

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of volume 19, a bumper issue.

As we have done before, the first part of this issue is devoted to a highly significant Masters' thesis that would not otherwise have wider circulation. Jennifer Hampton's MSc thesis at the University of Lancaster involved analysing the data from the 2013 British Quaker Survey.

In 1990 and in 2003, there were major surveys of believing and belonging in British Quakerism. The first survey was run by myself in 1990, and in 2003 Rosie Rutherford replicated this. At the same time, Simon Best undertook the first major survey of adolescent Quakers. Ten years on from these last surveys, a new research project run by a team of six scholars into patterns of believing and belonging within British Quakerism took place in 2013.

This project gives scholars the ability to compare data across two decades; to understand much better what has been happening within British Quakerism over the past twenty years; and to identify what is happening now. The main overarching questions were:

1. What are the shared beliefs, values and identities held by Quakers? How are Quaker beliefs and values, identity, and patterns of belonging changing over time? How do these compare with other surveys of belief and values in the UK?
2. How is Quaker identity expressed 'in the world'? What does current Quaker testimony consist of?
3. What are the generational differences amongst British Quakers? How do patterns of belief and practice amongst younger Quakers compare with research on religious youth in the UK?
4. How do the religious beliefs and practices of Quakers fit with recent theories on religious change in Britain?
5. How does the case of British Quakerism contribute to the ways in which scholars are rethinking definitions of religion and how it functions in the world today?
6. This time, the response rate was 80%, defying all accepted social science wisdom, especially for a survey comprising 20 pages and over 50 questions.
7. The respondents were aged between 17 and 100, with a mean age of 64. In terms of gender, 61% were female, in line with national figures. In terms of ethnicity, 99% belonged to the white ethnic group, and 71% had undergraduate degrees with 32% of these a Masters or Doctorate in addition. The Quakers are not typical of the British population as a whole but represent a very particular demographic.

Jennifer Hampton coded and analysed the adult surveys. She noted some major changes from the 1990/2003 results. Levels of Christian self-identification had dropped from 51.5% in 1990, to 45.5% in 2003 to 36.5% in 2013. Those seeking God's will in Meetings for Worship had dropped from 32% in 1990 to 25% in 2003 to 20% in 2013. The other major overall change was in belief in God. The question asked 'Do you believe in God'? In 1990, 74% said 'Yes', in 2003 72% and in 2013 57%. What is interesting is that the drop from 72% to 57% is strongly reflected by an increase in those answering 'No'. This rose from 3.4% in 1990 to 7% in 2003 to 14.5% in 2013.

Frequencies are blunt tools of analysis and Jennifer Hampton also conducted a latent class analysis amongst the 84% who self-identified as Quaker. This is a form of analysis that looks beneath the presenting responses and identifies patterns of response across the whole survey to identify sub-populations that are not otherwise visible. Hampton found three kinds of response pattern and only 6 out of 654 respondents did not fit into one of these three types with a probability of more than 80%. Hampton's analysis of the 2013 British Quaker Survey reveals a set of three groupings amongst those who self-identify as Quaker, what she has called 'Traditional', 'Liberal', and 'non-Theist'. These clusters are not due to generational differences but are distinct cross-age cohorts. Her article centres on this analysis. This survey is being replicated in Australia and the USA.

Anne Kett's work explores the anti-slavery activity of Quaker Eleanor Stephens Clark. It concerns a 'depot' or shop that Clark ran from 1853 until 1858, selling cotton goods cultivated by free labour, rather than slave labour. This was part of the 'Free Produce Movement' which promoted a boycott of slave-made goods and thus offered shoppers a practical contribution to abolitionism or even a remedy for the problem of slavery. This case study allows Kett to discuss Quaker women's anti-slavery activity and the practical impact that it made on free-produce shoppers in the locale.

Charlotte Dando's work on Pemba uncovers the complexities of Quaker mission work and how naivete about local culture can lead to unintended consequences. The article argues that the possibility for Quakers to bring something new and beneficial to the missionary field was mostly unachieved. Further, Quakers may even have contributed to the power structures which stopped freed slaves from becoming truly liberated.

Judith Roads' research notes investigates two distinct linguistic styles amongst early Friends' tracts: the incantational style and the catechetical style. Judith Roads argues that both are present in early Quaker writings whilst the catechetical style becomes more dominant as the seventeenth century wears on and the context for Quaker publication changes. This article fits well with Nikki Coffey Tousley's work on the changing nature of conviction narratives between the 1650s and 1670s.

The issue ends with a selection of book reviews, edited by Rebecca Wynter.

'Ben' Pink Dandelion