<u>The Seekers Found: Radical Religion during the English Revolution</u>

A study in their construction by themselves, their opponents and their historians

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Philip Michael Smith, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own.

Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

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Abbreviations

ASR	*American Sociological Review*	*HLQ*	*Huntingdon Library Quarterly*
AJS	*American Journal of Sociology*	*HJ*	*Historical* Journal
AKJV	*Authorised (King James) Version*	HMSO	*Her Majesty's Stationery Office*
AUL	*Aberdeen University Library*	HPT	History of Political Thought
BDBR	*Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals (Greaves & Zaller)*	HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
		HTW	*History Teaching workshop*
BFHS	*Bulletin of the Friends' Historical Society*	HW	*History Workshop*
BFHSP	*Bulletin of Friends' Historical Society of Philadelphia*	HWJ	*History Workshop Journal*
		Johnson	*From Seeker to Finder (Ph.D)*
BQ	*Baptist Quarterly*	*Johnson, CH*	*From Seeker to Finder* (*Church History)*
BRT	*Baptist Review of Theology*		
CH	*Church History*	*Jones*	*Studies in Mystical Religion*
Como, Radical	*Radical Parliamentarians in the English Civil War*	*JBS*	*Journal of British Studies*
		JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
CQR	*Church Quarterly Review*	*JFHS*	*Journal of the Friends Historical Society*
CUP	*Cambridge University Press*		
CVS	*Chromos Virtual Seminar*	*JHI*	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
EHR	*English Historical Review*	*JIH*	*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*
FHL	*Friends' House Library*	*JMH*	*Journal of Modern History*
FQ	*Friends Quarterly*	JNR	*Journal of the Northern Renaissance*
FQE	*Friends Quarterly Examiner*	*JR*	*Journal of Religion*
Hughes	*Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution*	*JRH*	*Journal of Religious History*
		JRS	*Journal of Religious Studies*

JSSR   Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion

JWEH   Journal of Welsh Ecclesiastical History

LRB   London Review of Books

McGregor & Reay   Radical Religion in the English Revolution

MH   Medical History

MUP   Manchester University Press

MVHR   Mississippi Valley Historical Review

NEQ   New England Quarterly

ODNB   Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

OUP   Oxford University Press

PBA   Proceedings of the British Academy

P&P   Past and Present

PAPS   Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society

QH   Quaker History

QS   Quaker Studies

RIHSC   Rhode Island Historical Society Collections

RQ   Renaissance Quarterly

RS   Religious Studies

RR   Renaissance and Reformation

Durston & Maltby   Religion in Revolutionary England

Poole   Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton

SCH   Studies in Church History

SCJ   Sixteenth Century Journal

SH   Social History

SUL   Sheffield University Library

TBHS   Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society

Tolmie   The Triumph of the Saints

TRHS   Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

Vendettuoli   John Jackson Principal Spokesman

Walker   William Dell: Master Puritan

WMQ   William and Mary Quarterly

Note on the text

In all quotations of primary sources I have kept the original spellings, except for standardising long 's' In citing the titles of pamphlets and sermons, I have also standardised fonts and capitalisation. For seventeenth century texts, the place of publication is London unless otherwise stated and all dating is taken from Thomason. All biblical citations are from the *Authorised King James Version*.

Until 1752 England used the Julian calendar in which the year began on 25th March. All dates have been changed to the current Gregorian or Western calendar where the year begins on 1st January. Hence Charles 1 execution on 30th January 1648 (Julian) is rendered as 30th January 1649 (Gregorian).

Abstract

With the abolition of episcopacy from 1641, ecclesiastical hegemony evaporated and numerous religious groups emerged and filled this void. Each advocated a unique position and believed they alone had the model of the *true church.* A bewildering plurality of competing models ensued and the emergence of the Seekers was both a constituent of, and a reaction to, these developments. The Seekers were spiritualist Protestants who met in small voluntary, autonomous and usually uncoordinated groups, following the congregational model of the gathered churches. They were unorganised rather than disorganised in their corporate structure and withdrew from organised religion, to varying degrees. Their size and influence peaked in England during the period of Civil War and *interregnum* known as the English Revolution. They drew considerable attention from hostile contemporaries who described the Seekers as a sect to serve the authors' own polemical purposes. They have attracted less interest from historians who have described them as a loose movement or an intermediate phase in a spiritual journey towards Quakerism. Both constructions are unsatisfactory, and this thesis contends that the evidence best supports the characterisation of a Seeker milieu containing a number of related, but separate and coherent, spiritualist positions regarding religious belief and practice. Historians have not acknowledged the significant role that disputes with Seekers played in shaping the identity of other contemporary religious groups. This thesis aims to correct this by considering evidence drawn principally from the printed exchanges between different religious groups over the nature of right religion. The argument is focused on the competing constructions of the Seekers by themselves and their opponents including Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Quakers. Key methodological problems have included anachronism regarding the definition of terms and what respective weight to give to the various accounts of Seekers when they disagree, as is often the case.

Introduction

Aims

This thesis has 4 aims:

1. To accurately characterise Seeker attitudes, beliefs and practices and establish the Seeker withdrawal from ordinances as the seminal act of the radical reformation
2. To challenge their unsatisfactory categorisation by previous historians and argue for their accurate characterisation as a Seeker milieu, based on the their organisation and the extent to which they shared attitudes, beliefs and practices
3. To challenge the historiography that has dismissed Seekers as merely immature Quakers
4. To analyse how other groups constructed the Seekers in print; to compare these constructions with one another and with Seeker self-representation; and to argue for the importance of this process in the formation of group identities

Key arguments

The Seekers had a simple response to the arrival of unprecedented religious freedom and the uncertainties that this brought in the 1640s: they withdrew. They withdrew from church, ministry and ordinances to await a new dispensation that would demonstrate its authenticity through miracles. Historians have not fully acknowledged the significance of this quiet militancy and this thesis seeks to argue that this withdrawal was the seminal act of the radical reformation taking place in 1640s England. Seminal because of its originality but also because of the impact of this withdrawal on the subsequent development of other important groups such as Ranters and Quakers, both of whom were products of the Seeker milieu. This is why they warrant more serious attention and this thesis aims to correct this.

A second area of focus is the nature of the Seekers themselves as a group. Contemporaries talked of the `new sect of Seekers'; but historians have most commonly described two types of Seeker, that vary in the extent to which they embrace a fully spiritualised religion; and consequently in the degree to which they resemble the Quaker position that many Seekers eventually assumed. Seekers who approximate this more closely have been deemed 'advanced', in a Whiggish pursuit of a history of the future. This characterisation does not match the evidence found: rather they should be characterised as a loose and pluralist Seeker milieu with a variety of entry points, experiences and exit points. Connected to this is a third contention: in their attempts to retrace the Seekers' path through the spiritual wilderness, historians have carried a compass calibrated to hold Quakerism as

its magnetic north; they have viewed Seeker experience in relation to this fixed future point. Inevitably this has led them to distort the Seeker experience and steer it towards the lodestar of Quaker convincement. This denies the Seekers the agency and identity that their historical experience and significance deserve.

Lastly there has not previously been a systematic study of the way that Seekers were constructed by their religious rivals at the time. The similarities and differences in these constructions will be analysed and the Seekers self-representation will also be considered. Groups crafted their own identities by comparing themselves to one another and the role that this process played in shaping the group identities of all those involved will be assessed.

Methodology

This study has identified some themes that are consistent in the constructions of the Seekers by all groups. These will serve as standard metrics of measurement concerning the core Seeker traits. These themes include commentary on the Seeker withdrawal from church, ministry and ordinances, the wider consequences of this action; and Seeker attitudes to Scripture. As a methodology for the comparative study of the process of construction, this could provide a model for the systematic study of the construction of other groups.

Overview

The literature review discusses the historiography of radical religion in the period of the English Revolution. It defines key terms and considers the context and nature of the proliferation of religious debate reflected in printed works and elsewhere. It considers historical debates on second order concepts that have occasioned controversy: such as the extent to which the period was characterised by conflict or consensus and the degree of change and continuity witnessed. The fragmentation of Puritanism and the emergence of its radical forms in the guise of sectarianism is also discussed. The three core themes of religious toleration, anti-clericalism and anti-formalism that all radical groups of the time shared are also briefly discussed in context. A discussion of previous work on the Seekers follows. This includes their genesis and legacy, beliefs, organisation, and place within the landscape of radical religion in the period. Part One looks at Seeker self-representation: it charts their rise and fall and argues for their characterisation as a milieu through an analysis of their attitudes, beliefs and practice. Part Two considers their hostile polemical construction by various opponents in turn: the Presbyterians, the gathered churches of Independents and Baptists, and Quakers. Through this method, the aim is to discern the nature of Seeker organisation, belief and

practice; and the role that these exchanges played in forming the identity of all of these groups at a time of considerable flux and change.

Chapter 1   Literature Review

The abiding interest of historians in the brief flowering of intellectual debate about the nature of good government and right religion during the English Revolution is testimony to the fact that not all the ephemeral is evanescent.[1] In our modern sense of the term, which was emerging by this time, we see *revolution* and we expect conflagration: `an old world … running up like parchment in fire and wearing away.'[2] For many contemporaries though, *revolution* meant to turn, like a wheel, through a whole cycle; and so their world turned upside down [Act.17.6] and then righted itself: this is a more appropriate usage in some senses, since social, political and religious elites were substantially re-established at the Restoration.[3] However, hindsight's love for order and explanation; hatred for contradiction and the unexplained; and impatience with flux and uncertainty, all serve to insulate us from the psychological and spiritual world of the English Revolution: a world where the pace of change quickly made the old maps of these social, political and religious landscapes useless: a wilderness then, where many wandered hopefully, seeking peace and quiet, seeking solace and salvation, seeking God.

Contemporaries competed to reverse, halt or accelerate the changes taking place. The struggle was framed as a mortal contest by all sides; millenarian expectation increased apace and apocalyptic sermons primed audiences, proclaiming the fall of Babylon and establishment of Zion.[4] The focus of this study will be on the challenges to the religious establishment voiced by the mystical and spiritualist milieu, whose views of church government placed them at some distance from the Church of England orthodoxy and at the foremost point of a broad and continuing reformation. This milieu was quite heterogeneous and rows among its members were common, but collectively it formed a chorus, at times a cacophony, calling for further reformation. It contained the Seekers, who refused all traditional religious ceremonies and practices, or *externals* and rejected all visible churches and organised religion; until the arrival of a new apostolic dispensation. The Seekers worshipped here, amid the heat of the battle, among neighbours who feared their rejection of all

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[1] The term English Revolution was coined by French politician/historian Francois Guizot, *History of the English Revolution of 1640* (1826); Richardson, *Debate on the English Revolution* (1998) 87; Hessayon, 'Fabricating radical traditions' (2006-07) 1-6.

[2] Anon, *True Levellers Standard Advanced* (1649) 7: attributed to Gerrard Winstanley.

[3] For extended discussion on contemporary usage see Hill, 'The Word "Revolution"' in *A Nation of Change and Novelty* (1990) 100-120; Rachum, `The Meaning of "Revolution" in the English Revolution (1648-1660)' (1995) 195-215.

[4] Fletcher and Morrill both talk of the Civil War as a war of religion. Fletcher, *Outbreak of the English Civil War* (1981) 417-8; Morrill, 'Religious Context of the English Civil War' (1993) 45-68; Christianson, *Reformers and Bablyon* (1978) *passim*.

religious externals, at the leading edge of the continuing reformation; where Winstanley's parchment glowed red.

On the definition of terms

This thesis will use a range of terms that were contested by contemporaries and historians alike and clarification of some central concepts is required at this early stage. Patrick Collinson counselled against the imposition of a laboratory bench taxonomy of religious types and tendencies, on an unstable and dynamic situation such as the period in question.[5] We will begin with the mystical and spiritualist milieu already mentioned above. Both terms suggest a highly personal union with God but key differences distinguish them: spiritualism placed greatest emphasis, eponymously, on the *third person* of the trinity, the Holy Spirit; mysticism emphasised union with the *first person*, God the father. Mystical experience sought a temporary ecstatic union with God but spiritualists talked of a continuing possession by the spirit which drove their belief in human perfectibility: a faith not shared by mysticism. Mysticism prioritised the end (revelation of hidden knowledge by God and the use of such secret knowledge to challenge established authority), more than the means of attaining it, so wished to keep rituals and externals. Spiritualists rejected or spiritualised externals in their quest for a closer union with God: they typically sought to spiritualise rather than reject the church itself.[6] In varying degrees those in the Seeker milieu were spiritualists.[7]

Within spiritualists, Joachin Wach suggests a further dichotomy between negative and positive spiritualists. He describes negative spiritualists (who would include Seekers, Amsterdam Collegiants, evangelical spiritualists and followers of Caspar Schwenckfeld (1490-1561)); and positive spiritualists (who would include Quakers, Rijnsburg Collegiants, rational spiritualists and followers of Sebastian Franck (1499-1553)).[8] For Wach, the difference between them is the *duration* of their protest against traditional forms of expressing religious experience. Positive spiritualists, like Quakers, *perpetually* protest or reject sacraments, because they think they have the Spirit so don't need them; negative spiritualists like Seekers *temporarily* protest or suspend sacraments, until they

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[5] Collinson, 'A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan' (1980) 488.

[6] In this instance I have taken the typology of George Johnson and updated it to reflect more recent scholarship. For a fuller discussion of this dichotomy see: Jones (1909) 4, 452-67; Davis, 'Mystical versus Enthusiastic Sensibility' 301-319; Hudson, 'Mystical Religion in the Puritan Commonwealth' (Jan 1948) 51-6; Johnson(1948) 3-5, 76; Vendettuoli, (1958) 14-18; Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (1961) *passim;* Nuttall, 'Puritan and Quaker Mysticism' (1975) 518-31; Brauer, 'Puritan Mysticism and the Development of Liberalism' (1950) 166; Maclear, 'The Heart of New England Rent' (Mar 1956) 628.

[7] The Seekers have been constructed variously as evangelical spiritualists and negative spiritualists. For further discussion of these sub-types see below and Vendettuoli, 16-18.

[8] For evangelical spiritualists see Vendettuoli, *JJPS* 16-17; George Johnson denotes certain Seekers as 'Finders' because they pushed the Seeker position further and claimed the Spirit over the Word as the final judge of truth: Johnson *(CH)* (1948) 306; Johnson, 168-73.

are sure who has a right to administer them. This system of classification is problematic since the duration of the protest is only discernible with hindsight and so best avoided in historical analysis. Unfortunately, the description of the Seekers in the two theses that have discussed them in most detail both employ this dichotomy which weakens their conclusions.[9]

Another key distinction is that between a sect and a movement. Both Jones and McGregor suggest that neither Seekers nor Ranters were sects, but rather 'contagious movements', 'tendencies of thought', and 'widespread states of mind' who appeared in various parts of England without producing any unifying, cementing organisation.[10] If we want to distinguish between the terms religious movement and religious sect we must rely on a lexicon drawn from Sociology that unfortunately is inadequate since the Seekers qualify as both 'a religious movement' and 'a sect' in modern sociological parlance. Sects are new religious groups formed to protest against some element of a parent denomination, usually involving charges of apostasy or heresy and an atavistic desire to return to true religion: by this reckoning the Seekers were a sect, albeit an unorganised and uncoordinated one. Contemporaries would agree with this label since they repeatedly refer to a sect of Seekers throughout the period under study, as we shall see in later chapters. Although they use the term quite indiscriminately to describe groups they deem undesirable, including the sect of Adamites who did not exist, so it is possible that neither ill-informed contemporaries nor modern sociologists can supply reliable testimony here.[11] According to the same sociological conventions, religious movements do not advocate a return to a more pure religion (which would exclude the Reformation from this category) but the embracing of something new, like a new prophecy or teaching, often brought forth by a charismatic leader. Seekers awaited a new age of the spirit and autonomous groups formed around charismatic preachers, in the New Model Army (NMA) particularly, so we could also accurately use the term `religious movement'. Thus, the Seekers can be constructed to fit two categorisations that sociologists designed to be mutually exclusive. This may suggest that the Seekers' contemporaries, or modern sociologists (or both) do not themselves use these terms appropriately; but rather the contention is that it indicates a broader range of Seeker experiences, beliefs, practices and organisation operating within a more volatile and dynamic Seeker milieu.

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[9] Johnson (1948), Vendettuoli (1958).

[10] Jones, 452; McGregor, 'The Ranters, 1649-1660' (*Oxford* B.Litt. 1968) 13.

[11] Stark and Sims Bainbridge, 'Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements' (1979) 118; see for example, Anon, *A catalogue of the several sects and opinions in England* (19 January 1647) which names 22, of which perhaps 10 were real; Anon, *A nest of serpents discovered or a knot of old heretiques revived called the Adamites* (1641).

Other terms of reference such as Familist, Puritan, Independent, Radical, Seeker and Quaker were pejorative and contested labels in the seventeenth century; indeed they are still disputed concepts now.[12] As a representational category, 'Puritan' was used synonymously with 'schismatic' by contemporaries, some of whom acknowledged the term as ambiguous; NMA chaplain and Seeker William Erbery (1604-54) for example used it to describe a generation already dead and gone: 'the godly of old, the honest Puritans'; later historians have echoed this with Christopher Hill describing the term as: 'an admirable refuge from clarity of thought'.[13] Similarly, 'Independent' was used in various ways: some used it to describe the general Congregationalist position; other usages intended a particular faction within the Westminster Assembly. Both of the groups termed Independent by these definitions would have excluded themselves from the term Independent in the way it was used by William Walwyn (*bap.* 1600, *d.* 1681), which included Anabaptists and Separatists.[14] In New England too, John Cotton regretted the latitude with which the term Independent was used and claimed that Antipaedobaptists, Antinomians, Familists and Seekers all styled themselves Independents. He complained that its use in Massachusetts: 'neither truly describeth us, nor faithfully distinguisheth us from many other'.[15]

'Radicalism' is a particularly interesting case and it has been offered as a concept that explains other historical phenomena without itself being in need of explanation.[16] However there is already an extensive literature on the usage and appropriateness of the terms Puritan and Radical and the construction of Seeker by various parties will be considered in part two of this thesis.[17] When terms of contested definition are combined, their usage has been challenged on semantic

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[12] See the sub-title of James Naylor, *A Discovery of the First Wisdom* (1653): 'Written by a servant of the Lord, whom the world scornfully nicknameth and calleth a Quaker.' For contemporary usage of *radical* in a religious context see Baxter, *Plain Scripture proof of infants* (1651) 294; For a modern disputation over the legitimacy of the term radical see, Underdown, 'Commentary' (1984) 125; For the use of *Familist* as a term of general opprobrium by the mid-17th century see Durnbaugh, 'Baptists and Quakers—Left Wing Puritans?' (1973) 77.
[13] Erbery, *The General Epistle to the Hebrews* (1653) 5; Widdowes, *The Schysmatical Puritan* (1630) cited in Sasek, *Images of English Puritanism* (1989) 287; White, 'William Erbury and the Baptists' (1969) 114-25 n14; Durston and Eales, *Culture of English Puritanism* (1996) 1-6; Hill, *Society and Puritanism,* 13; see also Poole, 5, 190 where the term is seen as registering the anxieties surrounding socio-ecclesiastical structures in flux. Poole, 3-4 and 189-90 for fuller discussion of the contemporary usage of *Puritan* and a good survey of the historiographical discussion of the term; see also Greaves, '*The Nature of the Puritan Tradition'* 258; and Coffey, *John Goodwin* (2008a) 10-11.
[14] Walwyn, *A Help to the Right Understanding of a Discourse Concerning Independency* (1645) 6; Zakai, 'Orthodoxy in England and New England' (Sep. 1991) 415.
[15] Poole, 39-40.
[16] Clark, *Our Shadowed Present* (2003) 110.
[17] For further discussion of the contentious issues concerning usage of *radical*, see Hessayon and Finnegan (eds.). *Varieties of English Radicalism in Context* (2011b); Burgess and Festenstein (Eds.) *English Radicalism* (2007) 1-17, *passim*; Caricchio and Tarantino, (eds.). *CVS, Recent Historiographical Trends* (2006-7) especially Hessayon, 'Fabricating radical traditions' and Burgess 'A Matter of Context: "Radicalism" and the English Revolution': the useful bibliographies of these essays cite several further works.

grounds, though without offering an acceptable alternative. For example, Tim Cooper criticised Nigel Smith's reference to John Saltmarsh (1610-47) and William Sedgwick (bap. 1609, d. 1663/4) as: `fathers of radical Puritan spirituality', adding `whatever that is'.[18] This work will use a functional definition of the term `Radical', after Colin Davis. This approach does not view radicalism as a single continuous line of popular protest but lays down basic functional criteria for what constitutes radicalism, and identifies any ideas or activity that match these criteria as radical. In this context, `Radical Protestantism' is a good fit for his definitional criteria: radical Protestant groups de-legitimated the existing church order; re-legitimated alternatives and provided a range of transfer mechanisms to effect this change. This functional definition is used in preference to the substantive definition favoured by Christopher Hill and E. P. Thompson, which implies a continuous radical tradition.[19] It is also preferred to the nominalist definition advocated by Conal Condren, which argues that the term radical was not widely used until the nineteenth century, so its application to any earlier period is anachronistic. Specifically, the term radical will describe those religious beliefs and practices which placed the holder beyond the pale of the Church of England, Presbyterian and Independent positions.[20] These are not empty distinctions as semantics matters, especially in a war of words. Each of these labels were variously weapons of attack and defence; unstable, conflicted and appropriable designations whose meanings were shaped by the context of their use. In this way, the words themselves: `constitute nothing less than archaeological sites: layered pits full of the debris and traces of past battles, social configurations and dominant and subordinate meanings.'[21]

Culture wars

The perception that religion and politics were inseparable saw contemporaries link religious change to political change in an early modern domino theory: 'if by multiplying hands and petitions they prevail for an equality in things ecclesiastical, the next demand perhaps may be *lex agrarian,* the like equality in things temporal.' The poet and politician Edmund Waller (1606-87) saw episcopacy as a 'counterscarp or outwork' of the whole political system; which it was in the interests of all gentlemen to preserve.[22] As the 1640s progressed, Independents, and more so, Presbyterians found

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[18] Cooper, *Fear and Polemic* (2001), 2, citing Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed* (1988) 149.

[19] 'The Radical Critics of Oxford and Cambridge in the 1650s' in Hill, *Change and Continuity* (1974) 132.

[20] Davis, 'Radicalism in a Traditional Society', 193–213; Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates' (1989) 525–42; Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth Century England* (1994) ch. 5; Burgess and Festenstein, *English Radicalism*, 7-9; Burgess, 'A Matter of Context' (2006-7); Bradstock, *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England* (2011) xxv; Gary de Krey makes a strong and persuasive case for why we should use the term radical, despite the problems connected with it use: de Krey, 'Radicals, reformers and republicans: academic language and political discourse in London' (2011) 98-9.

[21] Shepard and Withington, (eds). *Communities in Early Modern England* (2000) 1.

[22] Edmund Waller 17th May 1641; BL E 198 (30); Sloane MS 3317, fol.22r quoted in Fletcher, *Outbreak,* 123-4.

their own progressive positions on church reform overrun by calls for even greater reformation: the Presbyterian firebrands of the pre-war period became the conservative establishment figures.

However Presbyterians struggled to maintain ecclesiastical discipline and assert themselves as the new orthodoxy: Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) complained about preferments for Seekers and other sectaries.[23] They decried sectarian calls for greater toleration and religious freedom and called for the excision of the cancer of heresy.[24] This drew accusations of hypocrisy from a range of figures within a radical Seeker milieu. John Milton (1608-74) famously noted: 'New presbyter is but old priest writ large.'[25] Others concurred, though none as eloquently: NMA chaplian and Seeker William Dell (1607-69) said: 'Presbyterian Uniformity, is neer a-kin to Prelatical Conformity'; and pamphleteer and Leveller Richard Overton (1599-1664) added: 'Persecution was unlawful when the [Presbyterian] Priests were persecuted, but now it is lawful when they persecute'. NMA chaplain and Seeker John Saltmarsh enquired: 'Why is not free Christian liberty, peaceable forbearance of each other's differing opinions, and practice in unity, more heard among us; and obedience, conformity and uniformity lesse?' Oliver Cromwell made his priorities clear: All that beleeve have the reall unity, which is most glorious because inward and spirituall, in the body and to the head; for being united in formes, commonly called uniformity, every Christian will for peace sake study, and doe as far as conscience will permit.[26]

The first line of fracture within Puritanism was over the issue of national church organisation and the Westminster Assembly was called to decide this highly contentious issue.[27] Those termed Erastians wanted a national church under strict *state* control.[28] Those who wanted a national church under strict *church* control were called Presbyterians: they wanted to retain elite control of the church, by simply replacing Episcopalian with Presbyterian church-government. Those who rejected

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[23] Rutherford, *Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist* (1647) 8.

[24] The metaphor of sectarianism as disease is commonplace and Edwards' *Gangraena* (1646) did not invent the tradition, Thomas Gataker had compared antinomianism to disease as early as September 1643: Willen, 'Thomas Gataker and the Use of Print in the English Godly Community' (2007) 356.

[25] Milton, *On The New Forcers Of Conscience Under The Long Parliament (1646)* targets Rutherford, Baillie, Edwards and fellow Scots Presbyterian polemicist Adam Stewart*;* A similar charge was later levelled at Quakers: Thomas Underhill, *Hell Broke Loose* (1659) 'They [Quakers] cry up liberty of conscience, but are not willing to give it to others' in Horle, 'John Camm: Profile of a Quaker Minister' (1981) 73.

[26] Dell, *Uniformity* Examined (1646) 5; Overton, *The Arraignement of Mr Persecution* (1645) 19*;* Saltmarsh, *Groanes for Liberty* (1646) 85; Rutherford, *Survey*, 250; Durston & Maltby, Introduction*,* 13; Maclear,*'*The Making of the Lay Tradition' (1953) 121*;* Maclear, 'Popular Anti-Clericalism in the Puritan Revolution' (1956) 445*.*

[27] The scale of the proposed changes and the contentious nature of the discussions brought 1163 meetings of this assembly, over six years.

[28] Named after Thomas Erastus (originally Lüber) (1524-83), an early Swiss opponent of Presbyterianism. Saltmarsh was one of the first to use the term: Saltmarsh, *Smoke in the Temple* (1646) 26.

the national church model, in favour of voluntary autonomous groups in a congregational model, were called Independents. Puritan MPs were also split into two factions called Independents and Presbyterians, but these are not synonymous with the religious groupings and were looser shifting alignments.[29] These contrasting positions of Independent and Presbyterian are thus the product of a fragmentation of Puritanism. Yet they are also expressions of different reactions from within Puritanism, to the problems arising from the process of fragmentation itself: the Independent solution was to placate non-conformists and abandon ecclesiastical uniformity; the Presbyterian solution was to suppress the separated churches and restore ecclesiastical uniformity.[30]

This formed the background to a Presbyterian denunciation of antinomianism and general *radicalism* that took several forms and served many functions. The most important work of this nature was the heresiography *Gangraena,* by the Presbyterian controversialist Thomas Edwards (1599-1648). It was essentially a biography of heresy but he quickly found his subject far too large to marshal every anecdote and render every detail successfully, however his general message was in no doubt: `wee should not separate from this church and set up other churches'. From here, he warned, the nation would fall through sectarianism to atheism. This characterisation of the continuing reformation as a slippery slope was a common trope in the discourse on religious uniformity and heresy.[31] Ann Hughes argues that the central goal of Edwards' polemic was to implicate mainstream Independents (who he regarded as schismatic and little better than sectarians) in the spread of religious chaos.[32] As a religious grouping, the Presbyterians were more cohesive than the Independents and Edwards' work aimed to highlight and reinforce this. Although in New England, Independency was a rigidly controlled orthodoxy, in old England it was a complex and confused movement including a wide diversity of theological opinion. English Independents of the 1640s were less a sect than a loose confederacy sharing a moral code and an acute distrust of an authoritarian church: they were the growing edge of Puritan division and fragmentation.[33]

Edwards sought to characterise Independency as a gateway to heresy and worse excesses. A key function of the work was mobilisation: Edwards aimed to construct the dissenting religious

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[29] Johnson suggests the growing spiritualist emphasis in English Puritanism had produced five distinct groupings by 1640: Church of England, Presbyterian, Independent, Separatist and Baptist: *Sectarians* and *Radicals* were pejorative terms aimed principally at those in the last two groupings which contained many subgroups. Johnson, 1.

[30] Tolmie, 4; Dell, for one, rejected Presbyterian calls for uniformity claiming they 'hath no footing in the Scriptures nor in the Churches of Christ': Dell, *Uniformity Examined* (1646) 5.

[31] Edwards, *Gangraena, II* (1646) 164; this work was published in three sections throughout 1646: section I [E232 (2)] on 26 February, section II [E338 (12)] on 28 May and section III [E368 (5)] on 28 December.

[32] Hughes, 64-5, 107; Hessayon, *Gold Tried in the Fire* (2007) 10; Tolmie, 128.

[33] Maclear, 'Lay Tradition', 123; Hudson, 'Mystical Religion' 51.

beliefs and practice of out-groups like Antinomians, Familists, Baptists, and Seekers in such a way as to create religious enemies. He hoped to translate the opposition to these sects by the magistracy and his own in-group, the Presbyterians, into direct action. His attempts to impose categories on the shifting tides of radical religious opinion are understandable, if inaccurate, and in his case, as disorganised as the morass of radical views he sought to marshal. However contemporary and fellow Presbyterian heresiographer Robert Baillie (1599-1662) identified the Baptists as the principal target rather than the Independents.[34] This suggests either that Presbyterian characterisation of religious pluralism as a Babel of confusion is accurate, or that the Presbyterians were incapable of coordinating their polemical attacks. A decade later, Richard Baxter concurred with Baillie rather than Edwards and charged English separatists and Anabaptists: 'You do but prepare too many for a further progress: Seekers, Ranters, Familists, and now Quakers'. This confirms a spiritualist drift in English Protestantism which accelerated its fragmentation and left the Presbyterians and Independents further and further behind the vanguard of the continuing reformation.[35]

Fragmentation of Puritanism

In 1645, Richard Byfield wrote that those who set up Independent churches made Christ monstrous: by calling each church: `the mysticall body of Christ, [they] make Christ a Head that hath so many bodies.[36] There have been several readings of the Puritan response to Laudian innovation. One is that Puritanism had been quite cohesive in the 1630s when the pressure of persecution necessitated solidarity. London Puritans were acutely aware of the importance of actively maintaining unity, in public at least, and they developed sophisticated in-house mechanisms for conflict resolution: 'whereby doctrinal consensus or orthodoxy was constructed, policed and reproduced among the Godly.'[37] These mechanisms were highly successful in all cases, bar a few notable exceptions, but for which, they would have remained invisible.[38] When that pressure of oppression was released in the 1640s and 1650s Puritanism began to splinter and one of these shards formed the Seeker position. As late as the 1650s Baxter maintained control over his Kidderminster congregation through his judicious supervision of private meetings. He recognised that: `if I had not allowed them such as were lawful and profitable, they would have been ready to run to such as were unlawful and

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[34] Baillie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountain of Independency, Antinomy, Brownisme, Familisme, and … other Errours* (1 January 1647).

[35] Hughes, *passim*; Baxter, *Quakers Catechism* (16 June 1655) B[r]; Huntington, 'Quakerism during the Commonwealth' (1982) 74.

[36] Richard Byfield, *Temple-defilers defiled* (1645) 3.

[37] Como and Lake, 'Orthodoxy and its Discontents' (2000) 34.

[38] *Ibid*, the cases involved George Walker and Anthony Wotton; Stephen Denison and John Etherington (see Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge* (2001)); and Peter Shaw (see Como and Lake, 'Puritans, Antinomians and Laudians in Caroline London: The Strange Case of Peter Shaw' (1999) 684-715).

hurtful'.[39] Alternatively, Puritan unity could be explained by a more passive mechanism of an outward conformity to Laudian innovation: some Puritans practised a deeply resentful Nicodemism within the church which hid from historical enquiry the thoughts and attitudes of those who spent the 1630s waiting, hoping and praying for better times. This was the classic Familist response, but this was imitated by some Puritans.[40] However there is a third reading whereby Puritan fragmentation can be viewed as a response to Laudian innovation; if we date it to the 1630s. This dating fits the revisionist construction of this fragmentation as a reactive attempt to avoid the impact of a nascent Arminian orthodoxy.[41]

Peter Lake and David Como's structural approach to the question of the origins of radical Puritanism suggests that the culture of Puritanism in itself contained a structural tendency towards faction, division and theological fragmentation which exploded after the removal of various constraining factors after 1641.[42] In the case of the Seekers this culminated in a repudiation of any external sacraments or valid ministerial status. Erbery thought that this process was sequential and progressive: 'the Prelatick Church was monarchical…The Presbyterian Church is an aristocracy…The Independent or baptized Churches (both is one) are a pure Democracy.'[43] Ernst Troeltsch's dictum that all sects are destined for enthusiasm implies that any acceptance of externals is unstable, and ultimately indefensible, once the Spirit is introduced. Leo Solt agrees that the Puritan movement contained divisive tendencies and also offers the collapse of episcopal authority and opposition to Scottish Presbyterianism as reasons for Puritanism's disintegration. Geoffrey Nuttall thought that the: 'Puritan movement was fundamentally one towards religious immediacy in relation to God … an increasing preoccupation with the conscience, till the strain proved too great, and Antinomianism set in'.[44]

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[39] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), 88; Foster, `The Faith of a Separatist Layman', 397.

[40] For a full discussion of Nicodemism see Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: dissimulation, persecution, and conformity in early modern Europe* (1990).

[41] Russell, C., *Parliament and English Politics, 1621-9* (1979) 28 n.2; Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution' (1973); Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism* (1990a); Tyacke, 'The Fortunes of English Puritanism, 1603-40' (1990b); see also the debate between Nicholas Tyacke and Peter White: White, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered' (1983) 34-54; Tyacke, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered' (1987), 201-21; White, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered: A Rejoinder'(1987) 217-29; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, xiv.

[42] Como, *Blown,* 22; Como and Lake, 'Orthodoxy and its Discontents' *passim*.

[43] He also claimed 'to Spiritual Saints in this nation the churches are nothing'. Erbery, *Testimony of William Erbery* (1658) 63, 133.

[44] T*roeltsch, Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1931) 339, 342; Solt, *Saints in Arms* (1959) 28; Maclear, 'Popular Anti-Clericalism', 452*;* Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, xix, 92, 134; in this sense, Antinomianism describes the replacement of an external moral law by an internal spiritual one. This is also the sense in which figures like the Quaker leader Naylor understood it, according to his biographer: Damrosch, *Harvard's Libraries and the Quaker Jesus* [http://harvardmagazine.com/1997/05/scholars.damrosch.html accessed 12.01.13] 3.

Puritan preachers Samuel Ward (1577-1640) and Richard Rogers (1551-1618) make the point repeatedly in their diaries that knowledge of religion was but dross and dung unless one could point to genuine experience of encounters and conversations with God.[45] There was a tension within Puritanism between Biblicism and experiential religion: 'Here at the very heart of Puritanism was a craving for personal encounter, an emotional longing for an immediate relating of the soul to God … [which] fathered the vigorous Puritan Mysticism and Spiritism of the Civil War and *interregnum* periods.'[46] The natural corollary of a more direct and personal relationship with God was atomisation and heterodoxy, rather than unification of faith. One interesting aspect of this process of fragmentation and an aim of the current study is to try and accurately describe the movement between one separatist congregation and another, once an individual had left the established church: this journey to and through the Seeker position will be outlined for some individuals.

In an attempt to shepherd itself, Puritanism internalised an abiding Calvinist fear of damnation and a concomitant demand for strict observance of church ordinances: deviance was admonished, and dissenters excommunicated. Some dissenters did this more than others but even among the various radical groups we find excommunications. The Fenstanton Baptist records show repeated examples of excommunication for rejection of carnal ordinances.[47] Seekers like Dell approved excommunication over matters necessary to salvation although they did specify that it was a last resort and subject to a vote of the whole church.[48] Quakers preferred the term 'disowning': when one or two members were 'walking disorderly'. The agitator Cornet Joyce (b.1618) and the Quaker schismatics, John Pennyman (1628-1706) and George Keith (1638-1716) were respectively disowned for loose living, bible burning and doctrinal disagreement and James Naylor (1618-60) felt the sharpened quill of the nascent Quaker propaganda machine on refusing to kiss the foot of George Fox (1624-91). Where dissenters were more numerous, organised and persistent, as in the case of the Proud Quakers and Rice Jones (*fl.* 1650-63), the outcome was schism. Rice Jones' refusal to defer to Quaker leadership and discipline is paralleled among other Antinomian strains like Ranters who neither submitted to discipline nor saw any need for it.[49]

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[45] Maclear, 'Lay Tradition'*,* 116.

[46] *ibid*, 115-6.

[47] Most of those excommunicated professed faith in an inward principle superior to the dictates of the Bible. Davis, 'Religion and the Struggle for Freedom', 512; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 7, 14; Underhill, *Fenstanton Records* (1854) 8, 12, 14, 40, 44-5, 94, 97, 117, 120, 244-5; McGregor*,* 'The Ranters', 124.

[48] Dell, *Way of True Peace and Unitie* (1649) 127-40; for a summary see Johnson, 81-2.

[49] Moore, *Light,* 116; Hessayon, 'Not the Word of God' (2018) 162; Higgins, 'The Apostatized Apostle, John Pennyman' (1980) 102-118; Anon., *Quakers Complaint Against George Keith* (1700); Anon., *Rotterdam Quakers excommunication and damning of George [Cornet] Joyce* (1671).

It has been argued that this increasing formalism was the key to the stability of Puritanism as a creed: it was the means of reconciling water and oil; liberty and authority, acting as an emulsifier to enable a temporary suspension of the two, mixed against their natures.[50] Spiritual biographies suggest nearly all adult members of extreme Protestant sects who had journeyed through religious enthusiasm to a conversion experience were alienated by dry and excessive formalism in their youth.[51] Mainstream Puritanism was not wholly formalist but it was legalistic, dogmatic and literalist. In the millenarian crucible of the 1640s the Puritan mainstream was outflanked by a radical wing whose emphasis on experientialism, spiritualism and scriptural exposition fostered an anticlerical, anti-intellectual and anti-legalist climate that did much to nurture antinomian ideas. Indeed, David Como has argued that antinomianism was the product of a deep structural instability within Puritanism itself.[52]

Protestantism (and more so separatism) is fissiparous in nature. Roman Catholicism had traditionally used dogma as a bulwark against unwanted innovation: the teachings of the church rather than the will of God. Protestants in turn saw the Pope as a tyrant and Catholic traditions as empty dogma. The most reformed saw all attempts at enforcing uniformity through externals as oppression: an oppressive usurpation of the role of the Holy Spirit. Those writing from within the Church of England portrayed the exit of others from the church as a descent into horrid antinomianism; those who left portrayed it as a spiritual ascent that transcended the corrupt trappings of established religion. At its heart is the dispute over whether religious truth came through learned exegesis and studious observance of ritual, or naïve experience and opening one's heart to the workings of the spirit.

Most parties looked to Scripture for authority, as is shown by the following range of writers. Some orthodox figures like Presbyterian divine Richard Vines were nervous about the spiritualist mood of the time: 'to make conscience the final judge of actions, is to wipe out the hand-writing of the Word of God', but an increasing number had begun to look within. In the Seeker Dell's words: 'The true religion of Christ is written in the soul and spirit of man by the Spirit of God; and the believer is the only book in which God himself writes his New Testament.' Seeker-turned-Quaker

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[50] Davis, 'Against Formality' (1993) 265-88.

[51] Watkins, *Puritan Experience* (1972) unsurprising given this genre's central motif of spiritual pilgrimage; one purpose of these works was as a guide to others; a Seeker tract by John Jackson, *A Sober Word to serious People: or, a Moderate Discourse respecting as well the Seekers, so called, as the Present Churches* (19 December 1650) wrote 'to prevent from further straying such [as himself] who were upon the like enquiry' Preface.

[52] Como, *Blown*, 131; Hessayon, *Gold*, 10; For Puritan attitudes to Jewish law see Avis, 'Moses and the Magistrate: the rise of Protestant Legalism' (1975).

Anne Audland called the mind: 'the Book of Conscience on which the Scriptures are written'. Seeker, John Webster, railed against those who: 'read too much upon the dead paper rolls of creaturely-invented letters, but do not, nor cannot read the legible characters that are onely written and impressed by the finger of the Almighty.' Quaker Naylor used the same Seeker trope: 'True judgement … is a gift from the spirit of God, set in the heart of everyone who dwells in the light of Christ'; and Independent Thomas Goodwin concurred that the Holy Spirit: 'writes first all graces in us, and then teaches us to read his handwriting'.[53]

The Bible burning by figures like the prophet TheaurauJohn Tany (*bap.* 1608, *d.* 1659?) and the Quaker John Pennyman was perhaps the most theatrical expression of this primacy of the spirit over the word; of the interior revelation of Christ within, over the outward letter of the Scripture.[54] The Calvinist model understood this problem and fought fire with strict orthodoxy and discipline. Notable examples of the strict prosecution of heterodoxy from the period include the 1637 mutilation of Prynne, and his co-controversialists John Bastwick (1595?–1654) and Henry Burton (*bap.* 1578, *d.* 1647/8) in London for pretended innovations in the Church. The Presbyterians used Scripture to justify the draconian penalties they imposed for blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking and sexual misconduct as they sought to halt the second reformation, or deformation, as Edwards called it.[55]

This is not to say that the whole country was embracing Presbyterianism, let alone rushing for further reformation. Extensive research into the Clubmen and Anglican survivalism attests to broadly held attachments to the local and familiar. John Morrill called the Clubmen: 'a square-peg movement, radical in their challenge to national bodies and values and defiant of gentry leadership, conservative in their adherence to forms, processes and values of rural life.'[56] In reality, the Presbyterian classis never displaced the traditional parochial structure and 90% continued to worship in their parish church despite the civil war.[57] The use of the Common Book of Prayer remained widespread in spite of the prospect of hefty punishments, as did the taking of communion

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[53] Vines, *Authour, Nature, and Danger of Heresie*, (sermon preached on 10 March 1646) in Vines, *Sermons Preached* (1656) 45; Dell, *Trial of the Spirit* (1660) 20; Walker (1970) 225; Jones, '"Seekers" then and now'(1928) 189; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 33; Webster, *Academarium Examen* (1653) 28; Naylor, *Love to the Lost* (1656) 20; Goodwin, *Childe of Light* (1636) 116; Webster, 'Writing to redundancy: approaches to spiritual journals' (1996) 46; (Further discussion of Seeker views on this topic appears in Part One).
[54] Hessayon, 'Not the word of God'.
[55] *Gangraena*, Epistle Dedicatory, [unpaginated but between A3 and B]; *Gangraena I,* 166, 13, John Benbrigge, *Gods Fury Englands Fire* (1646) sig. A2^V; for other instances see Poole, 1, 187 n.3.
[56] Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces* (1998) 204. Morrill is here synthesising his view of his own work on the Clubmen of Cheshire with that of Ronald Hutton on Worcestershire and Mark Stoyle on Devon.
[57] It was illegal to attend church services outside one's parish and this statistic could conceal the importance of Lectures, which could be attended anywhere, as a solvent of older and narrower loyalties: Tolmie, 33.

at both Easter and Christmas.[58] This defiance came at a cost and around a third of English parishes were punished by the sequestration of some 3000 ministers, which suggests the scale of the Presbyterian's punitive programme, although this means 6000 escaped this censure.[59] Continuity then, was the normative religious experience, despite many historians focussing on the more eye-catching emergence of the people in political and religious radicalism.[60] Presbyterianism never gained enough momentum, either to make an impression on the obdurate resistance of Anglican survivalism on one side, or to fend off the challenge of the more reformed Independents and sectarians on the other: it became, in modern parlance, a squeezed middle; but it is to the sectarians that we shall now turn.[61]

Growth of Sectarianism

As the capacity of the national church to maintain discipline and enforce orthodoxy waned, the locus of authority drifted, in some cases, all the way down to the individual and the light within.[62] Preachers claiming divine inspiration and prophets expounding the texts of Daniel and Revelation were commonplace: Christ's spirit and kingdom were immanent and imminent respectively. Seeker Erbery felt the pace of history quickening as the dawn of the last days drew near and mentioned the successive fall of the various churches in Britain in the days since the Reformation several times, always in the order popery, prelacy, Presbyterianism, independency and, finally, the Baptists.[63] A steady trickle of people left the national church; some on physical journeys to foreign shores and some on spiritual journeys which took a minority into gathered churches and beyond.[64] Recent work estimates that those identifiable as radicals never numbered more than 3.85% of an estimated

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[58] Maltby has suggested the extent of 'Prayer Book Protestantism' at the outbreak of the Civil War: Maltby, *Prayer Book and People* (1998) see her Appendix I for the extent of petitions supporting the Prayer Book, 1640-2.

[59] McGregor & Reay, Introduction, 9; Bradstock, *Radical Religion*, xiv; Durston and Maltby, Introduction, 8.

[60] Walzer, *Revolution of the Saints* (1965) viii, argues that the radical sects' negligible political influence and tiny membership meant their *cultural* impact was minimal. This is an overly reductionist view even though the sheer volume of contemporary pamphlet literature decrying and defending them seems incommensurate with the level of direct threat they posed.

[61] Anglican survivalism is Morrill's term for the way in which high Anglican and Royalist adherents covertly worshipped in the early *interregnum*. Morrill, 'Church in England, 1642-9' in Morrill, *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642-9* (1982) 89-114.

[62] Alexander Ross, *The Round-Head Uncovered … With a distinction between the Round-heads, and such as Papists call Puritans* (1642) 4.

[63] See Erbery's following works of 1653: *The Welsh Curate, The Woman Preacher, A Whirlwind from the South, The Children of the West*, in *Testimony* (1658) 14, 148, 126, 133.

[64] Immigration from England to the American colonies numbered some 20,000 during the period of personal rule. Once the civil war began perhaps 10% of colonists returned to England, including a third of the clergy: Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home* (2007); Dollarhide, *British Origins of American Colonists* (1997) http://micbarnette.bravepages.com/Research_in_the_Old_South/Puritans_to_New_England_/puritans_to_new_england_.html [accessed 01.10.12].

population ranging from 5.09 to 5.28 million people between 1641 and 1661.[65] London hosted a handful of separatist churches in the 1630s with perhaps a thousand members by 1640. These groups grew rapidly during the civil war and *interregnum* period. For example, in England and Wales, the Baptists had around fifty gathered churches in 1644 but perhaps 300 by the Restoration with up to 25,000 members or 0.47% of the population.[66] Some of these individuals moved on to become Seekers and consequently joined the Quakers who grew quickly from their beginning in 1652, to number 60,000 by the Restoration.[67] William Braithwaite and other Quaker historians have explained this rapid growth by suggesting Quakers harvested support from pre-existing Seeker communities.

Radical milieu

Although there was a lot of overlap in terms of the doctrines and beliefs held it is possible to distinguish shared tendencies with differing emphases within the radical milieu.[68] Contemporaries like Baxter noted the recent appearance of `five sects at least', since the Presbyterians had been purged from Parliament. He said their doctrines: `were almost the same, but they fell into several shapes'. He names the Vanists, Seekers, Ranters, Quakers and Behmenists.[69] Many historians have warned against the temptation to see the sects as discrete and easily identifiable bodies, and eschew the impulse to impose rigid categories on this flux of ideas.[70] The most recent of these noted that: 'civil war sectarianism was characterised by considerable hybridity as actors immersed themselves in various heterodox traditions'.[71] Indeed both heresiographers and the sectarians themselves were often guilty of muddying the far from clear waters of the radical milieu by conflating different groups. The poet and Leveller sympathiser, George Wither (1588–1667) described Quakers as 'Levellers new-named'; William Prynne (1600-69) attacked 'those

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[65] Hessayon & Finnegan, *Varieties,* 17.

[66] Wright, *Early English Baptists* (2006) has detailed figures for English Baptists in this period; see final appendix for the geographical range of Baptists in 1645; Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism and the Lamb's War* (1997) 9

[67] Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution* (1985); McGregor & Reay, Introduction, 12; Tolmie, 4, 37; Moore, *Light,* 4-5; Beck and Ball, *London Friends' Meetings* (1869) 32; Hessayon, Review of Wright, *Early English Baptists* (2011a) 1-3; Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History of England* (1981) 92-3, suggests the figure of 60,000 was not reached until 1680 and then declined.

[68] Early Quakerism, for example, had *permeable borders* with associated religious radicals and owed a huge debt to earlier Seeker beliefs and practices; Smith, 'Hidden things Brought to Light' (1996) 68; Disbrey, 'George Fox and Some Theories of Innovation in Religion' (1989) 69; Hudson, 'Winstanley and the Early Quakers' (1943) 177-194; For the influence of Winstanley on Fox see Hessayon, 'Rethinking early Quakerism and its origins' (2019) 16-17.

[69] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 174; Orme, *Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (1830) 85; Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme and the early Quakers' (2005) 198.

[70] For example, Braithwaite, *Beginnings,* 23; Durnbaugh, 'Baptists and Quakers' 82; Bernard Capp, 'The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism' in McGregor & Reay, 184; Poole, 115.

[71] Como, *Radical* (2018) 390.

Independent-Seekers'; the posthumous editions of Ephraim Pagitt's (1574–1646) popular work *Heresiography* claim: 'the Ranter is an unclean beast, much of the same make with our Quaker, of the same puddle.'[72] We will see that Edwards alone identified 176 current errors or heresies.[73] One problem that the sources pose, is deciding what respective weight to give to the sectarians own claims of what they believed and did, and what weight to give to the claims of their detractors.[74]

There were not many beliefs and practices that were unique to a particular group and all groups shared the same radical palette. Rather, it was the precise combination of beliefs at any given time that distinguished a group from others and from its own earlier incarnations. Beliefs and practices touched at points of shared doctrine, smudging the edges between these groups, an effect accentuated by the spiritual journeys of individuals that led them through many different groups at different times. This was a confusing position for many of the godly to find themselves in, as voiced by Baptist Robert Purnell: 'there are so many opinions, viz. Presbytery, Independency, Anabaptist, Arminians, Antinomians, Ranters, Quakers, Seekers, I know not with whom to sit downe.'[75] There were however some beliefs that were held by all those radicals who had moved beyond the Church of England, Independent and Presbyterian positions. These included religious toleration, anti-clericalism and anti-formalism, the term Colin Davis coined for the varying degrees of distaste for the externals of religion. Each of these three areas and the historical debate surrounding them will now be discussed to conclude this chapter.

Toleration

Toleration was advocated by Independents, much to the disgust of Presbyterians like Edwards who blamed this for the growth of sectarian error and heresy. Following the formal abolition of episcopacy in 1646 the role of the magistrate in relation to matters of public morality and private conscience became a subject of fierce and sustained debate. Early attempts to suppress opposition to Presbyterianism such as the so-called Draconic Ordinance fell by the wayside after Pride's Purge ousted the Presbyterians and confirmed Independent dominance in Parliament in December 1648; and they were displaced by a series of measures designed to protect all but the most extreme

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[72] George Wither, *Vaticinia Poetica* (1666) 10, in *Miscellaneous Works* IV; Prynne, *A fresh discovery* (24 July 1645); Pagitt, *Heresiography*, (1645, 6ed 1662) 259.

[73] Edwards, *Gangraena I*: 15-31.

[74] This debate has dominated discussion of the Ranters since the publication of Davis, *Fear, Myth and History* (2002); see McGregor, Capp, Smith, Gibbons, 'Debate: Fear, myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters"' (1993) 155-194; Davis, 'Debate: Fear, myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters": Reply' (1993) 195-210; Hessayon has countered several of Davis' claims convincingly by connecting Coppe to a host of other radicals: 'Abiezer Coppe and the Ranters' (2013a) 346-74.

[75] Purnell, *The way to heaven discovered: and, the stumbling-blocks …removed* (20 July 1653) 147-8.

views.[76] The Instrument of Government (1653) for example allowed for free religious practice in the home, since the state wanted to distinguish between private belief and public disorder.[77]

The antiquarian Sir Simonds d'Ewes proclaimed in 1645: 'It is the mark of the Church Antichristian, to persecute; of the Church Christian, to be persecuted.'[78] But even within the Christian family, an emphasis on externals bred intolerance and discord. Colin Davis said: `Formalism's most hateful characteristic was its capacity to divide the saints'; echoing Church of Ireland Bishop Jeremy Taylor: 'We think we love not God unless we hate our brother, and we have not the virtue of religion unless we persecute all religions but our own.'[79] The issue of religious toleration and persecution was one where religion and politics met: the question of whether dissent could be tolerated and whether the civil magistrate should persecute, without any universally recognised ecclesiastical authority, was the subject of much debate. There were three distinct positions in play on liberty of conscience during the English Revolution: calls for none, for some and for complete toleration, although what was considered tolerable changed over time.[80] Cromwell's concern for tender consciences led him to intervene and save the lives of the anti-Trinitarian John Biddle (1615-62) in 1655 and the Quaker James Naylor in 1656 but the Humble Petition of the following year only protected Trinitarian Christians from persecution. Presbyterians like Edwards linked sectarians' behaviour to their beliefs and so called for the enforcement of doctrinal orthodoxy to curb unacceptable behaviour; he saw religious toleration as the cause of the sectarian problem rather than the solution to it.[81] Presbyterians and erastians clashed in the Westminster Assembly over the magistrate's role in enforcing doctrinal orthodoxy and behavioural norms: a long running bone of contention attached to the national church. Independents like John Owen (1616-83) wanted more religious liberty than Edwards, but were also concerned about irreligious behaviour by those who felt themselves above ordinances and beyond the wrath of God.[82] The enthusiasm for the 'new light' and the dark spectre of persecution drove some radicals to deny the civil magistrate any

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[76] 'May 1648: An Ordinance for the punishing of Blasphemies and Heresies, with the several penalties therein expressed', Firth and Rait (eds.). *Acts and Ordinances of the interregnum, 1642-1660* (1911) 1133-1136.

[77] Three separate acts in the 1650s explicitly protected law abiding and peaceable religious dissenters from discrimination or persecution: 1650 *Act for the Relief of Peaceable People*; 1653 *Instrument of Government*; 1657 *Humble Petition and Advice* protected all Trinitarian Christians from persecution: Durston & Maltby, Introduction*,* 8; McGregor, *'*The Ranters*'*, 74.

[78] D'Ewes, *The primitive practise for preserving the truth* (28 June 1645); BL E290 (9), 1.

[79] Davis, *Against Formalism*, 278; Livingstone Huntley, *Jeremy Taylor and the Great Rebellion* (1970) 40.

[80] Thomas Burton, *Parliamentary Diary,* I, 98 (Wednesday 10th December 1656); Jordan, 'Sectarian thought and … religious toleration: Pt III Socinians' (1940) 408, 411; see Stephen Snobelen on Biddle in ODNB [accessed 10 October 2012]; Worden, 'Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate' (1984).

[81] See Edwards, *Reasons Against the Independent Government of Particular Congregations* (1641) 26.

[82] Owen, *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655), Chapter XXXV; McGregor and Reay, 195.

coercive power in religious matters and to adopt a position of radical toleration.[83] Saltmarsh had

asked whether universal toleration was needed, for fear of persecuting the truth through ignorance:

'I am only against any form, when it becomes an engine of persecution to all Christians differing

from it'.[84]

However, Colin Davis argues that such claims for liberty of conscience were not calls for self-

determination as it meant submission to God, not to self. As the Seeker and later Quaker writer,

Isaac Penington (1616-79) put it: 'there is no liberty here not to love God or to neglect any duty of …

obedience.' This idea, that liberty precedes service of God, is affirmed in Exodus, 7.16: 'Let my

people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness'.[85] Some feared the divisive consequences of

religious pluralism. Baxter argued for: 'in necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all

things, charity.'[86] He sought the unity, not the uniformity, of Protestant faiths, but still excluded

papists and Seekers from these plans.[87] Radical tolerationists like the Rhodes Island founder Roger

Williams (1606-83) and the Leveller William Walwyn were both labelled as Seekers at some point;

they both rejected ecclesiastical, in favour of congregational, discipline, a path later advocated by

Quakers. They thought that religious persecution was fundamentally unchristian, and they

effectively sought an end to religious orthodoxy.[88]

The *de facto* toleration of the 1640s became more intentional from December 1648

following the removal of Presbyterian interests from Parliament in Pride's Purge. The Independents

and the Army were more committed to toleration and opposed both presbytery and episcopacy.[89]

Of course there were limits (as the Leveller controversialist, John Lilburne (1615?–1657) and the

Quaker Jesus, Naylor would no doubt testify), but these were not always consistently applied.[90] The

Blasphemy Act of August 1650 was aimed at perceived Ranter excesses and was later used against

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[83] Coffey, 'The Toleration Controversy During the English Revolution' in Durston & Maltby, 54-6, lists the most significant Baptist, Seeker, Quaker and Socinian figures and their relevant publications.

[84] Saltmarsh, *Dawnings of Light* (1644) 38; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory* (1647) ii; Solt, *Saints,* 61.

[85] Davis, 'Religion and the Struggle for Freedom', 515, 518; Penington, *Divine Essays (1654)* 81.

[86] Baxter, *True and Only Way of Concord of All the Christian Churches* (1680), preface. Baxter cites the 'despised pacificator' for this quotation, apparently Rupertus Meldenius. http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/quote.html [accessed 16/10/12].

[87] Hughes, '"The Public Profession of These Nations": the National Church in *interregnum* England', in Durston and Maltby, 108.

[88] Williams, *Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* (1644) – burned by Commons order on 9 August 1644; Walwyn, *The Compassionate Samaritan* (1644); see also Anon. (Henry Robinson), *Liberty of Conscience* (March, 1644) 56; Hill, 'Irreligion in the 'Puritan' Revolution', in McGregor & Reay, 195-6; http://www.ccel.org/b/baxter/ [accessed 27/10/11]; Durston & Maltby, Introduction, 6.

[89] Durston & Maltby, 8; McGregor & Reay, Introduction, 10-11.

[90] See the different treatment of Lilburne and Dell by Parliament in the summer of 1646 when brought up on similar charges. Solt, *Saints*, 13; Johnson, 42; *Lords' Journals VIII*, 432-3, 436.

early Quakers. However, it did not directly target those who had remained within the Seeker milieu that had provided many of the members of both these groups, since their public behaviour was far less conspicuous. The Seeker movement 'beyond ordinances' constituted a denial of ecclesiastical and scriptural authority, just like that of their progeny, the Ranters and Quakers, but the Seeker denial was manifested by quiet withdrawal in private, not by loud proclamation in the street and steeple house as with Fox and Baptist preacher and Ranter, Abiezer Coppe (1619-72). This difference in the style of dissent made it easier to include Seekers within the pale of tender conscience that the Independents and army were so committed to defending, although the 1652 Humble Proposals would try to exclude them.

There were also gaps in which further toleration flourished: gaps between actual beliefs and what the law deemed blasphemous; and gaps between statute and practice. For example, Thomas Tany was examined under the Blasphemy Act and cast as a Ranter, but only two of the many blasphemous beliefs that he owned in his trial fell within the Act and the others were ignored. The application of the law also varied considerably according to locale. There are many instances of social or neighbourly tolerance to Quakers. These occurred in the form of community support, such as: warnings of arrest; paying fines and tending the crops of imprisoned Quaker neighbours; and protection by patrons among the gentry, with both Judge Fell (husband of Margaret) and John Bradshaw (regicide) ordering the release of Quakers from prison in 1655-6.[91]

The substance of toleration and persecution is visible in various places: the 27 September 1650 Act for the Relief of Peaceable People relaxed the rules on church attendance; earlier in the year the small group of Diggers in Surrey led by Gerrard Winstanley (bap.1609, d.1676) had been attacked, by servants of the local landowner in Cobham, because they: 'did not know God, nor will not come to Church.' Winstanley retorted that if their God and preacher had taught them to do such cruel deeds: 'We will neither come to church nor serve their God.'[92] Continued discrimination against law-abiding Trinitarian Christians who opted out was explicitly prevented by statute in the 1653 Instrument of Government and 1657 Humble Petition and Advice.[93] Opposition to the established church included protests against the tithe and patronage systems which underwrote it; with many sects favouring congregational election of ministers, maintained by voluntary contributions. Winstanley thought tithes the: 'greatest sin of oppression'; and compared: 'selfish tyth-taking preachers', to :'Judahs that betraid Christ and the Pharisees that put him to death'.

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[91]Hessayon, *Gold,* 3; Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration* (2000) 153.

[92] Winstanley, *An Humble Request to the Ministers of Both Universities and to All Lawyers in Every Inns-a-Court* (April, 1650) 13.

[93] Toleration did not extend to adherents of 'popery and prelacy'. Durston & Maltby, Introduction*,* 9.

Seekers Erbery, Dell and Saltmarsh all wrote against tithes; although Calamy claims that Dell accepted £200 per annum in tithes at Yelden, Bedfordshire, despite his opposition to them; opening a charge of hypocrisy. Saltmarsh definitely rejected his tithe living at Brasted, Kent in 1643 in favour of voluntary contributions and paid back the equivalent of 'a full years arrearage'.[94] This animus against clerics went beyond opposition to tithes to a broader concern for social justice: this is visible in the writing of Coppe, Winstanley, Erbery, Dell, Fox and others.[95] However, the presence of agendas that roamed beyond religion, like that of the Levellers and Diggers, did not alter the fact that both movements were still imbued with a deep religious conviction. Their respective political defeats in 1649 and 1650 brought religion as an expression of the profound changes they desired back into sharper focus and many individuals from these groups gravitated towards the Seekers, Quakers, Ranters and Fifth Monarchists.

Anticlericalism

A second shared tendency within the radical milieu was a broad and deep anticlericalism. Certain themes within anti-clericalism were arguably implicit in the Reformation, but even before this, it was a feature of the Lollard heresy which objected to the Church's wealth and exemption from taxes. As defenders and propagandists of the crown, the clergy were traditionally a bulwark of the establishment: as Robert South put it: 'If there was not a Minister in every Parish, you would quickly find cause to encrease the number of Constables.' Or as King James noted simply: 'No Bishop, No King'.[96] Inevitably, challenges to royal authority and political unrest in the civil war period were accompanied by religious unrest and challenges to clerical authority as mechanic preachers and the popular practice of prophesying threatened the clerical monopoly on spiritual leadership and scriptural exegesis.[97] Popular anticlericalism continued into the Restoration period and both the diarist Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) and satirist Samuel Butler (*bap.* 1613, *d.* 1680) cite numerous examples.[98] It is significant that the term democracy appears first in the period's religious, not

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[94] Winstanley, *New Lawe of Righteousness* (1649) 53; Erbery, *The Grand Oppressor or the Terror of Tithes* (1652) in *Testimony,* 48; Dell, *Tryal of the Spirit* (1660) 29; Walker, 171; Saltmarsh, *An end of one controversie* (1646) 115; other attacks on tithes include: Thomas Collier, *A Brief Discovery of Corruption of the Ministry* (1647) 4-8 and Milton, *Considerations touching the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the church* (1659); see also Josselin, *Diary of Rev. Ralph Josselin* (1908) 38, 105; Reay, 'Quaker Opposition to Tithes' (1980) 98-120; James, 'Political Importance of the Tithes Controversy' (1941); Johnson, 21.

[95] See Erbery, *Testimony* 58, 75; Erbery's letter to Cromwell in July 1652: Nickolls, (ed.). *Original Letters and Papers of State Addressed to Oliver Cromwell* (1743) 88-9; see Hill, *Experience of Defeat,* 87 for ideas on social reform from Erbery, Winstanley and Milton; Dell, *Right Reformation* (1646) 27 appealed to the Commons to 'regard the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy'; for a sustained anti-legalist and anticlerical defence of the poor see the Seeker Robert Read, *The Fiery Change* (1656).

[96] Reay, 'Popular Hostility Towards Quakers' (1980) 389.

[97] Edwards included prophesying as error 127 in his *Gangraena*.

[98] Pepys, *Diary I* (ed.). H.B Wheatley (1904) 314-5; Butler, *Characters and Passages from Note-books,* Waller (ed.) (1908) 318; Hill, 'Irreligion' in McGregor & Reay*,* 208: Maclear, 'Popular Anticlericalism', 443-70.

political, controversies.[99] For the philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) anticlericalism was a natural corollary of the unpleasant democratising properties of the Reformation:

> 'After the Bible was translated into English, every Man, nay every Boy and Wench that could read English, thought they spoke with God Almighty, and understood what he said …The reverence and obedience due to the Reformed Church here, and to the Bishops and Pastors therein, was cast off; and every man became a Judge of Religion and an Interpreter of the Scriptures to himself.'[100]

Puritan preachers schooled their flocks in contempt for unlearned Church of England priests and popish prelates and failed to realise that the disdain and hostility this engendered, might one day be turned against them themselves.[101] Sectarians were more anticlerical than the Puritan congregations of their youth and Baxter claimed that all sectaries were similarly anticlerical; it was just the means of expression that changed:

> 'And therefore their main business, whatever vizor they put on, is to bring the people into a dislike or contempt of the Ministry. If they seem Quakers, they will rail at them: If they seem Seekers, they will dispute against their calling. If they seem the gentlest Behmenists, they have their girds at them, to acquaint the world that they are misguided by them.'[102]

The economic aspect of popular anticlericalism goes far beyond the well documented hatred of compulsory tithes which, whilst highly unpopular, were not nearly as galling as the many special fees that attended every encounter with the clergy.[103] The venality of the priesthood was well established in the popular mind and this reservoir was tapped by mechanic preachers. The Quaker leader, Fox recounted how eight or nine divines had sought the benefice of a deceased incumbent: 'They are like a company of crowes when a rotten sheepe is deade they all gather together to pluck out his puddings & soe doe ye priests for a fallen benefice'[104]

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[99] The democratising effects of Puritanism and particularly the later doctrine of the light within are well documented, perhaps most consistently by William Haller: Haller, *Tracts on Liberty* (1934); Haller, *Rise of Puritanism* (1938); Trinterud, 'William Haller, Historian of Puritanism' (1966) 34-55, 34.

[100] Hobbes, *Behemoth* (1679) 28.

[101] Maclear, 'Lay Tradition', 118.

[102] Baxter, *Key for Catholics (1659) 344*; the accusation that sectaries were two-faced is an important trope in the anti-sectarian rhetoric and also appears in visual representations. It invoked the spectre of Familism dissembling. For images of janus-faced bishops from 1642, see Miller, *Religion in the Popular Prints 1600-1832* (1986) 75; for janus-faced representations in contemporary plays see Carpenter*, A new play call'd The Pragmatical Jesuit new-leven'd a comedy*.

[103] Tolmie, 41 lists many of these including the fees payable on the death of one's child.

[104] Nickalls, (ed.). *Journal of George Fox*, (1952) 223.

Baptists criticised the Presbyterian principle that people should not: 'hear a man not bred up at ye university and not ordained'.[105] Dell said the distinction between clergy and laity was anti-Christian and many sects rejected university education of the clergy because it created a separate clerical caste.[106] Experimental religionists generally believed that learning the outer word of God (bible) was inferior to inner illumination by the spirit. Saltmarsh protested that the *Declaration by Parliament against Preaching without Ordination* (1647), put the clergy above the laity, and by so doing, put the rules of the Church above those of God.[107] However, this flat distinction between the laity and clergy was sometimes more complex: 'mechanic preacher' was a pejorative seventeenth century term for self-appointed lay evangelists of the artisan class, such as Fox and the Baptist author, John Bunyan (*bap.* 1628, *d.* 1688). They were mostly self-taught, unlike the qualified ministry; but Nicholas McDowell has shown numerous *mechanic preachers* were Oxbridge graduates and used their classical education to attack their opponents in their own language.[108]

Anti-formalism

The Seekers were at the very centre of this broader movement this is a good place to finish a general survey of religious radicalism before beginning a detailed survey of the Seekers themselves. As the 1640s progressed so too did sectarian distaste for the externals of religion, which included ordinances: the practices that one carried out to show one's faith to God. It was the validity of these and the requirement that Christians observed them that came increasingly to be denigrated as mere formality by Seekers and others. Thomas Hooker described formality as: 'the practice of the outward duties of the first table, joined with a neglect of the duties of the second table'. In a Commons speech of 1641, Lucius Cary 2nd Viscount Falkland (1610-43) complained that: 'conforming to ceremonies hath been more exacted than the conforming to Christianity.'[109] An anti-formalist tradition was forming well before the civil war as Puritanism itself was trying to breathe life into the formal religion of the state church by calling on believers to heed the inner voice and: 'take up the cross'.[110]

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[105] Terrill, *Bristol Records* (ed.). Hayde (1974) 98.

[106] Durston & Maltby, Introduction, 8; Hill, 'Irreligion' in McGregor & Reay, 194, 196-7; Maclear, 'Popular Anti-Clericalism', 443-70; McDowell, *English Radical Imagination* (2003); Davis, 'Against Formality', 265-88; Johnson, 7.

[107] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* epistle dedicatory A5^r; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 84; A similar view is attributed to the supposed proto-Seeker, Bartholomew Legate, in Henoch Clapham's *Errour on the Right Hand* (1608) 30-31.

[108] Martin, 'Christopher Vitel, an Elizabethan mechanic preacher' (1979); McDowell, *Radical Imagination* (2003); For example, all of Johnson's *Finders* were university graduates: Collier, Dell, Erbery and Saltmarsh: Johnson, 19.

[109] Thomas Hooker cited in Davis 'Against Formalism' 267; Cary, *A Speech to the House of Commons Concerning Episcopacy (1641),* Marriott, *Life and Times of Lucius Cary Viscount Falkland* (1908) 182; Vendettuoli, 38.

[110] Schurman, 'Spiritual Guidance from the Writings of Isaac and Mary Penington' (1994) 149.

Slavish observance and veneration of the sacraments were seen as papist by Church of England clergyman Richard Sibbes (1577?–1635); he was the most widely read and reprinted Puritan author in the 1630s and advised his readers: 'shut out of your hearts too much relying on any outward thing'; 'trust not in sacraments above their place.' Of the sacraments he said: 'there is grace by them, though not in them.'[111] This was echoed by numerous radicals: for example, Joshua Sprigge said: 'Every forme hath weakness in it … forms are helps, but God doth by forms bring us to know himself without a forme'. Sprigge saw the implications of this: 'The kingdom and government of Jesus Christ is not outward, formal, and shadowy, but inward real and powerful.' Erbery concurs, ominously: 'never shall all the Saints unite . ... till wrath be poured forth on all their Forms ... Then shall the Spirit … gather up all … in God.'[112] Both sides in the civil war claimed to be against formality. In 1642 Parliament charged the King's wicked counsellors with being: 'more earnest in the Protestant profession, than in the Protestant Religion.'[113] Voices calling for further reformation sought a transformation that would surpass mere outward conformity or formality and affect inner conviction; some warned that formalism had survived the civil war and was alive and well in the gathered churches.[114]

The Godly had a particular hatred for the 'seeming saint'; Winstanley could also smell hypocrisy: 'I see Prayers, Sermons, Fasts, Thanksgiving, directed to God in words and-shews, and when I come to look for actions of obedience to the Righteous Law, suitable to such a profession, I finde them … saying, and not doing'.[115] However, Colin Davis argues that religious formalism (an emphasis on the ritual and observance of religion, rather than its meaning) was a necessary evil: the desire to respect diversity of religious experience was countered by the fear that unity was impossible without some uniformity on fundamentals: formality reconciled liberty and authority; and for the more reformed in the gathered churches it reconciled biblicism and spiritualism. Indeed, this could be framed as part of the eternal creative conflict between heterodoxy and orthodoxy.[116]

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[111] Sibbes, *Works,* (ed.). Grosart (1862) Vol. IV, 229, 295; Vol. III, 134; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 91; Maclear, 'Lay Tradition' *126;* Sibbes' popularity is attested by the reprinting of his writings in every year from 1633-41*:* Nuttall, *Holy Spirit* 14.

[112] Sprigge, *A Testimony to Approaching Glory* (1649) 55, 60; Sippel, 'The Testimony of Joshua Sprigge' (1946) 27; Erbery, *Testimony*, 47 'the Bishop of London or an Episcopal Spirit risen and appearing at London House: that is, the Spirit of Prayer ceased in the Churches. (22 November 1652)

[113] Davis, 'Against Formality', 269.

[114] For examples from Winstanley and Coppe see Davis, 'Against Formality', 272 n36.

[115] Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom* (1652) 10; John Everard also sought the acquaintance of 'men who had experience with Christ rather than men of notions and speculations, [men] that desired to act rather than talk.' Rapha Harford, *Dedicatory Epistle to Oliver Cromwell* in John Everard, *Some Gospel Treasures Opened* (1653).

[116] Davis, 'Against Formality', 267, 286; Rufus Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy* (1932) 4, called the middle decades of the 17th century the 'most creative single epoch in the modern life of England'.

Anti-formalism threatened to subvert this linkage, so any who embraced it, Seekers and Quakers among them, had to find another way to reconcile liberty and authority. Quakers responded by effectively subordinating the democracy of the group to the centralised leadership of the principal Friends. Quaker historians argue that the Quaker church model evolved in this direction as a survival response to persecution during the Restoration but the *Epistle from the Elders at Balby* of November 1656 shows that this process was completed much earlier. The Seekers did not possess an organisation that could propose, let alone execute, such a decision and this could be a principal reason why they did not survive.[117] Davis argues that, internally, gathered churches were about discipline, orthodoxy and conformity. Some who had moved beyond the gathered churches accepted an external authority, such as the followers of the Muggletonian prophets John Reeve (1608-58) and Lodowick Muggleton (1609-98); others like the Seekers, Ranters and Quakers argued for an internal authority. One basic tenet of the Protestant Reformation was the priesthood of all believers and the immediacy of experimental religion and the doctrine of the light within accelerated this process with democratising consequences; since every believer could lay claim to spiritual authority through revelation. Attempts to contain these democratic implications among gathered groups are visible, as here in the examination of John Harvey by the Fenstanton General Baptist congregation of Henry Denne (1605/6?–1666): 'We then desired him … to prove what he had said … He found it by experience,' he said. 'We desired him to prove it by the Scriptures, for we would not be ruled by his fancy.'[118]

This emphasis on experimental knowledge over book learning and the workings of the spirit over the teachings of Scripture and the church, threatened to unleash a rampant and novel individualism. The light within was a presence to be felt rather than analysed, as such it was not only anticlerical, but also anti-rational: this subverted the rules of theological disputation and the humanist assumptions on which they were based. Fox claimed all his theology was revealed to him directly from God and Winstanley said: 'I have nothing, but what I do receive from a free discovery within.'[119] This is the kind of innovation that both Condren and Cooper suggest was anathema to the seventeenth century mentality.[120] One solution to this was to effectively remove oneself from the process and claim the individual voice was not one's own but God's. Fox followed this line and

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[117] Bauman, 138; Ingle, *First Among* Friends, 48.

[118] Underhill, *Fenstanton Records* (1854) 94.

[119] Disbrey, 'George Fox', 69; Corns, Hughes, and Loewenstein (eds.). *Complete Works of Winstanley* (2009) Vol II. 171; Gurney, *Gerrard Winstanley* (2013) 24.

[120] Although Fox and Winstanley were far from alone in their views; Condren, *Language of Politics,* ch. 5; Cooper, 'Reassessing the Radicals'.

reconciled liberty and authority with the light within: `it is His [God's] authority within you, not your own.'[121]

A very different attempt to reconcile liberty and authority was to reject the premise of the question and argue that there was complete amity between them. This strategy is evident at various points along the Puritan spectrum in the work of Richard Sibbes (above) his fellow Church of England clergyman, Richard Hollinworth (*bap.* 1607, *d.* 1656) and, here, the mystic and provost of Eton College, Francis Rous (1580/81–1659): 'the light of the Word and the light of our souls are twins, and resemble each other, and agree like brethren.'[122] If this were true the need for a set of strict ordinances to contain heterodoxy would seem moot; where it was not, the mystic Rous, like Sibbes, emphasised the subordination of externals to the Spirit, rather than their complete abolition. However some radicals, including figures within the Seeker milieu, Collier, Dell, Erbery and Saltmarsh (that Johnson denotes as Finders), went further and claimed the spirit over the word as the final judge of truth.[123] Fox resolved the issue thus: 'and the light within, which cometh from Christ the word, is not against the word, nor Scriptures, which are the words, but it owns them, and with them hath unity; and no one sees the word but with the light within.'[124] The orthodox view of this is visible in the notes of the Associated Ministers of Cumberland and Westmorland, (both Seeker strongholds) who complained of the Quakers: 'setting up their conceits and experiences, as being of *equal* authority with the Scriptures'.[125] But it is clear that this extreme wing of anti-formalism developed over time, in a gradual trend towards the spiritualisation of externals. Henrik Niclaes (1502-80) founder of the Family of Love, had thought externals more unimportant than offensive and sanctioned a Nicodemite approach to them, suggesting his followers dissemble and assimilate into existing parish structures, if local communities were tolerant.[126] By the 1640s a more intolerant position to externals had evolved: Seekers sought either to subordinate externals to the Holy Spirit or to do away with them all together.[127]

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[121] Greene, 'Muggletonians and Quakers' (1983) 107; Disbrey, 'George Fox', 68.

[122] Sibbes, *Works*; Hollinworth, *The Holy Ghost on the Bench* (1656) 35, 84; Rous, *Works* (1657) 721.

[123] Johnson, *CH*, 306; 306; Johnson, 73.

[124] Fox, *Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (1659) in *Works,* III (1831) 154.

[125] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 35; Vendettuoli, 186.

[126] Dissembling was characterised as shape shifting that undermined the certainty of shared belief that had been part of the visible church. For examples of this imagery see Poole, 115 and Hughes, 101.

[127] Johnson, *CH*, 300; Maclear, 'Lay Tradition'*,* 128.

Seek and ye shall find. (Luk. 11.9)

The focus of this literature review will now turn to the Seekers themselves. Although the radical religious milieu has received a 'wildly disproportionate' amount of attention and been the subject of voluminous research, knowledge about certain aspects of radical Puritanism remains thinner.[128] David Como noted that little substantive scholarship has been conducted on the *process* whereby forms of social and religious radicalism emerged from the bosom of pre-civil war Puritanism: the Seeker movement was one such form.[129] There are a number of reasons why we know less about the Seekers than other groups: the seeking state was by definition, transitional and often spiritually unsatisfying.[130] First-hand accounts of the time spent in this spiritual wilderness are often formulaic and followed the tropes of spiritual autobiography; the details are often scantily sketched or abstract and focus on the internal spiritual state rather than external details; thus the reconstruction of Seeker social networks is extremely difficult.[131] The literary trail, and therefore the historical record, goes cold during an individual's Seeking phase; it often reappears in the form of retrospective spiritual autobiographies; and for some, in Quaker tracts following their convincement, but the reliability of both these sources is compromised, respectively, by their retrospective and propagandist natures.[132]

Early work into the Seekers was carried out by Robert Barclay but he read hostile accounts of the Seekers uncritically. Unfortunately, a subsequent generation of Quaker historians, including Rufus Jones, Champlin Burrage, C.E Whiting and W.C. Braithwaite relied on Barclay too heavily and produced characterisations of Seeker doctrine that inaccurately emphasise Seeker mysticism. In turn, this body of thought then informed later works by historians like, Jerome Brauer, James Ernst, Larry Ingle and Douglas Gwyn.[133] There have been four doctoral theses that have discussed the

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[128] Adamson, 'Cavaliers v Roundheads Continued' (2001); Gurney, *Gerrard Winstanley,* 6.

[129] Como, *Blown,* 13.

[130] There is a distinction to be drawn between *seeking* and *Seeking*. The term *seek* appears frequently in Scripture and the works of mystics like Boehme. It had become highly significant for spiritualists like Williams by 1636 (see Garrett, *Roger* Williams, 48, 146). The first work to use the capitalised pronoun Seeker was George Walker's 29 January 1644 sermon to the Commons, although Thomason acquired it a year later on 29 January 1645. Original capitalisation has been retained in quotations, elsewhere the capitalised `Seeker' has been used throughout.

[131] See Watkins, *Puritan Experience*.

[132] Burns, 'From Seeker to Finder: The Singular Experiences of Mary Pennington' (1996) 76.

[133] Barclay, *Inner Life of the Religious Societies* (1876); Jones (1909); Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy*; Burrage, *Early English Dissenters* (1912); Whiting, *Studies in English Puritanism* (1931); Braithwaite, *Beginnings*; Braithwaite, 'Westmorland and the Swaledale Seekers' (1908); Brauer 'Puritan Mysticism' (1950); Ernst, *Roger*

Seekers, but with the important exception of Douglas Gwyn, a brief recent chapter by David Como, and some discussion of Seekers in New England by Philip Gura, the Seekers have been overlooked for half a century. For example, the four most recent surveys of radical religion in the period by Hill, Dow, McGregor & Reay and Bradstock, pay scant attention to the Seekers, mustering less than 25 pages between them.[134] Most of the denominational history written by Quakers characterises the Seekers as a mere prequel to early Quakerism. This conforms to the problem that Philip Sheldrake has highlighted with the progressivist historiography of religion: 'If a particular theological standpoint carries the day, then the contrary tendencies are assumed to have been deviant. If one spiritual trend emerges as predominant, then what it replaced must have been less effective or fruitful.'[135] The problems contingent to this kind of linear or *vertical history* are discussed by Patrick Collinson and the present study will attempt to combine a vertical and horizontal approach to the explanation of the Seeker movement in an attempt to correct this classification of the Seekers as mystics and merely immature Quakers.[136]

Collinson noted that the principal problem of the vertical approach is that: 'sects are approached by some denominational historians […] for their value for denominational posterity, an entirely legitimate, but restricted motive.' [137] In the case of the Seekers, they are constructed by Quaker historians like Jones, following Barclay, and ultimately, Fox's Journal, as a necessary but temporary stage on an individual's inexorable journey toward Quakerism.[138] This from Jones, for example: 'After 1652, the advent of Quakerism, there is no indication of the continuation of a separate sect of Seekers, and the characteristic ideas which formed the body of their propaganda henceforth disappeared.'[139] Here, Jones's delineation of the genealogy of Quakerism is blinded by hindsight and ignores the evidence that suggests continuing Seeker influence beyond the

Williams and the English Revolution (1931); Ernst, *Roger Williams, New England Firebrand* (1969) Ingle, *First Among Friends* (1994) 56; Gwyn, *Seekers Found* (2000).

[134] Johnson; Vendettuoli ; McGregor, 'The Ranters'; Morgan,'The Life and Work of William Erbery' (1968): Morgan has recently revised and republished this study as a book, *The Honest Heretique* (2012); Gwyn, *Seekers Found* (2000), 'Saltmarsh: Quaker Forerunner' (2003) 3-24, 'Joseph Salmon: From Seeker to Finder and Almost to Quaker' (1998); Como, *Radical,* 384-409; Gura, *Glimpse of Sion's Glory (*1984); Hill, *WTUD*, 184-97, including 5 pages exclusively on Erbery; Dow, *Radicalism in the English Revolution* (1985) where Seekers feature only as an item in a list of sectaries on three occasions; McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters' in McGregor & Reay where Seekers fill only 8 of 211 pages (121-9); and Bradstock, *Radical Religion* (2011) which has around 20 lines focused on Seekers as they relate to the formation of Ranters and Quakers only.

[135] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History* (1995) 100.

[136] Collinson, 'Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition' *(1975).*

[137] Collinson, 'Towards a Broader' 3, 7.

[138] Nickalls, *Journal*: Fox's agenda in the journal has been discussed at length: See for example Hudson, 'Winstanley and the Early Quakers' 177-194; and the debate between Hudson, 'A Suppressed Chapter in Quaker History' (1944) 108-118, especially 115, 118 and Cadbury, 'An Obscure Chapter of Quaker History' (1944) 201-213.

[139] Jones, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1921) 351.

appearance of the Quakers and the variety of subsequent paths followed by Seekers. For example, in 1670, Baxter is still complaining that in his area of London: `there is scarce one professour of a multitude … that is not turned to the Seekers'.[140] William Penn noted that some Seekers developed into Ranters, presumably before the Quaker phenomenon and Braithwaite confirms that it must not be supposed that the Quaker movement, except in certain districts, absorbed the Seekers *en masse*. Henry Clark argued that Seekers as a group were absorbed by the Ranters not the Quakers, though he allowed that some Seekers joined the Quakers. Gwyn confirms this picture too: 'By no means did all Seekers and Ranters become Quakers in the 1650s. But nearly all of the earliest Friends underwent classic Seeker phases before becoming Friends, and the earliest Quaker preachers found their most receptive audiences among those mournful 'travellers after Zion.'[141] Having said this there is a genuine sense that in many towns and regions, the early Quakers were pushing at an open door in their search for converts amongst Seekers: 'what land had been more fruitfully watered for the acceptance of Quaker principles than Cardiff and its environs, where Erbery's later years were engaged in decrying a paid ministry, denouncing all sects, and presaging the arrival of the Third Dispensation and its new apostles.'[142]

Jones' view of the mystical roots of early Quakerism has been challenged by several writers including Geoffrey Nuttall, Lewis Benson and John Punshon but his characterisation of the Seekers has not been opposed as robustly.[143] Others, like George Johnson, have focused more explicitly on Seekers and placed some of them at least in the spiritualist tradition. Johnson's central thesis is that a core of Seeker thinkers: Dell, Saltmarsh, Erbery and Thomas Collier (d.1691) transcended the Seeker position to become what he calls Finders. He argues that this *Finder* position is a bridge linking the doctrine and practice of the Seeker movement to that of early Quakerism.[144] There is not even unanimity on the identity of the leading Seekers: Christopher Hill's most extended work on the Seekers limits its discussion of key individuals to controversialist William Sedgewick (*bap.* 1609, *d.*

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[140] Letter from Baxter to Richard Sargeant, 14 May 1670: quoted in Cooper (1997) 249.
[141] Clark, *History of English Nonconformity, I* (1911) 362; Vendettuoli, 11-12; Gwyn, *Seekers Found,* 13; Braithwaite, *Beginnings,* 27; the Baptist Tombes, unsurprisingly, claimed to have 'good evidence' that Quakers had formally been Seekers but that Baptist coverts to Quakerism were few: John Tombes to Richard Baxter, 4 April 1655, DWL/RB/2/2.141.
[142] Richards, *Religious Developments in Wales* (1923) 261-2.
[143] For a summary of these competing interpretations of the origin of Quakerism see Cooper, 'The Legacy of Rufus M. Jones' (1994) 22-6; Pryce, 'Negative to a Marked Degree' (2010) 518-31 has registered dissent from Jones' silencing of Quietism and its importance in Early Quaker thought.
[144] Both Johnson and his doctoral supervisor Winthrop Hudson seem intent on dichotomising the Seekers. Hudson began by postulating a loose group of mystical Puritans, distinct from the Seekers: Hudson, 'Winstanley and the Early Quakers' especially 180-182; Hudson then tightened this into categories of Pietists and Legalists: Hudson, 'Mystical Religion', 51-6; before Johnson refined the model into Seekers and Finders in his doctoral thesis.

1663/4), Erbery and Isaac Penington.[145] James Vendettuoli's thesis excludes Dell entirely and centres on Seeker apologist John Jackson (c. 1615-1682) as the leader of the Seekers. John Garrett suggests Jackson drew heavily on the work of another key Seeker, Roger Williams.

Jerome Brauer's discussion of spiritual Puritans concurs closely with the list of pre-Quaker authors that William Penn (1644-1718) identifies as essential reading for young Quakers: Saltmarsh, Dell, Wiliam Erbery, Richard Coppin (*fl. c.*1645–1659), John Webster (1611-82) and Christopher Goad (1601-52), author of the preface to Dell's *Several Sermons and Discourses* (1651).[146] Erbery himself was described as the Champion of the Seekers in 1646, but claims that those who had made the fourth step to knowledge of Christ in the Spirit included only Sedgwick, and the Independent preachers Peter Sterry (1613-72) and Joshua Sprigge (*bap.* 1618, *d.* 1684): these men were the nearest to Zion, although not arrived: 'for as every prophet shall one day be ashamed of his vision; yea prophesie itself shall fail'.[147]

The tropes of spiritual autobiography and the transitional nature of the Seeker experience have obscured them from historical view; but their true nature has been further adumbrated by those modern historians who have viewed them through a distorting Quaker lens. A typical example of this is seen in the, otherwise excellent, work of Richard Bauman: 'Indeed some of these groups, like the Seekers, for example, were already close to the Quakers in belief and practice, conducting silent meetings and relying upon a prophetic lay ministry'. If Seekers predate them why is this not vice versa, Quakers close to Seekers in belief and practice?[148] Another Quaker historian, Hugh Barbour demotes the Seeker phase of Isaac Penington who: 'midway between his graduation from Cambridge and his turning Quaker went through a dark period, tossed and tumbled about, melted and new-molded'. He continues dismissively: 'Penington's pre-Quaker phase can also be called Quietism, or Ranterism, or a mental breakdown.'[149] Quaker historians have taken a vertical approach and filled in the gaps of a teleological narrative; using tropes of progress from Whig history, they

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[145] Although more usually known as a Quaker writer, for a time Penington called himself a Seeker: Moore, *Light*, 48; His early works *Light or Darkness* (1650), *A Voyce out of the Thick Darkness* (1650), *Severall Fresh Inward Openings* (1650) and *An Echo from the Great Deep* (1650) all suggest a Seeker position: see Richard Greaves on Penington in *ODNB* [accessed 11 May 2011]; Punshon, 'Early Writings of Isaac Penington' (1994) 60-71; Hill, *Experience of Defeat,* Chapter 4. Although Hill notes that he only excludes John Webster and William Dell as he had written about them elsewhere, 19. As Hill does not cite Johnson here we don't know if Hill disagreed with Johnson's thesis or had just not read it.
[146] Vendettuoli; Garrett, *Roger Williams*; Brauer, 'Puritan Mysticism'; Penn, Letter to Sir John Rhodes, Oct 1693, *BFHS, IV,* 35.
[147] Anon., *A Publike Conference Betwixt the Six Presbyterian Ministers and Some Independent Commanders Held at Oxford on November 12th* (*1646*) 3; Erbery, *Testimony* (1658) 69.
[148] Bauman, 71.
[149] Barbour, 'Ranters, Diggers, and Quakers Reborn' (1975) 60; Brink, 'Quietism of Isaac Penington' (1965) 30-56; Barbour & Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings* (1973) 224-6.

have projected the trajectory of Quakerism backwards to include Seekers: a group who didn't know Quakerism was coming or that it would formalise, concretise and stick around.[150] Even Geoffrey Nuttall's excellent study of the role of spiritualism paints a teleological gloss over the importance of the Seekers: 'there is no need to retrace in detail the development through the Seeker movement which reached its logical conclusion in Quakerism.' [151] This vertical approach has inevitably produced teleological conclusions.

Johnson wrote before Wach but his conception of the Seekers conforms to the typology of Wach's negative spiritualists. Johnson identified several leading figures within the Seeker milieu that were positive spiritualists; but rather than concluding that the typology of positive and negative spiritualists was unhelpful, or that the Seeker milieu contained more than one closely related position; he simply extracted those Seekers who did not fit the description of negative spiritualists, relabelled them *Finders*, and offered them as the *missing link* to Quakerism. Johnson argues for a spiritualist vanguard among Seekers who stressed allegorical interpretation of Scripture and the subordination of all externals to the Holy Spirit, in expectation of the imminent arrival of a new dispensation. These figures were Dell, Thomas Collier, Erbery and Saltmarsh. The term Finder was not applied to these individuals by contemporaries and is really a device designed to impose doctrinal order on a body of thought and people that was more amorphous; to section off those within the Seeker milieu who were closest in their belief and practice to the position that would later develop into Quakerism. This application of the typology was informed by hindsight but was attractive perhaps because it left a neat remnant of negative spiritualists called Seekers who were seeking and waiting for the valid administration of the sacraments.[152] Vendettuoli follows Johnson in accepting Wach's flawed typology but expands the terms. He argues for Seekers as negative spiritualists because they assigned a less significant role to the spirit in individual or corporate life than Quakers. Douglas Gwyn also accepts the distinction between negative and positive spiritualists but argues that the Seekers included both types: negative spiritualists who waited for new apostles to lead the way back to the purity of the primitive church; and positive spiritualists looking for a new spiritual church devoid of external trappings. This second type emerged in the later 1640s, and broadly match the position of the Finders, as described by Johnson. However, what each of these historians have lost sight of is that, to contemporaries, it was the act of withdrawal itself, not its

[150] Braithwaite, 'Westmorland and Swaledale'; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*; Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism* (1919); Gwyn, *Seekers Found*; Jones, 452-67; Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy*.
[151] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 85.
[152] Wach, *Types of Religious Experience* (1951) 139; Johnson, 168-73 and *passim*.

rationale or duration, which exercised critics, animated disputations and defined the group to contemporary observers.[153]

Seeker Organisation

The Quakers invented the quarterly and yearly meetings or at least significantly developed them from the practice of existing Baptist models. This gave their nascent movement not only a rudder, enabling strategic direction, but also a whip, as the meetings served as a forum for admonishment and collective exhortation in which the light within was disciplined by an insistence on its subjection to the 'sense of the meeting'.[154] This development into the Quaker form lent the Seeker model greater rigidity, and thus longevity, as it endowed early Quaker leaders with institutional power to supplement their charismatic authority.[155] Johnson describes the difference thus: Finders [Seekers] spiritualised the congregational system with temporary success: Quakers spiritualised the Presbyterian system with permanent success. Finders were congregational in polity; Quakers were Presbyterian in polity.[156] Seekers like Dell argued that a true church was: 'wholly a spiritual and invisible society'; Quakers disagreed and their changes to the Seeker church model meant: 'the church was not only a communion of saints in ideas, it was a communion of saints in fact'.[157]

In addition to this the Quakers innovated a sophisticated network of support for their evangelical work that included finance and credit, dissemination of published evangelical materials and mutual exhortation through correspondence, which the Seekers did not develop. This Quaker republic of letters fostered the continual interchange of ideas, phrases and priorities that may have helped to keep Quakers unified and on message whilst in different areas of the country; Seeker groups do not appear to have been so communicative. McGregor suggests that the Seekers' organisational frailty precipitated the development of the Ranters, who existed as a mood of disaffection and resulted from a diaspora of refugees from the Seekers and other sects who, for the lack of leadership, rarely developed any sense of common identity or desire to propagate their doctrines. When they did stir it was generally in response to other enthusiastic movements, and particularly the Quakers, who themselves are arguably another response to the organisational frailty of the Seekers as they differ from the earlier group more in organisation than in doctrine.[158]

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[153] Vendettuoli, 19, 25, 219; Gwyn, *Seekers Found* (2000) 11-12, 93-4, and Chapter 2 *passim*.
[154] Ingle, 'From Mysticism to Radicalism' (1987) 90-1.
[155] Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings*, 463.
[156] Johnson, *CH,* 313.
[157] Dell, *Way of True Peace and Unity*, 157; Shideler, 'An Experiment in Spiritual Ecclesiology: the Quaker Concept of the Church' (PhD, Chicago, 1948) 40.
[158] McGregor, 'The Ranters' 128; Hessayon, 'Abiezer Coppe and the Ranters', 346-75.

Situating the Seekers in the radical milieu

One Quaker historian has called the Commonwealth period the most confused and confusing in the history of English religion. This was also true for its inhabitants, Francis Howgill (1618-69) declared: 'I am one thou calls a Quaker and a Seeker, and blessed be the Lord for evermore that ever I was found worthy to bear the name in truth, for they that seek shall find and they that wait shall not be ashamed.'[159] It was not infrequent for Baptists, Seekers, and Independents to merge in a single congregation although whether this was driven by the will of preachers, congregations or practicality is not clear. Certainly, Baptist congregations designated themselves 'open' or 'closed' and there are intra-Baptist debates about this in the 1640s. Article 49 of the 1646 Particular Baptist Confession advocated closed membership but others, like the Broadmead Church, designated themselves 'open'. Those that were designated open were particularly vulnerable to 'shattering' and many who arrived at the Seeker position did so via the gathered churches.[160] Shared worship could also indicate other conditions: for example, a broader seeking mentality or state of flux where individuals sought to witness the religious beliefs and practices of other groups as part of their own search for true religion. It was not infrequent for Baptists, Seekers, and Independents to merge in a single congregation although whether this was driven by the will of preachers, congregations or practicality is not clear. Shared worship could also indicate other conditions: for example, a broader seeking mentality; or a state of flux where individuals sought to witness the religious beliefs and practices of other groups, as part of their own search for true religion.[161]

Quaker historians place the Seekers loosely in this milieu. William Braithwaite says the Seekers were the product of the religious travail of the age, rather than of any one religious sect and were recruited from Independent, Anabaptist, Presbyterian and Anglican churches.[162] Hugh Barbour says they were not a distinct sect, but a growing aggregation of spiritual pilgrims weary of their wandering through successive enthusiastic, but short-lived, gatherings.[163] Rufus Jones characterised Seeking as a tendency and so claimed there were Seekers to be found among the Anabaptists, Familists, Brownists and among those who remained inside the fold of the Church. He alludes to Baptist writers of the period who admitted there were many Baptist Seekers, although he names

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[159] Hudson, `Gerrard Winstanley and the Early Quakers' (1943) 177-8; Howgill, Francis, *An answer to a paper; called, A petition of one Thomas Ellyson* (3 Nov 1654) H3154 (Wing 2nd ed.) 10.

[160] For discussion of open/closed membership in Baptist churches see Wright, 'British Baptists and Politics' (Ph.D, London) 63, 76, 132, 153, 165; Tolmie, 171.

[161] Jordan, *Development of Religious Toleration in England* (1938) 353-8.

[162] Braithwaite, *Beginnings,* 25.

[163] Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England* (1964) 31.

none.[164] But this approach serves more to obscure Seeker doctrine within the beliefs of host sects, than to identify what differentiated these Seekers from other Baptists, for example. So, the first task is to try and situate the Seekers more precisely within the *radical religious milieu*; although the term *radical religious dialogue* may be more reflective of the heavy traffic of hectoring and accusations running between the sects in print, public debates and presumably in private conversation. Historians are often over-reliant on textual transmission since it is visible. Serious study of how ideas were transmitted and synthesised orally rather than textually is difficult although it is probable that some of the cross-pollination among radical thinkers came about this way. Recent work by David Como talks of the: 'laboratory of informal discussion … [in which] most of the creative work of political and religious innovation took place'.[165] Oral transmission was important and particularly infectious, as Pagitt warned: 'The plague of heresy is greater [than actual plague] and you are now in more danger than when you buried five thousand a week. You have power to keep these heretics and sectaries conventickling and shoaling together to infect one another.'[166]

Reading was nevertheless an essential component in the translation of radical religion: radicals spread their ideas, especially in the cities and the army, by printing as much as preaching.[167] The plethora of cheap print and ephemera bears witness to the frantic and impassioned attempts of sectarians to sanitise their own genealogy, beliefs and practice whilst besmirching those of others. This tangled milieu hampers any attempt to trace the origins of Seeker thought but a general characterisation of Seeker roots is possible and some of the central antecedents that have been offered will be sketched and evaluated. There is not a single line of ancestry for Seeker beliefs or practice which were probably synthesised from a range of available precedents and a serious attempt to unravel the Gordian knot of polygenesis would be at best very difficult and at worst pointless.[168] Instead printed sources will be used to pursue a horizontal rather than a vertical

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[164] Jones, 452; although they disagree on whether the Seekers were a tendency that was present in Familist groups, Jones relies heavily on Robert Barclay. Barclay suggests John Spilsberie acknowledged that many fellow Baptists became Seekers, but cites Baillie as his source: Barclay, *Inner Life* 175; Baillie, *Anabaptism*, 118; Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance, The Saints Priviledge* (4 May 1646) 36-7, cf n.14 *supra,* for the rejection of this claim see Baptist John Tombes to Richard Baxter, 4 April 1655.

[165] Como, *Radical,* 381-2; for Winstanley as an interesting case study of this process see Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme's writings during the English Revolution and afterwards' (2013b) 91 and Hessayon, IHR Seminar on Jacob Boehme, 24.11.11.

[166] Pagitt, *Heresiography* (4ed, 1647) Dedication.

[167] Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 11.

[168] A similar search for the sources of Winstanley's theology was described thus: 'as futile as to attempt to identify the streams that have contributed to the bucket of water one has drawn from the sea.' Petergorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War'* (1940) 125; Gurney, *Gerrard Winstanley,* 24.

approach; by discussing the nature and influence of Seeker thought rather than tracing its intellectual lineage.

Historians using a vertical approach have overplayed the doctrinal similarities between early Quaker and Seeker positions to demonstrate continuity. For example Braithwaite claims: 'the two movements indeed were continuous with one another.'[169] Elsewhere this quest for continuity has led to contradiction: Hudson claims the Seekers, Ranters, Quakers, Familists and Behmenists as the: 'major mystical groups' in the period; before adding that the: 'Seekers, strictly speaking, were not mystics at all, although they did betray some mystical tendencies and provided the Quakers with many of their recruits'.[170] The central doctrines of Quakers and some Seekers were the same and there were other points of overlap in belief and practice, but the join is not seamless and important theological distinctions remain. For example, as Hudson noted immediately after the above quotation: 'A fundamental difference in point of view separated the two groups. The Seekers were waiting for new ecclesiastical forms to be established in a new apostolic dispensation, while the Friends had repudiated external forms entirely and were worshipping under the direct ministry of the Spirit.'[171] There are two problems with this characterisation: firstly, it overstates the homogeneity of Seeker beliefs regarding ordinances and disregards the ways in which these beliefs changed over time; and secondly, as the fourth largest religious grouping of the later 1640s, it is inadequate and ahistorical to construct the Seekers as merely immature Quakers and a prequel to the inevitable rise of Quakerism.

Geoffrey Nuttall locates the Baptist position between the Congregational and the Quaker and claims that many or most who 'posted up and down', passed through it *en route* to a Seeker position. It is also uncertain as to how permanent any religious position felt following the abolition of episcopacy: Seeking was perhaps not the only position which was psychologically unsatisfying and defined by inversion. Murray Tolmie describes the Seekers winning converts from the Baptists. All these descriptions employ the analysis of hindsight to impose a direction and geography onto these spiritual journeys that those who took them did not experience.[172] These attempts to weave the Seeker movement into Quaker genealogy have highlighted the difficulties in adequately defining the

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[169] Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 27; for evidence of contemporary conflation of Quaker and Ranter positions and Quaker's private responses see Thomas Lawton to Margaret Fell, n.d. *FHL* Swarthmore MSS 1/242 and Francis Howgill and Anthony Pearson to Margaret Fell, 10 July 1654, *FHL*, Caton MSS 3/74. Lawson met Ranters south of London who believed there was nothing different between the two groups except that Friends 'did not see all things to be theirs'.

[170] Hudson, 'Winstanley and Early Quakers', 178.

[171] Johnson's thesis used the term Finders for the handful of individuals whose writings place them in the overlap of Seeker and Quaker thought; Hudson, *ibid*.

[172] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 14; Tolmie, 54.

movement. Indeed it had several names at various points in its development: the Scattered Flock, Children of the Light, Seekers, Waiters, Expecters, Finders and a host of others that purported to relate to different types of Seekers, including Manifestarians, Vanists and for Baxter six unnamed 'Sub-divisions, or Sects' of Seekers.[173] Only the Finders have a discernible pedigree of their own, but this group have only been argued into existence by historians.

'Children of Light' appears in Scripture [Ephes. 5.8] and the term was a common expression of the period for spiritualists. *Kinder des Lichts* was adopted by some continental Baptists, (but not their English counterparts) Quakers and some Seekers: Saltmarsh refers to: 'children of the day and of the light' in the 'true spiritual Church'.[174] Quakers called themselves the Children of the Light but Francis Rous, the prominent Puritan mystic and one-time Provost of Eton applied this term to all spiritualist Christians including Seekers.[175] Braithwaite suggests distinct groups of Waiters and Seekers in London in August 1654: 'Burrough and Hubberthorne meanwhile went to the Waiters. On the Sunday, Howgill was moved to go to a society of Seekers ... Amidst the confusion of the sects, the Waiters, the Seekers and some of the Ranters showed most readiness to receive the Quaker message.' Although both are attacked collectively by Edward Burrough.[176] Rosemary Moore describes the public dispute of Quakers Richard Farnworth and Naylor with Manifestarians Thomas Moore (father and son) in Cambridge, and the subsequent exchange in print and correspondence. Moore explains their name (they waited for the manifesting of the children of God) then adds: 'they were of the Seeking kind', but does not admit them as Seekers.[177] These terms represent more than just semantics; they reflect the contested identities and competing constructions typical of the sectarian milieu: there was no standardisation, and everyone had an agenda.

Seekers Genesis

Quaker historians place the Seekers (as the immediate ancestors to Quakerism) in a long lineage leading back through the Legatine Arians to the Dutch Collegiants, and on to the ideas of continental mystics including the German writers Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenckfeld and Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). The Seekers have also been linked to the Family of Love: 'one of the most erroneous

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[173] Baxter, *Key for Catholics*, 332-4; Baxter's use of Vanists could have been to facilitate a polemical pun. On Peter Sterry's sermons he said: `vanity and sterility were never more happily conjoined': Orme, *Practical Works of Baxter* (1880) Vol. I, 86*.*

[174] Barclay, *Inner Life,* 262n, 273n; Jones, 460; Johnson, 183; Burrage, 'The Antecedents of Quakerism' (1915) 262-3; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 145

[175] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 40.

[176] Braithwaite, *Beginnings,* 160; Burrough, *A Trumpet of the Lord Sounded Out of Sion* (1656) 29-30.

[177] Moore, *Light,* 95; On the exchange see Nuttall, *Early Quaker Letters* (1952); Moore, *Antidote Against the Spreading Infection of Antichrist* (1655); Moore, *A Defence Against the Poyson of Satan's Design* (1656); Naylor, *A Second Answer to Thomas Moore* (1656).

and dangerous sects that ever was'[178] This area had been quite heavily researched so it is not a primary focus of this study. (Correspondence between Seekers and Amsterdam Collegiants show the range of Seeker influence so do feature in Part One). Schwenckfeld's contemporary Dirk Coornhert (1522-1590) influenced Collegiants and called for an interim church with holy sacraments suspended whilst they waited for the living head of the Church. The Collegiants formed in 1619 and held several opinions that Seekers would come to share: Scripture reading; some occasional preaching but a rejection of a hirelings' ministry; silent meetings, unless one was moved to speak; and a social justice commitment to almsgiving. Theodor Sippell contended that the Collegiants were in fact a forerunner of Seekers. Others like Jones, Whiting and Kattenbusch disagreed but only because they accepted A.R Barclay's incorrect dating of 1617 for the first printed reference to the Seekers in John Murton's *Truths champion* (1617): of which more, shortly.[179]

Historians give different dates for the first appearance of Seeker *beliefs*, Seeker *groups* and the term Seeker. Rufus Jones has suggested the earliest dating of Seeker *beliefs* and describes a fully-fledged Seeker position in 1590: separatist Henry Barrowe recommended that the: 'work of the ministrie cease until some second John the Baptist, or new apostles, be sent from heaven … surely if they make a new ministrie they must make a new gospel and confirm it with new miracles'.[180] Champlin Burrage offers *Antidoton* (1600) by the Church of England preacher and former Brownist, Henoch Clapham (fl. 1585–1614) as the first printed example of Seeker *style* beliefs, although the work actually describes the Arian opinions of the Legate brothers. Stephen Wright holds that Clapham attributes a Seeker position to a 'William' in 1608 but Clapham does not use the word *Seeker*. Wright also describes John Wilkinson as the leader of a group of Seekers in Colchester in 1613, but again the work by Wilkinson he cites, *The Sealed Fountaine Opened* (1646), does not mention Seekers by name.[181] Robert Barclay and Rufus Jones erroneously suggest *Truth's Champion* (1617) by the Baptist John Murton (1585-1626) as the first explicit reference to 'Seekers' and 'seeking' by name.[182] However, Burrage has convincingly discredited Barclay's dating of 1617.[183] These claims reflect the tendency of some denominational *vertical histories* to stick a pin in the past and work back to it. The efforts of Jones and others to construct a vertical history of the Seeker

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[178] Pagitt, *Heresiography* (1st edn 1645) 75.

[179] Sippell, 'Ueber den Ursprung des Quakertums', *Die Christlich Welt (May 12, 19, 26, 1910)*; transl. by Sharp (1910) 299-301; Barclay, *Inner Life*; Whitley, 'Rynsburgers (or Collegiants)' (1922); Kattenbusch, 'Seekers' (1913); Jones, *Mysticism,* 75.

[180] Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy*, 68; Barrowe, *Brief Discovery of the False Church* (1590).

[181] Burrage, *Early English Dissenters,* 215; Wright, 'British Baptists and Politics', 24 n89, 35.

[182] Murton, *Truth's Champion* (1617) [sic] 160; Barclay, *Inner Life,* 411-2; Jones, 455; Wright, *Early English Baptists,* 250; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 25.

[183] Burrage, *Early English Dissenters,* 259-62, Appx. A. For discussion of his argument and the Murton text itself, see Part Two (Chapter 4).

movement risks overstating the continuity of belief across three or more generations from writers like Saltmarsh and John Webster through the ideas of John Everard and Roger Brierely and back further to Elizabethan Separatists: this attempt is fraught with difficulty and the danger of labelling.[184]

Types of Seeker

Quaker historian Rufus Jones claimed that continental mystics influenced Seeker theology and Douglas Gwyn added a layer of differentiation to this claim by describing two parallel types of Seeker. The first were religious conservatives who, renounced all existing options and, following Caspar Schenckfeld's model of a *stillstand*, waited for new apostles, like those of the Book of Acts, to re-establish the purity of the New Testament church model. The second were an incipient liberal type, who came later, flourishing in the later 1640s, and echoed Sebastian Franck's vision of an invisible church. They were not waiting for the restoration of the primitive church as they believed the age of Christendom was over. They looked to the emergence of a new age of the spirit: a new spiritual Christian and a new form of church devoid of institutional and sacramental trappings.[185] Norman Burns implicitly echoes this dichotomy and suggests contrasting types of Seeker: Clarkson as an example of Gwyn's Schwenckfeldian type and Mary Penington as a representative of the Franckian tendency. However, Burns, Hudson and Gwyn may be guilty of assuming direct linear influence between early and later exponents of similar ideas, or at least underplaying the importance of oral transmission; since recent scholarship suggests that only Franck was translated into English and printed, whereas knowledge of Schwenckfeld tended to be confined to those with continental European contacts.[186]

Neither the Burns or Hudson models map perfectly on to Gwyn's typography but there are certainly some shared tendencies.[187] Hudson describes a dichotomy of pietists and legalists. The: 'mainly clerical pietist tendency' included Richard Sibbes, and fed later groups like the latitudinarians and Cambridge Platonists. They tended to remain within conventional church groupings and evolved as an attempt at a more pure and vital religion; as an antidote to the proliferation of religious strife following the abolition of episcopacy. They placed emphasis on immediacy and justifying faith rather than historical faith; and so were indifferent to externals, rather than actively hostile. Since most rows were over externals, they argued unity could be restored by a politic subordination of

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[184] For a similar attempt by another different Quaker historian, see Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 23-7.

[185] Gwyn, *Seekers Found,* 11-12, 93-4, and Chapter 2 *passim.* Gwyn argues Quakerism grew from the second type of Seeker: *Ibid* 314.

[186] Burns, 'From Seeker to Finder', 75; Thank you to Ariel Hessayon for this insight.

[187] Hudson, 'Mystical Religion', 51-6.

controversial externals to the incontrovertible witness of the spirit within. In this way they sought peace both within and without: 'The word is nothing without the spirit; it is animated and quickened by the spirit'.[188] Hudson's `legalist tendency' was more anticlerical, attributed all things to the Holy Spirit, and was actively hostile to externals. They focused on creating a true church by reproducing the rites and usages of primitive Christianity. Disagreements as to what constituted this primitive pattern solidified into factions within Puritanism. Legalists left conventional church groupings on a spiritual pilgrimage, coming together in unstable associations during their search for the true church. The consequent conclusion that all groups and forms were corrupted, so one should withdraw from organised religion and worship inwardly, awaiting a new dispensation, was the classic Seeker position. It was accompanied by the belief that one had passed beyond or risen above ordinances in this new and present age of the spirit, and must depend on the immediate guidance of the spirit within, as in the primitive church. Hudson follows a parallel argument to Jones in suggesting that the legalist tendency fed into the Quaker movement.[189] However a figure like John Saltmarsh seems *pietist* in his repeatedly expressed desire to seek refuge from schism, and in his belief that he had risen above ordinances; but *legalist* in his withdrawal from organised religion and his practice of inward worship: this reduces the explanatory power of this dichotomy.[190]

Jones argues similarly for two wings of the Seeker movement. One branch which felt the need of an outward organisation and were waiting and seeking for the arrival of a figure with an apostolic commission with divine gifts and spiritual power to re-inaugurate a visible church. Another branch who were more mystically minded and were convinced that the visible church was no longer needed in the world. This wing believed the new dispensation of the spirit had begun: `everything henceforward that has to do with religion is to be inward … organisation for this type was a mark of weakness and a return to beggarly elements.'[191] Johnson also suggests a distinct group closely related to the Seekers that he calls *Finders* and describes the main difference between the two. Seekers looked to the primitive apostolic age for the perfect ideal of the Christian church. They rejected contemporary ecclesiastical organisation and existing ceremonies, ordinances, creeds and externals of any kind, except preaching, in their search for the oldest and purest Christian order. They desired a return to the earliest church establishment, which they believed God would restore in His own time. However, they believed when this church establishment was restored it would

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[188] Richard Sibbes, quoted in Hudson, 'Mystical Religion', 52-53; Solt, *Saints,* 51.

[189] Hudson, 'Mystical Religion', 53-4; Johnson, *CH*, 300; Johnson, 13. Saltmarsh uses similar language when describing the transformative power of the *fiery-tryall*: 'when a Christian passes from a meer legall state into a state lesse legall or more Gospel': *Sparkles*, 256-61.

[190] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 15-19 illustrates this conflict well.

[191] Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy,* 71.

constitute an apostolic order in which external ordinances and ceremonies would feature. The Finders were content that this new age of the spirit was already upon them and that all forms, worship and ceremonies were entirely spiritualised and that Seekers were mistaken in awaiting the return of a pure, but ultimately external, form of worship.[192] Given this, Johnson's claim that the Finders were a bridge to the Quakers is more difficult to justify.

Seeking and Finding

Quaker historians have been particularly interested in the undeniable accounts of those groups of Seekers who underwent mass convincement to Quakerism in the North of England in *1652*. Their collective testimony attests to the existence of communities of Seekers across the country, who were primed to receive the Quaker message.[193] Braithwaite describes the Quaker message: 'like a spark falling in prepared tinder' and notes the influence of Seekers at Balby, Preston Patrick, London and Bristol. It was among scattered groups of Seekers in Westmorland and Yorkshire that Fox won his first important successes by persuading them, `a prepared people', to accept his doctrine of the Inner Light. Quaker historians stress the importance of the Seekers' convincement for the Quakers' viability as a sect and their further rapid expansion. Such is the story as it is usually told, and the authority upon which it rests is the *Journal* of Fox.[194] It is certain that some of these groups, such as those led by Quaker preachers Richard Farnworth (1630-66) and Thomas Aldam (1616-60) at Balby, South Yorkshire, and William Dewsbury (1621-88) at Wakefield, Yorkshire, began as Seekers, but had already reached a point that we would associate with Quaker doctrine before Fox's arrival. These were unusual Seekers for they were no longer seeking but had become 'happy finders'. 'I have called them Seekers' says Braithwaite: 'but the name is hardly emphatic enough, for they had already found the light … It is evident they had reached the Quaker experience before Fox came among them.'[195]

Quaker historian Rosemary Moore claims 'truth sprang up' first in Leicestershire in 1644, Warwickshire 1645, Nottinghamshire 1646, Derbyshire in 1647 and adjacent counties in 1648-50. Those involved testify that: 'we did meet concerning the poor and to see that all walked according to the Truth, before we were called Quakers'; so Moore says they: 'may be described as proto-Quaker in their ideas, though there is no record of any quaking'.[196] Some of these Seeker groups were large

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[192] Johnson, 169. See 168-73 for his full discussion of the differences between Seekers and Finders.
[193] Penney, *First Publishers of Truth* (1907); Braithwaite, 'Westmorland and Swaledale Seekers'; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*.
[194] Braithwaite, *BQ,* 26-7; Hudson, 'Suppressed Chapter', 109.
[195] Braithwaite, *Beginnings,* 58-61; Hudson, 'Suppressed Chapter', 114; Hudson's arguments are answered by Cadbury, 'Obscure Chapter', 201-213; Dewsbury, *Discovery of the Great Enmity*.
[196] Moore, *Light,* 11-12.

such as the one which met around Preston Patrick, led by Thomas Taylor (1617-82), Francis Howgill and John Audland (1630-64). Following their convincement, they formed the nucleus of the Quaker movement in this part of Westmorland. There was another large community of Seekers in Bristol who were encountered and apparently convinced by the Quaker missionaries John Audland and John Camm (1605-57).[197] The later history of the Seeker movement is summarised succinctly by Ronald Knox: 'Waiting is meagre diet; and it is little wonder that many of them recognised, in the rousing personality of Fox, the sign to which they had looked forward.'[198] I would argue that we should just call these groups what they actually were: Seekers. Quaker historians' interpretations of the relationship between Seekers and Quakers are far too reliant on Fox's journal which is a highly problematic source, particularly on this question.

So according to Quaker sources and historians, many Seekers became Quakers and others followed the indwelling spiritual God in a different direction and became Ranters: initially there was less difference between these two groups than Fox would later have us believe. In neither case was Seeker lineage openly proclaimed: and this is another reason why serious study of the Seekers is difficult. It is nonetheless important, given the range and importance of their influence: any group who spawned the Ranters AND the Quakers is worthy of study. Vann describes the Quaker insistence on the immediacy of the inner light as 'almost uniquely hostile to history' but this is even more true for the Seekers since the Quakers at least produced an abundance of spiritual autobiographies which helped establish their denominational tradition, which the Seekers did not.[199] Ronald Knox thought the Seekers were: 'a body more elusive in their origins, but with a more continuous history' than the Ranters: a point worthy of note given Colin Davis' views on the latter group. Much more recently John Gurney noted that, despite their importance in the later 1640s, the Seekers are by their very nature, one of the most difficult religious groups to study.[200] Seeker influence, like Alph the sacred river, ran underground; or as Thomas Carlyle would phrase it, Seeker influence went historically submarine. Now that we have reviewed the relevant historical debates generated by previous work on radical religion and the Seekers themselves, we will consider how they were characterised by themselves and those who were openly sympathetic to their position.

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[197] John Audland and John Camm to Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, Bristol, September 1654. *FHL*, A.R. Barclay MSS., No. 158.

[198] Knox, *Enthusiasm* (1950) 174.

[199] Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism* (1969a) 1-2; Peters, *Print Culture & Early Quakers* (2009) 17.

[200] Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 173; Davis, *Fear Myth and History*; Gurney, *Gerrard Winstanley,* 26.

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

[Matt. 12.36-7]

What follows is a discussion of how those within the Seeker milieu described their own attitudes, theology and religious practice. The sources used are primarily the printed works but also spiritual autobiographies that these individuals produced. The former were often published in response to hostile critics and the latter were often written retrospectively once the author had reached a settled religious position, often as a Quaker; this affects the reliability of both. Many beliefs and practices were shared by various religious groups and none were created in a vacuum, but each combination was unique. The principal aim here is twofold: firstly, to chart the rise and fall of the Seekers, and situate the Seeker milieu within the broader landscape of radical religion; and secondly, to detail the Seekers attitudes, beliefs, practices and organisation. This will include: attitudes to toleration, the visible church and its ministry, Scripture and the role of the spirit; beliefs regarding millenarianism, salvation and ordinances; and practices such as prayer, preaching and forms of worship. The Seeker views of each of these issues will be discussed and contextualised by reference to the views of similar groups. For the sake of good order and to illustrate progression, discussion of Seeker works within each theme is arranged in broadly chronological order. Particular attention will be paid to differentiating the Seeker and Quaker positions since they are all too often conflated; sometimes by contemporaries: 'What difference is there between that they (Craddock, Erbery, Sprigge, Webster, Sterry, Dell, Saltmarsh, Lloyd) preached and the Friends came forth in';[1] but most often by Quaker historians, whose focus on the later and more stable Quaker position adumbrates the Seekers distinct contributions. For example, Rosemary Moore describes Quaker complaints about existing churches and notes that: `much of this was common ground with other radicals'; rather than acknowledging that all of the examples she cites were established Seeker complaints.[2]

Sources and Rules of Engagement

To fully understand the Seeker position, extensive reading and immersion in this sectarian dialogue is necessary: partly because the Seeker position is not described fully in any one single tract and is the work of many hands; but more importantly because it essentially describes a milieu whose

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[1] A.R., *a tender exhortation,* 13; Letter from William Penn to Sir John Rhodes, August 1693 cited in Allen, 'William Penn on the Choice of Books' (1911) 33-42 adds Christopher Goad to this list. Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 13 n2

[2] Moore, *Light*, 129.

constituent parts were designed by dissatisfaction; it was a conscious rejection of all the forms of organised religion currently on offer in the market place; it is only by understanding what it was not, that we may understand what it was, or at least what it was attempting to be.[3] Thus in part two, the constructions of hostile witnesses will be used to add depth and tone to the outline of the Seeker position discussed here. These can be used constructively but must be used cautiously: lessons can be learned here from the historiographical furore surrounding the Ranters.[4] Equal care must be taken when discussing the Seekers self-representation. In order to situate the Seekers theologically, certain texts will be taken as representative of Seeker doctrine but again these must be used critically since self-representation is itself polemical and was never a transparent process.

The writings and beliefs of Quakers and Ranters are a possible source of insight into their retrospective dissatisfactions with their earlier Seeking state, but must be used with caution. Many are little more than sectarian propaganda and all contain an understandable self-protecting bias that aims to cast the writer's current spiritual state and form of worship in the best possible light. Some protagonists sought to subvert the tribal nature of the radical milieu that we see in the exchange of printed disputations. Saltmarsh agreed with Dell and Cromwell that the names of all sects and divisions should be laid aside and devised a plan in 1646 incorporating broad access to free debates, open conferences and printing (provided all writers gave their names, so that they were answerable for their words): 'Let there be liberty of the Presse for Printing, to those that are not allowed Pulpits for Preaching: let that light come in at the window which cannot come in at the door'. He hoped that by this means the four principal groups of Independents, Presbyterians, Anabaptists and Seekers may cease assailing one another's beliefs: no one listened.[5]

Roger Pooley's DNB entry for Saltmarsh claims Samuel Rutherford was inaccurate in labelling Saltmarsh a Seeker; since in *Sparkles of Glory* (27 May 1647), the penultimate work during his short lifetime, Saltmarsh criticizes Seekers for waiting for what is already there and available in Christ and his saints. But he had previously offered warm support and agreed with all other areas of Seeker doctrine and practice, so it is more accurate to place Saltmarsh at the leading spiritualist edge of a dynamic Seeker milieu. Saltmarsh then is a useful source for the range of views within the Seeker milieu in the late 1640s. John Jackson also denied the charge that he was a Seeker but his 1651 treatise *A Sober Word* is generally regarded by historians of the period to be another fair summary

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[3] Collinson described the 'religious farmers' market that was England in the 1650s' Collinson (2008) *LRB* review of Lamont's *Last Witnesses*.

[4] Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*; 'Debate: Fear, Myth and Furore', 155-210.

[5] Saltmarsh, *Dawnings*, 57-8; Saltmarsh, *Smoke,* 2*;* see also Hugh Peter, *A Word for the Armie* (1647) 11.

of Seeker doctrine and I would place this at the less spiritualised end of the spectrum of belief within the Seeker milieu.[6]

A lost, but possibly formative, Seeker text is Lawrence Clarkson's first published work, *The Pilgrimage of Saints, by church cast out, in Christ found seeking truth* (1646) which he claims he wrote after joining the Seeker groups at Horn in Fleet Lane and Fleten in Seacoal Lane.[7] However the text can be partially reconstructed by a comparative reading of Presbyterian criticisms of the work and Clarkson's second work later that year, *Truth released from prison.*[8] The term pilgrimage is often employed which suggests a known route and destination. Given the spiritual, rather than physical, destination, and Clarkson's own journey through the sects, hostile accounts would have called it a peregrination at best and a murmuration at worst. But this would be unfair as there was drift and there was a fairly consistent pattern towards spiritualisation in the Seeker milieu, suggesting deeper and broader tides and currents of religious belief carrying individuals to similar spiritual shores. But there was neither grand design nor inevitability and examples of those who defy these trends and drift in the opposite direction, warrant further research, as genuine *radicals*.

The Rise and Fall of the Seekers

Seeker practices and beliefs were not all new and many were held by earlier (and later) groups: the tangled roots and branches of Seekerism suggest their ideas developed organically and through polygenesis.[9] The correct dating of John Murton's *Truth's Champion* (discussed earlier) supports Sippell's thesis that the Seekers' closest direct ancestors were the Amsterdam Collegiants. Further manuscript evidence, not cited by Sippell, supports the continuance of private connections between Seekers and Collegiants into the 1650s. Evidence of a Seeker dialogue with figures in Holland is

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[6] See for example, Vendettuoli; some contemporaries concur: Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 332, 'The most rational and modest that hath wrote for this way, is the Author of *A Sober Word'*.

[7] Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found* (1660) 19.

[8] Edwards, *Gangraena I*, 15-16, 18-19, 24-5, 28, 105-6; *I (ii)* 20; *II,* 6-7, 136, 165. Edwards does not provide page numbers for the original work but indicates that it appeared about six weeks before *Gangraena I* (ie the beginning of January 1646). He explicitly cites it as the source of errors: 2, 4, 97, 107, 108); three other hostile works cite p.4 of the original as their source and another references p.5; the longest passage is in a catalogue of sectarian error produced by city Presbyterians of the Sion College Enclave, *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ* (14 December 1647); Clarkson, *Truth released from prison* (1646); Baillie, *Anabaptism* (1 January 1647); Thomas Underhill, *Hell broke loose: or, A catalogue of many of the spreading errors, heresies and blasphemies of these times* (9 March 1647); Lamont, *Last witnesses* (2006) 37-43; McGregor, 'The Ranters', 69; Como, *Radical,* 392-3.

[9] Ariel Hessayon described the polygenesis of the Early Quakers at an IHR Seminar on 18.01.17 titled 'Rethinking Early Quakerism and its Origins' and cited the influence of Stayer and Pachull, 'From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins' (1975) 83-121; Although I had already, independently, found this a useful concept in thinking about early Quakerism; Hudson, 'Dr. Hudson Replies' (1944) 279-281.

shown through the following four examples ranging from 1651 to 1660, which suggest continued continental interest in Seeker ideas, well beyond the appearance of Quakerism. The first example is a letter sent by W. Rand to Samuel Hartlib in 1651 and is found in his papers. It describes a treatise by Rand: `long since finished but in need of polish'. Rand identifies the work as: `An apologeticall Essaie pleading for the Lawfullnes, Utility, Necessity of Church-assemblies & Sacraments. wherein I answer the Arguments of such as are called seekers.'[10] The other three examples are fragments of correspondence from the Collegiant Petrus Serrarius to the prominent Seeker John Jackson. The first of these is a fragment of a letter from 1656 in which Serrarius suggests human efforts to bring a chiliastic salvation were pointless and that Christians should wait expectantly upon the divine initiative, while the true church was in the wilderness. He sought confirmation, from Jackson, of the Seekers' views on the question, suggesting Jackson's reputation as a Seeker leader stretched to the continent. [11] A further two notes from Serrarius to Jackson are bound between two tracts of Jackson's work in the Friends House Library. The first is undated and reads:

> 'I have perused M[r] ~~Jacksons~~ Booke &c. his moderate discourse I like admirable well and will commune it to my freinds and perhapps it may bee published heer alsoe for it is very clean and solidd: [Margin: 'John Jackson']

> Are these your Seekers in England? then Ile rather Joyne wth them, then with such as presume they have found and possessed.

> Better is a poor man in his uprightness acknowledging his want then a rich man that perverteth his words (saith Solomon) and makes shew to bee what hee is not.

> This Controversy beginneth to bee much ventilated in these parts

> vide 19 Articles translated out of Dutch into English'

What would seem to be the last note chronologically, is dated Amsterdam 17/27 4° mo: 1660 (ie late June 1660) and reads, 'Yo[r] Sober word I have runn through wth great delight. my spirritt symbolozing wth yo[rs] and Glorifying God both for the clearness of the truth and of the expressions of it. Would to god this people might increase both in multitude and earnestness'.[12]

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[10] Letter from W Rand (Amsterdam) to Samuel Hartlib, 1 September 1651, Hartlib Papers 62/27/1A-4B.

[11] Molhuysen & Kossman (eds.). *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* (1937) 911-13; Vendettuoli, 26.

[12] *FHL* Tracts Volume 309 (between two tracts of John Jackson) Petrus Serrarius, Amsterdam. I believe these letter fragments were first brought to scholarly attention by Geoffrey Nuttall.

These letters show clear support for the Seeker position from a significant figure within the Collegiants. Petrus Serrarius (1600-69) was a friend of the Presbyterian ecumenicist John Dury and a correspondent of Samuel Hartlib as well as Jackson. He also translated 17 sermons of Joshua Sprigge into Dutch in 1654. This is a further connection to the Seeker milieu since though formerly an Independent, Sprigge's increasing spiritualism drew him into the Seeker milieu. He performed the friendly office of publishing a Seeker work, *Refreshing Drops and Scorching Vials* (1 June 1653) for Christopher Goad after Goad's death. He is also named by William Penn alongside Collier, Goad, Dell and Saltmarsh as authors of books: 'fore-running Friends appearance'.[13] By the time of these exchanges he was well established as a prominent supporter of the Mennonite leader Galenus Abrahams who in a meeting with the Dutch Quaker William Sewel maintained the position that: 'nobody nowadays could be accepted a messenger of God unless he confirmed the same by a miracle', echoing the Seeker stance on how new Apostles would demonstrate their qualification.[14] So the social and doctrinal links between Seekers in England and like-minded Collegiants in Holland is visible, suggesting that the Seeker milieu was part of a broader phenomenon that reached beyond the seas. A horizontal history such as this, that traces shared theology and social, legal and professional connections between various members of the extreme Protestant milieu, is eminently more defensible than the vertical approach of historians like Rufus Jones. He claimed long roots for the Seekers, to sixteenth century continental mystics like Schwenckfeld and Franck; but this ignored the issue of the scant availability of their works in translation.

Shorter roots in the 1630s are more convincing. By 1634 John Pordage was not rejecting ordinances completely but was proposing a model of religiosity in which would-be believers were to wait upon the motions of the spirit for illumination. In a sermon, again from the early 1630s John Everard notes that some: 'forsake ordinances at a season … [and] have presumptuously affirmed that they are above these'.[15] In New England, in 1641, Williams complained of: '[Samuel] Gorton … denying visible and externall ordinances in depth of Familisme'; even though he himself had shaken off church forms and adopted a seeking posture by this time. Como has argued that Williams thought Gorton rejected ordinances for the wrong reasons. His own stance was borne of both a dissatisfaction with existing church forms and an expectant, strenuous seeking after new revelation. Gorton's view resulted from a rejection of the whole principle of coming to God through ordinances:

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[13] Goad, *Refreshing Drops and Scorching Vials* (1 June 1653); Penn, *Invalidity of John Faldo's Vindication* (1673); for other contemporary works linking Sprigge to a Seeker milieu see Robert Rich, *Love without Dissimulation*, (1667) 6*f*; A.R., *A Tender Exhortation to Friends at Bristol* (1700) 1, 3; Cadbury, 'Joshua Sprigge on the Continent' (1953); Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 13, 184; Sippell, 'Testimony of Sprigge' (1946) 24-8.
[14] Sewel, *History of Friends, II* (1823) 368.
[15] Hartlib Papers MS 29/2/40B; Como, *Blown*, 388, 390.

he claimed to be above such beggarly elements.[16] So although they reached similar outcomes or positions on ordinances, they gave different arguments and justifications for those outcomes: this was a feature of the Seeker milieu. Also in 1641, John Winthrop's accusation that Anne Hutchinson, her son and Mr Collins of Barbados held Seeker views shows Williams was not alone.[17] Jackson gives an early Seeker position in *The True Evangelical Temper* (1641) and *The Book of Conscience Opened and Read* (1642). Williams' first sojourn in England began in June 1643 and by the following summer he had led many London Independents to a Seeker position, according to private correspondence of Robert Baillie. Erbery was also preaching that: 'Baptism was a human and carnal ordinance', by this time but seems to have reached this position independently of Williams.[18] The term Seekers also appears as a neologism in a dictionary, along with: 'peccadillio, pantaloon, vogue, Quakers, Levellers, Trepanners, piqueering, plundring, storming, Excise, &c. and others which got in during the reign of the Long Parlement'.[19]

Clearly the question of when Seekers appeared impacts on the question of why they appeared. Since the first issue is contested, the second is also. Different Seeker *moments* have been suggested, each with a different motivation and each conveying a response to different religious changes. What links all such Seeker moments is the sense that *seeking* was always an act of rejection: a rejection of organised religion; the impulse *to seek* came from a feeling of alienation. Hudson agrees that Seekers were among those who: 'became disillusioned with regard to all counterclaims'; and David Masson said of Williams: 'he had worked himself into that state of dissatisfaction with all visible church-forms, and of yearning quest after unattainable truth, for which the name Seekerism was invented by himself or others.'[20] Unlike the Quakers, there is no 1652 for the Seekers, no grand convincement or collective epiphany; Seekers arrived at the position individually, along a spiritually dark, lonely and difficult road and at different times. The precise date is also often contested too. If we take Williams: James Ernst claims that Williams' religious views were not of 'baptisticher natur' at any time; and that he had: 'become a Seeker in August, 1635'; Perry Miller claimed Williams arrived at the Seeker position by 1639; Williams' Baptist neighbour Richard Scott recorded that prior to Williams' first visit to England, the Providence Seeker group had disbanded, after a year or two of existence, which puts Williams conversion to Seekerism to 1641 – 1642. Scott echoed Williams' reasons for leaving the Baptists' fellowship: 'their baptism could not be

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[16] Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed* (1644) 41; Como, *Radical*, 390.
[17] Winthrop, *History of New England II* (1853) 38-9.
[18] Laing, *Letters and Journals of Baillie*, II, 191-2, 7 June 1644 and 23 July 1644; Como, *Radical*, 390.
[19] Howell, James, *Paroimiographia Proverbs* (1659).
[20] Hudson, 'Mystical Religion', 54; Masson, *Life of Milton* (rp 1965) Vol. *III*, Book *II*, March 1644 - March 1645: Seekers.

right because it was not administered by an apostle. After that he set upon a way of Seeking (with two or three of them that had deserted with him) by way of preaching and praying'.[21] The resulting possible explanations of Seeker motivations are not necessarily competing or mutually exclusive. Seeking was a phenomenon present in each generation of the continuing spiritualist reformation, all that changes over time are the specifics of what is being rejected. The continual religious change discredited the national church, and indeed all organised religion, for some members of each successive generation. The Seekers sought refuge: refuge from false religion and damnation, of course; but also refuge from change, refuge from doubt, and refuge from *Religion*. They sought the right way to worship God and in this search, they turned directly to *Him*, and waited.

The Seeker Journey and the Seeker Milieu

If all these constructions are valid this affords the possibility that there was more than one Seeker position, or that different forms evolved at different times and places in response to different pressures. Not all who arrived at a Seeker position did so via the same route: the Seekers grew out of the gathered churches: for example, Presbyterian sources identify the London open-congregations of Independent minister Sidrach Simpson and Particular Baptist Richard Blunt (*fl.* 1640).[22] Hostile commentators like Baxter described six different kinds of Seeker, encapsulating Presbyterianism's twin bugbears of both sectarian proliferation and disunity. Jackson's *A Sober Word* (1651) described three positions on ordinances all attributed to Seekers by contemporaries: 'such as are against all Ordinances, or that see not sufficient ground for the present practice of Ordinances; or such as are above and beyond Ordinances'. Saltmarsh also describes a range from an expectant type that awaits the reform of externals on a primitive Christian model to a more Spiritual type who believe the fullness of Christ is already in the Saints.[23] All contemporary accounts attest to the existence of a Seeker milieu. However successive historians have sought to dichotomise this milieu into two clear groups (with slightly different labels): one more 'advanced' than the other – meaning closer in belief and practice to the Quakers who would follow. As already discussed, Jones, Johnson, Hudson, Burns and Gwyn all do this in one sense or another; but a conception of the Seekers as a

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[21] Ernst, *Roger Williams: New England Firebrand* (1932) 207; See James Ernst's translation of Freund's 'Roger Williams, Apostle of Complete Religious Liberty' (1933); Miller, *Roger Williams*; For Scott's letter see Fox, *A New England Firebrand Quenched* (1678) 247.

[22] Baillie, *Anabaptism,* 96-7; *Letters and Journals of Baillie, II* (ed.) Laing, 3 vols. (1841-2) 211-2; Edwards, *Gangraena II*, 16 and *III*, 112-3; Edwards, *Antapologia* (1644) 295; Wright, *Early English Baptists,* 153.

[23] Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 331-4: Baxter's typology refers directly to works by Jackson and Clement Wrighter, both known Seekers; Jackson, *Sober Word*, 2; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 292-6; Gwyn claims that Jackson's, *Sober Word* has a similar typology: Gwyn 'Joseph Salmon' 114-5.

broader milieu that contained a greater variety of different entrances, experiences and exits, is more convincing.

There were also many overlaps in terms of personnel which can hamstring attempts to situate the Seekers both theologically and socially. Clarkson, Erbery and Wrighter all took different routes to, and from, the same Seeker milieu, and this is true of others.[24] William Dewsbury's spiritual seeking took him to the parliamentary army before moving through the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and finally Quakerism. Francis Howgill was educated for the Church of England priesthood, he then became an Independent, Baptist farmer-preacher, Seeker and finally Quaker. Many of those who were at one time Seekers arrived at this point in their spiritual journey via other sects and went on to join other sects afterwards.[25] Sippell held that the course of those who became Quakers led from adherence to the Baptists, to a state of waiting as Seekers, and then to convincement and several early Quakers mirror this pilgrimage.[26] Braithwaite describes Seekers as the product of religious unsettlement; Penn likens them to 'Doves without their mates' and Baillie said of these spiritual wanderers: 'the spirit that is in them is restless and keeps them in a perpetual motion'.[27] Clarkson's spiritual autobiography, *The Lost Sheep Found* (1660), provides a revealing insight of an individual's trajectory of belief and the typical slide through the sects following the decision to leave the established church. Clarkson progressed through seven forms of church fellowship: Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist, Seeker, Ranter, and Muggletonian, where he: `finally found truth'. Clarkson moved from the Baptists to the Seekers after influence from Erbery and Sedgwick. Clarkson came into preaching whist serving under the Particular Baptist Paul Hobson in Yarmouth. Hobson himself was described as writing: 'more like a Notionist, Quaker, or Seeker, then a setled Christian' by a fellow Baptist. [28] This familiar pattern is confirmed by hostile sources. Edwards ascribes a similar trajectory to Clement Wrighter, who arguably fits the profile of the last of Baxter's six categories of Seeker, who had: 'over-grown the Scripture, Ministry and Ordinances'.[29]

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[24] On Wrighter, see Edwards, *Gangraena I* (ii), 27.

[25] Dewsbury, *Discovery of the Great Enmity of the Serpent* (1655) 16; Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 83; Hudson, 'Gerrard Winstanley', 178; Similarly, Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* xx, xxvi.

[26] Sippell 'Seekers', *Die Religion in Geschichte unt Gegenwart* (1931); Durnbaugh, 'Baptists and Quakers', 76.

[27] Braithwaite, *Beginnings,* 25; Penn, *Preface to Fox's Journal';* Baillie, *Anabaptism* (1647) 97; Garrett, *Roger Williams*, 148.

[28] Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, 19; Thomas Tillam, *The fourth principle of Christian religion* (25 July 1655) 40; Hessayon, 'Clarkson, Lawrence', In *Encyclopedia of English Renaissance Literature* (2017) argues that Clarkson's account of his progress through these seven forms of church fellowship references the seven churches of Rev. 2-3 as a trope, to suggest to his readers that he has finally arrived at the truth.

[29] Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 334; McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters' in McGregor & Reay, 126; for the social network connecting Wrighter with Walwyn (whom Edwards also describes as a Seeker), see Part Two.

The spiritual odyssey of Erbery is also instructive as a model of the Seeker journey. His 1639 pamphlet, *The Great Mystery of Godliness* asserted his position as an Independent: 'In the word I am taught to know Him' [Christ] (Joh. 17.8.); 'in the sacraments I am tied and knit to Him'. (I Cor. 10.61.)[30] The views expressed in his sermon at Chew Stoke in November 1640 confirmed that he had not changed this position: 'a Christian Church did consist in these three particulars, the members, the pastors, and the administration of God's Ordinances.'[31] However in 1642 he and his congregation from Llanvaches (Newport) fled from the Royalist advance and settled in Bristol which had declared for Parliament and this experience radicalised him.[32] Erbery was one of several men whose preaching in Bristol constituted a Western radical milieu, others included: Walter Cradock, Robert Bacon, Peter Sterry, Saltmarsh, Dell, Williams, and other Independent ministers such as Samuel Petto (1624-1711) and the mystic, Morgan Llwyd (1619-59).[33] Erbery also served as chaplain to Major-General Skippon's regiment of foot in Essex's army in 1643-4 and then as chaplain to the Oxford garrison of Colonel Richard Ingoldsby's NMA foot regiment from August 1646 - Jan 1647.[34] According to Edwards, Erbery's journey from Independent to Seeker was complete by January 1646.[35] This progressive radicalisation is also supported by all of Erbery's pamphlets from 1647-8 and by his contributions to the Whitehall Debates in December 1648 and January 1649.[36]

Edwards complained that: 'our armies are the Nurseries of all our errors and all our evils.'[37] Their time as NMA chaplains had a profound effect on the views of Erbery, Dell and Saltmarsh, 'who all smell of the army'. However, such radicalisation was reciprocal. Major General Kelsey suggested replacing troops stationed around Rochester since he thought the controversial teachings of the nonconformist preacher Richard Coppin (fl. c. 1645-59) too popular among common soldiers and some officers. Baxter also complained of the radicalising effects of individuals, 'from Sir Henry

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[30] Erbery, *Great Mystery of Godliness* (1639) 2.

[31] Evidence of John Cole of Chew Magna, Somerset (SRO, D/D/Ca 334, fol 104) in James, 'The evolution of a radical' (1986) 40.

[32] Como, 'Garrisons, Radicals and Sectaries: the Rise of Religious Conflict in the English Civil War' IHR Seminar 16/01/12. Other work that discusses Erbery in Bristol includes: Tolmie, 29, 94; Cressy, 'Revolutionary England' (2003) 35-71; Stieg, *Laud's Laboratory* (1983); Stieg, *Diary of John Harington* (1977); Morgan, 'William Erbery' (1968).

[33] Llwyd would have been a marginal figure in this milieu given his base in North, not South Wales. See A. R., *A tender exhortation,* 13, for a full list and details of what they preached.

[34] Laurence, *Parliamentary Army Chaplains* (1990) 124.

[35] Edwards, *Gangraena* I (ii) 24.

[36] Namely Erbery's account of his dispute with Francis Cheynel at Oxford in 1646: *Nor Truth, Nor Error,* (January 11, 1646) and his two later pamphlets: *The Armies Defence* and *The Lord of Hosts,* (1648) both of which are subtitled, '*or, God guarding the camp of the saints, and the beloved city*'; Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*.

[37] Edwards, *Gangraena*, III, 266; Walker, *William Dell,* 49.

Vane's party' on the Coventry garrison in 1643.[38] In addition to the radicalising effects of army service and contact, prison was also a radicalising experience for many people. The role of the gaol as a public stage for debate was connived at by the authorities in Early Modern England. For example, the trajectory of the army chaplain and Ranter Joseph Salmon (*fl.* 1647–1656) demonstrates this: his thinking develops in a distinctly mystical direction during and after his incarceration in Coventry gaol.[39]

The spiritualist cadre of NMA chaplains that included Seekers like Erbery were certainly in the ascendant from Naseby until perhaps March 1648. Johnson argues that their influence upon the religious thought of other soldiers is visible, and cites five tracts by soldiers showing the millennial and perfectionist influence of Dell, Saltmarsh, Collier, and Erbery.[40] Baxter claims that Saltmarsh and Dell were the two great preachers at the NMA's headquarters and this is confirmed by a survey of postings and events.[41] Saltmarsh, Erbery and Dell were chaplains to Fairfax's person, horse and foot regiments, respectively. Dell was also chaplain to Cromwell's horse regiment and officiated at Bridget Cromwell's marriage to Henry Ireton in June 1646.[42] In the month preceding the surrender of Oxford on 24 June 1646, newsbooks reported that Saltmarsh, Dell and Sedgwick preached sermons to the Parliamentary Commander-in-Chief, Thomas Fairfax (1612-71) at Headington on Sunday 24th and Monday 25th May, many soldiers attended: 'divers of them climbing up into trees to hear'. A fortnight later at Marston on the 7th June, Fairfax attended Sabbath day sermons by both Dell and Saltmarsh. Edwards regretted that Fairfax, who Seeker Joshua Sprigge called a: 'moderate, sober-minded man', had to hear them, and more orthodox voices like John Gauden concurred, calling them: `dangerous and audacious soul-seducing schismaticks'.[43] The stature and growing confidence of the Seeker clique is shown by the admonishments of Fairfax and Cromwell by Saltmarsh and Sedgewick: Saltmarsh hoped that: 'there will be that spirit in you that will esteem the wounds of a friend better than the kisses of an enemy'. These actions were then emulated by the antinomian army preacher Henry Pinnell (b.1613).[44]

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[38] McGregor, 'The Ranters', 111; Orme, Practical Works of Baxter, I, 42-3.

[39] Lake and Questier, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (2002) 209; Lake and Questier, 'Papists, Puritans, Public Sphere', 72. For the role of prisons also see Bell, 'Dens of tyranny and oppression' (Ph.D, Stanford, 2017); McGregor, 'The Ranters', 105.

[40] Johnson, 24.

[41] Baxter, *Baxterianae Reliquianae,* 45.

[42] Laurence, *Parliamentary Army Chaplains*, 170, 124, 120-1: *ibid* 172-3, for William Sedgwick; Christopher Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons* (1659) 544-5 details Saltmarsh' rapid rise to prominence.

[43] *Perfect Occurrences of Both Houses of Parliament and Martiall Affairs*, 22-29 May 1646, 5-12 June 1646; Edwards, *Gangraena III,* 242; John Gauden, *Hinc Illae Lachrymae* (1647) 20-21; Solt, *Saints*, 12; Hughes, 215.

[44] *Letter of Saltmarsh to the Council of War* (28th October 1647): Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty,* 438; Saltmarsh, *Wonderful Predictions* (1648); John Lilburne, *The People's Prerogative and Priviledges* (1648) 58;

The army was not the only route to the Seeker milieu and progressive radicalisation though. Quaker activist Luke Howard (1621-99) is another whose spiritual quest took him from 1630s conformity through separatism to the Coleman Street church of the Independent John Goodwin (1594-1665). Howard later received adult baptism from William Kiffin (1616-1701) during the Particular Baptist leader's first visit to Kent in 1644, but later defected to the General Baptist preacher and soap boiler, Thomas Lambe (1629-61).[45] Howard then rejected the act of baptism altogether and entered: 'a seeking state again', denoting his rejection of all forms of organised worship. It should be noted here that many Puritans doubted the scriptural foundation of baptism but didn't separate or get anabaptised: rejection of baptism then was a necessary rather than a sufficient cause for moving to a Seeker position.[46] Howard ended up a Quaker, from his convincement in 1655 during the first missions into Kent by Quaker missionaries John Stubbs (1618-1675) and William Caton (1636-65).[47] Yet another route of radicalisation through the Seeker milieu is evidenced by a different Goodwin acolyte: Nicholas Culpepper. Culpepper's growing interest in astrology may have alienated him from his pastor and turned him into a churchless Seeker. According to news reports, Culpeper: 'Admitted himselfe of John Goodwins Schoole (of all ungodliness) in Coleman-street. After that hee turn'd Seeker, Manifestarian, and now hee is arrived at the Battlement of an absolute Atheist'.[48]

Melvin Endy notes that most of the leaders of the Quakers, Ranters, Familists and Seekers arrived at their destination after traversing much of the Puritan spectrum. In the course of that trek they found themselves relying less on trained intellectual leaders and more on their own overwhelming experiences of spiritual rebirth.[49] We can see this in Quaker Richard Farnworth's account of his own spiritual journey through Seeking and beyond: `For a year … I was full of trouble, … and went from one [priest] to another; and if I did hear of any that were high in notion, I ran after him, but … still my soul wanted, … and I saw them to be confused in their sayings, one saying one thing, and another saying another.[50] The Seeker journey was difficult, as the road less travelled

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Sedgwick, *Mr William Sedgwick's letter to his Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax* (1648); Pinnell, *A Word of Prophesy* (1648).

[45] Howard, *Looking Glass for Baptists* (1672) 5. Lambe himself and fellow General Baptist William Allen (left 1653) were also both former members of Goodwin's Coleman Street congregation, as was future Seeker and Quaker, Isaac Penington.

[46] Tolmie, 47.

[47] Howard, *Love and Truth in Plainness Manifested* (1704) 1-30; For Howard, see Acheson, 'Religious Separatism in Canterbury' (Ph.D, Kent, 1983) 115, 230, 244-50; Eales, 'So many sects and schisms' Religious Diversity in Revolutionary Kent, 1640-60', in Durston & Maltby, 227-8.

[48] *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, 4–11 September 1649; Coffey, *Goodwin*, 166.

[49] Endy, 'Puritanism, Spiritualism and Quakerism' (1986) 284.

[50] Farnworth, *The Heart Opened by Christ* (1654) 9.

always is. Stephen Crisp explained: 'the reason that so few come here is because they fear the perils and dangers that are in the way, more than they love the light that would lead them through them.'[51] John Crook charts the impact that the uncertainty and dissatisfaction of the Seeking state had on fellowship among his group:

> we began to consider … whether we were in the right order of the gospel, according to the primitive patterns, and in the consultation of the proper administrator of baptism … we began to be divided and shattered in our minds about it; … confused in our preachings and services, … so that at last we did not meet at all, but grew by degrees into estrangement from one another.[52]

For most the Seeking state was transitory: a prelude to another form of worship. General Baptist William Allen (d. 1686) wrote, of Seekers: 'Many there are indeed, upon whom the spirit of Ranterism hath not yet so far prevailed', which implies that at least some Seekers were moving to a Ranter position, including Clarkson if we are to believe the sequencing in his autobiographical *Lost Sheep Found*.[53] Others like Isaac and Mary Penington became Quakers; some like Williams held a Seeker position throughout their adult lives, eschewing other sects; whilst others left the Seekers and returned to the established Church: 'Come, let us go back to Egypt for Bread: it's better take it at the mouth of Ravens, then starve.'[54] The various different outcomes could reflect different entry points to the Seeker milieu; different dissatisfactions within it; or different responses to the same dissatisfactions or all of the above. What is clear is that there was a range of different Seeker experiences within this Seeker milieu that goes beyond a neat dichotomy of Seekers and finders or negative and positive spiritualists; one of whom is just slightly closer to Quaker convincement than the other.

I would argue that we should just call these groups what they actually were: Seekers. Quaker historians' interpretations of the relationship between Seekers and Quakers are far too reliant on Fox's journal which is a highly problematic source, particularly on this question. When we do look beyond this we get quite a different view: neither Richard Farnworth, Thomas Aldam, Naylor nor William Dewsbury mention Fox as an agent in their spiritual development. Fox found congregations everywhere in the North apparently waiting for his message in the early 1650s, these congregations

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[51] Crisp, *Short History of a Long Journey* (rp 1837) 191.
[52] Crook, *Life of John Crook* (1706, rp 2010).
[53] Allen, *A Doubt Resolved, or Satisfaction for the Seekers* (1655) 15.
[54] Jackson, *Sober Word,* Preface. Here, it is assumed by Barclay that Jackson intends Ravens as Presbyterian clergy, who wore black gowns: Barclay, *Inner Life*, 412. This interpretation is followed by Jones, 467 and Vendettuoli, 207 n.3.

had their own traditions – Familist, Grindletonian, Seeker: thus there must have been many early Quakerisms.[55] When Fox met Durand Hotham in 1651, he said he had already known the principle of God: 'working in his heart now this ten year'. The Hotham family were connected by blood or marriage to key figures within the Seeker milieu, such as Saltmarsh, Sir Henry Vane the Younger and the influential Wray family of Lincolnshire whose ranks contained a network of Seekers.[56]

As to the question of whether Fox pitched his message according to the expectations of his Seeker audiences or just targeted Seeker audiences because he knew they were the most likely source of potential converts, I don't think they are mutually exclusive because they are both reactive strategies. Fox's earliest convincements in the north in 1652 could have been a conscious attempt to hijack the Seeker movement, a case of Stockholm syndrome *en masse* or just the reductionist rationalisation of Quaker historians. There is no sense that Fox saw his own future and planned ahead but he was ambitious, opportunistic and understood power. He came from within the Seeker milieu and his early positions gave them what they wanted: the promise that: `There is one, even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition'; his early emphasis on miracles and charismatic preaching; and his presentation of himself as a prophet at Lichfield. His later emphasis on discipline did strengthen his control of the nascent zeitgeist of spiritualism but it does not seem presciently proactive; more a series of similar reactions to stimuli that could invite persecution such as the Naylor debacle at Bristol; the conduct of Rice Jones in Nottingham and later to the 1662 Quaker Act. Once he won the allegiance of the supporters of the Seeker movement, he changed Quaker practice to suit his purposes, especially in church government.

The number of Seekers is difficult to measure but in 1646, Saltmarsh rated them fourth in importance behind Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists and in the same year Edwards said that they: 'grew in great numbers'; and thought that all the other sects would soon be: 'swallowed up in the Seekers', so they were probably quite large in relation to sectarian membership but quite small in terms of the total population. It is not possible to calculate their numbers accurately but an estimate of between 500 and 5000 is reasonable; concentrated in areas like London, Bristol, Ely and the areas of the north where Quakerism would first take hold. Although the many communities of Seekers around the country were not formally connected or directed by any central body.[57] The mid-

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[55] Hill, *Experience of Defeat,* 130; Hoare, *Balby Beginnings* (2002) 12; Ingle, *First Among Friends,* 74.

[56] On Durand Hotham, see Nickalls, *Journal of Fox*, 75; for links to Saltmarsh (who gave evidence in trial of Sir John Hotham, in December 1644) see HHC: Hotham MSS, U DDHO/I/62: Durand Hotham, esq., to Saltmarsh, London, 12 November 1644; and Hopper, *Papers of the Hothams* (2011) *passim*; for Hotham connections to Wray family see Hopper, *passim*; and for the Wray family tree see Garrett, *Roger Williams,* 270; Saltmarsh also dedicated his 1646 work, *Free Grace* to Sir John Wray.

[57] Saltmarsh, *Groanes, 22-3*; Edwards, *Gangraena II* (1646) 13-14.

1640s were the high point in Seeker expansion with the movement on the wane by the early fifties when Jackson said those who sought out the Seekers: `finding them very inconsiderable both for quantity and quality, and nothing extant which in any measure might be a stay to them, by laying a ground for their dependance & further waiting upon God, have waxed weary', and returned to their former practice. Rufus Jones redated the Seekers as flourishing to 1655.[58] They remain a target for polemicists after the Restoration and this is another area for further research.

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[58] Jackson, *Sober Word,* preface; Vendettuoli, 56; Jones, 465.

Toleration

We will now consider Seeker attitudes to toleration; to the visible church and its ministry; and to Scripture and the role of the spirit. We must begin a discussion of Seeker attitudes to toleration with Roger Williams. Significantly Williams wrote both his major works on toleration during his two visits to England in 1644 and 1652. His priority was not the seeking of liberty as one might expect, but rather the liberty of seeking; he felt a desperate need for this and he was sure others did too.[59] During his first visit, Williams gave fulsome praise for Sir Harry Vane's address to Parliament, calling for liberty to seek: 'Why should the labours of any be suppressed if sober, though never so different? We now profess to seek God; we desire to see light.'[60] Vane and Williams were close: they knew each other in Massachusetts in the mid-1630s and linked up again in 1643-4 during Williams' stay in England. Polizotto makes a detailed and convincing case for their further collaboration in 1652, during Williams' second visit, in the campaign against the Humble Proposals, during some of which time, Williams stayed in Vane's own house in London.

This last episode is worth detailing as it can be viewed as evidence of an active network within the Seeker milieu, mobilised by the threat of religious persecution at the hands of their erstwhile friends, the Independents.[61] Both Williams and Vane saw the Proposals as an assault on liberty of conscience. Williams quickly assumed the role of campaign manager and published three opposition works that year: *The Fourth Paper, The Bloody Tenent yet More Bloody, The Hireling Ministry None of Christs*. Another work, *The Examiner Defended*, was a defence of *Zeal Examined,* yet another attack on the proposals, but both of these works were anonymous: Polizzotto attributes them to Williams and Vane respectively. The network involved in active opposition also includes Vane's brother Charles and John Milton whose sonnets to Cromwell and Vane, should be viewed as part of this campaign. All told, this constitutes an active London cell, within the Seeker milieu, in 1652, with Roger Williams at its nexus. Such social networks within the seeker milieu are intended to be the focus of a future prosopographical study.

Key thinkers within the Seeker milieu including Vane, Williams, Collier, Saltmarsh, Erbery, Sedgwick and Dell all consistently rejected the idea of a national church on the grounds of liberty of

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[59] Williams, *Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* (1644) and *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody* (1652); Garrett, *Roger Williams*, 158

[60] Williams, *Mr Cotton's Letter* (1644) prefatory address to the reader.

conscience. From 1644, Saltmarsh argued for the necessary distinction of church and state on jurisdictional grounds: 'The kingdom of Christ and the World are two […] the first to be ruled by the law of grace, the second by the law of nature […] Nature lives by this law, preserve thyself […] Grace lives by this law, deny thyself'.[62] Dell and Collier both thought a nation cannot be a church. Instead, God gathers his church out of the elect, who have received a new birth through the: 'gift of the spirit'. John Webster later agreed: 'Not he whom man approveth, but he whom God approveth is justified'.[63] The Seekers asked, if the kingdom of Christ was spiritualised, as they desired, what need would there be for the Church: 'if the magistrates power hath under it the whole outward man […] Christ's power hath under it the whole inward man, what place for your ecclesiastical power?'[64] Many radicals opposed a national church and also opposed religious persecution: for some these arguments came together in their opposition to Presbyterian rule, as Milton put it, New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.[65] Dell agreed: 'Presbyterie is the most dangerous Sect of any other, to be tolerated in the State'. He argued this was because it aspired to political power and sought to crush all other groups bar its own: 'It is no proper Presbyterial Doctrine, that does not (at least) meddle with the affairs of the state, which in time they may hopefully come to order.'[66]

Most of the Seekers and other antinomian preachers in the army made it quite clear though, that religious liberty should in no way derogate from the power of the magistrate in preserving the civil peace and liberty of the kingdom.[67] Particularly now they were in the ascendant at army headquarters. The influence of those whom Solt called *Saints in Arms* coincided with the increasing priority awarded to liberty of conscience. However, advocating broad tolerance did not mean wishing one's opponents into power. In 1648 Seekers like Erbery and Sedgwick looked back on the outbreak of war as a providential call for the Saints to seize the helm. Erbery declared that God made a war within church and commonwealth so that by dividing: 'King and Parliament, Prelates and Presbyters, the Saints have got liberty … in their states and spirits to serve God, and Men also to their good.' Sedgwick's view hints at a more self-serving interpretation of providence: 'When we began the war there was this in our minds […] that the King and his party were wicked men […] not

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[61] C. Polizzotto, `The Campaign against The Humble Proposals of 1652', *JEH*, 38/4, October 1987, 569-581
[62] Saltmarsh, *Dawnings*, 36; *Sparkles*, 160.
[63] Dell, *The Building, Beauty, Teaching, and Embellishment of the Truly Christian and Spiritual Church.* [hereafter, *Marston Sermon*] (7 June 1646) 95; Collier, *Certaine* Queries (21 July 1645) 5; Webster, *Saints Guide* (17 August 1653) 32-3; Solt, *Saints,* 47.
[64] Dell, *Right Reformation,* 38.
[65] Milton, *On the new forcers of Conscience.*
[66] Dell, *Right Reformation,* Epistle Dedicatory B2ʳ; Dell, *City-Ministers Unmasked* (1649) 23-4; Johnson, 53; Solt, *Saints*, 46.
[67] Collier, *Certaine Queries* (1645) 24; Henry Denne, *Man of Sinne Discovered* (1645) 20; Webster, *Judgement Set,* 276 and *Saints Guide*, 28; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles, '*The Epistle Dedicatory'; Solt, *Saints,* 49.

[…] fit for their places and power; and we were saints and they did properly belong to us […] and no body is now fit to administer justice, to rule over men, but we'.[68]

In 1655, Cromwell's own reflection cast providence against the possible abuse of toleration suggested above:

> Religion was not the thing at first contested for at all; but God brought it to that issue at last;
> … and at last it proved to be that which was most dear to us. And wherein consisted this
> more than in obtaining that liberty from the tyranny of the Bishops to all species of
> Protestants to worship God according to their own light and consciences?[69]

Morrill has argued that by religion, he meant religious liberty, rather than religion *per se*. Cromwell had realised that the conflict had begun as a war to impose an alternative religious authoritarianism, but argued that God had taught them humility in matters of conscience. [70] However, shortly before he died, Saltmarsh detected a sea-change and charged the army's leaders with abandoning the saints: 'I observe you and some others to begin an estrangement to such who were godly, honest and spirituall, and to avoid discourse and communion with them: Me thinks I see in the light of God a black cloud over some of you in the Army'. He further warned Fairfax: 'stop not the breathings of God in meane private Christians, the counsells of God flow there.'[71] Hugh Peter carried this activist attitude into the Whitehall Debates in December 1648: ' It was the old question in Pharaoh's days, whether the people should worship or no … though we all sat still, yet the work of God will go on, I am not in the mind we should put our hands in our pockets and wait what will come.'[72]

Baxter, who championed unity, or at least humility, would tolerate Episcopalians, Arminians and Anabaptists: but not Seekers and Papists.[73] Those within the Seeker milieu were more forgiving, though as in all things, by no means united. A brief chronological survey reveals no trend, but a spectrum, of views. In 1644, Williams opposed religious persecution by the State or anyone else and thought: 'Jews, Turks, or Antichristians may be peaceable and quiet subjects […] loving and helpful neighbours'; he even said Roman Catholics: 'should not be choaked […] and smothered […] upon good assurance given of civill obedience to the civill state'.[74] In 1645, Collier tolerated all, except

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[68] Erbery, *Testimony*, 27; Sedgwick, *Some Flashes of Lightnings,* 23.

[69] Oliver Cromwell, *Speech on the Dissolution of the First Protectorate Parliament*, 22 January 1655. http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/speeches/Speech_3.pdf [accessed 29.05.2019].

[70] Morrill, 'Making of Oliver Cromwell' in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (1990) 18 n. 58.

[71] Saltmarsh, *Englands friend raised from the grave.*

[72] Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, 138.

[73] Hughes, 'Public profession' in Durston & Maltby, 108.

[74] Williams, *Bloudy Tenent of Persecution*, 67, 107*.*

Roman Catholics, again enemies of the state, and blasphemers.[75] In 1647, Saltmarsh tolerated all groups then existing in England (although Jews were still banned and he made no comment on Turks or Muslims).[76] In 1652, Erbery tolerated everyone including Pagans, Muslims, Jews and Roman Catholics (if they gave assurance to the state of their peaceful subjection). He argued: 'if for unbelieving Jews why not for misbelieving Christians.'[77] He echoed Winstanley and the book of Isaiah in saying: 'to make a man an offender for a word … this is the spirit of Antichrist'.[78] By 1661, Sedgwick also believed the remedy for England was liberty of conscience for all, including papists.[79] In 1667, Dell tolerated all, but was actively intolerant of Roman Catholics who were enemies of the state and Jews who were too concerned with Mosaic Law to acknowledge that the Gospel had overcome it.[80] Some were more against persecution than they were for toleration. Instead of uniformity they called for love. Sedgwick professed: 'there can be no peace but in that love which can bear with that which to him doth not appear to be God's mind.'[81] Saltmarsh was more specific: `No gift or ordinance is to be preferred before love … the more we love any [Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Independents] that are not as we are, the lesse we love as men, and the more as God.'[82]

A National Church

Attitudes to a national church were intimately connected with those towards toleration. Uniformity was anathema to the Seeker church model and given their opposition to covenanting at church level it is not surprising that those within the Seeker milieu were against the same impulse at a national level, and they were among the first to register dissent.[83] After one of the key turning points of the war, at the siege of Bristol, Cromwell emphasised the shared core of godliness among Parliament's supporters: `Presbiterians, Independents, all had here the same Spirit of faith and prayer, they … know no names of difference; pitty it is, it should be otherwise anywhere … As for being united in

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[75] Collier, *Certaine queries,* 26.

[76] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, ii; Saltmarsh's *Groanes,* was perhaps the most eloquent plea for religious toleration in the 1640s, Saltmarsh's position on toleration drew fierce criticism from the Presbyterian John Ley.

[77] Erbery, *Honest Heretique* (1652) in *Testimony,* 333-4; also see Erbery's comments on the settlement of religion during the Putney Debates: Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty,* 170-1.

[78] Isa. 29.21; Cheynell, *An account,* 35.

[79] Sedgwick, *Animadversions upon a Book Entitled Inquisition for the Blood of our Late Sovereign* (1661) 200; for an overview of toleration in England from 1640-60 and beyond, see Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, Chapter 6 and *passim.*

[80] Dell, *Crucified and Quickened Christian,* 5*;* Dell, *Increase of Popery in England* (1667) 3

[81] Sedgwick, *Animadversions,* 166.

[82] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, ii; Saltmarsh, *Reasons for Unitie,* 122-3; Dell agreed that whilst unity was Christian, uniformity was the opposite: Dell, *Uniformity examined*, 41-9.

[83] For example, Henry Vane, *Speech to the House of Commons Against Episcopall-Government* (11 June 1641).

forms (uniformity) every Christian will for Peace sake, … doe as far as Conscience will permit.' This position became the foundation of the religio-political alliance called the 'Independent coalition'.[84] At the end of September 1645, Saltmarsh's short pamphlet, *A Newe Quere*, posed the question: 'Whether it be fit, according to the principles of true Religion and State to settle any Church-government over the Kingdom hastily or not.' He thought not, and was supported by Dell a year later who said external uniformity was monstrous and against nature, as: `the variety of forms … is the beauty of the world'.[85]

Saltmarsh opposed the establishment of a Presbyterian state church in *A Newe Quere* which drew him into an extended printed dispute with his Presbyterian friend, John Ley (1584-62), Saltmarsh argued: 'it is not safe going to the state for a paterne for the church'. He seriously doubted: 'whether in spirituals, as in civils, votes and voices are to make laws [since] Divine laws are made without the vote of any man.'[86] Saltmarsh thought the separation of church and state should be reciprocated and said: 'I never made state business any pulpit work.'[87] In his Marston sermon, Dell said the spiritual church is to be built not with common, but with: 'elect and precious' stones; and that there must be no mixture of precious and common stones.[88] Dell explains his antipathy to a national church: 'For where there are two different outward powers in a kingdom, to wit, civill and ecclesiasticall, each will be striving for precedency.'[89] Dell berated Presbyterian desires for a national church: 'it would be your confusion to go about to build the Church on yourselves and your power; seeing this building is too weighty for any foundation, but Christ himself'.[90] There is a genuine sense that Seekers sought a toleration that extended beyond merely their own inclusion. Their printed exchanges with opponents temper righteous self-defence with measured ecumenicalism and the spirit of Christianity's golden rule pervades their expression on matters both civil and ecclesiastical. The text: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand' [Mat. 12.25] was often cited in civil war sermons. In his sermon to the Army before Oxford at Marston, Dell and the Seekers offered England another vision of itself, or of what it could be: `God hath given diversity of gifts to divers saints, that each may acknowledge something in another, which he hath not himself, and may reckon his perfection to lie in his union

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[84] *Cromwell's Letter to the Commons, concerning the taking of Bristol* (1645): Gardiner, *History*, *II*, 319-20; See Como, *Radical*, 384.

[85] Saltmarsh, *Newe Quaere*, Title page and *passim*; Dell, *Uniformity Examined*, sig. A4ᵛ.

[86] Saltmarsh, *Smoke*, 32, 74, 69; Solt, *Saints*, 70; for a summary of the debate with Ley, see Greaves on Ley in ODNB [accessed 3 June 2019].

[87] Saltmarsh, *Letter from the Army* (1647) 4; Solt, *Saints*, 87.

[88] Dell, *Marston Sermon*, on Isaiah 14.1-17; Walker, *William Dell*, 62.

[89] Dell, *city-ministers unmasked*, 23.

[90] Dell, *Way of True Peace*, ii.

and communion with them; that so the communion of saints may be kept up in the world, in despite of the world.[91]

The Ministry

The Seekers' attitude to the ministry dictated their beliefs on ordinances, so we will deal with the ministry here and ordinances in the next section on Seeker beliefs. Dell saw sacraments or ordinances as the hinge of the priesthood's power.[92] As will be the case with ordinances, we can see a basic shared attitude of hostility towards a separated ministry which separates out into varying gradations of enmity among different Seeker authors: all of which became progressively more pronounced over time. Later examples include Robert Read, who calls the clergy: 'seducers and deceivers who preach for hire [whose] kingdom is at an end'; and Dell, who claimed the carnal clergy had: 'done more … for Antichrist and his false church, than all the people in these Nations besides.' [93] Indeed the doctrine of the light within was more than just anti-clerical, it also contained a strain that was anti-intellectual: reflections on the light within in Seeker testimony are spiritual and emotional rather than rational. Although the Seekers were openly hostile to the notion of a separate ministry their role in practice was reduced more than removed. Regarding scriptural exposition, only those ministers pretending: 'to no certain determination of things, nor any infallible consequences or interpretations of Scriptures', were tolerated.[94] Preaching was the only external which the Seekers allowed in their church services, even praying in public was condemned. John Brayne is a good example: he regarded all existing churches as false, and awaited the emergence of the true church from the wilderness as prophesied in Rev. 12.6 (in 1666). In the meantime though, he saw himself as an: 'unworthy witness of the Lord' (a reference to the two witnesses of Rev. 20). He preached the gospel four or five times a week but did not administer the sacraments.[95] This completed a journey from mediated meetings with God: through Catholicism where one met God through the sacraments, to Protestantism where one met God through reading Scripture; to the Spiritualist Seeker idea of an *immediated* relationship with God within, through the Spirit.

The universities' monopoly on clerical training was a perennial target of those who were more forward in religion. In the 1630s, Richard Sibbes affirmed: 'an illiterate man of another calling may be a better divine than a great scholar'; William Ames, Hugh Peter's co-pastor in the Reformed

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[91] Dell, *Marston Sermon*.

[92] Walker, *William Dell,* 122; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 90-102.

[93] Read, *Fiery Change*, 34; Dell, *Tryall of Spirits*, 39.

[94] Johnson, 14; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 292.

[95] Brayne, *The New Earth* (3 October 1653) title page.

church at Rotterdam, agreed, citing the rude speech of Paul [2 Cor. 11. 6].'[96] The almost universal obloquy by radical writers on this topic constitutes a zeitgeist: Dell, Penington, Webster, Winstanley, Saltmarsh, Read, Peter, Erbery, Jackson and Sibbes all concur. One notable irony is that most of these men were university trained clerics: Dell was Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and Hugh Peter helped found Harvard College. [97] Seekers repeatedly assert a preference for preaching by the gifted rather than the educated. Dell thought: 'ignorance more fit and ready to receive the Gospel, than Wisdom', and pleaded for a return to the old gospel ordinance of prophesying, where the subject is moved by the spirit to speak [I Cor. 14]. In fact he thought this a useful guide to the spiritual quality of members, and therefore a pointer to future leadership.[98] Erbery also called fools the wisest men (and mad men the most sober minded) with God and said only God, not education, could not make a minister, according to Edwards.[99] Webster denied any role for human learning in the securing of Grace and Redemption, attacked the idea of a professional clergy; and condemned: 'Academick and Scholastick Learning [as] the rotten rubbish of Babylonish Ruins.'[100]

Webster joined Erbery in a dispute at All Hallows in October 1653 against, Independent, Presbyterian and Baptist opponents. The press reported that Webster wanted to: 'knock down learning and the ministry'; Webster replied that he was not: 'an enemy to humane, or acquired learning, as it is considered in natural, civil, artificial, or moral respect, but as it is considered in a theological respect'.[101] This follows the line taken by Saltmarsh who was also not an enemy of learning *per se*: 'I allow Learning its place anywhere in the kingdom of the world, but not in the kingdom of God.'[102] Winstanley attacked the clergy and universities, respectively, as: `Scribes and Pharisees' and 'the standing ponds of stinking waters.'[103] Jackson observed that Christ's apostles

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[96] Sibbes, *Works,* Vol. IV, 295; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 91; see also Hill, *Change and Continuity*, Chapter 5; Solt, *Saints,* 59; Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (1642) 182.

[97] On this issue see McDowell, *Radical Imagination*.

[98] Dell, *Tryall of Spirits*, 106; Walker, *William Dell* 127; Edwards included prophesying as error 127 in his *Gangraena*.

[99] Erbery, *Mad Mans Plea* (1653) 1, Erbery cited the following three Scriptures for support [Mat. 12.25; II Cor. 5.13 and I Cor. 3.18; *Gangraena*, *I*. 78, *II* 89-90.

[100] From sermons at All Hallows, Lombard Street and Whitehall during Webster's brief stay in London in June 1653: Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy,* 89; Webster developed these criticisms in later works like *Academiarum Examen* and Dell wrote extensively on University curriculum reform: see Walker, *William Dell*, chapter 7.

[101] *Mercurius Politicus*, 13–20 October 1653; Webster, *Picture of Mercurius Politicus* (25 October 1653) 8; his views were attacked further in G.W., *The Modern States-Man* (1654), a work advocating the benefits of human learning for the understanding of the sacred text; see Clericuzio on Webster in ODNB [accessed 13 May 2013].

[102] Saltmarsh, *An end of one controversie…* in *Some drops of the vial,* 115.

[103] Winstanley, *New Law of Righteousness*, 238-42; Sutherland, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley and Digger Communism' (1990-1) 33:2 http://www.diggers.org/diggers/religion_winstanley.htm#n2.94 [accessed on 11.04.13]

were not university men and bemoaned: 'a Giftless Ministry […] who, for lack of Gifts, study to acquire Arts.'[104] Early Quakerism received this baton and carried it forward: 'You do not read in all the holy Scripture that any of the holy men of God were Cambridge or Oxford scholars or university men or called masters, but on the contrary they were plain men and laboured with their hands and taught freely as they had received it freely form the Lord'.[105] This attack on universities is a product of the anti-intellectualism of early modern experimental religion and modern fundamentalism: both vilify educated professionals like clergy, lawyers and university lecturers; both movements employ the rhetoric of social justice and sentimentalise the poor.

Winstanley stressed the legal-clerical axis in his last published work: 'the main Work of Reformation lies in this, to reform the Clergy, Lawyers, and Law; for all the Complaints of the Land are wrapped up within them three'.[106] The dedication of this work to Cromwell is significant: Winstanley's early works are mystical and conceive of the reformation of self and society as an internal process, founded on reason as a light within; this last work was more worldly and looked to the magistrate to effect law reforms. It cites Hugh Peter's *Good Work for a Good Magistrate* (1651) and hoped similarly to influence the Hale Commission on law reform: Later, Robert Read highlighted the clergy's reliance on the law: ' [the Clergy] they say we are all undone, if this light do continue. If they cannot blow it out, they cry for help, help Judge, help Magistrate, help Justice, help Lawyer'. He was equally scathing of lawyers: 'Let the Lawyers of our times learn to dread the Lord, and not to wrest the proposals, made to them in peace, into a long contrived debate to enrich themselves by others ruine'.[107] Overton and Hugh Peter also criticised the severity of the criminal code.

Seekers viewed ministerial claims to authority through learning as dogma but considered the experience of revelations and gifts from God as authentic. Williams derided the ministers who took refuge behind: 'their sacrilegious and superstitious degrees … in the profession of divinity'.[108] Dell thought it dangerous for one man to preach in a church week after week, he invited the tinker John Bunyan to preach in his own Yelden pulpit on Christmas Day 1659 against the objections of his parishioners; and argued at length for the rights of uneducated men, gifted in the Holy Spirit, to

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[104] Jackson, *Sober Word*, 18, my italics.
[105] This is from one of the earliest Quaker tracts, *False Prophets and False Teachers* (1652) 1-8, signed by former Seeker Thomas Aldam, Elizabeth Hooton and four others from York gaol; see Nuttall, *Early Quaker Letters* 359-62; Moore, *Light*, 130 n5.
[106] Winstanley, *Law of Freedom in a Platform*: prefatory address to Oliver Cromwell; Gurney, 'Gerrard Winstanley's *The Law Of Freedom:* Context and Continuity', in Davis and Avilés, (eds.). *Utopian Moments: Reading Utopian Texts* (2012).
[107] Read, *Fiery Change*, 34 and on the clergy as teachers more broadly 24-39; on Lawyers, 82.
[108] Williams, *Hirelings Ministry*, 15.

argue with clergymen.[109] Saltmarsh, Williams and Jackson were not anti-intellectual; they just refused to acknowledge the need for any theological training for ministers, whilst acknowledging the need for sound education in general.[110] This was a part of their belief in the equality of all in the true church. In his Marston sermon, to Fairfax and the Parliamentarian army laying siege to Oxford, on 7 June 1646, Dell allegedly proclaimed: 'the power is in you the people; keep it, part not with it'.[111] He talked of the various gifts of God to the Saints: 'One christian hath the gift of faith, another the gift of prayer, another the gift of utterance in preaching'.[112] Both Dell and Saltmarsh had taught the religious equality of all men; an ignorant reprobate had the same potential power to be a vehicle of grace as any learned minister: 'no man is higher or lower than another in the kingdom of God, but all are equal in Jesus Christ' [113] Erbery thought things were quite out of order when a minister had to undergo special instruction in the matters of the Kingdom of God.[114] Dell echoes this democratic note elsewhere: 'some Believers should not exercise dominion and authority over Believers; all being fellow servants alike, under one Lord.' He wrote that, in the truly spiritual churches on earth, God: 'would have none over one another, but will have all to serve one another in love'.[115] Dell gave advice to address the consequent problems with congregational authority and discipline, but it was the later Quakers who affected a sustainable resolution.[116]

The issue of authority among Seekers, Quakers and Ranters is an interesting one. None of them were initially associated with a strong central author or consequently a strong central authority. Henrik Niclaes and the Family of Love were unique in the sense that there was an undisputed 'brand name': a body of works and author that outlined that sect's belief and practice.[117] The Seekers' opponents constructed an imagined community of Seekers that all shared the views of prominent authors, like Saltmarsh, but actual authority among such groups was looser.[118] Seekers like Saltmarsh, Dell, and Williams did give some coherence and direction to other Seekers, (a feature

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[109] Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (1934) 161; Dell, *Way of True Peace,* 100-110.

[110] Saltmarsh*, An end of one controversie,* 115; Williams, *Hirelings Ministry,* 14*;* Vendettuoli, 110.

[111] Dell was summoned to the House of Lords on 29th June over these words. He published it without parliamentary approval, but after some discussion on 2nd, 6th, 8th, 11th and 15th, his case was excused on 17th July: *Lords Journals VIII*, 401, 403, 418 https://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol8 [accessed on 10.10.12]

[112] Walker, *William Dell*, 60; *Select Works of William Dell* (1773) 88.

[113] *Ibid,* 95; Dell used the word *equality* to describe the spiritual relationship between one saint and another: Walker, William Dell, 70.

[114] Erbery, *Testimony*, 116; Vendettuoli, 111.

[115] Dell, *Way of True Peace,* 32; Dell, *Stumbling Stone,* 22.

[116] Dell, *Way of True Peace,* 127-40.

[117] The punishment for second-time offenders, under the 1581 Act against the Family was branding with the initials 'H.N.'.

[118] See Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1991) for this eponymous concept, which is usually the result of self-representation rather than representation by a hostile *other*.

also visible among Ranters and early Quakers). Here, we could apply Max Weber's typology on legitimate authority: these men possessed charismatic, traditional and rational authority as all were charismatic ministers offering reasoned arguments based on scriptural exegesis. For Weber, the prototypes of traditional and charismatic leaders were, respectively, the priest and the prophet: the last desperate journey of Saltmarsh to Windsor to confront Cromwell and Fairfax suggests a move from priest to prophet; one which Fox would attempt in reverse a decade later.

The process of codifying doctrines and recording canonical writings is important when establishing any new denominational religion.[119] Max Weber identified Fox as a prophet-type, unlike the Seeker leaders, who were often university trained.[120] In the Quaker case this was an equally delicate matter and Fox gave advice on the checking of unhelpful ministry in meetings: 'be valiant for the Truth upon earth; tread and trample all that is contrary under', which as Braithwaite notes has always been a delicate and difficult matter throughout Quaker history.[121] As early as November 1652, the indiscipline of the light within was visible, especially in women, which risked bringing the nascent Quaker movement into wider disrepute. Thomas Aldam said that Jane Holmes: 'did kick against exhortation'.[122] After Naylor's refusal to kiss Fox's foot in September 1656 and the Bristol debacle a month later, Fox ordered a meeting. The resulting *Epistle from the Elders of Balby* (November 1656) was a highly prescriptive document covering all aspects of church order and discipline and it formed the model for the increasing institutionalisation of Quakerism, which had developed a forerunner of the Yearly Meeting by 1658. The letter had 18 clauses covering a range of relationships; it cited I Peter 5.5: `you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders … "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble." … These things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all … may be guided [by the light] … for the letter kills but the spirit gives life.[123]

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[119] Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (trans. Fischoff, 1963) 64; Peters, *Print Culture and Early Quakers*, 15; Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism,* 197-208.

[120] Weber, Roth, & Wittich, *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (1978) 446; Bauman, 41; McDowell, *Radical Imagination, passim*.

[121] Nickalls, *Journal of Fox,* 263: probably written from Launceston Gaol; Braithwaite, *Beginnings,* 310.

[122] Sw. 3.40 (EQL 7) Aldam to the Brethren and Sisters (November 1652); Moore, *Light,* 133.

[123] Moore, *Light*, 137, 141; For evidence that Naylor was more prominent than Fox in early Quakerism see: Burton, *Parliamentary Diary,* I, 98 (Wednesday 10th December 1656); Moore, *Light,* 104; Hudson, 'Suppressed Chapter in Quaker History', 114 n43; Nuttall, 'A Letter by Naylor Appropriated to Fox,' (1988) 178-9. For Quaker rejoinders, see Cadbury, 'An Obscure Chapter of Quaker History' and 'Dr Hudson Replies', 279-281.

Another letter from October confirms a meeting of elders and approved Friends from Nottingham, Lincoln, Derby and Yorkshire scheduled for November in Balby.[124] The document produced there was titled: 'The elders and brethren sendeth unto the brethren in the North these necessary things following; to which, if in the light you wait, to be kept in obedience, you shall do well'.[125] It institutionalised certain features of Quaker faith and practice, like meeting every Sunday. Braithwaite claims the first Quaker leaders did not invoke their personal authority, but based their claim to give guidance upon their own possession of the Spirit of truth and upon the witness to the Spirit in the hearts of those they addressed: they took the position of inspired leaders, not of spiritual superiors.[126] Quaker authors stress the genuinely democratic nature of Quaker organisation and its aim of placing the individual under the authority of the group, but are unclear on how this accommodates the leadership role of charismatic figures. It is difficult to see how this is anything more than a semantic cover for the centralisation of charismatic authority by Fox and an approved cadre of spiritual leaders.[127]

Once sacerdotal claims and practice regarding the sacraments were rejected and preaching was open to those lay people with the gift for it, why not do away with a distinct clergy completely? This was the conclusion that Quakerism later arrived at.[128] Some Baptists argued that ministers should labour with their hands. And some Seekers denounced all the settled characteristics of the ministry and maintained that ministers should be elected from and by the local congregations without accepting payment for their services. Jackson attributed the lack of divine inspiration in countless sermons to the fact that preachers, for the most part, merchandised the Word: 'it might prove Balaam's wages for any one either to accept or expect any recompense … for any part of the work of the ministry, whether public or private.' Williams echoes Jackson's stance: 'He that makes a trade of preaching … and the charge of men's eternall welfare a trade … no longer pay no longer pray, I … maintain the Son of God never sent such a one to be a Labourer in his Vineyard.' John Webster also opposed preaching for pay: 'Did ever Christ teach you to preach for hire and to make contracts how much you must have for exercising that ministry.' This position is very similar to that of the Quakers, who went even further and repudiated the role of single ministers in local churches

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[124] Richard Farnworth to Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough, from Swarthmore, 4th October 1656: AR Barclay open MSS, SAS Open Journals [https://journals.sas.ac.uk/index.php/fhs/article/view/4220/4172] [accessed 10.09.12]; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 310.
[125] Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 311: Barclay, *Letters of Early Friends,* 59; Barclay, *Truth Triumphant. II* (1831) 383.
[126] Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 311.
[127] Fox appears to have assumed a role of censoring Quaker publications by viewing all books before they were printed, as early as 1653: Hudson, 'Suppressed Chapter in Quaker History', 116; Braithwaite, *Beginnings* 134. This process was completed by the 1666 'Testimony of the brethren' for which see Leachman, 'From An 'Unruly Sect' To A Society Of 'Strict Unity'' (Ph.D, UCL, 1997) 76-8
[128] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 98-100.

entirely (a practice also prevalent in the German Reformation), maintaining that all Quakers were essentially ministers so a formal ministry had no part to play in worship, and thus no tithes were due either, although this does not mean that a ministry was free, just that the contributions were now voluntary.[129] This is an interesting contrast to the example of Thomas Taylor: 'a true Seeker and enquirer after the best things', who willingly took cash for ministering to the Westmorland and Swaledale Seekers.[130]

The Role of the Spirit

> The spiritual man judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged by no man. [I Cor. 2.15]

Much has already been said about the role of the Holy Spirit as it sits at the centre of Seeker belief and practice. The working of the spirit was internal: not even the purest forms of externals could reveal it. John Webster notes: 'no form of external Worship and Discipline (though never so near the model that you may imagine is laid down in the Letter of the Scriptures) doth make a saint where the life and power is absent.'[131] Saltmarsh consistently supported this view: 'No outward ordinance or ministration of the creature or letter can convey […] pure spiritual things' [John 3:8].[132] Dell said that men could climb above: 'all visible and sensible things, even as high as God himself', through an experience of a totally overpowering spiritual death and rebirth.[133] Seeker attitudes to ordinances were shaped by their attitudes to the spirit: the second coming of Christ, a new dispensation and the role of the Holy Spirit were cornerstones of Seeker belief.[134]

Those seeking in a spiritual wilderness wanted to progress their spiritual knowledge. Naylor echoes Winstanley in his contempt for the man who: 'worships God at a distance, but knows him not, nor where he is, but by relations from others.' Rather, men must rely on: 'the pure light of God dwelling in you and you in it'.[135] This was easier said than done: Mary Penington was a Seeker who struggled to leave behind the empty forms of conventional worship and find a solo mode of worship

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[129] Jackson, *Book of Conscience Opened and Read* (1642) 122-3. Jackson added that he was not being paid for this sermon; Williams, *Hirelings Ministry,* 8; Webster, *Saints Guide*, 'To all those that set up Forms, and external Worship instead of the spiritual, and those that call themselves the Ministers of the Nation' [unpaginated]; Vendettuoli, 108-9, 111; Johnson, CH, 313; Corns and Loewenstein, *Emergence of Quaker Writing* (1996) 9.

[130] On costs of supporting Taylor among Seeker and early Quaker communities see Taylor, *Truth's Innocency* (1697); Braithwaite, 'Westmorland and the Swaledale Seekers'; Vendettuoli, 62.

[131] Webster 'An address to all those that set up forms and external worship instead of the spiritual and those that call themselves Ministers of the Nation' in *Saints Guide.*

[132] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 247, other examples, *ibid* 189-90: and Saltmarsh, *Smoke*, 17:

[133] Dell, *Marston Sermon*, 18; Endy, 'Puritanism, Spiritualism and Quakerism', 290.

[134] Saltmarsh, *Opening of Master Prynnes New Book,* 28; Erbery*, Testimony* 244; Collier, *A discovery* of the *new creation*, (29 September 1647) 12; Johnson, *CH*, 303.

[135] Naylor, *A Discovery of the first,* 11, 6; Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, 141.

that could satisfy her craving for an unmediated relationship with God. She was seeking a glimpse of the: 'exchanges of glory in the Saint', that Saltmarsh thought characterised life in the spirit.[136] Saltmarsh was one who provided such Seekers with a spiritual map; a theoretical structure that could guide them to the Spirit. His account of the progressive spiritualisation of the church echoed the idea of Joachim of Fiore's *Three Ages*, though whether his model was based on his own reading or mediated through another is not known. Saltmarsh outlined eight dispensations or stages in the historical development of Christianity, which were paralleled by the range of existing churches. His eighth and final dispensation saw God himself directly minister to the Sons of God.[137] This historical account by Saltmarsh is very much in the mystic tradition but he also describes a process of immediate spiritualist epiphany, which he calls the fiery-tryal: 'whereby mans own righteousness is consumed and crucified to a more excellent discovery of God'. He urged Cromwell to embrace it, and warned him of the costs of not doing so: 'be not ashamed of the fiery trial, but close in with that which hath most of God in it'. [138]

Ronald Knox has argued that the leading characteristic of 17th century English enthusiasm was the distinction (early made) between the: `Christ of History and the Christ of Experience'.[139] Orthodox Christology saw the Trinity as three distinct persons: Seekers saw the Trinity as the same person in three different forms. Seekers developed a spiritualised and adoptionist conception of Christ: Jesus was a man, just like any other, it was only when he adopted the spirit at baptism, that he was transformed into Christ; hence like him all true Christians could achieve perfection on earth and immortality after death.[140] This was the basis of Seeker belief in the perfectibility of Man. Perfectibility (not perfection) of man was an extension of the doctrine of the indwelling spirit: in this Seekers shared the Grindletonian position of Roger Brierley.[141] Dell wrote: 'As long as the Spirit of God dwells in the flesh, it will be reforming the flesh to the spirit, till the whole body of Sin be destroyed … till all be perfected.'[142] Dell, Erbery and Saltmarsh all advocate the benefits that could accrue from accepting the indwelling spirit: the liquor can sweeten the vessel.[143] However, the Seeker conception of the spiritual life (as a series of dispensations or stages, like the Fiery Tryal, through which the truly spiritual must pass to ever higher attainments) meant they were careful not

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[136] Burns 'From Seeker to Finder: … Mary Pennington', 73.

[137] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 68, 65. This work contains a full description of the successive ministrations in pp 41-78; Burns, 'From Seeker to Finder' 73; see also Erbery, *Testimony*, 66-8, 248; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 106.

[138] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 257 and 256-61; Saltmarsh, *Englands friend raised from the grave* (1649).

[139] Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 175.

[140] Johnson, 64-6; Johnson, *CH*, 302.

[141] Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 2.

[142] Dell, *Right Reformation,* 9; Cheynell, *An account,* 14; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 126.

[143] Solt, *Saints,* 33.

to lay claim to perfection or infallibility. Jackson took a similar view of Seeker beliefs: 'they dare not say they are perfect, though notwithstanding (through the power of Christ) they are going on to perfection.'[144] From 1647-8 the printer of radical works, Giles Calvert published a group of tracts that had emerged from members of the army, under the influence of spiritualist antinomian chaplains like Saltmarsh, Dell and Erbery. The key doctrines of these works were perfectionism and the second coming of Christ. They are: Nicholas Cowling, *The Saints Perfect in This Life; or Never* (1647); Robert Westfield, *Christ Coming in the Clouds* (1647); Joseph Salmon, *Antichrist in Man* (1648); John Lewin, *Man-Child Brought Forth in Us* (1648); and George Hassal, *Designe of God in the Saints* (1648).[145] Although these tracts are not all indisputably Seeker works but they are all certainly Spiritualist. In contrast to Quakers, Jackson did not espouse perfectibility, and the Quakers claim to perfectibility was as repugnant to Jackson as the papal claim.

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[144] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 52; Jackson, *Strength in Weakness*, 17.
[145] Johnson, 307.

Seeker Beliefs

Introduction

Historians have used the term *stillstand* to describe the Seekers' suspension of traditional church practice and rejection of existing ordinances until a further revelation and new dispensation should be granted. The term was coined by sixteenth century Schwenckfeldians but Seekers were: `clearly of the same mind'.[146] Seekers had rejected all claims to apostolic succession and some had embraced sectarian claims to divine authorisation. Whilst a range of religious groups laid claim to a church pattern that most closely resembled the primitive church, Seekers chose to suspend judgment and await a new dispensation. In this sense it was not an intellectual movement as such but more experimental or experiential.

But McGregor suggests that for many, the Seekers were no more than a transitional state which prompted an interest in experimental religion. There grew up a considerable body of opinion, unconnected with any sect or creed, which advocated the self-sufficiency of inward revelation. These enthusiasts were the basis of the popular religious movements of the *interregnum*. He concluded that Seekers held no common doctrine, but were rather a widespread state of mind, based around what Huehns had called: 'unilluminating quietism', which rejected existing ordinances and waited passively for a new dispensation to be revealed. [147] McGregor is correct in his assertion that these Seeker enthusiasts were the basis of the popular religious movements of the *interregnum*, but they did have a set of beliefs and practices that were distinct from those of their near neighbours; although these were organic and unstable as reflected the flux around them. Thus, those who withdrew from organised religion to await a new dispensation, formed a Seeker reservoir that fed the streams of later religious enthusiasm. My reading has convinced me that they held more than this in common; this older, narrower view of the Seeker position as a mere transitional state, unconnected with any sect or creed, which advocated the self-sufficiency of inward revelation, underplays the cohesiveness and coherence of the Seekers as described by both themselves and hostile polemicists.

There is little about the Seekers that was standardised, they were unorganised rather than disorganised; they had no universally agreed upon confession of faith and no need for one given their rejection of organised religion. Seeker doctrine and practice were founded on a rejection of all external forms, all organised religion and all visible churches. Because the current churches did not

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[146] Jones, *Spiritual Reformers* (1914) 68; Gwyn, *Seekers Found,* 11, *passim*; Vendettuoli, 17.
[147] McGregor, 'The Ranters', 13-14; Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History* (1951) 108.

conform to the apostolic model, their administrators were invalid and so unable to administer ordinances. The Seeker position was to wait for new Apostles who would demonstrate their qualification through special gifts. In the meantime, Seeker doctrine advocated simple piety, spiritual reflection and an active retreat into largely silent worship in the hope of divine inspirations. The logic of the Seeker position is that it is a temporary state and one rife with contradictions since its reason for existence contains within it the seed of its destruction: the impulse to seek, or expect, conflicts with the basic psychological need to find, or arrive. There is certainly evidence of a Seeker *opinion* and contemporaries frequently refer to them as a sect but the most accurate nomenclature is perhaps a description of a Seeker *milieu*. [148] This was not used by contemporaries but it better embodies several aspects of Seeker belief and practice that my reading has made clear. Firstly that the Seeker position is not clear but rather amorphous in nature; secondly that it contained multiple positions that are similar enough to warrant the same label of Seeker; thirdly that it allows for movement as some individuals developed their own views in an increasingly spiritual direction; and fourthly that it is open ended and does not impose artificially neat and thick lines around groups who were inherently unstable and dynamic.

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[148] 'Opinion' is often used interchangeably with 'sect' and 'religion': see Poole, 110-11 for discussion and examples.

Ordinances and Externals

But now in this time of Apostacie, they finde no such gifts, and so dare not meddle with any outward Administrations, dare not preach, baptize, or teach, &c. or have any Church-fellowship, because they finde no attainment yet in any Churches or Church-ways, or administration of Ordinances, according to the first patern in the New Testament.   John Saltmarsh (1647)

That, heretofore we have seen as much of God in our outward formal fellowships one with another in fleshly Ordinances; as baptism of water and breaking of bread; but now happily Christ is crucified in all these things to us ; and we find nothing but dead flesh there, nothing that can administer any spiritual comfort in any of these things.   Joseph Salmon (1648)

Persons called by the name of Seekers, having compared them [ordinances] with the Word of God, and not finding them to conform thereunto, dare not joyne issue in the present practice of them.
                                                                                                                                John Jackson (1651)

All outward Ordinances of the Gospel were but Ordinances of man … the appearance and power of the Spirit was the ordinance of God.   William Erbery (1652)

It is not outward profession or conformity that counts but Christ in you … it is the incoming of the power of God in our spirit by which alone our freedom, deliverance and salvation is wrought.
                                                                                                                                John Webster (1654)

Ministers … do speak bitterly, and would act cruelly, against divers poor people of God, that are otherwise inlightened, then themselves, and are led by the true light of God, living above the ordinances of man, which they call the ordinances of God.

                                                                                                                                Robert Read (1656)

Like as when the law of the first Covenant was engraven on tablets of stone, it not at all diminish or lessen the glory of that which was written upon the heart … and made it more legible: so neither doth the Law of faith destroy the Law of works … As it was performed in the oldness of the letter now it must be performed in the newness of the spirit … [loving God] only requires Newness of Spirit in lieu of Oldness of letter.   John Jackson (1657)

Here we see the development of views on ordinances by various figures within the Seeker milieu in their own words, over a decade.[149] Seeker doctrine was neither codified, nor created in one

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[149] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 289; Joseph Salmon, *Antichrist in Man*, 31-2; Jackson, *Sober Word,* 4; Erbery, *The Grand Oppressor,* in *Testimony,* 55; Webster, *The Saints Perfect Freedom* (4 July 1654) printed in Webster, *The*

sitting, nor formed in a vacuum. Like the views of other sectarian groupings, Seeker thought was extremely porous and sensitive to the shifting ground on which it stood. If, as is suggested in Isaiah 14, the true church is indeed made of living stones; as those stones change and develop, so too does the church they constitute. The doctrinal similarities between Seekers and Quakers are not the result of the Quakers simply adopting existing Seeker doctrine and re-badging it, nor is it likely that Seeker doctrine remained unchanged by exposure to a Quaker critique. What is more likely is that the more spiritual tone of Webster's rejection of ordinances in 1653, the anticlerical emphasis of Read's rejection in 1656 both reflect an ongoing dialogue with Quaker ideas in the 1650s. There is visible progression: from Saltmarsh' 1647 comparisons of the current apostasy with the primitive church; through progressive spiritualisation in the following decade; to Jackson's attempt to reconcile scripturalism and spiritualism in 1657. Thus, there is coherence to the core beliefs held by Seekers that constitutes more than Huehns' `unilluminating quietism'. Yet there is also a detectable dynamism and progression in their views that includes attempts, like Jackson's to reconcile seemingly incompatible beliefs, which reflect internal tensions. The conception of a Seeker milieu successfully accommodates the way in which different ideas and emphases from others are both absorbed and reflected in Seeker works, without becoming a meaningless catch-all.

A cursory glance of the printed literature of the period confirms that the issue of externals was at the forefront of religious debate in the Civil War period. Some of the protagonists in this debate, like Saltmarsh, were unsettled by this preoccupation: 'we that are thus contenders for Ordinances, for the Temple and the Vessels in it, let us take heed we forget not Him who is greater then the Temple […] that while we strive for the Vessels and Cups, we spill not the Wine'.[150] The Seekers wanted to reduce the prominence given to externals but they were neither the first nor the only group to emphasise the spirit over the word. The drive to place the commands of an inner spiritual religion above those of externals and ordinances can be found across a spectrum of people and groups going back to Montanus in the 2nd century. A century before the Seekers, the German mystic Franck talks of those: `[who] think the ceremonies since the death of the apostles equally defiled… that God no longer heeds them and does not desire that they should be longer kept'.[151]

Ambivalence towards externals and ordinances can be seen among the Godly stretching back into the 1630s, in the works of Richard Sibbes for example and this important pre-history can

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judgement set, and the bookes opened (24 July 1654) 236-7; Read, *the Fiery Change* (3 January 1656); Jackson, *Hosannah,* 16.

[150] Saltmarsh, *Smoke*, F2ᵛ, epistle to the reader.

[151] Franck, *Chronicle* (1536); Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy,* 66.

provide clues about the trajectory of the individuals involved.[152] In the 1636-7 controversy in Massachusetts, Governor Henry Vane (1613-62) supported the antinomian Anne Hutchinson (*bap.* 1591, *d.* 1643) and by the 1640s was arguably more indifferent to ordinances than even the Familists had been, although as Nicodemists it is difficult to know their actual private position. Rufus Jones argues that Vane held a Seeker stance towards ordinances from a very young age. He certainly preached in his own house on Charing Cross Road, rather than attend formal worship and he still spoke the language of a spiritualist Seeker in his last year. He said: `the Kingdom of Christ is within and capable of subsisting and being managed inwardly in the minds of His people'; those of this kingdom: `are fitted to fly with the Church into the wilderness, and to continue in such a solitary, dispersed, desolate condition till God call them out of it. They have wells and springs opened to them in this wilderness, whence they draw the waters of salvation.'[153]

Vane's defenders have argued Cromwell's closure of the Rump Parliament triggered his: `retirednesse under the immediate teachings of God's Spirit' (and committed opposition to Cromwellian rule); but in truth Vane had reached this position long before the dissolution of the Rump.[154] Whilst there was a progressive indifference to ordinances in the 1640s, this hardened among the followers of Vane. Seekers replaced neutrality with actual discord. Convinced that: 'in this time of the Apostacie of the Christian Churches', all externals were corrupt and invalid; they suspended their use and waited: 'onely in Prayer and Conference', for the establishment of the true church through a new dispensation.[155] In *Truth Lifting up its Head Above Scandals,* a 1650 work distinctly imbued with Seeker theology, Winstanley was declaring qualified support for ordinances: 'I do walk in the daily practice of such ordinances of God as Reason and Scriptures do warrant'; whilst condemning ten such outward ordinances whose observation he considered unwarranted, including: formalised prayer, preaching, tithes, holy communion, baptism and Sabbath observance.[156] Meanwhile, Ranters like Jacob Bauthumley (1613-92) also thought all religious ordinances obsolete: 'They were but the preparatives and forerunners of a more spiritual condition.'[157]

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[152] Sibbes, *Works*, Vol. III, 134; see also Everard, *Some Gospel Treasure Opened,* 561-2; Johnson, 8.

[153] Vane, *An Epistle General, to the Mystical Body of Christ on Earth* (1662)

[154] Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, 273: Henry Stubbe, *Malice Rebuked, or a Character of Mr. Richard Baxters Abilities: and a Vindication of the Honourable Sr. Henry Vane from His Aspersions in His Key for Catholics* (1659) 55; Parnham, *Sir Henry Vane, Theologian* (1997); Parnham, 'The Nurturing of Righteousness: Sir Henry Vane on Freedom and Discipline' (2003) 1-2.

[155] Maclear, 'Lay Tradition', 128; Saltmarsh *Sparkles*, 188-92.

[156] Winstanley, *Truth Lifting Its Head Above Scandals* (1648) 66, 70-3. Winstanley gives a detailed description of his position on ordinances pp 67-73; Hessayon, 'Not the Word of God' 20; Hill, *Experience of Defeat,* 22.

[157] Bauthumley, *The light and dark sides of God* (1650) 4.

By the mid-1640s, Seekers had made distinct attacks on several externals including sacraments, external prayers, psalm singing and scriptural reading without exposition. When charged with being an Antinomian, Saltmarsh replied: 'if to say we serve not the Oldnesse of the Letter, but in the newnesse of the Spirit; … if this be Antinomianism, I am of that sort of Antinomian.'[158] He added, elsewhere: though the [Mosaic] Law be a beam of Christ … we are not to live by the light of one beam now when the Sun of righteousnesse is risen himself ... What need we light up a Candle for the children of the day to see by?[159] His central problem with externals is that they placed the teachings of men above those of God. This was a problem for two reasons: firstly, it dishonoured God and secondly, it brought dogma and persecution: 'synods of men and visible Churches have erred in […] judging all higher attainments of light and glory, heresie and schism, and by this … confining [God] only to their own measures and degrees, which is […] judging as God, nay judging God himself'.[160] Saltmarsh pushes this idea to its most extreme conclusion: 'the Spirit … makes [the believer] the very Law of Commandments in himself, and his heart the very two Tables of Moses'.[161]

Saltmarsh' assertion that all externals were corrupt and invalid placed him in the spiritualist vanguard of the Seeker milieu. Johnson argues that this constitutes a qualitative difference and hence Saltmarsh is not a Seeker, but a Finder. I would argue that the difference is only quantitative and hence Saltmarsh is at the Spiritualising edge of the group but in his stance on externals at least, still a Seeker. Saltmarsh was one of the first in the period to assert that all externals were corrupt and invalid, but the course of his journey to this decision has not been charted. His early views on externals, can be seen in a sermon on Reformation from 12 August 1643; they are less well formed but they do establish the direction of his thinking: 'if I be now examined what Reformation I aime at, I answer, my endevour here was only to take out of the way such rubbish as others would bring in; if we can but clear the passage we go far in the work.'[162] It is tempting to assume that Saltmarsh was just more moderate at this time, like everyone else, and the turn towards the extreme views he held by his death in 1647 was just a response to the events of the next four years, but I don't think this is true.

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[158] Saltmarsh, *An end of one controversie*, 6-7.
[159] Saltmarsh, *Free-grace* (30 December 1645) 146-47; Greaves, 'John Bunyan and Covenant Thought' (1967) 167.
[160] Saltmarsh, *Smoke*, 15; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 146-7.
[161] Saltmarsh, *Free-grace*, 146; for similar views see also, Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 240-41; Greaves, 'John Bunyan and Covenant Thought', 168.
[162] Saltmarsh, *Examinations, or a Discovery of Some Dangerous Positions* (26 July 1643) 12.

Firstly, although Saltmarsh was, like many soldiers, profoundly affected by the 'fiery-trial' of his personal experience in the army, this did not change the intellectual direction of his views on spiritualising the externals of religion, but merely accelerated the pace of this development. His position is best placed within a Seeker milieu rather than warranting Johnson's creation of a new category of Finder. Secondly, Saltmarsh was not a moderate in August 1643: four days after the sermon above, on 16 August, the Commons examined papers found in a trunk of Saltmarsh in connection with the trial of his kinsman John Hotham Jr, the treacherous former Governor of Hull. These papers included a list of propositions: '1 How the Papists and Protestants might be set together by the Eares. 2 How the King might be still kept away from his Parliament. 3 How the King and his Children might be destroyed, and the house of Here[ford] or Harfs might be entitled to the Crowne.'[163] Beyond the cynical and alarming proposals to inflame the conflict, the proposal to replace Charles I with a Seymour was beyond the pale. Saltmarsh admitted being the author but claimed, somewhat unconvincingly, they were just descriptions of things ascribed to the parliamentarians by the royalists. Parliament moved to imprison him, but Henry Marten defended him, before he himself was expelled from the House, at Pym's bidding: Saltmarsh survived but the militant campaign was over. Even though Saltmarsh did not join the army until May 1646, he was already 'in the war'. Brink has suggested that spiritualist figures like Winstanley, Pennington and Saltmarsh had to repudiate the world before they could build it anew. This matches the experience of the first two but not Saltmarsh, who continued to try and influence events at the highest level including the fateful journey to Windsor in December 1647 that precipitated his early death, when he championed the soldiery and admonished Cromwell and Fairfax.[164]

If Saltmarsh wanted: 'to take out of the way such rubbish as others would bring in', Seeker meetings did just this and had very little of the usual outward forms of religious service. In the place of external forms of service, the Seeker meeting sat, often in silence, and waited: 'only in prayer and conference' for a new dispensation.[165] This formed a unique linkage between the popular sectarian rejection of externals and millenarianism. In this sense, the term Seekers is a misnomer since they were *waiting* for a new dispensation that would bring valid ordinances, rather than *seeking* one. Indeed, they were also termed the waiters or expecters; perhaps a better description of this zeitgeist: `They wait onely in Prayer and Conference … for a restauration of all things, and a setting up all Gospel Officers, Churches, Ordinances, according to the pattern in the New Testament. They

[163] From Laurence Whitaker's diary: BL Whit., fol. 70v; Como, *Radical,* 177.
[164] Brink, 'Quietism of Isaac Penington', 30-1; Bauman, 118.
[165] After the early Apostles in Acts 1.4-8, 2.21, 3.19-23.

wait for an Apostle … to give visible demonstration of their sending … and thus, they interpret those places of the Revelation. This is the highest of their Attainment.[166]

Although Saltmarsh claims not to own the name of Seeker himself, he gives a sympathetic summary of their views in three separate works.[167] *Groanes for Liberty* (1646) offers a single short paragraph; later in the year he gives a more detailed description of Seeker beliefs and practice with a particular emphasis on attitudes to the role of miracles in *Smoke in the Temple*. A full description of Seeker beliefs that includes those of the standard Seeker position and those of a more spiritualised strain was included in *Sparkles of Glory* (1647). The fact that Saltmarsh returned to this theme on three occasions in such quick succession suggests his desire to clarify the Seeker position or perhaps combat the constructions of their opponents. (see part two) He describes the attitude of the 'Seekers so called' towards ordinances as: 'that there is no Church, nor Ordinances yet'.[168] He equivocates slightly, later in the same work, claiming that according to their gifts and the Spirit: 'Beleevers ought to practice so far of the outward Ordinance as is clearly revealed they may.' This comment aside, there is a clear difference between the view of Cambridge Platonists like Peter Sterry who thought the Holy Spirit would subordinate externals to found a common religious faith, and the Seeker position which insisted that the Holy Spirit would destroy them to establish a truly spiritual religion.[169] Whether or not this position regarding externals was shared by all those called Seekers at all times, is unlikely since evidence suggests that there was no centralised coordination of the movement. Indeed Saltmarsh himself describes a more spiritual position, beyond that of the Seekers that criticises them thus: `there is no warrant from Scriptures to expect any restoring of Offices or Ordinances according to the first patern in Scripture… to wait in any such way of Seeking or expectation, is Antichristian, [and] that desert, wildernesse-condition prophesied on by Christ.'[170] This should be read as Saltmarsh' attempt to spur those within the Seeker milieu, who he viewed as tardy, to adopt his own, more spiritualised, position, rather than a wholesale rejection of their position, that would place him outside of a Seeker milieu.

Gwyn cites this section of *Sparkles of Glory* to construct two separate branches of Seeker doctrine, much in the vein of Hudson and Johnson. The first is a more moderate classic Seeker type who was a passive *expecter* who had left all churches and now waited in the spiritual wilderness for

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166 Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 292, my italics. The 'High Attainers' was also a contemporary term for the Ranters.
167 Saltmarsh, *Groanes,* 3; *Smoke,* 13-16; *Sparkles,* 289-98.
168 Saltmarsh, *Smoke*, 15; Saltmarsh gives another survey of Anabaptist, Independency and Seeker positions in *Groanes,* 23.
169 Saltmarsh, *Smoke,* 18; Johnson, 23, 25-6.
170 Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 293-5.

a new dispensation to restore a true, primitive and visible New Testament church, complete with pure sacraments, ministry and church government. This more moderate Seeker view on ordinances is represented here by Jackson: 'having compared [ordinances of the present Church] with the Word of God, and not finding them to conform there unto, [Seekers] dare not join issue in the present practice of them.'[171] Gwyn's second branch is a purely spiritual Seeker type who did not await a new dispensation to restore a New Testament church order but heralded the arrival of a new age of the spirit: 'the True Reformation, then, is not to be in Administrations, Ordinances, and Gifts, but rather to have Jesus Christ as the Eternal Seed formed in us.'[172] I do not see these as separated categories, but rather as a reflection of the gradations of spiritualism within a single amorphous Seeker milieu.

However antipathy to ordinances is a consistent feature of Seeker literature and has a number of repeating tropes; for example the way ordinances and the word are equated with the flesh and things external; which must be subordinated to the internal and undefiled spirit: 'this Church of Christ being thus baptized by Spirit into one body, is not to be divided by any outward things …, which are visible, outward, and perishing; or by any fellowship and ordinances below the glory of the Spirit.[173] Erbery expresses this doctrine in a more mature and robust form seven years later: `all outward Forms, and Church Ordinances, at the best, are but flesh; … [their] Defilements … came by the loss of that Fire and Baptism of the spirit, which did first constitute the Churches of Christ, and kept their Ordinances pure.[174] Thus, externals must be spiritualised and made pure again and will be by the new dispensation of Christ: this linkage of the practice of rejecting externals to a more popular millenarian belief was unique to the Seekers. Dell also strikes this spiritualist note, but adds a tone of anticlericalism, in his reproach of those: 'who are so Jewish and so zealous of the honor of the law, that they will by no means endure to hear, that the Gospel of the Son of God comes to abolish it, or that the new law is given us, to make us quite dead to the old'.[175] This Seeker contagion for a spiritualisation of ordinances, rather than a rejection or rising above them, spread in the early 1650s: John Webster asserts that: 'there is nothing an ordinance but Christ alone.'[176] This

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[171] Baxter, *Key for Catholics* 332; Baillie, *Anabaptisme* 97; and Barclay, *Inner* Life, 177, all see Jackson as a spokesman for the moderate wing of the Seekers. He features as: 'John Jackson A seeker, lay preacher, Excise-man'; in: 'A list of persons in the militia of the city of London, prepared by the Council of State to be presented to Parliament,' (February 1660): *Report on the manuscripts of F.W. Leyborne-Popham* (1899) 166; He is elsewhere referred to as 'formerly Grand Treasurer of the Excise' an office of some importance: Letter from William Allen to Richard Baxter, in *Reliquae Baxterianae, Appx IV,* 93, 95; Jackson, *Sober Word,* 4.

[172] Gwyn, 'Joseph Salmon: From Seeker to Finder' 114-5: Gwyn references *Sparkles,* 114 and 189-90 but his argument is better supported by pages 293-5.

[173] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles* 18-19.

[174] Erbery, *The Great Earthquake* (1654) 43; *Testimony,* 300.

[175] Dell, *The Crucified and Quickened Christian* (1652) 8-9.

[176] Webster, *The Vail of the Covering*; sermon preached at All Hallows, Lombard Street (June 23rd, 1653): printed in Webster, *Judgement Set,* 28.

trend could perhaps be the result of exposure to (and cross-pollination with) a growing contemporary Quaker critique emphasising Christ as the guiding light within. Dell's anticlerical note is taken up by Robert Read and the contest between Ordinances and the Spirit is linked to a broader anti-legal agenda for social justice: 'what a do is there now with the Clergy, […] they say we are all undone, if this light do continue. If they cannot blow it out, they cry for help.'[177]

In effect the term Seeker describes anyone who rejected the validity of external ordinances because they felt that all parts of the visible church so far were part of the apostasy from the model of the New Testament church. However, beyond this, the attitude of Seekers to ordinances is more heterogenous and nuanced. Different writers express different reasons for their views on ordinances and there is a development of the rationale offered between the 1640s and 1650s. Some Seekers are explicit in stating that they felt they had moved beyond, or risen above ordinances whilst others merely hold the position that, because the ordinances cannot be proven valid, they should be ignored and the individual must wait for a new dispensation and new ordinances. The anticlerical tone becomes more visible in later examples. Jackson distinguished between these different positions at length and claimed that the only true Seeker position described those who did not see sufficient ground for the present practice of ordinances. There are strong similarities in the main conceptions and style between Jackson's Sober Word and the earlier work of Roger Williams: suggesting either a conscious emulation or an undiscovered common ancestor. For example, both cite the noble inquirers of the city of Berea, mentioned in Acts 17.10-12 as proto-Seekers that offered a scriptural sanction for their own seeking.[178]

Since Jackson felt the variety of Seeker positions required such detailed explanation, his analysis is included in full here: he clearly illustrates the distinction between those against, rather than beyond, ordinances:

> The Seekers, I do finde, are charged with this, that they are a people who deny all Ordinances; […] these are again distinguished into such as are against all Ordinances, or that see not sufficient ground for the present practice of Ordinances; or such as are above and beyond Ordinances.
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> For the former, those which are against, i.e. contrary to them, they are very improperly called Seekers. For the later, they which are above and beyond them; these are so far from Seeking, that they are rather Possessors, Enjoyers, and Attainers, then Seekers, properly so called.

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[177] Read, *Fiery Change,* 34 and more broadly 24-39.
[178] Garrett, *Roger Williams,* 167.

> The third sort are such, as, not seeing a sufficient ground for the practice of Ordinances, are said to seek them … Of this sort of Persons, and this sort of Seeking, this present Discourse onely treats.[179]

The reference to *Attainers* here, like others in Saltmarsh' *Sparkles of Glory*, could refer to a 'High Attainer' branch of the seeking milieu that would develop into the Ranting tendency. However, it could also describe the Finder type suggested in Johnson's thesis. Nigel Smith has argued that Robert Read, *The Fiery Change* (1656) and Jackson's *Sober Word* defined Seekerism as: 'a rising above ordinances rather than a rejection of them.' This is an accurate view of Read perhaps but not a consistent position held by Jackson. If Jackson is an accurate commentator on the Seeker position by 1651, then it would appear to be neither of these things; but clearly the attitude to ordinances is a key criteria for gradations of position within the Seeker milieu. [180]

Williams is an example of the type of Seeker described by Jackson. He did not deny the importance of visible ministries and sacraments; he simply could not make out what God wanted them to be like. Thus, his was a suspension of ordinances not a derogation of them.[181] Indeed he attacked Samuel Gorton over the issue of ordinances in 1646, accusing him of: 'denying all visible and external ordinances in depth of Familism'. Gura notes the similarity of Gorton's theology to that of Saltmarsh and Dell. Although Williams was key to the growth of the Seeker position in 1643/4 when in London, by 1646 the position to which thinkers like Saltmarsh (and Gorton) had extended their views, from the same point of origin as Williams, suggests the sheer range of views that could be seen as Seeker, both then and now, and reinforces the idea that Seeker beliefs should be considered as a journey, rather than a destination, if we are to understand them in full context.[182] His opponent, the Massachusetts minister John Cotton (1585-1652) describes the following sequence for Williams' slide towards Seekerism and consequent disuse of ordinances:

> he first renounced communion […] then … his ministry, then all church fellowship, then baptism … the Lords Supper and all ordinances of Christ dispensed in any church way, till God shall stir up himself, or some other new apostles, to recover and restore all the ordinances and churches of Christ out of the ruins of anti-christian apostasy.[183]

Erbery is another Seeker who Johnson claims for a Finder, but he himself would seem to disagree: `though I may be above in the … knowledge of God, yet … I am below any Gospel-

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[179] Jackson, *Sober Word,* 2; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 146-7, 292, 289.

[180] Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed,* 8; Jackson*, Sober Word*, 2.

[181] Garrett, *Roger Williams,* 163.

[182] *Ibid; see also* Gura, 'The Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton' (1979) 79.

[183] Cotton, *A Reply to Mr Williams His Examination* (1647) 11, in *Complete Writings of Roger Williams,* (ed.). Russell (1963).

Ordinance, having not that manifestation of the spirit that was always with them in the Churches, …
to carry me up from living in Ordinances, to live in God alone.' Hence he stood aside from the
ordinances of the contemporary Christian communities rather than above them.[184]

The Quakers are the contemporary group most closely associated with a complete
and strident rejection of ordinances and their position is usually portrayed as the natural progression
or culmination of a trajectory that includes the Seekers. However, they do not progress further than
the position Saltmarsh attributes to the Seekers and so the distinction here is one of style rather
than substance. Thus, when Fox was recruiting for his nascent Quaker movement among Seeker
audiences, he was pushing at an open door as early Quaker doctrine and practice was closely based
on the Seekers' position regarding the use of ordinances. Arguably Fox did not found a movement
but struggled successfully in the 1650s for control of a seeking phenomenon dating back at least a
decade. Once he won the allegiance of the supporters of the Seeker movement, he changed it to suit
his purposes, especially in church government.[185] Champlin Burrage concurs with the possibility that
at least some of the early Quakers were just the Seekers under a new name.[186] The title of a Quaker
manifesto of 1655: *A Declaration of the Children of Light (who are by the world scornfully called
Quakers)*, supports my belief that the Quakers were simply the Seekers under a new name. As,
before the rise of Fox, the Seekers are known to have referred to themselves as the: 'children of the
light'.

Non-Quaker historians have changed the emphasis slightly here and see the Quakers as a
progression from the Seekers: a new denomination that succeeded in giving shape and direction to
the spiritual turmoil of Seekers.[187] Certainly, people and ideas ebbed and flowed between the sects
and despite claims by Fox (amongst others) that all his theology was revealed to him directly from
God, there was very little that was original in Fox's teachings.[188] Fox's insistence on personal
revelation predisposed him against admitting spiritual or intellectual debts to any authority but he
was a magpie who borrowed freely from other thinkers like Boehme, and groups including the
Seekers. The tenet of direct revelation and validation through the light within made Quakers

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[184] Erbery, *Great Earthquake* in *Testimony, 292*; White, William Erbury and the Baptists', 121.

[185] Johnson, 180 n1.

[186] Burrage, *Antecedents of* Quakerism, 89.

[187] Tolmie, 6; Hessayon has noted interesting parallels between Fox and Winstanley; the Quaker leadership did
not emerge from the Diggers but a common milieu for some of them seems very plausible. Hessayon,
'Rethinking early Quakerism'.

[188] Fox explicitly states that he formulated his ideas of 1647-8 without the 'help of any man' on at least three
occasions: Nickalls, *Journal of Fox*, 11, 34, 35. This claim is supported by successive Quaker historians (relying
on his journal as a source for the period prior to 1651): Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 35, 41; Jones, *Story of George
Fox* (1919) 18; and subsequently challenged by Hudson, 'Suppressed Chapter in Quaker History', 108-9.

doctrinally incapable of acknowledging cultural debts to their contemporaries.[189] Some Quaker practices were not taken from the Seekers, such as thrashing and quaking as spirit and flesh battled, but other contemporaries like George Foster and Thomas Tany were possible models. Rather Fox created a new creed through synthesising existing strands of mystical utopianism and radical sectarianism: 'his instinct was to roam the countryside, cross-fertilising hearts here and there with the pollen of a doctrine which was not his so much as everybody's.' Fox was thus an unoriginal thinker but an assiduous propagator and proselytiser: what was new was his personality.[190]

Johnson suggests a group of Finders who act as a bridge connecting the Seeker and Quaker position: it is equally possible that Fox was merely able to co-opt and mobilise the existing Seeker movement under his own charismatic leadership until it could be stabilised through the mechanism of the Quaker meeting and sanitised through his own re-narration of early Quakerism: Fox's journal remains the only source of information about early Quakerism before 1651 and he has been charged with omitting anything that distracted from his central aim: establishing his legacy as the sole creator of Quakerism.[191] The Quakers shared much of their doctrine with the existing Seeker groups. They both emphasised the Holy Spirit and the spiritual church; they both followed the adoptionist idea that they could possess the same spirit as Jesus had and so do the same things as he had and secure perfection; they both stressed the precedence of the latent spiritual meaning of Scripture over the literal text, discoverable through exposition by those with a gift; they both argued for the primacy of the Holy Spirit over the word; they both believed in a spiritual second coming. Gwyn agrees that many of the religious ideas associated with the early Quakers were already in place: strong emphasis on the light of Christ within; the light's work as an apocalyptic day of judgement; disuse of external sacraments; cessation of a regular professional ministry; extensive use of silence; claims to moral perfection through the work of the spirit; and the beginnings of a Christian pacifism.[192]

They differed on salvation (see later) and most significantly, on church organisation and attitudes to a separated ministry. The Seekers were still essentially congregational in their thinking, whereas Fox saw that a more rigid organisational structure was the key to further growth and stability for the Quakers. The demography of the two movements was also different: the average

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[189] Bauman, 9; for discussion of Fox's debt to Boehme: *ibid*, 4 and Hessayon, 'Boehme and the early Quakers'.
[190] *McGregor,* 'The Ranters', 130; Knox, *Enthusiasm,* 144; Burrage, *Antecedents of Quakerism*, 89; Bailey, *New Light on George Fox* (1992).
[191] Hudson, 'A Suppressed Chapter', 110-114.
[192] Johnson, 185-6; Gwyn, 'Joseph Salmon: From Seeker to Finder', 115-6.

age of Quakerism's valiant sixty was 23 years old;[193] the average age of key Seeker writers like Saltmarsh, Dell, Erbery and Sedgwick in 1646, when their influence was peaking, was 38. An anti-clerical and spiritualist tendency became more widespread over the course of a generation: in this sense one could view the Quakers as the *Young Turks* of the Seeker milieu. The Quakers added a complete rejection of a separated ministry to the Seekers' rejection of all ordinances and their movement began to increase in size. This combination appalled the 1650's establishment despite the fact that they were following a well-worn path. The Quaker innovation was to disuse ordinances so openly, deliberately and systematically, and to offer explicit reasons for so doing. Most characteristic features of Quakerism, such as the refusal of hat honour; the use of thou; and tithe opposition, were certainly practiced by Saltmarsh in the 1640s. They were, in fact, traditional features of English radical movements dating back, in some cases, to the Lollards. [194]

Arguably, the Quakers were more comfortable with this position because their attitude to scriptural authority was somewhat different to that of the Seekers. They developed the concept of the light within further than other groups had done, which gave them a sense that they held a stronger legitimising authority for their actions than other groupings. Seeker tracts contain more scriptural references than Quaker works, but the latter are just as infused with the language, style and spirit of Scripture. The Quakers saw themselves as new apostles, re-enacting the missionary travails of Christ's earliest followers, with the light of Christ within as their inspiration, motivation and salvation. Fox's journal reads very much like the book of Acts: this was possibly intentional as could also be argued regarding Lodowick Muggleton's *Acts of the Witnesses* (1699). The Quakers' readiness to reject the scriptural texts that commanded obedience to ordinances grew from their argument that the light within was a superior source of religious truth to Scripture: should the two conflict.

For Seekers, the Old Testament was a legalist, first dispensation; and the Gospels were a spiritualist, second dispensation; but they believed both had been followed too literally and men had become slaves to externals. Hence, they sought a third dispensation that would purify, (or for some) completely spiritualise, all forms, ceremonies, human rules and governments. They believed both were inspired by the same spirit but argued the light within was more immediate.[195] Indeed Fox noted that the word sacrament was not to be found anywhere in Scripture. Another difference in Seeker and early Quaker attitudes to Scripture concerns the coming of Christ: most Seekers believed

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[193] Huntington, 'Quakerism during the Commonwealth', 72.

[194] Hill, *Experience of Defeat,* 131.

[195] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 99-100; Fox, *Collection* (1831) 73; Huntington, 'Quakerism during the Commonwealth', 83.

in a literal account of the bible, in so far as they waited for and expected the physical coming of Christ to establish a visible church with external ordinances, forms and ceremonies; Quakers, who developed from the spiritualist end of the Seeker milieu, completely spiritualised this eschatology. For these people, the coming of Christ was a purely spiritual event that had already occurred among the convinced: those who had discovered the real presence of the light within. The Quaker refusal to institute new ordinances was arguably one reason why those Seekers like Williams, on the less spiritualised end of the Seeker milieu, found it impossible to recognise figures like Fox as true prophets and apostles.[196]

Despite some overlaps and similarities, both historians and contemporaries argue that Seekers, Ranters and Quakers constituted separate positions, and described different groupings. Saltmarsh took pains to delineate the Seeker position and distinguish it from that of other groups on repeated occasions; perhaps to counter popular misconceptions that sectarianism was an indistinguishable mass.[197] In 1646 he ranked the Seekers fourth in importance behind Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists. He described the beliefs of each of these respective groups in an extended six page discussion of: 'the opinions of these times', in *The Smoke in the Temple*.[198] It is possible that Seeker views were affected by the emergence of Ranter and particularly Quaker views in the immediate aftermath of the civil wars in the late 1640s. It is certain that for many of the Seekers' opponents the nuanced positions within the Seeker milieu were moot and they were often conflated, wilfully or otherwise.

Maclear has argued for the Seekers as a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of a fully developed spirit-mysticism that arrived once those waiting for the Holy Spirit to disclose new forms became convinced that the fresh dispensation of the spirit had arrived. This convincement (as Fox called it) brought with it the realisation that outward forms were not only to be rejected as useless, but they were to be destroyed as false guides and idols. In this theological climate only a completely spiritualised church could exist.[199] Thus the idea of an effective inward spiritual covenant developed: Collier preached this message to the Army Headquarters at Putney; that the Saints were joined to Christ not in the letter but by praying, preaching and praising in the spirit, which delivered them from: 'fleshly actings, into the glorious liberty of spiritual actings'.[200] This highlights an interesting paradox in Seeker thought whereby the passive act of waiting is made active: Seekers were

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[196] Burrage, *Antecedents*, 90.
[197] Saltmarsh, *Groanes*, 22-3; *Smoke*, 7-13; *Sparkles*, 289.
[198] Saltmarsh, *Smoke*, 7-13.
[199] Maclear, 'Lay Tradition', 128.
[200] Collier, *A Discovery of the New Creation* (1647) 26.

proactive in their negative rejection of organised religion; but passive in their positive adoption of new religious forms, since they had to wait for Christ to manifest Himself through a new dispensation. They travelled in a spiritual wilderness without paths and their retrospective spiritual biographies were written from the psychological safety of their post-conversion or post-convincement positions. These works conform to the conventions and tropes of the genre; as maps of where they had been, rather than where they were going, they fail to convey the psychological impact of their spiritual uncertainty and feeling of being lost.

The Ordinance of Baptism

> John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. [Luke 3.16][201]

The Seeker triumvirate of NMA chaplains, Dell, Erbery and Saltmarsh all rejected the sufficiency of water baptism and asserted the need for Christ's spirit baptism. Dell devoted an entire work to the doctrine of baptism and contended: 'Christ's baptism put an end to John's water-baptism, and Spirit-baptism [put an end] to creature-baptism'. Dell did not invent these views and they appear in print earlier. For example, Thomas Webbe had reached the same position two years earlier. Webbe would later move to a Ranter position but in 1646 he is more accurately placed within the Seeker milieu. Como has argued that his view is subtly different from the Seeker position of Williams and Clarkson at this time as he views ordinances as indifferent, rather than forbidden. However, contemporaries such as Jackson, saw both views as different strands of the same Seeker position. Webbe's view that ordinances are indifferent is accommodated within Jackson's third sort of Seeker who: 'not seeing a sufficient ground for the practice of Ordinances, are said to seek them'.[202] Dell argued water baptism was inferior to baptism of the spirit because it was merely an external ceremony: it gave neither remission of sins nor entrance into the Kingdom of God.[203] Dell argued only: 'Spiritual baptism from Jesus gave the saints a new nature … [and] made them one with their Lord.'[204] Erbery systematically condemned the baptism practices of the Baptists. He questioned whether water baptism was valid without a prior spirit baptism and whether any could administer baptism without already

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[201] See also Mat. 3.11; Acts 11.16.

[202] Dell, *Doctrine of Baptisms* (1648) in *Select works*, 391; Webbe, *Mr Edwards Pen no slander* (21 May 1646) 5-6; Como, *Radical*, 393-4; Jackson, *Sober Word*, 2;

[203] Dell did get his younger children baptised, beginning with his fifth child Anne in 1653, despite his opposition to paedobaptism in the 1648 work above. This action remains unexplained and there is no other evidence of a change in his views: Walker, *William* Dell, 171.

[204] Dell, *Doctrine of Baptisms*, 16-20; 32-41; Johnson, 86-8.

experiencing spirit baptism themselves.[205] He cited the model of baptism in the primitive church and decried the current plurality of practice among what he called the *baptised churches*: `the Churches are become three bodies, and these have three Baptisms; Presbyterians baptize the whole Nation; Independents the children of believers only; the baptized Churches believers themselves: Here is Babylon in three parts.[206]

Seekers and Baptists disputed several texts, including [I Cor.12.13]. Saltmarsh interpreted a part of this text: 'by one spirit we are all baptized into one body', to mean that the true baptism into Christ's church was a spirit baptism rather than a water baptism.'[207] The General Baptist, Allen challenged this interpretation and the consequent Seeker rejection of water baptism. He countered that if the Seekers were correct and spirit baptism was the only means of entry to Christ's church, they excluded everyone alive from gospel privileges since none were spirit baptised.[208] The Seekers had a second problem with baptism; Williams told Winthrop in 1649, that Baptist practice came nearest of all to that of the primitive church: `yet I have not satisfaction, neither in the authority by which it is done, nor in the manner'.[209] Seekers rejected the divine authority of the minister who practiced baptism and many Seekers suspended ecclesiastical usage like water baptism and the Lord's Supper, only because they questioned the validity of those who administered them. They fully expected new authorization for the ordinances of God and awaited the re-establishment of ecclesiastical forms and a revelation of the true church.[210] Saltmarsh framed the Seeker rejection of baptism thus: `because they finde that the power was at first given to the Apostles with gifts, and from them to others, and they dare not take it from Antichrist … Bishops … nor Churches, because they finde no such power [there].'[211] He even claimed a divine plan to replace externals with the gospel, and water baptism with spirit baptism.'[212]

The Baptists contested this Seeker claim. General Baptist Allen cited I Cor.1.17 and argued: `baptizing, was not restrained to the Apostles as such, but might be done, as usually it was, by the

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[205] Erbery, *Mad Man's Plea*, 6; see also: *Testimony* 136-8, 272-5, 329-31 and *Mad Man's Plea*, *passim*; White, 'Erbury and the Baptists', 123.

[206] Erbery, *A Scourge for the Assyrian* (1652) in *Testimony*, 78; White, 'Erbury and the Baptists', 118.

[207] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 39.

[208] Allen, *A Doubt resolved,* Postscript*,* 39.

[209] *Letters of Roger Williams*, *VI*, Bartlett (ed.). (1874) 188; Vendettuoli, 81.

[210] Vendettuoli, 18-19.

[211] Saltmarsh, *Groanes,* 22-3.

[212] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 21, 28; see also Saltmarsh extended discussion of water and spirit baptism in *Sparkles*, 29-40.

Disciples.'[213] Spilsberie developed the argument that only those covenanted in a church could baptise, which helped prevent even more Baptist groups from collapsing. Nevertheless, the issue drove some like Roger Williams in Rhode Island to change position. Williams had joined the Baptists in Providence but broke off as he did not accept the legitimate succession of those who had been empowered to officiate. He turned Seeker and awaited 'new apostles' with a valid commission to baptise.[214] Back in England, it appears that this issue brought significant numbers of Baptists and Independents to Seeker congregations in the 1640s and this is well-documented by Presbyterian heresiographers.[215] Many of these Independent congregations abandoned infant baptism without adopting believer's baptism which suggests a growing climate in which any form of baptism was increasingly viewed, albeit by a small minority, as adiaphorous.

Richard Blunt's immersion ceremony in January 1642 formed a catalyst for the development of the flourishing Seeker position of the 1640s. This position combined a Baptist belief in the efficacy of believer's baptism, with a denial of the qualified administrators required to link current churches back to the primitive church. Blunt's fledgling congregation was an early casualty of the uncertainties this Molotov cocktail of beliefs produced.[216] Edwards reported it: 'broke into pieces, and some went one way, some another, diverse fell off to no church at all'.[217] Thomas Kilcop formed one splinter, with the remnant represented by Thomas Skippard and Thomas Munday. This remnant signed the confession of faith, favoured by Particular Baptists, which directly addressed the threat of Seekerism in article 41, which affirmed the ordinary commission of a preaching disciple to institute the ordinance of baptism. [218] Hence, one indicator of a Seeker tract is the presence of an argument that an extraordinary commission is required to administer baptism. Edwards also reports that the congregation of Sidrach Simpson suffered from Seekers.[219] Wrighter was one who left Blunt's group for the Seekers; Clarkson left William Kiffin's Baptist church for the Seekers: `when I came, there was

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[213] Allen, *A Doubt Resolved,* 31; The Particular Baptists had also refuted this claim a decade earlier: Spilsberie, *God's Ordinance,* 37; Kilcop, *Seekers Supplyed* ; Barrow (RB), *A Brief Answer to RH* ; Tolmie, 54-5; see Part Two for detailed discussion of these texts' portrayal of the Seeker position.

[214] Letter from Richard Scott, appended to Fox, *New England Firebrand Quenched,* 247; Garrett, *Roger Williams*, 24.

[215] Baillie, *Anabaptism,* 96-7; Laing, *Letters and Journals of Baillie, II*, 211-2; Wright, *Early English Baptists,* 153.

[216] Tolmie, 54.

[217] Edwards, *Gangraena III*, 112-3; Francis Bampfield, *A name an after one;...or an historical declaration of the life of Shem Archer* (1681) 16; Edwards' informant was a woman who had married a member of Lambe's General Baptist congregation, suggesting Blunt's church was hurt by the rivalry of the Arminian Baptists as well as by the Seekers. Tolmie, 54; Wright, *Early English Baptists*, 105, 114; Hill, *Experience of* Defeat, 300 suggests 'the claim to a special apostolic commission in 1642 split the *Seeker Church* of Samuel Blacklock and Richard Blunt'; *BDBR, I,* 68, 78.

[218] Tolmie, 57.

[219] Edwards, *Antapologia*, 295; Edwards, *Gangraena II,* 16.

diverse fallen from the Baptists as I had done … they informed me several had left the Church of Patience, [Thomas Patient] in seeing the vanity of Kiffin and others.'[220]

Seeker Millenarianism

      Millenarian beliefs were common in 1640s England, especially among the radical milieu, and a spectrum of beliefs relating to the coming of Christ were held by Seekers. Seekers were waiting for a new dispensation from God to deliver them from the wilderness that had existed since the disappearance of the apostles of the primitive church. However, the arrival of a new commission did not necessarily equate to the return of Christ as prophesied in Revelation. Seekers' millenarian beliefs were broadly spiritual, but they did also refer to the real world. Christopher Hill distinguishes between literal millenarianism and spiritual millenarianism. Seekers appear to have held beliefs in both, simultaneously, so perhaps it is more accurate to view this as a spectrum of millenarian belief.[221] This internalization of the Christian message did not necessarily eliminate all the temporal notions, for the full outpouring of the spirit in the saints was determined historically and associated with a particular age. The approaching (or current for some) age of the spirit, was quite distinct from all previous ages of history. Morton, Cohn and Hill have all asserted the influence of Joachim of Fiora and Boehme on spiritual millenarians including those in the Seeker milieu.[222] Saltmarsh translated this into the ages of the law, of grace, and of the spirit; Erbery, spoke of the three dispensations which formed a stepladder toward the spiritual perfection of the last times. In each case, it must be noted that these spiritual millenarians were talking about historical ages on earth and in this world, and not the internal religious journey of the individual saint.[223]

      If reports of the meeting are to be believed, Saltmarsh' end-of-life warning to Cromwell prophesied a literal apocalypse: 'God will burne up, and consume the earthly matter of his Saints; ... then … draw up all the sparkles of glory in one confluence to himselfe, and cause every thing to returne to its first originall end.'[224] William Sedgewick reported in the London press in March 1647 that the world would end within the month: his sobriquet became Doomsday Sedgewick thereafter! However by the following year he had spiritualised his apocalyptic musings: 'Some men thinke to see the Kingdome of God coming in such and such a person […] and sights and voices, these are

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[220] Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, 19.
[221] Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England* (1971).
[222] Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 126-7, 83-4,112; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, 147-8 ; Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957) 99-100; Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme's writings during the English Revolution' has found little evidence of apocalyptic predictions by Boehme.
[223] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 68; Erbery, *Testimony*, 248.
[224] Saltmarsh, *Wonderful Predictions*, 3.

delusions, Behold the kingdome of Christ, God, [and] heaven is within you'.[225] Collier also preached of a spiritual millennium to the army during the debates at Putney in September 1647: `Some apprehend, that Christ shall come and reign personally … but this is not my apprehension: but that Christ will come in the Spirit, … his people, … shall by the power of Christ in them, reign over the world, and this is the new heavens and the new earth.' Collier also spiritualised heaven and hell: heaven was where the Almighty existed spiritually within the elect; hell was the soul living apart from God. [226]

Erbery is perhaps more ambivalent; his biblical language suggests both a spiritual and a physical battle between good and evil, and as such, smells of the army: `the reign of the saints with Christ is a more spiritual mystery then carnal Christians and Churches commonly conceive: tis not in worldly government … but … revealed in us, when we shall … rule the Nations with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a Potters vessel. His thinking on this issue developed: as he felt the pace of history to be quickening and the dawn of the last days drew near, he mentions the successive fall of the various churches in Britain in the days since the Reformation several times, and always in the order: Popery, Prelacy, Presbyterianism, Independency and, finally, the Baptists. Even his later writings show a conception of the coming of Christ that is both spiritual and worldly: 'though Christs Kingdom was not of this world, yet the best of us fancy a reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years, and the Saints to reign with him in an earthly manner, and outward observation'.[227]

The early works of Winstanley have a more mystical tone than his later writings and his works of 1648 express a passive but expectant millenarianism, typical of the Seeker milieu. One such work, calls on the: 'Despised sons and daughters of Zion [to] wait patiently upon the Lord'. It also bears a message: `for you that are the children of the light … must lie under the reproach and oppression of the world; that is God's dispensation to you … but your redemption draws near.'[228] Another Winstanley work from this time reassures his readers about the anxieties that accompany this passive expectation: 'think it not strange to see many of the Saints of God at a stand, in a wildernesse, and at a losse, and so waiting upon God to discover himself to them; many are like the tide at full sea, stands a little before the water run either way.' [Isa.32.12] Endy has identified both

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[225] Sedgwick, *Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Sonne of Manne* (1648) 88; Bell, 'Minister, Millenarian and Madman: Puritan Lives of William Sedgwick' (2018) 29-61.

[226] Collier, *A discovery* of the *new creation*, 8; Collier, *General Epistle to the Universall Church of the First Born* (1648) 49-54, 60-62; Johnson, *CH*, 302; Johnson, 67-9; see also Dell, *Tryall of Spirits*, 13.

[227] Erbery, *Testimony*, 94, 148, 126, 133, 232; White, 'Erbery and the Baptists' 121.

[228] Winstanley, *Breaking of the Day of God* (1648), preface A3, 126; Jones, 460-1; Hudson 'Winstanley and the Early Quakers', 181 notes that Winstanley's use of *Children of the Light* predates the Quaker usage.

Truth Lifting Up its Head Above Scandals and *The New Law of Righteousness* as Seeker texts, and Hudson has added *Breaking of the Day of God* , to this list [229]

So, the normative stance among those in the Seeker milieu was a spiritual millenarianism. There was no Seeker unanimity on when the anticipated reign of the saints would begin. For example in 1647, Saltmarsh wrote that Christ in: 'his fullnesse is already in the Saints, or all true Christians; and that all growth, improvement or reformation that is to be, is onely the revelation or appearance of this'. His *Wonderful* predictions, published in 1648, after his death, added: 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord is neere, when all men shall be judged by Jesus Christ'. Yet Dell thought contemporaries would not live to see it. This is perhaps because they conceived the idea of spiritual reformation slightly differently.[230] Cromwell's confession: 'I am one of those whose heart God hath drawn out to wait for some extraordinary dispensations,' places his brand of millenarianism, at this time, within this Seeker milieu.[231] This judgement is supported, tentatively, by the enthusiasm he showed for the religious views of his favourite daughter, Elizabeth Claypole, a year earlier: `to be a seeker is to be of the best sect next to a finder; and such an one shall every faithful humble seeker be at the end. Happy seeker, happy finder!'[232] He conveyed his faith in providences: 'surely they must mean something, they hang so together, so constant, so clear'; but his comment on another within the Seeker milieu, Harry Vane also suggests a spectrum of attitudes to providence: 'I pray he make not too little, nor I too much, of outward dispensations.' [233]

Seeker Soteriology

Some Seekers like Dell, Collier and Saltmarsh followed the dualist doctrine of two seeds or two Adams, one spiritual and one carnal. They distinguished the inner light which enlightened every man regardless of his spiritual state, from the light that was Christ, owned only by the saved. They believed only the elect would find salvation and all others would be destroyed spiritually.[234] Others like Erbery and Richard Coppin were Universalists, believing all men would secure salvation, since all

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[229] Winstanley, *Mysterie of God* (1648) 39; Endy 'Puritanism, Spiritualism and Quakerism'; Hudson, 'Winstanley and Early Quakers', 182. For a list of Quaker works showing spiritualist affinities see Endy 'Puritanism, Spiritualism and Quakerism' n43.

[230] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 295-6; *Wonderful Predictions*, 3; Solt, *Saints*, 73.

[231] In Putney debates, 1 November 1647, but Cromwell repeatedly refers to waiting on the Lord Firth, (ed.). *Clarke Papers I* (1901) 378-9.

[232] Letter from Cromwell to Bridget Ireton, 25 October 1646: Carlyle, (1904) *Letters and Speeches of Cromwell,* I, 246-7.

[233] Letter from Cromwell to Robert Hammond, 25 November 1648; Letter from Cromwell to Oliver St John, 1 September 1648: Carlyle, *Letters and Speeches of Cromwell*, II, 329, 292; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 125; Barker, *Oliver Cromwell and the English People* (1937) 66.

[234] Dell, *Tryall of Spirits*, 3-4; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 1-3; Collier, *Marrow of Christianity* (1647) 1-15; see also Erbery, *Testimony*, 268; Johnson, 61; Vendettuoli, 3; this conception was influential in both Old and New England, where it is visible in the works of: Gura, 'Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton', 86.

things were possible through the Holy Spirit. Erbery's unusual belief in universal redemption reflects his equally unusual call for almost universal toleration: 'the death of Christ, or universal redemption of mankind thereby, which both Presbyters and Independents abhor as Paganism, though nearest the Gospel indeed.'[235] Fox's position was between these two groups: since the Holy Spirit permeated all things, all men had it so all could, in theory, be saved; but only those who realised they possessed it could be saved, this acted as a spur to evangelism among Quakers.[236]

Saltmarsh's key work on salvation was *Free Grace* (1646). Pooley has noted that what marked him out from many of his contemporaries was his insistence that grace should not be mixed with the law at all in the Christian life. With such views he attracted the attention of the heresiographers and this work elicited printed responses from half a dozen prominent Presbyterian opponents and was read quite widely with ten editions appearing by the end of the century.[237] He said the believer should: 'consider sin no otherwise in himself than as debts paid and cancelled by the blood of Christ; and by this all bondages, fears and doubtings are removed, and his spirit is free'.[238] There was a single string attached to this salvation: one had to believe in it: 'The promises of Christ are held forth to sinners as sinners, not as repenting sinners or humble sinners, as any condition in us upon which we should challenge Christ; for then it is no more of grace, but of works. Now we are freely justified by his grace.'[239] Collier and Jackson both argued that faith was not a condition of salvation to be fulfilled by man: 'God gives faith to believe, for faith is the gift of God'; and: 'the saved ones are to ascribe the honour of their salvation to the free and rich grace of God as being mere gift in opposition to works'; but both equally acknowledge the claim of Eph.2.7-10 that the man of faith will not be without good works.[240] Williams thought waiting, delaying action and toleration until such time as God separated the tares from the wheat was part of the programme for saving the elect out of the lamentable shipwreck of mankind and Seekers wrote extensively on this central parable of salvation and the dangers of mistaking wheat for tares.[241] However for Saltmarsh, it was a simple enough process: 'Salvation is not made any puzzeling work in the Gospel; … Jesus

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[235] Erbery, *Testimony*, 70, 264; Johnson, 63, 40.

[236] Johnson, *CH,* 312; Damrosch, *Harvard's Libraries and the Quaker Jesus,* 3.

[237] See Pooley in ODNB on Saltmarsh; Ley, *Light for Smoke*; Gataker, *A mistake, or misconstruction, removed;* and *Shadowes Without Substance* (1646), *Mysterious cloudes and mistes* (1648), *Antinomianism discovered and confuted* (1652); Baillie, *Anabaptism*; Rutherford, *Christ dying and drawing sinners to himself* (1647); John Graile, (a former assistant to Gataker) *A modest vindication of the doctrine of conditions in the Covenant of Grace* (1654) and Thomas Hall, *The beauty of holiness* (1655). Erbery's views on Free grace are also challenged in *Mysterious Clouds* and *A Modest Vindication*.

[238] Saltmarsh, *Free Grace* (2ed. 1646) 144; Solt, *Saints,* 30.

[239] Saltmarsh, *Free Grace* (2ed. 1646) 104.

[240] Collier, *Exaltation of Christ in the days of the Gospel* (2ed, 1651) 251; Jackson, *Hosanna,* 23; Vendettuoli, 182.

[241] Webster, *Saints Guide*, 33; Dell, *Way of True Peace*, 281; Saltmarsh, *A New Quaere* (1645) 3; Solt, *Saints,* 62.

Christ was crucified for sinners; this is salvation, we need go no further; and now you ask me what you must do to be saved, I answer Beleeve in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'[242]

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[242] Saltmarsh, *Free Grace* (2ed.) 191; Solt, *Saints*, 33; for later discussion of the issue by Saltmarsh see *Sparkles,* 190-8.

Seekers and the Visible Church

The Seekers were a distinguishable people in England, from 1640-60; they met in fellowship but never attempted to covenant together to form a church lest they should express their will and not God's will.[243] They sought a New Testament Church model in their atavistic pursuit of a religious faith and practice based on the primitive apostolic church. They waited for a new dispensation and apostles to deliver this church model and as the 1640s wore on and some Seeker thinkers began to become convinced that the new dispensation was already present, internally, in the hearts of men, the deep implications of the Seeker stance for any visible church were fully realised. Erbery described his vision of the true visible church-fellowship as: 'a Free Company, or *Society of Friends,* who come together, not as called by an outward power, but freely closing by the inward spirit.'[244] Dell had already laid down a pattern for the true spiritual church: 'a society knit to one another in Christ by the Spirit and love'.[245] The basic premise of Dell and Saltmarsh with respect to church government was that the outward form of worship must proceed from the inward belief. That belief could be revealed as word or spirit, through Scripture or the light within.[246] Dell thought the true church could only be reformed inwardly and spiritually: he wanted visible spiritual churches to be autonomous; to gather whenever they wished; and govern their own affairs through the Holy Spirit; including ministerial appointments and dismissals.[247] Dell attacked the Presbyterians' sanctioning of the use of external force and laws to establish ecclesiastical order. In return they accused him of wanting a reformation of the heart: 'Come and learn at M Del, to keepe the heart Right, and violate all the Ten Commandments'.[248]

Rufus Jones suggested disillusionment over the authority and power of the visible church was the: 'first characteristic of the English Seeker'. They thought the days of the visible church were ended, its power exhausted, its creeds and sacraments inefficacious, its ministry futile: 'there is news that their kingdom is at end, that there is no need of them'.[249] Erbery argued that neither the state, nor the gathered churches, were true churches; and totally rejected their respective views on

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[243] For an example of this view see Williams, *George Foxe Digg'd* (1676) 102-3; Vendettuoli, 3.

[244] Erbery, *Welsh Curate,* 8, my italics.

[245] Dell, *Way of True Peace,* 10.

[246] Dell, *Right Reformation,* 133; *Marston Sermon*, 91; Saltmarsh, *Smoke,*3, 69-70; *Free Grace,* 150; Solt, *Saints*, 52.

[247] Dell, *Way of True Peace,* 56.

[248] Dell, *Right Reformation*; Rutherford, *Survey*, 31; Johnson, 45.

[249] Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy*, 61; Read, *Fiery Change,* 34.

a range of issues.[250] Seekers rejected the covenanting model: Jackson claimed covenanting people had usurped the rights of primitive churches and did so: 'altogether without precedent from the Word of God'; and so: `[were] not to be acknowledged for the true visible constituted Churches of Christ according to the Primitive Pattern'.[251] After leaving the Baptists in 1639, Williams refrained from setting up a new church organisation. For the next forty years he neither celebrated the sacraments of baptism and the Lords Supper, nor recognised any clergy as the apostles he hoped would come from God. Thus, the Seeker position was not always a brief or even temporary phase of religious development for every individual, even though it was, in millenarian terms, a transitional phase.[252]

Although the Seeker repudiated or spiritualised the externals of religious practice such as Sabbath observance, baptism, the Lords' Supper, set prayers and singing of psalms, they continued to gather together for meetings: a spiritual church is not a virtual church. These meetings were held variously in church buildings, meeting houses, moors, and commons: 'sometimes upon the hills without and sometimes in houses and barns.' Braithwaite gives several examples, including the Seeker group at Bolton, Lancashire. He also noted that the absorption of the Westmorland Seekers provided the Quaker movement with an existing organisation and a template for their own meetings. [253] Seekers did not treat the physical church building as sacred ground and spiritualised the church, describing the congregation as living precious stones after [Isa. 54.11-12] with Christ as the corner stone.[254] Erbery ridiculed Baptists for building a church at St Pauls, since the primitive church: `never made a meeting place for themselves... but went forth to the world, to ... preach, and to pray in their own houses?' [255]

Both the Quaker and Ranter positions flowed from the Seeking milieu. One interesting point of contention between them was the necessity for any religious organisation. Both agreed that every man had his teacher within him in the form of the light within. Bauman overreaches when he claims that: 'the doctrine of the indwelling spirit of God in everyone was distinctive to the Quakers among the religious sects and denominations of the period'; as it was a position previously held by the Seeker movement at least. [256] Quakers consequently rejected the need for a ministry and Ranters

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[250] Erbery's opposition is seen throughout his collected works, *Testimony* (1658): he variously rejects their doctrine (73), discipline (274-6), ceremonies (281) and ordinances (284-305), tithes (309-12), preaching (316), sabbatarianism (325-7), and assurance of salvation (337); *cf* Cheynell, *An account*, 24-5, 30.

[251] Jackson, *Sober Word*, 15; Vendettuoli, 155.

[252] Garrett, *Roger Williams*, 160; Vendettuoli, 87, 199; Miller, *Roger Williams*, 157.

[253] Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 374, 95.

[254] Saltmarsh, *Smoke,* 64; Dell, *Marston Sermon,* 13-14

[255] Erbery, *Mad Mans Plea*.

[256] Bauman, 24.

questioned the purpose of gathering for worship or instruction.[257] Their Seeker ancestry maintained a ministry and meetings for worship and faith in the light within, albeit in altered forms from these Seekers' own Baptist and Independent ancestors. The Seeker experience was characterised by patient waiting and quiet uncertainty. As Jackson testified, the Seeker meeting was a salve to this condition whose purpose was mutual exhortation, to enable them to be: 'Instruments in the hands of the Lord, to stir up the grace of god in one another, by mutual conference and communication of experience'. The power of this feeling is expressed in a later work by former Seeker George Keith: 'if a Company of People should come into a dark place, every one of them having a Lamp or Candle lighteth, each person injoyeth not only the Light of his own, but also of all his Neighbours, where each sufer their Light freshly to shine forth'[258]

Seeker Preaching

I took my journey into the society of those people called Seekers, who worshipped God only by prayer and preaching'[259]

In *The way of true peace and unity* (1649), Dell laid down a pattern for the true spiritual church which predated the Quaker model. He said in this spiritual community, all external distinctions, such as those between clergy and laity, were to wither away, for Christ: 'forbade Lordship in his Church and commanded service.'[260] From 1630 onwards there are two kinds of separatist churches: those with a professional ministry and those with a lay pastorate.[261] The extent to which Seeker groups themselves used separated ministers is somewhat uncertain and most likely inconsistent. There were precedents for this practice in early gathered churches. For example, the Jacob church had no pastor from 1634-7, between John Lathrop's emigration and Henry Jessey's appointment: how the church practised the sacraments in the meantime is unclear. Some Seeker groups did the same, but without the same regrets at the consequent lack of any sacramental observance in their worship, since they had rejected the validity of many of these sacraments, unlike earlier separatists. Those who did not see a sufficient ground for the practice of ordinances can be called Seekers but this was not peculiarly a Seeker phenomenon.[262] For example, the Pilgrim Fathers couldn't persuade William Brewster to be their pastor so they went nine years without sacraments; Sir Henry Vane abstained from sacraments for two years, for conscience' sake; and Dell's Yelden

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[257] McGregor, 'The Ranters', 144.
[258] Jackson, *Sober* Word, 3; Keith, *benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings,* 10; Vendettuoli, *51.*
[259] Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, 19
[260] Dell, *Way of True Peace*, 10, 94-6.
[261] Tolmie, 39.
[262] See Jackson, *Sober Word*, 2.

congregation petitioned Parliament in 1660, complaining that: 'he has for twelve years past neglected the due administration of the Sacraments, in consequence of which many children are unbaptized'.[263]

Seekers still revered preaching as the chief means of conversion. Dell and Saltmarsh were convinced evangelists and both declared that preaching was appointed for a converting ordinance of the Lord.[264] When it was done well there was nothing to match the power of preaching: after the battle of Dunbar in September 1650, one witness heard Naylor preach: 'with such power and reaching energy as I had not till then been witness of...I was struck with more terror … than I was before the battle'.[265] The leading Seeker preachers were all Oxbridge trained, though the style of Saltmarsh' published works is direct and simple with minimal marginal reference to his considerable learning. Coppe also attended Oxford and his writing, and most likely, preaching style was febrile; but it is reasonable to assume, that, whilst charismatic, Seeker preachers were not prone to the theatrics of the sectarian mechanical preacher, who was a popular subject of parody: `puffing and blowing, grinning and gerning, … showing his teeth … persuading [the poor ignorant multitude] that he … looketh into deeper matters than the common sort: when indeed he hath lately rub'd over some moth-eaten Schismaticall Pamphlet.[266] But this did not mean that Seeker ministers felt ordained men such as themselves held exclusive rights to preach: Dell thought preachers were to be chosen by the local congregation itself which should also reform and depose them.[267]

The Seekers rejected the validity of the key sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper that a minister performed. For Williams, this was because properly administered sacraments depended on properly authorised ministers and he didn't think modern ministers held a valid commission from God. However, they did not reject the justification and importance of preaching. Williams distinguishes between a feeding ministry and a superior converting ministry in 1644 and Jackson talks similarly about two ministries: a pastoral feeding ministry of pastors and teachers and an evangelical breeding ministry of apostles, prophets and evangelicals [Acts 20:28] and each required separate gifts.[268] Crucially both deny that either type of ministry was currently extant. Williams claimed there were: 'no churches since those founded by the apostles …, nor seals

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[263]Tolmie, 18; http://www.supralapsarian.com/pdf/william-dell.pdf [accessed 28.05.2019].

[264] Saltmarsh, *The opening of Master Prynnes New Book*, 22; Dell concurred in *Crucified and Quickened Christian*, 12; Johnson, 84.

[265] Gough, *Memoirs* (1781) 56.

[266] Richard Carter, *The Schismatick Stigmatized* (1641) sig. B1 [R-V]; Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (1973) 74, has argued that the incoherence of such prophesying was taken as evidence of its authenticity.

[267] For Dell, on the appropriate qualification for the ministry, see: Dell, *Way of True Peace,* 73-7; *Stumbling Stone* (1653) 23-5; *Power from on High* 91645) 18-24.

[268] Garrett, *Roger Williams,* 163, n58; Jackson, *Sober Word*, 10-11.

administered by such and that the church was to want these all the time she continued in the wilderness.'[269] Jackson concurred: 'the Ministry of these times … appear neither called nor qualified according to the Primitive Patterns'. Since there was no true visible extant church of Christ, the claim of the ministry to a true calling was fraudulent.[270] The pastoral function was seen as inferior to the evangelical as there could be a true breeding ministry without a feeding ministry but not vice versa and Seekers were happy for the sacramental roles of the minister to be performed by others or not performed at all.[271] However they wanted to retain the Minister's preaching role: this is highly significant and relates to the desire for an intimate experimental or experiential religion in which anyone who was moved by the spirit could preach the word of God, a desire shared by the Quakers.

Dell, Erbery and Saltmarsh were committed evangelicals: preaching and gadding to sermons was about bearing witness but even more so about performance and experience in a way that private bible study just wasn't. The impact of a sermon was emotional and visceral; the authority of the minister was often charismatic as much as intellectual: private study could not reproduce the feeling of being there in the room. Dell also envisioned a key role for the listener since: `[In] The true Church … all Christians, through the Baptisme of the spirit, are made priests alike unto God; and every one hath right and power alike, to speak the word; … the Ministers … have no authority … but by the consent of the Church.' In the same work he speaks of a preaching ministry, elected church officers and the need for vigilance to keep ministers subordinate to the entire church. In places he suggests a thoroughly spiritualised ministry: `in the true church, Christ and the Spirit are the onely Officers and men onely, so far as Christ and the Spirit dwel and manifest themselves in them'[272] The role of preaching was to inspire and this does not conflict with the rejection of other ordinances (which may remove the justification for religious organisation), because God revealed Himself in men's hearts, not in outward administrations, and preaching could facilitate this.[273]

Thus, Seeker groups around Dell certainly retained some form of separated ministry. Maclear suggests Dell's thinking betrays a rather incongruous conservatism in its concern for organisation, but this could be countered by two possibilities. Firstly, the amount of ministerial organisation required for a meeting without externals of any kind, beyond silent prayer and extempore preaching, would be minimal; and secondly, it could be that Dell was merely reflecting

[269] Williams, *Hirelings Ministry,* 4, 6-7; for Williams: 'the whole existing world, since the morning Christ ascended into heaven, is nothing but a wildernesse' Miller, *Roger Williams,* 107.

[270] Jackson, *Sober Word,* 16-17; Hudson, *Experiments in Spiritual Life and Health* (1951) 17; Vendettuoli, 144-5.

[271] Garret, *Roger Williams* 165.

[272] Dell, *Way of True Peace,* 94, 71-9, 98, 11.

[273] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles,* 289-9; `Maclear, *'Lay Tradition',* 126-8*;* Maclear, 'Popular Anti-Clericalism', 451*;* Johnson, *CH,* 300, 313; McGregor*,* 'The Ranters', 9.

the mores of the Seeker congregations themselves who sought a guide in the wilderness and looked to their ministers for this leadership. The petition of his Yelden parishioners suggests that signatories did want spiritual leadership but also wanted the spiritual comfort of sacraments. The Seeker impulse towards pupil-led worship did not entirely preclude a teacher but just rebalanced this relationship. Evidence that other Seekers were wrestling with this issue can be seen in Erbery's Oxford disputation with Presbyterians in 1646: Erbery's question ('framed in tearmes which [the Presbyterians] impos'd to their owne advantage') was: 'Whether the esteemed ministers of the Church of England had more authority from Christ to preach in publicke, than ordinary Guifted Christians.'[274] Erbery clearly believed they held equal authority from Christ; as did Dell, sometimes. Once more it seems that a search for uniformity in Seeker practice only confirms the most basic level of commonality: preaching occurred at Seeker meetings sometimes; some groups of Seekers were led by separated ministers, and some met without them.

Seeker Prayer

> Let your words be few. [Eccl.5.2]

> It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your father which speaketh in you. [Matt.10.20]

Most Seeker groups (and later Quaker meetings) rejected sacraments and focused on silent prayer, since read prayer was viewed as a hindrance to the spiritual freedom to access God, and hence sinful. [275] Charles Marshall (1637-98) and his group of Bristol Seekers: `sat down sometimes in silence; and as any found a concern on their spirits, and inclination in their hearts, they kneeled down and sought the Lord; so that sometimes before the day ended, there might be twenty of us pray, men and women.'[276] This constituted a privileging of the speech of the inner spirit, articulated in silence, over human speech, or: 'a shifting of the locus and character of religious speaking from outward, human speech to the inward spiritual speech of God.'[277] Susan Sontag observed: 'behind the appeals for silence lies the wish for a perceptual and cultural clean slate'.[278] This applies to the Seeker agenda: silence and waiting were handmaidens to a deeper wish: for purity in the form of a restart through a new dispensation, a fresh start: to be spiritually born again. By the mid-1640s the practice of the silent meeting was not only widespread among Seeker groups who had rejected both

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[274] Robert Waring, *A publicke conference,* 5.
[275] Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 66-9; Maclear, 'Lay Tradition', 131 notes how the Durham Friends' silent form of worship was taken over from Seekers.
[276] Marshall, *Journal* (1844, rp 2007) 3-4; Jones, 464.
[277] Bauman, 30.
[278] Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence' in *Styles of Radical Will* (rp 2009) 17.

sacraments and ministers.[279] Burrage calls such groups the Scattered Flock; however, this is really just a poetic name for the Seeker milieu. In the summer of 1645, following the battle of Naseby, Baxter encountered Army radicals at Leicester and found men: 'sometimes against Forms of Prayer [and] set times of Prayer'.[280] The refusal to pray and demands for the scriptural support for its practice were deemed sufficiently important and widespread to warrant inclusion in the list of errors in *Gangraena* by 1646.[281] At the Putney debates in 1647 Lt Col William Goffe defended a motion for a day of prayer whilst acknowledging: 'forms have been rested uppon too much'. This suggests that even open prayer was, in certain army circles, becoming questioned as an empty outward form.[282]

Saltmarsh declared an effective spiritualisation of the sacrament of prayer in 1647: 'Prayer is rather a work of the Spirit then of any form, and no set form ought to be put upon the Spirit of God, but what it freely breathes and speaks'. He did think there was an important role for prayer if it was: 'an immediate, proper, and spiritual act of the Spirit of God in the Saints'. He conceived of the practice of prayer as a series of progressive revelations, the highest of which taught that: 'Prayer is God speaking in us his mind and will […] all that we pray, and not in the Spirit of God in us, … is but the Spirit of man praying, which is but the cry of the creature, or a natural complaining for what we want'.[283] So he not only spiritualises prayer but condemns any other form of the practice as base, carnal and selfish. This spiritualisation of prayer removed yet another ministerial role: as each expression of special status was eliminated, Seeker and later Quaker groups moved further towards their stated goal of a pure equality of the spirit. The most thorough and detailed work on silent prayer in the period acknowledges that Quakers took their use of silence from the prior experience of the Seeker 'sect'.[284] William Penn noted that Seekers met: 'not formally to pray or preach, at appointed times or places […] but wailed together in silence, and as anything rose in any one of their Minds that they thought savoured of a divine spring, so they sometimes spoke.' Though Seekers did not quake, Jackson records the Seeker practice of inarticulate wailing and: `groaning to God'.[285] Seekers like Erbery, in 1652, justified silence by appealing to the practice of the primitive church: 'the spirit of Prayer in Gospel times was more in spirit, lesse in the Form'[286] Erbery denied any scriptural precedent from Christ or the apostles for the: 'superstitious Forms of Prayer and the

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279 Burrage, 'Antecedents of Quakerism' 87,

280 Baxter, *Reliquae Baxterianae, I,* 77.

281 Edwards, *Gangraena I,* 27: error 135.

282 Firth, *Clarke Papers I,* 49, 253; Como, *Radical,* 397.

283 Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 223-35: A Discovery of Prayer.

284 Bauman, 123; see also Maclear, 'Lay Tradition', 131.

285 Penn, *preface* to Fox's *Journal*, 1694; Jackson, *Sober Word,* 47.

286 Erbery, *Bishop of London: […] Spirit of Prayer ceased in the Churches* (1652) in *Testimony*, 44; see also Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 224 and 223-9; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 67-8; Johnson 85-6.

customary practice of the old Priests … to begin every publick Speech or Sermon with Prayer … to think themselves wiser than God, and more devout than Christ.' In fact, he notes that the Scriptures actually condemn public prayer. [Matt. 6.5-6] and asked whether Christ or the apostles prayed in public with their preachings.[287] Dell did not attack prayer in print, but he did not practice it with his own congregation: its absence from his services, was listed alongside exposition, psalm singing and the Lord's Supper in their 1660 petition to Parliament for his removal.[288]

Fox found many Seeker groups who met without words scattered across his travels in Wigton, Cumbria; Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire; Kendal, Westmorland, Malpas, Cheshire; Lewes, Sussex; Moberley, Cheshire and Bristol.[289] The early Quakers adopted the practice in their own meetings: 'We met together often, and waited upon the Lord in pure silence from our own words, and hearkened to the voice of the Lord and felt his word in our hearts.'[290] When Fox arrived among the Westmorland Seekers at Firbank Fell in 1652, Francis Howgill describes the scene: 'we waited upon him in pure Silence … and the Heavenly Presence appeared in our Assemblies. There was no language, tongue nor speech from any creature, and the Kingdom of Heaven did gather us, and catch us all in a net.'[291] The Quakers had silence as a central feature of their worship from their beginning, following the Seeker model; as Bauman notes of Seeker and Quaker practice: 'silence precedes speaking, is the ground of speaking, and is the consequence of speaking.'[292] The Seeker-turned-Quaker, Charles Marshall's advice suggests the role of the spirit as the conductor of silence and speech: 'Wait diligently in that Light…and you will come to see the Time when to speak, and when to be silent … when that which is sealed to the understanding is offered, retire inward and sink down into the pure stillness, and keep in the Valley'. [293]

An interesting issue concerns who can speak, when and for how long: the spiritually unconfident would tend to remain silent in fear of the: 'constant human susceptibility to the exercise of self-will.' Speakers tended to be: 'those spiritually secure enough to be confident about

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[287] Erbery, *A Monstrous Dispute* (1653) in *Testimony* (1658) 194-5; *Mad Mans Plea,* 7, where Erbery cites [Acts 2.43, 2.46, 4.23, and 12.5; Johnson, 85-6.
[288] Matthews, *Calamy Revised,* 161; Walker, *William Dell*, 170.
[289] Wigton, Cumbria; Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire: (Penney, *First Publishers,* 52, 124); Kendal, Westmorland: (Ann Camm, in John Field, *Piety promoted* (1721) 352); Malpas, Cheshire: (John Lawson letter to Margaret Fell, 1653 Swarthmore MSS 4.69); Lewes, East Sussex: (Life of Caton in Barclay, *A Select Series, […] Productions of Early Members of the Society of Friends* (1837) 58; Moberley, Cheshire: (Penney, *First Publishers,* 18); and Bristol: (Marshall, *Journal,* 3-4); Jones, 463-4; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit* 68.
[290] Edward Burrough, Epistle to the Reader in Fox, *Great Mistery*; Jones, *Spiritual Reformers,* 340.
[291] Hayes (ed). *Gray Ridge: Book of Frances Howgill* (1942) 17.
[292] Hastings (ed). *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, XI* (1921) 512b; Bauman, 126.
[293] Marshall, *An Epistle to the Friends Coming Forward* (1677) 4; for a similar account of Seeker meetings see Keith, *benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings*, 4-5, 9; Bauman, 126; Burns, 'From Seeker to Finder', 100.

the validity of their own openings.' Among early Quakers the first ministers were often those who were: 'spiritually mature and religiously active people, with prior experience in other groups' including Seekers.[294] Early Quakers denounced a ministry based on education and training but still evolved a ministry based on experience of religious meetings rather than experience of religious inspiration. This also explains the mechanism through which Seekers coalesced around charismatic preachers like Saltmarsh, Erbery and Dell: they were people in a state of spiritual uncertainty with a cultural and individual preference for deference. For fear of seeming spiritually presumptuous or proud, they actively chose listening and only passively chose silence. This is central to Seeker practice; Lim is among those who claim Seekers waited passively for a *new* dispensation to be revealed from Christ within, to re-establish an *old* religious practice, of primitive Christianity. I challenge this conception of Seeker passivity: waiting and silence were too loaded with millenarian yearning to be described as passive. Waiting, expecting, listening and seeking are active not passive states.[295]

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[294] Bauman, 130-2.
[295] See Lim, *Mystery Unveiled* (2012) *passim*.

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. [Mat. 12.25]

O God, were there ever such frenzies possessed the braines of men? As these sad times have yielded? Neither have these prodigious wretches smothered their damnable conceits in their impure breasts, but have boldly vented them to the World, so as the very presses are openly defiled with the most loathsome disgorgments of their wicked blasphemies.[1]

The wise *Solomon* saith, *That the full stomach loatheth the hony comb;* & his saying is made good in this Age; for never was the word of God more plentifull, nor never more contemptible then it is in these dayes; but what brings a loathing, but a fulnesse? And what brings contempt, but plenty? [2]

As some are playing young Spaniels, questing at every bird that rises; so others, held very good men, are at a dead stand, not knowing what to doe or say; and are therefore called Seekers, looking for new Nuntios from Christ, to assaile these benighted questions and to give new Orders for new Churches.[3]

This section will look at the way that other writers and groups characterised the Seekers. Many printed works published from 1640-1675 by Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist and Quaker authors are cited and analysed.

A note on method

This section has used the printed sources available through Early English Books Online, as a comprehensive, if not complete, body of works representing the printed dialogue of the English Civil War and Restoration period. The methodology involved searching the full text of all works in this database from 1640-75 for the term 'seeker' and variants. This produced 2,499 hits in 1,110 records, of which 263 were substantive references, worthy of attention and comment. For example, it was very common for Seekers to appear in a list of sectaries or dangerous beliefs; such works were not included in the figure of 263 unless the work also discussed Seeker doctrine or practice in detail

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[1] Hall, Joseph, *The Shaking of the Olive-Tree* (1660) 161-2. As Bishop of Norwich, Hall was not a Presbyterian, but his view reflects a broadly held concern over the range and depth of religious schism in the period.
[2] Richard Stooks, *A Second Champion, or, Companion to Truth* (1650) 193-4.
[3] Nathaniel Ward, *The simple cobler of Aggawamm in America* (1647) 18-19

elsewhere. There is also discussion of several identified works and authors whose works do not mention the word Seeker, but who talk about Seeker doctrine, practice and belief. The number of works by Seeker and Seeker-friendly sources is larger than any other single group but much smaller than the hostile sources collectively: Seekers were in dialogue with multiple opponents simultaneously. It should also be noted that most of the apologists for the Seekers do not self-describe as Seekers, although their opponents do apply this label to them in print; suggesting perhaps that the term itself was pejorative or became weaponised.[4]

Introduction

It has been well noted that 1640s England witnessed the polemicization of an entire society at all levels of discourse.[5] In 1644, Richard Vines, the Presbyterian master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge expressed dismay that religion had become debased into: 'a kind of philosophy of opinions'.[6] Baxter did not blame weak church-government, but: `the Licentiousness of a time of war, when all evil spirits are turned loose ... [for the] ... inlet of our Heresies and Divisions'.[7] In 1646 the congruence of several factors caused hostile constructions of Seekers, from a range of sources to peak. These factors include: the abolition of episcopacy by ordinance, a fierce debate on heresy laws, a Presbyterian campaign against religious toleration in the aftermath of the first civil war and the prominence of Seekers among the NMA chaplains. Within this febrile atmosphere, Seekers like Erbery, engaged with other religious groups. Erbery held that all the churches were in error but acknowledged differences in degree: 'Prelatique and Presbyterian Churches, I called old Rotten Whores, being in fellowship with ... every man in the parish; but Independent and Baptized Churches being in fellowship with Saints so called, I compared to the well favoured harlot'.[8] Seekers debated with their more orthodox and their more radical neighbours, drawing fire from all sides; one contemporary ruefully acknowledged Thucydides' warning: 'Those that dwel in the middle, between two adverse parties, ar wont to be beaten on both sides.'[9] The spectrum of religious practice and belief that formed in the space left by the end of established religion was a broad and crowded one in which dissent begat pluralism. Religious groupings butted against one another, even overlapped,

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[4] Printed works have been read in the British Library, Friends House Library, Bodleian Library, Dr Williams Library and through the digital platform Early English Books Online. Many letters and a smaller number of other manuscripts sources have also been used. See Appendix 1 for a detailed chronological and denominational breakdown.

[5] Zwicker, *Lines of Authority* (1993) 9.

[6] Vines, *The Posture of Davids Spirit*, (preached on 22 Oct 1644) in *Sermons preached upon several publike and eminent occasions by ... Richard Vines* (n.d. 1656).

[7] Baxter, *Five disputations of church-government and worship* (1659) 328.

[8] Erbery, *Honest Heretique, Testimony*, 236; White, 'Erbery and the Baptists', 117.

[9] Presbyterian Minister, Thomas Gataker (1574-1654) *A discours apologetical* (27 February 1654) 26; Willen, 'Thomas Gataker and Use of Print', 343.

and individuals moved between them continually. The Puritan Minister Richard Sibbes described a 'Generation of Seekers' and the phrase was repeated by contemporary writers from across the spectrum of Christian religious belief in England.

This process was driven by continual debates, meetings, sermons and challenges laid down and answered, a considerable amount of which is left to us, by people like Erbery, in printed exchanges. Through these exchanges individuals and groups sought to assert their identity and individuality often by contesting the constructions that hostile writers and groups had laid upon them. In the case of the Seekers, Jackson complained that there was chaos in the public's understanding of who the Seekers were, as a result of what had been: 'laid down and aggravated by several persons, in several books'. He noted that hostile writers sought to show: 'the dangerousness of [the Seekers'] opinion, and the dreadfulness of its tendency; and under the term of 'Seekers' comprehend all those that differ from themselves touching the present exercise of visible administrations'.[10]

These printed disputations about right religion form a tangled series of charge and counter charge with each disputant claiming a monopoly on the true church. Milton's defence of free speech, *Areopagitica*, argued: 'Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to lay on the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple, who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter.' Walwyn concurred, pithily: 'they shunne the battell that doubt their strength.'[11] Thus some were confident that 'truth will out', no matter how complex the disputations. Others, like Saltmarsh took a more pessimistic, or perhaps realistic, view of the power of truth to enlighten these disputes: 'that which makes us on all sides so far from peace […] is our intemperancy … in which we spend as much papour, as in the Cause itself, … in some differences … the truth stands by while we wrangle beside it, and the dust we raise in arguing makes the truth less discernable'.[12] One particular problem for the reader is that this radical dialogue raised a scriptural impasse: how could one distinguish truth from error in such febrile exchanges when all sides claimed chapter and verse for their own arguments and denounced those cited by their opponents? Cromwell said when the evidence is not clear, the best way to judge a matter is by whether or not it conforms to the: 'law written in us, which is the law of the spirit of God, the mind of God', so the spirit must rule over the word.[13] As to what aspects of *right religion* were up for debate in this radical dialogue, even Williams felt there

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[10] Jackson, *Sober Word,* 2; Vendettuoli, 142.
[11] Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644) 35; Walwyn, *Walwyn's Just Defence* (1649) 118.
[12] Saltmarsh, *Dawnings*, 57-8.
[13] Oliver Cromwell at Putney Debates, 1 November 1647: Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty* (1992) 105.

were some points of doctrine so fundamental that: 'without right belief thereof a man cannot be saved'; Dell agreed but thought it safe to allow the debate: 'Hear them speak and be rather confident, that the truth of God will prevail over their error.'[14]

Conflicts within a shared culture of common assumptions and beliefs can be more intense than those between totally dissociated or antithetical beliefs: conflict inevitably involves some element of shared assumption.[15] This shared culture was a Protestant community and David Sabean has argued that what is common in community is not shared values or common understanding, so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument, in which alternative strategies, misunderstandings, conflicting goals and values are thrashed out.[16] Hence we would expect to see the most extreme emotions reserved for our nearest neighbours, geographical or ideological and if we examine the radical dialogue this is in fact what we find as radicals reserved their sharpest contumely and oftentimes calumny for those with whom they may be confused by others. John Gager characterised this tension as: 'a fundamental law of religious dynamics: the closer the parties, the greater the potential for conflict'.[17]

The purpose of the next three chapters is to consider the various characterisations, or constructions, of Seeker beliefs, practices, intentions and actions by their opponents between 1640 and 1675, through a discussion of the voluminous printed polemical literature of the day. A range of hostile sources will be considered including Presbyterian, those from gathered churches such as the Baptists and Independents or Congregationalist, and lastly Quaker works. Within each group of works, changes and continuities in these constructions over this period will be discussed. Evidence of borrowing will be noted and assessed as to whether this constitutes a collegiate approach. The constructions of Seekers by the different groups will also be compared, one with another, to establish in which areas and to what extent they agree. Additionally, some tentative conclusions about why each group constructed the Seekers in such a way at such a time will be offered.

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[14] Miller, *Roger Williams* (1953) 114-5; Dell, *Way of True Peace*, 300; Solt, *Saints,* 57, 60.
[15] Davis, 'Religion and the Struggle for Freedom', 508; on a similar dynamic in political debate, see Sharpe, *Politics and Ideas in Early Stuart England* (1989) 286; Underwood, *Primitivism*, 65-6 discusses similarities between Seeker, Baptist and Quaker positions, with that of the Muggletonians.
[16] Sabean, *Power in the Blood* (1984) 27.
[17] Gager, *Origins of Anti-Semitism* (1983) 143; Como, *Blown,* 8.

a new Sect of Seekers, who renounce the Scriptures as blinde guides, and wait for new lights to lead them to the true Religion… in the mean time they will seek, and suspend, and fasten on no Religion, till the new lights appear … but by flatteries, forgeries, and new fangle opinions, draw away many well-meaning people [from Christ].[18]

Caluinists Presbyterians, Independents, Congregationals, & seekers in Comparison of one another … esteeming themselues in their owne present frame as perfect as they can bee; & if you tell them either of thinking lesse of themselues or more of their neighbours who differ in outward Circumstantials from them; … or that they ought not to contend with so much heat of partialitie about such matters, … but that they rather ought to … walke together in that … wherin they really do agree, perhaps they scarse will giue you the hearing; but then you will bee told; let them come to us; for we haue no reason to go to them; wee are gone foreward to a greater perfection then they; why should wee go back againe?[19]

Alongside the English Civil War between Roundhead and Cavalier, there raged an escalating civil war among the godly. An initial panic over the creation of gathered churches was being displaced in the second half of the 1640s by even greater concerns over heresy and sectarianism. The sermon by George Walker in January 1645 (above) is the first public pronouncement on the Seekers by a Presbyterian; this helps both to date the emergence of the Seekers as a cause of concern to Presbyterians, and to show how they initially characterised the group. The letter from Dury from 1651 expresses his frustration that all protagonists within this discussion had not managed to overcome what we would now call confirmation bias. The Presbyterians went into print against the Seekers more often than any other group. Forty-four authors produced some ninety-one separate published works targeting this opponent from 1645-1681. The bulge years are 1645-7 when the Presbyterian campaign against Independency and the dangers of toleration was in full swing and thirty-three Presbyterian works addressed the perceived Seeker threat during this time. A second, smaller peak occurred during the Protectorate from 1653-6 when a further sixteen Presbyterian works attacked Seekers. The most prolific authors in attacking Seekers were Baxter (twenty-one works) and William Prynne (nine works), although often their agenda was to portray Seekers as crypto-Catholics; a further fourteen Presbyterian authors attacked the Seekers more than once so twenty-eight authors wrote against them only once. It is worth noting that works by friendly sources

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[18] George Walker, *Sermon Preached Before the … Commons* (29 Jan 1645) 19.
[19] Letter from John Dury to Edward Lane, 31 October 1651. Hartlib Papers 1/32/23A-28B.

or those self-describing as Seekers are concentrated from 1644-53 but both Independent and Presbyterian writers sustained a campaign against Seekers after this (see Appendix 1). Given that Thomason collected only 60% of printed output (excluding serials), even at the peak of his activity in 1643-8, we must view these totals as bare minimums.[20]

The Style of Presbyterian Accounts

The broad Presbyterian campaign against toleration and heresy that included sustained attacks on Seekers was not particularly well choreographed and no strict house style was maintained in terms of either structure or content. It was a campaign that sought unity and uniformity in religion, but Presbyterians were not able to coordinate this fully even within their own ranks. Indeed, writers such as Edwards were not even able to sustain a consistent construction of Seekers within a single work! There are examples of very successful coordination; Baillie enlisted David Buchanan to write his *Short and True Relation* to satisfy a demand for such a work among London readers and it sold 3-4000 copies in two days.[21] There was also, as we will see, evidence of a shared Presbyterian lexicon through the repetition of key phrases like 'wandering stars' and `utopia'. Edwards' infamous call to halt: 'a second reformation, or deformation' is repeated by successive Presbyterian writers such as James Cranford but Edwards had borrowed it from Independents.[22] Presbyterian constructions influenced the characterisation of Seekers by other groups and there is evidence of active collaboration. In Yarmouth, an area of known Seeker activity mentioned by Clarkson, staunch Presbyterian minister John Brinsley (1600-1665) worked with local Independent Minister William Bridge (1600-1671) to present a united front against sectaries such as the Seekers, even sharing a church.[23] Indeed the Seeker rejection of visible churches was an attack on both Presbyterian and Independent models, as noted in the Independent work *A Plea for Congregational Government* (1646). Presbyterian constructions also crossed the divide between religious and popular works, unfiltered at times: the account of Seekers in the broadsheet *A relation of severall heresies* is identical to that in Pagitt's earlier *Heresiographie.*[24]

The Hartlib papers contain correspondence between Presbyterian John Dury and Anglican Edward Lane that show not all Presbyterians felt comfortable in their trench, lobbing abuse at the

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[20] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering,* Fig. 5, 195.
[21] Buchanan, *A Short And True Relation* (14 September 1645) 85; see Cameron in ODNB on Buchanan for details [accessed 13 February 2014].
[22] Edwards, *Gangraena*, Epistle Dedicatory, [n.p but between A3 and B]; Hughes, 107; Cranford, *Plain English: Or, The Sectaries Anatomized* (1646) 3; Richard Watson, *Sermon Touching Schism* (1642) 13; Benbrigge, *Gods Fury Englands Fire,* sig. A2^V; for other instances see Poole, 1, 187 n.3.
[23] Brinsley, *Spirituall Vertigo* (1655) 47; See Richard Cust on Brinsley in ODNB [accessed 12 November 2018]. In a similar vein, John Gauden, *Hieraspistes* (1653) 96, argues for a common episcopalian–presbyterian cause.
[24] Wellwisher of Truth & Peace. *A relation of severall heresies,* Published according to order (1646).

other side. These letters show both the views of Presbyterian orthodoxy and the Seeker rejection of externals: both were required to sustain a dispute. Dury's response was not as typical of the Presbyterian view of Seekers as, say Rutherford, who wrote: 'What is Antichrist to Familists, not the Pope but the Protestants, whom they falsely call legal teachers'.[25] Dury's letter points to the ecumenical understanding that no side could muster, but which was essential to any sustainable cohabitation. Dury makes a plea that they both: 'endevour to build [the Holy City] up by keeping the vnitie of the spirit in the bond of Peace … if wee both should giue way to our passions this would lead us into the Laberinth of Confusion wherinto the disputers of these times ordinarily fall'. He criticises the: 'laodicean temper' of the Churches of Christ and their spirit of stubborn contention; 'wherby they stand each of them too much vpon the Iustification of themselues & the Condemnation of others in respect of themselues. … & haue need to … repent of their partialitie wherin euery one of them studies to set up themselues in all things aboue others.'[26]

In 1641, Seekers were not sufficiently numerous, dangerous or lascivious to make John Taylor's list of twenty-nine sects in London; or had not yet been constructed into a sufficient threat by their opponents to warrant inclusion. In June and July 1644 private letters from Baillie note the influence of Williams (during his stay in London) in encouraging Independents to: `step out of the church' into a `singular independencie'; but Walker's sermon is the first to publically name the: `new sect of Seekers'.[27] The proliferation of sects continued, to Baillie's dismay, and he wrote to an associate in January 1646 that: 'Schismes and heresies doe daily increase in all the corners of the land for want of discipline'. At the end of May 1646, *Gangraena* warned that the Seekers would swallow up all other sects before long.[28] Edwards' weekly lectures on heresy, that would become *Gangraena,* were given at Christchurch, Newgate Street. The resident Presbyterian Minister there, William Jenkyn, observed: `[the] Church is wounded by the soule-stroying opinions of Antinomians, Arminians, Anabaptists, Seekers, Anti-scripturists, Antitrinitarians &c. All which … have been more propagated these foure yeares of Church Anarchie then in fourscore of Church tyranny.'[29] Edwards, characterised by a biographer of Milton as: 'a fluent, rancorous, indefatigable, inquisitorial and, on the whole, nasty kind of Christian', lectured on heresy (indeed, *Gangraena* is structured around 176

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[25] Rutherford, *Survey*, 201.

[26] Letter from John Dury to Edward Lane, 31 October 1651. Hartlib Papers 1/32/23A-28B. https://www.dhi.ac.uk/hartlib/view?docser+main&docname=26A_02 [accessed 12.08.19].

[27] Taylor, *A discovery of 29 sects here in London* (1641); Laing, *Letters of Baillie*, *II*, 191-2 (7 June 1644), 212 (23 July 1644).

[28] Baillie to Mr Robert Ramsay, 15 Jan. 1646, *Letters of Baillie, II*, *336;* Hughes, 139; Saltmarsh, *Groanes*, 22-3; Edwards, *Gangraena II* (28 May 1646) 13-14.

[29] Jenkyn, *A Sleeping Sicknes* (1647) epistle dedicatory.

`errours or heresies'); but with his: 'taste for personalities', his real target was the heretic.[30] This contrasts with Baxter, who: `cared not who maintains [opinions] so I do but effectually confute them.'[31] An anti-Quaker pamphlet of 1655 describes Edwards' quarry: 'He is an Heretique who both erres in the Articles of holy faith, through defect in his understanding, and withal pertinaciously cleaves to such errors, through the perverseness of his will.'[32]

If naming is taming, *Gangraena* can be read as an attempt to define, frame and thus hopefully fix a definitive heterodoxy; to project a rigid labelled framework of heresy onto a fluid and heterogeneous spectrum of dissenting belief, including what I have termed the Seeker milieu. Edwards sought to flag the dangers of toleration and highlighted the need for religious discipline and restraint: as evidence he cited 176 errors, heresies and blasphemies, of which at least seven are directed at the Seekers in particular.[33] The combative Puritan polemicist William Prynne, another erstwhile radical overtaken by the pace of change in religious opinion, also railed against Independency in a series of works in the mid-1640s, which include an interesting conflation when Prynne attacks: 'those *Independent Seekers*, who like wandering Stars, gad about every day after New Lights, New Fashions of Church Government, wavering like empty clouds without water.'[34] For the sectarians themselves, such attacks could nurture group cohesion through encouraging a siege mentality and they could also nurture group identity through a process similar to brand formation. What is certain is that once the monopoly of the national church was removed the resulting vacuum was filled by a proliferation of visions of right religion; and that the breakdown in church discipline and censorship contributed to this process. What is more complex is the different ways that Arminian orthodoxy impacted on the fragmentation of Puritanism.

Baxter was a prolific author for whom: 'Writings were my chiefest daily Labour'. John Goodwin donned him *Malleus Anabaptismi* and: 'a man as like as any man I know, to make a crooked generation streight, if it be possible'.[35] He took a particular interest in Antinomianism and Seekers were attacked in thirty-one of his works; there were also numerous attacks in private correspondence with Baptists John Tombes (1602-76) and Allen.[36] Baxter was a Presbyterian but is

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[30] Masson, *Life of Milton,* III, 130-1, 141-3; Hughes, 429-30.

[31] Baxter, *The true Catholick church described* (1660) 55.

[32] Sherlock, *The Quakers Wilde Questions* (1655) 175.

[33] Edwards, *Gangraena, I*: 15-31; Barclay, *Inner Life* identified the relevant seven errors as 10, 29, 127, 128, 135, 137, 157; see also Jones, 457.

[34] Prynne: *Independency Examined, Unmasked, and Refuted* (1644); *Faces about. Or, A recrimination charged upon Mr. John Goodwin* (1644); *Truth triumphing over Falsehood* (1644); the work cited here (my italics) is his *Fresh Discovery* (1645) 1-2.

[35] Baxter*, Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 1.84; Goodwin, *Cata-baptism*, To the Reader, Epistle Dedicatory.

[36] Cooper, `Richard Baxter and Antinomianism' (Ph.D Canterbury, NZ, 1997) 47, lists works by William Lamont, Neil Keeble and several others who agree that Antinomianism was Baxter's prime target from 1649 onwards.

difficult to categorise as he was notoriously chary of being labelled and has been called: `a bundle of contradictions'.[37] Baxter's description of his position regarding church order conveys this well: 'You could not (except a Catholick Christian) have trulier called me, than an Episcopal-Presbyterian-Independent'. By 1671 he would claim: 'I would have Love and Gentleness exercised to them all' – them being sectarians including Seekers. A decade earlier, when discussing Charles II's *Declaration on Ecclesiastical Affaires*, with Clarendon, (25 October 1660) he wished: 'Factions and Parties may all be swallowed up in Unity'; and vowed to do all he could: 'to promote our happy Concord'. However, in 1653 he had stated that concord did not extend to: 'any Seekers that disclaim Discipline; nor Papists … but only the Protestant Episcopall Divines'.[38]

Presbyterians like Edwards and Baxter stress the need for Christian unity, but both clearly viewed the Seekers as excluded from such limited ecumenicalism. The polemical purpose of their publications was to warn society of the dangers of heresy and sectarianism. However, they also stressed the proliferating and protean nature of their quarry, so it is perhaps not surprising to find inaccuracy and inconsistency regarding the basic questions of 'how many errors?' and 'how many sects?': Independent minister Thomas Weld lists eighty-two errours in New England in 1637; less than a decade later Edwards lists 176 errours in England in 1646; in 1645 Presbyterian heresiographers Robert Squire and John Graunt had listed eight and ten active sects respectively whilst, a year later *A Catalogue of Several Sects* names twenty-two; Edwards claims the errors in *Gangraena* could be connected to sixteen types of sectaries, whilst five years earlier, John Taylor had given twenty-nine sects in London alone (of which perhaps ten were 'real').[39] In various places heresiographers stress that the English sects were not distinct and discrete in terms of beliefs, practices or membership. Edwards says they were not 'simple and pure' holding a mixture of opinions, and this has been echoed by historians, most recently David Como, who notes that: `civil war sectarianism was characterised by considerable hybridity as actors immersed themselves in various heterodox traditions'[40]

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[37] Cooper, *Fear and Polemic*, 3

[38] Baxter, *A third defence of the cause of peace* (1681) 110; Baxter*, A defence of the principles of love*, 20; Baxter*, Christian concord or The agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcs*. (1653) 2; see Keeble on Baxter in ODNB [accessed 10 August 2018].

[39] Edwards, *Gangraena, I*, 15-31; Weld, *Catalogue of erroneous opinions brought into New England* (30 August 1637)*;* Squire, *Arraignement and Condemnation of Chief Heresies … as an Answer to … The Arraignment of Mr Persecution* (1645); J[ohn] G[rant], *Truths Victory against Heresie* (9 April 1645); Anon, *Catalogue of the several sects*; for link of 176 errors to just sixteen sects, see Hughes, 101; Taylor, *A discovery of 29 sects*.

[40] Como, *Radical,* 390; see also Hughes, 101; Capp, 'Fifth Monarchists' in McGregor & Reay, 184; Poole, 115.

The Reliability of Presbyterian accounts

A significant methodological issue in this research has been how much weight to give to hostile constructions of the Seekers. Como uses John Everarde as a case study to measure the difference between what someone said and what their opponents reported that they had said. His 'God is in everything' was rendered as the more pantheistic 'God is everything' by the High Commission. Hostile observers tended to reshape the words of those accused of heterodoxy and a very similar dynamic is visible in the trials of Thomas Tany and Robert Norwood.[41] Como makes three observations about the polemical cut and thrust: firstly, hostile observers very rarely reported opinions, statements, or events that had no basis in reality; secondly, basic facts were often misrepresented, manipulated, or re-wrought to distort the opinions and intentions of the supposed heretic; thirdly, in some cases even the most hostile witnesses told the truth.[42] With reference to the reliability of the Presbyterian propagandists, Christopher Hill casted doubt on the: `alarmist accounts of professional heresy-hunters' naming Presbyterians Edwards, Baillie, Rutherford, Pagitt and Ross; but added that *Gangraena* was: `well documented and seems to stand up quite well to examination: we need a critical edition.'[43] One Victorian commentator said: 'Edwards has to be put into the witness-box and cross-examined unmercifully, not as a wilful liar, but as an incredibly spiteful collector of gossip for the Presbyterians.'[44]

Ian Gentles has a balanced view of the reliability of Edwards' accounts of NMA behaviour claiming the 'persistent strain of hysteria' is tempered by corroboration from 'other less inflammatory texts.[45] Those attacked by Edwards were less generous, Goodwin complained of Edwards: 'racking, wresting, misusing, and misconstruing the words and phrases [of Jeremiah Burroughs].'[46] A pattern of selective quoting rather than outright misquoting is repeated in Edwards' analysis of writings by Milton, Collier and Hugh Peter.[47] Saltmarsh, another much maligned by Edwards, accused his accuser thus: 'Solomon tels us, that a man may seem faire in his own tale, till his neighbour search out the matter ... How dare you have one eare open for complaints, and faults,

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[41] Como, *Blown,* Appendix C, 477; Hessayon, *Gold, passim;* see Hessayon in ODNB on Norwood [accessed 09.07.2020].
[42] Como, *Blown,* Appendix C, 478-9.
[43] Hill, 'Irreligion' in McGregor & Reay*,* 206.
[44] Masson, *Life of John Milton, III*, book ii, March 1644 - March 1645.
[45] Gentles, *New Model Army* (2009) 89, 101-2, 111, 469, 472; Hughes, 215.
[46] Goodwin, *Anapologesiates Antapologias* (1646) 190; Hughes, 244.
[47] Hughes, 246-7.

and crimes, and the other shut against all defence?'[48] In conclusion regarding reliability, Ann Hughes points out:

> the recognition that heresiological accounts of error and schism are based on distinct
> generic models should not imply that their categories had no relationship to some
> independent reality. The timelessness of labels or definitions of error derive as much from
> perennial tensions within Christianity as from the distorting mirror of heresiology.[49]

This is true but we must also try to understand that the shape and consistency of the distortion is important. Individual Christians did not have much agency over the perennial tensions attached to belief and worship, but individual heresiographers did at least have some agency in how they angled the mirror in their attempts to bend the light. As Ariel Hessayon observed: 'Intemperate, alarmist and occasionally inaccurate, their purpose was generally to represent doctrinal and behavioural errors as inversions of truths so as to facilitate their extirpation.'[50] So, with these caveats in mind, we will consider the Presbyterian campaign and its construction of Seekers, both individually and collectively, in close detail.

Presbyterian Campaign

From 1645, Presbyterian writers produced a series of substantial works detailing groups and opinions they deemed heretical and many shorter pieces on heresy also appeared in the popular press. Their campaign included a heresy and blasphemy ordinance, introduced to Parliament in September 1646.[51] With some notable exceptions, Presbyterians have been portrayed by historians as stubborn traditionalists, or bitter and disappointed failures frustrated by aggressive sectaries. Having read many Presbyterian works that deal with the Seekers, it is certainly easy to see why this is the case. Their arguments are often dogmatic and pedantic and they frequently resort to personal attacks and hyperbole in their efforts to demonise their opponents.[52] A few years after the 1646 peak of the Presbyterian campaign, Jackson published a defence of the Seeker position entitled *A Sober Word to Serious People* (1651) which clearly conveys his belief that the Seekers' practice and doctrine, especially their stand on the suspension of ordinances, had been misrepresented and

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[48] Saltmarsh, *Reasons for Unitie, Peace and Love* (1646) 148.

[49] Hughes, 75.

[50] *Ibid*; Hessayon, 'Not the word of God', 6; Poole has noted that *fictional* Puritans functioned as a means of representing the social and discursive representations of radical religious non-conformity. I have found examples of Seekers performing a similar function, such as Carpenter, A *new play call'd The Pragmatical Jesuit new-leven'd a comedy* (n.d. 1665); Poole, 14.

[51] *An ordinance presented to the Honourable house of Commons* (21 September 1646) B356 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994) was introduced by two Presbyterian MPs but was not passed until May 1648; for final version see Firth and Rait, Vol. I, 1133–36.

[52] Hughes, 19.

unjustly maligned by 'heresy hunters'. He feels that Presbyterians were unwilling or unable to 'discern the spirits' of Seekers but aimed only to show: 'the dangerousness of their Opinion, and the dreadfulness of its tendency'. He felt that they employed the term Seeker almost as a lightning conductor, to cover every evil abroad in England, and: 'under that term of Seekers, comprehend all those which differ from themselves touching the present exercise of Visible Administrations'. Both Saltmarsh and Walwyn had already made the same point about labelling, but Jackson hoped to establish that Seekers were not fanatic, traitorous, licentious or anti-religious and his attempt prompted Baxter to label him the: 'most rational and modest that hath wrote for this way.'[53]

The creation of heresiographies in the 1640s was part of a campaign to mobilise conservative Presbyterianism in its struggle with Independency. The peak years for such works was 1646-8, when almost sixty titles featuring `heresy' or variants were published in England.[54] The perceived urgency and pressure to act was palpable, as Baillie noted: 'Slothfulnesse is fatall when unseasonable.'[55] The Seekers were not central to the Presbyterian campaign, although most heresiographies name them, Edwards acknowledged their popularity but viewed Seekers and all other sects as symptoms of a dangerous and progressive religious pluralism caused by the detestable toleration advocated by the Independents. The Independents were the Presbyterians most important and immediate enemy because of their status as a political opponent as well as a religious one, although as the political profile of figures such as Saltmarsh, Dell and Erbery increased, so did Presbyterian attacks on Seekers. The Seekers, or Expecters were absent from the first edition of the first Presbyterian heresiography on 8 May 1645, by Pagitt but were added to the second edition shortly after, along with Papists and others. After Pagitt's death his bookseller William Lee took over editorial control and added Ranters and Quakers to the list of heresies for the 5th edition in 1654. Thus, the work could be a mirror, reflecting society's anxieties, as Colin Davis may argue, or an accurate record of the shifting tendencies and forms of heterodoxy. Certainly the publication of six separate editions in seventeen years shows intense public interest in such works. By early 1646 the Seekers were the first named group in Edwards' *Gangraena*, possibly due to their increasing political influence through the prominence of NMA chaplains such as Saltmarsh, Dell and Erbery*.* After congratulating Parliament for dealing with Papists and Laudianism, Edwards asked: 'But what have you done against other kinds of growing evils, Heresie, Schisme, disorder, Seekers,

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[53] Jackson, *Sober Word,* To the Reader*;* Anon. (Attributed to Walwyn), *The Vanitie of the present churches* (23 February 1649) 11-12; Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 332.
[54] Nasu, 'Heresiography and the Idea of "Heresy"' (Ph.D, York, 2000) 56-7; two 1645 heresiographies by J[ohn] G[rant], *Truths Victory against Heresie* (9 April 1645)*; and* Robert Squire, *The Arraignement and Condemnation of the Chief Heresies of These Times* (1645) can be added to the canon of Presbyterian hersesiographies produced in these years by Pagitt, Baillie, Edwards, Bastwick and Rutherford; Hughes, 81, 85.
[55] Baillie, *Anabaptism,* 179.

Anabaptists, Antinomians, Brownists, Libertines, and other Sects?'[56] However, with the exception of

Clarkson and perhaps Wrighter who gain extensive attention, the Seekers were not *Gangraena's*

primary target and are not named in any of the 176 errors that Edwards lists; unattributed Seeker

restrictions on what a minister may lawfully practice do follow the list, but Edwards dismisses them

as: 'but light in comparison.'[57]

Gangraena is a mirror for Edwards' concerns and as such is a dynamic and reflective text; in

Book One his bête noire is John Goodwin's Independency but he quickly became increasingly

preoccupied with the political activities of the sectaries and the army. In Book Two he noted that

their politicking was on the rise and by the release of Book Three, in September 1646, the theme

dominates.[58] Much of Edwards' commentary complains of politicking by the Independents and

sectaries, including Seekers, who connive and position to gain public office and use: 'their friends in

the Armies … [and] … boast of their friends in the House of Commons'. He adds: `there is never a

Committee about London, but they have some friend or other in it'. He notes that: 'these

preferments, places of publike trust, &c. have made more Sectaries and Anti-Presbyterians, then

all the Sermons and Books ever preached and printed by the Sectaries.' Baxter accused Cromwell

of heading the army with: `anabaptists, antinomians, seekers, or separatists, at best … when a place

fell void, it was twenty to one a sectary had it'. Rutherford complains that Seekers and other

sectaries: 'received indulgence by law and other means … but none to Presbyterians at all.' He also

complains that: 'such Familists as Mr. Del and Saltmarsh are alowed and authorized to be ordinary

preachers to the Army.' Edwards accuses everyone else of combining against the Presbyterians:

'Independents and other sectaries, Anabaptists, Antinomians, Seekers &c, hold together, make one

body against the Orthodox godly, strict Ministers and people.'[59] Presbyterians thus felt that

Independents and sectarians, including Seekers, had made a common political cause and letters

from John Dury portrayed his private view that Saltmarsh was a threat to both political and religious

authority.[60] David Buchanan had already advanced this view with a punning construction of Seekers:

`those men seeking preferment and benefit … may justly all be called Seekers: For, there was never a

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[56] Edwards, *Gangraena I* (all references are to the third edition, 1646) Epistle Dedicatory to Parliament, A4ʳ.
[57] Jones claims seven of Edwards' 'errours' relate to Seeker positions (10, 29, 127, 128, 135, 137, 157);
Clarkson's lost Seeker text *The Pilgrimage of Saints* (published January 1646) is named in five errours (2, 4, 97, 107, 108). For the full list of errours, see *Gangraena I*, 15-31; *Gangraena I,* 31.
[58] See for example his coverage of John Lilburne and Richard Overton; Hughes, 65.
[59] *Gangraena II,* 23, 158; *Gangraena III*, 181; for similar charges see also Anon., *Some queries propounded to the Common-Councell,* (30 July 1647) 9; *Practical Works of Baxter*, Vol. I, 61; Rutherford, *Survey,* 8, 20; *Gangraena I*, 61.
[60] John Ley, *Light for Smoke* (1646), sigs. B2r–C1v; Dury, *Demonstration of the Necessity of Settling some Gospel Government* (1654) sig. A3v, 21, 41, 43; *SUL*, HP, 3/3/13A–B; Carrichio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri* (2003a) 87–133; Caricchio, 'John Dury, reformer of education against the radical challenge' (2010); Hessayon and Finnegan, *Varieties*, 78.

generation, among men, so nimble and so active about preferment and benefit, as those men are.'[61] Hence the Presbyterian campaign was in no small part an acknowledgement that they were being comprehensively outmanoeuvred by Seekers and their ilk.

The Presbyterians thus imposed a binary construction on the contemporary political landscape that divided interests in the shadow of the civil war into neat and intelligible categories. This was not a Hobbesian war of all against all but a distinctly Calvinist construction of a war between them and us. This would help to galvanise their base of support by developing a siege mentality; and the persecution that they suffered would consolidate their belief that they were indeed God's chosen. They would also attempt however to impose a binary construction on the contemporary religious landscape, which was a much more difficult task given the sheer variety of religious opinions and practice. In *Gangraena*, Edwards places the Presbyterians on the side of God and true religion, and everything else from the Catholics to the Seekers on the side of *heresy,* which the Independents' practice of toleration had unleashed and would continue to breed and nurture. This was a device more than a belief, as Edwards noted: 'I set down and joyn together all the following opinions in one Catalogue, because they all agree *in uno tertio* in that common notion of errour … in forsaking the communion of the Reformed Churches: yet I am far from thinking them all alike.'[62] Paradoxically this device rendered schism indivisible and religious pluralism a monolith. As John Grant's *Truths Victory* (1645), an early work in this Presbyterian campaign, proclaimed: 'Papist and all other heresies make one enemy'.[63] When talking of the dangers of sectarianism in the NMA, Edwards relies on the monstrous birth trope closely associated with sectaries in the popular press; he describes a mongrel heretic, borne of a cursed dam: 'their heads of Enthusiasme, their bodies of Antinomianisme, their thighs of Familisme, their leggs and feet of Anabaptisme, their hands of Arminianisme, and Libertinisme as the great vein going thorow the whole.'[64] Independency and other sects were: `so neer of blood' that they had become a `compound of errors'. Edwards chose his words carefully here, claiming the following conflation to be true, `for the most part without any solecism': `Independency is all Sectarism, and all Sectarism is Independency; Independents turn Baptists and Seekers … Sectaries turn Independents: We have now few Independents (justly labelled) but Independent Antinomians, Independent Anabaptists, Seekers &c or rather men made up of all of these.'[65]

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[61] Buchanan, *A short and true relation,* 85; See James Cameron on Buchanan in ODNB for links to Baillie.
[62] *Gangraena I*, sigs C4^V –D1^r.
[63] J.G., *Truths Victory,* 6.
[64] *Gangraena I* (26 February 1646) 14; this perennial trope linking sectarians with monstrous births includes the fictional account of Mary Adams in George Horton, *The Ranter's Monster* (30 March 1652).
[65] *Gangraena I,* 61.

Hence the *enemy* in this Presbyterian campaign was not Satan *per se* but toleration and schism: 'Toleration is the grand designe of the Devil, his masterpeece & chief engine. Independencie in England hath brought forth in a few years monsters of errours.' Independency was the mother, nurse, patroness and original of other Sects.'[66] Toleration had made England the home of the New World's heresies too:

> How many cast out of New England for their Antinomianism, Anabaptism &c. have come over and here printed books for their Errors, and preach up and down freely? So that poor England must lick up the persons, who like vomit have been cast out of the mouths of other Churches and is become the common shore and sink to receive in the filth of Heresies and Errors from all places.[67]

The Presbyterian Sion Enclave used similar language to denounce a toleration by which: 'sundry sectaries from other parts resort hither and … vent their poisonous opinions amongst us, as if they intended to make England a common receptacle of all the sinful dregs of foreign countries as well as former ages.[68] Just three days later, suggesting the possibility of coordinated action, the Scottish Presbyterian Commissioners warned of: 'an unlimited toleration for … matter of worship, and exercise of all Ordinances, expressly granted to all Sectaries'. This included: `those Nullifidians, the Seekers, … by all which the very foundation of Church and State is shaken, and neare to be overthrown.'[69]

Edwards called for unity, but unity through purity, and accused opponents of impurity in tones that at times prefigure anti-miscegenation rhetoric. He accused Independent churches of being: 'a linsey wolsey compounded Religion', admitting Anabaptists, Antinomians and Seekers; or at least of: 'not censuring wild sectaries (as Seekers) who have fallen from their Churches,' adding, 'Mr Sympsons Church hath bred divers Seekers.' He accused the Seekers and other sects of impurity: 'There are hardly now to be found in England … any sect that is simple and pure, and not mixt and compounded, that is, any sect (among them all) which holds only the opinions and principles of its own way, without enterfering and mingling with the errours of other sects.' [70] He

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[66] *Gangraena I,* The first Table, shewing the Contents of the first Division.

[67] *Gangraena I,* 77: Here there is perhaps a xenophobic note too; Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims* (2007) estimates around 10% of colonists returned to the mother country bringing their religious views with them. *cf supra* n.96.

[68] *A Testimony to the Trueth,* 2: for a detailed listing of the ideas and individuals attacked therein, see Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 158.

[69] Scotland Parliament, *The Answer of the Commissioners* (17 December 1647) 12; For later Presbyterian references to Seekers as Nullifidians, and notably atheists see: George Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions* (1649) Title headings; Francis Cheynell, *Divine trinunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (1650) 418-9.

[70] *Gangraena II,* 13; *Gangraena I,* 12; Baillie, *Anabaptism,* 104, echoes this complaint. Mr (Sidrach) Sympson was an Independent minister in London, who co-authored the plea for Congregationalism, *An Apologeticall*

cited Ephes. 4.4-6 to call for purity and unity and Lev. 19.19 and Deu. 22.9-10 to decry ecumenicalism as a violation of scriptural commands for separation.[71] Edwards view was held more broadly and is echoed in an anonymous Presbyterian pamphlet of 1647, which asked:

> But this Independent, what is he? Independent is a collective word. There be many strange creatures list themselves under this colour. There be seekers that deny all Ordinances and Churches … There be Anti-Scripturists, Anti-Trinitarians ... Arminians, Socinians … all these list themselves under the name of Independencie.[72]

Presbyterian attempts to husband a binary construction on the religious landscape did not hold and just three years later, others like Rutherford emphasised the plurality of dissent: 'There is then no stability of faith, but in two or three points, in which all sects (he lists fifteen including Seekers) agree, and make one true Church.' Now Presbyterians stressed the distinct nature of these sects who had previously been portrayed as an amorphous but contiguous heretical mass: 'Socinians have a way of their own, Anabaptists another way, Seekers and Familists, as Saltmarsh a far different way. Mr. Oliver Cromwell calls all Religions things of the mind'. In this work Rutherford refers to Seekers frequently (seventeen times) including the now deceased Saltmarsh in their number. He quotes Saltmarsh: 'Christians should live in the unity of the Spirit under their severall formes and attaintments', but counters: 'the Lord should be one, and his name one in both Kingdomes, and yet … that Gods name may be divided amongst Socinians, Arrians, Familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, Seekers, Antiscripturists, Libertines, Scepticks, Enthysiasts, Brownists, Independents this is worse then a Popish implicit faith.' Parallels with Popery were not uncommon and Rutherford charged that Saltmarsh: 'maketh the Scriptures as unperfect as the Papists doe, the one dreaming of a Spirit in the breast of the Pope and cursed Clergie to be the master of our faith, the other an Anabaptisticall Spirit of unwritten revelations to be our leader.' [73] Although a parallel is drawn between the views of the Seekers (as expressed by Saltmarsh) and the papists, they are now seen as distinct views, unlike the construction offered by John Grant in 1645. In 1642, Richard Vines had warned that religious tolerance could be a 'Trojan horse' for popery; by 1652 Presbyterians thought universal toleration a

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Narration (1644); *Gangraena I*, sig. D4V.

[71] Edwards, *Casting Down … a treatise against toleration and pretended liberty of conscience* (1647) sig. B2^r.

[72] Lover of Truth, Peace, and Honesty, *Anti-Machiavell. … An answer to … the case of the kingdome stated* [by Marchamont Nedham] (3 July 1647) To the courteous reader, A3^v.

[73] Rutherford, *A free disputation against pretended liberty of conscience* [6 August 1649] 131, 395, 253; Rutherford, *Survey*, 249.

Trojan horse for sectarians, including Seekers: 'whose doctrines are … become so bitter that whoso drinks thereof is in danger to die… who will admit of no unity with us of the Presbyterian-way.'[74]

One dynamic that worked against Edwards' attempt to construct schism as indivisible and all who disagreed with him as religiously monolithic was his penchant for personalities and his propensity for personal attacks (noted above). Even though his war was against the religious pluralism borne of the Independents' toleration he certainly engaged in battles with several individuals he identified as Seekers: these were not merely bystanders caught in the crossfire of his broader campaign against Independency. Hughes notes that heresiologists often assumed that loosely connected ideas, or even the teaching of one influential man, had to be associated with a 'sect': an organized group of people.[75] Key individuals that Presbyterian heresiographers identified as Seekers and attacked included NMA Chaplains Saltmarsh, Dell and Erbery along with Leveller theorist Walwyn. Substantial works on Dell and Erbery already exist so we will focus now on Saltmarsh as a case study in the pattern of construction that Presbyterians conceived for Seekers.[76]

Presbyterians and Saltmarsh

Presbyterian writers actively targeted Saltmarsh in 1646 and in so doing constructed an archetypal Seeker consisting of several tropes. This archetype calls to mind the contemporary examples of Theophrastian character sketches on figures such as the Puritan. It would prove to be similarly enduring as the traits and associations that Presbyterians developed would continue to be attributed to Seekers by most of those who wrote after them. In February, Edwards' *Gangraena* set the pace with sixty references to Saltmarsh (styled `M. al's trash' at one point). Edwards accused Saltmarsh of allowing a woman to preach at the church of which he was Minister in Brasted, Kent.[77] This associated Seekers with the inversion of the social order and its contingent unleashing of sexual licentiousness. Such popular fears were never far from the surface among many contemporaries and this charge is akin to the dog whistle tactics in modern political campaigning; sectarianism threatened the social fabric and women preachers referenced powerful cultural tropes of

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[74] Vines, *Calebs Integrity* (part of a commentary on Calvin and Servetus that was published in 1646 but preached on 30 Nov 1642); John Elmeston, *An essay for the discovery and discouraging of the new sprung schism [of] Mr Henden of Bennenden.* (1652) To the Reader.

[75] Hughes, 73.

[76] Walker (1970) Morgan (1968, 2012); four shorter studies of Saltmarsh exist: Solt, 'Saltmarsh: New Model Army Chaplain' (1951) 69-80; Gwyn, 'Saltmarsh: Quaker Forerunner' (2003) 3-24; Parnham, 'Saltmarsh and the Mystery of Redemption' (2011) 265-98; Kileen, 'My exquisite copies for action': Saltmarsh and the Machiavellian Bible' in Killeen, Smith and Willie (eds.). *Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England* (2015).

[77] Edwards, G*angraena I,* 129, 20.

termagants and hysterical religious enthusiasm. Attacks by John Ley and Thomas Gataker followed in April. Ley developed the trope that Seekers were quixotic, indecisive and amorphous by claiming to be unable, even after reviewing his writings, to ascertain Saltmarsh' actual position and thus identify him as a Seeker or Antinomian.[78] Gataker said Saltmarsh's only held his views on Free Grace for personal ease, because they exempted him from dutiful Christian observance and strengthened Ley's construction that Seekers like Saltmarsh made groundless assertions: 'wrought out of his own curious head and fancy, without warrant from Gods Word'.[79]

At the same time, in a private letter to Ley, his colleague in the Westminster Assembly, John Dury said Saltmarsh's religion pivoted on an 'unruly' spirituality which both undermined respect for Church authority and fostered a democratic principle in the State. In other correspondence with Samuel Hartlib, also in April 1646, Dury said Saltmarsh had become the main writer on behalf of a 'party' which aimed to impede the Presbyterian Church-settlement. This party endangeredany any possibility of 'Orderly Courses and Establishments'.[80] This chimes with Edwards' fears, expressed in *Gangraena* that Saltmarsh had gained an unacceptable amount of political influence through his role in the NMA. It could also help explain the context for the Presbyterian strategy of reducing complex political and religious situations down to binary oppositions of them and us. In September, Gataker published *Shadowes Without* Substance, a reply to Saltmarsh' *Reasons for unitie, peace, and* love, (which was itself a reply to earlier attacks from Gataker, Ley and Edwards). This entire 114 page work is an attack on Saltmarsh and focuses primarily on his arguments for universal redemption in his work *Free*-Grace, although it does also state provocatively that Saltmarsh: `is fallen off to the Antinomian partie and become an Architect of a new Sect, that wants as yet a peculiar distinguishing name.'[81] An even more extensive attack follows a year later in Rutherford's *Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist* of November 1647. It calls Saltmarsh the 'chief familist in England' and focuses on all the core Seeker beliefs: the plea for liberty of conscience that would open the gates to innumerable heresies; the rejection of all externals including ordinances, ministry and church that was constructed as an unwillingness to submit themselves to the personal and moral strictures of a Christian life; and the total spiritualisation of faith and worship until Christ's return, which in the meantime made them nullifidians, if not atheists.[82] Tim Cooper has noted that Gataker and Rutherford's numerous accusations against Saltmarsh, Dell, and Tobias Crisp were

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[78] Ley, *Light for Smoke*, sigs. B2r–C1v; Hessayon and Finnegan, *Varieties,* 78.
[79] Gataker, *A Mistake or Misconstruction Removed* (1646) To the Christian Reader, 27.
[80] Dury, *Demonstration of the Necessity*, 21, 41, 43; Caricchio, *John Dury* http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3787; Hessayon and Finnegan, *Varieties*, 78.
[81] Gataker, *Shadowes Without Substance* (11 September 1646) 105.
[82] Rutherford, S*urvey*, 194, 251. Chapters 18-34 focus on Saltmarsh and Seeker beliefs particularly.

wrong regarding the charges of: libertinism, anti-scripturism, pantheism, the deity of Christ and the existence of heaven and hell.[83]

The position of Saltmarsh as Chaplain to Fairfax's regiment and the heterodox views contained in his sermons and printed works attracted the attention of the Presbyterian heresiographers of the 1640s. Rutherford's *Survey* singles out: 'the Antichristian doctrine of Saltmarsh and Will. Dell' on its title-page.[84] Edwards also complains that: 'Master Saltmarshes saints' do not keep fasts or thanksgivings. In 1645 Thomason identifies Saltmarsh as an 'Independant' but in his *Survey* Rutherford labels Saltmarsh a Seeker.[85] Saltmarsh does not own the name himself and in *Sparkles of Glory* (1647) Saltmarsh gently admonishes Seekers for waiting for what is already there and available in Christ and his saints. As its title suggests, Saltmarsh's *Groanes for Liberty* (1646) dealt with toleration; in it he attacked the Presbyterians, especially Edwards, for opposing toleration, when they had pleaded for it on their own behalf only a few years earlier, when Smectymnuus were attacking the bishops. Gerald Aylmer has noted that demands for religious toleration could mean very different things to different people and to the same people in different contexts. He notes that for figures like Rutherford it meant no more than the right to replace prelacy with presbytery, but Aylmer does acknowledge that Saltmarsh and the sect of Seekers were sincere pluralists and some of their number, like Williams, did push toleration to its full conclusion and advocate tolerance of Catholics, Muslims and non-believers, though these were rare.[86]

Edwards' *Gangraena* mentions Saltmarsh almost sixty times and Rutherford's *Survey* over 650 (including the index and headings). Rutherford claims that Saltmarsh: 'pleads for liberty of conscience [and] professeth himselfe A Seeker, and disclameth Presbytery, Independency, Anabaptisme, and that there is neither Ministery, Church or Ordinances, nor any promise of continuance of them till Christ's second coming.' He claimed that: 'Saltmarsh, Mr Dell and the Seekers, in print disclaime both Presbyterians and Independents.'[87] From 1646 the London ministers increasingly believed NMA heretics were the greatest threat to Presbyterianism and became open critics of the army's activities. Christopher Love (1618-51) attacked Dell but this was probably part of an attack on radicalism in the army rather than Seekerism *per se*, given Dell's army connections, as Love also made recorded attempts to protect his erstwhile mentor, Erbery, from persecution and

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[83] Cooper, `Richard Baxter and Antinomianism' (Ph.D Canterbury, NZ, 1997) 81-7.
[84] For Dell, *Gangraena III,* 9, 61, 63, 64, 213, 242, 262, 266.
[85] See annotation on Thomason copy of Saltmarsh, *The opening of Master Prynnes new book* (22 October 1645)
[86] Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities' (1988) 11-12.
[87] Rutherford, *Survey*, 194, 251; Hughes, 109; Walker, 114 n.34.

censure. [88] Edwards targeted six works of Saltmarsh and evidence that the Presbyterian strategy was hitting home with the broader public in London is seen by similar targets appearing in a 10,000 strong petition of 16 July 1647. [89] In response, Saltmarsh was particularly provoked by Edwards' use of witnesses who refused to identify themselves: 'where there is not one name subscribed, may not be as well written by Mr Edwards, as to him.' [90]

Edwards also identified Walwyn as a great Anabaptist, Antinomian and Seeker but Walwyn himself said: 'I do not esteeme these as names of reproach, no more then to be called Presbyterian or Independent'. He thought the limits of his own and anyone's influence in religious matters was: `to gently perswade to what *I* conceive is both evidently true, and really usefull: and thus have *I* done amongst those my loving friends, whom you judge seekers.' Here Walwyn was probably describing his great friend the notorious Seeker, Wrighter (who also knew Walwyn's fellow Leveller Richard Overton and contributed to his *Man's Mortalitie*). It is noteworthy that, although Walwyn will not own the name himself, he does emphatically confirm the existence of Seekers: `Am I one because I know many, and have been amongst them often, that I might know them fully.' Walwyn certainly shared some, though not all, Seeker beliefs and practices. He agrees with Seekers that the current ministry lacked the gifts of their apostolic equivalents but adds that all may still: `make use of those things they have left unto us in the Scriptures of the mind and will of God'. He also provides evidence of the kind of debates that must have been current wihin the Seeker milieu: `I have often perswaded with them that they should not reject what they may with much comfort make use of, because they cannot find what they seek, & for ought I know are not like to find in this world: see now what a seeker you have found of me.' [91]

Edwards identified Erbery as: 'a Seeker and I know not what', who preached at Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk in July 1646. His sermon claimed his belief in general redemption and free grace; that God would shortly raise up extraordinary apostolical men with the authority to preach the gospel; that he was against gathering churches and anabaptizing; that men ought to wait for the coming of the spirit, as the apostles did and until their arrival conference and prayer were available but not ministry and sacraments. [92] Other Presbyterians also identified Erbery as a Seeker and a

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[88] Love, *Short and Plain Animadversions* (1646); see Eliot Vernon on Love in ODNB [accessed 18 Feb 2014].
[89] *To the Right Honourable, The Lord and Commons Assembled in Parliament* (1647); Hughes, 395-6.
[90] Saltmarsh, *Groanes,* 26-7; Vendettuoli, writing in 1958, likened Edwards to the Congressional witch hunter Senator Joseph McCarthy, Vendettuoli, 76.
[91] Walwyn, *A Whisper in the Eare of Thomas Edwards* (13 March 1645) 6-7; Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism* (1930) 94, claims that Walwyn was not a Seeker; Vendettuoli, 46; McMichael and Taft, (eds.). *Writings of Walwyn* (1989); for the connection to Wrighter, see Como, *Radical,* 399.
[92] Edwards, *Gangraena I,* 24.

Socinian in their accounts of the public disputation with Francis Cheynell and other ministers on 11 January 1646.[93] Finally, Edwards also identifies Clarkson as a Seeker and reports that his sermon: 'tended to the vilifying of the Scriptures, all Ordinances, Duties, Ministers, Church, and State'.[94]

Presbyterians on Seekers as a Group

According to the Presbyterians, the Seekers were a sect, and they refer to them as such consistently between 1645 and 1660.[95] A year after Walker did so in his Commons sermon of January 1645, Gaspar Hicks' sermon, to the Lords this time, said: 'There is in these our dayes sprung up a refined, sublimated sect of Seekers, who look after that which can never be found'. Edwards refers to them as a sect in various places and some idea of his perception (genuine or otherwise) of their increasing size by February 1646 is given here:

> The Sect of Seekers growes very much, and all sorts of Sectaries turn Seekers; many leave the Congregations of Independents, Anabaptists, and fall to be Seekers, and not only people, but Ministers also; and whosoever lives but few yeers (if the Sects be suffered to go on) will see that all the other Sects of Independents, Brownists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, will be swallowed up in the Seekers, alias Libertines.

This concurs with Saltmarsh's claim in March 1646 that Seekers were fourth in number behind Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists at this time. Strange then, that in September, Gataker names Saltmarsh as: `the architect of a new sect, with no peculiar distinguishing name', unless he intends a different group to the Seekers.[96] It is also possible that Edwards' addition of 'alias Libertines' intends a larger and more heterogenous entity.

To the Presbyterians, the Seekers represented an object lesson in why toleration was a dangerous idea. The Seeker response to the relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline was to reject scriptural discipline in the form of ordinances, which was a complete anathema to a group like the

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[93] There are four accounts of this meeting: Cranford, *Truth Triumphing Over Errour and heresie,* (14 January 1646); Cheynell, *An Account Given To Parliament By Ministers Sent By Them To Oxford* (1647); Erbery, *Nor Truth Nor Error (1646)*; and a royalist observer who gains much sport from both sides: Robert Waring, *A Publicke conference betwixt the six Presbyterian Ministers and some Independent commanders* (1646); McLachan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England* (1951) 226ff also links Erbery to Socinianism; Vendettuoli, 71; for a detailed discussion of Cheynell's charges of Socinianism and anti-Trinitarianism against Erbery, see Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 175.

[94] Edwards, *Gangraena II*, 136.

[95] Walker, *sermon preached before the … Commons*, 19; Baillie, *A dissuasive from the errors of the time* (22 Jan 1646) 163; Gaspar Hickes, *The advantage of afflictions* (28 January 1646) 13; Edwards, *Gangraena II* (16 February 1646) 9, 11; Gillespie, *A treatise of miscellany questions* (1649) 1; Thomas Hall, *The pulpit guarded with XVII arguments occasioned by a dispute at Henly in Arden in Warwickshire* (25 April 1651) 15; Prynne, *A new discovery of some Romish emissaries,*2-3; Edward Reynolds, *A seasonable exhortation of sundry ministers in London* (1660) 8-9.

[96] Edwards, Gangraena II (1646) 13-14; Saltmarsh, *Groanes*, 22-3; Gataker, *Shadowes Without Substance*, 105.

Presbyterians who prized unity and uniformity above all else. Just as Milton had sought to portray Presbyterians as the new gamekeeper, (new presbyter is but old priest writ large) so Presbyterians tried to construct Seekers as the new outlaws, outside of the Christian community, as Nullifidians beyond the pale of acceptable dissent from prelacy or episcopacy. Presbyterians attempted to create their own identity partly by inversion: we are the things our opponents are not. They constructed the Seekers in a more consistent way than other groups and this helped them set the type that later writers would use when assembling their own characterisations of the Seekers. The Presbyterian construction exerted the most powerful influence on other groups writing about the Seekers. This was for three principal reasons: partly because of the sheer volume of their output and its reasonable consistency over time; partly because of chronology - it was the *first* 'campaign' and was thus able to set the template that others followed; and partly because their construction touched on so many deeply held fears and tropes about the dangers of religious schism, most of which resonated with other concerned groups. Presbyterians adopted a populist language of blame rather than hope as a strategy designed to broaden and deepen `negative cohesion': it was not designed explicitly to proclaim the merits of their own view, but rather, by attacking the purported flaws of opponents like the Seekers, to galvanise their own base and to shepherd waverers among the Godly and wider public into the Presbyterian fold.

They voiced this privately, as seen in letters by Baillie from June and July of 1644, and then publicly and repeatedly in print from January 1645. The timing of their decision to go into print was possibly driven by their fears that the Independents were proposing to increase toleration towards groups such as the Seekers.[97] In January 1645, John Dillingham, a member of Cromwell's political set, wrote in the Parliament Scout, that he opposed 'universall tolleration', but given that no: 'two since the world began, have been of one minde in all things: Why should not then a quiet latitude be allowed?' [98] Dillingham then attended the Uxbridge Treaty in February 1645 with Cromwell's former mentor, the Independent Oliver St John. John Thurloe was with them and his papers contain a manuscript that shows this Independent circle supported the toleration of Seekers at this time:

> The independant, anabaptist, antipædo-baptist and seeker, who thinks all ordinances lost, for any positive offence against that which is the received way of the state, are not at all punishable, as such, sith none of their principles, candidly examined, engage them in direct opposition to either table in any branch. This or that form of government ecclesiastical, or

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[97] On the following section see Como, *Radical,* 386-7.
[98] *Parliament Scout* (30 Jan 1645) 671.

worship of God, according as any of them holds it out, if they be private, and civilly peaceable.[99]

Whilst this level of tolerance may seem surprising to modern readers, it would have been shocking to contemporary Presbyterians when the paper circulated. In February 1645, some leading Independents within the parliamentary coalition were weighing a deal with the King based on a limited toleration so broad that it even included those like Seekers, who rejected all ordinances and church forms! A succession of Presbyterian works appeared in print from May 1645, detailing Seekers' beliefs and blaming their appearance on the Independents and religious toleration. In January, however, they had already voiced their concerns directly to the nation's political leaders, since Walker's sermon was given to Parliament itself:

> a new Sect of Seekers, who renounce the Scriptures as blinde guides, and wait for new lights to lead them to the true Religion… in the mean time they will seek, and suspend, and fasten on no Religion, till the new lights appeare. … but by flatteries, forgeries, and new fangle opinions, draw away many well-meaning people [from Christ].[100]

Note in this first public Presbyterian reference to the Seekers, the use of the phrases `in the meantime' and `suspend': these stress the temporary and contingent nature of the Seeker position; a view that later Presbyterians would attempt to ossify into a permanent and resolved but fantastical and utopian position.

In early summer 1645, the speedily produced second edition of Pagitt's *Heresiography* added the Seekers to its list of heretics. He claimed that they: 'doe deny that there is any true Church, or any true Minister, or any Ordinances: some of them affirme the Church to be in the wildernesse' and hoped for their safe return.[101] In June, John Bastwick claimed: 'most of them, if not all, were first Independents', and repeated Pagitt's description verbatim; adding that Independent ministers were the cause of such: `new, hidious, and monstrous opinions, and … the sad differences amongst Brethren: … their doctrines give way to all such errors, and … give liberty for the finding out of new truths, and changing of opinions according to New-lights.' He linked Independency with the Seekers in mocking tones: 'Lights, Lights, Gentlemen-INDEPENDENTS, hang out your Lights, your New-lights there; hang out your Newborn-lights there, that the poore Seekers may finde a Church

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[99] Bod. L., MS Rawlinson A.1, 607-8. Transcript based on *Thurloe Papers* Vol I, 607 (January 1645); Hartlib Papers 26/2/3B, Letter from Thomas [Wiltshire?] To Hartlib, 1 March 1644 [accessed 12.08.19].
[100] Walker, *Sermon Preached Before the … Commons* (29 Jan 1645) 19.
[101] Pagitt, *Heresiography* (8 May 1645) 141: Others added to the second edition also include Papists, so the initial omission does not suggest those groups excluded were obscure or unknown.

amongst you'. [102] William Prynne strengthened this connection to the Independents and the theme of quixotic novelty the following month: 'those Independent Seekers who like Wandring Stars, gad every day after New-Lights, New-fashions of Church Government … not knowing yet what Government they would have, or where to fix; believing and practising all things, with a reserve, to alter their opinions and practise every day upon discovery of further light.'[103] David Buchanan completed the round of attacks for 1645 in the pamphlet Baillie had asked him to write. It went on sale on 14 September and sold 3-4000 copies in just two days. This shows a sustained and coordinated Presbyterian response to the emergence of the Seekers and suggests a ready market of interested readers. Buchanan noted the Seekers disunity and confusion: 'they cannot agree among themselves unto any one thing … except it be upon continuing in phrenaticall Fancies; and those of the most exacter sort amongst them, are named Seekers, not of God, or his Truth, and of Peace; but of themselves and of novelties'.[104]

It was not Walker's initial characterisation, but rather Pagitt's account that seems to have been the primary template for later Presbyterian accounts. For example, where Walker had used `renounce', Pagitt and all subsequent accounts by others eschewed Walker's term `renounce' and substituted `deny': 'many have wrangled so long about the Church, that at last they have quite lost it, and go under the name of Expecters and Seekers, & doe deny that there is any true Church, or any true Minister, or any Ordinances.'[105] By 1646, 'Seekers and Waiters' feature tenth of sixteen in Edwards' list of sectaries. Whilst the *content* of Presbyterian accounts is broadly consistent over time (due to the impact of copying and some coordination) there is a more conciliatory *tone* towards Jackson's *Sober Word* (1651) than there had been to Saltmarsh in the 1640s.[106] In 1653, Alexander Ross described: `Seekers or Expecters, who deny there is any true Church or Ministry, and therefore they are seeking one, but they know not where to find this Church, except it be in the land of Utopia'.[107] In 1658, another work describes: 'an erroneous profession of a Seeker, denying either Baptism, lawful Ministry, or right Churches to be on earth, until the Apostles arise again.'[108] In 1670 a Scottish Episcopalian clergyman wrote about a journey he'd taken in 1657 and remembered: 'Seekers were men who denied that there was a true church or ministry, and therefore sought one

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[102] Bastwick, *The second part of that book call'd Independency not Gods ordinance,* (10 June 1645) 37-8, postscript, 75.
[103] Prynne, *A fresh discovery* (24 July 1645) 1-2; For later examples see: Thomas Case, *Asarkokaukema* (1655) 81, As a Christian; Prynne, *A new discovery of some Romish emissaries* (1656) 2-3; Thomas Hall, *A practical and polemical commentary* (1658) 150, 240-1.
[104] Buchanan, *A short and true relation,* 85.
[105] Pagitt, *Heresiography* (2ed, 1645) 141.
[106] Baillie, *Anabaptisme*, 97; Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 332; Garrett, *Roger Williams,* 148; Jones, 461.
[107] Ross, *Pansebeia* (1653) 412.
[108] Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Survey of … Thomas Hooker* (1658) 126.

but know not wh^r to find this church except in ye land of Utopia'.[109] Which is strikingly similar to Ross (above). Having said that, it also looks like Ross himself based his own discussion of sectarian beliefs on Pagitt, whose fourteen line description of Seekers or Expecters in his second edition remained completely unchanged in all six subsequent editions and it is perhaps merely this consistency and availability that accounts for its influence as a source of opinion on the Seekers by other groups. Contemporary Episcopalians like Fraser echoed it, despite having earlier included the Seekers in a list of a 'Hydra's head' of a dozen opinions, 'all of them the Spawwn of Presbitrie'.[110] Furthermore, in a case of life imitating art, this Presbyterian construction has become the master historical narrative of Seekerism through its influence on modern Quaker historians.

Another Presbyterian whose influence can be attributed to the frequency with which he harangued Seekers and the consistency of his message, is Baxter. Baxter's construction of the Seekers is interesting but not internally consistent, which given the volume of his output over the 30-year period under discussion, is not perhaps surprising. Baxter portrays the Seekers as a calculating, united and powerful force at times but also a naïve, schismatic and weak one elsewhere. The most common imagery he deploys (on four separate occasions) is of a: 'Masterless Dog that will follow any body that will whistle him'.[111] The Seeker, like the dog, is restless and full of boundless energy; determined, even stubborn; doting and loyal; but ultimately unintelligent, naïve, easily led and always in need of an external master to lead him. Baxter constructs the Seekers as a sizeable threat and claims in half a dozen different places that they represent the greatest of all sectarian dangers to the true church. He offers them as the very anti-model of the Christian humility desirable in a minister: 'the more humble and heavenly any one is, and consequently most honest, and fit to be a Pastor of the Church, the further he will be from the Seekers way!'[112]

Baxter places Seekers at the extreme edge of the Christian spectrum; only papists and infidels are further from the pale of true Christianity. He claims infidels are: 'too thick about us, under severall garbs, especially under the maske of Seekers' and labels the Seeker Wrighter as the 'masked Infidel of this Countrey'.[113] He says that no Church can pass the Seekers' overly rigorous

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[109] *AUL* MS 2538, vol. 1, ff. 28r: James Fraser of Phopachy, clergyman: *Triennial travels June 1657 - April 1660*, (1670) quoted in Raymond, 'Review. In 1649, to St. George's Hill' (2012) 443. Many thanks to Ariel Hessayon for alerting me to this reference.

[110] *AUL*: MS 2538, vol.1, ff. 27v; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 242-3.

[111] Baxter, *The safe religion* (1657) To the Protestant Reader; Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 344; Baxter, *Fair warning, or, XX prophesies concerning the return of popery* (1663) 22; *ibid*, 53-4.

[112] Baxter, *Key for Catholics*, 346; *Ibid,* Epistle Dedicatory; Baxter, *Fair warning*, 22; *Ibid*, 59; Baxter, *Defence of the principles of love*, 172-3; Baxter*, The difference between the power of magistrates and church-pastors and the Roman kingdom* (1671) 25.

[113] Baxter, *Confirmation and restauration the necessary means of reformation* (1658) Postscript; Baxter, *A saint or a brute* (1662) 157-8.

tests of ministry, church or ordinance so: 'we must all turn Seekers to day, and Infidels tomorrow'; for the Seeker is 'like to be an Infidel ere long'.[114] Lastly, he says that such as maintain there is: 'no certainty that the Scripture is true … or that there is such a thing as a true Ministry … are either Infidels or Papists'.[115] This aims to place Seekers beyond a Christian community of faith; to characterise their position as one that is qualitatively not quantitatively different, so their views cannot be included when choosing the location of a negotiable middle ground. Seekers cannot be reasoned with because: 'The Seekers have no Church or Ministry [and] he is either no Christian, or of a crazed brain, that thinks Christ hath no Church or Ministry but them.'[116] Seekers reject the fundamentals of Christianity and as such are dangerous. What also makes Seekers (and Quakers) a particular threat is Baxter's charge that they mask and conceal their true intentions and position, and this theme is found consistently throughout his work: 'He that wilfully concealeth his Faith, alloweth me to suspect it to be naught.'[117]

Against this characterisation of a solid and unified cadre of dedicated sectarians plotting to pull the nation away from true religion, is Baxter's repeated assertion that Seekers are disunited; inevitably splintered into an unruly gradation of schisms by an arrogant reliance on inner inspiration that guarantees disorder. Baxter bemoans the more general division and subdivision of Churches: 'one Congregation of the division labouring to make the other contemptible and odious; and this called … purer worshiping of God'.[118] He mentions the divided nature of the Seekers themselves on three occasions. In 1659, his *Key for Catholics* sub-divides Seekers into six sects (*Fair Warning* repeats the claim four years later). Each represent a recognisably Seeker view, but Baxter delineates fine gradations regarding the extent to which organised religion has been rejected or spiritualised; in this way Baxter constructs a descending ladder of Seeker belief. This could be designed in the spirit of divide and rule: partly to emphasise Seeker uncertainty and disunity because this implies weakness, but also perhaps to indicate that those at the moderate top-end of the ladder were within reach and with sufficient encouragement and assurance could be offered a helping hand to restore them to the visible church.

The closest were those Seekers who held that a true church and ministry existed, but they just could not find it. The second were those whom Jackson had identified as true Seekers: doubting and seeking (but not denying) any organized political church, ministry or ordinances. The third flatly

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[114] Baxter, *Five disputations,* 175, 209.
[115] Baxter, *Fair Warning*, 53-4.
[116] Baxter, *A second sheet for the ministry* (1657) 12.
[117] Baxter, *Key for Catholics*, Epistle Dedicatory.
[118] Baxter, *The cure of church-divisions* (1670) The Authors II. Reasons of this Book.

deny any true apostolical churches, ministry, and church ordinances on Earth, as things lost in the universal apostasy since the time of Christ. The fourth include Wrighter and doubt the certainty of Scripture itself (as well as the ministry, ordinances and church) and say no one is bound to believe the gospel but those that have themselves seen miracles to confirm it. The fifth sort own church, ministry and ordinances; but suppose themselves above them: as these exist only for Christ to guide men to a higher state that they have already received through the spirit so now have the law written in their hearts, and are under a higher *second covenant* (as they call it). The sixth sort think all believers should now have overgrown the Scripture, ministry and ordinances and include the David-Georgians.[119]

All historians of the Seekers cite this account as Baxter's established view on Seekers but another account in the following year, titled *The True Catholick Church Described* has been overlooked and leads us to rather different conclusions.

> because they purposely hide their opinions; and because I meet with them of so many minds, I shall therefore deal only with the Opinions *commonly supposed to be theirs*, not determining whether indeed they are theirs, or no: for I care not who maintains them, so I do but effectually confute them.[120]

This begs the question, 'commonly supposed' by whom? The opinions that follow this statement in *The True Catholick Church Described* are drawn from earlier Presbyterian constructions of Seeker views of the nature of the church. It also invites a range of interpretations: it suggests that Baxter is *consciously* refuting a received *construction* of the Seekers rather than the actual beliefs of an identifiable group or person. This shows an acknowledgement of the construction that is not as visible in other writers; other contemporary works maintain the assertion that real people hold these particular views (although Colin Davis has claimed that real people did not, in the case of the Ranters).[121] This admission by Baxter could support Davis' argument in a Seeker context: if a group of abstract errors had the human focal point of 'Seekers', this would increase the sense of clear and present danger that they presented. This would make the reader more fearful and thus more willing to be galvanised into opposition against the Seekers, as a locus of this combination of heresies. Alternatively, it could also be interpreted to suggest that for Baxter (and Edwards too, given that *Gangraena* is structured loosely around 176 errors) the printed public disputes were about the *ideas*

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[119] Baxter, *Key for Catholics*, 331-4; repeated in Baxter, *Fair Warning*, 53-4: David-Georgians is most likely an Anglicisation of David Joris, the sixteenth century Dutch Anabaptist.
[120] Baxter, *The true Catholick church described* (1660) 54-65 (my italics).
[121] Davis, *Fear, Myth and History, passim.*

themselves, not the people who held them and that the 'Seeker' position included a range of increasingly spiritualised views regarding the visible church. This seems a more accurate description of the situation at the time and so more convincing, giving further support to the characterisation of a Seeker milieu: a nexus of ideas, doctrine, practice and people; in that order.

Seeker Doctrine and Practice

Having discussed the nature of the Presbyterian campaign against Seekers individually and collectively, we will drill down to specific accusations and aspects of this debate and focus on Presbyterian accounts of the Seeker's views on Scripture and the visible church, its ministers and its ordinances.

Seekers and Scripture

Scrutamini scripturas. These two words have undone the world.[122]

In a lost foundational Seeker text, of late 1645 or early 1646, Clarkson argued that Scripture was the wrong place to search for God: 'Scripture, whether true manuscript or no, whether Hebrew, Greek or English, it is but humane, so not able to discover a Divine God. Then where is your command to make that your rule of discipline, that cannot reveal you God, nor give you power to walk with God.' This early Seeker text grounds the Seeker withdrawal from observing ordinances in a rejection of Scripture as a source of divine will; rather than in a rejection of the authority of those who would administer such ordinances. Erbery searched Scripture for the spirit that would release him from its authority: 'By seeking I finde in the Scriptures … That Book, which was sealed before, shall be open again, and so it is, Rev.10.1-2. …. when Christ shall appear in the Saints, then shall the Mystery be but a little Book; 'tis no more then God manifest in mans flesh.' These earlier Seeker works do not cite Scripture as the ultimate authority, but Presbyterians would have us believe that Seekers never did, which is not true. In 1651, Jackson told his readers that their objections to his work, if they had any, would: 'sendest me back to the searching of the Scriptures, which must be the Standard & Rule of trial'.[123] So, the Seeker stance on Scripture was ambivalent or at least developed over time; but the Presbyterian condemnation of it, was not.

The relationship with Scripture was a key battleground. In January 1646, Edwards called Wrighter: 'a Seeker and now an anti-Scripturalist … one of the chief heads of those that deny the Scriptures to be the Word of God.'[124] Exactly two years later, Henry Wilkinson (1616-90) framed the issue as Presbyterians saw it: 'Let's not be a rule to our selves, nor follow extraordinary impulses upon our spirits and revelations, but … let the Scripture be the Umpire, & let's acquiess altogether in its determinations'. He notes the Seeker stance as living above Ordinances but says: 'all their Lights, however new, are but Ignes fatui, false Lights, to lead us into dangerous destructive ways: Let's

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[122] John Selden, *Table Talk* (1892) 45.
[123] From *Pilgrimage of Saints*, 4, quoted in *A Testimony to the Trueth,* 5; see Como, *Radical*, 393; Erbery, *Nor Truth, Nor Error* (11 January 1647) 1-7; Jackson, *Sober Word*, To the Reader.
[124] Edwards, *Gangraena I*, 27.

therefore… square all by the infallible rule of the word of God.'[125] Presbyterian heresiographers repeatedly accused Seekers (as they did others) of denying or scandalising the Gospel and Scriptures; Rutherford named Schwenckfeld and Niclaes as Seeker influences but characterised the group's current stance as isolated: 'the spirit without the word must only teach the Seekers.'[126] Pagitt included a 'sect' that denied the Scriptures in his second edition. Although he does not name them, their description immediately precedes that of the Seekers, or Expecters: leaving the reader to infer guilt by juxtaposition perhaps? [127] Gataker charged Saltmarsh with innovation: 'like the Spider, that weaves her web out of her own bowels, hath spun us, not out of Gods Word, but out of his own brains … not conclusions from Gods Word, but groundles assertions, wrought out of his own curious head and fancy, without warrant from Gods Word'. [128]

Edwards suggests Franck, 'a great Seeker and Enthusiast', as the progenitor of the Seeker emphasis on revelation over Scripture, echoed by Dell: 'the believer is the only book in which God now writes His New Testament.'[129] Rutherford agrees: 'so they preach, so they beleeve, and so they professe, not because *God so saith,* but because their conscience so dictates to them.'[130] Although this construction is tempered by Baillie, who says those who are: 'only Seekers… are content in a private and personall way to embrace the Scriptures, and the most substantiall truths therein contained.'[131] Thus there is disagreement in the Presbyterian construction of Seekers here.[132] We have already seen that Schwenckfeld and Franck represented different expression of spiritualism, but here both are considered antecedents of the Seekers. This supports my conception of a heterogenous Seeker milieu, rather than a narrower and more homogenous Seeker sect.

Baxter enlists the charge of anti-scripturism as an adjunct to his central claim that Seekers are crypto-papists (of which more later). He claims the first question both Papists and Seekers ask is: 'How know you the Scripture to be the Word of God?'[133] He characterises Seekers and others: 'that believe not the Truth of the Scriptures', as 'Pagans professing Christianity'.[134] Thus Baxter clearly

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[125] Henry Wilkinson, *Three decads of sermons* (1660) 132-3.
[126] Edwards, *Gangraena I,* Epistle Dedicatory A5ᵛ, 20; *Gangraena II*, 136; Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 141; Rutherford, *Survey,* 175.
[127] Pagitt, *Heresiography* (2ⁿᵈ ed) 141.
[128] Gataker, *A Mistake or Misconstruction Removed* (21 April 1646) 32-3.
[129] Dell, *Tryal of spirits … confutation of divers errors delivered by Mr Sydrach Simpson* (4 December 1653) 20.
[130] Rutherford, *A Free Disputation,* 256.
[131] Baillie, *Anabaptism*, 97-8.
[132] An *IHR* seminar on 'Heresy-hunting and ecclesiology: Robert Baillie and the London Presbyterians c.1640-1662' by Alexander Campbell on 14 March 2013 concluded that there were significant deficiencies in Presbyterian coordination.
[133] Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest*, 177.
[134] Baxter, *Additions to the saints everlasting rest* (1651) preface.

places Scripture at the gateway to Christianity. Baxter makes an unusual argument that the two greatest dangers are Papists (predictably) but also the profanity that Seeker anti-scripturism animated. He feared that because such profanity was the: 'religion that men are born in'; and because men were: 'naturally so indeared to their lusts, that they would not have the Scripture to be true, [and] will easily hearken to him that tells them it is false.'[135] For Baxter, the sinner had two choices: either Scripture was false or he risked being undone for ever: `no wonder if he choose the former, and turn his ear to seekers and infidels, and pick up some crumbs of comfort from their dung'.[136] This professes a Hobbesian view of the natural state of Man and suggests that, for those who felt that human nature had no sense of right or wrong, or self-control, the prospect of the demise of scriptural authority and ordinances must have been truly terrifying.

Seekers, Ministers and Ordinances

We have already seen lots of Presbyterian references from the 1640s to Seeker beliefs regarding the visible church, its ministry and its ordinances in this chapter. This short section considers the consistency of the Presbyterian construction of these core seeker beliefs. [137] Some criticism was specific to particular ordinance observance; Richard Vines criticised the Seeker stance on both the Lord's Supper, and the sacrament, for example.[138] But most works were more abstract; they attacked the *principle* of Seeker attitudes to ordinances, often extrapolating the consequences of such a stance in promoting disorder. Robert Jenison condemned: `Seekers, and other high-flowne Sectaries, who will be above all Ordinances of God'.[139] Richard Vines accused the: `Seekers, Sans-Ordinance men, and Supra ordinance men, that will be without and are above Ordinances', of inappropriate haste in their leaving-off of ordinances. He said: `Christ is not yet come the second time, and as it was his first coming that set them up: So it is his second only that shall take them down; let not pride infatuate you.'[140] Firstly, this differentiates between those Seekers who have resolved to live *without* ordinances and those who have decided that they have reached a spiritualised plane, *above* ordinances (Jackson had discussed both of these positions by this time in his *Sober Word*). Secondly, and more importantly, Vines is also claiming the source of ordinances to

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[135] Baxter, *Fair warning*, 22.
[136] Baxter, *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity* (1655) 191-2.
[137] Presbyterian works that highlight the Seeker rejection of valid administrators: Pagitt, *Heresiography* (1645) 141; Edwards, *Gangraena I* (1646) 60, 82-3; Wellwisher of Truth & Peace, *A relation of severall heresies* (1646) quotes Pagitt verbatim; Rutherford, *Survey,* 194; Gillespie, *A treatise of miscellany questions* (1649) 1; Ross, *Pansebeia* (1653) 412; Anthony Burgess, *CXLV expository sermons* (1656) 558; Rutherford*, A survey of the Survey*, 126.
[138] Vines, *A Treatise Of The Right Institution, Administration, and Receiving of the Sacrament Of The Lords-Supper*, A Treatise of the Right Institution, Administration, and Receiving of the Sacrament.
[139] Jenison, *The faithfull depositaty*, 37.
[140] Vines, *Sermons preached*, 177.

be Christ, not the Church or Scripture; and so whilst he accepts their waiting stance, he commands Seekers to continue to obey ordinances until Christ himself or new Apostles appear, and not to ignore them in the meantime.

The Presbyterian account of the core Seeker objections was summarised in December 1646 by Baillie who said: `many Anabaptists have now turned Seekers'. This position involved: `denying the truth of any Church [or] … Pastors now on the earth … any preaching of the word … joining in prayer … celebration of Baptism or the Lords Supper, any Church discipline [or] … ordinance whatsoever; while God from heaven send new Apostles to work miracles and set up Churches.'[141] We have noted the influence of Pagitt's 1645 account, but Pagitt omitted any reference to a Seeker requirement for miracles in *Heresiography.* These were added in a short summary pamphlet released in 1646. This work reduced Seeker beliefs to two core points: `1 That there is no Church nor Ordinances, nor Ministery in the world. 2 That it is the will of God, that miracles should attend the Ministery, as in the Primitive times.'[142] This suggests that these were the key headlines that Presbyterians wanted readers to associate with Seekers. Note the prominence of objections to the ministry which appeared more prominently in Independent and Presbyterian accounts, than in Baptist constructions, which focused more on the Seeker rejection of ordinances, especially baptism. This references a broader contemporary debate about whether the 'age of miracles' had ceased.[143] Seekers claimed miracles as the proof required to justify an administrator's authority; Presbyterians countered: 'of Miracles … to which Monasteries did much pretend … even now there be Seekers and Sayers … if thou beest a Believer … and dost love Christ as thou oughtest, thou hast no need of Miracles. For Miracles are given to unbelievers.'[144] This neatly associated the Seekers with Catholics, atheists and false messiahs simultaneously. Baillie's construction above also positions the Seekers as rejecting current church models in favour of the apostolic model. The exact nature of the primitive church was itself debated fiercely, but features more in Baptist-Seeker debates than among Presbyterians.

Presbyterian constructions of Seekers in this key phase of 1645-7 did undergo change. By December 1647 Rutherford's construction of Seeker beliefs asserted a direction of travel towards increasing spiritualisation. He attacked Saltmarsh and Dell: 'who will have the accomplishing of Gospel reformation … by the spirit only; without all power of man, and so it is not visible nor

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[141] Baillie, *Anabaptism*, 96-7.
[142] Pagitt, *A brief collection out of … Heresiography* (1646) 15.
[143] See Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (2006).
[144] Francis Fullwood, *The church-history of Britain … by Thomas Fuller* (1655) 330.

ecclesiastick.'[145] He also repeated the conflation of Seekers with the earlier heresy of Familism: 'Familists and Seekers would have no Churches re formed according to the Apostlick paterne; because they think the Apostles legall and Jewish men, and they judge all externals and outward Ordinances, as hearing, baptisme, praying, to bee Jewish and legall, and hold that love is all.'[146] Hence, for Rutherford: 'Dell and Antinomians with Schwenckfeld will have the Gospel preached to none, but to those that have the internal word and Spirit in their hearts'.[147] This charge goes right to the heart of Seeker practice (as Presbyterians constructed it): Seeker preaching did not aim to propagate the gospel, as Scripture commanded, but to proselytise spiritualism. This is not wholly inaccurate since the Seekers' collective worship (such as it was) was not an essential element of their creed and served a primarily pastoral purpose as a forum for mutual exhortation and spiritual solace whilst waiting on the Lord to send new dispensations.

Baxter is atypical of the Presbyterian position regarding his comments on ordinances. Twenty of his works refer to ordinances, of the thirty that attack Seekers; but only to note the Seeker position on ordinances and not to challenge it. He seems to believe that the role of the minister is more important than the commands of Scripture, in maintaining Christian order. This stance sets him apart from the Baptists who focus on ordinances; and most Presbyterians in the 1640s who focus on both the Seeker rejection of the ministry and the consequent loss of ordinances. On this issue Baxter is closer to the Independents who also focus primarily on the Seeker rejection of the ministry. This could be because most of his works appear a little later when some of the heat had gone out of the argument about the Seeker rejection of ordinances: religion and society had not collapsed, as previously predicted. Seekers had been challenging the authority of the Ministry for over a decade by disputing the validity of their calling and succession when Baxter published a pair of works in its defence in 1657. His defence was not new and repeated aspects of both Presbyterians and Baptist accounts from the 1640sa decade earlier. He said Scripture talked of two sorts of Ministers: one sort, including Apostles and Prophets that received revelation immediately from God (whose authority Seekers acknowledged); and a second sort who received no immediate revelation but whose role was to proclaim existing laws (whose authority Seekers did not recognise). Baxter said Seekers and Papists cheated men by 'jumbling all together' and calling for miracles to prove both kinds of Ministry. Although he acknowledged that the current quality of Minister was only of the second sort, he denied that miracles were necessary to prove their validity; this was only true of

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[145] Rutherford, *Survey,* 30; Walker, 91-2.
[146] Rutherford, *Survey,* 209, 212. Rutherford's rejection cited the Baptists' staple text [Mat. 28.19].
[147] Rutherford, *Survey*, 35; Vendettuoli, 41.

the first kind, of which there were none, currently.[148] He expends considerable energy asserting the right and duty of the Ministry to guide and chide their flocks as necessary but, unlike Presbyterian accounts from the 1640s, Baxter does not repeatedly demonise the Seeker 'rejection of ordinances' and the necessity for their observance in maintaining order in his printed works.

In his works that deal with the Seekers, Baxter makes only a single short and sympathetic reference to the Seekers treating every day as a Sabbath, for example, in response to the excessive 'scrupulousness and censoriousness' of some among the Godly. He makes no reference at all to the Lord's Supper or to Seeker practice on prayer.[149] He details the grounds for the Seekers' stance on baptism accurately but denies that their critique warrants a response. He does pose the rhetorical question: if the Seekers should grow and significant numbers become unchurched, and their children unchristened, what will follow?[150] He claims that the Seekers were the first to reject infant baptism and suggests the importance of this stance as a driver for many, including Williams, towards a Seeker position, which reverses the direction of causation proposed by Baillies' letters from the summer of 1644. He makes an interesting claim that after their rejection of baptism, Williams' Baptist followers in New England dissolved their gathered church and turned Seekers (a reminder that the Seeker position was not a gathered church, but rather a next step, once one had been rejected). Baxter notes that this group retained just one principle: 'That every one should have liberty to worship God, according to the light of their own Consciences; but otherwise not owning any Churches or Ordinances of God, any where upon earth.'[151] This suggests individual liberty of conscience as the core value of those who unchurched themselves and became Seekers. It is not surprising that a sustainable model of worship, structure and discipline did not emerge from this pretext and it was only by subordinating the individual to the leaders that Quaker groups found a stable and sustainable church model.

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[148] Baxter, *One sheet for the ministry against the malignants of all sorts* (1657) 5; Baxter, *second sheet for the ministry*, 2-3, 16; Baxter, *Key for Catholics*, 344; Baxter, *True Catholick church described*, Preface.

[149] For the Sabbath, see Baxter, *A Christian directory* (1673) 572.

[150] Baxter, *Confirmation and restauration,* Postscript

[151] Baxter, *Certain disputations of right to sacraments* (1658) 41; Baxter, *More proofs of infants church-membership*, 154; Baxter, *Defence of the principles of love*, 172-3. The same quote appears verbatim in Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, the ecclesiastical history of New-England* (1702) Vol VII, 9 showing the breadth of Baxter's influence.

Seeker Identity

This chapter will finish with a discussion of the Presbyterian characterisation that Seekers were deceptive and mercurial. This includes the accusation that Seekers were secretly Papists or of no actual faith at all; that they used the rhetoric of spiritualisation to hide their true purpose of debauchery and that they continually shiften their position, and ultimately, held no single fixed position as a group.

Hide and Seekers

For all Protestants, the greatest threat to the Reformation was Catholicism and a repeating motif in Presbyterian polemic sought to cast the Seekers (and Quakers) as Papal agents in disguise, sent to discredit the Reformation by fomenting divisive sectarianism. The most frequent exponents of this device were Prynne with six examples and Baxter with nine.[152] They are rather formulaic in their content and all aim to associate newer heterodoxies such as the Seekers with older established heresies. Baxter is clear: 'The truth is when a man is made Seeker he is half made a Papist'.[153] The key repeating theme of this common accusation is that the papist half is hidden within the Seeker. Prynne warns that: 'those swarmes of Jesuites, Seminary Priests and Popish Fryers, now in England under the disguises of Anabaptists, Gifted Brethren, Dippers, Seekers, Quakers, New-lights, Mechanickes of all Trades … may succeed them in their Ministry, to subvert our Church, Religion, and reduce us back to Rome.'[154] Baxter claims: `another sort of Hiders … called Seekers' as a stronghold of the Papists. He expertly draws out the hidden dark purpose of Seeker scepticism: `They practise the lesson that we must suspect all Religion … Christ and Scripture … be unchristened … that we may be espoused to the Pope. This is the Papists work by the Seekers, to take us off from all, or from our former Religion, and blot out all the old impressions, that we may be capable of new.'[155] He expanded this claim to smear other groups within or close to the Seeker milieu at the

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[152] In chronological order, <u>Prynne</u>: *Substance of a speech made in the Commons* (4 December 1648) 111; *A Gospel plea for the lawfulnes & continuance of … tenthes*, 7; *Quakers unmasked, and clearly detected to be but the spawn of Romish frogs* (19 June 1655) 5 and passim (in part a reply to Seeker turned Quaker John Audland); *A new discovery of some Romish emissaries*, 2-3; *The remainder, or second part of a Gospel plea* (1659) *passim; A true and perfect narrative* (1659) 43. <u>Baxter</u>: *The saints everlasting rest* (1650); *Christian concord* (1653); *The safe religion* (1657); *Grotian religion discovered* (1658); *Key for Catholics* (1659); *The successive visibility of the church* (1660); *Fair Warning* (1663); *Defence of the principles of love* (1670); *More proofs of infants church-membership* (1675). <u>Others</u>: Vincent, *God's terrible voice in the city* (1667) 93-4; Welch, *Popery anatomized* (1672) 482; see also Weld*, A false Jew* (1653) *passim;* Manton, A practical commentary […] on the Epistle of Jude (1657) 178; Trapp, A commentary or exposition (1660) 293-4;
[153] Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 331-4; repeated in Baxter, *Fair Warning,* 53-4.
[154] William Prynne*, A Gospel plea for the lawfulnes & continuance of … tenthes* (1653) To the Unprejudiced Christian Reader, but Prynne repeated the charge on countless occasions.
[155] Baxter, *Key for Catholics,* 331.

spiritualist end of the contemporary religious spectrum. He claimed he: `quickly found that the Papists principally hatched and actuated this sect, [Seekers]… However, they closed with the Vanists, and sheltered themselves under them, as if they had been the very same.'[156]

The charge ranges from the notion that Seekers do not even realise that it is Papists who are leading them astray: 'The Seekers (who are the Jesuits By blows, though they yet know not their own father)'; to the assertion that: 'of any one Sect in England, there is none to be so much suspected of a spirit of Jesuitism, as the Seekers of all sorts'.[157] Embedded within the charge is the accusation that the Seekers are anti-scripturists and their attacks on the Ministry and Ordinances are a device to bring believers off from religion so that they may join the Roman Catholic faith. This is connected to the arguments discussed above that the Ministry and Scripture were of particular importance in a time of great flux, as the only means of maintaining Christian order and discipline. All of these themes appear in a published printed exchange between Baxter and William Johnson in 1660: 'if … Seekers … question all things and endeavour to disparage the Holy Scriptures, Ministry, Church and Ordinances, though but in a questioning way … suspect a Papist.'[158]

Baxter tapped into a powerful trope of the Catholic in England as a furtive plotter. Papists did not seduce the Godly openly but in secret, through the sects. They: 'plead under the name of Seekers against the certainty of all religion'; 'under the Vizard of Infidels and Seekers they plead against Scripture and Christianity'; they are 'crept in among all sects', they: 'wear the coat of the Quaker, Anabaptist, Seeker … and many a poor soul will take a … Seeker into their bosome … that would be afraid of them if he knew them to be Papists.' [159] Baxter consistently argued that the Seekers incessant questioning: 'against the certainty of religion', was designed: 'to loosen men from all Religion'. The masterless dog image features repeatedly here to show when men: 'have lost their Ministry, Church and Religion, they are easily allured to the Church of Rome'. [160] An irony that must be mentioned here is that English Roman Catholics themselves also offered printed attacks against: `Seekers, who, if they judg not themselves to be above Gospel-Ordinances of Word and Sacraments, and look upon them as carnal low Administrations, yet please themselves to live without them.'[161]

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[156] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 77.
[157] Baxter, *Saints everlasting rest*, 177; Baxter, *Fair Warning*, 37-8, 53-9.
[158] Baxter, *Successive visibility of the church*, 26-7.
[159] Baxter, *Christian Concord* 2, 85; Baxter, *The safe religion*, To the Protestant Reader; Baxter, *Fair Warning*, 22; Baxter*, Key for Catholics*, Epistle Dedicatory*;* Baxter, *Grotian religion discovered*, 99-100; Baxter, *Key for Catholics*, 40-1; Baxter, *Saints everlasting rest*, 177.
[160] Baxter, *The safe religion*, To the Protestant Reader; Baxter, *Fair Warning*, 22; Baxter, *Key for Catholics*, Epistle Dedicatory*;* Baxter, *Fair Warning,* 53-4.
[161] Humphey Ellis*, Pseudochristus* (7 March 1650) 61-2

Seekers and the Slippery Slope of Sectarianism

The idea of a hierarchy of heresy is present throughout Presbyterian heresiographies and is consistently portrayed as a slippery slope. Presbyterian writers populate the landscape with a host of distracted and lost souls progressing through the sects on a spiritual journey and straying further and further from the Presbyterian truth. In October 1645, John Clarke suggests a sectarian staircase of heresy in a sermon preached at Lincoln: `Many fall from schism to heresie from being Separatists to Anabaptists, Antinomians, Arminians, Socinians, Libertines, Atheists, Seekers. They shall never find that old, and right way ... they be over head and ears ingulfed, from the puddle of heresie, into the bottomlesse pit.'[162] In January 1646, Baillie confirmed the Seekers' position at the bottom of a slippery slope of progressive heresy: 'How much neerer these [Independents] professe to draw towards us then their [Brownist] Fathers, so much the farther their other Brethren run from us; for, the *Anabaptists* go beyond the *Brownists* in wandring; the *Antinomians* are beyond the *Anabaptists*, and the *Seekers* beyond them all'. He also confirmed their novelty; those who leave the Independents: 'when they have run about the whole circle of the Sects, at last to break out into the newest way of the Seekers, and once for all to leap out of all Churches'.[163] A month later, Edwards follows the same hierarchy: 'from the highest Seeker to the lowest Independent'.

Edwards was not consistent though; in this same book, his account of Wrighter's spiritual journey places the Seekers just beyond the midpoint of a trajectory from presbyterianism to atheism: `[he] fell off from the Communion of our Churches, to Independecy and Brownism … after that he fell off to Anabaptism and Arminianism and to Mortalism … After that he fell to be a Seeker, and is now an Antiscripturist, a Questionist and Sceptick and I fear an Atheist.' This account though does not seem accurate. In November 1645 Edwards had obtained: 'a Paper of very dangerous and subtile Questions given abroad by Wrighter, about the Ministery, Church, and two severall Baptismes appertaining to the true Ministery of the Gospel.' This description matches the questions in the manuscript seized from Overton, dated 17 Oct 1645, (discussed in the next chapter) and these questions clearly come from the pen of someone within the Seeker milieu. Baxter also knew Wrighter in the 1650s and confirmed: 'A Seeker he profest to be.'[164]

By May 1646 however, Edwards suggested the Seekers had been overrun by more extreme groups and positions. He sketched the progression: `from Independency to Anabaptism, and Antinomianism, and from Anabaptisme to be Seekers, and from Seekers to be

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162 Clarke, *Leaven, corrupting the childrens bread …* (n.d. 1646) 15, 43.
163 Baillie, *A dissuasive,* 6, 163.
164 Edwards, *Gangraena I,* Preface B2ʳ, 60, 82-3; Baxter, *Reliquae Baxterianae I*, 116; the convincing suggestion that Wrighter was the author is from Como, *Radical*, 398-9.

Antiscripturists, and Sceptiks, yea, Blasphemers and Atheists.' A month later, John Vicars outlines a two-tier system of heresy with the more heinous 'crafty foxes' such as Papists and prophane Atheists ahead of 'little foxes' such as: **'**Anabaptists, Antinomians, Independents, Seekers, and such like Libertines**'.**[165] In January 1647, Baillie published the second part of *A Dissuasive* entitled *Anapabtism: the True Fountaine of Independency* and changed the position of the Seekers within his hierarchy to match Edwards' new pattern of progression: 'Many of the Anabaptists are become Seekers denying all Churches, all Officers, all Ordinances'.[166] He also now supported the idea that more extreme positions had overtaken the Seekers. He sketched a journey through: 'the whole circle of errours, from Independency to Antipaedobaptism, from hence to Arminianism, from this to Antinomianism, thereafter to the Seekers, *thence* to the Antitrinitarians, the Antiscripturists, the Familists, the Atheists, whither he will.'[167] Hughes has noted that the heresy ordinance, for which Presbyterians agitated in 1646-8, also offered a hierarchy of offences, with those punishable by death, such as denial of the Trinity, or contempt for God, distinguished from lesser errors such as the rejection of infant baptism.[168] These Presbyterian commentators then, writing during the peak months of the Presbyterians' print campaign against heresy, showed some collegial coordination when describing (what they clearly perceived to be) a fast-moving progressive radicalisation in the second half of 1646; but this did not come out of a calm sea. In an earlier letter of June 1644 Baillie had recounted:

> Most of [the Independents] partie are fallen off to Anabaptisme, Antinomianisme, and Socinianisme; the rest are cutted among themselves. One Mr Williams has drawn a great number after him, to a singular Independencie, denying any true church in the world, and will have every man to serve God by himself alone, without any church at all. This man has made a great and bitter schism latelie among the Independents.[169]

In the following six weeks, Baillie clearly got to know Williams and wrote again that: 'Sundry of the Independents are stepped out of the church and follow my good acquaintance Mr Roger Williams, who says there is no Church, no sacraments, no pastors, no Church officers, no ordinances in the world nor has there been since a few years after the apostles'.[170]

This pattern of characterization continued into the interregnum. In 1650, John Downham (1571-1652) licensed a pamphlet which claimed that separatism led successively to Anabaptism,

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[165] Edwards, *Gangraena II,* 164; Vicars, *The schismatick sifted* (22 June 1646) 4.
[166] Baillie, *Anabaptism,* 96-7; for a similar characterization of Tombes as a Seeker, and Seekers as inheritors of Anabaptism see John Cragge, *The arraignment and conviction of Anabaptism* (n.d. 1656) 59, 87.
[167] Baillie, *Anabaptism,* 104, my italics.
[168] Hughes, 93.
[169] Laing, *Letters of Baillie*, II, 191-2. Letter dated 7 June 1644.
[170] Laing, *Letters of Baillie*, II, 212. Letter dated 23 July 1644; Vendettuoli, 84.

Seeking, Levelling and Ranterism.[171] London's Provincial Assembly also noted a similar progression in 1654: 'how are they fallen from heaven, some turning Scepticks and Seekers, others Ranters and Quakers, and what not? Falling and falling, till at last they grow openly prophane and profligate Atheists'.[172] William Jenkyn agreed, but with greater floridity; he described sectarians progressing through Brownism, Anabaptism, Arminianism and Socinianism to the Seekers:

> Or rather loosers of themselves, just nothing, as a thin empty, cloud, they are tossed so long up and down by winds, that at length they come to nothing at all. Their heads are like Inns, and their opinions like Travellers, which oft lodg not above one night in them; like wax, they take any new impression. It is hard to say whether, they are pluralists or neutralists in Religion, and as hard to please them in any opinion, as to make a Coat that should constantly fit the Moon. They know they shall dy, but in what faith they know not. One error is ever a bridg to another. 2 Pet. 3.16.'[173]

The following year Thomas Case (1598-1682) regretted the course of the progression: 'It is very sad, to consider, how many fine spirits, thorow too much delicacy from searchers are turn'd seekers & of seekers are at length resolv'd into down-right Atheists'.[174]

Edwards claimed that Clarkson: 'turned from Anabaptist and Dipper, to be a Seeker'. Perhaps this description helped to structure Clarkson's own account of his sectarian development.[175] Whilst Edwards frames this journey through increasingly radical sects as a compulsive process, it has also been described as a journey driven by repulsion: Garret argued that Jackson's reluctance to accept the name Seeker in *Sober Word*, was very likely prompted by the prevalence of antinomian and anti-Trinitarian teachings among those who had come to be called by the name and Williams may have denied the name for the same reasons.[176] At the Restoration there was still an unmistakable message from the Presbyterians that Seekers were part of a larger sectarian problem that was still growing. The moderate Presbyterian Edward Reynolds bemoaned: 'the divers Sects of Libertines increasing every day in numbers, power and malice; under the various forms and names

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[171] Anon, *A Blow at the Root* (1650) 151-2; this work was licensed by John Downham, rector of All Hallows the Great in Thames Street, London. see Paul Seaver on Downham in *ODNB* [accessed 16 July 2019]; but Morton argues that the work is the production of the Presbyterian establishment, Morton, *World of the Ranters* (1970) 102; Davis, *Fear, Myth and History* also notes that the work appeared to have establishment backing; Underwood, *Primitivism*, 15 n33.

[172] London Provincial Assembly, *Jus divinum ministerii evangelici* (7 Feb 1654) 32, 64.

[173] Jenkyn, *An exposition of the epistle of Jude* (24 May 1654) 304.

[174] Case, *Asarkokaukema,* 81, As a Christian; for identification as a Presbyterian see Michael Mullett on Case in ODNB [accessed 2 Dec 2015].

[175] Hughes, 248 n52.

[176] Garrett, *Roger Williams,* 164.

of Quakers, Seekers, Ranters, Familists, Behemists, &c'. John Trapp prophesied doom in biblical terms: 'Our Church is at this day pestered, with Atheists (who first have bin Seekers, Ranters, Antinomians, Antiscripturists, &c.) and is even dark with them, as Egypt once was with the Grashoppers.'[177]

A Swarm of Shapeless Seekers

In mid-1645, Pagitt introduced the notion that Seekers were amorphous into Presbyterian polemic and, if accurate, this supports the notion of the Seeker milieu. He said: 'some of them affirme the Church to be in the wildernesse, and they are seeking for it there: others say that it is in the smoke of the Temple, & that they are groping for it there.'[178] The image is one of uncertainty and also confusion. Members of more stable and uniform groups like the Presbyterians sought to attack the amorphous nature of the Seeker milieu by deploying the tropes of Proteus and the swarm. The character of Proteus: an unnatural, incoherent and shape-shifting body, conflicts with the parallel aim to portray the sectaries as a highly organised group capable of coordinated and effective politicking. Hence there is a polemical downside to portraying Seekers in this way, if it were not true; supporting the idea that it was, and the notion of a genuine Seeker milieu. The upside was that this characterisation did connect Seekers to an infamous lineage that included Puritans and Familists. Puritans had previously been accused of Protean shape-shifting: 'and appeareth sometimes like a Protestant, sometimes like a Papist, & sometimes like an Anabaptist.' The Family of Love were characterized similarly due to their Nicodemite willingness to dissemble. Seekers were not dissemblers in the same way but the act of seeking itself and the range of views within the Seeker milieu allowed their opponents to portray them as Protean and quixotic.[179]

This protean image was not exclusively used by Presbyterians or aimed only at Seekers: the Church of England clergyman Richard Sherlock aimed it at Quakers too: `it being the essential property of a *Schismatick,* like *Proteus,* to change his minde into every opinion, represented to his fancy as plausible … the separatists like travellers out of the beaten road, finde no path to walk in.'[180] The image of a swarm of sectarians served to register chaotic anarchy and headlessness but also the purposefulness of the hive, and the deafening buzz of unrestrained discursiveness.[181] Rutherford talked of: 'new Bee-hives of Anabaptists, Seekers, Enthusiasts, Familists, and

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[177] Reynolds, *A seasonable exhortation*, 8-9; Trapp, *A commentary or exposition* (1660) 293-4.

[178] Pagitt, *Heresiography,* 141. This is not a reference to Saltmarsh' book, *Smoke in the Temple*, which was not published until January 1646.

[179] Oliver Ormerod, *Picture of a Puritane* (1605) sig. A2^V;

[180] Sherlock, *Quakers Wilde Questions,* 193-4; it was also used against Lilburne.

[181] Poole, 106.

Antinomians', and Edwards conjured a leaderless, or at least inappropriately-led, mob that featured powerful icons of the social disorder that sectarianism had unleashed: 'What swarms are there of all sorts of illiterate mechanic Preachers, yea of Women and Boy Preachers!'[182] Edwards, perhaps, articulates the idea that the act of expression was feared rather than the words themselves. Hughes argues: 'the very structure and content of *Gangraena* combined to conjure up the sprawling endless mass of contemporary sects, blasphemies and heresies in all their immediate monstrous horror.' This could have been a deliberate strategy to facilitate bewilderment or just a symptom of Edwards' own bewilderment. [183] In contrast to this view, Kirsten Poole argues persuasively that, within its own historical literary context, *Gangraena* emerges as an almost scientific attempt at documenting sectarianism and scrutinising it through meticulous recording.[184] In terms of the Seekers, there is evidence that Edwards does both of these things at different times and contradicts himself at various points within the sprawling narrative of *Gangraena*, as we have seen. Poole argues that: Edwards' classification aims to eliminate confusion – or quite literally con-fusion'; and that: 'He divides the swarm and reinserts it into an organising matrix … through the form of the catalogue … so that a grammar for the language of Babel is created.'[185]

The metaphor of the swarm is echoed somewhat in the accusation of rootlessness. Prynne combined this with a conflation of Independents and Seekers to add to the sense of a blind maelstrom or perhaps even a simple moth:

> ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (as those Independent Seekers are) who like Wandring Stars, gad every day after New-Lights, New-fashions of Church Government, wavering like empty Clouds without water, or waves of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; not knowing yet what Government they would have, or where to fix.[186]

This image recalls the Puritan practice of gadding to sermons but suggests an unhealthy and distracted preoccupation with novelty for its own sake and the implicit charge of Seeker tergiversation.[187] Also in 1645, Baillie describes the appeal for those who: 'have run about the whole

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[182] Rutherford, *Survey*, 177; Edwards, *Gangraena I*, A2[V].
[183] Hughes, 106; For other swarm references see Prynne*, A Gospel plea, To the unprejudiced Christian Reader*; Taylor, *A discovery of a swarme of seperatists, or, a leathersellers sermon* (1641); Taylor, *A Swarme of Sectaries and Schismatiques* (1641); [D.P.P], *Antidote Against the Contagious Air of Independency* (1644) 24; Poole, 'Dissecting Sectarianism' (2000); Poole, ch 4; Bitterman, 'Early Quaker Literature of Defense' (1973) 207.
[184] Poole*, 119, 114.
[185] Poole, 118, 120-1, 123; Ormsby-Lennon, *Dialect of Those fanatic Times* (Ph.D, Pennsylvania, 1977)*;* Bauman, 1.
[186] Prynne, *A Fresh Discovery,* 1.
[187] For tergiversation see also Gataker, *A Mistake,* 43.

circle of the Sects, at last to break out into the newest way of the *Seekers*, and once for all to leap out of all Churches'.[188] This harmonises with voices within the Seeker milieu such as Isaac Penington who recounted his passage through the Seekers' spiritual wilderness, as a dark period when he was: 'tossed and tumbled about, melted and new-molded.'[189] This theme of incessant travelling through the sects reappears the following year, when Thomas Gataker mocks Saltmarsh's Free Grace: 'And as for his Title-page, experiment of a disquieted soul, tossed to and fro by times for twelv yeers together.' Gataker also suggests Seekers take this path rather than: 'the more harsh and unpleasing that Gods Ministers out of his Word, have formerly chalked out unto them'; because: 'they think to make a shorter cut of it.'[190] Edwards complains of those sectaries beyond Independency: 'running every day further and further, adding daily out of pretence of New-Light and Revelation, one horrid error, or new Ordinance or other.'[191] That same year this trope found its most eloquent expression through the pen of Baillie: 'We are not yet come towards any period of the journey of these wanderers, for the spirit that is in them is restless, and keeps them in a perpetuall motion.'[192] This construction of the Seekers as quixotic was easily developed into a portrayal of Seekers as Dissemblers thereby linking them (in the readers mind) to the Familist heresy of the previous generation: 'so I might give instance in Clarkson professing against the dipping to get out of prison, and as soon as he was loose turning Seeker.'[193] Edwards' emphasis here on Clarkson's physical travelling (through Essex, Kent etc) mirrors his portrayal of the inevitability and inexorability of travelling through the sects. Both sides refer to a spiritual 'journey' with Prynne and Baillie, among others, following the same imagery.

The idea that Seekers cannot settle on any position because they are driven by the iron whim of their own internal fancy reappears throughout the period. It serves to cast the Seekers against the stability of eternal scriptural authority and present their views as the product of human folly not divine inspiration. Buchanan said they: 'will not settle upon anything at all, except it be upon continuing in phrenaticall Fancies; and those of the most exacter sort amongst them, are named Seekers, not of God, or his Truth, and of Peace; but of themselves and of novelties'.[194] John Bastwick described: 'the Seekers needlesse, vain, and unnecessary janglings about the truth and the

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[188] Baillie, *A dissuasive*, 162-3.
[189] Penington, *Light or Darkness* (1650); Brink: 'Quietism of Isaac Penington' 30-56; Barbour & Roberts: *Early Quaker Writings,* 224-6; Barbour, 'Ranters, Diggers, and Quakers Reborn', 60-5.
[190] Gataker, *A Mistake*, 27, 'To the Christian Reader'; Gataker, *Shadowes Without Substance*, 10, 12-13.
[191] Edwards, *Gangraena I,* 101.
[192] Baillie, *Anabaptism*, 97-8.
[193] Edwards, *Gangraena II*, 119.
[194] Buchanan, *A short and true relation,* 85.

way.'[195] Westminster Assembly member Gaspar Hicks said Seekers: 'light up the candle of their own conceits at noon, to look after that which is clearly discovered by the Sun of the Word'.[196] Robert Waring noted of Erbery's supporters in his disputation with Cheynell, that: 'they seem'd rather possess'd then inspird.' [197] Rutherford said Seekers preach, believe: 'and professe not because god so saith, but because their conscience so dictates to them. And here is the Libertines Creed.'[198] Christopher Love noted that: 'when the Apostle saith, prove all things, hee never intended that men should be unstable in Christianity'. He repeated Prynne's construction of Seekers as: 'wandering stars … who settle no where, but are always finding out new Truths, with their new Lights, which usually in the End prove to be nothing but old Errors.'[199] By the mid-1650s, Presbyterians had woven Ranters and itinerant Quakers evangelists into the same polemical weft as the Seekers. Ralph Robinson lamented:

> We have many Spiritual Vagrants … many wandring Stars in the Firmament of our Church at this time, and … many are misled by them. There is a generation of Ranters, Seekers, Quakers, risen up among us. Prophaneness is now stampt with the name of Religion, and this Religion hath many professors.[200]

Anthony Burgess denounced their: 'fickleness, inconstancy and scepticism'; and said they were :'in their souls, what Cain [was] in his body, vagabonds about the earth'. [201] Burgess told his readers that their own lack of conviction exposed them to the infection of heresy: 'Such empty straws and feathers are we, that any new opinion doth presently seduce us; … from this pollution it is, that we have so many apostates, that there are Seekers, that there are so many Neutrals, that there are so many who think any, in any Religion, may be saved.'[202]

A final strand of the characterisation of Seekers as amorphous and continually shifting in their beliefs, was the accusation of Nullifidianism. Either, Seekers vacillated as they did, to conceal that they actually had faith in nothing; or they had pushed doubt to its limit and had no faith left at all. Several scots sent this consistent message from late 1647. In August, the Scottish Kirk looked south and warned that the growth of sectarian error was hindering the Reformation. They listed liberty of conscience and various sects as key dangers and added: `those Nullifidians, or men of no

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[195] Bastwick, *The utter routing of the whole army of all the Independents and Sectaries* (1646) The Antiloquie.
[196] Hickes, *Advantage of afflictions,* 13.
[197] Waring, *A publike conference,* 4.
[198] Rutherford, *A free disputation*, 256.
[199] Love, *A Christians duty* (17 June 1653) 71.
[200] Robinson, *Safe conduct* (12 January 1655) 67-8.
[201] Burgess, *CXLV expository sermons,* 593-4.
[202] Burgess, *A treatise of original sin* (1658) 217-8.

Religion, commonly called Seekers.'[203] In November, Rutherford stressed the implications of the Seekers' total spiritualisation of faith and worship until Christ's return: in the meantime, they were nullifidians, if not atheists.[204] In December, the Scottish Parliament weighed in with a fresh warning against an unlimited toleration for: 'matter of worship, and exercise of all Ordinances, expressly granted to all Sectaries'; including: 'those Nullifidians, the Seekers … by all which the very foundation of Church and State is shaken, and neare to be overthrown.'[205] George Gillespie later completed the scots' attack and the repetition of key phrases and the linkage of nullifidianism with atheism suggests some degree of coordination or at least copying: 'Some are unstable in the truth, and unstable in error too … they are of a new faith, and a new religion, every year, if not every Moneth.' Ross offers Reuben's reproach 'unstable as water, thou shall not excell' [Gen, 49. 4] as a warning against: 'One sort of the Sectaries [who]… are known by believing nothing, these passe now under the name of Seekers.' He looks back a century to the 'ancient Fathers' who would say: 'these Seekers were in their dayes called Atheists … what other name is due to these Nullifidians who are of no Religion? [206]

English Presbyterians heard these warnings and joined the chorus. In 1650, Francis Cheynell bemoaned those who pretended to be spiritual Christians yet denied the divine Nature and distinct subsistences of Christ and his Holy Spirit. He complained of: 'this Licentious Age, wherein Scepticks in the highest points are called Seekers, and Hereticks good Christians'. He repeated the claim that the current today's Seekers were 'as the Fathers called them', Libertines, Nullifidians and Atheists. He warned: 'the Seekers whom I am to deale with; who deny the Lord Christ to be God; … I shall easily discover that this is Atheisme.'[207] A final indicator of the enduring influence of Presbyterian construction of the Seekers is seen when other Englishmen, who were not Presbyterians, climbed on board this band-wagon. Primitive Episcopalian Edward Leigh, identified: 'One sort of Sectaries there is which will not ingage to hold any thing, but are known by believing nothing; these passe now under the name of Seekers … and will never hold out in time of danger'. Others, like Independent John Goodwin, a key figure in our next chapter, portrayed Nullifidianism as the inevitable destination of the Seekers' spiritual peregrinations: 'Sir, we have heard that a Seeker, who had run through many Forms and Sects, when he came to dye, cryed out that he had been of all Religions, and was now of none; Lord, saith he, I have been seeking thee till I have lost my self. O seek and find me now,

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[203] *A declaration and brotherly exhortation of the Generall Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (20 August 1647) 8-9.

[204] Rutherford, S*urvey*, 194, 251. Chapters 18-34 focus on Saltmarsh and Seeker beliefs particularly.

[205] Scotland Parliament, *The Answer of the Commissioners* (17 December 1647) 12.

[206] Gillespie, *A treatise of miscellany questions* (n.d. 1649) 141-2.

[207] Cheynell, *Divine Trinunity,* 417-18; see also Lim, 179.

or I am lost for ever.' [208] After the Restoration, the Cathoic writer Thomas Blount added 500 words in the second edition of his 1656 dictionary, *Glossographia*. There was still no entry for the term *Seeker* itself, but this new entry speaks volumes: Nullifidian (from nulla fides) one of no faith, Religion or honesty; a Seeker.'[209]

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[208] Edward Leigh, *A systeme or body of divinity consisting of ten books* (1654) 385. Goodwin, *A fresh discovery of the high-Presbyterian spirit*, 55.
[209] Blount, *Glossographia*, (2ed. 23 July 1661)

> I have ingaged my self in the publike court of my Ministry against 4 Errors … generally look'd upon as the most predominant amongst us, and unto which, all others whatsoever, may (I conceive) easily be reduced; Antinomianisme, Anabaptisme, Anti-Scripturisme, Querisme, or *Seeking*.[1]

> Great are the troubles of this age … hardly one opinion can afford another a good word: and what is the reason of all this? Sure it is not of God; but the man of sin ..., he stirs up the King against the Parliament, and the Parliament against the King, and Priests against Priests, and People against People, even to shed blood, and thus the Devil roars in the kingdom.[2]

> A spirit of Love and Meekness becomes Believers. They that write not as enemies, are likely to prove better friends to the Truth, because they raise not so much dust with their striving as others, to blind one another's sight.[3]

Introduction

From a full text EEBO search for *Seeker* and variants in publications from 1640-75, sixty-two works were found that make significant reference to Seekers and feature here. These include examples from fifteen Baptists in twenty-six works from 1644-74 and from twenty-eight Independents in thirty-six works from 1646-74, although 80% are concentrated from 1646-60 (see appendix 1 for dated listings by denomination). The pattern of Presbyterian works seen previously, in short concentrated bursts, suggested a coordinated campaign against Seekers, but the patterns of publication by writers from the gathered churches, although initially London-centric, are much more diffuse and less organised than either their Presbyterian or Quaker counterparts. Baptists were more explicitly engaged than Independents in direct printed dialogue with Seeker works and there are several examples of multiple Baptist responses to publications by Seeker or Seeker-friendly writers, such as NMA chaplains Saltmarsh and Erbery (neither of whom had London congregations). The tone of Baptist works was also generally more vituperative than Independent works, which neither engaged in extended printed dialogue with Seekers nor featured them as the principal target in their printed works.

Davis' essay on Cromwell's religion deems the term *Independent* 'confusing and problematic'. Contemporaries label some of the figures discussed here as Independents and others

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[1] John Goodwin, *Sion-Colledg visited* (1 February 1648) 28.
[2] Richard Stooks, *Truths Champion* (1651) Epistle to the reader: note the eschatological framing of the Civil War and its contingent conflicts.
[3] Saltmarsh, *Smoke*, 68.

as Congregationalists. I have followed the example of Joel Halcomb in viewing the terms as interchangeable. There are no noticeable differences in their respective constructions of Seekers but for clarity the term *Independent* is used throughout.[4] Although both were forms of gathered churches, we must first distinguish between these Baptist and Independent groups. In terms of organisation, both were gathered without established ecclesiastical authority, but they differed in what they deemed the formative acts of their respective church fellowship. Independents held the confraternity of the godly in church covenant as the foundation of a true church, but Baptists substituted this covenant with believer's baptism.[5] In terms of size, there were more Independents, but in key places they were more evenly balanced: Tolmie lists thirteen Independent, five General Baptist and seven Particular Baptist gathered churches in London in 1646.[6] Most Seekers had previously been members of gathered churches and the number of works produced suggests significant concern among these gathered churches that the emergence of the Seekers represented a challenge to their own beliefs and practices as well as a continuing threat to their own congregations and reputations. Their constructions of the Seekers share many features with earlier Presbyterian accounts showing the influence of each construction on later accounts. They focus on Seeker attitudes to Scripture and the visible church, its ministry and the need for gifts or miracles, the observance of ordinances including baptism, and the perceived dangers of the Seeker withdrawal to a more spiritualised form of worship.

Independent and Baptist constructions of Seeker beliefs also share many features with each other. Devon minister William Bartlet's summaries of Seeker beliefs and practices in two separate works of 1647 and 1649 are typical of the Independent view. The first noted that Seekers have left the church, its communion, ministers and ordinances and expectantly await a ministry accompanied with the gift of miracles: `as in the Apostles dayes'; and the second denounced Seeker hostility to the externals of religion. Particular Baptist Daniel King echoes much of Bartlet's characterisation in his 1650 work *A Way to Sion Sought Out.* This shared characterisation was stable as two decades later, the Baptist Collier, and on the other side of the Atlantic, Independent Thomas Shepard, offered the same construction of the Seekers, who deny all Churches, Ministers and Ordinances: 'in a

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[4] Davis, 'Cromwell's religion', in Morrill (ed.), Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (1990) 184; Hill, 'History and denominational history' (1967), 65-71; Joel Halcomb, 'Was Cromwell an Independent or a Congregationalist?' (Cromwell Association Study Day, 3 October 2015 at City Temple, Holborn, See [http://www.olivercromwell.org/wordpress/?page_id=1422] [accessed 11.11.19].
[5] Clark Gilpin, *Millenial Piety of Roger Williams* (1979) 57.
[6] Tolmie, 122.

seeking, waiting condition, for Apostles to be sent.'[7] Independent accounts differed from Baptist accounts in some respects though and these differences reveal something of the purpose of these respective constructions. Bartlet (Independent) claimed Seekers had rejected: `a particular church of Saints rightly constituted according to the order of the Gospell, … denying any such church, or churches'; but King (Baptist) disagreed: `they will have a Church but will allow her no ordinances because she wanteth Apostles, miracles and extraordinary gifts'.[8] This difference is more than one of emphasis: Baptists condemned the Seeker rejection of ordinances, including baptism, whilst the Independents focused on the Seekers withdrawal from the act of congregation in visible churches. Both used the Seekers as a foil and constructed the Seeker position in terms of opposition to their own core practices and beliefs.

A Radical Community

Baptist-Quaker debates have been the focus of previous studies but none have considered Baptist-Seeker exchanges in detail.[9] Before Quakers or Ranters emerged from the Seeker milieu, the Seekers' closest neighbours were arguably the Baptists and many Seekers had previously been members of Baptist congregations like that of Richard Blunt. Many others had belonged to 'open-membership' congregations that mixed Baptists and Congregationalists like that of Sidrach Simpson. John Goodwin's Independent church in Coleman Street also saw members like Walwyn, Isaac Penington Jr and Nicholas Culpepper leave, due to varying degres of Seeker sensibility.[10] All these groups were particularly open to the influence of Seekers, as their members began to question the authority of ordinances and several of them shattered, spilling their congregations into the Seeker milieu. Self-reported sources and hostile polemicists both suggest that many of these individuals passed progressively through Independent, Baptist, Seeker and Quaker positions, or at least through some of them. Tombes was not impartial as his agenda was to defend the Baptists, but he took pains to assure Baxter: 'I think that you are misinformed that [Quakers were once] Anabaptists, I think there are very few of them that were ever baptised, and have good evidence that they have been formerly Seekers, as you call them.'[11]

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[7] Bartlet, *Ichnographia*, 60; Bartlet, *Ba'al-samz or, Soveraigne balsome*, (5 April 1649) To the Reader; King, King, *A Way to Sion,* To the Reader, (23 March 1650); Collier, *The body of divinity* (1674) 480-1; Shepard, *Wine for Gospel Wantons* (1668) 10
[8] Bartlett, *Ichnographia*, 87; King, *A Way to Sion,* To the Reader.
[9] Horle, 'Quakers and Baptists', 344-62; Underwood, *Primitivism*; White, 'Erbury and the Baptists' 114-25
[10] On those leaving Simpson's church see Edwards, *Antapologia* (13 July 1644) 295*;* Edwards, *Gangraena II,* 16; Baillie, *Anabaptism II,* 211-2; Tolmie, 95; Hessayon in ODNB on Robert Norwood. On those leaving Goodwin's church see Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 248.
[11] Letter from Tombes to Baxter of April 4th, 1655 in Baxter, *More proofs of infants church-membership* (n.d. 1675) 9.

Thus one can view the milieu of religious radicals as a community or neighbourhood; many of those within it shared common roots, experiences and aspects of religious culture. For David Sabean, neighbours and enemies are intimately related terms and the conceptions of village life, community and culture he drew from his work on early modern Württemberg can usefully be applied to the radical religious milieu of 1640s England. He argues that what is common in community is not shared values or common understanding so much as the fact that members of the community are involved in the same *argument* or discourse in which misunderstandings, alternative strategies, and conflicting goals and values are thrashed out.[12] The Seekers and the gathered churches were all part of a radical religious community and culture that can be viewed in this sense. The Seekers' doctrine and practice, like that of the Quakers who would follow them, was a palimpsest containing the core Christian principles that they shared with their progenitors, overwritten with their own rejections and amendments: this constituted their distinct creed.[13] Sabean sees culture as a series of arguments among people about the common things of their everyday lives, and he stresses that it is the dialogue about shared symbols that connects them, not their attitudes, strategies or goals.[14]

Within this radical community, the constructions of Seekers were to some degree affected by groups outside it, such as Presbyterians. Despite the Seekers' clear rejection of gathered churches, some Presbyterian works explicitly identified Seekers as Independents, aiming to stain Independency by association with sectarianism: Prynne conflated the two and talked of 'you Independent Seekers'.[15] Consequently, several Independent works only mentioned Seekers in order to disassociate themselves from them and counter the Presbyterian charge that they are interchangeable terms. John Cotton complained against this same charge from Baillie and Rutherford but directed blame at the sects themselves rather than Presbyterian polemicists. He named Seekers among those who 'style themselves Independents' and complained: 'is there any Sect … but shrowdeth themselves under the title of Independency'.[16] Most Independents directed blame the other way, as the following three examples from 1648 show. In January, an Independent response to the same Presbyterian charge complained: 'can any man in the least degree withstand your Presbytery, and not be rankt among these Sectaries … not understanding your wayes, here we are [called] Seekers.'[17] In June, John Goodwin said Presbyterians William Jenkyn and John Vicars

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[12] Sabean, *Power in the Blood,* 29.
[13] For an alternative view see McGregor, 'The Ranters' 13; Huehns, *Antinomianism,* 108.
[14] Sabean, *Power in the Blood,* 94-5.
[15] Prynne, *A Fresh Discovery*, 1-2.
[16] Cotton, *The way of Congregational Churches* (1648) 11 - written in New England, against works by Presbyterians Baillie and Rutherford.
[17] English covenanter, *The Scottish mist dispel'd* (19 January 1648) 16-17.

called anyone who was sceptical of their view, a Seeker.[18] Lastly, Abraham Babington condemned Rutherford's depiction of Independents: 'alluding to a Company of men [Seekers], that these men [Independents] have little to do with, or little acquaintance with, as he knoweth well enough and therefore saith that but a few of them go under that name'.[19] If Babington's charge is true it shows that, in conflating these two distinct groups, Presbyterians were deliberately throwing mud where they thought it would stick, suggesting that the construction was a conscious and active process. It also suggests that *Seeker* held broader currency as a generalised term of abuse, similar to the earlier usage of *Puritan* and *Familist* and, if Davis is correct, the later usage of *Ranter*; although such use of *Seeker* does not mean the term was inaccurate for all, just for Independents. The Presbyterians, and Quakers did not have to distinguish themselves from the Seekers, although the Quakers did so. Hence this feature of uncoupling conflations was particular to the gathered churches and particularly the Independents, although they were soon to be accused of prejudicial labelling themselves:

> Since, they [Independents] are increased in numbers, and have as it were, scumm'd the Parish Congregations of most of their wealthy and zealous members. … Do they not dayly spit their venom privately and publickly, against any that either separate from them, or joyne not with them … Making whom they please Atheists, Anti-scripturists, Antinomians, Anti-magistrats, Polligamists, Seekers, or what they will.[20]

Baptists suffered a similar fate at the hands of Presbyterian polemicists. In 1646, Baillie deemed baptism: 'the true fountain of all heresy' and Baptist writers were conscious of this charge and their consequent reputation within the radical milieu. Particular Baptists feared that if such surmises, based on the former 'headiness' of German Anabaptists and 'the influence of historians' went unchallenged: 'our righteous profession may be made odious, as if it were the Fountain and Source of all disobedience'.[21] Twelve years later Baxter was still asking Baptists how they differed from Seekers:

> If you think their [infant] Baptism a Nullity and consequently the instituted Churches, Ministry, Order and Sacraments Nullities, that were used in all those Ages … when almost none but such as were baptized in Infancy were Church Members; how far then do you differ from the Seekers that tell us, all these were lost in the Apostasy?[22]

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18 Goodwin, *Neophytopresbyteros,* (15 June 1648) *passim*.
19 Babington, *An answer to a discourse intituled, Truth it's manifest* (1648) 129-30.
20 Anon. (Attributed to Walwyn), *The Vanitie of the present churches,* 11-12.
21 Baillie, *Anabaptism*; *Humble petition and representation of several churches of God in London, commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists* (2 April 1649) 4.
22 Baxter to William Allen, 6 November 1658: Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Appx IV.

The Baptists viewed the Seekers as more radical than themselves (modern historians concur) because Seekers rejected the validity of externals such as the sacrament of baptism, for example. However, in a similar way to Presbyterian and Quaker exchanges with Seekers, the Baptist-Seeker exchanges served a dual purpose: firstly, to assert and defend the Baptists' beliefs and practices as well-ordered, Scripture-based and Minister-led models of moderation; secondly, to accuse and attack the Seekers as headstrong or foolish (but nevertheless dangerous) abusers of Scripture. This was possibly an attempt to gain mainstream acceptance for their own beliefs and practices, by demonising neighbouring religious groups and accentuating the differences between themselves and those they characterised as dangerous.

Seekers and the Visible Church: reactions to the Seeker Journey

Many individuals within this radical community progressed to increasingly radical views that place them within the narrower constituency of the Seeker milieu. The trope of Seekers as wandering clouds was established by Presbyterian authors, but the gathered churches also used it to describe the Seekers spiritual sojourns. Some Baptist works did construct the Seeker as a well-intentioned and tender soul; but nevertheless, an aimless, rootless wanderer: led either by a quixotic and false light within, or a deceiving and false prophet without. The Independent John Bewick said: 'every new doctrine carrieth them into a new way … thereby unstable in all their ways ... till they be outed of all wayes, and become seekers, or rather loosers of themselves, being herein like thin empty clouds … which at last vapour into nothing.'[23] This construct reflects the tension inherent in the Seeker position: it is ethereal, ephemeral and destined for nullifidianism; but it is also 'resolved' in the sense of a position arrived at after all other positions have been tried and abandoned as unsatisfactory. Seekers sought a new dispensation and found that it did not yet exist, so they resolved to wait for it: actively seeking to maintain their personal piety whilst they did so. They didn't cease worship or live ungodly lives, they just withdrew and assumed personal responsibility for their own religious conduct: this individualism was an anathema to the corporatism of the church hierarchy, constituting, as it did, some form of spiritual libertarianism[24]. In this sense the labels Seeker, Waiter and Expecter all describe indefinite activities: different stages along the same spiritual journey, within the same *Seeker milieu*. Most Seekers moved from this position after a time, but the sense of being trapped is tangible in Bewick's description and is echoed in a letter to John Goodwin, from the surgeon of the remote islands and garrison of Scilly. It describes his spiritual journey through Puritan, Presbyterian, Independent and Anabaptist, to Seeker: `where seeking for that which could

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[23] Bewick, *An answer to a Quakers seventeen heads of queries* (1660) 89.
[24] Gura, *Glimpse of Sion's Glory*, 74-5.

not be found, I had almost lost my self.' The author could not turn back for he knew `famine was there', but felt trapped since ahead of him: `I faced the Ranter, but found him to be set on fire of Hell and knowing by woful experience, that the burnt child dreads the fire, I durst not come near.'[25] When caught, spiritually, between famine and fire, what can one do but continue seeking.

One explanation of the Seeker withdrawal from the visible church that was not shared by both gathered churches was that of Crypto-Catholicism. We have already seen how Prynne and Baxter played repeatedly on the suggestion that Seekers were either themselves secretly Papist or were simply being unwittingly manipulated by Catholics, and this charge appears among some Independent writers, but not among Baptists. For example, Marmaduke James saw Seekers, but smelt Jesuits, and Thomas Vincent claimed that 'many cunning & learned Jesuits' disguised themselves as mechanical Tradesmen: `that they might seem to the people to have been taught those things by the Spirit, which have been the product of much study; … putting themselves into any shapes, [including Seekers] that they might mis-lead.'[26] Other Independents rejected the argument that mechanical preaching and the Seeker rejection of the visible church were devices through which Catholicism may usurp Protestantism. John Rogers' *Diapoliteia* (1659) rails against Baxter (and Prynne): 'Now those that he calls SEEKERS, and in a Satyrical Vane, VANISTS … hold no universal visible head (nor any other over the Church but Jesus Christ,) And therefore are not within the compass of his description of a Papist; nay, are further off … then himself.'[27]

Independents regretted the emergence of the Seekers and indeed the progression of so many of their own former congregants to the Seeker position but blamed a range of factors. In Devon, Bartlet pointed the finger at Seekers: `how great the sinne is of those that are called Seekers, that have been professed members of such a particular church of Saints rightly constituted according to the order of the Gospell, but now have left it'.[28] Some Independents followed the Presbyterian line, blaming themselves and their toleration for liberty of conscience for hatching the Seekers. Walter Cradock pointed to internal causes and blamed: 'wranglings among the Saints … by these open divisions, many turn seekers'.[29] Lewis Stuckley blamed Independent congregations for setting poor examples: 'have not you been such unprofitable hearers, that Seekers, Ranters, and Quakers, … cry down the Office of the Ministry, … if you had received more of God upon your hearts and lives,

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[25] Salter, Christopher, Sal Scyllâ (22 June 1653) 5-6

[26] James, *Best fee-simple* (29 September 1658) 37; Vincent, *God's terrible voice,* 93-4.

[27] Rogers, *Diapoliteia. A Christian concertation with Mr. Prin, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Harrington, for the true cause of the Commonvvealth.* (1659) 20.

[28] Bartlet, *Ichonographia*, 87.

[29] Cradock, *Divine drops distilled from the fountain of Holy Scriptures* (1649) 9.

you had more credited the Ministry, and put to silence these foolish men.'[30] John Rogers, the future Fifth Monarchist, pointed to the ministry and his former Presbyterian brethren for the emergence of the Seekers, rather than their congregations. His 1653 apology for Independency, *Ohel or Beth-shemesh*, said: 'Ministers most complaine, who are most the cause of their owne complaines … such as make the sorest complaints of Seekers are very much the cause of their miscarriage.'[31] Goodwin blamed the strictness of Calvinist predestination for triggering antinomian excess: `your doctrine … is accessory to far the greatest part of those abominations at this day raging amongst us, Antinomians, Enthusiasm, Familism, of the dangerous and vile opinions and practices of those called Seekers'.[32] However, more often, Independents blamed their neighbouring gathered church, the Baptists, for the Seekers' emergence. In 1647 Bartlet said: 'this doctrine and practice of the Re-baptizers, hath made so many to turne Seekers and Waiters'; at the Restoration, the very title of Thomas Gery's *A Mirrour for Anabaptists* made clear whom he thought culpable; and as late as 1674, Obediah Wills argued for the particular importance of the stance on baptism in driving some to the Seeker position in his disputation with Particular Baptist Henry Danvers: 'some of the hottest Zealots against Infant-baptism, have grown so cold, as to turn Seekers, and to deny the lawful Administration of Ordinances. So common is it for men to run from one Extreme to another.'[33]

The Baptists were keen to paint Seekers as the initiators of their disputes and both King in 1650 and Kilcop in 1651 take pains to stress that they are merely responding to attacks on their own position by earlier Seeker works. There is also evidence that these groups shared an audience: Coppe's Seeker work, *Some Sweet Sips of Spirituall Wine* (1649) and King's *A Discovery of Some Troublesome Thoughts* (1651) expressly address the same Baptist congregations in Broad Street (London), Coventry, Warwick and Hook Norton. It seems likely that these Baptist churches in particular were experiencing Seeker schism at this time and could form part of the intended audience of both works.[34] Both King and Kilcop took up Knollys' dispute with Saltmarsh' *Smoke in the Temple*, King protesting that he did so reluctantly and at the urging of others: 'And though [Saltmarsh' exceptions] be briefly answered by Mr Knollys … "The shining of a flame in Sion." Yet

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[30] Stuckley, *A gospel-glasse* (1667) 319.

[31] Rogers, *Ohel or Beth-shemesh A tabernacle for the sun* (1653) 82.

[32] 'Mr Goodwin's Letter to Mr Caryl', in *A Fresh Discovery of the High Presbyterian Spirit* (1655), 79. This supports the general thesis of Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (2004).

[33] Bartlet, *Ichnographia,* 105; Gery, *A mirrour for* Anabaptists, 37-8; Obediah Wills, *Infant-baptism asserted & vindicated by Scripture and antiquity* (1674) Preface.

[34] King, *A discovery* (7 November 1651) sig. A3v, preface, 'To all poor souls, who are troubled and tossed in Spirit' where King declares himself 'neer-related' to all these groups; Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips,* 8-10 (written between his departure from the Baptists and the publication of his later Ranter works). Thank you to Ariel Hessayon for drawing this overlap to my attention; see Hessayon on Coppe in ODNB for the characterisation of *Some Sweet Sips* as a Seeker work [accessed on 30 March 2014].

some apprehend not so sufficiently as they desire: and beside, I conceive something had need to be made clearer.'[35] Hence King's response does not contradict that of Knollys, but nor is it coordinated with it. It acknowledges weaknesses in the earlier challenge whilst attempting to maintain a united front, as King claims his own work was: 'written before I saw those pages'. This claim seems unlikely given that they had been available for three years and there is considerable reliance on them in King's work. Nevertheless, King maintains: 'neither had I any intention ... to come to the public view.' King's account is inconsistent here: his direct reply to Saltmarsh begins by excusing himself for contesting three years after Saltmarsh's death: `It is well known to some honest men … that my answer was prepared …, before Mr Saltmarsh dyed'.[36]King gives no explanation for the three-year hiatus between writing and publishing, which does seem odd given the importance Baptists placed on prompt responses. Just a month later, Kilcop's response to Jackson's *Sober Word* noted: `none (as yet) hath put forth any answer hereto … for brevity sake, I mind only (yet exactly) the pith of it, and give thereto a brief, and punctual Answer.'[37] Ann Hughes has noted that all participants were conscious of the power of the press and the importance of getting their own version circulated in a definitive form to a wider audience.[38]

So why did King go into print against Saltmarsh more than two years after his death, over a work that was four years old? Lake and Como's work on intra-Puritan conflict in London suggests taking a disagreement into the printed public sphere was a last resort, when consensus and attempts at conciliation had completely broken down.[39] There is strong evidence that King went into print at this time in reaction to the perceived 'Ranter' menace which was a clear and present danger in March 1650; his attack on the Seeker position at this juncture was, I would argue, part of a conscious strategy of *retrojection*.[40] He blames, retrospectively, the Seeker withdrawal from organised worship for the Ranter excesses of the times in which he was writing. He chose this time to challenge Saltmarsh' positive portrayal of the Seekers' spiritual wilderness state, by constructing it

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[35] King, *A Way to Sion,* 97. Four London Particular Baptist Ministers signed this work's *epistle dedicatory*, which supports King's claim that others encouraged him and suggests a collegiate approach by Particular Baptist clergy in London.

[36] *Stumbling Blocks Moved Out of the Way* (1650) in *A Way to Sion Sought Out*, 100; Further evidence of Baptist reticence to denigrate Saltmarsh after his early death is seen in Blackwood, *Expositions and sermons,* 543-5: for identification of J.S in this work as Saltmarsh see Brown, 'Christopher Blackwood: Portrait of a Seventeenth Century Baptist' (1987) 28-38.

[37] Kilcop, *Unlimited Authority* (12 October 1651) To the Reader.

[38] Hughes, 'The Pulpit Guarded', 44.

[39] Como and Lake, 'Strange Case of Peter Shaw' 684-715; Como, 'Orthodoxy and its Discontents', 34-70.

[40] David Finnegan, *Prophecy and Political Radicalism Amongst Catholics in Early Modern Ireland, Revisiting Early Modern Prophecies (c.1500-c.1815)* conference, Goldsmiths College, 26-28 June 2014. Rather than prophecy, which obviously concerns the future, retrojection is the more common practice of engaging in conjecture about the past causes of current events.

as the gateway to the current dangerous errors of the Ranter apostasy; this would also serve another purpose, of distancing the Baptists from prominent Ranters like Clarkson and Coppe who were ex-Dippers. Coppe claimed to have abandoned his Baptist principles long before, around 1647, claiming he was 'above ordinances'. However, his former Baptist colleague, and fellow midlander, King could have been well aware that his Ranting had only very recently brought him to the attentions of Parliament. [41] A few weeks earlier, the Particular Baptist attack on Ranters, *Heart-Bleedings*, had addressed the charge: 'that those [Ranters] who have faln into such desperate abominations, were sometimes members of our [Baptist] Congregations, and from thence are apt to condemn our profession, and question whether our way be of God or no, saying, you see what your judgement leads to.' They replied that: 'many if not most of them were never members with us', thereby acknowledging that at least some had been; they also offer examples of Hymeneus and Alexander who went astray after leaving the church gathered: 'by the holy Apostles themselves (which by all are granted to be the purest)'.[42]

King also explains at length that an altruistic concern for the souls of Seekers and the audience they had thrown into confusion, were his grounds for entering the fray:

> in many parts of the country I observe many people staggering and doubting which way Sion should stand: some conclude there is no Sion yet upon earth. Others that there is a Sion, but she is [invisible] in the wilderness … Others acknowledge a Sion … but cannot believe the right way to it is yet found out ... Therefore wait upon him for light, … that will not only tend to the overthrow of all visible churches and ordinances, but also all Scripture, Gospel, Faith, Righteousness.[43]

Here King typifies the Baptist construction of the Seeker position and its contingent dangers: Seekers may seem mild but their views 'tend to' further error. This was the same construction that Baillie's *Anabaptism* (1647) had previously placed upon the Baptists themselves but it reappears again here at precisely this time, which is crucial to the timing of King's resort to print, and tells us something perhaps of his true purpose in attacking Saltmarsh. It explains how the Baptist portrayal of Seeker ideas in printed exchanges, fits into the Baptists' broader positioning of themselves within the sectarian milieu. The Presbyterian pamphlet, *A Blow at the Root* was anonymous but licensed by John Downham on 20 February 1650 and is dated by Thomason as 4 March 1650.[44] Thomason dates

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[41]*Severall Proceedings in Parliament* (18 Jan 1650) 213; See Hessayon, 'The Making of Abiezer Coppe' (2011c) 55-6; Como, *Radical*, 407.

[42] Anon., *Heart-bleedings for professors abominations* (28 February 1650) 12-13; Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 102.

[43] King, *A Way to Sion,* To the Reader; *cf* William Bartlet, *Ichnographia*, (25 March 1647) 87.

[44] Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*, 55-6 gives this dating and notes that *A Blow at the Root* is officially licensed by John Downham, perhaps lending weight to its importance in the mind of responders such as King. The

King's *A Way to Sion* shortly after on 23 March 1650. As noted previously, the epistle dedicatory to King's work was signed by four Particular Baptist Ministers: William Kiffin, Thomas Patience, John Spilsberie and John Pearson; King's work followed swiftly behind one of the first printed attacks on the Ranters (also written by Particular Baptists): *Heart-Bleedings of Professors Abominations,* which appeared on 28 February 1650. This work set the tone for later attacks on Ranters as: 'men who sometimes have made large profession of … godliness, are turned aside to commit all manner of uncleanness ... having turned the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into lasciviousness'. [45] It was signed by sixteen Baptist ministers, including the same four mentioned above and Edward Drapes who, along with Kiffin, Spilsberie and Patience had also attacked the Levellers less than a year earlier in *The Humble Petition and Representation of Severil Churches of God*.[46] So King's attack on the Seekers in *A Way out of Sion* is unmistakably part of a broader campaign by Particular Baptists seeking to place themselves on the orthodox side in opposition to any groups, whether religious or political, who they viewed as unsavoury or unpopular.

The Presbyterian work, *A Blow at the Root*, offered the following judgement: *'Separation* is an ordinary step to *Anabaptisme*; *Anabaptisme* perfects it selfe in *Seeking*, being above *Ordinances*, and *Questioning* every thing revealed in the *Scriptures*, and in high *Raptures* and *Revelations.'*[47] This attempt to draw a direct lineage from the Baptists to the current Ranter menace, via the Seekers, can also be seen in the popular press of 1650: 'their Ring-leader was one [Clarkson] formerly an Anabaptist, and after turn'd Seeker, and now Rantipoler'.[48] King's decision to go into print at this time then is designed to confirm the <u>Presbyterian</u> construction of Seekers as more extreme and dangerous than Baptists; but also to cast the Seekers (and not the Baptists) as the key progenitor of Ranters because of Seeker attitudes to ordinances. King is clearly making the acceptance of ordinances the Rubicon that divides those who can be trusted and tolerated (Baptists) and those who cannot (Seekers and Ranters). In 1652 Baptist Tombes, blames the Seeker rejection of ordinances for unleashing the Quaker movement too.[49] This is of crucial importance as it points to the influence of the Seekers on the development of the other religious groups around them: it was the Seekers who opened the door through which more heavily studied groups like the Ranters and

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argument based on the dating sequence that follows is my own but was stimulated by a reading of Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 99-100.

[45] *Heart-bleedings for professors abominations,* 3:

[46] *The humble petition … of several churches … commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists* (2 April 1649).

[47] *A Blow at the Root* (1650) 151-2.

[48] *Impartiall Scout*, 12-29 July 1650. Thank you to Ariel Hessayon for this reference; Anon, *Arraignment and Tryall with a Declaration of the Ranters* (17 December 1650) 3, also suggests the Baptists as the gateway to Ranterism; Davis, *Fear, Myth and History* 105.

[49] Tombes, *Anti-paedobaptism* (28 November 1652) 443.

Quakers then charged. This is partly why they are much more significant than other historians have previously acknowledged and why their historiography is frustrating. Consequently, this is one of the most important claims of the current thesis.

Attitudes to anonymity and allusion to personal meetings in printed works show contemporary awareness of the impact that reputation and group identity had on opinion formation: we are clearly dealing with active-readers here. Kilcop was another Baptist who had attacked Saltmarsh, in his 1646 work, *Seekers Supplied;* but, with Saltmarsh' death in 1647, he moved on to other Seeker writers.[50] Kilcop's letter 'To the Reader' in his *Unlimited Authority of Christ's Disciples Cleared* (1651) bemoans the anonymous nature of Jackson's *Sober Word*, but all groups issued works anonymously on occasion, presumably to avoid detection or censure. In an April 1646 letter to Samuel Hartlib, Presbyterian John Dury discussed personal contacts who could act as go-betweens with Saltmarsh and takes exceptional pains to try and ensure Dury's response to Saltmarsh is not traceable to either of them. He claims this is to prevent any denominational bias colouring Saltmarsh' response to his arguments; but despite Dury's ecumenical track record this does seem disingenuous.[51] Several printed Baptist works mention face to face 'metinges' with Seekers that had preceded and even occasioned publication.[52] Knollys records a meeting with Saltmarsh: 'But meeting with you by a good hand of providence'; Erbery describes three encounters with Baptists in his writings: Christopher Feake at London House near St Pauls; David Davies in Glamorgan; and Edmund Chillenden at St Paul's. Allen described his meeting with Jackson to Baxter. [53] Hughes, again, notes that rival accounts of the same debate include accusations that the writer has distorted and cut his opponents' words whilst enlarging his own, and that pamphlets themselves were used as evidence in disputations.[54] The extent to which oral transmission of ideas occurred among members of the radical milieu is one that is notoriously difficult to study and a detailed prosopography of the Seekers social networks in the 1640s and 1650s is planned to examine

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[50] Kilcop's next work *Ancient and Durable Gospel* (1648) was a response to fellow Baptist Samuel Richardson entitled '*Justification by Christ Alone*' (1647) but then he returned to challenging the Seekers and Jackson's *Sober Word* in his next work, *Unlimited Authority*.

[51] John Dury To Hartlib, 24 April 1646, *SHUL,* Hartlib Papers, 3/3/13A-B.

[52] For an example of Baptist works against Seekers that remained in manuscript and did not reach the press, see PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/212 (13 August 1646) fols. 10-15 'Papers concerning Overton, to be perused by the Committee'. Como, *Radical,* 398-400 argues these papers came into Overton's hands through the: `"metinges" conversations, and manuscript exchanges that were clearly taking place at the extreme frontier of the London Godly Community.'

[53] Knollys, *Shining,* Epistle; White, 'William Erbury and the Baptists', 116; *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Appx IV: letter from William Allen to Baxter, London 23 July 1659. White has the Chilenden meeting in the Cavalry Barracks at St Paul's, but the meeting was within St Paul's itself, part of which had been turned into a stable. Thank you to Ariel Hessayon for the information on St Paul's.

[54] Hughes, 'The Pulpit Guarded', 45-6.

the role of oral transmission in the Seeker milieu. However, neither oral nor print culture should be viewed as entirely separate and these pamphlet exchanges, often based on disputations in front of an audience, could constitute a liminal space where oral and print culture interacted.

Collegiality and Tone

Some Baptist works advertise themselves as responses to Seeker writings and Baptists did produce multiple replies to Saltmarsh in 1646 suggesting some level of loose coordination in the form of a 'campaign'. The dozen or so major works that addressed the Seekers directly span thirty years and were mostly authored by those whom posterity has termed Particular Baptists, but recent scholarship has renamed Baptistic Congregationalists.[55] Although this was not a term deployed by contemporaries, it does suggest a degree of collegialism in the type of Baptist who was most engaged in exchanges with Seekers. In chronological order of first publication, the Baptist authors who make noteworthy mention of Seeker positions are: Sarah Jones (November 1644); Knollys, the London Baptist Confession, Spilsberie, Robert Barrow, and Kilcop (all in 1646).[56] John Spittlehouse (1649), Daniel King and Richard Stooks (1650), Kilcop (1651), William Allen (1655, 1660), John Bunyan (1666) and John Child (1676). These works were the response to a trend from 1644 onwards of people actively rejecting the Baptists for the Seeker position. As Sarah Jones, a leader of the Jacob-Jessey church riven with conflict over infant baptism, wrote in mid-1644: 'some are Seekers out of a Baptisme looking for Elyas as John the Baptist to bring it from heaven, forsaking all fellowship till Christ shall send forth new Apostles to lay on hands'.[57]

We do though begin with an anomaly, in General Baptist John Murton. He was the first writer of any sort to refer to the Seekers in print, and his characterisation prefigures many of the accusations proposed by Particular Baptist writers 30 years later:

> Oh, ye Seekers, I would ye sought aright, and not beyond the Scriptures, calling it carnal; …
> and are not ashamed to say that there is none saved but by the blood of Christ, and that it is
> of no value at all, and … that they do not hear preaching nor read the Scriptures, nor live in
> obedience thereto … he hath shaken the Episcopal way, and he hath shaken the

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[55] According to BDBR each of those writers who addressed Seekers were Particular Baptists but Coffey, *John Goodwin,* 227, refers to Stooks as a General Baptist. Stooks' construction of the Seekers is very similar to that offered by his Particular Baptist contemporaries. Either way, Stooks was subsequently convinced to Quakerism by Fox at Grayrigg: Nickalls, *Journal*, 144-5; Sell, *Church Planting* (1986) 18; for the rejection of the label Particular Baptist, see Bingham, *Orthodox Radicals, passim*.

[56] The London Baptist Confession of 1646 was a revised version of the 1644 Confession, which was itself based on a continental Baptist Confession of 1596.

[57] Sarah Jones, *To Sions Lovers* (1644) Sig. A2v; Como, *Radical,* 388 argues that this suggests a guiding apocalyptic structure to the Seeker position, focused explicitly on the rejection of baptism and belief in an imminent prophetic visitation.

Presbyterian way; … he hath shaken the Independent way, and the way of the Anabaptist, with the seeking way.[58]

After Murton, there are no references to Seekers in print until the 1640s. Rufus Jones followed Robert Barclay in dating this passage by Murton to 1617 and offered it as a link between the Arian position of the Legate brothers (punished for heresy under James I) and the Seekers of the 1640s, but the notion that a Seeker position existed in 1617 and remained, somehow undetected until 1644 is not at all likely.[59] An alternative explanation by Burrage is much more convincing: Murton did not publish Truth's Champion in 1617: he did publish another book, *A Discription of What God Hath Predestinated Concerning Man* in 1620. This does not mention Seekers either but is actually the work that Barclay referred to as *Truth's Champion* (1617). *A Description* was the basis for two later editions, titled *Truth's Champion*, published before 1673, both of which are now lost. The passage on Seekers quoted above was added in the 1640s or 1650s by the editor of the second or third edition. This was seen by Barclay, but assumed by him and Jones to have been present in the first edition, published some thirty years before the term Seeker came into use.[60] Its appearance in the 1640s or later would have been neither early nor at all unusual.

The tone of Baptist writings about Seekers hardens over time. The early exchanges of 1646, target the work of Saltmarsh, and are generally warm and even fraternal; but this irenic tone is displaced by a more stringent and bitter invective in later replies to Saltmarsh and even more so in the 1650s in works against Erbery and Jackson.[61] A possible explanation for this is that the recent adoption of immersion by many Baptists in the early 1640s placed them on a defensive footing: in his first response to Seeker objections, 14/43 of Kilcop's answers dealt with baptism. By the 1650s the development of Ranterism and Quakerism from the Seeker milieu had confirmed the relative orthodoxy of the Baptist position which could have given them confidence to attack the Seekers more freely. [62]

A Baptist-Seeker dialogue dates from February 1646 with Knollys', *The Shining of a Flaming Fire in Zion,* in reply to Saltmarsh' 1645 work, *The Smoke in the Temple*.[63] The opening *Epistle* is

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[58] Murton, *Truth's Champion* (1617) [sic] (3rd ed. 154).
[59] Barclay, *Inner Life,* 411-12; Jones, 455.
[60] Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, 259-262 and Appendix A, 'An Additional Note Concerning the Book Titled 'Truth's Champion'.
[61] Erbery was accused of extreme antinomian views and came under increasing pressure to distance himself from the Ranters: Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (1977) 301; Quaker responses to Jackson in the 1650s are similarly contemptuous (see Naylor in Jackson, *Strength in Weakness* (1655) and Fox in *The Great Mistery*.
[62] Kilcop, *Seekers Supplyed* (2 Nov 1646); Underwood, *Primitivism,* 11.
[63] Knollys, *Shining of a flaming-fire* (11 February 1646).

warm, respectful and conciliatory and sets the tone for the piece. It describes Saltmarsh, variously, as 'My Reverend Friend' and 'Beloved Brother'. Knollys hopes their shared love of God will constrain Saltmarsh: 'to endeavour Unity, and Peace with all the Saints, though they differ from you in Opinion. For we may be one in Christ (as you rightly apprehend) though we think differently.' Knollys attests to his own: 'unfeigned desires of a Brotherly Amity, Unity, and Peace amongst the Saints', and makes this request: 'let us keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace and let all our things be done in love.' Repeating Saltmarsh, he points to their common ground: 'I also own your conclusion, A Spirit of love, and meekness becomes Believers and they that write not as Enemies are like to prove better friends to the Truth.'[64] In March 1647 Saltmarsh wrote an introductory epistle in Collier's *Marrow of Divinity*. It praises the: `excellent and pretious truthes' therein regarding the two Adams, the spiritual (not personal) nature of the church and the reign of Christ, `of which I myself will write soon'. He praises Collier's: `spirituall designe, to set up the Kingdome of God in spirit, and to draw believers by that more into the spirit; and that no differences of outward administrations, or Ordinances should divide Christians that are baptised into one spirit.'[65]

Saltmarsh dies in December 1647 but two years later, John Spittlehouse echoes this wish to give Seekers a fair hearing: 'in dealing with them [Seekers] under this notion, I will rather adhere to Mr. Saltmarsh his description of them (then their other malicious Sensurers).'[66] As late as 1655, against a landscape of fractious dispute in religious matters, Samuel Fisher noted the closeness and amity between Seekers and Baptists. He said the Godly only sought separation when they despaired of redress:

> which was the Protestants case with their once holy mother the Church of Rome, when she prov'd a strumpet, the Presbyterian with their Ghostly fathers, the Prelatick Priests, the Independents with the Presbyters, the Baptists with the Independents, and all the rest, but not the Seekers case with the Baptists, for they act in all things according to the primitive pattern shewed in the word.[67]

After the Restoration Tombes calls for a moderation of the language of debate, albeit through bared teeth: 'Seekers and Quakers, have in a Clamorous way like Scolds bespattered all that's opposit to them, with this reproach of Antichristian'. He warned that the: 'Christian Protestant Churches' would be: 'weakened and wasted by such intestine broiles', until they became prey: 'to the common adversary'. Tombes concluded: 'For my part it was still opposed by me long since when Saltmarsh

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[64] Knollys, *Shining,* A[2]; Saltmarsh, *Smoke,* 68.
[65] Collier, *Marrow of Divinity* (2 March 1647)
[66] Spittlehouse, *Rome ruin'd by White Hall* (31 December 1649) 178-182.
[67] Fisher, *Christianismus redivivus* (n.d. 1655) 619.

wrote, that I had proved infant-Baptism Antichristian, I made him alter it, and when a meeting was for union between dissenters, I urged this as one thing necessary, that the term Antichristian should be forborn.'[68]

It is notable that these exchanges appear in print rather than in private conversation or correspondence. This could be driven by a desire for witnesses or by the shared belief that correspondence with an opponent was properly conducted in public, with an audience, and that it was an occasion for self-fashioning and rallying one's own base, as much as it was an opportunity to challenge other views. In that context, this irenic mode of writing could just be a debating posture; evidence of a self-awareness of the 'public space' in which printed dialogue took place; and an intention to present oneself as peaceful and reasonable to the whole reading audience. It is also possible, however, that this early Baptist-Seeker exchange between Knollys and Saltmarsh is a genuine example of an attempt to follow the ecumenical spirit that Cromwell had urged upon the Godly after the fall of Bristol had signalled a sea-change in Parliament's military fortunes: 'Presbiterians, Independents, all had here the same Spirit of faith and prayer, … know no names of difference; pitty it is, it should be otherwise anywhere.'[69] Either way, attacks on doctrinally-close neighbours and calls for an end to the same were both around to stay and still evident some thirty years later when John Child called for an end to 'Exasperation and Railery' among 'Professors of Religion' so that they may 'maintain some amicable correspondency one with another.'[70]

Independents also condemned the prevailing spirit of contention in religion and called for unity and order. Several writers seem to condemn the act of discussion itself rather than the conclusions reached and stress the presumption of those such as Seekers who challenge orthodoxy. William Sheppard called the: 'unhappily fruitful produceing of wild heresies … the crime of our Nation as well as the calamity.'[71] Whilst John Heydon lamented that Independents, Seekers and others: 'now quarrell, bite, and use bitter invectives against each other… I wish … all for ever buried in oblivion, and the precious name Christian only remaining.'[72] Like the Baptists, the Independents' tone also became more strident by the later 1650s. There are plenty of examples of colourful similes and biblical allusion that compare Seekers to: 'Frogs and Toades, *Sponte nascentia*, who come up of themselves, bred onely by Corruption'; to monsters, vermin, snakes, adders and 'poisonfull

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[68] Tombes, *Saints no Smiters* (n.d. 1664) 40.
[69] *Cromwell's Letter to the House of Commons, concerning the taking of Bristol* (14 September 1645): Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, II*, 319-20, which closely matches the original, Bod. L., MS. Nalson 4, fols. 169r-v.
[70] Child, *Moderate Message to Quakers, Seekers, and Socinians,* (1767).
[71] Sheppard, *Sincerity and hypocricy* (April 1658) 390.
[72] Heydon, *Some gospel truths catechistically laid down* (n.d. 1647) 91; see chapter 3 for similar sentiments from Oliver Cromwell in his letter following the siege of Bristol.

creatures come forth out of their holes'; 'locusts that are come out of the bottomless pit'; a rabble, or simply: 'the very scum and shame of Christians.'[73] On the whole though, Independent accounts of the Seekers use more moderated language than their Presbyterian, Baptist and Quaker counterparts.

Having assessed the rules of disputation and the tone and trajectory of the dialogue, this chapter will now focus on the points of belief and practice that the gathered churches and Seekers disagreed on and argued about. The theme throughout concerns authority and this is manifest in debates on the proper relationship between the spirit and Scripture; the status of administrators and the requirement for gifts or miracles; and the observance of ordinances like baptism.

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[73] William Harvey, *The sectaries downfall* (1655) 21; James, *Best fee-simple,* 37; Thomas Gery, *A mirrour for Anabaptists* (1660) 37-8.

Seekers and Authority: Scripture and Spirit

Almost all Christians shared Scripture as a common reference point of cultural authority, as did Jews, if Scripture is restricted to the Hebrew Bible; but the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Seekers and Quakers, who feature in this thesis, disagreed as to the meaning and relative importance of texts and whether the Word or the Spirit should hold pre-eminence. In the mid-1640s, Presbyterians were pre-occupied with what contemporaries called the externals of religion. They advocated a uniformity in religious practice and scriptural exegesis that was based on their own model, hence their preoccupation with the dangers of toleration and heterodoxy. Presbyterians and Independents competed to define and occupy religion's middle ground between prelacy and sectarianism, and both accused Baptists of innovation. So, when addressing Seekers, the Baptists' exegesis sought to show how Scripture provided an indubitable, respectable and immovable anchor for their own views on the core ordinance of baptism. This directed their debates with Seekers and later Quakers who both challenged this envelope of orthodoxy by saying that the word made no sense unless informed by the spirit.

We will begin with Baptist constructions of the Seeker position on scriptural authority and will see similarities but also some important differences with the earlier Presbyterian constructions. The Presbyterians spoke the language of blame and sought to construct the Seekers as deviant and a threat to Christian order and unity. They focused on the Seeker withdrawal from organised worship and the consequent inevitability of their drifting, quixotic progression towards atheism. They claimed Seeker positions were based on ill-begotten, ill-conceived and quixotic internal inspiration, rather than Scriptural authority. They tried to show that the Seeker rejection of *ecclesiastical* discipline entailed an automatic rejection of *scriptural* discipline, in the form of ordinances; in an attempt to place Seekers firmly outside the pail of acceptable Christian dissent. Unlike the Independents, Baptists did not focus primarily on the rejection of administrators that underpinned the Seeker rejection of ordinances. Rather, as a group already on the rim of the same pail, Baptists constructed the Seekers in a way to emphasise the Scriptural respectability of their own practices against charges of innovation. They took pains to place themselves within the pail by pointing to their differences with the Seekers, who were clearly outside it. Their constructions of Seekers were designed to protect their own core position on believer's baptism. By rejecting the Scriptural exegesis that Seekers used to invalidate current administrators; they challenged the basis for the consequent Seeker rejection of ordinances, especially baptism. Unlike Presbyterians, Baptists did not stress the inevitable drift of Seekers towards atheism following their withdrawal from the visible church, since as gathered churches, they already had one foot out of this door themselves.

Baptist-Seeker disputations in printed debates are reasonably narrow and, as with Seeker-Presbyterian disputes, stem from disagreements over the primacy of the word or the spirit. The Seeker rejection of ministerial authority to administer sacraments, was the basis of their opposition to ordinances, including baptism, which was of such vital importance to the Baptists. The Baptists sought to demonstrate that whilst they observed the rules of Scripture, the Seekers did not. The term Anti-scripturist did not gain currency until after *Gangraena* (1646) which had proclaimed the errors of both the gathered churches and Seekers. The Baptists wanted to deflect the charges laid at their door by Presbyterians. Their assiduous attachment to scriptural support could be part of a polemical strategy to counter this charge. Presbyterian Richard Hollingworth said: 'none are readier to bring Scripture than seducers'; and Baptist Robert Barrow replied that Presbyterians: 'will not yeeld to the true meaning of the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, but will make all Scriptures to speake what they would have them speake, to maintaine what they hold and practice.'[74] The Particular Baptist Confession of 1646 invited a Scripture-based exchange: 'if any shall do us that friendly part to show us *from the word of God* that we see not, we shall have cause to be thankful to God and to them'.[75] The 1644 and 1646 Confessions are dominated by discussion of ordinances and obedience but these play a much less prominent role in the Baptists' 1689 Confession, showing the importance of this issue in the pamphlet war of the mid-1640s.

The Baptists also took pains to pass on the accusation of anti-scripturism to more radical positions like the Seekers. Kilcop's reply to Saltmarsh' *Smoke in the Temple* aims to place the Baptists and Seekers on opposing sides of the Scripture-Spirit debate. The work, *Seekers Supplied*, is subtitled *'43 non-church queries by Scripture answered*', and one gets a sense of how Kilcop wants to construct the Seekers by the nature of the forty-three questions he attributes to them: the nature and validity of a visible church; the status of ordinances (especially baptism) and the role of apostolic gifts or miracles all feature prominently. Twenty-three objections concern some aspect of visibility, fifteen deal with gifts and fourteen concern baptism. But, as the subtitle suggests, the role of Scripture in his refutations is key. Kilcop defends his own use of Scripture whilst characterising Seeker exegesis as either erroneous or pedantic: 'Their way is to study subtle queries, which puzzles … the (weak, but) conscientious people … But I have the word on my side, which they have not ... They quote Scriptures, so do I. Let the reader weigh theirs and mine, and see whose are suitable to what they are brought for and whose not.'[76] Kilcop repeats this key charge against Jackson in a later

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[74] See R.B., Well-wisher to the truth, *A Briefe Answer To R.H. His Booke, Entitled, The True Guide* (1646) 12, 28.
[75] *London Particular Baptist Confession* (1646) my italics: http://www.reformedreader.org/ccc/1646lbc.htm [accessed 12.02.18].
[76] Kilcop, *Seekers Supplyed,* To the Reader.

work: 'The Scripture is a guide, to find out God's ways and commands … if they speak not according to this word there is no light in them'.[77] King offered a twist on this idea in his belated response to Saltmarsh, *A Way to Sion* (1650), where he argued that the Seeker reliance on specious scriptural support, rather than a specious light within, was the fundamental problem in the printed dialogues between them:

> As thou goest … lay a bible by thee, look the Scriptures quoted, read the words, consider how they depend, …, for it is the fault of many readers to … take them upon trust … not considering whether the sense speak out any such thing or no, and that is the cause of such unstableness in Christians at this day.[78]

Gangraena targeted John Goodwin over all others and portayed him as a friend of heresy. Although Goodwin opposed the use of force against heretics, he was fully committed to confuting them by argument from Scripture. Indeed, from 1644 to 1646, he had devoted his 'week-day Lectures' to a sustained critique of the Antinomians, Anabaptists and Seekers. He had also preached 'for severall moneths together of late', against: 'the error of the AntiScripturists (more dangerous and pestilentiall then all the rest)'.[79] The following year, Anti-Scripturism remained the main enemy of Goodwin's *Divine Authority*, subtitled: `*that King of Errours and Heresies, Antiscripturisme, who hath already destroyed the faith of many'*.[80] In 1650, Independent divine Nathaniel Homes repeats the accusation that spirit had displaced Scripture as the locus of authority among Seekers who: 'under the pretence of revelations by the spirit give vent to lying doctrines'.[81] Goodwin confirms the dangers of such undiscriminating spiritualism in his 1655 work *Cata-baptism*. This work is partly a response to Baptist defections from his Coleman Street congregation by figures like William Allen and Thomas Lamb; and warns remaining congregants of the errors of those groups, like Seekers, beyond the Congregationalist position. Goodwin believes the Seekers: `honour every Spirit, that shall at any time enter into you, though never so frantique, and fanatique, though never so lying or unclean, with the worthy name of the Spirit of God'.[82] Some Independents see the Seekers as more naïve than calculating, they: 'have a zeal of God but not according to knowledge'.[83] But Goodwin portrays Seekers as disingenuous not naïve: 'who think they do God a most choice service in overlooking all that is written, upon pretence of looking after somewhat higher, more mysterious,

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[77] Kilcop, *Unlimited Authority,* 46.
[78] King, *Way to Sion,* To the Reader.
[79] Goodwin, *Anapologesiates Antapologias* (27 August 1646) Preface, sig. A4v–ar; Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 138.
[80] Goodwin, *Divine Authority* (18 December 1647); Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 154.
[81] Homes, *Daemonologie, and theologie* (4 November 1650) 191.
[82] Goodwin, *Cata-baptism: or new baptism* (21 July 1655) 13.
[83] James*, Best fee-simple*, 37.

and sacred … as if God, who … hath spoken unto the world by his Son, intended to speak by these men somewhat beyond, and of greater import.'[84]

One irony of the Independent accusation that the act of seeking represents an abrogation of Scripture is evident in the sheer number of scriptural commands to seek. The *AKJV* contains 291 references to seek. Within this number there are 81 passages that convey a command to seek God or Christ or refer to those doing so in a positive way. The Independent Nehemiah Rogers wrote a comprehensive work on the subject in which he cites many examples of these passages. He berates those: `[who] seek, but without a Light, as our Familists, Anabaptists, and … Quakers, newly sprung up: they scorn the Scriptures, and seek in the dark corners of Enthusiasms, and Revelations. Search the Scriptures, saith Christ, but these will none of that.' [85] So, the charge that Seekers were anti-scripturist or that seeking went against the wishes of God, ignores the reality that Seekers were in fact doing exactly what Scripture repeatedly advised or commanded Christians to do. This debate over the pre-eminence of Scripture or spirit was important then, but it was certainly not the deepest faultline in the religious landscape. The initial formation of gathered churches and the adoption of believer's baptism marked more visible and significant breaks with the *status quo* at a parish level. The subsequent debate around the status of the ministry and ordinances was the key dividing line between relative moderates in the gathered churches and relative radicals like the Seekers.

Seekers and Authority: Ministers and Miracles

The issue of authority and the model of the primitive apostolic church were central to the Seeker position and to the way in which other groups characterised them. Seekers rejected the validity of the visible church and the authority of its ministry to administer ordinances. They were waiting for a new dispensation that would bring new apostles, who could demonstrate the validity of their calling through the performance of miracles. All of these issues were connected by the same chain of reasoning and members of the gathered churches sought to break this chain at various points. In the interests of clarity, attempts have been made to separate the related issues of the ministry, miracles and ordinances (incuding baptism). It is worth noting, however, that contemporaries often combined them, as here by John Stalham: `Are you among the seekers of the

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[84] Goodwin, *Cata-baptism,* 13.
[85] Rogers, *The fast friend: or A friend at mid-night* (3 September 1658) 419-425: here it is probable that by Familists he intends to include Seekers as this conflation was common.

times, and flie higher, looking for miracles, extraordinary gifts of prophecying and singing? Or doe you hunt after some … new Baptisme, Church and Ministery?'[86]

The Baptists cite scriptural accounts of the powers held in the Primitive church when rejecting Seeker claims of the necessity of gifts as a sign of valid administration. King cites Acts 2.41 to argue that: 'whatsoever was necessary to make a man a believer, they had in primitive times before they had the power to work miracles'. He proposes that: 'only some believers worked miracles in primitive times as others received other gifts of the spirit instead such as prophecy.'[87] Kilcop gives the example: 'John, a Gospel Minister, did no miracle'. He argues against miracles as the criteria for Administration since: 'some Ministers of Christ wanted these, and some false Ministers have them'.[88] Kilcop returns to Matt. 12.39 to claim that Christ called miracle seekers, adulterers.[89] Since both Independents and Baptists agreed it was clear that the current generation of Ministers lacked gifts, their strategy was to flatly reject the premise that they were necessary. When Saltmarsh had queried: 'Whether any people … may gather and baptize themselves, and others: unless they have a Commission from Heaven … by the visible gifts of the Holy Spirit?' Kilcop merely replied: 'This querie declares much ignorance in the querer.'[90]

Both Independents and Baptists consistently denounce the rejection of ministerial authority by groups such as the Seekers and this provides insight into how the gathered churches dealt with the increasing spiritualism of the Seekers. Independent William Harvey encapsulates a view held more broadly among the gathered churches. He named Seekers in a: 'heretique and schismatical rabble … set to destroy or disturb the English clergie, the wonder of the World.'[91] In their characterisations of the Seeker's hope for a new dispensation, Independent William Bartlet and Baptist King both cite Mat. 16.4. `A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.'[92] Bartlet claims Seekers rejected the current ministry because they were: `not so qualified as these were in the Primitive times, they have not those extraordinary gifts of working miracles as they had'. He disputes whether all in apostolic times had such gifts, citing I Cor. 12.29-30. He also claims that their chief end had been to confirme the Gospel [Heb. 2.34] but that: `common education serves so farre now, as Miracles did of old'. Baptist Spilsberie does accept that the working of miracles attended the

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[86] Stalham, *Vindiciae redemptionis* (17 April 1647) 121; for a similar construction see Vincent, *God's terrible voice,* 93-4.

[87] King, *A Way to Sion*, 69.

[88] Kilcop, *Unlimited Authority*, 5 [John 10.41] 23: here he again cites John 10.41 but adds Deu. 13.1-3 and Mat. 24.24..

[89] *Ibid* 47.

[90] Kilcop, *Seekers Supplied*, 2. Saltmarsh cited John 16.33; John 17.18; and Acts 9.10 in support of his argument.

[91] Harvey, *The sectaries downfall*, 21.

[92] King, *A Way to Sion*, 71; Bartlett, Ichnographia, 113.

apostolic ministry but also denies that they are essential to a `true Ministry of Christ'.[93] Bartlet argues that if evidence of miracles was essential, then John the Baptist and: `many in the Primitive times, were not true Ministers of Christ'.[94] Spilsberie grounds his rejection in his reading of the Bible, as we may predict: 'where is one word in all the New Testament that any man shall come from God in this manner, of working miracles, signs, and wonders?' He finishes with a sombre warning: 'Miracles can be no true note of Ministry, nor Minister sent of Christ, because the working of miracles is that by which false Prophets shall deceive the people.'[95] Kilcop concurs: 'To affirm … that … administrations … in the name of God, or Christ, are without the authority of Christ, if not accompanied with gifts, must needs be deceiving'.[96] In 1649, John Spittlehouse argued, in similar vein: 'a Pretender may worke a Miracle … like the Sorcerers of Aegypt against Moses; and Antichrist is rather spoken to come with Signes and Wonders of the two, then Christ'.[97] King argues that miracles are in fact a hindrance to faith, as he also did, regarding the Seeker move above ordinances.[98]

Bartlet's 1647 *Ichnographia* concurs with all of these views. He says false ministries may perform miracles; reliance on miracles as evidence of validity suggests a weak and insufficient ministry; and argues that the Seeker claim that the efficacy of the ministry depends more on the external working of miracles than the internal working of the spirit, derogates the spirit that they seek to venerate.[99] Goodwin later confirms this construction. Seekers: 'make it a matter of Conscience to turn their backs upon the Ministry of the Gospel'; they condemned the ministry as dry and unedifying, but many thousands could testify to the transformative power of the pulpit. A godly ministry had: 'mighty Engines and Screws whereby to manage and command the hearts and consciences of men'. He lamented the: `strange spirit [that] walks up and down the streets of your City', and deluded those who once loved 'the Assemblies of the Saints'. As Coffey has noted, Goodwin was probably speaking from bitter experience of men like Nicholas Culpepper and Isaac Pennington junior, who no longer worshipped with his congregation. Goodwin had little sympathy for such disillusioned drifters. He accused them of being 'Sceptiques' and 'absolute Neutralists' who

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[93] Bartlet, *Ichnographia*, 82, 109; Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance,* 13.
[94] Bartlet, *Ichnographia,* 109„ 82-3: Scripture cited includes [Mar. 13.22, 2 Thes. 2.9-10, Rev. 13.13-14, Rev. 16.14, 19-20, and Mat. 7.22-3].
[95] Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance,* 3, 14; Spilsberie cites support from: Mar. 13.22; Rev. 16.14; Rev. 19.20.
[96] Kilcop, *Seekers Supplied*, 11.
[97] Spittlehouse, *Rome ruin'd by White Hall,* 178-182.
[98] King, *A Way to Sion*, 71; for a fuller discussion of the role of Protestant miracles in the post-Apostolic age, see Shaw, *Miracles.*
[99] Bartlet, *Ichnographia*, 109.

had rejected a ministry which served as: 'a Conduit Pipe … to convey the Holy Ghost into the hearts and souls of men'[100]

Knollys, Kilcop, King and Spittlehouse all faithfully cite the Seeker claim of Saltmarsh that there was: 'no such office as administrator in the world', revealing the enduring importance of this key Seeker objection.[101] Spilsberie then expanded to challenge the Seeker view that signs and miracles were greater proof of valid administration than was scriptural knowledge: 'they prepare men to be deceived by these false Christs, and false Prophets, who teach men to receive none as Ministers of Christ, though they [clearly] prove their doctrine and way by the Scriptures …, unless they shew great signs and wonders.[102] Kilcop added his voice: where Seekers had cited the model of the Primitive Church to reject any current administrator's authority, he cited the same as support: 'Tis doubtless possible, for such to be … Ministers of worship, that have neither gift of miracle, nor the spirits baptism … Christs Disciples, were lawful Administrators, when they had not Apostleship, nor power to work miracles, nor the baptism of the spirit.'[103]

Both sides maintained a consistent account of the Seeker position on administrators into the 1650s, a decade after Saltmarsh had first described it, in *Smoke in the Temple*: 'the want of a right administrator' prevents Seekers 'coming into Church communion'; because since the appearance of the apostasy that was the Papacy: `there hath none appeared sufficiently Authorized by God, … to gather Churches, or administer Ordinances'; so all must wait: `till God raise up some such, whose authority in this behalf he shall attest with visible signs of his presence,' such as gifts and miracles.[104] Allen, like Kilcop, claims that the current administrators have the same validity as those in the Primitive Church: 'we have … the same apostolical power now, to plant and settle churches, & to administer Ordinances, as was enjoyed in the Apostles days … Because we have the same instructions and directions from the Apostles in their writings, … as they who had lived in the Apostles times.'[105] Twelve years later, Tombes continued the warning:

That it is a step to Apostacy, … forsaking of the assembly of the Saints; to refuse to hear the present Ministers, and to joyn in Prayers with them, and too much experience hath proved

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[100] Goodwin, *Pleroma to Pneumatikon, or, A being filled with the Spirit* (1670), Ch. 14. Quotations at 387–88, 400, 411, 412, 415, 417; Coffey, *Goodwin*, 248.

[101] See above for Knollys, Kilcop and King; Spittlehouse; *Rome ruin'd by White Hall,* 178-182.

[102] Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance,* 33.

[103] Kilcop, *Seekers Supplied*, 2: Kilcop cites John 3.22 for support but this is not convincing.

[104] Allen, *Doubt Resolved,* 14: based on Saltmarsh' accounts of Seeker belief from the mid-1640s in *Smoke* and *Sparkles*; See also Vendettuoli, 20.

[105] Allen, *Doubt Resolved*, 19.

> what backsliding, if not to Popery, yet to other errours of Antinomians, Familists, Quakers,
> Seekers, Ranters, hath been the fruit of Separation.[106]

By 1676, John Child was making the strongest possible claims for the importance of a functioning ministry. For him, this specific aspect of Seeker belief was the gateway to the most heinous and dangerous of errors: 'the denying or Removing of them is no less than the shaking of the very foundation and ground work of Christianity all over the earth'. His argument here is weak and emotive, relying on projected outcomes and listing the dangers and absurdities that would: 'break in upon us like a flood' if the principle be admitted that 'ability or qualification is wanting everywhere in this age'.[107] However the weakness of his argument does not detract from my conclusion that even the most conciliatory of Baptists felt the Seeker rejection of administrators remained worthy of vocal and vehement rejection over a thirty year period.

The similarity of arguments and examples by both Baptists and Independents, and the sequence of publications suggest strongly that Bartlet had read Spilsberie and Kilcop; and that King had then read Bartlet. The genesis of these arguments are complex and impossible to unravel completely but it is safe to conclude that within the gathered churches there was considerable cross-pollenation and consensus when it came to a common threat: the Seeker rejection of ministry. This is not entirely true though when we look at these hostile accounts of the Seeker stance on ordinances, which were a primary focus of Baptist, but not so much Independent works, as we shall see next.

Seekers and Authority: Ordinances and Baptism

The Seeker stance on ordinances featured less prominently in Independent accounts than in Presbyterian or Baptist constructions. Bartlett claimed the Seeker rejection of ordinances was a rejection of God himself and cited II Chron. 15.2, Heb. 3.12 and Rev.2.4-5 for support.[108] Other Independents claim that Seekers falsely justify their rejection of ordinances on guidance received from the spirit: 'they make boasts of having the spirit, but … they are not spiritualized, but are carnal … The Seekers pretend the spirit, but lay aside those Ordinances that are appointed by the spirit.'[109] But this argument is unfair as it misrepresents the Seeker rationale: Seekers did not cite the

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[106] Tombes, *Theodulia* (n.d. 1667) 324.
[107] Child, *Moderate Message to Quakers, Seekers, and Socinians,* 40, 45.
[108] Bartlet, *Ichnographia*, 114.
[109] Homes, *Daemonologie, and theologie,* 21.

instructions of the spirit as the reason for their withdrawal from observing ordinances, they cited the inherent invalidity of the administrators of the ordinances themselves.

The ordinance of baptism was a sensitive area for Baptists. So much so that the Independents' apparent unwillingness to condemn Seeker objections regarding baptism was viewed as evidence that they too intended the rejection of all ordinances! Thomas Lambe denounced: `these pleas of Mr. Goodwins, or rather the Seekers, which Mr. Goodwin hath espoused, and put so great a countenance upon them, as if they had so much weight in them, as to make the matter difficult, whether the Ordinance of Baptisme be standing or no'. He said Goodwin was willing to: 'hazard the reputation of all the Ordinances, rather than the true Baptisme of the New Testament should advance in the minds of men … what else meaneth your countenancing of the Seekers Arguments.' Lambe said Goodwin's comments:

> hath made more joy on earth, amongst the Seekers, Ranters, and all sorts of non-Churchers, than ever they had in all their lives before, by how much you excell the most, in parts, learning, wit, &c. by so much the more is their consolation, that you seem to feel weight in their Arguments, HEARK HOW THEY CLAP THEIR HANDS AND SING.[110]

Before their arguments with the Seekers, the Baptists' own rejection of the ordinance to baptise children had drawn criticism from within the Church of England. Thomas Blake accused Christopher Blackwood: 'When you have condemned all ministerie & baptisme … you will hardly finde a way to … re-establish any … but leave us among the seekers, who deny any Church or ministery at all upon earth.' Blackwood described the way to re-establish a visible church: 'believers gather themselves together and make profession of their faith one to another; … agree together, to worship God in all his wayes, as revealed to them; and chuse out a Pastor … that may administer all ordinances.'[111] So *believer's* baptism still relied on the valid authority of someone to administer it but the Seekers reading of Scripture led them to reject the validity of all current administrators' authority to Baptise. As Jackson later put it: 'the present Ministry, is not Christ's and so, a powerless people call a giftless Ministry, who wanting gifts, study arts'.[112] Baptist writers all contest this perceived Seeker error, even though they themselves had similarly accused Presbyterian ministers of lacking authority. Barrow described this as the: `chiefe point in difference betwixt us', in an

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[110] Lambe, *Truth Prevailing against the fiercest opposition, or, An answer to Mr. Iohn Goodwins Water-dipping no firm footing for church communion* (n.d. 1655)*, 77-8.
[111] Blackwood, *Apostolicall baptisme* (13 January 1646) 76.
[112] Jackson, *Serious Word,* 17-18.

exchange with a Presbyterian opponent; whom he claimed: `brings not one proofe of Scripture positively to prove his Ministers lawfull.'[113]

The Seeker argument was that the absence of valid administrators relieved Christians from observing ordinances and only a new dispensation with valid administrators could usher in the reign of Christ to come. The growing popularity of this extreme position against forms and ordinances in 1645 drew a response from Baptists and other godly writers in 1646.[114] Knollys was the first to address this Seeker challenge by name, in print in February 1646 but Baptists had already been struggling with the impact of Seeker ideas for some time. After Prince Rupert surrendered in the second siege of Bristol on 10th September 1645, members of the Broadmead church returned, many from London, where they had been exposed to Seeker ideas: `every meeting was filed with disputes and debates [and] …in great confusion … Some … against ordinances, as having got above them, or pleading that while the church was in her wilderness state, they should not use them.'[115]

In May 1646, Spilsberie, like Kilcop, pointed to the Primitive Church model to rebuff the Seeker rejection of administrators. He argued that errors, irregular practices and divisions were present then too: `yet no godly person will hereupon condemn the gathering of Churches, and the use of Christs ordinances in those dayes'.[116] He chided those:

> who under pretence of seeking the truth, do by cunning and crafty enquiries undermine the same [and deny] Church fellowship and communion with Christ in his Ordinances of the New Testament, for want (as they say) of a Ministry with power from God to call and fit a people for Ordinances, and to administer the same.[117]

Four years later, King's reply to Saltmarsh' *Smoke in the Temple* repeated the link between administrators and ordinances: 'They will have a Church but will allow her no ordinances because she wanteth Apostles, miracles and extraordinary gifts.' King claimed the authority of current administrators came from their strict adherence to Scripture, implying that Scripture fills the Seekers' purported authority-gap since the last dispensation: 'Pastors and Teachers are to continue

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[113] Barrow, *A Brief Answer to R.H.,* 34.
[114] Kilcop, *Seekers Supplied*; Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance*; R.H*., The True Guide: or a Short Treatise* (all 1646); and later William Bartlet, *Soveraigne Balsome* (1648); Spittlehouse, *Rome Ruin'd by Whitehall* (1648); William Bridge, *A Vindication of Ordinances* (1649); Henry Lawrence, *Some considerations […] Vindicating […] Christian Ordinances* (1649); Como, *Radical,* 406.
[115] Underhill, *Broadmead Records,* 31; Hayden (ed.). *Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol* (1974).
[116] Kilcop, *Seekers Supplied*, 2: cited earlier; Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance*, 36; for later Baptist references to the imperfections within the model Primitive Church, see *Heart-bleedings for professors abominations,* 12-13.
[117] Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance,* To the Reader.

in the Church though they have not such an infallible gift.'[118] Spilsberie goes on to link the rejection of ordinances to the rejection of much else: 'the same false principles whereby men are now taken off from obedience to Christ in the use of his Ordinances, if they be followed home, will also take men off from obedience to all Christ's commands'. He includes preaching and hearing the Gospel, assembling to join together in prayer, meditation, thanksgiving, and Bible study: `for all these are Ordinances of Christ, and are no more appointed in the Word for these times, than Baptism and the Lords Supper.' King concurs citing Paul in Tim. 6.14: [keep this commandment without spot, until the appearing of Christ]: 'now by this commandment he meaneth all the precepts concerning Church-worships, Doctrines, Ordinances, and Officers[119]

The Baptists construe the Seeker position of being above ordinances as a state of desperation not deliverance, and loneliness not liberation. This is confirmed by the numerous spiritual autobiographies describing a Seeker phase spent in a spiritual 'wilderness' including those of future Quaker Mary Penington and future Baptist John Bunyan who described what we could call his Seeker phase as being *apart from* rather than *above* ordinances and portrays this as a miserable condition rather than a state of grace. Indeed, the term Seeker implies those who are discontent with that which they already have and so look for something else.[120] Warming to his theme, Spilsberie's tone hardens and his argument extends into hyperbole:

> Sometimes [the enemy] persuades men that they are above ordinances … He might as well tell them that they are above Jesus Christ, who commands the use of his Ordinances, and communicates himself unto us in [them] … Beware of that doctrine which making void the authority of the New Testament, pulls Christ's Sceptre out of his hand, his crown from his head, and himself from his throne.[121]

Spilsberie is writing here before the development of Ranterism but his words do seem prescient and suggest the Baptists were right to view the Seeker position on ordinances as the crack through which further irreligion would enter.

After the appearance of the Ranting phenomenon, King laid out the consequences of the Seeker rejection of ordinances as follows: 'if none have the right to baptise then none have the right to preach either as Christ sent disciples forth to do both and made no distinction; if no preaching

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[118] King, *Way to Sion,* To the Reader.

[119] Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance*, 36; King, *Way to Sion*, 31.

[120] Penington, *Experiences Mary Penington, passim;* Bunyan, *Grace Abounding* (1666) 31; Watkins, *Puritan Experience*, 219.

[121] Spilsberie, *Gods Ordinance*, 38; for the same argument, see also Bartlet, *Ichonographia,* 114.

then no faith; if no faith then no Christ; if no Christ then no Heaven, nor eternal life.' He then

summarises: 'it setteth up fancy instead of faith ... leads men to the grossest atheism [and] maketh a

man worse than a sea monster.'[122] Christopher Blackwood's later attack on the Seeker rejection

could also fit a Ranter position: 'Because there are some Allegories in the Scriptures they turn all into

Allegories, that they may carry us into a Wood whence we may not finde our way out, and all to

stablish these fooleries; [they judge themselves in] judging others to be children who use

ordinances.'[123]

There is perhaps irony in the Baptists constructing the Seekers as a gateway to further

heresy, considering their own characterisation as such by the Presbyterians, but it is most likely that

they characterise the Seekers in this way *because of*, rather than *in spite of*, this situation. If there

were no valid administrators there was no one to administer ordinances and the door was opening,

ever wider, to a coherent and rational Antinomianism. By 1655, the fears that this unravelling of

internal discipline among Christians would unleash still greater errors had not abated. Allen made

the implications of the Seeker position explicit:

> The Devil, perceiving that … he could no longer detain men in the erroneous and
>
> superstitious use of Ordinances, *as heretofore*; now labours … to persuade them, … there is
>
> now none … in a capacity to Administer them ... [and] that they are above, or have no need
>
> of Ordinances, by persuading men to cast off Ordinances, he hath quickly drawn very many
>
> to cast off all Religion.[124]

Here, I would argue that Allen initially implies the external rituals of the Catholic antichrist *(as*

heretofore), besmirching the Seekers by association with this powerful trope, since Popery was the

magnetic north of religious error, by which all Protestant compasses were calibrated. Although the

implication is that, unlike the Pope, the Seeker is the deceived, rather than the deceiver. Prynne and

Baxter both echo the General Baptist Allen in the view that sectarian dissent was a papal stratagem

and references to Seekers as crypto-Catholics in contemporary hostile accounts are legion. Here then

we see a broad spectrum of moderate non-conformist opinion portraying the Seeker suspension of

ordinances as a precursor to a full exercise of either atheism or Catholicism.[125]

The Baptist counter argument to the Seeker rejection of administrators was scriptural and

based on their narrow, even pedantic, distinction between apostle and disciple.[126] In my view they

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122 King, *Way to Sion,* 80-2: King's argument has been significantly reduced through paraphrasing, but both his
intermediary and ultimate conclusions remain evident here.
123 Blackwood, *Expositions,* 543.
124 Allen, *Doubt Resolved,* A[2].
125 See Vendettuoli, 144.
126 For example, see Kilcop, *Seekers Supplied*, 2.

would not have been as persuasive to a neutral audience as the Seeker arguments, which possess much more vigour and vitality, although the key point here is that neither side was writing to a neutral audience; both sides were resorting to print and constructing the other in order to strengthen the confirmation bias of their own intended readership.[127] Montaigne described this process in the sixteenth century: 'People are prone to apply the meaning of other men's writings to suit opinions that they have previously determined in their minds', but this all seems strikingly modern and is reminiscent of recent British political debates.[128] Tombes' *Theodulia* (1667) shows a contemporary awareness that such exchanges presage the online echo chambers of today but also suggests that the Seeker position rejects such sophistry:

> too often, many declining to hear them that preach sound Doctrine, because they say they rail, when they reprove their errours, or vices; and choosing to hear those that are of their way, and preach according to that which they like, or else turn Seekers, denying any to be Ministers, but such as speak by immediate and unerring motion of the Spirit.[129]

Tombes hopes that those of good intention but weak judgement questioned less and satisfied themselves: `by preferring the judgment of their faithful, learned, wise and holy Teachers and Rulers before their own, when their own capacity is insufficient to settle their Consciences.'[130] He concludes that by representing the hearing of Ministers as: 'dangerous and odious', Seekers caused: 'many [to] fall to the opinions of Quakers, Seekers, and other erroneous opinions and practises, which by hearing the present Ministers, might have been prevented.'[131]

When the argument rolls on to ordinances it is not possible to know whether the Baptist fear of atheism here is real or purely for dramatic, or polemic, purposes. But it does suggest that in the absence of strong, or at least uncontested, church leadership they believe that continued obedience to scriptural ordinances was essential to maintaining the stability and viability of organised religion, hence the prominence given to obeying ordinances in the Particular Baptist Confessions of 1644 and 1646. Baptist congregations continually admonished those members who, under the influence of the ideas of Seekers and others, were guilty of 'despising scripture and slighting ordinances': the records

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[127] *Confirmation bias* is the psychological tendency for people to understand new information as affirming their pre-existing beliefs and to ignore evidence that doesn't, rather than 'I'll believe it when I see it' it dictates 'I'll see it when I believe it'. It was first proposed and demonstrated by English psychologist Peter Wason in his study, '2-4-6 Hypothesis Rule Discovery Task' (1960).

[128] Michel de Montaigne, 'An Apology for Raymond Sebond' (1568), in *Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Frame (1958) 327.

[129] Tombes, *Theodulia* (n.d. 1667) 63*,* 325: this work's main thrust is against the Seeker attack on the ministry; for contemporary Presbyterian recognition of the same phenomena of confirmation bias, see a letter from Baxter to John Eliot, 27 March 1668, in Powicke, ed., `Some Unpublished Correspondence', *Bulletin of John Rylands Library*, XV (I931) 169; Foster, `The Faith of a Separatist Layman', 402.

[130] *Theodulia,* 50.

[131] *Ibid* 272.

of the Fenstanton Church are littered with cases.[132] By 1655 or 1659 when Allen and Baxter were writing, it is uncertain whether they were scared of Seekerism *per se* or just of the Ranter and Quaker positions to which it had led. I believe it was an attempt to drain the antinomian swamp, as they saw it: to target the Seeker rejection of administrators and consequently ordinances that had created the reservoir from whence greater heresies had flowed. Allen deployed a common anti-sectarian trope in his claim that the Seeker rejection of administrators and ordinances was made under the influence of the Devil, rather than reason: 'those poor souls, whom the Devil hath so far beguiled, as to conceit themselves so spiritual and sublime, as to be above ordinances, are indeed, and in truth, so poor, low, and carnal, to be grossly ignorant of the mind of God, thus plainly laid down in Scripture.'[133]

A similar point had been made some five years earlier by two fellow Baptists, after the appearance of Ranters, but before the emergence of Quakers. King accused Seekers of vanity since they conceived themselves: `to be in higher rooms as to Presbytery, Independency, Baptism … THEY … cry out, that those that use Ordinances, are low, and weak, they are not yet come to those high enjoyments as they are.' Here the phrase 'high enjoyments' could also act as a dog-whistle to connect Seekers with the 'High Attainers' or Ranters.[134] General Baptist Richard Stooks thought Satan planned: `to take us off all worship and to deny the Bible to be the word of God, … that every man may walke according to the dictates of his owne heart, ... if he can take men off the word, that thereby they may deny all Scriptures, and all Visible Worship, then they will be his owne children of the *tribe of disobedience*.'[135] This is the same view that Independent Cotton Mather attributes to Williams, rather than Satan: `that everyone should have liberty to worship God according to the Light of his own Conscience; but owning of no true Churches or Ordinances now in the World.'[136] They both sound similar to the Presbyterian assertion that sectarianism is dangerous because plurality is the enemy of obedience and discipline. Although Stooks felt uniformity could only come from the authority of Scripture, so takes pains to assert that the Bible is not corrupted and is the Word of God. King also offered scriptural support against Saltmarsh and the Seekers: 'The Church (say they) is in the wilderness … we are to be fed from inspirations and spirit from Christ alone, and no Ordinance to be made use of ... But saith Christ, Go not forth, Mat. 24.26 ... (i.e.) of your Order,

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[132] Underhill, *Fenstanton Records*, 2, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14 and *passim*.
[133] Allen, *Doubt Resolved,* 12. Allen makes the same argument regarding baptism, *Ibid*, 9.
[134] King, *Some Beams of Light* 168-99: King was still responding to Saltmarsh' *Sparkles,* 293-5.
[135] My italics. Richard Stooks, *A Second Champion* (1650) *A Postscript to a Party called Seekers, or those that call themselves Mad-men, which deny the Bible to be Scripture, or the Word of GOD*.
[136] Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) Bk VII, 9.

and Ordinances, and Obedience; neither to the Seekers; nor those others, to seek Christ in the Desert'.[137]

It is noteworthy here that the title of Stooks postscript: '*A Postscript to a Party called Seekers, or those that call themselves Mad-men, which deny the Bible to be Scripture, or the Word of GOD*'. The sense of the text suggests that Stooks was conflating Seekers with anti-scripturists and Ranters here, especially since there was a Ranter tract called *Justification of the Mad Crew.* This could mean that he was not particularly well-informed about Seeker beliefs but it is more likely that this is an intentional polemic device. In a similar way, John Spittlehouse (inaccurately) conflated disparate groups based on a shared stance on ordinances[138] The extent to which this was common by 1650 is an interesting question as this would draw the Seekers nearer to the J.C Davis inspired controversy surrounding the Ranters or at least give the impression that the Ranter danger was broader and deeper than perhaps it was. Although the Seekers are in no way a good fit for Davis' Ranter characterisation as both friendly and hostile sources report their significant growth and importance by 1646.[139] King writes similarly at this time, juxtaposing Seeker and Ranter positions which asserts a close association and even a fluidity between the two positions, placing them at adjacent points on a sliding scale of radical belief rather than as separate categories.

> The Devil hath [persuaded] them that there are no churches in the world, that persons cannot … practice ordinances, there being no true ministry in the world: others they run to another desperate extreme, holding Christ to be a shadow, and all his Gospel and Ordinances like himself, fleshly and carnal.[140]

The following year, and perhaps even more unfairly, Independent preacher John Durant, linked Seekers to Socinians, for whom Christ is: `but a shadow … a mere Patterne of what we should doe … [and not] `a substantiall Saviour'. He claimed Seekers: `likewise over-throw the substantiality of Christ, think of him only as a forme of God, putting forth it selfe for a time, and annihilated afterward; [who] was but a shadow of what God would doe in our Flesh, and that themselves are as substantially God as he.'[141] In 1653 Baptist Samuel Fisher continues eagerly to stir muddied waters and claims that Satan seeks to uphold his kingdom: 'by erecting a new moddle, of men, I mean the seekers, and Ranters'. Fisher argues that the core value of the Seekers, their stance on ordinances, lead inexorably to the Ranter view: in allowing best to be the enemy of good, the Seeker: 'scruples

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[137] King, *Some Beams of Light,* 169.
[138] Spittlehouse, *Rome ruin'd by White Hall,* 351: 'Postscript, to the Brethren of the Independants, Antinomians, Seekers, and all that reject and despise Ordinances'.
[139] Davis, *Fear, Myth and History, passim*; Saltmarsh, *Groanes*, 22-3; Edwards, *Gangraena II* (1646) 13-14.
[140] King, *A Way to Sion,* Epistle Dedicatory.
[141] Durant, *Comfort & counsell for dejected soules* (1651) Epistle Dedicatory, B2ʳ.

everything, till he is satisfied to own nothing, as if because there is some waies of error, therefore there can be no way of truth: he is weak in the faith, believing nothing to be good till he believes everything to be so, and nothing to be bad or naught at all. Thus, this man runs up to ranting by little and little.' Fisher, an ex-Presbyterian, would later leave the Baptists for the Quakers; exemplifying the incremental radicalisation that he attributes to Seekers.[142] The repeated examples do suggest that *terminological inexactitude* regarding Seeker and Ranter positions was a deliberate strategy by Baptists, in order to amplify the danger presented by both: a combined danger, that incorporated the quiet, moderate voice of Jackson's recent *Sober Word* as well as the loud, immoderate 'rantings' of Coppe and his associates, was greater than the sum of its parts.

The Practice of Baptism

The two most important differences between Baptists and Seekers concerned the need to observe, and the right to administer, sacraments or ordinances. Baptists accused Seekers of prioritising their own spiritual inspirations over Scripture and countered the Seeker claim that ordinances are invalid because they have no qualified administrators. This claim underpinned all subsequent contentions over the role of miracles and gifts and, most importantly, the status of all ordinances including baptism. The last of these was clearly an area of particular importance for Baptists, although it did not feature as prominently as one might expect, as the controversy over the exercise of baptism was in effect a corollary of the disagreement over apostolic authority. However, contemporary Baptist records offer important details on the development of Baptist practice at this time which provide an important context for their relations with other groups and their constructions of the Seekers.[143] The Kiffin manuscript states:

> 1640. 3rd Mo: The [Jacob] Church became two by mutuall consent half being with Mr P. Barebone & ye other halfe with Mr. H. Jessey Mr Richard Blunt with him being convinced of Baptism yt ought to be by dipping in ye body into ye water, resembling Burial and rising again (2 Col. 2.12 [sic]; Rom. 6.4) had sober conference about in ye Church, & then with some of the forenamed who also were so convinced; and after prayer and conference about

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[142] Fisher, *Baby-baptism meer babism* (n.d. 1653) 417, 617; Fisher, *Christianismus Redivivus,* 417.

[143] The reference here is to the manuscript believed to be the work of William Kiffin, but argued by Whitley to be written by Henry Jessey: Whitley, 'Rise of the Particular Baptists' (1910) 227; White, 'Who Really Wrote the 'Kiffin Manuscript', 3-10; The work was first transcribed in 1712 by Benjamin Stinton, but is now commonly known as the Gould Kiffin Manuscript following a later transcription in 1860, from which all quotations here are taken. Its accuracy was questioned by Christian, *Baptist History Vindicated* (1898), introduction and *passim*. The dating of the beginning of the Particular Baptists' practice of immersion from 1640 onwards is now generally accepted.

their so enjoying it, none having so practiced it in England to professed Believers & having heard that some in ye Netherlands had so practiced they agreed and sent over Mr Blunt.[144]

What we see here is innovation in the use of immersion in baptism; schism within the Particular Baptist Churches about the use of immersion; and uncertainty regarding the need for continuous authority to baptise believers. All of these would serve to heighten anxiety and sensitivity to criticisms offered by the Seekers and others not only about the authority to baptise but also about the correct manner of baptism. Burrage confirms the view that during 1640 Richard Blunt and certain members of both Spilsberie's and Henry Jessey's churches became convinced that baptism by dipping rather than sprinkling or pouring was the form of baptism employed in the apostolic church. Dipping had not been practised like this in England before 1640 and Spilsberie himself was not convinced, so those preferring dipping separated to form another church.[145] In 1643, Spilsberie suggests the presence of Seeker views within the Blunt-Blacklock church. These are confirmed by Sarah Jones a year later and are also reported in *Gangraena*.[146]

However, by the time of the 1644 First London Confession of Particular Baptists, all signatories representing the seven churches, including Spilsberie, Jessey and Kiffin had agreed on the adoption of immersion.[147] Neither Blunt nor Blacklock signed the Confession as they had either become Seekers or defected to the General Baptists, who adopted immersion themselves around this time (General Baptist Edward Barber published the first argument for *dipping* in England in 1642). Within a few years most who had pleaded for the baptism of believers, added the further

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[144] Gould Kiffin MSS, entry for 1640; Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, 336, states that immersion had been adopted by 1641; On the Kiffin Manuscript, also see Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and his World* (6 Vols, 2010-19), Wright, *Early English Baptists* and Bingham, *Orthodox Radicals* (2019).
[145] Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, 381.
[146] J[ohn] S[pilsbury], *A treatise concerning … baptisme* (s.n. 1643) Epistle to Reader, sig.A3; Jones, *To Sion's Lovers*, Sig. A2v; Edwards, *Gangraena, The Third* Part, 113; Wright (2004) `Sarah Jones and the Jacob-Jessey Church', 9; Wright, `Sarah Jones and the Jacob-Jessey Church: The Relation of a Gentlewoman', eBLJ, article 2 [https://www.bl.uk/eblj/2004articles/article2.html accessed 07.06.20].
[147] The Kiffin manuscript acknowledges the novelty of immersion as a method of baptism in England but the 1644 *First London Confession* of Particular Baptists does not. The relevant sections are clause 39 (believers' baptism) citing Acts 2.37, 38; 8.36-38; 18.8; clause 40 (dipping) citing Mat. 3.16; John 3.23; Acts 8.38; Rev. 1.5; 7.14; Heb. 10.22; Rom. 6.3-5; I Cor. 15.28, 29, 41; and clause 41 (rejecting the need for an extraordinary commission in order to baptise): 'the commission enjoining the administration, being given to them under no other consideration, but as considered Disciples', citing Isa. 8.16; Mat. 28.16-19; John 4.1-2; Acts 20.7; Mat. 26.26. For the 1644 Confession text itself see McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1911) 171-89; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1969) 153-71: also available digitally at http://www.reformedreader.org/ccc/h.htm [accessed 08.08.2019]. This was the first Baptist Confession to show a preference for immersion: Lumpkin, 146; and the first Confession of [Christian] history to prescribe a single immersion as the form of baptism: McGlothlin, 169; Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (2009) 56-7.

plea, that it be immersion.[148] So, in this highly unstable period of 1642-5, many Baptists moved from church to church, or became Seekers. In conservative religious circles, such developments caused much concern, and from autumn 1643 the Westminster Assembly of Divines debated the means to control them.[149]

So, the actions and writings of the Baptists, regarding the Seekers, at this time were in part a reaction against three powerful charges laid at their door (not necessarily by Seekers) regarding the authority to baptise, the manner of baptism and schism regarding both issues. Seekers argued that a continuous authority stretching back to the apostolic church was essential to any valid baptism. Some Particular Baptist congregations, like the group around Henry Jessey, as part of a broader sectarian wish to disassociate themselves from any practice that opponents could portray as 'novel', sought to connect both the practice of immersion and the authority to baptise to a continuous chain of authority and dispatched Richard Blunt to Amsterdam, where the Dutch Collegiant of Rijnsburg, John Batten, performed the rite before Blunt returned and baptised Samuel Blacklock.[150] These two leaders then baptised another 51 people before this group itself split, with some remaining with Blunt whilst others followed Kilcop. Blacklock himself left Blunt's group when it divided once more over the Seeker charge that apostasy had removed all ordinances, becoming either a Seeker or defecting to the General Baptists.[151] However, in the early 1640s, schism existed as the Particular Baptist group led by Spilsberie rejected both immersion and the necessity for continuous succession: 'The position of the Particular Baptists meant that for an administrator of Baptism they did not go beyond the authority of the New Testament.'[152] Later, with the support of Tombes, this stance rejecting the need for continuous succession to grant the authority to baptise, became the dominant view of the Particular Baptists (and helped shape their own construction of Seekers as a group who were failing to follow the model of the Primitive Church). The case of Saltmarsh illustrates the

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[148] Edward Barber, *A small treatise of baptisme, or, dipping* (1642); Whitley, 'The Revival of Immersion in Holland and England' (1912) 35; *The First London Confession of Particular Baptists* (1644) states that 'Scripture holds out [Baptism] to be dipping or plunging the whole body under the water.' The General Baptists were probably practicing immersion by 1650, but their first confession specifically calling for baptism by immersion only appeared in 1660.

[149] Wright, *British Baptists and Politics*, 87: indeed, Sarah Jones', *To Sion's Lovers* addressed her concerns to Assembly member William Gouge.

[150] Burrage argues that Blunt was not baptised by Batten but visited only to confer with the Collegiants and obtain information, before returning to baptise Blacklock, the leader of the immersionist community. This view removes the schism with the Spilsberie group over continuous authority. Burrage, *Early English Dissenters,* 330-1; G.P.G., The President, 'Review of Burrage's Early English Dissenters' (1912) 64.

[151] Tolmie has Blacklock joining the Seekers, but Greaves disagrees based on Blacklock's presence on 28 December 1648 in a group protesting to Fairfax at Putney that contained several General Baptists. Haller & Davis (eds.) *Leveller Tracts,* 423-4; Tolmie, 180; Greaves in *BDBR I*, 68; Whitley, 'Rise of the Particular Baptists', 243; Edwards, *Gangraena*, 113; Wright, 'British Baptists and Politics', 98.

[152] Christian, *History of the Baptist Churches I* (1922) 168.

development of objections to baptism at this time by those within the Seeker milieu. During his ministry at Brasted, Kent in 1645, Saltmarsh became intimate with the growing Baptist community around Cranbrook and conferred with Baptist preacher Christopher Blackwood to baptise him but declined when he came to question the power of the dispenser. Blackwood: 'answered his arguments and [his] wifes, being many, till they had no more to say, save this, they were convinced, but they must stay until God did perswade, after which time he speedily went into the army'. Saltmarsh was himself radicalised by his NMA experience and skipped the Baptist position, proceeding directly to a rejection of forms.[153]

The original Confession of London Baptists (16 October 1644) was revised in 1646. Both are dominated by a concern with ordinances and their dutiful observance. The records of Baptist congregations at Bristol and Fenstanton, Warboys and Hexham also show this issue was a continuing source of conflict within these Baptist congregations.[154] As well as the importance of ordinances and attitudes to Magistracy, the 1644 Confession argues for the primacy of Scripture (Clause VII) and that only the Elect are saved by their faith (XVII and XXI); it asserts the right of church members to choose their own: 'Pastors, Teachers, Elders and Deacons' (XXXVIII), and also claims Scriptural support for dipping as the correct way to baptise (XL). The revised Confession (January 28th, 1646) appeared a fortnight before *Gangraena*, with the first civil war effectively over. It is shorter but differs little in essentials, it tempers the right of the congregation to choose its own officers, removing Pastors and Teachers, from clause XXXVIII; it also qualifies its description of dipping in clause XL, perhaps to rebuff the accusation that immersion was a cover for sexual gratification: 'the word baptize signifies to dip or plunge (yet so as convenient garments be both upon the administrator and subject with all modesty).'[155] It is noteworthy that both Baptist and Presbyterian accounts of Seekers from 1646 share a focus on error, indiscipline and the importance of ordinances. However, it is also worth noting that Presbyterian writers did challenge the Baptist Confession of Faith itself, including its claim of scriptural support for immersion.[156]

Unsurprisingly, a key ordinance for the Baptists was believer's baptism and they do devote a significant amount of attention to Seeker criticism on this point. Thomas Lambe (d.1686) told John Goodwin that if he: 'denied that Baptisme was the ordinance of entrance into the visible Church of

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[153] Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons* (1659) 543-5; Como, *Radical,* 395.
[154] Underhill, *Records of Broadmead* (1847); Underhill, *Records of Fenstanton*.
[155] See also Clarkson, who replied that: 'nature hath small desire to copulation in water', to the charge that he dipped six sisters naked, then had sex whilst still in the water, with his sister of choice, at Framlingham, Suffolk: *Lost Sheep Found*, 15.
[156] Thomas Bakewell, *An answer, or confutation of divers errors […] of Anabaptists (*May 1646) 7. This was a full seven months before the principal Presbyterian attack on the Baptists in Baillie, *Anabaptism* (1 January 1647).

Christ' he would have no fellow, except some Seekers, and some few persons leaning that way'. Lambe weaponises the Seekers in his suggestion that Goodwin shares their beliefs and practices. [157] Seeker objections to the baptism practices of the Baptists took four main forms. Firstly, as we have seen already and will not repeat at length here, their main objection was that none of those administrators who currently practised baptism were qualified to do so, due to the absence of any valid and continuous apostolic succession. Interestingly, John Child notes a difference between Seekers and Quakers on this point: 'Quakers, (so called) deny that Baptism with water is now a duty incumbent upon Christians; … Seekers so called, do deny that any persons have a right in this Age to Administer it, although they do grant it to be a duty.'[158] A second related issue was voiced by Jackson, 'unless it can be showed, where and when Jesus or Apostles, did ever teach believers to baptise one another since his resurrection ... [they cannot] prove a sufficient ground for the practice.'[159] Thirdly, Seekers rejected any scriptural authority for *water baptism* as they interpreted the baptisms by Christ described in the Bible as a baptism of the spirit; and fourthly, Seekers cited Scriptural objections both to the wording and the methods used by Baptists when administering this sacrament. Saltmarsh raised thirteen objections against the practice of the Baptists in *Smoke in the Temple* and eight of these mention the sacrament of baptism itself. The Seekers did not devise all of these objections themselves and Baptists had already debated some of them amongst themselves: Robert Barrow had responded to similar objections from PraiseGod Barbon in 1642.

Whilst the vast majority of sources in Baptist-Seeker exchanges that are cited in this thesis are printed, in this case there is a manuscript source, dated 17 October 1645, that covers all of the points listed above so it is transcribed and included here. It was found in papers seized by the courts at the house of the radical printer Overton, composed by a Baptist and attacks: 'maney [who own] them selves by the name of seekers,' thus verifying that the term 'Seeker' was a label of self-description. It reproduced and refuted eight questions on baptism, which match those given in *Gangraena* that Edwards had received from the Seeker Wrighter in November 1645:

1 whether Johns baptim and Cristes are all one

2 whether cristes baptim is the baptim of water

3 To prove that aney but Apostells That ware to preache to all nachones ware to baptise According to the Commichon Mathew 28

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[157] Lambe, *Truth prevailing,* 59-60*,* 77-8.
[158] Child, *A Moderate Message to Quakers, Seekers and Socinians,* 1.
[159] Jackson, *Sober Word,* 21; Vendettuoli, 149.

4 To prove by or from scriptewer wheither aney after the said Commichon given forth did baptise but Apostells evangelists or thous that had an emediat Call from god and did worke marakels

5 To prowfe yowar one practtis by scriptewers how you Can baptise on Another with owt a Call and make yowar selves A Church and breake bread

6 To prowfe by scriptewer That aney did breake bread after the said Commichon given forth but thous that ware baptised and gathred in to Church fellowshipe by apostells

7 To prove weither a peopell of themselves may baptise on another and so be Com a Church of themselves and so send forth one of selves to preach To them selves and others of the world and gather Chur[ch]es and baptise

8 To prowfe that they did baptise with water in the name of the father sone and spirit and thow thay baptised with water in the name of the lord prowfe it to be from the Commichon [of] Mathew 28.[160]

The anonymous Baptist author's response was that these: 'craftei queres and suttell argewmentes maneiged by the deptes of sathan', could be used: 'to render dowtfull aney thing' in the Bible. His rebuttal asked whether the 'seeker' could produce Scripture showing that John's baptism 'was repealid' or positive scriptural proof that baptism, the Eucharist and church gathering were not based on 'commandes contained in the new testament.' He claimed these doubts could be applied to anything in Scripture tending directly 'to infidillatey' if not 'athisem'[161] We will consider the Baptist responses to some of this Seeker's four objections and consider what they tell us about how and why Baptists sought to construct the Seekers and characterise their own relationship with them.

Saltmarsh had argued that scriptural baptism was spirit not water baptism and cited several examples of Scripture for support. [Matt. 20.22-23; Matt. 3.11; I Cor. 12.13; I Cor. 10.2]. Knollys countered that Matt. 28.19 (Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost): `cannot properly be understood of any other kind of Baptizing, but by water.'[162] Having recently begun practising immersion, we can see the Baptist engagement with the Seeker objections as a defensive action. All religious groups sought to distance themselves from novelty or innovation and associate themselves with the patterns and practices of the Primitive Church, in an attempt to stitch their own practices in to a continuing apostolic

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[160] PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/212 (Aug. 13, 1646), fol. 10r; Como, *Radical,* 398.
[161] PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/212 (Aug. 13, 1646), fols. 11r, 13r-v, 15r; Como, *Radical*, 398-9.
[162] Knollys, *Shining*, 3.

succession and its contingent claim to religious authority. Hence it is unsurprising that there were such hotly contested debates over what the practices of the Primitive Church actually were. Saltmarsh used this same text, Matt. 28.19, to argue that the wording of the current Baptist practice (baptism in the name of Jesus Christ alone) had no scriptural basis, since Scripture clearly describes baptism in the name of the Trinity. Knollys responded, weakly, that either wording was: 'one and the same Baptism'.[163] Saltmarsh argued for a baptism of gifts not water. [Matt. 28.1, 8; Joel 2.28; Isa. 44.3; Matt. 3.11; Acts 1.5; and John 1.33] Knollys retorted that baptism by water and the Holy Spirit are not to be separated. [Hebr. 6.1-2; Acts 2.38; Acts 10.45-48]. Such scriptural exchanges did not resolve the dispute and merely served to deepen the trenches of the respective positions.

The standard Baptist response that we have already seen was to criticize their opponent's exegesis and charge them with abusing Scripture, which they also did here. John Gosnold claimed all Christians saw the commission in Mat. 28.19. as water baptism: `except some few Notionists and Seekers of few years late past'. Allen argued: 'too many in these times, … to render water baptism unnecessary, do construe most of those Scriptures as meant of the Baptism of the Spirit, which speak of Baptism, after the ministry of John the Baptist ceased'.[164] Vendettuoli has argued that Allen is here describing the view of those that Johnson called Finders and Wach termed positive spiritualists, thereby recognising these as distinctions within the Seeker movement; Vendettuoli argues that Seekers, Finders and early Quakers were all separated from the existing churches, but only the Seekers still felt the need of outward organisation. My own view is that Seekers are better characterised as the milieu that includes all of these three groups and the valid distinctions between sub-groups within the Seeker milieu relate more to differing stances regarding the stance of *Stillstand*, rather than differing levels of outward organisation. All were similarly unorganised but those termed Finders or Early Quakers were those who believed that the presence of the spirit within *already* signalled the arrival of that for which others in the Seeker milieu sought or awaited, namely an apostolic commission to inaugurate a visible church with divine gifts and spiritual power like the primitive church. These Schwenckfeldian principles were shared by English Seekers and Dutch Collegiants and a direct derivation is asserted in Theodore Sippell.[165]

This charge, (levelled against various dissenting communities) that the Seekers did not know their Scripture, or wilfully abused it to support their arguments, was a recurring Baptist criticism of the means rather than the ends of the Seeker argument. We have already discussed Sabean's concept of culture and community and the idea that what bonds people together is participation in

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[163] Knollys, *Shining,* 2.
[164] Gosnold, *Baptismon didaches. Of the doctrine of baptisms* (n.d. 1657) 3; Allen, *Doubt Resolved,* 37;
[165] Vendettuoli, 20; Sippell, 'Uber den Ursprung des Quakertumes' (1910) Transl., Sharp (1910) 298-302.

the same arguments: what this conception does not mention is the impact that the protagonists can have on one another, and how this can change the culture as a whole. If we are looking to describe and assess the impression that Seekers had on Baptists, we could do worse than look to the Broadmead church in Bristol. After those who had been exposed to the Seeker ideas in London returned to the congregation in Bristol, the church members that: 'did cleave to the simplicity of the gospel of Christ, and the ordinances thereof, began again to new model themselves and to separate from those disturbers'. This group signed a covenant which shows the impact on Baptists of exposure to Seeker ideas, in what I would term a post-shattering position – the beliefs this covenant asserted are the things that their former congregants (turned Seekers) had rejected. So we can see the shape of actual Seeker doctrine and practice left (as it were) like an impression in Baptist clay:

> that they [Baptists] would in the strength of Christ, keep close to the Holy Scriptures, the word of God; and [to] the plain truths and ordinances of the gospel, of church fellowship, breaking bread, and prayers; and to be subject to one another, according to the discipline and admonition [commanded] by the rules of Christ, in the New testament or the Scriptures.[166]

Seeker exchanges with the gathered churches and with Presbyterians begin from the same epicentre: all sides used Scripture for authority and argument to serve confirmation bias. The gathered churches deployed Scripture to justify their own forms, beliefs and rituals and the Seekers deployed Scripture, sometimes the same Scripture, to reject these same forms, beliefs and rituals. The Quaker-Seeker exchanges were a different beast as the Quakers had advanced further, beyond the Seekers, on a sliding scale between reliance on the Word and reliance on the Spirit. In this sense the Seeker path and position was uniquely complex, even for the intensely complex and entangled melange that was the Radical religious milieu; because they occupied a liminal position between the relative order of the gathered churches that many of them had left, and the relative disorder of the Ranter and Quaker positions that many of them would join, and that they had done so much to bring into existence. In 1651, a Baptist letter characterised the Seeker view on ordinances, embracing prayer and preaching but rejecting others like baptism, as conflicted, rather than Laodicean; as: 'neither hot nor cold. We beseech you lay aside all such carelessness and lukewarmness.'[167] Seeker restlessness had carried them to an uncomfortable, and ultimately untenable, position between the more rigid formalism and scripturalism of the Presbyterians and gathered churches behind them and the almost total rejection of forms and externals by the Ranters and Quakers, ahead of them. As

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[166] Underhill, *Broadmead Records,* 32.
[167] Underhill*, Fenstanton Records,* 6.

Edmund Skipp noted 'to the Seekers so called' in 1653: 'You … have born forth unto the world that uncomfortable fraternity of Quakers and Ranters'.[168] Hence they received criticism from both sides, some like Jackson developed a siege mentality and hardened their quietism and willingness to wait upon the Lord; others felt the ebb tide draw them back towards orthodoxy; whilst others still, were carried on a rising ecstatic flow to Ranter and Quaker positions, and it is to these Quaker-Seeker debates that we turn next.

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[168] Skipp, *The worlds wonder, or the Quakers blazing starr* (28 February 1655) 59-64. Nuttall, 'Another Baptist Vicar, Edmund Skipp' (1990) identifies Skipp as a Baptist but Skipp himself tells us he had previously maintained 'fellowship and society with [Seekers] in a special manner above and beyond all other people professing the ways of the Lord, for the space of six years compleat'.

Radical Dialogue

In 1646, Presbyterians led printed attacks on the Seekers with Edwards predicting that the Seekers would soon carry all before them but a decade later they had been outflanked by the Quakers, a more activist radical voice and the Seeker Jackson bemoaned the direction of travel that saw Seekers swelling the ranks of the nascent Quakers. His *Hosanna to the Son of David* (1657) addressed: 'those who pass under the name Quakers … not so much for the detecting of their persons, as the reclaiming the tender-hearted among them from the error of their way'. Jackson wanted to reach those among them: 'who have quit their former profession, which they have made before many witnesses, and are moved away from the hope of the gospel, to the embracing of some other thing instead thereof.' [1] The extent of such *Convincements* is well documented and the Quaker numbers were certainly on a rising tide by the mid-1650s, buoyed up by former Seekers. The Quakers took much of their membership, practice and doctrine from the Seekers, yet there was little love lost between the two groupings in their print exchanges and no doubt in their personal dealings. Indeed, Edmund Morgan has noted that: 'the most hotly contested religious differences have often been differences of degree: the shift from orthodoxy to heresy may be no more than a shift of emphasis'.[2]

The drift from Seeker to Quaker was not inexorable. Some remained, theologically, as Seekers, some moved beyond that position but were never formally convinced as Quakers, whilst others returned to a Seeker position following a Quaker phase. The correspondence published as *Strength in Weakness* in 1655 shows clearly that Mary Noel rejected the exhortations of prominent Quaker Naylor to maintain her *stillstand* among the Seekers; Williams also resisted Quaker convincement but from a more orthodox Seeker position, since he objected to the denial of a visible church with external sacraments and the spiritualisation of the Lord's Supper and water baptism, and affirmed the importance of external prayer and preaching.[3] Williams represents a wing of the Seeker milieu that did not embrace a wholly spiritualised form of worship. Saltmarsh, Erbery, Joshua Sprigge, John Webster, Morgan Llwyd and Walter Cradock all moved towards a more positive spiritualism over time, towards the Quaker position, without becoming formally 'convinced'. This suggests that the beliefs of those at the spiritualised edge of the Seeker milieu, overlapped with

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[1] Jackson*, Hosannah to the Son of David* (1657) To the Impartial and Unprejudic'd Reader; Vendettuoli, 48 n.1 claims that Jackson was already lamenting the defection of Seekers to the Quaker position six years earlier in his 1650 work *Sober Word*, but I cannot find any support for this claim in the work.
[2] Morgan, *Roger Williams: Church and State* (1967) 11; Endy, 'Puritanism, Spiritualism and Quakerism' 296.
[3] Williams, *George Foxe Digg'd out of his Burrowes* (1676) 65; Vendettuoli, 87.

some of the beliefs held by those who had been convinced as Quakers. [4] Saltmarsh, Erbery and Sprigge all eventually rejected outward ecclesiastical forms and put their primary emphasis on the inner working of the spirit and (at least tacitly) acknowledged a new dispensation in the form of the light within, but all actively resisted Quaker proselytization. Whilst Quaker Robert Widders lamented that John Webster: 'had been partly convinced and turned back again, Simon Magus like.'[5]

All this activity represents a complex Seeker milieu and one of those searching in its murky depths was Isaac Penington. His early works show a Seeker stance in the late 1640s and he travelled a long road before his formal Quaker convincement in 1658. An early work of 1648 is preoccupied with the search for certainty among the 'bitter contentions of the present age'; and warns about following the religious fashions of, 'this flitting-age': three years later Jackson is still describing 'these discoursing times'.[6] Bauman's sensitive study of quietism notes that the energies of early Quakers were devoted to asserting the differences between themselves and all others and this section deals with the way that the Early Quakers attempted to construct the Seekers.[7] In this contest the Quakers showed a much more organised and controlled programme of propaganda than the Seekers. Letters from Francis Howgill to Margaret Fell, following his recent London meetings with Seekers and Waiters, amongst others, advised her to send forth only those: 'that hath a sharp sword [and were] well skilled to handle it'.[8] One historian of the Early Quakers noted their gift for invective: 'admitting no weapon but the tongue, they used it unsparingly'.[9]

An individual who represented a social nexus at the centre of the printed contest between Quakers and Seekers was the bookseller Giles Calvert (*bap.* 1612-63) who was closely associated with both groups and printed works by both Seekers and Quakers from his shop at the sign of the Black Spread Eagle in St Paul's Churchyard. Around 200 of the 500 works he is thought to have published were by Quakers (peaking between 1653-6) although his backlist is a roll-call of the radical

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[4] See *supra* for the competing typologies of Douglas Gwyn and Winthrop Hudson.

[5] Vendettuoli, 68-9; Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 178 n6. For a similar example see John Toldervy, *Foot Out of the Snare* (1655) 3-4.

[6] Penington, *A Touchstone or Trial of Faith* (1648) A[2] To the Reader; Jackson, *Sober Word*, 1; Punshon, 'Early Writings of Isaac Penington', 64.

[7] Bauman, 32*;* the boundaries of the term 'early Quakerism' are open to debate, the experience and form of worship that would become Quakerism was visible in the E. Midlands in 1646-7, and the letter by Farnworth, Parker and Whitehead *et al, Testimony of the Brethren* (1666) [in *FHL* Portfolio MS 41.94 and Barclay, *Letters of Early Friends* (1841) 318-24] has been offered as the end of this phase: Hoare, *Balby Beginnings,* vii; Moore*, Light,* 224; the most recent collection of essays on this area is Angell and Dandelion, *Early Quakers and Their Theological Thought* (2015).

[8] Howgill refers to the 'Sword in the Mouth': Francis Howgill to Margaret Fell, late July 1654, London in Caton MSS III, 156-8; Horle, 'John Camm: Profile of a Quaker Minister', 77; Howgill had also met Baptists, Ranters and a group called the *Bible People:* Moore, *Light*, 27.

[9] Nuttall, 'Overcoming the World', 150: Nuttall gives the DNB entry for Fox as his reference, but this quote does not appear there.

canon of religious writers at the vanguard of spiritual thought in the period: Boehme, Henrik Nicholas, Saltmarsh, Dell, Williams, Winstanley, Overton, Walwyn, Clarkson, Isaac Penington, Fox and Naylor. He accompanied some 200 Quakers to a meeting in Swannington, Leicestershire in January 1655, publishing several of the Quaker works that this meeting produced. Later that year Quaker letters place him at another meeting in London in the close company of Fox, Naylor, Judge Thomas Fell and Alexander Parker, and show Quakers visiting his house. He provided credit for Quakers (the Kendal fund was linked to his bookshop) a distribution centre (propaganda materials were collected from there before road trips to towns such as Cambridge) and acted as a postal clearing house for Friends in London.[10] Although his close connections with the Quakers did cool significantly by 1658; due to personal financial vicissitudes and the close involvement of his sister Martha Simmons in the Naylor debacle at Bristol in 1656.[11]

The contest spawned quite an extensive literature and the works sampled here span the quarter-century from Naylor's *The Power and Glory of the Lord Shining out of the North* (1653) to Fox's *New England Firebrand Quenched* (1678). A thorough search of printed material held in EEBO between these dates found fourteen Quaker writers who made substantive reference to Seekers in twenty-seven titles.[12] Some of the works offer explicit characterisations of the Seekers as a group: in Edward Burrough's *A Trumpet of the Lord Sounded out of Sion* (1656), Seekers appear last in a list of eighteen targets; whereas John Crook's *Defence of the Quakers* (1659) devotes twenty-two pages to a sustained assault on the Seeker position.[13] Other works focus on specific Seeker authors or works, rather than the group as a whole. One such work is Fox's diatribe *The Great Mistery of the Great Whore* (1659) which is really a rebuttal of various opponents' books and principles, petitions and attacks on Quakerism, including Seeker works by Dell and Jackson. Still other works, such as

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[10] See Hessayon on Calvert in ODNB [accessed 12 Dec 2018]; Alexander Parker to Margaret Fell, 21 May 1655, *Swarthmore MSS*. I. 162; Letter from Bristol for Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill c/o Giles Calvert in London (n.d.) *A R Barclay MSS*, 157; Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, 80.

[11] On Calvert see *op. cit* above and Caricchio, 'News from the New Jerusalem: Giles Calvert and the Radical Experience' in Hessayon and Finnegan, *Varieties,* 69-86; Caricchio, 'Giles Calvert, an 'area editor' in the English Revolution' (2003b) 1-14, http://old.fupress.net/index.php/cromohs/article/view/15675/14550 [accessed 20 October 2019]; Plomer, *Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers* (1967) 42-3; Terry, 'Giles Calvert's Publishing Career', 45-9; Terry, 'Giles Calvert, Mid-17th Century Bookseller and Publisher: An Account of his Publishing Career' (MSc Thesis, Columbia University, 1937); Thomas, 'A Purveyor of Soul-Poysons. An Analysis of the Career of Giles Calvert' (PhD La Trobe University, Australia, 1999).

[12] For chronological listings of relevant Quaker texts from 1653-78 that dealt with Seekers see appendix 1. Quaker works cited beyond 1678 include William Penn's *preface to Fox's Journal* (1694) and John Pennyman's *Short Account of the Life of Mr. John Pennyman* (1705) but a systematic search of EEBO was only conducted between the years 1640-1675.

[13] Burrough, *A Trumpet of the Lord*: those attacked are: 'Cromwell, his Counsell, Generals and Commanders, Delinquents and Cavaliers, Judges and Lawyers, Astrologers and Magicians, Priests, Prophets and Teachers, Anabaptists, Freewillers (who say Christ died for all), Millenarians, Ranters and Seekers'; Crook, *A defence of the true church called Quakers …against the several sects* (1659) 34-56.

Jackson's *Strength in Weaknesse* (1655) are essentially a dialogue in print between Seekers and Quakers, in this case, Naylor. The final bookend of the sample surveyed, Fox's *New England Firebrand Quenched* (1678) is, similarly, a response to Williams' *George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes* (1676).

The number of disagreements cited here is perhaps surprising given the fact that the Seekers provided the leaders, followers and much of the model of worship for the nascent Quaker movement. Seekers formed the majority of the early convincements in 1652-3 in the North and welcomed Quakers like William Caton as late as 1656 during the course of their tours through southern counties like Sussex, as Caton told Fell in January 1656: 'I hath been in Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex and hath had very good service, A door was opened me in A Corner of Sussex where there was several seekers (so-called) the most part of two meetings were convinced'.[14] Later that same year, again in Sussex, Caton cites the friendly reception of Seekers: 'About the middle of the Ninth month 1656 ... I had exceeding good service in Sussex, especially among a people that were called Seekers, who were mostly convinced, not far from Lewes.'[15] Those commentators who were more distant from the milieu that produced first Seekers, then Quakers, also linked them explicitly. John Stalham, the Congregationalist (and later ejected) Minister of Terling, Essex confims that only those who had previously entertained Seeker ideas, were now receptive to Quaker conversation, but that they: `will be at a loss, and ... seek again ... within a short time.'[16]

Consequently, the Quakers do have occasional compliments for the Seekers: at this time Edward Burrough notes that the Seekers' spiritual journey through the sects had moderated their militancy: 'To all ye that are called Seekers and Waiters: among you there is a simplicity and a calm spirit, for you have been poured from vessel to vessel and your scent is not so strong as the former'.[17] In his early works, the convert Francis Howgill did not abandon the name entirely: 'I am one thou calls a Quaker and a Seeker, and blessed be the Lord for evermore that ever I was found worthy to bear the name in truth, for they that seek shall find and they that wait shall not be ashamed.[18] He wrote later: `to you who are called separated Churches and fellowships, under this or that name'. He approvingly acknowledged: 'there was that which shewed you the Nationall way of worship under Episcopacie and Prelacy, and Presbyterie ... was the broad way, and not according to

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[14] Sw. MSS.1.314 (Tr. 1.367; Nuttall Calendar 356) William Caton to Margaret Fell. 19th January 1656, London.
[15] Caton, *Journals of the Lives and Gospel Labours of William Caton and John Burnyeat* (1839) 58; Penney, *First Publishers of Truth,* 235 details the extensive role of Seeker groups in Quaker Convincements in Sussex; Moore, *Light*, 25.
[16] Stalham, *The Reviler Rebuked* (1657) 293.
[17] Burrough, *A Trumpet of the Lord*, 29.
[18] Howgill, *An answer to ... Thomas Ellyson*, 10; Howgill, *Dawnings of the gospel-day,*13; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 27.

the mind of the Lord … you began to separate from them into this or that body, under this or that name … and so here you set up your rest.'[19] There was also still room for occasional friendships such as that between Quaker convert Lilburne and Seeker Jackson. Jackson's *Strength in Weakness*, an account of his 1655 dispute with Quaker leader Naylor, may have owed its title to Lilburne's own *Strength out of Weaknesse* (1649). Although he supported Naylor, that: 'tall man in Christ', in this debate, Lilburne also described Jackson as a 'tall Cedar' and 'my endeared friend and old and long acquaintance', and a 'great professor of religion'.[20] He had read Jackson's *Strength in Weakness* and owned a copy of Naylor's response, *Something in Answer to Strength in Weakness*. He considered Jackson's work: `the strongest and rationalest' response he had ever read in the controversies with his 'endeared freinds called Quakers'.[21] Later, in 1659, Fox himself looked back fondly on the early practice of the Quakers whilst describing *Seeker* practice:

> and after our long seeking the Lord appeared to us … And so we ceased from the teachings of all men, and their words, worships, temples, baptisms and churches; and we ceased from our own words, professions, and practices in religion,... And by this light of Christ in us were we led … met together often, and waited upon the Lord in pure silence, and hearkened to the voice of the Lord, and felt his word in our hearts.[22]

 Certainly, any who strayed from the Quaker flock, such as schismatic John Perrot, found the Seeker position a warm and welcoming one: 'there are of the People called Seekers … whom I as truly own, and with whom I have more Unity, than with divers which are called … Quakers.'[23]

Although near neighbours in belief and practice, when it came to exchanges in print, there was, more often, no love lost between them, and recent work on early Quakerism suggests that Quakers were even more radical in speech than in print.[24] Some early Quaker works talked the language of love and toleration: 'Jesus Christ hath no communion nor fellowship with those that are … backbiters, nor haters'.[25] Nevertheless, two years later, Edward Burrough's characterisation of Seekers drips with vitriol: `your Mother is not the Lord's wife, but married unto a Harlot, and your Seed is mixed with strange children: A prophet was your father, and a whore brought you forth, and

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[19] Howgill, *A lamentation,* 1-2.
[20] Lilburne, *Resurrection,* 8.
[21] Lilburne, *Resurrection*, 5, 8; *FHL*, Tract vol. 309/3, MS annotation following J[ohn] J[ackson], *Strength in Weakness* (1655), printed in Nuttall, 'Overcoming the world', 39; I am grateful to Ariel Hessayon for bringing this annotation to my attention and for the opportunity to read his essay *The resurrection of John Lilburne, Quaker*, prior to its publication.
[22] Fox, *Great Mistery,* Epistle to the Reader.
[23] J.P. (Perrot) *An epistle for the most pure amity and unity,* 12-13; Carroll, 'John Perrot, Early Quaker Schismatic' (1971); Smith, 'Exporting enthusiasm: John Perrot and the Quaker epic' (1990).
[24] Moore, *Light, passim*.
[25] R.F., *Heart Opened by Christ,* A Word to you that are appointed to be Commissioners for the Approbation of Ministers, 15.

your Profession will wither as time passeth away.'[26] Naylor was similarly venomous in his condemnation of the Seekers:

> hath not the greatest deceit, pride, covetousness, … since Cain's time, now got a cover of profession, and Church-name amongst you? … how have you eaten up the sins of them that went before you, and have added their curse to your own, … *you are … to be bemoaned above all other, who have had a measure of tenderness, but now wholly lost; and not only so but now oppose it, in others who retain it, nor would seek after it*.[27]

Later still, Alexander Parker concurred that: 'there hath been something stirring and working in most (Seekers, Baptists and Ranters] at their first breaking forth, but not waiting in the light, for the Lord to lead them, they have run in the dark before the Lord, and so run into error and confusion'.[28] The fact that the Seekers had shown early promise before falling into such self-indulgent error drew particular vitriol from Quakers. Such vehemence was occasioned by Quaker efforts to assert a new identity, both distinct and superior to the belief and practice of their near neighbours in the Seeker milieu, from which most of them had recently emerged. It is a truism that there is nothing so zealous as a convert and all early Quakers were converts; the psychology that produced this fervent desire to set themselves apart from near neighbours within the sectarian milieu is neatly expressed in Freud's aphorism as the narcissism of small differences.[29]

The Quakers were the first to develop a systematic approach to religious controversy and sustained a stable of controversialists who contested with their opponents in person and in print. Quaker preachers quickly realised the role that printed pamphlets could play in their proselytising mission, 'very servisable' both for weak friends and for 'convinceing the world'. In February 1653, Richard Farnworth declared: 'the truth doth spread much abroad by the Bookes that is in print'. This group, who saw themselves collectively as the *Body of Christ*, produced a formidable and voluminous body of work, rising from a handful of titles in 1652 to over 100 in 1655. The Naylor controversy of 1656 saw a fall in Quaker publications but they had recovered to nearly 400 during the political crisis of 1659-60, forming 10% of all publications in this period.[30] The list of all those Quakers directly involved in explicit printed battles with Seekers is quite extensive: Burrough (three),

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[26] Burrough, *Trumpet of the Lord,* 29.
[27] Naylor, *Something Further in Answer to Strength in Weaknesse*, 7-8 [my italics].
[28] Parker, *Discovery of Satan's Wiles*, 12.
[29] Sigmund Freud, *The Taboo of Virginity* (1918) in *Complete Works of Freud*, Vol XI (ed. Strachey) (1910) 198.
[30] Thomas Aldam to George Fox, (1652) *FHL*, A.R. Barclay MSS 1:71, fos.206-7; Richard Farnworth to Thomas Aldam, February 1653, Portfolio MSS 36:151; Peters, 'Quakers and the Culture of Print' (2013) 567; Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers (passim)* describes an early Quaker movement where members were assigned tasks in accordance with their gifts, including the creation and support of a stable of polemicists whose works dominate early Quaker literature.

Howgill (four) and Naylor (four) all wrote several works and Fox himself, *The Lamb's Officer*, coordinated, approved and reinforced; leading the attacks in five of his own works. Naylor fires the opening salvo against the Seekers in 1653; two years later he fights a duel in print with Jackson over the tender conscience of Mary Noel. Such debates see both Quakers and Seekers calling foul and claiming victory. Over the course of this period, other opponents came to the fore. The Seekers do not feature greatly in Fox's *Great Mistery of the Great Whore,* a comprehensive rebuttal of all his perceived opponents in 1659.[31] But twenty-five years after the Quakers appeared out of the north, the crackle of religious disputation is still audible as Quaker leader Fox and his New England Seeker nemesis, Williams, went toe-to-toe, although by this time the ocean between them was doctrinal as well as physical.[32]

These debates also tell us something of the rules of combat and the mechanics of disputation. Both sides usually claimed that their opponent's falsehoods had prompted them into print and portrayed the other as contentious, whilst rejecting the same charge against themselves: this suggests that even within this religiously radical, experimental and adversarial milieu, argument for its own sake was frowned upon.[33] In the exchange of letters and pamphlets titled *Strength in Weakness* (1655), Jackson claims to be a transparent mouthpiece, writing only: 'for the Truths sake that suffers, and for the Reprover's sake, that he may see what yet he sees not.' Naylor claims his own views were glossed by Jackson to prejudice the reader: `Oh thou full of all subtilty, was not God able to direct the wise without thy forestalling slanderous opinions? … hadst thou Printed them both, and been silent, then thou hadst left it to God indeed, and I should have been silent also.'[34]

Quakers laid several charges at the Seekers' door: they were seeking God in the wrong place; they believed in reason above experience; they held the dead letter of Scripture above the living word of the spirit; and they were divided and schismatic.[35] In 1656 Quaker elders in Balby developed strategies for containing disagreement between members: `let it be done in private,

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[31] Fox, *Great Mistery.* In this extensive defence of Quakerism, the longest of Fox's books, he writes against 71 books, 4 papers or sheets, 3 agreements or petitions and challenges the principles of 38 named individuals and groups as well as detailing certain Scriptures which he claims have been corrupted by their translators. The Seekers are not addressed by name, although works by Jackson and Williams are challenged; Moore, *Light* 53 gives slightly different figures for this work.

[32] Williams, *George Fox Digg'd* and Fox's reply, *A New England Firebrand Quenched*.

[33] Ingle, *First Among Friends,* 56 claims that the Seekers refused to 'join issue … by writing and otherwise.' Ingle attributes this comment to 'a critic': Jackson in *Strength in Weakness*. [n18. 302] Ingle is mistaken here: the quote does not appear in this work and Jackson was not a critic of the group, but rather a leading Seeker himself.

[34] Jackson, *Strength in Weaknesse*, 14, 10.

[35] Barclay, *Letters of Early Friends*, 278, 322; Bauman, 60. This echoes the strategies used in the Puritan underground that are outlined in Lake and Como, 'Orthodoxy and its Discontents'.

betwixt them two, or before two or three witnesses, and not in the public meetings'. The elders confirmed the pre-eminence of the group over the individual: 'if any…do degenerate from the truth … then the church hath a true spiritual right and authority to call them to examination.' Quakers also condemned the Seekers because they had put down the cross (a charge also levelled at others such as Ranters): they had not only ducked the suffering and persecution inflicted on those still bearing the cross, but also denied God. They said Seekers had placed themselves above Him and led others away from His light to serve their own selfish ends. They had rejected the perfectibility of mankind and some of them were returning to more orthodox religion. Ex-Seeker Howgill proclaimed: 'not one of you will suffer for that you judge your principal [sic]; and now you begin to creep into the Idols temples, and worship there, and seek to the powers of the earth to uphold you.'[36] Quakers also portrayed the Seekers as a composite sect; as magpies who had raked in ideas from the scattered souls of those troubled times but had no doctrine of their own: 'you are the highest in the image of many mixtures and your tent is pitched in the Plains of feigned humility and your goodly building stands upon the sand, repaired and beautified by the scattered stones, gathered out of the ruins of the former cities of confusion.'[37] This charge is not without irony as the Quakers themselves were open to the same charge; even Quaker historians acknowledge that Fox himself, a populariser rather than an originator, was hugely influenced by the spiritualist milieu in which he moved.

Seeking within and without

The term 'tender' was used by contemporaries to describe someone who had progressed beyond the established orthodoxy of the Church of England and, in the context of the 1640s, Presbyterianism. It described those whose religious sensibility was softened and receptive to the light and power of God. There was not complete consensus on usage though: Quaker Richard Hubberthorne called Seekers tender as they were willing to explore: 'any ordinance or worship *until* they had a certain evidence from the spirit of God that his spirit, life, power and presence was not in it.'[38] This was not the common usage of `tender', nor was it an accurate description of the Seekers, who *refrained* from observing ordinances *until* they were convinced by the spirit of God that his power and presence *was* in them. Fox uses the term in the conventional way and Quakers tried to portray Seekers as tender but misguided; as seeking in the wrong place; as seeking without rather than within; as trusting in reason rather than their own experience; and placing the dead letter of Scripture ahead of the living voice of the spirit: `you poor scattered sheep, … in this cloudy, dark day

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[36] Howgill, *Lamentation,* 27.
[37] Burrough, *Trumpet of the Lord*, 29.
[38] Hubberthorn, n.d. *FHL*, Portfolio MSS., 2:81.

… you have been running from mountain to hill, to find the Lord, but have not found him, … and are worshipping you know not what, but as others tell you, who know as little of the living God as your selves.' [39] Thus Quaker's acknowledged the Seekers' search as worthy but said that, without the light within to guide them, they were merely fumbling about in the dark, since: `those who deny the light of the sun must needs stumble, though at noone day'.[40] Naylor had voiced this criticism in 1653, as Quakers sought to claim their own way as the only true path. He accused Seekers thus:

> many of you have been inquiring after the way so many years, seeking after your blind guides,[41] … and so have forsaken the fountain of light, and have run after … them who are in the same darkness with you, now stand still a while and see where you are … you pretend as to the Kingdom of God, but you are not seeking where it is; you have been seeking without, but it is within you, and there you must find it, if ever you find it, it is not to be found in Forms and Customs, and outside Observations; but the Kingdom of God is within you, and the way to the Kingdom is within you, and the light that guides … is within.[42]

This accuses the Seekers of refusing to recognise that the messiah for whom they wait is already here, in the form of the light within. Saltmarsh had given similar advice: 'there is no warrant from Scriptures to expect any restoring of Offices or Ordinances according to the first pattern in Scripture…That to wait in any such way of Seeking or expectation, is Antichristian, because there is no Scriptures to warrant any such restauration'. Thus, six years earlier, the Seeker milieu had incorporated those advocating the level of spiritualisation that the Quakers now advocated.[43]

A year later, Fox concurred with Naylor. He claimed Seekers: 'talke of seeking and waiting, but have not their minds turned to the light, nor that eye opened which sees Christ which is the light, which is within, but seeks without, and looks without, seeking the living among the dead'.[44] Two years on, and Quakers maintained the same charge; the well-travelled Quaker Alexander Parker noted: 'and though many have long been seeking after God, yet have not found him, because they have been seeking the living among the dead.'[45] Though he does not name Seekers, Parker's language strongly implies the Seeking milieu as his target: `All you that … have long been wandering

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[39] Naylor, *Power and the Glory,* 63ff; Vendettuoli, 56.

[40] Naylor, *Something Further in Answer to Strength in Weaknesse*, 3.

[41] Francis Howgill similarly called Ministers of the Gospel 'Blind Shepherds': Howgill, *answer to a paper of one Thomas Ellyson,* 10.

[42] Naylor, *Power and the Glory,* 1; Naylor repeated the charge later in his exchange with the Seeker Mary Noel that forms part of Jackson, *Strength in Weakness*, 9 when he said her 'vain imagination' kept her shut out of the kingdom.

[43] Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 293-5.

[44] Fox, *A declaration against all profession and professors that have not the life of what they profess* (1654) 6; Fox repeated the charge that the Seekers 'had but a notion of the Kingdom' in *Great Mistery,* 217.

[45] Parker, *A Call out of Egypt* (19 November 1656) 7; For details of Parker's travels and frequent disputations see Richard Greaves on Parker in ODNB [accessed 17 Feb 2016].

upon the mountains, as sheep without a shepherd; who have long been seeking after God, but have not found him, …. I say unto all such simple hearts … return home to your Father's house.'[46] In 1659, the message was still the same. John Crook made the same point: 'ye called Seekers, waiting (as ye say) for a right Administrator of Baptisme, &c. do but from the desert look for the Kingdom to come with an outward observation, when as the Kingdom of God is within you, as it was in the Pharisees, if ye could so see it.'[47] Even in 1670, George Keith maintained of Seekers that: 'they saw no way how either to Worship God, or profit their own Souls, or one another, but as they thought was in Words, or outward Practises and Observations, and yet they missed the Kingdom, which they in some true Measure desired'.[48] Maintaining this level of consensus over seventeen years suggests a sophisticated level of coordination.

Edward Burrough expanded on this critique to accuse Seekers of not only seeking in the wrong place, but waiting in the wrong place too: 'you seek not at the true door and wait not at the gates of life, and your seeking will end before life eternal you find'.[49] Part of Naylor's advice to Mary Noel included the plea to: 'stand still a while and see where you are'. Here he was advocating a Schwenckfeldian *Stillstand* that was already the established Seeker position, highlighting the heavy debt that Early Quakers owed to Seekers, (although a Franckian positive spiritualism was more typical of Fox's views). Indeed, looking from a greater denominational distance, John Stalham calls Naylor, a Seeker.[50] The Seekers were also known as the Expecters, since they waited in expectation of a new dispensation and new ordinances; but Naylor also tells Mary Noel that such expectations were misplaced:

> Friend, a Seed is in thee which I own, which hath kept thee tender … some openings of the Lord's love thou hast had … to stay thy mind on him till the time appointed … but (in the meantime) the fear of being lost, another principle … hath led thee out into the visible expectations of a thing to come … that Covenant must be broken to which thou art now joined (before ever thou see his presence).[51]

Here Naylor's sense is plain: Expecters will receive what they wait for but only once they have abandoned their current religious affiliation and become Quakers.

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[46] Parker, *Call out of Egypt,* 31. Identical phrasing appears in Keith, *The benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings*, 6 and Penn, *Journal of George Fox* (1694) Preface: but ti was a common trope.
[47] Crook, *Defence of the true church,* 34-56.
[48] Keith, *Benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings,* 6; Vendettuoli, 54, 164.
[49] Burrough, *A Trumpet of the Lord,* 29.
[50] Stalham, *Reviler Rebuked*, 183.
[51] Naylor in Jackson, *Strength in Weaknesse,* 4.

Strength in Weaknesse is a key work for understanding the relative positions of Seekers and Quakers at this time; and the constructions that they sought to impose on one another. For example, they did not agree on the sufficiency of the light within and the exact nature of the spirit. Jackson asked: 'Whether the light wherewith every man is enlightened, be sufficient … to lead him to the discovery of Christ?'[52] Naylor replied: 'That light is sufficient to all that beleeve and follow it … but had thou known him … whose glory enlightens the earth … thou had not asked this question.' Naylor's answer here, is actually a thinly veiled attempt to get Jackson to answer his own earlier question: 'Can any come to God any other way but by his light, was it sufficient before the Letter and what is the thing that must be added to it now, to make it sufficient; seeing its sufficiency is now questioned, which never was before?' Naylor's line of questioning constructs the Seekers as believing in a visible, external Word and Church: ' Can any have the Word of God, who hath it not in spirit, is the Covenant of God and his Kingdom within or without?' His final question casts doubt on the efficacy of the Seekers' putative reliance on the word over the spirit: 'Whether any who, read the Letter without this light of Christ in them, can find out the mystery of it?' In turn, Jackson's questions associate the Quaker reliance on spirit with the spectre of antinomianism, schism and religious anarchy: 'What the spirit of a man is, and how dost thou distinguish it from the spirit of God.' [53] Jackson's questions confirm that his beliefs were more akin to Williams than those on the more spiritualist edge of the seeker milieu, like Saltmarsh and Erbery.

Jackson's retort questions both the authority and practicality of the Quaker concept of the light within:

> Christ the light is in every man (so much is inferred in thy answer) … and let but the Scripture witness and prove the same, and there shall be an end for ever of all controversy between [us], touching the sufficiency of that light (Christ) for I am only trying how far the Candle in man must vail its lustre, when this glorious Sun, viz. Christ the light appears.[54]

Here, Jackson's argument concurs with the Quaker charge that Seekers place the authority of Scripture above that of the spirit; but it also speaks to the Quaker accusation of Seeker pride and the accusation that Seekers dare not surrender their individual will to that of the Divine, but cover themselves with it as protection. Naylor finishes with a warning: 'Woe unto you…, who have covered and not with the Spirit, your literal coverings must be ripped off, and your nakedness must appear;

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[52] Jackson cites Rom. 8.16. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' *Strength in Weaknesse*, 20.
[53] Naylor in *Strength in Weaknesse,* 24.
[54] Jackson in *Strength in Weaknesse*, 30.

that is the cause why you so oppose the light, and Spirit within, who have covered the outside but cannot abide the search within'.[55]

Seekers trust Reason over Experience

For all of Rufus Jones' attempts to cast Quakers as mystics in a continental tradition, (an emphasis on union with the first person of the Trinity, God the father) they are really spiritualists (an emphasis on union with third person of the Trinity, the holy spirit) and their roots were closer to home. They argued for the spirit over the letter and the centrality of experimental religion, namely religious experience. Consequently, they criticised Seekers for employing reason to argue their case, drawing a parallel between the use of reason in argument and the use of externals in worship. Naylor makes this case in 1653:

> the true worship in Spirit … stands in the teaching of the Spirit, and not in the Letter … [the Saints] having outwardly declared their inward worship and fellowship … with God in Spirit, and this you find in the Letter, and … set up an outward form, image, or likeness of the Saints worship, and here you worship, and for this you contend by reasons and arguments, and wrest the Scriptures to uphold your form.[56]

Another former Seeker, Francis Howgill, takes this call to introspection to an almost anti-rational position and characterises the Seekers' external search as leading them further from God: 'Cease gadding abroad, and seeking in that principle which leads you further from God; and from your own wisdom, and reason, which is in the fall … the further you inquire in the natural fallen wit and reason, the further you are off the first principle that leads to know God.' [57] Howgill also suggests one danger of placing faith in reason, rather than faith in the spirit, is that this has multiplied schism among Separatists: `you walk according to the most exact pattern that is visible or written: but are divided in your selves; one sets up this, and another that thing, which you in your reason judge right. […] see the vast difference betwixt your assemblies and Churches, and the Churches which you say is your example.[58] This implies that following the voice of the spirit within will be less divisive, which is not the case; the reasons for the Quakers having greater unity than the Seekers was the management of inspiration through charismatic authority and the discipline of the Meeting that the Quakers innovated; it was these which corralled the of the inner light's potential

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[55] Naylor, *Something Further in Answer,* 6.
[56] Naylor, *Power and the Glory*, 8.
[57] Howgill, *Lamentation,* 33.
[58] *Ibid* 2.

for schism and made its prioritisation a workable doctrine. It was organisation, not doctrine that made the Quakers more sustainable as a group, than the Seekers.

Not suffering enough

One Quaker response to increasing persecution was to charge other groups including the Seekers that they had taken the easy route, put down the cross and avoided suffering. The Ranters' willingness to recant under examination was the highpoint of this response to repression but the Quakers were keen to suggest that the pride of the Seekers, in placing themselves above God, had produced the Ranting impulse. William Penn, looking back from 1694, sought to construct the Ranters as the natural product of the Seekers' lack of discipline: `some [Seekers] not keeping in humility, … were exalted above measure; and … ran out in their own imaginations, and mixing them with those divine openings, brought forth a monstrous birth, to the scandal of those that feared God … This people obtained the name of Ranters.'[59] This same charge had been levelled at the Seekers during the Ranter controversy itself by Particular Baptists such as King and Tombes who argued that the Seekers' path had indeed brought forth a monstrous birth: not the Ranters, but the Quakers.[60]

Choosing the path that avoided suffering was proof enough for the Quakers that such groups could not be chosen by God; Francis Howgill berated all separatists in 1656: `you have slayn those desires in you which was once after God, … and have set up such a Worship over every one of you as you can live at ease, in pleasures, and … [you] are men-pleasers, … you must take up the cross of Christ which you all stumble at ... or else you cannot walk in the way of the Lord.' [61] Four months earlier, fellow Quaker Henry Clark named Seekers among those who had joined: 'against the Lord and his anointed … who are by this generation imprisoned, whipped … beaten … scorned … envied and hated by all Sorts and Sects here in England, which sits at ease … making themselves merry … living wantonly upon the earth, forgetting the rock from whence they are hewn.'[62] It is possible that some Seekers disavowed the Quaker conception of *taking up the cross,* as in an earlier work Jackson had cast suffering and martyrdom in much broader terms: 'If we withal take the word Martyr in the fullest …significancy of the word, …for those who have suffered for a good cause, in their good names, in their estates… as well in life and limb (…a man may be a martyr without sword or fire).'[63] Perhaps, with so little that was original in their doctrine, Quakers sought to make a virtue of that which was distinctive in their experience.

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[59] Penn, preface to Fox's *Journal*, ix-x.
[60] See Chapter 4, including King, *A Way to Sion,* 80-2 and Tombes, *Anti-paedobaptism,* 443.
[61] Howgill, *Lamentation,* 12, 15.
[62] Clark*, A cloud of witnesses,* 23-4.
[63] Jackson, *True Evangelical Temper* (1641) 50-51; Vendettuoli, 107.

Anti-Ranter / the other path from Seekerism

The Quaker vitriol reserved for their near neighbour Seekers has a possible antecedent in earlier Seeker attitudes to Ranters. Although later convinced to Quakerism in 1658, Isaac Penington wrote from within the Seeker milieu in 1650. His early Seeker works employ the language of the t*wo seeds* creation theory, long before Fox propounded them: targeted at another product of the Seeker milieu: the Ranters. Penington voiced a common concern within this milieu, possibly cast by the long cold shadow of Calvinism; namely the question of who, within the religiously radical milieu, was saved and who was not. For the reprobate, he prescribed a spiritual purgative: 'There is a cup prepared for you, a baptism ye are to be baptized with, which shall wash you clean within, and make you vomit lustily, even till ye are quite emptied of all that froth and scum of vanity, which now swims up and down in your stomachs, and fumes up into your brains.' He directs his warning to 'the Mad Folks' of the Ranter milieu, but his words are reminiscent of the later Quaker charges against the Seekers themselves: `This is not the land of promise wherein ye now set up your rest, but a strange land … of dearth … barrenness, darkness and the shadow of death. This is not true light; it is but a painted light wherein ye now walk: not the light of the Lord but the light of the vain imagination of the creature.' Penington ends by inviting the `Mad Folks' to return to the Seekers but clearly understands Seeking as the journey and not the destination: 'O quit your station, your present habitation, the wilderness is better, though not as an abode, yet as a passage.' [64]

In the late 1640s many Seekers floundered in this state of spiritual flux. Many of these would become Quakers and when they did, they would attack their former views, as they felt they had found within them, that for which they had previously sought, without. Richard Farnworth had found: 'all outward helps and means failed … and I saw them to be confused in their sayings, one saying one thing, and another saying another.' [65] The charge of disunity was keenly felt by all sectaries as the overture to a greater charge of religious anarchy that attached to all calls for liberty of conscience. As time went on the Quakers were able to enforce discipline on the light within through the system of the meeting, but before they did, they were as open to the charge of disunity as Seekers. Jackson cited numerous scriptural references to the dangers of disunity in his exchanges with Naylor.[66] Bauman, argues that the unique structure of Quaker discipline evolved to help the movement withstand persecution during the Restoration. If true, this could explain why the Seekers didn't develop the same level of internal discipline and cohesion as the Quakers, because they never faced the same level of systematic and legislative persecution. However, I disagree with Bauman

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[64] Penington, *An echo from the great deep* (1650) 35, A3ʳ; Punshon, 'Early Writings of Isaac Penington', 65.
[65] R.F., (Richard Farnworth) *Heart Opened by Christ,* 9.
[66] I Corinthians 11.18; I Corinthians 1.11; II Thessalonians 3.11-12 all cited in *Strength in Weaknesse*, 35-6.

here as the Friends had already developed the disciplined structure of the meeting by 1656 and their assiduously nurtured networks of mutual credit and exhortation were also in place long before they were targeted by the authorities in the 1660s.[67]

Seekers are Scripture-bound formalists

One way in which the Quakers consistently sought to distinguish themselves from the Seekers was by accusing them of formalism: `for their minds were much drawn forth, seeking satisfaction, and refreshment in outward Words, Practices and Observations, which yet they found not'..[68] They particularly cast the reliance on scriptural authority by Seeker authors as part and parcel of a reliance on externals that the Quakers had moved beyond. Francis Howgill said all other sects, including Seekers, took their commands from the letter: `and so are ministers of the letter, and not of the spirit'. In this way he thought they were missing the substance of Christ and teaching a religion which was: 'all at a distance, grounded on the report of Christ dying at Jerusalem'.[69] Vendettuoli argued that Seeker reliance on Scripture caused their opponents within the spiritualist milieu to label them, pejoratively, as 'scholars'.[70] It is true that Jackson thought diligent study of the bible was the best defence against Naylor's false prophesy, and that this was perhaps why Naylor attacked it, but it is difficult to see exactly how the Quakers were innovative here: earlier writers like Saltmarsh had already taken Seeker thought to a position beyond Scripture in terms of its stance towards ordinances.[71] John Crook had this to say about the relative weighting to be given to the word of Scripture and the light of Christ: 'there is one great Ordinance which ye must never get above, but be in subjection to, if ever ye will have true Peace with the living God, and that is Christ the true light, who shines in every ones heart.'[72] Indeed in his reply to Quaker schismatic John Toldervy (previously a Seeker), Naylor takes pains to suggest that his contentious spirit: 'was infused into him before hee knew the Quakers, after … he became affected with those people called Seekers', but such finger-pointing was addressed to a gallery of more orthodox readers.[73] Nevertheless, Quakers generally portrayed the Seekers as carnal and worldly; although this charge

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[67] Bauman, 60; see *supra*.
[68] Keith, *Benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings*, 6;For a recent detailed discussion of the issue of formalism as it relates to Seekers see Como, *Radical*, 384-408.
[69] Howgill, *Lamentations*, 2-4; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 96.
[70] Vendettuoli, 167: he cites references in Roger Williams, *The Hirelings Ministry None of Christs* (1652) and Jackson's *Strength in Weakness,* 13; for a full discussion of the impact of learning and attitudes towards learning within radical sectarianism see McDowell, *Radical Imagination,* Chapters 3-5 and *passim*.
[71] Vendettuoli, 167, 192.
[72] Crook, *A defence of the true church called Quakers,* 34-56.
[73] Naylor, *Foot Yet in the Snare*, 14, 19.

seems unfair since Seeker figures such as Williams were among the most theologically minded even in this ultra-theological age.[74]

Early on, in 1653, Naylor's ire was directed at the abuse rather than the use of Scripture: 'but you will own the Scriptures (as they are) as far as they will make with your Form, and that you may live in the delights of the world; … and thus the Scripture must bend to you … that the will may reign and you live in your lusts.'[75] In response, Seekers like Jackson maintained that, unlike himself, Quakers gave inadequate consideration to Scripture throughout his disputation with them: 'To make tryall of the truth of what is affirmed, it is necessary to examine the Scripture to see whether it intermeddle in this matter'.[76] Quakers did not reject Scripture completely but rather subordinated it to the spirit: 'Scripture is not the Saints rule, but the Spirit which gave forth the Scripture, as the Scripture itself witnesses, [Rom.8.] Faith was before the Scripture was, and therefore the Scripture is not the ground of it, but a declaration of it'.[77] The Spirit itself must be sought within, as Fox noted: 'and the word is not to fetch from above nor from below, neither is it to seek it in a chapter or a steeple house without, but it is nigh in the heart, and in the mouth.' [78] The key message was that the light within was the light by which one could view Scripture truly as it was; John Crook told Seekers, if they wanted to find rather than just seek, they must: `find the vail to remove from off your understandings, … and so all … stumbling blocks taken up from the Letter without will be removed, and a right understanding of the Scriptures be given.[79] Thus Quakers claimed they knew God's will through revelation by the light within and Puritans advocated a similar message, with the caveat that it had to be checked against Scripture, to make sure it was not a man's own fancy deceiving him. The Seekers would follow the line of Dell who noted that no contemporaries' practice matched the primitive apostolic model: 'I know not any of us that either preach or write on Scripture in such a light of spirit as the apostles wrote the Scriptures.'[80]

For Jackson, *'Scripture'* meant the written word and he was disturbed by the Quaker move to interiorise Scripture seen above in Howgill and in Fox: 'waiting in the light which Christ hath enlightened you with, that's Scripture within you.' He feared the confusing of 'Scripture within you' with the Bible; Jackson argued that this could misguide Quakers and stressed that Jesus committed his mind to writing, to Scripture, so that future generations might reliably try the spirits, the Christs,

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[74] Miller, *Roger Williams,* 27; Vendettuoli, 90.
[75] Naylor, *Power and the Glory*, 8.
[76] Jackson, *Hosannah,* 17, (II); Vendettuoli, 192.
[77] Howgill, *fiery darts of the divel quenched*, 19.
[78] Fox, *A word from the Lord,* 8.
[79] Crook, *A defence of the true church called Quakers,* 34-56.
[80] Dell, *Tryall of Spirits,* 24; Vendettuoli, 195.

the prophets and the apostles (which pretend to come in his name). [81] Williams was similarly concerned that Quakers mistook their own notions for God's word: 'their new found light within them, which was (they say) before the Scriptures … gave forth the Scriptures, and therefore was above the Scriptures, and therefore is not judged or tried by the Scriptures, but they by it.'[82] He thought this Quaker doctrine was as fatal to scriptural authority as the belief in papal infallibility. He said that by neglecting the historical Jesus, Quakers: `preached Jesus to be themselves … set up the Christ within, opposite the Christ without … ask them what has happened to this Man that suffered at Jerusalem and they are forced to confess he is within and can give no other account of him.' Fox replied: 'That Christ died at Jerusalem, we own', but both Williams and Jackson were convinced that the Quakers were insincere in this belief, and that their doctrine of the light within undermined the doctrine of the incarnation.[83] Both Seekers and Quakers sought and claimed to follow the practice of the primitive church but Seekers felt that Scripture was more useful for identifying these practices than Quakers did. The Seeker Mary Noel in her correspondence with Naylor expresses Seeker Scripturalism:

> I say consider whether either the Apostles, or the Prophets thou art like unto herein, I know it to be … my duty to wait for the injoyment of all that is fore-told in the holy Scriptures; oh my soul! Wait thou on God for my expectation is from him, leave me to the Lords Tryal; so do I freely leave thee, not having faith to follow thee nor thy friends.[84]

 Jackson rejected the Quaker belief: `that the little light which shines in the dark heart of every man … was the sure word of prophecy'. Until 'that which is perfect shall come', he preferred: 'that more sure word of prophesie contained in the holy Scriptures as unto a light shining in a dark place.' He justified his reliance on Scripture over the spirit until a new dispensation arrived, since the spirit: 'hath a tendency to direct toward purity and uprightness but hath no power to assist'.[85]

In one of the few extended discussions that is directed explicitly at the Seekers, Edward Burrough acknowledges the scriptural learning of the Seekers whilst condemning it in the same breath: 'your knowledge is high but it arises out of the cursed ground … Forms outward you deny, but your form is inward, and your chiefest Idol is in your heart'.[86] Four months later, in August 1656,

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[81] Jackson, *Hosannah*, 2, 32 (II); Howgill, *Fiery* Darts, 19; Fox, *To All That Would Know the Way to the Kingdom,* 8.

[82] Williams, *George Fox Digg'd*, 49.

[83] Williams, *George Fox Digg'd*, 72-73*;* Fox, *New England Firebrand Quenched, I,* 49*;* Vendettuoli, 196; see also the account of the examination of Naylor in the *Diary of Thomas Burton* http://www.qhpress.org/texts/Naylor/burton.html [accessed 17.05.20].

[84] Mary Noel to James Naylor, 16 April 1655 in *Strength in Weaknesse,* 6.

[85] Jackson, *Hosannah*, 18-19, 24, 37, ii.

[86] Burrough, *Trumpet of the Lord,* 29*.*

Howgill portrays all other sects including Seekers as centred on the visible church. But nine years earlier, Saltmarsh had characterised Seekers quite differently, as rejecting the visible church and organised religion.[87] Similarly, Fox's *Great Mistery of the Great Whore*, whilst not attacking Seekers *per se,* does challenge several Seeker authors, including the 'contentious spirit' who wrote the anonymous work *Hosanna to the Son of David*, in November 1657. In this work, Jackson had written: 'The sure word of prophecy the apostle speaks of, is the prophecy of Scripture, or Scriptures.' Fox retorted: 'Doth the Scripture shine in a dark place until the day dawn? …Can any see the Scripture …but with the light within?'[88] The Quaker line here seeks to reframe the dichotomy of word versus spirit and to suggest that the Spirit is the light that enlightens the word, which without the spirit is but a dead letter. Quakers definitely cast the Seekers as more scripturalist, and therefore more formalist, than themselves: `O you dead, deafe, and blind, who are now banded together against the light of Christ and his appearance, how hath the God of this world besotted you ... Did ever generation practise contrary to what they professed like you? You have gotten more words but less power than ever any of your Fathers … ever had.' [89]In reply, Seekers claimed Quaker plain speaking was merely a cloak for darker designs: '[Satan] to deceive […] the remnant of the seed, [sent] abroad certain instruments under great disguise of purity and piety, clothing them with the title of Apostles and Messengers […] they go under the name of Quakers.' Jackson was not alone here and the charge of hypocrisy against the Quakers was a frequent one.[90]

Denying Christ, leading away from the Light, Placing Oneself above God

The Quakers had to account for the reality (in their view), that in terms of belief, practice and personnel, the Seekers were the reservoir from which flowed both the fetid sewer of Ranterism and the pure spring of Quakerism. Acknowledging this debt whilst distancing themselves from it required the Quakers to emphasise their differences on key doctrine. The most central doctrine in this regard was the Quaker subjugation of the self to the spirit within. Naylor believed Quakers had already attained a state of perfection and were in possession of the kingdom of God, so was impatient with the Seeker attitude that the kingdom had not been manifested in its full glory. In *Strength in Weakness* he accused Jackson of trying to limit the living God.[91] Richard Hubberthorne fired a similar accusation at Jackson's next work *Hosanna to the Son of David*: '[Seekers] that pretend to wait for the coming of Christ in power, … are now found to reject his coming, and to be such as watch for iniquity in those among whom Christ is come; now they are turned backward, and drink up that

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[87] Howgill, *Lamentation,* 3; Sell, *Church Planting*, 16; Saltmarsh, *Sparkles*, 289.
[88] Jackson, *Hosannah*, 18; Fox, *Great Mistery*, 221.
[89] Naylor in *Strength in Weaknesse,* 6-7.
[90] Jackson, *Hosannah*, 3.
[91] Jackson rejected this claim: *Strength in Weakness*, 37; Vendettuoli, 165, 170.

which they had vomited up.[92] Crossing the spiritualist gap between a Seeker like Jackson and the Quaker position required a literal leap of faith. Quakers claimed that Seekers had either not made this leap or that they had merely feigned it, in order to lend the authority of the divine to their own will. They accused Ranters particularly, but also Seekers, of elevating themselves and their own will above that of God, in order to emphasise the point that they, the Quakers, had not made this error and so could be trusted and tolerated. Quaker hostility to Ranters exceeded the hostility they showed to Seekers. At a meeting in Wellingborough, Richard Farnworth leapt on a Ranter (or someone he took to be one), threw him against a wall and stuffed a napkin in his mouth; the Ranter followed Farnworth to the next town and entered his meeting waving a sword.[93]

Quakers themselves were not immune to the charge of self-exaltation though and it often came from within their own ranks. Naylor was warned to: 'take good heed … that thou steal not men's hearts away from God to thyself … and make thee a mental idol'. The Quaker schismatic John Pennyman complained that: 'a great part of Quakers had degenerated into mere form, and setting up Fox instead of the spirit to be their Lord and lawgiver.'[94] Whilst John Crook in an extended diatribe against: 'you we call Seekers', warned: 'whether ye are not some of those false prophets which Christ said should come.'[95] The Ranter furore that produced the Blasphemy Act of 1650 was proof enough of society's concerns over the implications of antinomianism and the relationship between the individual's will and the light within. The Quakers wanted to stress that the Ranting impulse was a danger inherent in the Seeker emphasis on reflection and introspection, due to the difficulty of distinguishing one's own will from God's will; and that they themselves had avoided this error, through a unique combination of charismatic authority and the disciplinary mechanism of the 'meeting'. In doing so they sought to show how their own spiritual transformation had acted as a filter that had purified and separated them from the stagnant Seeker reservoir from whence they had emerged.

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[92] Hubberthorn, *The cause of stumbling removed [...] Herein also is a [...] false testimony reproved [...] by the name of John Jackson*, 26.

[93] Thomas Goodaire to William Dewsbury, n.d. in Cadbury, *Letters to William Dewsbury* (1948) 20-21; Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 56.

[94] Richard Nelson to Naylor Caton MMS 2.4, May 1655; Moore, *Light* 36; Pennyman, *Short Account of the Life,* 10; Higgins, 'John Pennyman', 69; Moore, *Light,* 223. Williams expressly denied that Fox held any apostolic power or divine commission in 1672: Williams, *George Fox Digg'd*, 65, 71; Vendettuoli, 162.

[95] Crook, *A defence of the true church called Quakers*, 34-56.

Conclusion

We have looked at the rise and fall of the Seekers and seen the strongest evidence for their roots being relatively short but including some influence from the continent through the Dutch Collegiants. Seeker groups began to form and swell with people leaving the gathered churches from around the time of Williams' first visit in 1643-4. Their size, influence and visibility peaked in the following decade. Their influence within the army and its leaders and their visibility in London was considerable for a time, but exceeded their actual strength in numbers, which was probably between 500-5000. They are most accurately characterised as a milieu of progressively spiritualist Christians, rather than a sect. They were not organised as a group and did not all share the same beliefs or practice in detail. They possessed similar attitudes to the visible church, its ministry and ordinances: since these did not meet the pattern of the primitive church, they withdrew from formal aspects of worship in anticipation of a new dispensation that would prove itself through divine gifts and miracles. Hence, they all shared millenarian beliefs, which were generally of a spiritualist tendency. They worshipped simply, though not in churches, using only preaching and silent or extempore prayer. The purpose and benefits of such meetings centred on their role as a forum for fostering spiritual community and mutual exhortation.

There is some evidence that those Seekers in the army were radicalised by their collective experience and became progressively more spiritualist than others within the Seeker milieu, who were more moderate and quietist. The number of Seeker works published attest to their engagement in public religious debate and to the level of hostility they faced from religious opponents (see Appendix 1). Seeker works were most numerous between 1644 and 1655 and peaked in relation to current events. These included significant peaks during the Presbyterian campaign for a heresy ordinance in 1646 and the Ranter phenomenon of 1649-50; and smaller, shorter bursts of activity during the Independent's attempt to exclude those within the Seeker milieu from religious toleration in the Humble Proposals of 1652. Writers within the Seeker milieu published some 85 works between 1644 and the Restoration; and actively engaged in public debates with a range of religious opponents, in print and in person. Hence although their religious practice can be characterised as passive and quietist, their defence and promotion of their views cannot. Seeker publications drop off after 1657, although they remain a target for polemicists into the Restoration, suggesting that they were still perceived as posing a danger to the Christian commonwealth.

The principal reason for this abiding reputation was the construction of the Seekers by their opponents, who characterised them in ways that augmented and even sometimes invented

the threat they posed. Presbyterian, Baptist and Independent opponents characterised the Seekers as having *rejected* ecclesiastical and ministerial authority. They implied that this was also a rejection of the shibboleth of *scriptural* authority. The Seekers themselves did not use the term *rejection* and its use by their opponents was part of a deliberate polemical strategy to construct the Seekers as more nihilistic than they really were. The Seekers withdrew in millenarian expectation that a new dispensation would appear, in time. Hence this arrangement was temporary and transitional in nature; but their opponents constructed it as a fully resolved or permanent position. The construction of Seeker faith as a nihilistic rejection of all religious authority allowed opponents to argue that Seekers were nullifidians, enabling the charge that their beliefs and actions were paving the way to the ultimate error of atheism.

Their withdrawal from religious authority left them open to their opponents' charge of immorality, and they received some accusations of deception and licentiousness; but not to the same extent as Ranters and Quakers. This was probably because their opponents did not actually view the Seekers' sober religious practice as a significant problem. Most Seekers lived pious lives of quiet contemplation and posed little threat to society. What their opponents found most concerning was the Seekers' initial withdrawal from ordinances. This was because, that decision contained the *potential* for immense disorder if others imitated the Seekers' withdrawal from the strictures of religious authority and discipline; but then did not also exercise the same degree of personal restraint as most Seekers. This rhetoric was seemingly confirmed from 1649 when the Ranters, and then soon after, the Quakers emerged from the Seeker milieu. Hence we should acknowledge that the Seeker withdrawal from ordinances and organised worship was not passive but a significant example of militant activism and extremely influential in the way that it shaped the behaviour and identity of both their opponents and those groups more similar to themselves.

Whilst this act of withdrawal was extremely radical and influential, the subsequent practice of Seekers was not, and this is one of the many tensions and inconsistencies within the Seeker position that has made their study both interesting and challenging. If their relatively conservative practice insulated them from some criticism from moderate groups, it exposed them to criticism from others. Quaker attacks on the Seekers are almost the inverse of Presbyterian and gathered church attacks. The Quakers approved of the Seekers refusal to abide by the dictates of external forms and to move beyond ordinances. The main drive of their criticism was that the Seekers had not continued moving in an increasingly spiritualist direction, unlike themselves. This argument included the accusation that Seekers had failed to do so through a lack of

courage and conviction; and that they had retreated to a reliance on reason over faith. Hence, if the Presbyterian and gathered churches accused the Seekers of spiritualising too much of their belief and practice, the Quakers accused them of not having spiritualised enough. The Seekers were indeed, as Thucydides predicted, `beaten on both sides'.

The most difficult conceptual and methodological problem encountered in this work has been trying to weigh and balance the competing constructions of the Seekers in order to understand their *true nature*, given this refraction through the lenses of such widely contrasting and clearly partial sources. Ann Hughes offers an articulate expression of this dilemma: 'there are no unvarnished, rhetorically neutral pictures of reality; but accepting what Diane Purkiss calls the *indeterminacy of truth* does not invalidate the attempt to compare and evaluate different accounts of past experience, or imply that all representations are of equal value, or that there is nothing but representation.'[1] My interest in the Seekers began in reaction to Colin Davis work on the Ranters and the historiographical debate that this engendered. He insisted that the printed polemic of the English Revolution cannot be taken as a direct source for the radical groups denounced therein. Indeed, he says the Ranters as any kind of sect did not exist, and almost suggests that the stereotyped accounts of the hostile pamphleteers are in themselves proof of the Ranters' non-existence.[2] In his construction of the Ranters, it seems that Davis deems it essential for a sect to display complete unity in doctrine, that excludes that of other sects, to form a unique position.

Davis' point was that what he called (problematically) the Yellow Press sought to scare the reading public, not educate it, by creating the Ranters as the face of all sectarian excesses, effectively creating one-dimensional or tunnel-vision in the reader.[3] The Seekers were in some senses used in this way by Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Quakers. Their respective criticisms and constructions of the Seekers were self-serving and did often serve as a foil to galvanise sections of their own support. They also actually diverted attention away from a real debate on the true nature of Seeker belief or the true church; partly because their opponents did not want that debate. But when all of these hostile constructions are taken together, triangulated with the Seekers' own works, and compared over a significant period; the effect is not that of a microscope but rather a kaleidoscope: richly textured, inter-woven and three dimensional. The only valid model

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[1] Hughes, 437.
[2] Hughes, 10; Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*; Capp, Smith, Gibbons (1993) 'Debate: Fear, myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters"', *P&P*, 140: pp. 155-94.
[3] For a persuasive explanation of why the term Yellow Press should be avoided in this context, see Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 240-1.

of explanation for the resulting image is that what one is observing is in fact a nuanced and variegated Seeker milieu.

The evidence surveyed has been largely printed works. The period 1640-60 produced a quarter of all works published from 1475-1700. Thomason's collection of around 22,000 tracts and news books is testament to the importance of print as a vector of radical ideas in the period. The collection of shops selling printed works was concentrated around St Paul's and this provided the locus for a new community of discourse that further accelerated the development of radical ideas. This contributed to the revolutionary climate that George Rudé has called a forcing ground for ideology.[4] New ideas and controversies grew more quickly than previously in these unusual conditions. Public discussion of fundamental questions about religious institutions, beliefs and practice became commonplace, and reached a tipping point in the 1640s. The speed at which the number of publications increased was new and the scale of the debate was also unprecedented. As protagonists synthesised, syncretised, criticised and responded, new discussions were formed on old questions, forming a palimpsest of contemporary discourse that multiplied exponentially. In this way, the grounds of discourse broadened so that within a relatively short period of time, the whole gamut of religious belief and practice had become the subject of detailed and sustained public debate and a radical religious *milieu* became a *melee*. Within this were the works we have considered, in a: 'warfare for the right to be a Seeker, erring or otherwise'.[5]

There are three issues with the way historians have written about the Seekers. The first stems, I believe, from largely uncritical readings of seventeenth century Presbyterian views about the Seekers, principally by Robert Barclay.[6] Some, though not all, of these characterisation of the Seekers are visible in the work of historians like Rufus Jones and, to a degree, Champlin Burrage. For example, in one of his studies of the Seekers and Ranters, Jones cites the (later) Barclay's work more than any other source (6 times), even acknowledging errors by Barclay on two occasions. His next most cited sources are *Gangraena* (5 times) and 'Old Ephraim' Pagitt, whom he acknowledges as 'not very reliable'. Jones and his contemporaries Burrage and Braithwaite are responsible for the second issue which is an apparent unwillingness to look at the Seekers on their own terms. These pioneers, and many of the historians of early Quakerism that have followed them, seem intent on pushing the line that Seekers were merely immature Quakers, which seems to me ahistorical and I have tried to argue against that conception here.[7] The last issue relates to how to categorise the

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[4] Rudé, *Ideology and Popular Protest* (1980) 8; McGregor and Reay (1984) 13.
[5] Garrett, *Roger Williams: Witness Beyond Christendom* (1970) 160.
[6] Barclay, R. (1876) The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth
[7] Jones, 450-81.

Seekers as a *sect*, *movement*, *tendency* or otherwise. Hughes notes that heresiologists often assumed that loosely connected ideas, or even the teaching of one influential man, had to be associated with a sect: an organized group of people. [8] Some historians have made similar assumptions when characterising the Seekers, and the conception of the Seekers as a milieu is an attempt to address and resolve this issue.[9]

There is still much work to be done (if it can be). One of the most interesting possibilities is in the field of social networks. David Como has recently noted the importance of laboratories of informal discussion, networks of correspondence and informal scenes of sociability as forums in which political and religious innovation took place.[10] This study has focused on printed exchanges but the complex Seeker milieu constituted a web of overlapping spiritualist, kinship and client networks. Certain figures like Williams, Calvert and Saltmarsh formed contact points between these networks and a detailed prosopography of their nature and development is an interesting area for further research. The Seeker social networks in London at the time of Williams' two visits is intriguing. The evidence that is available suggests his formative role in the development of a Seeker milieu during his first visit, but as LaFantasie notes, his non-diplomatic activities in London are: `largely unknown or unknowable'. Unfortunately this coincides with the longest break in his extant correspondence: no letters either to, or from him, have survived from March 1641 to June 1645.[11] Polizotto has shown the range and depth of social contacts Williams was able to draw on, in mobilising opposition to the Humble Proposals in 1652, during his second visit; it seems likely that he would have quickly built a network during his first visit too, in the formative period of the development of the Seeker milieu.[12] These contacts included John Milton and the Vane and Wray families, who also formed part of Saltmarsh' Lincolnshire kinship network. Exactly where such unchurched Puritans fit into the Seeker milieu is still unclear, but it is sensible to conclude that they sit better within this milieu, than outside it. The same is true for Cromwell who actively appointed and promoted the careers of notable seekers within the NMA and beyond.

Contemporaries constructed Seekers as *lacking* in various ways: lacking direction and self-possession, drifting through the sectarian groupings like a `masterless dog'; lacking resoluteness, since rather than live a godly life they accepted free-grace to `make a short cut of it'; lacking courage because they had `put down the cross'; lacking honesty as they were `half-papist at best'; lacking

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[8] Hughes, 73.
[9] For example, McGregor (1983); and most recently Stanley Lemons (2015).
[10] Como, *Radical,* 381.
[11] LaFantasie, *Correspondence of Roger Williams*, Vol I, 217-8.
[12] Polizzotto, `Campaign against Humble Proposals' (1987).

belief as `Nullifidians, or men of no Religion, commonly called Seekers'; and lacking moral integrity, abandoning virgin brides like Mary Abraham on their wedding night having `satisfied their lust'.[13] The aim of this thesis has been to show that, although they were waiting, expecting and seeking, they were not lacking. Opponents denounced the Seekers, for a lack of coherence, direction, courage, moral probity and even faith. Yet they themselves created these constructions in ways that lacked coherence, direction, courage, moral probity and good faith. By considering their own writings and actions as well as the various hostile constructions of them, we have seen that the charges above were made principally for polemical purposes; usually to galvanise the religious, and sometimes political, support base of the author. When the writings of Seekers themselves are included and all accounts are viewed in a collective context, we see most of these hostile constructions crumble.

Previous historians have also constructed the Seekers as lacking in various ways: lacking organisation, recognisable leaders, coherent doctrine or practice, and identity. They have discounted the Seekers because they have judged them on the criteria of a monothetic definition. These criteria are based on the implicit expectation that the Seekers should have leaders and organisation; and they must all share the same doctrine and practice, at the same time. In these terms we must concede that the Seekers, alongside many other contemporary groups, were not a sect in the modern sense, despite countless contemporaries labelling them as such. But this rather misses the point: we have seen that the most accurate way to construct the Seekers is as a milieu. This requires that we judge the Seekers on the criteria of a polythetic definition: where several characteristics occur commonly in a group, but none are essential for inclusion within it.

Looking for the real Seekers has been difficult; partly because their true nature has been obscured by the careful constructions of their opponents, and the careless constructions of historians. Also, because the Seekers were dynamic, chimeric and complex. In terms of their innovation and influence they held much more significance than they have previously been allowed. The Seeker milieu possessed a diffuse but ultimately coherent doctrine: the current church, its ministry and ordinances were invalid. They showed considerable courage to advocate a *stillstand*. They generally abhorred immorality and were people of intense faith. Their brand of millenarianism innovated an active passivism: their withdrawal was marked by creative energy, direction and purpose. They thrived for a season in the spiritually rich soil of tumultuous times: they sent out

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[13] Edwards, *Gangraena II,* 11-12

shoots and, in the Ranters and Quakers, they bore heavy fruit: they were the most influential and important root-stock of England's radical religious revolution.

Appendix 1   Significant References to Seekers from 1640-75 in Early English Books Online.[1]

Year	Seeker milieu	Presbyterian	Baptist	Independent	Quaker
1644	3	5	2	0	0
1645	5	7	0	0	0
1646	12	17	5	2	0
1647	5	7	0	4	0
1648	13	2	0	4	0
1649	7	3	2	4	0
1650	7	3	3	1	0
1651	0	1	3	1	0
1652	9	2	1	0	0
1653	15	4	1	1	1
1654	2	3	0	0	6
1655	3	5	5	3	2
1656	3	3	0	3	6
1657	1	3	1	1	2
1658	1	6	0	3	1
1659	0	3	0	1	2
1660	0	5	0	2	2
1661	1	0	0	0	0
1662	2	1	0	0	0
1663	0	1	0	0	0
1664	0	0	1	0	0
1665	0	0	0	1	0
1666	0	0	0	0	0
1667	1	0	1	2	0
1668	0	0	0	1	0
1669	0	0	0	0	0
1670	0	1	0	1	1
1671	0	2	0	0	0
1672	0	0	0	0	1
1673	0	1	0	0	0
1674	0	0	0	2	1
1675	0	1	0	0	0
	90	86	25	37	25

[1] 'You searched on: Full Text Keyword(s): "SEEKER" OR "seeker" OR "Seeker" OR "séeker" OR "seekere" OR "Seekers" OR "SEEKERS" OR "SEekers" OR "seekers" OR "séekers"; Date: 1640 to 1675; You did not include ECCO records. Your search produced 2499 hits in 1110 records'.

Frequency Chart: Works relating to Seekers by affiliation of author (1644-75)

Seeker milieu — Presbyterian — Baptist — Independent — Quaker
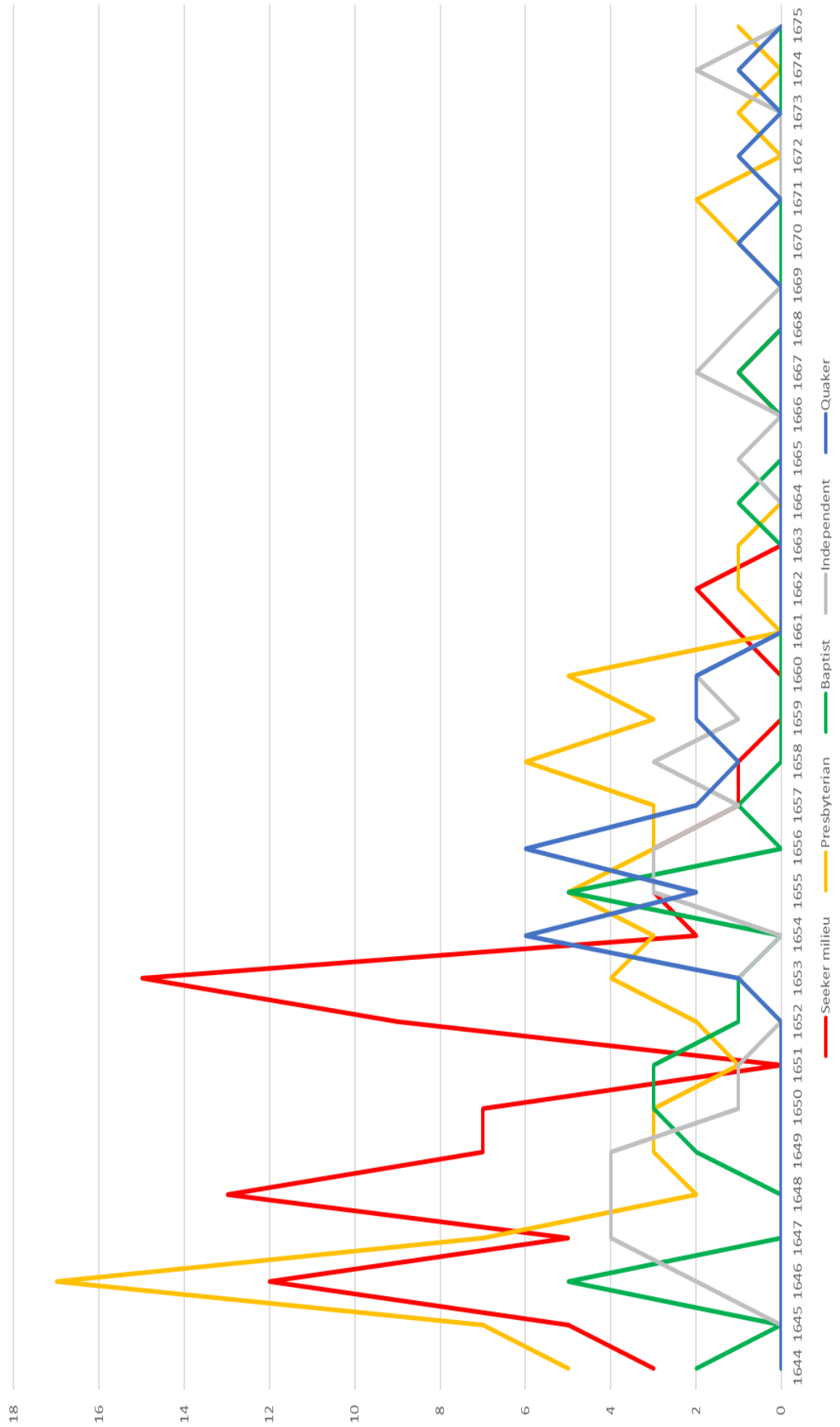
Date	Group	Author	Title
1620 [sic]	Baptist	Murton, John	A discription of what God hath predestinated concerning man in his creation, transgression, & regeneration (Truth's Champion, sic)
4 Jan 1644	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	Dawnings of Light
5 Feb 1644	Seeker milieu	Williams, Roger	Mr Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered
23 Apr 1644	Presbyterian	Vines, Richard	The Impostures of Seducing Teachers
15 Jul 1644	Seeker milieu	Williams, Roger	The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution
26 Sep 1644	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	Independency Examined, Unmasked, and Refuted
21 Oct 1644	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	Faces about. Or, A recrimination charged upon Mr. John Goodwin
22 Oct 1644	Presbyterian	Vines, Richard	Posture of Davids Spirit
6 Nov 1644	Baptist	Jones, Sarah	To Sions louers, being a golden egge to avoid infection, or, A short step into the doctrine of laying on of hands
3 Dec 1644	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	Truth triumphing over Falsehood
29 Jan 1645	Presbyterian	Walker, George	Sermon Preached Before the … Commons
9 Apr 1645	Presbyterian	Graunt, John	Truths Victory against Heresie
8 May 1645	Presbyterian	Pagitt, Ephraim	Heresiography
8 May 1645	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	Power from on High
10 Jun 1645	Presbyterian	Bastwick, John	The second part of that book call'd Independency not Gods ordinance
24 Jul 1645	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	A fresh discovery of some prodigious new wandring-blasing-stars, & firebrands, stiling themselves new-lights
24 July 1645	Seeker milieu	Collier, Thomas	Certain Queries, or points now in controversy examined
14 Sep 1645	Presbyterian	Buchanan, David	A short and true relation
30 Sep 1645	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	A new Quaere
22 Oct 1645	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	The opening of Master Prynnes New Book
30 Dec 1645	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	Free-grace or the Flowing of Christs Blood Freely to Sinners
1645	Presbyterian	Squire, Robert	Arraignement and Condemnation of Chief Heresies … as an Answer to … The Arraignment of Mr Persecution
c. Jan 1646	Seeker milieu	Clarkson, Lawrence	The Pilgrimage of Saints
11 Jan 1646	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	Nor truth, nor error
13 Jan 1646	Baptist	Blackwood, Christopher	Apostolicall baptisme: or, A sober rejoinder, to a treatise written by Mr. Thomas Blake; Infants baptisme freed from Antichristianisme
14 Jan 1646	Presbyterian	Cranford, James	Truth Triumphing Over Errour and heresie
16 Jan 1646	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	Smoke in the Temple
22 Jan 1646	Presbyterian	Baillie, Robert	A dissuasive from the errors of the time
28 Jan 1646	Presbyterian	Hickes, Gaspar	The advantage of afflictions
11 Feb 1646	Baptist	Knollys, Hanserd	The shining of a flaming-fire in Zion
26 Feb 1646	Presbyterian	Edwards, Thomas	Gangraena I
10 Mar 1646	Presbyterian	Vines, Richard	The Authour, Nature, and Danger of Heresie
10 Mar 1646	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	Groanes for Liberty
11 Apr 1646	Presbyterian	Ley, John	Light for Smoke
19 Apr 1646	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	An end of one controversie
21 Apr 1646	Presbyterian	Gataker, Thomas	A mistake, or misconstruction, removed
27 Apr 1646	Seeker milieu	Collier, Thomas	Exaltation of Christ in the days of the Gospel
4 May 1646	Baptist	Spilsberie, John	Gods Ordinance, The Saints Priviledge
6 May 1646	Independent	Anon	A plea for congregationall government
21 May 1646	Seeker milieu	Webbe, Thomas	Mr Edwards Pen no slander
28 May 1646	Presbyterian	Edwards, Thomas	Gangraena II
29 May 1646	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	Reasons for Unitie, Peace and Love
5 jun 1646	Presbyterian	Ley, John	An after-reckoning with Master Saltmarsh
7 Jun 1646	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	The building and glory of the truely Christian and spiritual church [Marston Sermon]
22 Jun 1646	Presbyterian	Vicars, John	The schismatick sifted
17 Aug 1646	Presbyterian	Cranford, James	Plain English: Or, The Sectaries Anatomized

27 Aug 1646	Independent	Goodwin, John	*Anapologesiates Antapologias*
21 Sep 1646	Presbyterian		*An ordinance [on heresy and blasphemy] presented to the Honourable house of Commons*
12 Oct 1646	Baptist	R.B., [attributed to Barrow	*Well-wisher to the truth. A BRIEFE ANSWER To R. H. His Booke, ENTITLED, The True Guide, &c*
2 Nov 1646	Baptist	Kilcop, Thomas	*Seekers Supplyed, or Three and forty Non-Church Queries by Scripture answered*
25 Nov 1646	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	*Right Reformation*
28 Dec 1646	Presbyterian	Edwards, Thomas	*Gangraena III*
1646	Presbyterian	Pagitt, Ephraim	*A brief collection out of Master Pagitts book called Heresiography*
1646	Presbyterian	Love, Christopher	*Short and Plain Animadversions*
1646	Presbyterian	Clarke, John	*Leaven, corrupting the childrens bread*
1646	Presbyterian	Bastwick, John	*The utter routing of the whole army of all the Independents and Sectaries*
1646	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	*Uniformity examined*
1646	Seeker milieu	Wrighter, Clement	*The jus divinum of presbyterie*
1 Jan 1647	Presbyterian	Baillie, Robert	*Anabaptism, the True Fountain of Independency, Antinomy, Brownisme, Familisme, and ... other Errours*
2 Mar 1647	Seeker milieu	Collier, Thomas	*Marrow of Christianity*
25 Mar 1647	Independent	Bartlet, William	*Ichnographia*
26 Mar 1647	Presbyterian	Cheynell, Francis	*An Account Given To The Parliament By The Ministers Sent By Them To Oxford*
17 Apr 1647	Independent	Stalham, John	*Vindiciae redemptionis*
27 May 1647	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	*Sparkles of Glory*
10 Jun 1647	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	*Letter from the Army*
28 Jun 1647	Presbyterian	Edwards, Thomas	*The casting down of the last and strongest hold of Satan. Or a treatise against toleration and pretended liberty of conscience*
3 Jul 1647	Presbyterian	Anon	*Anti-Machiavell*
20 Aug 1647	Presbyterian	Generall Assembly of the (	*A declaration and brotherly exhortation of the ... to their brethren of England*
29 Sep 1647	Seeker milieu	Collier, Thomas	*A discovery of the new creation*
7 Nov 1647	Seeker milieu	Cowling, Nicholas	*The Saints Perfect in This Life; or Never*
Nov 1647	Presbyterian	Rutherford, Samuel	*Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*
14 Dec 1647	Presbyterian	Sion College Enclave	*A Testimony to the Trueth*
17 Dec 1647	Presbyterian	Scottish Parliament	*The Answer of the Commissioners*
18 Dec 1647	Independent	Goodwin, John	*Divine Authority*
n.d. 1647	Independent	Heydon, J.	*Some gospel truths catechistically laid down*
1647		Ward, Nathaniel	*The simple cobler of Aggawamm in America*
1647	Presbyterian	Jenkyn, William	*A Sleeping Sicknes*
19 Jan 1648	Independent	English Covenanter	*The Scottish mist dispel'd*
9 Feb 1648	Independent	Cotton, John	*The way of Congregational churches cleared in two treatises*
19 Feb 1648	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	*Baptismõn didaché*
10 Mar 1648	Presbyterian	Ross, Alexander	*Englands Threnodie*
15 Jun 1648	Independent	Goodwin, John	*Neophytopresbyteros, or, The yongling elder, or, novice-presbyter*
4 Dec 1648	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	*Substance of a speech made in the Commons*
24 Dec 1648	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	*The Lord of Hosts: or, God guarding the camp of the saints*
28 Dec 1648	Seeker milieu	Sedgwick, William	*Mr William Sedgwick's letter to his Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax*
1648	Seeker milieu	Collier, Thomas	*General Epistle to the Universall Church of the First Born*
1648	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	*The armies defence, or, God guarding the camp of the saints*
1648	Seeker milieu	Penington, Isaac	*A Touchstone or Trial of Faith*
1648	Seeker milieu	Salmon, Joseph	*Antichrist in Man*
1648	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	*Wonderful Predictions*
1648	Seeker milieu	Sedgwick, William	*Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Sonne of Manne*
1648	Seeker milieu	Winstanley, Gerrard	*Truth Lifting Its Head Above Scandals*
1648	Seeker milieu	Winstanley, Gerrard	*The Breaking of the Day of God*

1648	Seeker milieu	Hassal, George	*The designe of God in the saints*
1648	Seeker milieu	Lewin, John	*The man-child brought forth in us, or, God manifest in flesh*
n.d. 1648	Independent	Babington, Abraham	*An answer to a discourse intituled, Truth it's manifest*
1 Feb 1649	Baptist	Blackwood, Christopher	*Expositions and sermons upon the ten first chapters of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to Matthew*
8 Feb 1649	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	*The way of true peace and unity*
1 Mar 1649	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	*The city-ministers unmasked*
2 Apr 1649	Independent	Bartlet, William	*Ba`al-samz*
10 May 1649	Independent	Lawrence, Henry	*Some considerations tending to the Asserting and Vindicating of the use of the Holy Scriptures and Christian Ordinances*
16 Jul 1649	Presbyterian	Gillespie, George	*A Treatise of Miscellany Questions*
31 Jul 1649	Seeker milieu	Saltmarsh, John	*Englands friend raised from the grave*
6 Aug 1649	Presbyterian	Rutherford, Samuel	*A free disputation against pretended liberty of conscience*
9 Nov 1649	Independent	Bridge, William	*A Vindication of Ordinances*
21 Dec 1649	Independent	Cradock, Walter	*Divine drops distilled from the fountain of Holy Scriptures*
31 Dec 1649	Baptist	Spittlehouse, John	*Rome ruin'd by VVhite Hall, or, The papall crown demolisht: containing a confutation of the 3 degrees of popery: papacy, prelacy & presbitery*
1649	Presbyterian	Jenison, Robert	*the faithfull depositaty [sic] of sound doctrine*
1649	Seeker milieu	Coppe, Abiezer	*Some sweet sips, of some spirituall wine*
1649	Seeker milieu	Sprigge, Joshua	*A Testimony to Approaching Glory*
1649	Seeker milieu	Sprigge, Joshua	*A Further Testimony to the Glory that is near*
1649	Seeker milieu	Winstanley, Gerrard	*New Lawe of Righteousness*
28 Feb 1650	Baptist	Anon	*—— Heart-bleedings for professors abominations: or, A faithful general epistle, presented to all who have known the way of truth*
4 Mar 1650	Presbyterian	Anon	*A Blow at the Root*
23 Mar 1650	Baptist	King, Daniel	*A Way to Sion, sought out and found; stumbling blocks removed out of the way; some beams of light*
1 Apr 1650	Seeker milieu	Penington, Isaac	*A Voyce out of the Thick Darkness*
22 May 1650	Seeker milieu	Penington, Isaac	*Light or Darkness*
20 Jul 1650	Seeker milieu	Penington, Isaac	*Severall Fresh Inward Openings*
4 Nov 1650	Independent	Homes, Nathaniel	*Daemonologie, and theologie The first, the malady, ... the second the remedy*
24 Nov 1650	Seeker milieu	Penington, Isaac	*An echo from the great deep*
19 Dec 1650	Seeker milieu	Jackson, John	*A Sober Word to serious People*
1650	Seeker milieu	Anon [Dell, William]	*The doctrine of the Sabbath*
1650	Baptist	Stooks, Richard	*A Second Champion, or, Companion to Truth*
1650	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*The saints everlasting rest*
1650	Presbyterian	Cheynell, Francis	*Divine trinunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*
Jan 1651	Independent	Durant, John	*Comfort & counsell for dejected soules*
25 Apr 1651	Presbyterian	Hall, Thomas	*The pulpit guarded with XVII arguments occasioned by a dispute at Henly in Arden in Warwickshire*
12 Oct 1651	Baptist	Kilcop, Thomas	*Unlimited Authority of Christ's Disciples Cleared*
7 Nov 1651	Baptist	King, Daniel	*A discovery of some troublesome thoughts*
1651	Baptist	Stooks, Richard	*Stooks, Richard, Truths champion an occasionall word to the reader*
30 Mar 1652	Seeker milieu	Williams, Roger	*The fourth paper*
28 Apr 1652	Seeker milieu	Williams, Roger	*The Bloody Tenent, Yet More Bloody*
15 Jun 1652	Seeker milieu	Anon [Vane, Henry]	*Zeal examined*
21 Jul 1652	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	*The Grand Oppressor, Or, The Terror of Tithes*
14 Sep 1652	Seeker milieu	Anon [Williams, Roger]	*The examiner defended*
8 Nov 1652	Presbyterian	Manton, Thomas	*A practical commentary, or An exposition with notes on the Epistle of Jude*
28 Nov 1652	Baptist	Tombes, John	*Anti-paedobaptism, or, The third part being a full review of the dispute concerning infant baptism,*
1652	Presbyterian	Elmeston, John	*An essay for the discovery and discouraging of the new sprung schism [of] Mr Henden of Bennenden*
1652	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	*The crucified and quickened Christian*
1652	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	*The Honest Heretique*

1652	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	A Scourge for the Assyrian, The Great Oppressor
1652	Seeker milieu	Williams, Roger	The Hirelings Ministry None of Christs
Jan 1653	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	The Bishop of London, the Welsh curate, and common prayers
20 Apr 1653	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	The stumbling-stone
1 Jun 1653	Seeker milieu	Goad, Christopher	Refreshing Drops and Scorching Vials
7 Jun 1653	Presbyterian	Ross, Alexander	Pansebeia
17 Jun 1653	Presbyterian	Love, Christopher	A Christians duty
22 Jun 1653	Seeker milieu	Salter, Christopher	Sal Scyllâ
23 Jun 1653	Seeker milieu	Webster, John	The Vail of the Covering; sermon preached at All Hallows, Lombard St
17 Aug 1653	Seeker milieu	Webster, John	The saints guide, or, Christ the rule, and ruler of saints
17 Aug 1653	Quaker	Naylor, James	The Power and the Glory of the Lord Shining Out of the North
7 Nov 1653	Independent	Rogers, John	Ohel or Beth-shemesh A tabernacle for the sun
22 Sep 1653	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	A Gospel plea for the lawfulnes & continuance of … tenthes
3 Oct 1653	Seeker milieu	Brayne, John	The New Earth
18 Oct 1653	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	A Monstrous Dispute
25 Oct 1653	Seeker milieu	Webster, John	The Picture of Mercurius Politicus
28 Oct 1653	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	The Mad Mans Plea
4 Dec 1653	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	The tryal of spirits
19 Dec 1653	Seeker milieu	Webster, John	Academarium Examen
1653	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	The Woman Preacher
1653	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	A Whirlwind from the South
1653	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	The Children of the West
1653	Baptist	Fisher, Samuel	Baby-baptism meer babism, or, An answer to nobody in five words to every-body who finds himself concern'd in't by Samuel Fisher
1653	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	Christian concord or The agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcs
7 Feb 1654	Presbyterian	London Provincial Assemb	Jus divinum ministerii evangelici
27 Feb 1654	Presbyterian	Gataker, Thomas	A discours apologetical
27 Jun 1654	Quaker	Fox, George	To All That Would Know the Way to the Kingdom
30 Jun 1654	Quaker	Farnworth, Richard	The Heart Opened by Christ
4 Jul 1654	Seeker milieu	Webster, John	The Saints Perfect Freedom
30 Jul 1654	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	The Great Earthquake
28 Aug 1654	Quaker	Fox, George	A declaration against all profession and professors that have not the life of what they profess
3 Nov 1654	Quaker	Howgill, Francis	An answer to a paper; called, A petition of one Thomas Ellyson
24 Nov 1654	Quaker	Howgill, Francis	The fiery darts of the divel quenched
1654	Quaker	Fox, George	A word from the Lord unto all the faithlesse generation
1654	Primitive Episcopalian	Leigh, Edward	A systeme or body of divinity consisting of ten books
1654	Presbyterian	Dury, John	Demonstration of the Necessity of Settling some Gospel Government
5 Jan 1655	Independent	Goodwin, John	A fresh discovery of the high-Presbyterian spirit
12 Jan 1655	Presbyterian	Robinson, Ralph	Safe Conduct
28 Feb 1655	Baptist	Skipp, Edmund	The worlds wonder, or the Quakers blazing starr
28 Mar 1655	Presbyterian	Wither, George	Vaticinia Poetica
19 Jun 1655	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	Quakers unmasked, and clearly detected to be but the spawn of Romish frogs
21 Jul 1655	Baptist	Tillam, Thomas	The fourth principle of Christian religion
21 Jul 1655	Independent	Goodwin, John	Cata-baptism
29 Sep 1655	Quaker	Naylor, James	Something Further in Answer to Strength in Weaknesse
6 Nov 1655	Church of England	Sherlock, Richard	The Quakers Wilde Questions
24 Dec 1655	Seeker milieu	Toldervy, John	The foot out of the snare
1655	Seeker milieu	Jackson, John	Strength in Weakness

1655	Seeker milieu	Vane, Henry	*The retired mans meditations, or, The mysterie and power of godliness*
n.d. 1655	Independent	Harvey, William	*Sectaries Downfall*
1655	Baptist	Lambe, Thomas	*Truth prevailing against the fiercest opposition, or, An answer to Mr. Iohn Goodwins Water-dipping no firm footing for church communion*
1655	Baptist	Fisher, Samuel	*Christianismus redivivus Christndom both un-christ'ned and new-christ'ned, or, that good old way of dipping … vindicated*
1655	Baptist	Allen, William	*A Doubt Resolved, or Satisfaction for the Seekers, wherein the case touching an administrator of gospel ordinances, in these times, is handled*
1655	Presbyterian	Case, Thomas	*Asarkokaukema*
1655	Presbyterian	Brinsley, John	*Spirituall Vertigo*
1655	Quaker	Naylor, James	*[in John jackson's] Strength in Weakness*
2 Jan 1656	Quaker	Naylor, James	*Foot yet in the snare*
3 Jan 1656	Seeker milieu	Read, Robert	*The Fiery Change*
31 Jan 1656	Seeker milieu	Toldervy, John	*The snare broken*
29 Mar 1656	Quaker	Clark, Henry	*A cloud of witnesses*
23 Apr 1656	Independent	Carpenter, Richard	*The last, and highest appeal. Or, An appeal to God, against the new-religion-makers, … menders, or venders amongst us*
21 May 1656	Quaker	Lilburne, John	*The Resurrection of John Lilburne now a prisoner in Dover-Castle*
31 May 1656	Independent	Wright, Abraham	*Five sermons, in five several styles; or Waies of preaching*
5 Aug 1656	Quaker	Howgill, Francis	*A Lamentation for the Scattered Tribes*
11 Sep 1656	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	*A new discovery of some Romish emissaries*
19 Nov 1656	Quaker	Parker, Alexander	*A Call out of Egypt*
20 Nov 1656	Presbyterian	Vines, Richard	*A Treatise Of The Right Institution, Administration, and Receiving of the Sacrament Of The Lords-Supper*
n.d. 1656	Independent	Cragge, John	*The arraignment and conviction of Anabaptism, or, A reply to Master Tombes*
1656	Presbyterian	Burgess, Anthony	*CXLV expository sermons*
1656	Quaker	Burrough, Edward	*A Trumpet of the Lord Sounded out of Sion*
1656	Seeker milieu	Vane, Henry	*A healing question propounded and resolved*
6 Jun 1657	Independent	Stalham, John	*The reviler rebuked: or, A re-inforcement of the charge against the Quakers*
2 Nov 1657	Seeker milieu	Jackson, John	*Hosannah to the Son of David*
25 Nov 1657	Quaker	Hubberthorn, Richard	*The cause of stumbling removed from all that will receive the truth*
1657	Quaker	Parker, Alexander	*A discovery of Satan's wiles and his subtile devices in transforming himselfe into the likeness of truth*
1657	Baptist	Gosnold, John	*Baptismon didaches Of the doctrine of baptisms*
1657	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*The safe religion*
1657	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*One sheet for the ministry against the malignants of all sorts*
1657	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*A second sheet for the ministry justifying our calling against Quakers, seekers, and papists*
18 Feb 1658	Independent	James, Marmaduke	*Best Fee-Simple*
Apr 1658	Independent	Sheppard, William (LLB)	*Sincerity and hypocricy*
Jul 1658	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*The Grotian religion discovered*
3 Sep 1658	Independent	Rogers, Nehemiah	*The fast friend: or A friend at mid-night*
1658	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*Confirmation and restauration the necessary means of reformation*
1658	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*Certain disputations of right to sacraments*
1658	Presbyterian	Hall, Thomas	*A practical and polemical commentary*
1658	Presbyterian	Rutherford, Samuel	*A survey of the Survey of that summe of church-discipline penned by Mr. Thomas Hooker*
1658	Presbyterian	Burgess, Anthony	*A treatise of original sin*
1658	Quaker	Whitehead, George	*A brief treatise on the truths behalf*
1658	Seeker milieu	Erbery, William	*The Testimony of William Erbery*
n.d. 1659	Independent	Rogers, John	*Diapoliteia. A Christian concertation with Mr. Prin, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Harrington*
1659	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*Five disputations of church-government and worship*
1659	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*Key For Catholics*
1659	Presbyterian	Prynne, William	*The remainder, or second part of a Gospel plea*
1659	Quaker	Crook, John	*A defence of the true church called Quakers*

1659	Quaker	Fox, George	*The great mistery of the great whore unfolded*
23 Jan 1660	Presbyterian	Reynolds, Edward	*A seasonable exhortation of sundry ministers in London*
8 Aug 1660	Independent	Bewick, John	*An answer to a Quakers seventeen heads of queries*
14 Aug 1660	Presbyterian	Wilkinson, Henry	*Three decads of sermons*
n.d 1660	Independent	Gery, Thomas	*Mirour for Anabaptists*
1660	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*The true Catholick church described*
1660	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*The successive visibility of the church*
1660	Presbyterian	Trapp, John	*A commentary or exposition upon these following books of holy Scripture*
1660	Quaker	Burrough, Edward	*A returne to the ministers of London by way of answer to their seasonable exhortations*
1660	Quaker	Penington, Isaac	*An answer to that common objection against the Quakers*
1661	Seeker milieu	Sedgwick, William	*Animadversions upon a Book Entitled Inquisition for the Blood of our Late Sovereign*
1662	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*A saint or a brute the certain necessity and excellency of holiness*
1662	Seeker milieu	J[ohn] P[errot]	*An epistle for the most pure amity and unity in the spirit and life of God to all sincere-hearted-souls*
1662	Seeker milieu	Vane, Henry	*An Epistle General, to the Mystical Body of Christ on Earth*
1663	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*Fair warning*
1664	Baptist	Tomes, John	*Saints no smiters, or, Smiting civil powers not the work of saints*
n.d. 1665	Independent	Carpenter, Richard	*A new play call'd The Pragmatical Jesuit new-leven'd a comedy*
n.d. 1667	Independent	Vincent, Thomas	*God's terrible voice in the city*
n.d. 1667	Independent	Stuckley, Lewis	*A gospel-glasse, representing the miscarriages of English professors*
n.d. 1667	Baptist	Tombes, John	*Theodulia, or, A just defence of hearing the sermons and other teaching of the present ministers of England*
1667 [publ.1681]	Seeker milieu	Dell, William	*The increase of popery in England*
n.d. 1668	Independent	Shepard, Thomas (NE)	*Wine for Gospel wantons*
1670	Independent	Goodwin, John	*Pleroma to Pneumatikon, or, A being filled with the Spirit*
1670	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*The cure of church-divisions*
1670	Quaker	Keith, George	*The benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings*
1671	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*A defence of the principles of love*
1671	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*The difference between the power of magistrates and church-pastors and the Roman kingdom*
1672	Quaker	Burrough, Edward	*The memorable works of a son of thunder and consolation*
1673	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*A Christian directory*
1674	Independent	Wills, Obed.	*Infant=baptism asserted & vindicated by Scripture and antiquity (answer to a treatise by Henry Danvers, Par.Bap)*
1674	Independent	Good, Tho.	*Firmianus and Dubitantius, or, Certain dialogues concerning atheism, infidelity, popery, and other heresies and schisme's*
1674	Quaker	Penn & Whitehead	*The Christian-Quaker and his divine testimony vindicated by Scripture, reason, and authorities*
1675	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*More proofs of infants church-membership*
1676	Quaker	Howgill, Francis	*The Dawnings of the Gospel Day*
1676	Seeker milieu	Williams, Roger	*George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes*
1678	Quaker	Fox, George	*A New England Firebrand Quenched*
1680	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*Church-History*
1681	Presbyterian	Baxter, Richard	*A third defence of the cause of peace*
1764	Seeker milieu	Crisp, Stephen	*A Short History of a Long Journey From Babylon To Bethel*
1767	Baptist	Child, John	*A Moderate Message to Quakers, Seekers, and Socinians with 3 Questions to John Bunyan*

Manuscripts, State Papers, Letters, Newspapers and Petitions

Manuscripts

London, British Library, MS Sloane 3317. Fol. 22r

London, British Library, E 198 (30)

Edmund Waller 17th May 1641; BL E 198 (30); Sloane MS 3317, fol.22r

From Laurence Whitaker's diary: BL Whit., fol. 70v

Bodleian Library

Bod. L., MS. Nalson 4, fols. 169r-v

Hull University

HHC: Hotham MSS, U DDHO/I/62: Durand Hotham, esq., to John Saltmarsh, London, 12 November 1644

Aberdeen University

AUL MS 2538, vol. 1, fol. 28r: James Fraser of Phopachy, clergyman: *'Triennial travels, containing a succinct and breefe narration of the journay and voyage of Master James Fraser through Scotland, England, all France, part of Spain, and over the Savoyan Alps to Italy, 1 June 1657 - April 1660'*, written 1670

Parliamentary Archive

PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/212 (Aug 13, 1646) fols. 10-15
PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/212 (Aug. 13, 1646), fol. 10r
PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/212 (Aug. 13, 1646), fols. 11r, 13r-v, 15r

State Papers

A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, (January 1645) in Volume 1, 1638-1653, ed. Thomas Birch (London, 1742) 53-62. British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/thurloe-papers/vol1/pp53-62 [accessed 28 May 2019].

Letters from Friends House Library (in date order)

Thomas Aldam to George Fox, 1652 *FHL*, A.R. Barclay MSS 1:71, fos.206-7

Thomas Aldam to the Brethren and Sisters November 1652, *FHL,* Sw. MSS 3.40 (EQL 7)

John Lawson letter to Margaret Fell, 1653, *FHL,* Sw. MSS 4.69

Richard Farnworth to Thomas Aldam, February 1653, *FHL,* Portfolio MSS 36:151

Francis Howgill and Anthony Pearson to Margaret Fell, 10 July 1654, *FHL*, Caton MSS 3.74

Francis Howgill to Margaret Fell, late July 1654, *FHL,* Caton MSS III, 156.8

John Audland and John Camm to Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, Bristol, September 1654. *FHL*, A.R. Barclay MSS 158

Alexander Parker to Margaret Fell, 21 May 1655, *FHL,* Sw. MSS 1.162

Richard Nelson to Naylor, May 1655, *FHL,* Caton MSS 2.4

William Caton to Margaret Fell, 19 January 1656, London, *FHL,* Sw. MSS 1.314 (Tr. 1.367; Nuttall Calendar 356)

Francis Howgill to Margaret Fell, late July 1654, London, *FHL,* Caton MSS III 156-8

Burrough and Howgill to Fell, March 1656, *FHL,* A.R. Barclay MSS 176

John Tombes to Richard Baxter, 4 April 1655, Dr Williams Library, DWL/RB/2/2.141

Petrus Serrarius, Amsterdam to John Jackson (?) *FHL* Tracts Volume 309 (between two tracts of John Jackson)

Richard Farnworth to Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough, from Swarthmore, 4th October 1656: AR Barclay open MSS SAS Open Journals

[https://journals.sas.ac.uk/index.php/fhs/article/view/4220/4172]

Arthur Cotton to George Fox, Nov 1656, *FHL,* Sw. MSS 4.163 (EQL 334)

Richard Hubberthorn [?], n.d., *FHL,* Portfolio MSS 2.81

Thomas Lawton to Margaret Fell, n.d., *FHL,* Sw. MSS 1.242

Letter from Bristol for Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill c/o Giles Calvert in London (n.d.) *FHL,* A R Barclay MSS 157

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Hartlib Papers

Hartlib Papers 26/2/3B, Letter from Thomas [Wiltshire?] To Hartlib, 1 March 1644

Hartlib Papers 62/27/1A-4B Letter from W Rand (Amsterdam) to Hartlib, 1 September 1651

Hartlib Papers 1/32/23A-28B Letter from John Dury to Edward Lane, 31 October 1651.

Hartlib Papers MS 29/2/40B John Dury, A demonstration of the Necessity of settling some Gospel Government (1654)

<u>Newspapers</u>

Parliament Scout (30 Jan 1645 / E261 [12])

Perfect Occurrences of Both Houses of Parliament and Martiall Affairs, 22-29 May 1646, 5-12 June 1646

Mercurius Pragmaticus, 4–11 September 1649

Severall Proceedings in Parliament (18 Jan 1650) / E.533 [38]

Impartiall Scout, 12-29 July 1650

Mercurius Politicus, 13–20 October 1653

<u>Petitions</u>

1. *To the Right Honourable The Lord and Commons Assembled in Parliament The Humble petition of those well-affected to Government, both young men and Apprentices of the City of London* (London, 1647)
2. The humble petition and representation of several churches of God in London, commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists. Which was presented on Monday the second of April, to the supream authority of the nation, the Commons assembled in Parliament. Together with the answer and approbation of the Parliament thereunto. (2 April 1649)

Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated. All datings are taken from Thomason.

Aldam, T., M. Fisher, E.Hooton, B. Nicholson, W. Pears, *False Prophets and False Teachers described,* (s.n. 1652) A894BA (Wing)

Allen, Richard, *An antidote against heresy: or a preservative for Protestants against the poyson of Papists, Anabaptists, Arrians, Arminians, &c … Written to stay the wandering and stablish the weak in these dangerous times of Apostasy*, (Printed by John Macock, and to be sold by Nathaniel Brooks at the sign of the Angel in Cornhil, 28 July 1648) A1045A (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Allen, William, *A Doubt Resolved, or Satisfaction for the Seekers, wherein the case touching an administrator of gospel ordinances, in these times, is handled,* (Printed by J.M. for H. Cripps, and L. Lloyd, n.d. 1655) A1063 (Wing)

Ames, William, *The marrow of sacred divinity drawne out of the Holy Scriptures, and the interpreters thereof, and brought into method,* (Printed by Edward Griffin for Henry Overton, 1642) A3000 (Wing)

Anon, *A discovery of 29 sects here in London, all of which, except the first, are most divelish and damnable, being these which follow. Protestants. Puritans. Papists. Brownists. Calvinists. Lutherans. Fam. of love. Mahometans. Adamites. Brightanists. Armenians. Sosinians. Thessalonians. Anabaptists. Separatists. Chaldaeans. Electrians. Donatists. Persians. Antinomeans. Assyrians. Macedonians. Heathens. Panonians. Saturnians. Junonians. Bacchanalians. Damassians. The Brotherhood,* (s.n. 1641) D1662 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *The dolefull lamentation of cheap-side crosse: or old England sick of the staggers*, (Printed by F.Coles. and T.B, 1641) D1837A (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A nest of serpents discovered or a knot of old heretiques revived called the Adamites,* (s.n. 1641) N470 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— (Robinson, Henry) *Liberty of Conscience: or the Sole Means to Peace*, (s.n. 24 March 1644) R1675 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Anon., *A plea for congregationall government: or, A defence of the Assemblies petition, against Mr. Saltmarsh. Wherein is plainly discovered, that in his reasons against the divine right of Presbytery, under pretence of opposing the Assemblies petition, he doth as much oppose the congregationall way, and goes about utterly to overthrow all church-government, ministery, baptisme, and all church-ordinances whatsoever; and wholly to subvert the authority of the civill magistrate in all matters of religion. Published according to order*, (Printed by Tho: Underhill at the Bible in Woodstreet, 6 May 1646) B1347 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *Hell broke loose: or, A catalogue of many of the spreading errors, heresies and blasphemies of these times*, *for which we are to be humbled*, (Printed by Thomas Underhil, at the Bible in Woodstreet, 9 March 1647) H1377 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A catalogue of the several sects and opinions in England and other nations With a briefe rehearsall of their false and dangerous tenents*, (Printed by R.A. 19 January 1647) C1411 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *A Publike Conference Betwixt the Six Presbyterian Ministers and Some Independent Commanders Held at Oxford on Thursday November 12th,* (s.n. 26 November 1646) W868 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Some queries propounded to the Common-Councell, and citizens of London, concerning the armies demand of having the militia of London of the 4th of May changed. Wherein the unreasonablenesse and great danger of that proposall, and the justifiablenesse of the cities refusall both in law and conscience, are fully demonstrated,* (s.n. July 30th 1647) S4561A (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The True Levellers Standard Advanced,* (s.n. 26 April 1649) [attributed to Gerrard Winstanley] T2716 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Heart-bleedings for professors abominations: or, A faithful general epistle, presented to all who have known the way of truth,* (Printed by Francis Tyton, and are to be sold at the three Daggers in Fleetstreet, neer the Inner-Temple-gate, 28 February 1650) H1310 (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

—— *The Arraignment and Tryall with a Declaration of the Ranters,* (Printed by B.A. and published according to order, 17 December, 1650) A3748 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A Blow at the Root,* (Printed by B.A. and published according to order, 1650) [attributed to John Downham] B3358 (Wing)

—— *Zeal examined: or, A discourse for liberty of conscience in matters of religion*. (Printed by G.D. for Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at the sign of the Black Spread-Eagle at the West End of Pauls, 15 June 1652) Z8 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The examiner defended [a reply to The examiner examined].* (Printed by James Cottrel, 14 September 1652) E3732 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A list of some of the grand blasphemers and blasphemies, which was given in to the committee for religion. Very fit to be taken notice of, upon the occasion of the day of publick fasting and humiliation*, (Printed by Robert Ibbitson, 23 March, 1654) L2406 (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

—— *The Quakers Complaint Against George Keith,* (Printed and sold by the booksellers of London and Westminster, 1700) Q19 (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

—— *The Rotterdam Quakers excommunication and damning of George Joyce who was formerly known by the stile of Cornet Joyce,* (Printed and sold by Joseph Moxon, 1671) R2005A (Wing 2nd ed.)

Babington, Abraham, *An answer to a discourse intituled, Truth it's manifest,* (s.n., s.l. 1648) B246C (Wing 2nd ed.)

Bacon, Robert, *A taste of the spirit of God, and of this vvorld, as they have appeared in opposition heretofore, so now latest of all at New-Windsor,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at his shop at the sign of the black spread Eagle, at the West end of Pauls, 6 July 1652) B371 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Baillie, Robert, *Anabaptism, the True Fountain of Independency, Antinomy, Brownisme, Familisme, and the most of the other Errours, which for the time doe trouble the Church of England,* (Printed by M.F. for Samuel Gellibrand, at the Brazen serpent in Pauls Church-yard, 1 January 1647) B452A (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *A dissuasive from the errors of the time,* (Printed by Samuel Gellibrand, 22 Jan 1646) B456 (Wing)

Bakewell, Thomas, *An answer, or confutation of divers errors broached, and maintained by the seven churches of Anabaptists contained in those articles of their confession of faith propounded to the Parliament,* (Printed by Henry Shepheard and William Ley, and are to be sold at the signe of the Bible in Tower-Streete, and at Pauls-Chaine neare Doctors Commons, 7 May 1646) B526 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Bampfield, Francis, 1615-1683. *A name an after one; ... or an historical declaration of the life of Shem Archer,* (Printed by John Lawrence, 1681) B627 (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

Barber, Edward, *A small treatise of baptisme, or, dipping. Wherein is cleerely shewed that the Lord Christ ordained dipping for those only that professe repentance and faith. 1. Proved by Scriptures. 2. By arguments,* [s.n. 1642] B694 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Barclay, Robert, *Apology for the Quakers,* (Printed by W. Richardson and S. Clark. And sold by the booksellers of London and Westminster, 1675) T085689 (estc)

—— *Anarchy of the Ranters,* (s.n. 1676) B718 (Wing)

R.B., [attributed to Barrow, Robert] *Well-wisher to the truth. A BRIEFE ANSWER To R. H. His Booke, ENTITLED, The True Guide, &c,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at his shop at the west end of Pauls, 12 October 1646) B159 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Barrowe, Henry, *A Brief Discovery of the False Church,* (s.n. 1590) 1517 (STC 2nd ed.)

Bartlet, William, 1609 or 10-1682. *Ichnographia. Or A model of the primitive congregational way: wherein satisfaction is offered, by unfolding (according to the Scriptures) what the right order of the Gospel, and way of the saints in the visible worshipping of God is, in the dayes of the New Testament. And how the saints in these dayes may walk up to it, notwithstanding their present hindrances,* (Printed by W.E. for H. Overton, at the entrance into Popes-head Alley, out of Lumbard-street, 25 March 1647) B986 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— Ba'al-samz or, Soveraigne balsome gently applied in a few weighty considerations (by way of quærie) for healing the distempers of such professors of religion as Satan hath wounded and drawn aside (under the notion of living in God) to the utter renouncing and casting off the use of divine ordinances, and Gospel-institutions of worship, (Printed by G. Dawson, for Elizabeth Overton in Popes-head Alley, neere the Royall Exchange, 5 April 1649) B987 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Bastwick, John, *The second part of that book call'd Independency not Gods ordinance,* (Printed by John Macock, for Michael Spark junior, and are to be sold at the sign of the blue Bible in Green-Arbour, 10 June 1645) B1069 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— The utter routing of the whole army of all the Independents and Sectaries, (Printed by John Macock and are to be sold by Michael Spark, 1646) B1072 (Wing)

Bauthumley, Jacob, *The light and dark sides of God or A plain and brief discourse of the light side,* (Printed by William Learner, at the Black-more in Bishopsgate-streete, 20 November 1650) B1165A (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Baxter, Richard, *The saints everlasting rest, or, A treatise of the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in glory wherein is shewed its excellency and certainty, the misery of those that lose it, the way to attain it, and assurance of it, and how to live in the continual delightful forecasts of it,* (Printed by Rob. White for Thomas Underhil and Francis Tyton, 15 January 1650) B1383 (Wing)

—— Plain Scripture proof of infants, (Printed by Robert White, 1651) B1344 (Wing)

—— Additions to the saints everlasting rest, to be put before the second part, (s.n. 1651) B1180B (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— Christian concord or The agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcs. With Rich. Baxter's explication and defence of it, and his exhortation to unity, (Printed by A.M. for Thomas Underhill ... and Francis Tyton, 10 July 1653) B1218 (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

—— The Quakers catechism, or, The Quakers questioned, their questions answered, and both published for the sake of those of them that have not yet sinned unto death and of those ungrounded novices that are most in danger of their seduction, (Printed by A.M. for Thomas Underhill at the

Anchor and Bible in Pauls Churchyard, and Francis Tyton at the Three Daggers in Fleetstreet, 16 June 1655) B1362 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *The unreasonableness of infidelity, Four discourses* (Printed by R.W. for Thomas Underhill, at the Bible and Anchor in Pauls Church-yard, and for F. Tyton, at the 3 daggers in Fleet-street, 16 November 1655) B1240 (Wing)

—— *One sheet for the ministry against the malignants of all sorts,* (Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657) B1335 (Wing)

—— *The safe religion, or, Three disputations for the reformed catholike religion against popery,* (Printed by Abraham Miller for Thomas Underhill ... and Francis Tyton, 1657) B1381 (Wing)

—— *A second sheet for the ministry iustifying our calling against Quakers, seekers, and papists and all that deny us to be the ministers of Christ,* (Printed by R. White for Nevil Simmons, 1657) B1404 (Wing)

—— *Certain disputations of right to sacraments, and the true nature of visible Christianity defending them against several sorts of opponents, especially against the second assault of that pious, reverend and dear brother Mr. Thomas Blake,* (Printed by R.W. for Nevil Simmons ... and are to be sold by him ... and by Nathaniel Ekins, 1658) B1212 (Wing)

—— *The Grotian religion discovered, at the invitation of Mr. Thomas Pierce in his Vindication,* (Printed by R.W. for Nevill Simmons bookseller in Kederminster, and are to be sold by him there, and by Tho. Brewster at the three Bibles, and by John Starkey at the Miter at the west end of Pauls, July 1658) B1280 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *Confirmation and restauration the necessary means of reformation, and reconciliation; for the healing of the corruptions and divisions of the churches,* (Printed by A.M. for Nevil Simmons, book-seller in Kederminster, and are to be sold by him there, and N. Ekins at the Gun in Pauls Church-yard, September 1658) B1232 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *A Key for Catholicks, To open the Jugling of the Jesuits, and satisfie all that are but truly willing to under-stand, whether the Cause of the Roman or Reformed Churches be of God; and to leave the Reader utterly unexcusable that after this will be a Papist,* (Printed by R.W. for Nevil Simmons,

bookseller in Kederminster, and are to be sold by him there, and by Thomas Johnson, 11 February 1659) B1295 (Wing)

—— *Five disputations of church-government and worship,* (Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, bookseller in Kederminster, and are to be sold by him there, and by Thomas Johnson at the Golden Key in St. Pauls Church-yard, London, 2 March 1659) B1267 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The successive visibility of the church of which the Protestants are the soundest members I. defended against the opposition of Mr. William Johnson,* (Printed by R.W. for Nevil Simmons ... and are to be sold by Francis Tyton, 1660) B1418 (Wing)

—— *The true Catholick, and Catholick church described. And the vanity of the Papists, and all other schismaticks, that confine the Catholick church to their sect, discovered and shamed,* (Printed by A.M. for T. Underhill at the Anchor and Bible in Pauls Church yard, and F. Tyton at the three Daggers in Fleetstrect [sic], April 1660) B1435 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *A Saint or a Brute. The Certain Necessity and Excellency of Holiness, &c. So plainly proved, and urgent-ly applyed, as by the blessing of God may convince and save the miserable, impenitent, ungodly Sensua-lists, if they will not let the Devil hinder them from a sober and serious reading and considering,* (Printed by R.W. for Francis Tyton ... and Nevil Simmons, 1662) B1382 (Wing)

—— *Fair warning, or, XX prophesies concerning the return of popery. with several plots laid by Campanella, Contzen, and others of late, in private letters, for restoring popery, now discovered to justifie the King's Most Excellent Majesty, and the Right Honorable the Parliament of Englands just revolution to maintain the Act of uniformity, that onely great remedy against the growth of popery,* (Printed by S.T.V.T, 1663) B1263A (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The cure of church-divisions,* (printed by Nevil Symmons at the three Crowns over against Holborn-Conduit, 1670) B1235 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *A defence of the principles of love, which are necessary to the unity and concord of Christians,* (Printed by
Nevil Simmons, 1671) B1239 (Wing)

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—— *The Bishop of London, the Welsh curate, and common prayers, with apocrypha in the end,* (s.n. 8 January 1653) E3223 (Wing 2nd ed.). [This contained four separate works including: *the Bishop of London*; *the General Epistle to the Hebrews and The Welsh Curate*.]

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—— *The great mistery of the great whore unfolded,* (Printed by Tho. Simmons, 1659) F1832 (Wing)

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E.G. for F. Clifton, and are to be sold at his shop on Fishstreet-hill neer London-bridge, 21 April 1646) G323 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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—— *Hieraspistes a defence by way of apology for the ministry and ministers of the Church of England: humbly presented to the consciences of all those that excell in virtue,* (Printed by Andrew Crooke, and are to be sold at the Green Dragon in St. Paul's-Church-yard, 20 June 1653) G357 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Goad, Christopher, *Refreshing Drops and Scorching Vials,* (Printed by R.W. for Giles Calvert, and the sign of the Black-spread Eagle at the west end of Pauls, 1 June 1653) G896 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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—— *Sion-Colledg visited*, (Printed by M.S. for Henry Overton, at the entring out of Lombard-street into Popes-head Alley, 1 February 1648) G1202 (Wing 2nd ed.)
—— *Neophytopresbyteros, or, The yongling elder, or, novice-presbyter,* (Printed by Henry Overton in Popes-head-Alley, 15 June 1648) G1183 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A fresh discovery of the high-Presbyterian spirit. Or The quenching of the second beacon fired … Also two letters written some years since, the one by the said John Goodwin to Mr. J. Caryl; the other, by Mr Caryl in answer hereunto; both relating to the passage above hinted,* (Printed by the author, and are to be sold by H. Cripps, and L. Ll. in Popes head Alley,5 January 1655) G1167.55 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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—— *A practical and polemical commentary, or, exposition upon the third and fourth chapters of the latter epistle of Saint Paul to Timothy,* (Printed by E. Tyler for John Starkey, 1658) H436 (Wing)

Harvey, William, *The sectaries downfall,* (Printed by T. Forcet, 1655) H1093A (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Heydon, J. *Some gospel truths catechistically laid down, explained and vindicated for the benefit of such as are weary of their own heart,* (Printed by Robert Ibbitson, 1647) H1675 (Wing)

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—— *The Holy Ghost on the Bench,* (Printed by Luke Fawn, and are to be sold by Ralph Shelmerdine, bookseller in Manchester, 1656) H2494 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Horton, George, *The Ranters Monster,* (Printed by Geoge Horton, 30 March 1652) R251 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Howard, Luke, *A Looking Glass for Baptists,* (s.n. 1672) H2986 (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

—— *Love and Truth in Plainness Manifested,* (Printed and sold by T. Sowle, 1704) T114618 (estc)

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Howgill, Francis, 1618-1669. *An ansvver to a paper; called, A petition of one Thomas Ellyson, late shepherd of Easington in the county of Durham, to his Highness the Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland,* (s.n. 3 November 1654) H3154 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Hubberthorn, Richard, 1628-1662. *The cause of stumbling removed from all that will receive the truth;... herein also is a false hosanna, and a false testimony reproved ... the name of him which hath so long travell'd to bring forth wind and confusion, is one known in the city of London by the name of Iohn Iackson,* (Printed by Thomas Simmons at the Bull and Mouth neer Aldersgate, 25 November 1657) H3222 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Jackson, John, *True Evangelical Temper,* (Printed by M. Flesher, for R. Milbourne, 1641) J76B (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The Book of Conscience Opened and Read,* (Printed by F.K. for R.M. and are to be sold by Daniel Milbourne, 1642) J76 (Wing)

—— *A Sober Word to serious People: or, a Moderate Discourse respecting as well the Seekers, so called, as the Present Churches,* (Printed by J. Cottrel, for James Noell, in Foster-lane; and are to be

sold by Giles Calvert, at the black Spread-Eagle neer the West-end of Pauls, 19 December 1650)
1651) J78A (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Strength in Weakness or The burning bush not consumed Being an answer (formerly published under this title) to two letters written by James Naylor. To which is now added several other papers written since by the same hand (whereof one is intituled, The secret shootings of the wicked reproved.) With a reply thereunto, as also to the rest respectively. By J.J. Published at the request of some, for the satisfaction of others: and tendred to the serious perusall of the impartiall and un-prejudic'd reader*, (Printed by J. Macock, 1655) J78B (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Hosannah to the Son of David: or A testimony to the Lord's Christ. Offering it self, indifferently, to all persons; though more especially intended for the people, who pass under the name of Quakers. Wherein not so much the detecting of their persons, as the reclaiming the tender-hearted among them from the error of their way, is modestly endevoured, by a sober and moderate discourse, touching the Light and law in every man; referring to what is held forth by them in their several books and papers, herein examined and discussed. By a lover of truth and peace,* (Printed byWilliam Godbid, 2 November 1657) J78 (Wing 2nd ed.)

James, Marmaduke*, The best fee-simple set forth in a sermon at St Peters in Cornhil, before the gentlemen and citizens born in the county of Nottingham, the 18. day of February, 1657. Being the day of their publique feast,* (Printed by J.M. for J. Martin, J. Allestry, T. Dicas, and sold at their shop at the signe of the Bell, in St Paul's Churchyard, 29 September 1658) J432 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Jenkyn, William, 1613-1685. *A sleeping sicknes the distemper of the times: as it was discovered in its curse and cure. In a sermon preached before the Right Honourable the House of Peeres in the Abby-Church at Westminster upon the 27th of January, the day appointed for their solemne and publicke humiliation*, (Printed by W. Wilson, for Christopher Meredith at the Crane in Pauls Church-yard, 1647) J654 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Johnson, Edward, *A History of New-England*, (Printed by Nath: Brooke at the Angel in Corn-hill, 29 November 1653) J771 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Jones, Sarah, *To Sions louers, being a golden egge to avoid infection, or, A short step into the doctrine of laying on of hands to provoke such as have time, hart, and parts to prosecute, resting upon the promise the tongue of the stutterers shall speake plaine, and out the mouthes of babes, Jehovah shall have praise : looke not to Scottish, nor Dutch, New-England, nor olde, behold the pattern, the Apostles fellowship and so goe up by the tents of the shepheards,* (s.n. 6 November 1644) J990 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Keith, George, *The benefit, advantage and glory of silent meetings,* (s.n. 1670) K144 (Wing)

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—— *Ancient and durable gospel,* (Printed by H.H. and are to be sold by Giles Calvert, living at the sign of the Black-spread Eagle at the west end of Pauls, 31 March 1648) K437 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Unlimited Authority of Christ's Disciples Cleared,* (Printed by J.C., 12 October 1651) K441 (Wing 2nd ed.)

King, Daniel, *A Way to Sion, sought out and found, for Believers to walk in; or, a Treatise, consisting of three parts: a Way to Sion; stumbling blocks removed out of the way; some beams of light,*(Printed by 23 Mar 1650) K490 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A discovery of some troublesome thoughts,* (Printed and are to be sold neer the Temple in Fleet-street, 7 November 1651) K489 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Knollys, Hanserd, *The shining of a flaming-fire in Zion. Or, A clear answer unto 13 exceptions, against the grounds of new baptism; (so called) in Mr Saltmarsh his book intituled, The smoke in the temple,* (Printed by Jane Coe, according to order, 11 February 1646) K725 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Lambe, Thomas, *Truth prevailing against the fiercest opposition, or, An answer to Mr. Iohn Goodwins Water-dipping no firm footing for church communion,* (Printed by G. Dawson, and are to be sold by Francis Smith, 1655) L213 (Wing)

Lane, Edward, 1605-1685. *Look unto Jesus,* (Printed by Thomas Roycroft for the Authour, and are to be sold by Humphrey Tuckey, and by William Taylor 1663) L332 (Wing)

Lawrence, Henry, *Some considerations tending to the Asserting and Vindicating of the use of the Holy Scriptures and Christian Ordinances,* (Printed by M. Symmons, for Hanna Allen, and are to be sold at the Crowne in Popes-Head Ally, 10 May 1649) L669 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Leigh, Edward, *A systeme or body of divinity consisting of ten books,* (Printed by A.M. for William Lee, 1654) L1008 (Wing)

Lewin, John, *The man-child brought forth in us, or, God manifest in flesh*, (Printed by G.C.,1648?) L1835 (Wing)

Ley, John, *Light for Smoke,* (Printed by I.L. for Christopher Meredith, at the signe of the Crane in Pauls Church-yard, 11 April 1646) L1883 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Love, Christopher, *Short and Plain Animadversions on Some Passages in Mr Dell's Sermon first preached before the Honourable House of Commons on Novemb. 25. 1646. But since printed without their order,* (Printed by M. Bell for Iohn Bellamy at the three golden Lions in Cornhill neere the Royall Exchange, 1646) L3174 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Manton, Thomas, *A practical commentary, or An exposition with notes on the Epistle of Jude,* (Printed by John Macock, for Luke Favvne, and are to be sold at his shop at the sign of the Parrot in Pauls Church-yard, 8 November 1652) M528 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Marshall, Charles, *An epistle to the flock of Christ Jesus, (and professors of truth in general amongst us) being to them a tender visitation from the true and living God, and chiefly intended for such as profess the true light,* (s.n. 1672) M740 (Wing)

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—— *On The New Forcers Of Conscience Under The Long Parliament,* (1646) in Milton, John. *Complete Poems*, Vol. IV. The Harvard Classics. (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14)

—— *Considerations touching the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the church,* (Printed by T. Newcombe for L. Chapman at the Crown in Popes-head Alley, August 1659) (Wing 2nd ed.)

Moore, Thomas, *Antidote Against the Spreading Infection of Antichrist,* (Printed by R. Ibbitson for Livewell Chapman, 1655) M2597 (Wing)

—— *A Defence Against the Poyson of Satan's Design,* (Printed by Livewel Chapman, at the Crown in Popes-head-Alley, 1656) M2600 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Mossom, Robert, d. 1679. *The preachers tripartite in three books. The first to raise devotion in divine meditations upon Psalm XXV: the second to administer comfort by conference with the soul, in particular cases of conscience: the third to establish truth and peace, in several sermons agianst the present heresies and schisms,* (Printed by Thomas Newcomb, 1657) M2866 (Wing)

Murton, John, *A discription of what God hath predestinated concerning man in his creation, transgression, & regeneration: as also an answere to Iohn Robinson, touching baptisme*, (s.n. 1620) 6773 (STC 2nd ed.)

Naylor, James, 1617?-1660, *A Discovery of the First Wisdom from Beneath and the Second Wisdom from Above,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, at the Black Spread-Eagle at the West end of Pauls, 25 April 1653) N272 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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—— *A Second Answer to Thomas Moore,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, at the Black-spread-Eagle at the west end of Pauls, 17 February 1656) N314 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Foot yet in the snare: [...] Discovered in an answer to Iohn Toldervy, Matthew Pool, VVilliam Jenkin, John Tombs, John Goodwin, VVilliam Adderley, George Cockain, Thomas Jacomb, and Thomas Brooks, who under a pretence of love to the truth, have gone about to devour it, and cover it with reproach,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, at the Black-Spread-Eagle neer the west end of Pauls, 2 January 1656) N281 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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—— *The Arraignement of Mr Persecution,* (Printed by Martin Claw Clergie i.e. Richard Overton, printer to the reverend Assembly of Divines, and are to be sould at his shop in Toleration Street, at the signe of the Subjects Liberty, right opposite to Persecuting Court , Europe - i.e. London, 8 April, 1645) O620 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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Paterson, John, 1604?-1679. *Post nubila Phoebus, or, A sermon of thanksgiving for the safe and happy returne of our gracious soveraign ... preached in the city of Aberden, upon the XIX [19] day of Iune,* (Printed by James Brown, Aberdene, 1660) P687 (Wing)

Parker, Alexander, 1628-1689, *A Call out of Egypt,* (Printed by Giles Calvert at the Black Spread Eagle neer the west end of Pauls, 19 November 1656) P378 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A discovery of Satan's wiles and his subtile devices in transforming himselfe into the likeness of truth ... also some of the false marks of the false prophets are discovered and the cause of the innocent pleaded against the lyes and slanders lately printed,* (Printed by Thomas Simmons, 1657) P380 (Wing)

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—— *Light or Darkness,* (Printed by John Macock, 22 May 1650) P1177 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Severall Fresh Inward Openings,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, 20 July 1650) P1189 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *An echo from the great deep,* (Printed by John Macock, and are to be sold by Giles Calvert neer the West end of Pauls, 24 November 1650) P1163 (Wing 2nd ed.)

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—— *A Warning of Love from the bowels of Life,* (Printed by Robert Wilson, 1660) P1218 (Wing)

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—— *The Christian-Quaker and his divine testimony vindicated by Scripture, reason, and authorities against the injurious attempts that have been lately made by several adversaries, with manifest design to rendor him odiously inconsistent with Christianity and civil society,* (s.n. 1674) P1266 (Wing)

—— *Preface to A journal or historical account of the life, travels, sufferings, Christian experiences and labour of love in the work of the ministry, of ... George Fox,* (Printed for Thomas Northcott, in George-Yard, in Lombard-Street, 1694) F1854 (Wing)

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Perrinchief, Richard, 1623?-1673. *A discourse of toleration in answer to a late book intitutled A discourse of the religion of England,* (Printed by E.C. for James Collins, 1668) P1593B (Wing)

J.P. [Perrot, John] d. 1671? *An epistle for the most pure amity and unity in the spirit and life of God to all sincere-hearted-souls ... that desire that God's truth and righteousnes in power, may be exalted over all within them and without them (in the whole earth) for ever,* (Printed by Robert Wilson, 1662) P1616 (Wing)

Peter, Hugh, *A Word for the Armie,* (Printed by M. Simmons for Giles Calvert at the black Spread-Eagle at the west end of Pauls, 11 October 1647) P1726 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Good Work for a Good Magistrate,* (Printed by William Du-Gard printer to the Council of State, 17 June 1651) P1706 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Pinnell, Henry, *A Word of Prophesy,* (Printed by George Whittington and Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at the Blew Anchor neare the Royall Exchange in Cornhill, 5 October 1648) P2280 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Prynne, William, *Histrio-mastrix,* (Printed by Edward Allde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes and William Iones for Michael Sparke, and are to be sold at the Blue Bible, in Greene Arbour, in little Old Bayly, 1633) 20464a (STC 2nd ed.)

—— *Independency Examined, Unmasked, and Refuted,* (Printed by F.L. for Michael Sparke Senior, and are to be sold at the Blew-Bible in Green-Arbour, 26 September 1644) P3985 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Faces about. Or, A recrimination charged upon Mr. John Goodwin, in the point of fighting against God, and opposing the way of Christ*, (Printed by Robert Bostock, dwelling at the signe of the Kings head in Pauls Church-Yard, 21 October 1644) P3952 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A fvll reply to Certaine briefe observations and anti-queries on Master Prynnes twelve questions about church-government: together with certaine briefe animadversions on Mr. Iohn Goodwins Theomachia,* (Printed by F.L. for Michael Sparke, Senior, 1644) P3967 (Wing)

—— *Truth triumphing over Falsehood,* (Printed by John Dawson, and are to be sold by Michael Sparke, Senior, 3 December 1644) P4115 (Wing CD-Rom, 1996)

—— *A fresh discovery of some prodigious new wandring-blasing-stars, & firebrands, stiling themselves new-lights,* (Printed by John Macock, for Michael Spark senior, at the sign of the blue Bible in Green Arbour, 24 July 1645) P3963 (Wing CD-Rom, 1996)

—— *The substance of a speech made in the House of Commons 4 December 1648*, (Printed for Michael Spark at ye ... Bible in Greene Arbor. 16490 P4093 (Wing)

—— *A Gospel plea for the lawfulnes & continuance of the ancient setled maintenance and tenthes of the ministers of the Gospel,* (Printed by E. Cotes for Michael Sparke, and are to be sold at the Blue Bible in Green Arbor, 22 September 1653) P3971 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The Quakers unmasked, and clearly detected to be but the spawn of Romish frogs, Jesuites, and Franciscan fryers; sent from Rome to seduce the intoxicated giddy-headed English nation*, (Printed by Edward Thomas in Green Arbour, 19 June 1655) P4046 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A new discovery of some Romish emissaries, Quakers,* (Printed by the author, and are to be sold by Edward Thomas in Green-Arbor, 11 September 1656) P4017 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The remainder, or second part of a Gospel plea,* (Printed by T. Childe and L. Parry for Edward Thomas, 1659) P4050 (Wing)

—— *A true and perfect narrative of what was acted, spoken by Mr. Prynne, other formerly and freshly secluded members, the army-officers, and some now sitting in the lobby, house, elsewhere, the 7th. and 9th. of May last,* (Printed by Edw. Thomas, 1659) P4112 (Wing)

Purnell, Robert, d. 1666. *The vvay to heaven discovered: and, the stumbling-blocks (cast therein by the world, flesh, and devill) removed,* (Printed by William Ballard of Bristol, and are sold by J. Grismond in Ivie-lane, 20 July 1653) P4243 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Read, Robert, *The Fiery Change,* (Printed by the author, and are to be sold by Giles Calvert, at the Black Spread-Eagle at the west end of Pauls, and by Richard Moone, at the Seven Stars in Pauls Church-yard, neer the great North door, 3 January 1656) R440 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Reynolds, Edward, *A seasonable exhortation of sundry ministers in London to the people of their respective congregations,* (Printed by E.M. for Samuel Gellibrand at the golden Ball in Pauls Church-yard; and Robert Gibbs at the golden Ball in Chancery lane, 23 January 1660) R1276 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Rich, Robert, *Love without Dissimulation,* (s.n. 1667) R1361 (Wing)

Richardson, Samuel, *Justification by Christ Alone,* (Printed by M.S. & are to be sould by Hannah Allen at the signe of the Crowne in Popes-head-Alley. And George Whittington at the Anchor neere the Royall-Exchange, 17 June 1647) R1408 (Wing 2nd ed.)

A.R., (Rigge, Ambrose) *A tender exhortation to friends at Bristol,* (s.n. 1700) R3 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Robinson, Ralph, *Safe conduct, or The saints guidance to glory,* (Printed by R.I. for Stephen Bowtell at the signe of the Bible in Popes-head Alley, 12 January 1655) R1711 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Rogers, John, 1627-1665? *Ohel or Beth-shemesh A tabernacle for the sun, or, Irenicum evangelicum: an idea of church-discipline in the theorick and practick parts, which come forth first into the world as bridegroom and bride,* (Printed by R.I. and G. and H. Eversden, 7 November 1653) R1813 (Wing)

—— *Diapoliteia. A Christian concertation with Mr. Prin, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Harrington, for the true cause of the Commonvvealth. Or, An answer to Mr. Prin's (perditory) anatomy of the Republick, and his true and perfect narrative, &c. To Mr. Baxter's (purgatory) pills for the Army,* (Printed by Livewel Chapman, at the Crown in Popes-Head-Alley, 20 September 1659) R1806 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Rogers, Nehemiah, 1593-1660. *The fast friend: or A friend at mid-night,* (Printed by Geo. Sawbridge, at the Bible, on Ludgate-Hill, 3 September 1658) R1822 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Ross, Alexander, *The Round-Head Uncovered … With a distinction between the Round-heads, and such as Papists call Puritans,* (Printed by George Lindsey, 27 July 1642) R2007 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Englands Threnodie. Or A briefe and homely discoverie of some jealousies and grievances, under which the kingdom at present groaneth,* (Printed by John Macock, 10 March 1648) R1951 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Pansebeia: or, A view of all religions in the world with the several church-governments, from the Creation, to these times. Together with a discovery of all known heresies, in all ages and places, throughout Asia, Africa, America, and Europe,* (Printed by James Young, for John Saywell, and are to be sold at his shop, at the sign of the Grey-hound in Little Britain, without Aldersgate, 7 June 1653) R1971 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Rous, Francis, *Treatises and Meditations,* (Printed by Robert White, and are to be sold by J. Wright, 1657) R2030 (Wing)

Rutherford, Samuel, *Christ dying and drawing sinners to himself,* (Printed by J.D. for Andrew Crooke, 1647) R2373 (Wing)

—— *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist. Opening the Secrets of Familisme and Antinomianisme in the Antichristian Doctrine of Saltmarsh and William Dell the Present Preachers of the Army Now in England, and of Robert Town, Tob. Crisp, H. Denne, Eaton and Others,* (Printed by J.D. & R.I. for Andrew Crooke, and are to be sold at his shop at the Green-Dragon in Pauls Church-yard, November 1647) R2394 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A free disputation against pretended liberty of conscience tending to resolve doubts moved by Mr. John Goodwin, John Baptist, Dr. Jer. Taylor, the Belgick Arminians, Socinians, and other authors contending for lawlesse liberty, or licentious toleration of sects and heresies,* (Printed by R.I. for Andrew Crook, and are to be sold at his shop, at the signe of the Green Dragon in St. Pauls Church-yard, 6 August 1649) R2379 (Wing 2nd ed.)

——— A survey of the Survey of that summe of church-discipline penned by Mr. Thomas Hooker … wherein the way of the churches of N. England is now re-examined, (Printed by J.G. for Andr. Crook, 1658) R2395 (Wing)

Salmon, Joseph, *Antichrist in Man,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, 1648) S414 (Wing)

Salter, Christopher, *Sal Scyllâ: or, A letter written from Scilly to Mr John Goodwin, minister of the gospel in London*, (Printed by J.M. for Henry Cripps, and Lodowick Lloyd, and are to be sold at their shop in Popes-head Alley, 22 June 1653) S462 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Saltmarsh, John, *Examinations, or a Discovery of Some Dangerous Positions,* (Printed by Lawrence Blaiklock, and are to bee sold at the Sugar loafe near Temple Barre, 26 July 1643)

——— Dawnings of Light, (Printed by R.W. and are to be sold by G. Calvert, at the Black-spred-Eagle neer Pauls, 4 January 1644) S476A (Wing 2nd ed.)

——— A new Quaere, (Printed by G. Calvert, at the black Spread-Eagle at the west-end of Pauls, 30 September 1645) S491 (Wing 2nd ed.)

——— The opening of Master Prynnes New Book, (Printed by G. Calvert, at the signe of the Black Spred-Eagle, at the West-End of S. Pauls, 22 October 1645) S493 (Wing 2nd ed.)

——— Free-grace or the Flowing of Christs Blood Freely to Sinners, (Printed by Giles Calvert, dwelling at the black Spred-Eagle at the West-end of Pauls, 30 December, 1645) S484 (Wing 2nd ed.)

——— Smoke in the Temple, (Printed by Ruth Raworth for G. Calvert, at the signe of the Black Spread-Eagle at the west-end of Pauls, 16 January 1646) S498 (Wing 2nd ed.)

——— Groanes for Liberty, (Printed by Giles Calvert, at the black spread-Eagle at the west end of Pauls, 10 March 1646) S489 (Wing 2nd ed.)

——— An end of one controversie, (Printed by Ruth Raworth for G. Calvert, at the signe of the Black Spread-Eagle at the west-end of Paul, 17 April 1646) S479 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Reasons for Unitie, Peace and Love,* [A reply to "A mistake, or misconstruction, removed" by Thomas Gataker (Wing G323); "A plea for congregationall government" by Richard Baxter (Wing B1347); the second part of "Gangræna" by Thomas Edwards (Wing E234); and "An after-reckoning with Mr. Saltmarsh" by L.M., i.e. John Ley (Wing L1870)], (Printed by G. Calvert, at the Black Spread-Eagle at the west-end of Pauls, 26 May 1646) S496A (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *Sparkles of Glory,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at the Black-spred-Eagle, at the West end of Pauls, 27 May 1647) S504 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Letter from the Army,* (Printed by Giles Calvert at the black Spread-Eagle at the West end of Pauls Church, 10 June 1647) S490 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Wonderful Predictions,* (Printed by by Robert Ibbitson, in Smithfield, neer the Queenes-head Tavern, 1648) S507 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *(Englands friend raised from the grave. Giving seasonable advice to the Lord Generall, Lievtenant-Generall, and the Councell of Warre. Being the true copies of three letters*, (Printed by Giles Calvert, at the black Spread-Eagle at the west end of Pauls, 31 July 1649) S480 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Sanderson, Robert, 1587-1663. *Fourteen sermons heretofore preached,* (Printed by R.N. for Henry Seile, 1657) S605 (Wing)

Scotland Parliament*, The answer of the Commissioners of the kingdome of Scotland, to both Houses of Parliament, upon the new propositions of peace, and the foure bills to be sent to his Majestie,* (Printed by Evan Tyler, printer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie, Edinburgh, 17 December 1647) S1180A (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

Sedgwick, William, *Mr William Sedgwick's letter to his Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax,* (s.n. 28 December 1648) S2387 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Sonne of Manne,* (Printed by H. for Giles Calvert, 1648) S2390 (Wing)

—— *Animadversions upon a Book Entitled Inquisition for the Blood of our Late Sovereign,* (Printed by the author, 1661) S2382 (Wing)

Selden, John, *Table Talk,* (ed.) R. Milward, 1689; (ed.) S. H. Reynolds. (Oxford, 1892)

Sheppard, William, *Sincerity and hypocricy,* (Printed by A. Lichfield, printer to the University, for Rob. Blagrave, Oxford, April 1658) S3210 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Shepard, Thomas, (1605-1649) *Wine for Gospel wantons,* (s.n. 1668) S3150 (Wing)

Sherlock, Richard, *The Quakers Wilde Questions…with brief answers thereunto,* (Printed by E. Cotes for R. Royston at the Angel in Ivie-Lane, 6 November 1655) S3255 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Sibbes, Richard, *Works*, (ed.). Grosart, A. B., (7 Vols. Edinburgh, 1862-4)

Sion College Enclave, *A testimony to the trueth of Jesus Christ, and to our Solemn League and Covenant; as also against the errors, heresies and blasphemies of these times, and the toleration of them. Wherein is inserted a catalogue of divers of the said errors, &c. All of them being collected out of their authors own books alleged in the margin, and laid down in their own words … Subscribed by the ministers of Christ within the province of London,* (Printed by A.M. for Tho. Underhill at the Bible in Woodstreet, 14 December 1647) T823 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Skipp, Edmund, *The worlds wonder, or the Quakers blazing starr: with an astronomical judgment given upon the same, from 2 Cor. 11.13, 14, 15. Proving them to be altogether deluded by Satan, both in their judgments and walkings,* (Printed by Henry Hills, and are to be sold at the sign of Sir John Oldcastle near Py-corner, 28 February 1655) S3949 (Wing 2nd ed.)

J[ohn] S[pilsberie], *A treatise concerning the lawful subject of baptisme* (s.n. 1643) S4976 (Wing)

Spilsberie, John, *Gods Ordinance, The Saints Priviledge,* (Printed by M. Simmons for Benjamin Allen, and are to be sold at his shop at the Crowne in Popes-head-Alley, 4 May 1646) S4975 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Spittlehouse, John. *Rome ruin'd by VVhite Hall, or, The papall crown demolisht: containing a confutation of the three degrees of popery, viz. papacy, prelacy, and presbitery,* (Printed by by

Thomas Paine, and are to be sold at his house in Goold sic Smiths Alley in Redcrosse Street, 31 December 1649) S5013 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Sprigge, Joshua, *A Testimony to Approaching Glory,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, at the Black Spread-Eagle at the west end of Pauls, near Ludgate, 1649) S5077 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A Further Testimony to the Glory that is near,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, 1649) S5074 (Wing)

Squire, Robert, *The Arraignement and Condemnation of the Chief Heresies of These Times which may serve as an Answer to a late scandalous and blasphemous Libell: intituled The Arraignment of Mr Persecution,* (Printed for the benefit of the Church of Christ, 1645) S5101aA (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Stalham, John, *Vindiciae redemptionis. In the fanning and sifting of Samuel Oates his exposition upon Mat. 13. 44. With a faithfull search after our Lords meaning in his two parables of the treasure and the pearl. … Where in the former part, universal redemption is discovered to be a particular errour… And in the later part, Christ the peculiar treasure and pearl of Gods elect is laid as the sole foundation*, (Printed by A.M. for Christopher Meredith, at the sign of the Crane in Pauls Church-yard, 17 April 1647) S5187 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Stalham, John, *The Reviler Rebuked,* (Printed by Henry Hills and John Field, printers to His Highness, 6 June 1657) S5186 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Stillingfleet, Edward, 1635-1699. *An answer to several late treatises, occasioned by a book entituled A discourse concerning the idolatry practised in the Church of Rome, and the hazard of salvation in the communion of it,* (Printed by R.W. for Henry Mortlock 1673) S5559 (Wing)

Stooks, Richard, *Truths champion an occasionall word to the reader,* (Printed for Martha Whittington, 1651) S5740B (Wing)

—— *A Second Champion, or, Companion to Truth,* (Printed by George Whittington at the Blew Anchor in Cornhill, 1650) S5740cA (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

Stubbe, Henry, *Malice Rebuked, or a Character of Mr. Richard Baxters Abilities: and a Vindication of the Honourable Sr. Henry Vane from His Aspersions in His Key for Catholics,* (s.n. 1659) S6060 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Stuckley, Lewis, 1621/2-1687, *A gospel-glasse, representing the miscarriages of English professors,* (Printed by Randolph Tayler, and are to be sold at the three Crowns in Little-Brittain, 1667) S6088A (Wing CD-ROM, 1996)

Taylor, John, 1580-1653. *The discovery of a swarme of seperatists, or, a leathersellers sermon… Shewing likewise how … the constable scattered their nest, and of the great tumult in the street,* (Printed for John Greensmith, 1641) D1637A (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

—— *A Swarme of Sectaries and Schismatiques,* (s.n. Printed luckily, and may be read unhappily, betwixt hawke and buzzard, 1641) T514 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Crop-eare curried, or, Tom Nash his ghost)… a little revived since the 30 yeare of late Qu Elizbeths Reigne, when Martin Marprelate was as mad as any of his Tub-men are now.,* (Printed by L. Lichfield Oxford, 17 February 1645) T446 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Taylor, Thomas, 1618-1682, *Truth's Innocency,* (Printed and sold by T. Sowle, 1697) T591 (Wing)

Tillam, Thomas. *The fourth principle of Christian religion,* (Printed by E.C. for Henry Eversden, and are to be sold by William Hucheson of Durham, 25 July 1655) T1165 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Toldervy, John, *The foot out of the snare. […]Being a brief declaration of his entrance into that sect, called (by the name of) Quakers. With a short discourse relating what judgment he was learned in, by the ministry of those people,* (Printed by J.C. for Tho. Brewster, at the Three Bibles, neer the west-end of Pauls, 24 December 1655) T1767 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The snare broken: or light discovering darknesse. Being an answer to a book intituled, Foot yet in the snare; published by James Naylor,* (Printed by N. Brooks, and are to be sold at the Angel in Cornhil, and at the three Bibles neer the West end of Pauls, 31 January 1656) T1770 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Tombes, John, 1603?-1676, *Anti-paedobaptism, or, The third part being a full review of the dispute concerning infant baptism,* (Printed by H. Hils, and are to be sold by H. Crips, and L. Lloyd, in Popes-head Alley, 28 November 1652) T1798 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Saints no smiters, or, Smiting civil powers not the work of saints being a treatise, shewing the doctrine and atempts of Quinto-Monarchians, or, Fifth-Monarchy-Men about smiting powers, to be damnable and antichristian,* (Printed by R.D. for Henry Eversden, 1664) T1816 (Wing)

—— *Theodulia, or, A just defence of hearing the sermons and other teaching of the present ministers of England against a book unjustly entituled (in Greek) A Christian testimony against them that serve the image of the beast, (in English) A Christian and sober testimony against sinful complyance, wherein the unlawfulness of hearing the present ministers of England is pretended to be clearly demonstrated by an author termed by himself Christophilus Antichristomachus,* (Printed by E. Cotes for Henry Eversden, n.d. 1667) T1822 (Wing)

Trapp, John, 1601-1669. *A commentary or exposition upon these following books of holy Scripture Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel & Daniel,* (Printed by Robert White, for Nevil Simmons ,1660): T2044 (Wing)

Underhill, Thomas, *Broke Loose: or An history of the Quakers both old and new.* (Printed by Simon Miller at the Starre in St. Paul's Church-yard, 13 November 1659) U43 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Vane, Henry, Speech in the House of Commons … against episcopall-government June 11, 1641. (Printed by Francis Constable, 1641) V76 (Wing)

—— *The retired mans meditations, or, The mysterie and power of godliness.* (Printed by Robert White, 1655) V75A (Wing)

—— *A healing question propounded and resolved upon occasion of the late publique and seasonable call to humiliation*. (Printed by T. Brewster, 1656) V68 (Wing)

—— *An Epistle General, to the Mystical Body of Christ on Earth* (s.n. 1662) V67 (Wing 2nd ed., 1994)

Vicars, John, *The schismatick sifted. Or, The picture of Independents, freshly and fairly washt-over again,* (Printed by Nathanael Webb, and William Grantham, at the Grey-hound in Pauls Church-yard, 22 June 1646) V326 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Vincent, Thomas, 1634-1678. *God's terrible voice in the city,* (s.n. 1667) V440 (Wing)

Vines, Richard, *Sermons preached upon several publike and eminent occasions,* (Printed by Abel Roper, 1656) V569 (Wing)

—— *A Treatise Of The Right Institution, Administration, and Receiving of the Sacrament Of The Lords-Supper,* (Printed by A.M. for Thomas Underhill at the Anchor and Bible in Pauls Church-yard, near the little north-door, 20 November 1656) V572 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Walker, George, *A sermon preached before the honourable House of Commons at their late solemne monethly fast Januarie 29th, 1644 wherein these foure necessary considerations are plainly proved and demonstrated out of the holy Scriptures,* (Printed by T. B. for Nathaniel Webb, and are to be sold in Pauls Church-yard, 29 Jan 1645) W364 (Wing)

Walwyn, William*,* (attrib.) *The Compassionate Samaritan,* (s.n. 5 January, 1644) W681A (Wing)

—— *A Help to the Right Understanding of a Discourse Concerning Independency,* (s.n. 6 February 1645) W683B (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *A Whisper in the Eare of Mr Thomas Edwards,* (Printed according to order, by Thomas Paine, for VVilliam Ley, at Paules-Chaine, 13 March 1645) W694 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Walwyn's just defence against the aspertions cast upon him in a late un-Christian pamphlet entituled Walwyns wiles,* (Printed by H. Hils for W. Larnar, 1649) W685 (Wing)

—— *The vanitie of the present churches, and vncertainty of their preaching, discovered. Wherein the pretended immediate teaching of the spirit, is denied, and the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures teaching, is maintained.* (Printed by J. Clows, and are to be sold in Cornhill, and Popes-Head-Alley, 23 February 1649) W693A (Wing 2nd ed.)

Ward, Nathaniel, *The simple cobler of Aggawamm in America*, (Printed by J.D. & R.I. for Stephen Bowtell, 1647) W788 (Wing)

Waring, Robert, *A Publicke conference betwixt the six Presbyterian Ministers and some Independent commanders,* (s.n. 26 November 1646) W868 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Watson, Richard, *A Sermon Touching Schism,* (Printed by Roger Daniel, Printer to the Universitie of Cambridge. And are to be sold by William Graves, book-seller in the Regent-walk. Cambridge, 25 November 1642) W1095 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Webbe, Thomas, *Mr Edwards Pen no slander,* (Printed by Jane Coe, and are to be sold by Henry Overton, at his shop in Popes-Head Alley, 21 May 1646) W1206 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Webster, John, 1610-1682, *The saints guide, or, Christ the rule, and ruler of saints,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, at the Black-spred-Eagle, at the West-end of Pauls, 17 August 1653) W1212 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The Picture of Mercurius Politicus,* (Printed by T. Webster and R. Hammond, 25 October 1653) W1211 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *Academarium Examen,* (Printed by Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at the sign of the Black-spread-Eagle at the West-end of Pauls, 19 December 1653) W1209 (Wing 2nd ed.)

—— *The Vail of the Covering; sermon preached at All Hallows, Lombard St* (June 23rd 1653) and *The Saints Perfect Freedom* (4 July 1654) both in *The Judgement Set and the Bookes Opened,* (Printed by R. Hartford at the Bible and States-Arms in little Brittain; and N. Brooks, at the Angel in Cornhil, 24 July 1654) W1210 (Wing 2nd ed.)

Welch, John, *Popery anatomized,* (Printed by Robert Sanders, Glasgow, 1672) W1312 (Wing) [Originally published in Edinburgh, 1602, under title: A reply against Mr. Gilbert Browne, priest.]

Weld, Thomas, *Catalogue of such erroneous opinions as were found to have been brought into New England, and spread underhand there as they were condemned by an Assembly of the Churches at New Town, Aug. 30 1637* in *A short story of the rise, reign, and ruin of the antinomians familists &*

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