its minister provides most of the resources, and fellow congregants provide a network of mutual support, for the individual spiritual quest which is undertaken by exploring a diversity of religious and other sources. In addition, to encompass the different beliefs held by its members, there are a set of

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280 By the end of the fieldwork period the minister had encouraged more group response. This has extended to a movement towards a more national Unitarian response on some matters of social justice.

281 See Appendix B Figure 5.

Unitarian principles which can be seen to be both the outcome of Enlightenment rationalism and humanist precepts. Some of these are as follows:

We believe in the freedom of religious expression. Every individual should be encouraged to develop their own personal theology, and to present openly their religious opinions without fear of censure or reprisal...

We believe in the authority of reason and conscience. The ultimate arbiter in religion is not a church, or a document, or an official, but the personal choice and decision of the individual...

We believe in the worth and dignity of each human being. All people on earth have an equal claim to life, liberty, and justice – no idea, ideal, or philosophy is superior to a single human life...

We believe in the necessity of the democratic process. Records are open to scrutiny, elections are open to members, and ideas are open to criticism—so that people may govern themselves... 283

This statement of Unitarian principles can be compared with the Quaker testimony on equality:

Friends (Quakers) believe there is that of God in everyone (and in the natural world). That means in the eyes of God, everyone is equal. Quakers have therefore worked for equal rights for all men and women regardless of race, creed or sexual preferences....

At the centre of the Quaker religious experience is the consistently held belief in the equal worth of all people. Our common humanity transcends our differences. We aspire not to say or do anything or condone any statements, actions or situations which imply a lack of respect for the humanity and human rights of any person or people. 284

During meetings for worship, for example, participants are seated in a configuration which faces them towards the centre. This has a levelling effect which also demonstrates the high value placed upon equality. This emphasis is also discernible in business meetings. There is no voting. Group unity is sought rather than unanimity, consensus, or the will of the majority holding sway. It is believed

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that seeking a majority decision by way of vote denies the minority a voice. The decision-making process is instead one which “gathers up the corporate wisdom of the body” (Jones 1927:68). Although all participants in the decision-making process are assumed to have an equal say, particularly in the wording of a minute; this is countered by the fact that individuals who disagree with the “sense of the meeting” or the “corporate wisdom” usually acquiesce.

The individualisms apparent in Quaker and Unitarian practices seemingly place different emphases on the values of equality and freedom and I contend that these differences have been historically determined. Unitarian individualism with its emphasis on liberty appears to have developed from notions expressed within the variant of individualism which had a more secular inheritance from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. This view stems more particularly from ideas that all citizens, although different or unique, are equal on a political level. It also flows from the view that humans are all endowed with reason. The Unitarian style and content of services of worship, accompanied by the valorisation of democratic process, all facilitate and reflect these ideas.

On the other hand, early English Quakers were heavily influenced by the ideas which were put forward by European religious leaders such as Martin Luther and his notions concerning the priesthood of all believers, self-cultivation and the inner life. Historically and philosophically, the German idea of liberty was that “of the spirit” or within the soul. This inner freedom lent itself to self-cultivation or bildung. German individualism had two traits: self-cultivation and the closing up of the self to the world. This type of individualism, as stated by Dumont (1986:137), favoured inwardness, introspection and enrichment of the inner life.

The ideas of mystics and theologians such as Jacob Bohme may also have had some standing with Quakers; but regardless of whether this was so, there is no doubt that Quakers have historically had a strong religious base which focused on their inner worlds. There is a religious duty to nurture the inner self in order to experience one’s own spirituality. Although many current Quakers do not believe in God there is still a residual belief in “that of God” which is an internal human property available to all, thus making all equal in the eyes of God. It is this belief which
prompts many Quakers to be involved in social justice issues, some of which bring them into conflict with the state.

Unitarians have historically tried to change religious views from within existing church structures and tried to work within the state’s political structure to bring about social reforms. Members of the early South Australian Unitarian community, for example, were active in the establishment of the colony’s educational and other reforms because they saw these reforms as the way to achieve betterment of the individual and society. Quakers, on the other hand, have had an historical relation of distrust and potential opposition to the state which arguably stems from the sufferings they endured during the English Civil War.

Quaker vision for society first came into significant conflict with that promoted by the Australian state during their campaign against compulsory military training prior to World War One. It was continued in their response to subsequent Australian involvement in war; and further reiterated in the recent centenary celebrations. As Kapferer rightly points out (1988:147), one of the reasons behind the Australian nation’s remembrance of the Anzacs is to recognize the human suffering endured. Accordingly, the state has attempted to make Anzac its central rite; but symbolically, it is also a “nationalist rite of the people, but a people in ambivalent relation to the state, a relation of distrust and potential opposition.” The Quaker reaction to the Anzac centenary commemorations is; however, based more on notions about the internal properties of human beings— notions which nevertheless drive Quakers towards a strong commitment to egalitarianism and individualism.

It is notable that the South Australian Unitarian website, whilst affirming the goals of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all, appeared to have no united response to the centenary of World War One. Australian Quaker response, on the other hand, is set out very specifically on their website. Central to their response, is an exhibition which was prepared by N.S.W. members in 2014 and which tells of the experiences of Australian Quakers, during and before, the First

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285 See Chapter 1 for the Quaker response to World War One and compulsory military training; a response kept alive through their response to the centenary of these events.
World War. The exhibition includes panels which were displayed initially in the Sydney Meeting House and then travelled to other locations in Australia, including Adelaide, where the panels were displayed in the city centre. The exhibition paid tribute to those who work for peace, highlighting Quakers’ continuing commitment to this cause. It showcased the challenges that faced Quakers who established the Australian Freedom League in Adelaide in 1912, and listed those boys who refused to do military drill or on-combat duties as senior cadets and were subsequently imprisoned as a result of their stance. The centenary was an opportunity for Quakers to reaffirm their commitment to peace, both historically and now. This commitment is based on a central tenet of Quakerism—“that of God” in everyone. This central tenet means that the requirements of the state are necessarily subordinated to the nature of the inner life in continuing Quaker witness.

FIGURE 5.4 PANEL FROM THE QUAKER EXHIBITION

286 Quaker witness today displayed in public silent vigil in heart of Canberra during Australian Quakers Yearly Meeting gathering in 2009 which S.A. Quakers attended (image extracted from WW1 Exhibition Panel shown on Quakers Australia Website [http://www.quakers.org.au] Accessed 25/2/16.)
FIGURE 5.5  PANEL FROM THE QUAKER EXHIBITION

The Quaker exhibition provides a counter narrative to that provided by the state which also had a travelling exhibition. The state’s focus is on the commemoration of military engagement and the legend of the Anzacs, as shown on the government website which advertises “The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience.”

Figure 5.6 Australian Government Exhibition

![Image of Australian Government Exhibition](image_url)

My main point here is that the Quaker alternative narrative of the Anzac centenary displays individualism and values which are still characteristic of modernity. However, it is a variant form.

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287 The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience is advertised as:

a travelling exhibition that tells the story of Australian involvement in the First World War, and the following Century of Service of Australia's armed forces in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations in which Australia has been involved. The exhibition follows a chronological timeline spanning the period from pre-First World War Australia to the present day, using a mix of visuals, artefacts, audio and film, from the Australian War Memorial. The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience includes a community zone that shares stories about local men and women who contributed to Australia's war efforts (Australian Government Website ‘100 Years of Anzac’, http://www.anzaccentenary.gov.au/). Accessed 25/2/16.
7. Conclusion

Through comparison of different approaches to ritual, I have argued that Quaker and Unitarian practices cannot be considered purely in terms of communicative action or relations of power, although these are still important features. Instead, they must be understood also in terms of their transformative potential—an attribute which is made possible by the internal dynamics within their rituals. Importantly, I posit that their practices are actively constitutive of value; and furthermore, although Quaker and Unitarian practices are different, the prominence of the individual, which is a key indicator of the concept of “modernity”, is evident in both. Their individualisms though are not quite the same, indicating that they are examples of variants within modern Australian ideology.
CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

South Australian Quakers and Unitarians have many similarities and this has resulted in frequent interaction between members of both communities, including a situation where one person attended Quaker and Unitarian worshipping activities on alternate weeks. Clearly, this person was faced with a dilemma of faith and practice which he negotiated by attending both communities and holding membership of both. On his death, he ultimately resolved this dilemma in his funeral arrangements. His funeral was held grave side at the historic Unitarian Shady Grove Cemetery but his committal was conducted by a member of the Quaker community. Members of both groups attended his funeral, bringing both communities together in mourning.

In this thesis though, I have concentrated on the small differences between these two communities rather than their similarities in order to understand how they have arrived at their contemporary embrace of spirituality and what they have added to its diversity.

Specifically, this has been a comparative study of how South Australian Quakers and Unitarians—two “old-style” religious organisations that have historically been called non-conformists and rational dissenters—confront the changing religious complexity of the contemporary world. I have argued that they have been able to maintain legitimacy through their ability to convey their ideal of the “autonomy of the individual”; an ideal which is the keystone value of modernity itself. However, I have posited that they do so in different ways, indicating articulation of variant forms.
2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1 The main research question

The main research question was set out at the beginning of this thesis and was as follows:

*Dumont’s ideas about variants of modern individualism were associated with the milieu of industrial capitalism and relative homogeneity of modern Western Europe. This milieu is vastly different from the more heterogeneous cultural environment of current Australian society. Notwithstanding this, Dumont’s notions are still pertinent in an assessment of how certain types of religious organisation confront Australia’s contemporary religious complexity and this is indicated by their practices which are actively constitutive of value.*

2.2 Subsidiary questions

The following subsidiary questions which relate to the main research question were also set out at the beginning of the thesis:

- Why did Quakers and Unitarians come to South Australia? What is the significance of South Australia in this study?
- What are the similarities and differences between the religious practices and ideas of South Australian Quakers and Unitarians?
- What is it to be a South Australian Quaker or a Unitarian and do the values they espouse resonate with the values embraced by Australia as a modern, secular state?
- Are South Australian Quakers and Unitarians still dissenting groups; and if so, how does this manifest itself in their practices and in their engagement with contemporary Australian society?

These questions were addressed by conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Adelaide and its environs in a deliberately comparative framework which involved observing and participating in Quaker and Unitarian practices for a period of time. The information collected during this process was collated and analysed and this became the major source of data for the study. The following is an overview of the information discovered, beginning with an outline of the importance of the location of South Australia for the purposes of the study.
3. THESIS REVIEW

3.1 The colony of South Australia

You see how healthy the religious atmosphere is. Anything can live in it. Agnostics, Atheists, Freethinkers, Infidels, Mormons, Pagans, Indefinites: they are all there. And all the big sects of the world can do more than merely live in it: they can spread, flourish, prosper.288

Mark Twain (1895)

As Mark Twain’s description implies, the European settlement of South Australia was promoted as a dissenters’ paradise, offering a safe haven for those who had suffered religious inequality. However, the colony was also planned as a capitalist utopia. Land was sold at a price which was attractive to middle-class capitalists but too expensive for the working class. The working class, on the other hand, were given assisted passage in order to provide the labour needed for this modernist scheme.

Most importantly, the colonial settlement was heralded as a new convict-free experiment which promised a supposedly morally superior environment, freedom of worship and religious equality. Arguably, South Australia, initially at least, was a utopian colony that was imagined as a space for the realization of certain visions for community and thought.

The colony’s promoters envisaged that settlers attracted by these prospects would more likely display a “moral rectitude” which, in their opinion, appeared to be lacking in those living in the penal settlement colonies. These factors resulted in South Australia retaining over time a distinctive religious character and a perception of difference.

288 Mark Twain visited South Australia in 1895.

In an article titled “My Social Vision for South Australia”, written one hundred and twenty years after Mark Twain’s comments, the Premier of South Australia makes no reference to distinctive religious character but certainly alludes to a perception of difference:

South Australia was conceived as an ideal society, established in response to the challenges of British industrialisation. From the Letters Patent establishing the colony that recognised Aboriginal land rights through to the 1856 Constitution amongst the most democratic in the world, South Australia strived to be a good society... We can draw on deep historical reserves of intellectual and moral capital. Integrity and democracy have their genesis in South Australia’s free settlement and early emphasis on democracy... We have been striving to address inequality since our founders first conceived the idea of the province... 

3.2 Quaker and Unitarian settlers

Among those first immigrants attracted to the new colony were a few British Quaker and Unitarian families; and remarkably, some of their descendants are still members of these communities. These immigrant Quakers and Unitarians were not members of new religious movements but instead formed part of the membership of religious traditions which had been established much earlier in Britain, Europe and North America. They immigrated with the blessing of their home congregations which offered assistance with advice, provision of building materials; and, in the case of the Unitarians, a minister. Both communities developed from an historical Christian heritage and have been a part of the South Australian community since European settlement. They came to South Australia in the hope that its particular colonial milieu would provide opportunity for them to further their economic advancement and pursue their aims for a better world.

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289 The Adelaide Review, 4 December 2015, J. Weatherill.  
The aspirations of the members of these two communities of practice initially appeared to accord with the new colony’s modernist agenda. Although the Unitarian community thrived from the outset, Quakers had internal difficulties to overcome in the first fifty years of colonial settlement. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, both communities were well settled, and the Quaker community was starting to find its voice. It determined that its vision for an ideal society did not necessarily accord with that of the new Australian nation, and this difference in vision was evident in the Quaker community’s response to military matters surrounding the events of the First World War. The Quaker and Unitarian communities’ dissimilar responses to those events also highlighted their different imaginings of how a better society might be brought about.

3.3 Research setting and design

The above factors provided background for my inquiry into the contemporary practices of Quakers and Unitarians in South Australia. I was persuaded by Bouma’s opinion that Australia, as a particular postmodern, secular and multicultural society provides a unique context for the study of religious practice. Therefore, I have extended his analysis by concentrating on South Australia, and Adelaide in particular, which I have demonstrated had a perceivably different colonial environment that encouraged those attracted to nonconformist Christian religions. Arguably, the South Australian setting provides a unique milieu for the study of religious practices, particularly those which do not fit into the category of mainstream Christian religion.

Commonalities exist between the Quaker and Unitarian communities which are centred on their histories of dissent, the eschewing of any creed, and their tolerance of other religious views. Moreover, each has more than one worshipping group in South Australia, a predominance of older people in their congregations and a similar number of members, although Quakers have a larger Australia-wide following.
My research ascertained that the Quaker and Unitarian communities structure their respective organizations and practices somewhat differently; not only from each other, but also from other church groups in Australia. In so doing, I have extended the sociological analysis of Gary Bouma regarding the characteristics of Australian religious and spiritual life, and his modelling of types of church authority and organisational structure. I also maintain that South Australia is different from the rest of Australia and that this distinctiveness adds to the work that Bouma has done on Australian religious life.

Bouma notes a move away from organised religion to spirituality—a label which can be applied to the new diversity of world religions. He contends that the usage of the term “spiritual” rather than “religious” as a form of personal identification is now more acceptable in Australia, and certainly contemporary Quakers and Unitarians are more comfortable with describing themselves as such. Vignettes of the experiences of members of both communities demonstrate the differences, not only between Quakers and Unitarians, but also between these groups and the Christianities which are usually the subject of anthropological study. The vignettes also highlight the variety of spiritualities in contemporary Australian society.

Ecumenicalism has been influential in Australia as a way of managing religious diversity by minimising difference, but as Bouma points out, despite this movement, there are a substantial number of Australians who grapple with this idea of downplaying difference whilst preferring to identify themselves with particular religious organisations. Importantly, Quakers and Unitarians confront the idea of ecumenicalism through their history of non-conformism. I have demonstrated how Quakers refuse to engage politically and how Unitarians confront the idea through their embrace of secularism and nationalism. Nevertheless, I maintain that both espouse non-denominational world religion in their experience of contemporary religion in multicultural Australia where Asian religions are major growth areas due to changing immigration policies. Quakers and Unitarians, through their practices, endorse this multiplicity whereas more mainstream religious traditions are only able to advocate tolerance. This endorsement is demonstrated in the ethnographic descriptions of both groups’ practices, rituals, and celebrations.
3.4 Description of Quaker Practices

In everyday life, intervals of silence can be awkward moments which somehow need to be filled in, but in a Quaker meeting for worship, the opposite is true. Silence is welcomed. The core of this type of worship is undeniably silent waiting. Adherents sit facing the centre, and each other, in stillness. They remain seated like this for an hour. Sometimes the silence continues for the whole hour, but more usually there is spoken ministry which lasts for a few minutes and then silence again resumes. Typically, there are several offerings of ministry which exude a certain humbleness and reverence. Some people believe that ministry can be inspired by the Spirit, and all believe that ministry should be from the heart and not an intellectual project. Silence used within the context of Quaker worship allows for more self-reflection. The removal of outward embellishment is replaced by interior complexity.

3.5 Description of Unitarian Practices

For South Australian Unitarians, the Sunday service of worship is undoubtedly the most important gathering held within their community. During services of worship, the congregation sits on the wooden pews and chairs arranged on either side of a central aisle. All seating faces towards the front of the meetinghouse or chapel. There is no fixed liturgical calendar. However, some Christian celebrations such as Christmas and Easter Sunday are still observed with a Unitarian interpretation of their significance, and there are several special Unitarian celebrations held during the year such as the Flower Communion Service and Ingathering Service.

The Sunday service usually follows a particular order and its musical interludes are considered features. The music is chosen to suit the theme of the service and can be highly entertaining. The Unitarian website notes that musical interludes are excellent and varied and “ranging from classical, to jazz, to folk, to R and B.”

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The focal part of the service though is undoubtedly the minister’s address to the congregation. Another important feature of Unitarian worship practice is that services and rites of passage alike draw inspiration from many sources and are often highly individualized. In this way, they display a certain consistency in their practice, and adherence to, Unitarian notions and values.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Bouma’s research led him to conclude that Australia is a particular postmodern, secular and multicultural society which also has a rich Aboriginal heritage. It is in relation to Aboriginality that dissenting religious traditions such as the Quakers and Unitarians develop a distinctly Australian voice to their worshipping practices. Quaker meetings for business are opened with the acknowledgement of the lands of the Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri peoples, respect for their culture and the responsibilities of the regional meeting to work towards greater justice for First Nations People. Unitarian services of worship begin their words of welcome with an acknowledgement of the Kaurna people as the traditional owners of the land and their spiritual relationship with their country. This spiritual relationship is likened to the church’s spiritual community and its commitment to its members to support them in their individual spiritual paths.

Quakers and Unitarians have also adapted their practices to incorporate changes in other ways. Recently, for example, a youthful African Quaker family, more familiar with an evangelical style, has been welcomed into one of the Adelaide meetings which previously had few children attending. The Quaker community has responded to the needs of these new attenders by holding a weekly children’s meeting and an “all ages” meeting several times a year. These meetings take a form similar to worship sharing rather than a meeting for worship and focus on a topic for reflection. After ordinary meetings for worship, there is time set aside for music and singing to encourage, and incorporate, the participation of children, outside the framework of the silent un-programmed meeting for worship. The ideas of African Quakers have been incorporated into the experiences and practices of Adelaide adherents; however, the un-programmed meeting format of silence, stillness and ministry still prevails.
Undeniably, Quaker and Unitarian worshipping practices are demonstrably different in form and content, particularly in their respective use of sound. Whereas Quakers are comfortable with the sound of silence, Unitarians are much more comfortable with an abundant use of words, music and song. My analysis, however, demonstrates that these worship practices cannot be reduced to relations of power or their functions alone, just as they cannot both be reduced to being communicative action. I therefore suggest that the approaches taken by Kapferer and Handelman are central to my argument because these theorists recognise ritual’s transformative potential—a factor which is essential for understanding Quaker and Unitarian practices.

Importantly, the transformational capacity of these practices was analysed using the concepts of “dynamics” and “virtuality.” Virtuality here is understood as being in-between reality (that which has already occurred) and actuality (the diversity of what will become); the space and structure of becoming, which can be characterised by the repetitive format of the meeting for worship. These concepts allowed me to argue that the act of sitting still in silence, surrounded by others who are intent on doing the same, is not a passive act. Quaker worship, with its predictive pattern, suspends some indeterminacies of every day realities in order that some of the dynamics of reality formation can be entered into, and then readjusted. The meeting allows for reflection and meditation to take place without subjecting those activities to some of the indeterminacies of everyday life, thereby allowing the possibility of openness to the promptings of the Spirit.

Following on from this, I contend that through the inward dynamics of ministry, silence and the underlying aesthetics of Quaker worship, there is the potentiality for participants to re-form the self as an “ethical self.” Therefore, an examination of Quaker worship as a ritual process through the concept of “virtuality” indicates that its internal dynamics appear to be the key to transforming everyday realities of its participants.

Similarly, an examination of Unitarian practices indicates that the internal dynamic of this worship style also has the potential to affect the everyday realities of its participants. Eclecticism, the dynamics of the sermon, the academic habitus of the ritual specialist, and the underlying aesthetics of Unitarian worship itself, all offer
transformative possibility. The Unitarian minister challenges his congregation “to deeper personal reflection” and exhorts them to have “a more considered personal faith and more ethical living” —again indicating how both Quakers and Unitarians, through their rituals, encourage adherents to pursue continuous personal spiritual transformation and to strive for a better world.

This pursuit of personal and societal transformation posed the question of whether there are any links between the values espoused by Quakers and Unitarians and the political and moral ideals characteristic of modern Australian society. This proposition was explored with recourse to the views of social theorists on the concept of “modernity.” In particular, the views of Louis Dumont were outlined as he is acknowledged as one of the principal authors on the roots of modern individualism and the ideas and values which characterize modernity.

Analysis revealed that South Australian Quakers and Unitarians put high value on the individual. Quakers, for example, believe that each individual is responsible for finding a personal understanding of God and must be guided by conscience in determining the right path in life. Their recourse to silence in ritual is instrumental in achieving this understanding. Unitarians, too, favour individual responsibility for formulating their own personal theology or spirituality. The minister’s recourse to the use of rhetoric rather than silence within ritual is persuasive in this regard. In both communities, the individual is given high value; a notion which is commonly associated with, and characteristic of, modernity.

Not only do the practices themselves promote individual responsibility, but also, the wording in rites of passage also confirm this. The Quaker wedding, for example, included the promise to “cherish and delight in your spirit and individuality.” In the Unitarian wedding, too, the minister remarked approvingly on the couple’s “strong sense of self.” Moreover, there were several instances of South Australian Quakers and Unitarians engaging and disengaging between the two communities of practice. This is a further example of an exercise of independence and freedom of choice which is informed by the cultural ideals of

Western modernity; a point also made by Norris in her discussion on “individualized modular spirituality” (2003:175).

In the Introduction to the thesis, I pointed out that in *German Ideology*, Dumont examined Germany as a variant of modernity. He compared Germany with France and determined the differences between them. He posited that Germany is more religious and introverted; whereas France is more secular and extraverted. These were not meant as absolute differences, but relative differences. Notwithstanding these relative differences, France is still religious and Germany is still very much secular. Dumont’s main point was that it is in the comparison between the two that the relative differences are able to be noted. I have argued that a similar contradistinction applies when a comparison is made between contemporary South Australian Quakers and Unitarians.

My research also indicates that the Quaker variant of modern ideology appears to be more like that of German individualism, which was significantly influenced by the ideas of Luther, i.e., it had a religious basis. Early Quakers embraced Luther’s ideas about the “priesthood of all believers” where the individual was responsible for his or her own salvation. Therefore, regard for politics and the state became subordinated to the workings of the inner life very early in Quaker thought. This type of individualism favoured inwardness, introspection and enrichment of the inner life. It also meant that Quakers were more likely to have ideals which might conflict with the views held by those in positions of power or authority. This propensity for social activism was evident in reaction to military events surrounding Australian involvement in the First World War, and reiterated in their response to its centenary.

Historically, Unitarians embraced the ideals of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. This form of individualism did not embrace inwardness and was more outward and socio-political in nature. This is not to say that Unitarians are not religious or spiritual in outlook. On the contrary, they highly value spirituality, but it does indicate greater openness to a diversity of sources of inspiration and a propensity for critical appraisal of religious views. This has brought Unitarians into conflict sometimes with mainstream Protestant churches but not so much with
the state. However, Unitarians are very conscious of human rights issues and the cardinal values of modernity—equality and liberty—are strongly defended publicly.

More particularly, I argue that the different individualisms evident within the ideas of Quaker and Unitarian communities in South Australia indicate the existent variants discernible within Australia’s modern ideology. Australia’s egalitarian values demonstrate that it is a modern western secular society that has adopted, and adapted, from its British heritage, a form of individualism which was inherited from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution; and in this regard, it can be seen to be a form of individualism which is perhaps closer to the Unitarian variant.

5. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

There are many future avenues for research which could benefit by building on the findings of this present study, including a further examination of the transformative aspects of ritual. In particular, the notion of “virtuality” could be utilized as a tool for understanding how rituals of different communities of practice in Australia work for their participants. The recently burgeoning fields of the anthropologies of ethics, morality, and “the good” also offer other ways of looking at the practices of Quakers and Unitarians which could add to existing knowledge. However, the most exciting avenues which are indicated by this research are related to its comparative approach. This study was necessarily limited to South Australia but it would be advantageous to also explore Unitarian and Quaker communities that have settled in other parts of Australia.

In Sydney, for example, there are two Unitarian communities: Sydney Unitarian Church and Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship. One community embraces a liberal Christian orientation and the other prefers a more expansive orientation. Quakers, on the other hand, have twelve meeting venues in NSW, two of which are in Sydney. The Devonshire Street Meeting House is the second oldest meeting house in use in Australia— South Australia’s North Adelaide meeting house being the oldest. A comparative anthropological study of Quakers and Unitarians in NSW would be illuminating, particularly as the colonial settlement of Sydney followed such a different course with its establishment as a penal colony in 1788.
Another direction for future research could entail bringing other church groups, such as pentecostal or evangelical Christians in South Australia, into comparison. On the face of it, these groups seem to have so little in common with Unitarians and Quakers and are not classified as rational dissenters. This raises the question of whether the location of South Australia would have as much bearing on the research findings of such a study.

Many of these churches have large congregations; for example, Influencers Church (formerly known as Paradise Community Church) has grown from humble beginnings in a north eastern suburb of Adelaide to be the fifth largest church in Australia, and now boasts international connections. Several political figures and a well-known singer have had associations with the church. As such, these communities form an important, and influential, part of Australian society. The research into North American pentecostal, fundamentalist and evangelical Christianities undertaken by Csordas (1994, 1997, 2007), Luhrmann (2004) and Harding (1991, 2001) would prove useful in this regard; and Dumont’s notions of “variants in modernity” would again be relevant in a comparative study involving an analysis of the practices of, and values espoused by, such groups.

In considering future avenues for research though it should be noted that Hann (2012:3) argues that there is too much emphasis on Protestantism and its links to modernity and too little engagement with Eastern Christianities. Hann acknowledges that Protestantism and Catholicism are the largest Christian communities worldwide, and that it is appropriate that they have dominated anthropological studies of Christianity. His main point is that Eastern Christian communities have been neglected in anthropological discussion.

Hann also questions influential assumptions that the emergence of individualism is connected with certain types of Christianity, and notes that Weber’s archetypal Protestant is the epitome of the modern citizen, who has internalized faith and eschews religious experts and sacraments in order to communicate with God.

Hann’s argument is that Weber judged Eastern Christians to be even further removed from this archetype than Roman Catholicism. He points out (2012:6) that although Taylor (2007) incorporates Roman Catholicism into his Western view of secularity, he also ignores the Eastern Orthodox traditions. Hann also criticizes the inference that immanence and transcendence should be the defining features of Western Protestantism. He suggests (2012:10-12) that Eastern Christianities have been excluded from such analysis, or considered “the other”, when compared with interiorized Christianity in western societies. Meaning and belief, in his opinion, are wrongly considered the prerogative of Western Christianities.293

It is difficult to refute Hann’s claims. The Eastern Orthodox Church is the second largest Christian church in the world.294 Within Australia, Orthodox traditions tend to have national identities which embrace the Greek, Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian and other smaller, and more recent, communities. There are many of these diverse churches throughout Australia and anthropological research into such differing groups, some of which are quite recent additions to Australia’s contemporary religious complexity, has been lacking. This would prove a rich area for future exploration. Orthodox Christianities, for example, are experiential and in many ways religions of “becoming” and despite very clear differences with Quakerism, do bear some comparison.

6. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Comparison formed the focus of this thesis which was an exploration of the Quakers and Unitarians as an analytical study of the kind of variants identified by Dumont. This research was clearly limited to two dissenting communities of practice in South Australia; but nevertheless, it was essential that these two communities be brought into focus.

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293 Seemingly as a corrective to Hann’s view that meaning and belief are considered the prerogative of Western Christians, this study of Quakers and Unitarians has been biased more towards ritual and orthopraxy.

Although both these communities are small in size, they have formed an important part of modern Australian society, engaging regularly in its wider socio-cultural processes. Social reformers, Catherine Helen Spence and former South Australian premier, Lynn Arnold, were members of these communities; and they, together with the artists, medical specialists, economists, mathematicians, and members of the teaching and other professions who have been members of these groups, have made a considerable contribution to Australian social and political life.

Both of these groups have been little studied. Although historical research has been conducted, including some studies undertaken by current members of these two groups; comparative anthropological research has not been attempted. By conducting a comparative study of these two South Australian communities, I contend that I have added to the knowledge of Australian society in general. More particularly though, this study has added to knowledge of these two small communities, and it has done so, in a distinctly comparative way.

More specifically, I have made an original contribution to the anthropology of Christianity and the anthropology of Australia. I have done this by developing a comparative framework for the study of Churches whose historical basis is firmly entrenched within the Christian tradition, in order to determine how they address dilemmas of faith and practice within modern Australia in arriving at their contemporary embrace of spirituality.

This framework was developed through comparing and analysing current Quaker and Unitarian practices taking a long-range historical perspective and proceeding from the global level to the local communities in South Australia. I have demonstrated that their practices clearly show the ideology they espouse. Therefore, I argue that their practices are constitutive, with internal orderings that are designed to transform life processes. Moreover, the notion of “virtuality” explains how worship activities actually work for participants, thus further developing research into Quaker and Unitarian practice.

Following Handelman, I also suggest that some rituals are characterised by a greater degree of interior complexity and reflexivity. I argue that Quaker ritual, in particular, has complex interior recursivities which are consistent with a form of introverted
individualism. This allows me to state that Quaker and Unitarian worshipping and other practices are not just representational but actively constitutive of value. In so doing, I rely on ideas espoused by Louis Dumont on the concept of “modernity” and introverted and extraverted individualisms— notions which were first outlined in the beginning of this thesis.

Quaker and Unitarian practices reveal various aspects of modernity, albeit in slightly different ways within the two communities. Here Dumont’s ideas become relevant. However, whereas Dumont and Weber pursued a history of ideas through analysing the ideological texts, this thesis has been an examination of ritual practice and the forms of everyday engagement South Australian Quakers and Unitarians undertake.

Undoubtedly, the notion of the “individual” has considerable relevance for both Quakers and Unitarians but there are definite variances in emphasis. Dumont’s notion of “variants in modernity” is able to explain why Quakers and Unitarians put more emphasis on some values rather than others. In this way, his notions are shown to be still pertinent in relation to how religious organisations confront Australia’s contemporary religious complexity and this is indicated by Quaker and Unitarian practices which are demonstratively actively constitutive of value.

Quakers embrace multiculturalism and the ideals of ecumenicalism, but at the same time, they confront its ideals by retaining their own unique form of spirituality which centres on the inner self and promotes involvement in social action which is against the state. Unitarians embrace ideals of ecumenicalism and multiculturalism, too. They incorporate ideas from other religious traditions into their worship activities, but at the same time, confront the ideals of ecumenicalism by embracing a more secular form of spirituality which refuses to abide by mainstream Christian precepts. Both are variants of modernity.

In a similar way, I have demonstrated that colonial South Australia was a utopian experiment in modernity—a variant relative to other Australian states. No other Australian state was a planned convict-free colonial settlement, based on utopian ideas about democracy and religious freedom. It was conceived as a “good society” which initially courted rational dissenters and capitalist endeavour—an experiment in colonization placing emphasis on political and moral ideals which were characteristic of modern ideology.
Although human greed and land speculation took the fledgling colony to the brink of financial ruin, South Australia survived, and its colonial beginnings are still feted. A newly established religious community called “Significance Church” recently claimed that South Australia “was firstly and foremostly a Christian state established by Christians for the free proclamation of the gospel to all who would live here.” It then quotes one of the colony’s founders as speculating that South Australia will become the headquarters for the diffusion of Christianity in the Southern Hemisphere.295

So far, this prediction has not come to pass and South Australia has not gained the reputation given to the Quaker colonial settlement of Pennsylvania, which was once called “The Holy Experiment.” Nevertheless, relative to other Australian cities, Adelaide has been considered more “religious”, and it has differed because it arguably had a more religious base which resulted from its colonial beginnings. I contend that it can be described as a variant relative to other Australian cities. This does not mean that Adelaide is not secular, or that Sydney and Melbourne have no religion; but in Dumont’s terms, it does mean that it can be considered as a relative variation born of comparison.

APPENDIX A

Figure 1a: THE RAJAH QUILT


The provisions to enable this handiwork were provided by Elizabeth Fry and the British Ladies Society for the Reformation of Female Prisoners.297

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296 According to the website of the National Gallery of Australia, *The Rajah quilt* is one of Australia’s most important textiles, and a major focus of the National Gallery of Australia’s Australian textiles collection.

These provisions were carried by the 180 women prisoners on board the Rajah as it set sail from Woolwich, England on 5 April 1841, bound for Van Diemen’s Land. When the Rajah arrived in Hobart on 19 July 1841, these supplies had been turned into the inscribed patchwork, embroidered and appliquéd coverlet now known as the *Rajah quilt*. [http://nga.gov.au/rajahquilt/](http://nga.gov.au/rajahquilt/) Accessed 20/8/15

297 See next page for further detail of *The Rajah Quilt*. 
Figure 1b: Detail from ‘Rajah Quilt’

Figure 2: THE QUAKER SHOP

Figure 3: THE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE, MEETING HOUSE LANE, NORTH ADELAIDE

APPENDIX B

Figure 1: ORIGINAL UNITARIAN CHURCH, WAKEFIELD ST., ADELAIDE

Unitarian Church, Wakefield Street, Adelaide, South Australia 1865-67 albumen silver photograph albumen silver photograph
printed image 14.3 h x 21.3 w cm
Purchased 1984
Accession No: NGA 84.2908.6
Figure 2: UNITARIAN MEETING HOUSE, NORWOOD

![Image](http://users.picknowl.com.au/~unitariansa/images/enteringcourtyard.jpg)

John Dowie’s many artistic works included sculptures such as the fountain in Adelaide’s Victoria Square, ‘Alice’ in Rymill Park, and the Victor Richardson Gates at the Adelaide Oval.

Figure 3: JOHN DOWIE PAINTING INSIDE THE UNITARIAN MEETING HOUSE, NORWOOD

Image Extracted from the S.A. Unitarians Website

Figure 4: **SHADY GROVE CHAPEL**

Shady Grove Chapel as shown on the South Australian Unitarian Website


Figure 5: **ADELAIDE UNITARIANS SUPPORTING MARRIAGE EQUALITY**

Members of the church holding a banner at a rally supporting marriage equality

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

CONGREGATIONAL ADDRESSES

Rev Jo Lane, ‘Beauty, Justice and Communion’ from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by J Lane 18/11/07.

Rev Jo Lane, Words Spoken and Delivered by Jo Lane at the Funeral Service for a Church Member held in the Adelaide Unitarian Church on 1/4/08.

Rev Jo Lane, ‘Returning and Ingathering’ from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by J Lane on 1/2/09.

Rev Jo Lane, ‘All Heretic’s Day’ from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by J Lane on 10/5/09.

Rev Bob Wightman, Father’s Day Service at the Unitarian Chapel at Shady Grove conducted by the Rev Bob Wightman and his wife, Mary, on 6/9/09.

Rev Jo Lane Words Spoken and Delivered by Jo Lane at a Special Service for children buried in unmarked graves at Shady Grove Unitarian Cemetery and held at Shady Grove Unitarian Church on 6/9/10.

Rev. Jo Lane. Words Spoken and Delivered by Jo Lane at the Wedding Service for a Church Member held in the Adelaide Unitarian Church on 18/12/10.

Pastor R MacPherson. Words Spoken and Delivered by Rob MacPherson and Margaret Lambert at the Welcome Service for the New Pastor held at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) on 16/10/11.

Pastor R MacPherson. AGM Sunday from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by R MacPherson on 30/10/11.

Pastor R MacPherson, ‘Tell me the truth about love: reflections on a Unitarian Wedding’ from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by R MacPherson on 14/10/12.

Pastor R MacPherson, ‘Welcome to new members’ from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by R MacPherson on 16/12/12.

Pastor R MacPherson, ‘Rites of Passage: What’s in a Naming Ceremony?” from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by R MacPherson on 24/11/13.

Minister R MacPherson, ‘Reimagining a Maculate Mary’ from a Service at the Unitarian Church of South Australia (the Adelaide Unitarian Church) conducted by R MacPherson on 8/12/13.

Minister R MacPherson, Memorial Service for a Church Member held in the Adelaide Church in March 2014 and reprinted in the April 2014 edition of the Adelaide Unitarian Newsletter.
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