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RICHARD FARNWORTH, SAMUEL FISHER, AND THE  
AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AMONG EARLY QUAKERS

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ABSTRACT

This essay traces the development of Quaker doctrines of Scriptural authority, concentrating on the years between 1653 and 1662. Utilizing controversies conducted by Richard Farnworth and Samuel Fisher with a series of non-Quaker critics, this study focuses on four areas: the possible status of Quaker epistles as revelation; whether the Bible, for Quakers, was human words, or God's words, or both; Quaker views of the Scriptural canon; and Quaker views of the propriety of using the Bible to settle religious controversies. This essay finds that defenders of Quaker views of Scripture steadily were pressed away from their original radical, spiritualist stances on Scriptural authority, toward a more orthodox, ecumenical, Puritan-oriented construction of that issue.

KEYWORDS

Richard Farnworth, Samuel Fisher, Scriptural authority, Scriptural canon, epistles, Westminster Confession of Faith.

CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF THE AUTHORITY OF  
SCRIPTURE AMONG QUAKERS

For most Quakers in the world, the study of Scripture remains a spiritual discipline of great importance. Among unprogrammed Friends in North America, Bible study remains a vital part of many Yearly Meeting programs and some Monthly Meeting programs, and a large umbrella group, Friends General Conference, regularly schedules Bible study half hours during its annual Gatherings. In the American liberal unprogrammed Friends setting, questions of Scriptural authority tend to be held loosely,<sup>1</sup> with questions from one's own spiritual experience often coming to the forefront, and participants encouraged to share problems they may have with the Scriptural passage under discussion.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Conservative

Friends have a practice of setting aside a time to read communally Scripture passages, without comment, out of the silence.<sup>3</sup> Among Friends in the pastoral tradition, there has often been contention as to the way Scripture should be viewed, with Barclay quoted, or misquoted,<sup>4</sup> on both sides of the dispute. In a 2013 separation in Indiana Yearly Meeting, Scriptural authority was named by many as a major issue.<sup>5</sup> In Friends' churches formed by missionaries from the North Atlantic world over the past century and a half, there is often limited knowledge of early Quaker teachings on such issues as Scriptural authority. This may be because of language barriers, at least in part. A rather straightforward explication of Robert Barclay's teachings on the Scriptures elicited some resistance at a recent class session of the Cuban Quaker Institute for Peace. It was noted that missionaries to Cuba had not taught the entirety of Barclay's teachings on Scripture. After this class session, one Cuban Quaker remarked, 'We must consider now what to do with these heretical teachings of great authority'.<sup>6</sup>

I tremble and quake to add to the already considerable literature on the authority and use of Christian Scriptures among Quakers. The literature on the subject is vast and of excellent quality.<sup>7</sup> But what if we expanded our reading of Quaker theological texts beyond the writings of Barclay and George Fox? How would our understanding of early Quaker views of such matters as Scriptural authority have to change? While there has already been some important work along these lines,<sup>8</sup> 'Ben' Pink Dandelion and I are further exploring this premise in a manuscript that we have recently submitted for publication to Cambridge University Press. Sixteen other eminent Quaker scholars have joined us in an examination of the diverse Quaker theologians of the seventeenth century, both men and women. We thus hope to expand the canon of Quaker theology. Fox and Barclay both have their chapters, but we hope to bring the attention of historians and Quakers to other notable contributors.<sup>9</sup> This essay will focus on the contributions of two unsung heroes of early Quakerism, Richard Farnworth and Samuel Fisher.

#### RICHARD FARNWORTH

The issue of the authority of Scripture was one that Quakers faced from their earliest years. 'The letter which thou callest the Bible, or written word, ... is natural and carnall', wrote Richard Hubberthorne in 1654.<sup>10</sup> According to Puritan auditors, Hubberthorne was only one of many Quakers who called the Scriptures 'carnal'.<sup>11</sup> Puritan ministers, raised on the Westminster Confession, which testified to Christians' 'high and reverent esteem of the holy Scripture' as 'the Word of God',<sup>12</sup> objected vociferously to what they saw as Quaker expressions of disrespect for the Scriptures. When George Fox and James Nayler were challenged in this fashion by eminent residents of Lancaster in 1652, Nayler provided a response which emphasized Quakers' respect for Scriptures with their disquiet over how they were used. The Scriptures, said Nayler, 'are a true Declaration of that word which was in them that spoke them forth', and 'they were given forth by the Holy Ghost, without adding or diminishing'. On the other hand, Nayler disapproved of

paid ministry by men who were 'ignorant of the Mystery and deny all perfection', adding the crucial point that 'none can rightly understand the Scriptures, but they who read them with the same spirit that gave them forth'.<sup>13</sup>

In the first half of the 1650s, the indefatigable publisher Richard Farnworth handled much of the debate about Quaker views of Scripture. Farnworth is a relatively overlooked figure in the earliest history of Quakerism, comparable to Fox, Nayler, and Margaret Fell in his significance as a Quaker leader prior to 1656, and also for a time in the 1660s. Farnworth, a native of South Yorkshire's Tickhill, a center of Royalist resistance until the 1644 surrender of its garrison,<sup>14</sup> had a religious awakening in about 1643, when he was sixteen. Ridiculed as a Puritan and a roundhead,<sup>15</sup> he appears to have had some education; for example, later, when addressing issues legal issues relating to Quaker persecution, he quoted knowledgeably from basic law books.<sup>16</sup> At first he found comfort in sermon and formal prayer, but later he renounced these, and he was consequently dismissed by his employer, Thomas Lord of Brampton.<sup>17</sup> He adopted a more figurative reading of Scripture, holding, for example, that 'Solomon's Temple was a mere figure for the bodies of the Saints in whom the Holy Ghost dwelled'.<sup>18</sup> Like Fox, Farnworth had several discouraging encounters with clergy. The clergy classified Farnworth with the 'tub preachers, sectaries, and independents'.<sup>19</sup> But Farnworth found no rest until he 'left off for going to the Steeplehouse', and instead he found peace and joy in 'waiting upon the Lord, in the light of the Spirit of truth'.<sup>20</sup> It seems likely that Farnworth was corresponding with Fox while the latter was imprisoned in Darby.<sup>21</sup> Fox records in his *Journal* that Farnworth was convinced when Fox visited Farnworth in Yorkshire in 1651, but that is a misleading statement, because Farnworth had strong beliefs similar to Quakers long before meeting Fox.<sup>22</sup> Farnworth was convinced along with Thomas Aldam, the nephew of his former master Thomas Lord, and many others, and this proto-Quaker-meeting of Seekers was ready to spring into action with its discovery of the Quaker movement.

Farnworth accompanied Fox in the climb up Pendle Hill in which Fox saw a 'great people to be gathered',<sup>23</sup> and Farnworth, taking full part in the evangelization of 1652 and 1653, was elated by the spiritual power of the Quaker movement in those years. He wrote,

I have gone through much...but I found the Lord exceedingly large to me... At Stanley...the power of the Lord was much manifested, very many were wrought on... [At Wakefield] I was drawn forth much to speak unto [the people], and they wondered at the work of the Lord...they were all silent, and were very attentive to hear me a long time... But at night...the devil did rage amongst them...so that they stoned us, stones flew as fast as bullets in a battle; but the Lord did carry every one above it, that not so much as one received any harm... [T]he world is all on a fire... I hear that there are warrants out against me for blasphemy. Ah! Dear hearts, be valiant; the Lord rides on triumphantly.

It would appear that most of the tracts published by Quakers in 1653, the first year of substantial Quaker publishing, came about because of the work of Aldam and Farnworth. Farnworth himself was the author or co-author of the majority of tracts published in 1653.

## ARE QUAKER EPISTLES REVELATION?

Turning to Farnworth's debate tracts, one of the first tracts he took on was a 1653 work entitled, *A Faithful Discovery of a treacherous Design of Mystical Antichrist Displaying Christs Banners, but attempting to lay waste Scriptures, Churches, Christ, Faith, Hope, &c. and establish Paganism in England*. It was written by some Yorkshire ministers in the vicinity of Beverley, John Pomroy, Paul Glissen, and Joseph Kellet. Its 'advertisement to the reader' was provided by more prominent men, Fifth Monarchists from the South of England, Christopher Feake, John Simpson, and George Cokayn. Feake *et al.* rejoiced that the Yorkshire ministers had 'discovered some of the serpentine errors, and delusive misteries of the Familists and Quakers'.<sup>24</sup> At that time, the Fifth Monarchists, well represented in the Nominated (or Barebone's) Parliament, were preparing legislative measures to abolish tithes,<sup>25</sup> a cause that, ironically, Quakers shared.<sup>26</sup>

For our purposes, the most interesting issue raised by Pomroy and company was: 'that they [the Quakers] intend to magnify their writings and Epistles above or into an equality unto the Holy Scriptures seems very probable, in that they put their papers very diligently into one another hands, but not so the Scriptures, and do some of them say, That it is alike to take a sentence out of their letters and preach from it, as to take a sentence out of Pauls epistles'.<sup>27</sup> Francis Higginson, a pastor near Kendal in the North of England, similarly observed of the 1652 Quakers that 'sometimes they only read the Epistles of Fox and Nayler which according to their principles are (to them) of as great authority as the Epistles of Peter and Paul'.<sup>28</sup>

The practice here described is well attested to in the historical literature. Hugh Barbour and Arthur Roberts, for example, note that letters between Friends, lovingly preserved and often transcribed and copied, 'formed the bridge from personal counsel to group discipline' and that, over time, Friends' epistles 'took increasingly mandatory form and became books of discipline'.<sup>29</sup> Given the propensity of early Quakers to place the revelations received by them on the same plane as the revelations granted to apostles and prophets and knowable through Christian Scriptures, the existence of a faith and practice as described by Pomroy and others would not seem at all far-fetched.

Farnworth's reply (in his 1654 book, *Light risen out of darkness now in these latter days*) took on an accusatory tone, without denying the charge:

Here you have shewed forth that you are guided by a lying spirit, which makes it good that you are Prophets of the deceits of your own hearts, and that you are taught to lie by the Devil...in saying that we magnifie our writings above the Scriptures. *But that which is written from the same spirit that gave forth the Scriptures, do witness with their spirits that spoke them forth, and have union together...* Nothing may stand in the day of the Lords power, but that which is of his own bringing forth, where those that speak may speak as the Oracle of God, with power and boldness, from the spirit of truth, as they receive their words from the Lord, and not from other mens writings, and gathered up knowledge and imagination, for carnal money and carnal ends ...[you] who make no other use of the Scriptures but to colour over your deceits.<sup>30</sup>

Farnworth implied that Quaker epistles were not superior to the Scriptures, but he was vague as to whether they were equal.<sup>31</sup> He expended many words in reply to the charge without clearly explaining what authority the letters from Fox, Fell, Nayler—or himself—would have to others within the Quakers' movement. By the end of the lengthy passage, he was deflecting the charge rather than answering it. That is, he accused his opponents of being the ones who use other people's writings in impermissible and corrupt ways, thus skirting the question of the status of Quakers' epistles in the eyes of their movement as a whole.

To my knowledge, Quaker theologians have never answered this question in a clear-cut fashion. Perhaps they cannot. To the extent that ecumenical concerns were important (and they were unimportant in the 1650s), humility would have prompted Quakers to forbear professing equality between their own writings and the Christian Scriptures that belong to all Christians. Yet the logic of prophecy and revelation should have caused Quaker theologians to entertain seriously the possibility that their epistles and significant writings are the equal of the Christian Scriptures. It may be the case that those revelations that possess the priority of time, and hence have garnered the widest acceptance among Christians, are not always greater in significance than newer and fresher revelations.

#### MEN'S WORDS, OR GOD'S WORDS, OR BOTH?

Farnworth and Quakers had a variety of succinct ways of expressing the primacy of revelation through the Light within, as opposed to the secondary status of revelation through Scriptures. In 1653, Farnworth held, in common with many Quaker contemporaries, that the Scriptures are not the Word of God. (In Reading, Puritan authorities apparently attempted to criminalize such assertions by 1655, and may have imprisoned Quaker Thomas Speed for such heresy. Christopher Fowler was the main perpetrator of the accusations of Quakers for heresy for denying the Bible to be the 'Word of God'. Ironically, Samuel Fisher later reported making Fowler back down from any contention that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and to admit that he had been mistaken.<sup>32</sup>) For Farnworth and other Friends, the Scriptures are only the Letter, unless read by inspired prophets, and only Christ can be the Word of God.<sup>33</sup> The later Quaker formulation that the Scriptures are the words of God was not then to be found in Farnworth's writings.<sup>34</sup>

This powerful prophetic impulse of early Quakers, manifesting in Farnworth, had profound consequences for the ways that Scriptures were used in their communities. An ecstatic form of Scriptural use organized by image clusters and drawing freely on Scriptural passages from both Testaments was not uncommon.<sup>35</sup> Jane Donawerth has shown that Quakers like Margaret Fell memorized large parts of Scripture for use in their prophecies, sometimes drawing on multiple translations in so doing,<sup>36</sup> and it is likely that Farnworth did the same. While Quakers were conscientiously opposed to the making or use of commentaries and the laborious exegesis of Puritan ministers,<sup>37</sup> an implicit doctrinal consistency still

emerges from most of the Quaker writing of the period. Spiritualist, antiformalist, universalist, mystical, and perfectionist themes were frequently evident in their Scriptural interpretation;<sup>38</sup> other themes, such as apocalypticism, were strongly evident at some times in early Quakers' use of Scriptures, but diminished or absent at other times.<sup>39</sup>

A Quaker like Farnworth might allude to 2 Cor. 3:6, proclaiming oneself to be a minister of the Spirit, not of the letter, because the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Thus, addressing a Baptist, Farnworth asserted, 'thy nakedness is bare, thy covers will not hide thee, to say the Letter and the Spirit is inseparable: God is a Spirit, but God is not the Letter, neither is the Letter Christ; and the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but the Letter is neither the Gospel nor the power, but declareth of it'. To state that 'the Letter and the Spirit are one, and inseparable' is 'as if the Spirit of God were lockt up and confined in the Letter, which is death, and if so, all the world would have the Spirit, and buy and sell it, if it were in the Letter, and at an easie rate, they might buy it for three or four shillings, for so may they buy the Letter, but the Spirit cannot be bought'.<sup>40</sup>

In 1655, John Stalham, a Puritan minister, issued a blistering attack against Quaker views of the Scriptures from his temporary post in Edinburgh.<sup>41</sup> Rosemary Moore has described Stalham's work as 'the most careful discussion of Quaker theology at this time'.<sup>42</sup> Unlike Pomroy, Stalham implied that the Quaker views of Scriptures were the most objectionable, vulnerable, and significant aspect of their theology by covering that matter first and intensively, in accordance with the Westminster Confession's treatment of the subject, before moving on to explore other theological differences.

In effect, Quakers appropriated Puritan theological categories, but inverted them, as Stalham complained. He supposed that both he and Farnworth would use 'letter' to refer to the whole of Scripture. But then he objected that

the letter or Scripture is set by R.F....in such opposition to the Spirit, as if the Spirit disowned it after he hath caused it to be written, & no way accompanieth with his power... [H]e writes, as if he would have none read the Letter of Scriptures, in faith of a blessing by them, but to think, when they are reading of them, they are cracking a hollow shell, that hath no kernel in it, or drinking a draught of dilute wine, that hath no spirits in it.<sup>43</sup>

Other Puritans, including Baptists, resembled Stalham in that they tended to associate the Spirit and the Letter together, not disassociate them as Farnworth and other Quakers did, and they also registered stout objections to the derisive character of Quakers' references to the Scriptures as 'the letter'.<sup>44</sup>

Stalham was appalled that Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough had published a pamphlet stating that 'the Scripture is other men's words'. This, he asserted, was contrary to what Paul said to Timothy, that Scripture was inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16).<sup>45</sup> What Stalham had done was to lift a few words from one of Burrough's attacks on parish ministers: 'The Teachers of the World...take the Prophets words, Christs, and the Apostles Words to talke upon, but have not received the Word from the mouth of the Lord; and their Prophetie and Preaching would

soon be ended, if they had not the Scripture, which is other mens Words, and that which was spoken to others, to speake their imaginations from'. It has been widely noted that Quakers, including Farnworth and Fisher, differed from Puritans in their unwillingness to sing the Psalms, because the spiritual condition of someone in the contemporary era is not necessarily the same as David's condition more than 2,500 years previously.<sup>46</sup> Both Farnworth and Fisher had leadings against singing the Psalms even prior to becoming Quakers.<sup>47</sup> Burrough's attack followed the same logic, but it was considerably more expansive in form. It would appear that anything from either Testament would be used inappropriately by anyone who did not share the spiritual experience of the authors, and who had no knowledge of revelation from the Lord.

In effect, early Quakers made the radical claim that the inspiration attendant upon the Christian Scriptures was not embedded in the text, but was dependent on having an inspired reader/prophet. If the reader of the Scriptures did not read the text with illumination from the Light of Christ, then the text had no salvific qualities at all. The specific proportions by which divine and human elements were admixed in the text of the Christian Scriptures were of little significance. If Fell's recollection of Fox's 1652 message at Ulverston is to be trusted, Fox conceded the divine origins of Scripture, but he still insisted upon the pivotal role of the Light-illuminated reader who should be open to new Light that would expand our knowledge of the divine:

The Scriptures were the Prophets' words, and Christ's and the Apostle's words, and what, as they spoke, they enjoyed and possessed, and had it from the Lord... Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the Apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a Child of the Light, and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?

For Farnworth, the human provenance of Scriptures was quite evident. He pointed out that various books of the Bible had human authorship, something mentioned in the opening verses of Jeremiah and Ecclesiastes.<sup>48</sup> In 1655, Farnworth asserted that the prophets and apostles were 'spirituall men', and that the words they had spoken forth were inspired. Sticking close to 2 Pet. 1:19-21, as he had done in a previous publication,<sup>49</sup> he considered that the Scriptures 'were words spoken by the men of God, and so words from the spirit of truth, spoken by the holy men of God, (other men) that were holy and spoke freely, and not by you that are sinfull and pleads for it, and Preaches for hire the words of others, as the false Prophets did'. Elsewhere in his tract, he repeated that 'the Scriptures are words that proceeded from the spirit of truth', again emphasizing their connection with the divine.<sup>50</sup> Stating that these words were 'from the spirit of truth' is close to saying that they were 'words of God', but that latter formulation had not yet emerged into prominence. For any Scriptural text to be relevant to this community of prophets, the Holy Spirit had to open it. While Quakers, including Farnworth, appealed to the Scriptural passage, 2 Tim. 3:16, most commonly used by many Protestants to establish a high level of Scriptural authority, some Quakers,

including Robert Barclay, utilized an alternative translation of the Greek that significantly changed the meaning of the passage and implicitly undermined the very high standard of Scriptural authority established by the Westminster Confession.<sup>51</sup>

The Quaker use of the phrase 'words of God' as applied to Scriptures seems to have been virtually non-existent prior to controversies with Puritan preachers such as Stalham. In a retrospective account of the year 1652 recorded in his *Journal*, Fox is said to have used the phrase, the 'words of God', to refer to Scripture,<sup>52</sup> but he never used that phrase in his published tracts, and only once in his epistles prior to 1659, and then not in a confessional manner.<sup>53</sup> This may be an instance in which his retrospective account is to be mistrusted. James Nayler never used the phrase 'the Scriptures are the words of God', and while he twice used the phrase 'the words of God' as an implicit reference to the Scriptures in his collected works, neither mention seems to have any importance for the topic of Scriptural authority.<sup>54</sup> In her letters, I cannot find that Margaret Fell ever used the phrase 'words of God'.<sup>55</sup>

The Stalham–Farnworth controversy probably pushed Quakers to embrace their soon-to-be-typical formulation that 'the Scriptures are the words of God'. Farnworth had gone home to Yorkshire in the late 1650s, playing a leading role in the composition of the 'Epistle from the Elders of Balby', but then his role in Quaker leadership diminished, perhaps, at least in part, because he seemed reluctant to take sides in the dispute between Nayler and Fox, but he always retained some role in the life of Friends, locally and nationally.<sup>56</sup> In December 1657, Farnworth wrote a tract (it would be published in 1658) that came up with this exact formulation, and probably for the first time, a Quaker utilized the phrase 'the words of God' in a confessional manner:

To all true Christians Gods Elect...and to all faithful moderate People...by what Names and Titles so ever known by...we...who are reproachfully called Quakers, do profess, and confess, testifie, own, believe, and declare as followeth: That we Profess and Confess Faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ his eternal Son, the true God; and in the Holy Spirit: And we do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Words of God.

His assertion that the Holy Scriptures are the 'Words of God' are repeated twice more in this work, and throughout he drew a careful distinction between the Scriptures as the Words of God and Christ as 'the Word of God'.<sup>57</sup>

One year later, Fox followed Farnworth's lead. In *The Great Mistery of the Great Whore Unfolded*, Fox utilized the phrase 'the Scriptures are the words of God' 29 times, including in a response to Stalham: 'And the Scriptures are the words of God, of truth, God spake all these words. He that adds to these words, the words of God is [*sic*] pure. Christ is the Word... So the spirit comes not by the Letter, but the Letter comes forth from the spirit'.<sup>58</sup> Others followed the lead of Fox and Farnworth.<sup>59</sup> By 1658, it seemed that Quakers were no longer willing to assert, in any way that could be misunderstood, that the Scriptures are human words. Instead, they have taken up Farnworth's mantra that the 'holy Scriptures...are the Words of God'.



Farnworth and Fisher were both inclined to assign some blame to the printing press and Bible salesmen for the English obsession with the Scriptures. Of Bible printers, Farnworth observed that ‘the word of the Lord was declared and spoken without Printed Bibles, and before Printing was invented; But if Printing had not been invented, what would you have Preached by that knows not the word of life, which was before writing or printing was?’<sup>60</sup> Fisher’s denunciation of Scripture sellers was equally sharp: ‘At the Sellers Shops there’s enough of the *Word of God* to be bought for Money, if the meer Letter were it, and a number of new Bibles for all Comers: Is it for want of hearing them read? No, they are read too much, and heard too often, unless they were more spiritually understood, and more carefully & practically observed.’<sup>61</sup> Both Farnworth and Fisher seemed to believe that any interpretation of Scripture that did not match the Quakers’ spiritual interpretation was highly unfortunate. Christopher Hill has judged, not inaccurately, that the availability of printed and inexpensive English-language Bibles over the century preceding Quaker beginnings had constituted ‘a cultural revolution of unprecedented proportions, whose consequences are difficult to over-estimate’.<sup>62</sup> While Farnworth and Fisher were beneficiaries of this revolution, neither man saw it as an unmixed blessing.

Michael Birkel and I have reached the following conclusion in regard to the Stalham–Farnworth controversy:

Stalham was right to see a tension between Farnworth’s view of the Scriptures, in particular, certain kinds of readings that Farnworth regarded as lifeless and without power, and the life of the Spirit, that leads one transformationally into a deeper, richer, more prophetic, more Christ-like existence. Farnworth was quite clear that the life in many of the Puritan churches that he had known in his youth was like a hollow shell, and he sought a religious life and fellowship that was deeper than anything that he had experienced. Stalham was far from oblivious to this, as he prefaced his later critique of Farnworth with an extended discussion of the mystical, spiritualist, Familist tradition, including such notable figures as Jacob Boehme and John Saltmarsh, that he imagined, not unreasonably, to have nurtured Farnworth. So, while the result of the confrontation through the written page between Stalham and Farnworth was likely less conclusive than either party hoped for, it was more illuminating in setting forth two different Christian perspectives and spiritualities than many such controversies.<sup>63</sup>

Farnworth did not write about issues of Scriptural authority after 1658. He resumed a more active role in about 1662, going to London in 1664 in the midst of the John Perrot affair. He evinced no reservations about opposing the attempted innovations of Perrot and his followers, and in 1666 he was the first-named author of ‘The Testimony from the Brethren’, advocating a more centralized form of Quaker organization. He died about one month after this document was written, but Fox, imprisoned at the time, utilized it in his own efforts to strengthen Quaker organization after his release from prison in September of that year.<sup>64</sup>

## SAMUEL FISHER

I now turn to another Quaker from the 1650s who addressed the issue of the authority of Scripture. Samuel Fisher is in many ways a study in contrast with Richard Farnworth. Whereas Farnworth was from the north of England, Fisher was from the South, from the county of Kent. Farnworth came to Quakers as a young man in his twenties, but Fisher was fifty years old before becoming a convinced Friend. Whereas Farnworth had little formal education, Fisher was probably the most educated of the early Quakers, having both a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Oxford (Trinity College and New Inn Hall, respectively). One thing that Fisher and Farnworth had in common was a dedication and determination to helping the Quaker movement address the issue of the authority of Scripture.<sup>65</sup>

Fisher, a Northampton native, became a resident of Kent at some time in the 1630s, and this Puritan Oxford-trained scholar had risen to the fairly lucrative position of vicar of Lydd by 1645. But as 'a Man Zealous for Reformation both in Church and State', he was moving steadily in a more radical direction, undergoing a second ordination at the hands of the Presbyterians in 1643. Then he resigned his vicarage and began raising cattle, when he joined the Baptists in 1649. Already he was an accomplished debater and controversialist, and, in 1653, he published a massive attack on infant baptism, *Baby-Baptism meer Babism*. Fisher's religious pilgrimage, however, was not yet complete, and the fifty-year-old Fisher was convinced as a Quaker in 1655 by two teams of much younger men, first thirty-seven-year-old John Stubbs and nineteen-year-old Will Caton, and shortly afterward, thirty-one-year-old George Fox and twenty-year-old Ambrose Rigg.<sup>66</sup>

His friends remembered his considerable academic abilities, especially in conducting controversies. Ellis Hookes recalled that 'he was greatly Envied by the Priests' as he 'took great pains to Convince his Adversaries of the Truth, and hath often overcome, and put to silence his Enemies'. At the same time, however, he was a man of great spiritual sensitivity. 'He was a man of very tender Spirit unto all'. He was not the kind of former preacher who would take over any occasion of Quaker silence and fill it with his oration. Instead, when he attended Quaker meetings for worship, he 'sate silent for a time, Learning of the Lord in all Subjection, until the Lord was pleased to open his Mouth, to declare the Truth... and the Lord was with him, and his presence (which is his Life) did accompany him'. William Penn admired Fisher's 'great Self-denyal and humility; who, from being a Teacher, became willing to be Taught; and that most evenness and sweetness of Temper, his most intimate friends have often observed in him'.<sup>67</sup>

## QUAKERS AND THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION

While Fisher was still a Presbyterian, an assembly of his fellow Presbyterian ministers offered to the world in 1648 the Westminster Confession of Faith, a Christian classic that, like Fox's *Journal* and Barclay's *Apology*, has found consider-

able resonance in succeeding centuries. As has already been mentioned in connection with Stalham, the topic of Scriptural authority was important enough to the authors to position the topic first in their Confession. A modern-day Presbyterian interpreter of this document, John Leith, has written:

The chapter 'Of the Holy Scripture', in literary expression and in theological excellence, is worthy of its place in the Confession. It is as fine an example of confessional writing as is to be found anywhere in the Christian tradition.<sup>68</sup>

Leith allows that later developments in Scriptural studies, especially historical criticism, have exposed the Confession as obscurant and isolating, and hence it contained 'hidden flaws which proved destructive'.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, the Westminster Confession has had considerable influence on conservative Protestants since the mid-seventeenth-century, and thus most Protestant groups have had to grapple with the Westminster Confession and to position themselves in relation to it, especially on the matter of Scriptural authority. Quakers are no exception in this regard, and Jerry Frost is one who has undertaken this task on behalf of the Religious Society of Friends. In a 1970 article for *Church History*, Frost wrote that

Quakers denied that the 'whole counsel of God' was in the Bible. No man by reading it could learn directly his inward calling, or whether he was justified and sanctified, or called to minister, or told to pray. The Bible did not contain 'the whole Mind, Will, and Counsel of God'. Revelation had not ceased.<sup>70</sup>

In generalizing on behalf of all early Quakers, Frost does not capture Samuel Fisher's more extensive critique of the Westminster Confession's first chapter. Fisher disagreed, in whole or in part, with all subsections of it. Fisher's critique comes in the context of his 1660 masterpiece, *Rusticus ad Academicos*. In *Rusticus*, Fisher was responding to attacks on Quakers by four Puritan ministers: John Owen, former vice chancellor of the University of Oxford; Thomas Danson, minister at nearby Sandwich in Kent; Richard Baxter of Kidderminster; and John Tombes of Leominster. I have covered elsewhere Fisher's participation, with Richard Hubberthorne and George Whitehead, in a debate with Danson, a debate in which he honed many of the arguments he would later use in *Rusticus*.<sup>71</sup> In this context, I will focus on the portion of *Rusticus* where he addressed the ideas of John Owen.

Owen, as vice chancellor of Oxford, had been instrumental in encouraging an often violent opposition to the Quaker evangelists who had visited the city from 1654 onwards.<sup>72</sup> Although he resigned the Vice Chancellor post in 1657, he continued as dean of Oxford's Christ Church until 1660, and it was during this period that Owen published a large study of the Bible, *Of the divine originall*, and, as an appendix, a fierce attack on Quakers, *Pro sacris scripturis: Exercitationes adversus fanaticos*. The main part of the book was in English, but his appendix had been written in Latin, a fact that enraged Fisher, who ascertained that Owen had written the appendix in Latin, in part because he knew that the mostly unlearned Quakers would be unable to read it and thus be unable to respond: 'If thy surmise of their Universal ignorance of thy Latine Lyes had been as sound as it seemed to

be, they had been left, not onely uncapable to do ought in their own defence, in the midst of thy many mischievous accusations, but insensible of any hurt at all'.<sup>73</sup> Owen was one of the main supporters of the Westminster Confession, and a chief architect of the 1658 Savoy Declaration, which made slight modifications to the Westminster Confession in order to meet the needs of Independent Puritans. The chapter on the Holy Scripture was not materially affected by these changes.<sup>74</sup>

#### SCRIPTURE: INFALLIBLE OR CORRUPTIBLE?

Perhaps the most notable assertion of the Westminster Confession is its affirmation of the 'infallible truth' of Scripture, something that can be known by the Holy Spirit. Subsequently, this has been widely influential among evangelical Protestants, including among evangelical Quakers.<sup>75</sup> Fisher, however, did not accept the infallibility of Scripture. 'The Light and Spirit of Christ' should be seen as infallible, stated Fisher, but not 'the bare naked letter of Scripture', with its 'lyableness to corruption'.<sup>76</sup>

When Owen asserted that the Scriptures is 'the Word of God, . . . entire to a little and perfect',<sup>77</sup> Fisher wanted to know whether Owen was asserting this of the prophets' and apostles' original autographs (which no longer exist), of the various transcripts of these autographs, or of the translations of these transcripts. Both Owen's writings, and Chapter 1.viii of the Westminster Confession, could be interpreted to apply to any of these, but Fisher demanded more precision from Owen and his fellow Puritans.<sup>78</sup> Fisher held that the various transcripts and translations that existed in his time (and ours), had been subject to various forms of corruption, so that the Scriptures were no more than a malleable nose of wax. 'Consider the naked Literal Aspect of the holy Scriptures, not in its highest, not in its Primitive, best, and purest, as at first given forth, but in its meer derivative, in its lowest, meanest, and most adulterated Capacity, wherein it stands at this day, wrested and torn, and like a Nose of Wax twisted and twined into . . . mens untrue and tottered Transcripts, and Translations'.<sup>79</sup> Not only processes of translation, but even the process of establishing the best text, was an imprecise process. Drawing on the most recent biblical scholarship, Fisher demonstrated how, contrary to Owen's assurances that every jot and tittle in the Scriptures had been preserved from its first writing, the vowels in Old Testament Hebrew had not been part of the original text, and any attempt to add them later, as the Masoretic transcribers had done some centuries after, was bound to introduce mistakes somewhere along the line. Owen assured his readers that such additions did not threaten the infallibility of the text; Fisher scoffed that such assertions were meaningless and delusive. Wrote Fisher, 'it should seem that every Tittle is not now as at first giving out of the Letter, if the Vowels were incompleat' until long after the original prophets' composition.<sup>80</sup>

## DECONSTRUCTING THE CANON

At great length and with impressive erudition, Fisher deconstructed the whole notion of a Christian Scriptural canon. A question of the day was the standing of the 'Apocrypha', certain books that, in Catholic Bibles, were incorporated in the Old Testament canon. These books had been part of the Septuagint, from which the Catholic Old Testament was drawn, but they were not included in the Hebrew Bible canon as defined by Jewish rabbis at the end of the first century. They are generally thought (both by seventeenth-century scholars and by contemporary biblical scholars) to have been written in the two hundred years prior to the birth of Christ, when the books that would later constitute the Hebrew Bible canon were already largely complete.<sup>81</sup> Martin Luther questioned their canonical standing,<sup>82</sup> and, although they were translated as part of the English project that had produced the Authorized Version at the beginning of the seventeenth century,<sup>83</sup> most English Protestants (especially Puritans) disregarded them. The Westminster Confession stated that they were not divinely inspired and thus 'are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God', classifying them with writings of mere human origins.<sup>84</sup> Many Quakers seemed to agree with the Puritans on this matter.<sup>85</sup> Fox, for example, utilized citations from the Apocrypha only for his writings to Jews.<sup>86</sup>

Both Fisher and Farnworth, however, utilized the Apocrypha. The young Farnworth cited an addition to the book of Daniel, Bel and the Dragon, to bolster his denunciations of the idolatry that he saw inherent in the paid priesthood of the Church of England.<sup>87</sup> Fisher made more extensive use of the Apocrypha, citing 2 Maccabees, 2 Esdras, Wisdom of Solomon, and Baruch.<sup>88</sup> Fisher stated that the Apocrypha were no more or less divinely inspired than the books customarily included in the Old Testament and New Testament, and hence were just as entitled to a place in the Scriptural canon as any other books. He thus declared himself to be in direct disagreement with the Westminster Confession on this matter.<sup>89</sup>

Fisher's favorite verse from the Apocrypha (judged by frequency of citation) was Wisdom of Solomon 7:27, which states in part: 'In each generation, she [Wisdom] passes into holy souls, and she makes them into friends of God and prophets'. This, in Fisher's view, was a fine statement of the understanding of the world that animated the Quakers. The likelihood that it was revealed and recorded to paper in the interim period, after the time that Puritans understood the Old Testament canon to be closed, and before the commencement of the New Testament, proved to Fisher that revelation could occur at any time, not only during the two brief periods in human history when Puritans dogmatically stated that it had occurred. In two different ways, this passage from the Wisdom of Solomon had obvious implications that bolstered the early Quaker view that revelation was possible in their generation as well, against all Puritan claims to the contrary.<sup>90</sup>

Fisher made other kinds of arguments about the biblical canon, to the same end of showing its corruptibility. He was one of many Quakers who asserted there were many other writings that were divinely inspired but not included in the Bible. It would seem that he was not the first to make this argument. Richard Hubberthorne had done so in 1657,<sup>91</sup> prior to Fisher's debates with Thomas Danson and Owen. In the 1659 debate with Danson in Sandwich, Fisher instanced Paul's third letter to the Corinthians (not extant, but referenced in I Cor. 5:9-11) and Paul's epistle to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16 refers to an epistle from the Laodiceans, although an epistle which purported to be from Paul to the Laodiceans was also extant). Fisher reported that Danson refused to believe that there was any such epistle, until a resident of Sandwich stated that he had the book where Fisher had said that it was printed.<sup>92</sup> By the time that Quakers (including Fisher in *Rusticus*) published their versions of this exchange, they were highlighting other lost books that had been 'given forth from the same Spirit' as the canonical ones, including Nathan the Prophet, Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah, Gad, Jehu, Jasher, and Enoch.<sup>93</sup>

Fisher also believed that there had been some books which had been included mistakenly in the New Testament canon. He believed that there would have been good reasons to exclude Philemon and 3 John, because these were 'Letters to Private Persons about Private Matters' and thus manifestly not intended to constitute 'Rules to all Saints to the World's end'. Fisher even questioned whether personal aspects of letters that contain more inspired passages would be suitable for the Puritans' much vaunted rule of faith. Why, he wondered, was it important for succeeding generations to know, per 2 Tim. 4:13, that Paul had instructed Timothy to bring with him a cloak he had left behind in a prior location of ministry?<sup>94</sup> Judging by their infrequency of citation in the Digital Quaker Collection, many early Quakers agreed with Fisher about the lack of significance of Scriptural passages of matters of private or personal import.<sup>95</sup>

#### RESOLVING CONTROVERSY WITH SCRIPTURE?

Finally, I shall examine one exhortation in the Westminster Confession that Fisher and his fellow Quakers largely agreed with. Chapter I.viii states that the Old and New Testaments have been 'kept pure in all ages...so as, in all controversies of religions, the Church is finally to appeal unto them'. Fisher did not accept the premise in this statement—he perceived plenty of corruption in the Christian Scriptures—but he largely accepted the conclusion. In other words, while the Scriptures were neither pure nor infallible, he believed that they were sufficiently reliable that they could be used as a basis for resolving controversies among Christians. Other Quakers made similar protestations. For example, in 1654 Margaret Fell declared that one of her critics was a 'lyer' for stating that she would not allow her writings to 'be tryed by the scripturs'.<sup>96</sup> Many modern biblical interpreters, whether Quaker or not, differ from Fell and Fisher on this matter. Nancy Bowen, Professor of Old Testament at the Earlham School of Religion,

holds as one of her cardinal principles that ‘no controversial issue is ever resolved by an appeal to the Bible’.<sup>97</sup>

This would be particularly important after the Restoration, after Quakers came under fierce attack for their refusal to subscribe to oaths. When, in 1662, Anglican bishop John Gauden argued that Quakers needed to ‘admit such cautions and limitations’ in New Testament Scriptures regarding oaths as they admitted in regard to other passages of Scriptures, Fisher responded that Quakers

have such due regard to the Scriptures, that we are willing, as by a Rule of Christians actions in this case of Oaths, to stand to a tryal of it by the Scriptures, but then those Scriptures which the Bish. beats so much about in a circumference of cautions and conceptions, but scarce comes near, as if he were afraid too critically to examine them, or to enter within the bark or rind of the context, to find out Christ’s true intent in the Texts themselves, must be duly examined, exactly weighed, & aptly reduced to that Standard of Truth, which is the Scriptures themselves, and not any mens false glosses on them’.<sup>98</sup>

This is a careful statement, and both Fisher and Gauden seem to recognize that a literal interpretation of Scriptures might not be so useful to Quakers in all areas as it would be manifestly in the case of oaths.

During the Restoration, Fisher suffered in prison most of the time, and during a lengthy imprisonment in the White Lion gaol in Southwark, he contracted the plague during the 1665 outbreak and soon died of it.<sup>99</sup> Thus Fisher would not have any further opportunity to refine his procedural statements about the trial of Quaker leadings and doctrines by the Scriptures.

#### CONCLUSION

Farnworth and Fisher have had somewhat different fates in the Quaker world. Richard Farnworth’s works were never collected, as would have been normal practice for a Quaker of his stature, so it seems likely that few Quakers of succeeding generations would have read his works. Fisher’s works were collected, and despite a somewhat challenging writing style, his works were often read. William Penn contributed a preface to Fisher’s collected works. Penn ‘greatly valued his abilities, imployed so accurately in a good cause... In perusing his *Rusticus ad Academicos*, I found the Objections of several Considerable Opposers so Closely handled, and so plainly enervated, that my Heart was not more affected, than my Understanding, was clearly satisfied of the Truth and Reasonableness of those Principles he defended.’<sup>100</sup> Robert Barclay did not leave a testimony to Fisher, but he seems likely to have read his work. Many of Barclay’s arguments on the Scriptures, including his advocacy of an open canon and his readiness to rely on the Scriptures to settle controversies with non-Quaker opponents,<sup>101</sup> are close parallels to arguments made by Fisher in his work.

While it can be said that Quakerism itself was established on a set of grand claims, such as the direct encounter with God, the obsolete nature of the separated clergy, spiritual equality regardless of gender and age, and so forth,<sup>102</sup> what is most

noteworthy here is that neither affirmation nor denial of the authority of Scriptures was one of the grand claims of early Quakers. However, Scriptural authority, and the degree to which it can be affirmed and denied, also has turned out to be not an issue that Quakers could ignore for very long. This essay has sketched out the development of some of the key issues during the first decade of the Quaker movement. Over three-and-a-half centuries and more, Quaker views of the authority of Scripture have developed, both from external controversy, and from discussion, disagreement, and division within the Quaker movement. Over the first decade, it is the former that is most prominent in the development of this issue. But both the external and internal discussions are important.

'Ben' Pink Dandelion and I note that the authors of the chapters in our forthcoming volume on early Quaker theologians take two different approaches: 'One starts with the wider historical, cultural and religious context and places Quaker ideas within that context... The other, more common, approach amongst the writers is to start with the Quaker experience and try and untangle its own internal logic.'<sup>103</sup> This essay has necessarily undertaken both tasks. The question about the revelatory status of Quaker epistles, while raised early on by critics like the Fifth Monarchists, is a central issue for the movement as a whole to confront, and to do so requires straightening out its internal logic. Issues relating to the canon and the fallibility or infallibility of the text are questions that were imposed largely from without. The issue about whether the Scriptures are human words, or God's words, or both, is perhaps the one that most prominently fused the internal and external factors in the development of Quaker theology, as the exposition of Quaker beliefs moved strongly toward an affirmation of the Scriptures as the words of God.

This subject matter also has implications for the development of Quaker theory, specifically in regard to a thesis that seventeenth-century Quakers had been spiritualists or mystics, as developed by Rufus Jones and others, and a competing theory that the most notable fact about seventeenth-century Quakers was their Puritan origins, a theory developed by Geoffrey Nuttall, Hugh Barbour, and others.<sup>104</sup> There are considerable insights to be gained from both sets of theories, and an urgent need is to find useful and nuanced ways to combine them. In this paper, and in the essays that underlie its analysis,<sup>105</sup> I have amassed evidence that both Farnworth and Fisher had arrived at highly radical and spiritualist orientations by the early 1650s. But then they were pulled in a more Puritan direction, in part as the result of external attacks from Pomroy, Stalham, Danson, Owen, Gauden, and others, as early as 1653. So this study, focusing on issues relating to Scriptural authority, contends that there was movement in a more conservative Puritan direction by Quakers throughout the period from 1653 to 1666, and this conservative movement among Quakers may well have accelerated from 1657 onwards, with perhaps a brief break in 1659 (the year of the controversies leading to *Rusticus*). Furthermore, despite their varying posthumous reputations among Quakers, both Farnworth and Fisher, during their lifetime, had influenced their fellow Quakers, including Fox, and consequently it seems likely that their increasingly conservative approaches toward Scripture had a substantial effect on other Quakers.



There is a need for more systematic studies of the extensive controversies in which many Quakers were involved. Quaker historians and theologians need to deal with more than just Quaker sources, the epistles, tracts, and journals written by our Quaker founders. Of specific concern for this study has been the insufficient realisation of the extent to which one Christian classic, the Westminster Confession, has hung over Quaker theology as a giant query for more than three-and-a-half centuries, demanding a response. This may have become truer of Quakers in America than Quakers in Britain, especially in the past century and a half. Of the early Quakers, Samuel Fisher gave the most comprehensive response, disagreeing at least in part, implicitly or explicitly, with each of the subsections of the first chapter of the Westminster Confession, 'Of the Holy Scriptures'. If Fisher were alive today, he would probably qualify as a moderate in Quaker circles. There would be some who would more strongly deny the various assertions to be found in the Confession's first chapter; equally, there would be others who would strongly affirm those same assertions from the first chapter. We need more critical assessment of the impact of non-Quaker writings on our movement, not least the Confession initially produced in 1646, and refined in 1648, by mostly Presbyterian ministers sitting in Westminster during the English Civil War and burgeoning Puritan rule.

## NOTES

1. A useful general perspective on Quaker views of Scriptural authority, encompassing most varieties of Friends, is provided by Dandelion, P., *An introduction to Quakerism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 184–87.
2. This is a frequently used method devised by American unprogrammed Friends. Spears, J., and Spears, L., *Friendly Bible Study*, <http://www.read-the-bible.org/FriendlyBibleStudy.htm> (accessed 22 September 2014).
3. Birkel, M.L., *Engaging Scripture: Reading the Bible with Early Friends*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press and Earlham Press, 2005, p. 112.
4. Angell, S.W., 'The Impending Split in Indiana Yearly Meeting', *Quaker Theology* 20 (Winter–Spring 2012), pp. 15–16. [Http://quaker.org/quest/QT-20-Final-for-Web.pdf](http://quaker.org/quest/QT-20-Final-for-Web.pdf).
5. Angell, S.W., 'Separation Accomplished: New Beginnings for a New Association of Friends and a "Reconfigured" Indiana Yearly Meeting', *Quaker Theology* 24 (Winter–Spring 2014), pp. 61–63. [Http://quaker.org/quest/Angell-Separation-Accomplished-Indiana-Yearly-Meeting.html](http://quaker.org/quest/Angell-Separation-Accomplished-Indiana-Yearly-Meeting.html).
6. Personal anecdote based on the author's experience teaching at the Cuban Quaker Institute for Peace, Gibara, Cuba, January 2014.
7. Among many excellent resources, I recommend the following: *Quaker Religious Thought* volume 97 has excellent articles on Elizabeth Bathurst, Dorothy White, Samuel Fisher, George Keith, Robert Barclay, and George Fox, and a superb response from Hugh Pyper; Cadbury, H.J., 'A Quaker Approach to the Bible', Ward Lecture, 1953, Guilford College, [http://www.universalistfriends.org/printable/cadbury\\_printable.html](http://www.universalistfriends.org/printable/cadbury_printable.html); Cadbury, H.J., 'Early Quakerism and Uncanonical Lore', *Harvard Theological Review* 40 (1947), pp. 177–205; Macy, H., 'Quakers and Scripture', in Angell, S.W., and Dandelion, P. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 187–201; Birkel, *Engaging Scripture*; Gwyn, D., *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2006; Moore, R., *The Light in their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646–1666*, University

Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2000, pp. 51–60; Buckley, P., and Angell, S.W. (eds.), *The Quaker Bible Reader*, Richmond, IN: Earlham School of Religion Press, 2006; Hill, C., *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-century Revolution*, London: Penguin Press, 1993; Dandelion, B.P., Gwyn, D., and Peat, T., *Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming*, Birmingham: Curlew Productions and Woodbrooke College, 1998.

8. See, e.g., articles by M. Birkel on Dorothy White and M. Garman on Elizabeth Bathurst in *Quaker Religious Thought* vol. 97, pp. 47–62.

9. Angell, S.W., and Dandelion, P., *Early Quakers and their Theological Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2015.

10. Hubberthorne, *Truth cleared and the deceit made manifest*, n.p., 1654, p. 7.

11. Fox, G., and Nayler, J., *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, London: Giles Calvert, 1654, p. 2; Stalham, J., *Contradictions of the Quakers (so called) to the Scriptures of God*, Edinburgh: published by the author, 1655, A3.

12. Leith, J., *Creeds of the Churches*, 3rd edn, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982, p. 195.

13. Fox and Nayler, *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, p. 16.

14. [Http://www.tickhillhistorysociety.org.uk/local\\_phototopics\\_castle.asp](http://www.tickhillhistorysociety.org.uk/local_phototopics_castle.asp) (accessed 17 September 2014); Hoare, R.J., *Balby Beginnings: The Launching of Quakerism*, Sheffield: Balby Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2002, p. 45.

15. Farnworth, R., *The Heart opened by Christ, or, the Conditions of a Troubled Soul*, London, n.p., 1655, p. 3.

16. Birkel, M., and Angell, S.W., 'The Witness of Richard Farnworth: Prophet of Light, Apostle of Church Order', in Angell, S.W., and Dandelion, P. (eds.), *Early Quakers and their Theological Thought, 1647–1723*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

17. Hoare, *Balby Beginnings*, pp. 101–104.

18. Farnworth, *Heart Opened by Christ*, p. 3; Birkel and Angell, 'Witness of Farnworth'.

19. Farnworth, *Heart Opened by Christ*, p. 10.

20. Farnworth, *Heart Opened by Christ*, pp. 10, 12.

21. Hoare, R.J., 'The Balby Seekers and Richard Farnworth', *Quaker Studies* 8 (2004), pp. 195, 205.

22. Birkel and Angell, 'Witness of Farnworth'.

23. Fox, G., *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. Nickalls, J.L., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952; London: Religious Society of Friends, 1975, pp. 103–104.

24. Pomroy, J., et al., *A faithful discovery of a treacherous design of mystical Antichrist*, London: H. Hills, 1653, front matter.

25. Hirst, D., *Authority and Conflict: England, 1603–1658*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986, pp. 313–15.

26. Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, p. 65.

27. Pomroy et al., *A faithful discovery*, p. 35.

28. Higginson, F., *A brief relation of the irreligion of the northern Quakers*, London: Printed for T.R. by H.R., 1653, p. 12.

29. Barbour, H., and Roberts, A., *Early Quaker Writings*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973, pp. 470, 464.

30. Farnworth, R., *Light risen out of darkness*, London: Giles Calvert, 1654, pp. 43–45.

31. Birkel and Angell, 'Witness of Farnworth'.

32. Fowler, *A sober answer to an angry epistle*, London: Samuel Gillibrand, 1656, p. 47; ODNB, s.v. Christopher Fowler, by S. Wright; Fisher, S., *Testimony of truth exalted*, London: n.p., 1679, pp. 200, 457.

33. Farnworth, R., *A discovery of faith*, London: Giles Calvert, 1653, pp. 5–7, 11.

34. Farnworth's 1655 tract, *The Scriptures vindication against the Scottish contradictors*, London: Giles Calvert, 1655 (per above discussion) contains this idea in paraphrase. Fox uses the exact phrase 'words of God' to characterize the Scriptures in his 1659 response to Stalham: Fox, G., *The great mystery of the great whore unfolded*, London: Thos. Simmons, 1659, p. 151.

35. Birkel, *Engaging Scripture*, pp. 22-23; Graves, M.P., *Preaching the Inward Light: Early Quaker Rhetoric*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009, pp. 183-205.
36. Donawerth, J., 'Women's Reading Practices in Seventeenth-century England: Margaret Fell's "Women's Speaking Justified"', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 37 (2006), pp. 985-1005.
37. Pyper, H., 'Can There Be a Quaker Hermeneutic?', *Quaker Religious Thought* 97 (2001), pp. 63-65.
38. Angell, S.W., 'Universalising and Spiritualizing Christ's Gospel: How Early Quakers Interpreted the Epistle to the Colossians', *Quaker Studies* 11 (2006), pp. 34-58; Spencer, C.D., *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism*, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007, pp. 14-17; Como, D.R., 'Radical Puritanism, c. 1558-1660', in Coffey, J., and Lim, P.C.H. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 252-53.
39. Dandelion, P., *The Liturgies of Quakerism*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005, pp. 8-20, 47.
40. Farnworth, *Truth cleared of scandals*, London, 1654, p. 8.
41. ODNB, s.v. 'John Stalham', by John Walter; Stalham, J., *Contradictions of the Quakers (so called) to the Scriptures of God*, Edinburgh: published by the author, 1655.
42. Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, p. 103.
43. Stalham, J., *The reviler rebuked*, London: Henry Hills, 1657, pp. 4-5, 26.
44. Underwood, T.L., *Primitivism, Radicalism, and the Lamb's War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 28-29, 32.
45. Stalham, *Contradictions*, A3. 'their [referring to "the Teachers of the World"] prophesie and preaching would soon be ended, if they had not the Scripture which is other men's words, and that was spoken to others, to speake their imaginations from'. Burrough, E., *Truth defended, or certain accusations answered*, n.p., [1654], p. 6. Howgill contributed a preface. Later Burrough himself appears to have corrected Stalham's misattribution: Hubberthorne, R., *The rebukes of a reviler fallen upon his own head*, London: Calvert, 1657, p. 30.
46. Farnworth, *England's warning peece gone forth*, London: Tho. Wayne, 1653, p. 9; Barbour, H., *The Quakers in Puritan England*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964, pp. 156-57; Glines, E.F. (ed.), *Undaunted Zeal: The Letters of Margaret Fell*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2003, p. 67.
47. Farnworth, *Heart Opened by Christ*, p. 5; Testimony of Luke Howard, in Fisher, *Testimony of truth exalted*, front matter.
48. Farnworth, *Scriptures vindication*, p. 6.
49. Farnworth, *Woman forbidden to speak in the church*, London: Giles Calvert, 1653, pp. 5-6.
50. Farnworth, *Scriptures vindication*, pp. 2, 5. Margaret Fell, writing to a 'professor' of Christianity in the same year, 1655, gave a similar formulation in response to a challenge regarding the Quakers' understanding of Scriptures: Christ 'saith not that Scriptures is the way... Yet the Scriptures wee owne, & beare testimony to the truth of them by the Same Spirit as he gave them forth... Thou saith you only believe Such prophecyes as in Scripture is set downe. Answ: Nay, you doe not believe, the prophecyes in the Scriptures, who hath not the Spirit of prophecy which is the testimony of Jesus. For noe prophecy of old came by the will of man, but holy men spoke as they were mooved of the holy ghost. And you that knowes not the holy-ghost, doth not believe the prophecies of Scripture though yee have them to talke of.' Margaret Fell to a Professor, 1655, in Glines (ed.), *Undaunted Zeal*, pp. 164, 166.
51. Farnworth states, 'Holy men of God spoke as they were moved, so saith the Scripture, 2 Pet. 1. And it doth not contradict 1 [sic] Tim. 3.16 where it says, the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God, then the Scripture was inspired, and that was by the spirit, and spirituall men spoke forth those words': *Scriptures vindication*, p. 5. See also Angell, S.W., 'Opening the Scriptures, Then and Now', *Quaker Theology* 14 (2007-2008), pp. 1-18. [Http://www.quaker.org/quest/issue14-angell-01.htm](http://www.quaker.org/quest/issue14-angell-01.htm). 2 Tim. 3:16 reads: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'. An alternative translation of the same text is: 'Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'.

52. Fox, *Journal* (ed. Nickalls), p. 145. See also Dobbs, J.P., *Authority and the Early Quakers*, Frenchay, South Gloucestershire: Martin Hartog, 2006, p. 69.

53. The phrase occurs in Fox's epistle 22 (1652), but the meaning of 'words of God' is unclear, as it could apply to any prophetic words, not just Scripture texts. Its next occurrence is in a 1667 epistle by Fox to Friends everywhere, and there 'words of God' is clearly applied to Scriptures. Jones, T.C. (ed.), *The Power of the Lord Is Over All: The Pastoral Letters of George Fox*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1989, pp. 16, 217.

54. Naylor, J., *Collection of Sundry Books, Epistles, and Papers*, Cincinnati: B.C. Stanton, 1829, pp. 438, 541.

55. Reference here is to Glines (ed.), *Undaunted Zeal, passim*.

56. Birkel and Angell, 'Witness of Farnworth'; Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, p. 44.

57. Farnworth, *A Confession and Profession of Faith in God*, London: Giles Calvert, (1658), pp. 2, 4.

58. Fox, *Great mystery*, p. 151.

59. Among those who used this formulation were William Penn and Robert Barclay. See, e.g., Barclay, 'Robert Barclay's apology for the true Christian divinity vindicated from John Brown's examination and pretended confutation', in *Truth Triumphant* (Philadelphia, PA: Benjamin C. Stanton, 1831), III, p. 304; and Penn, 'The invalidity of John Faldo's vindication', in *Collection of the Works of William Penn* (London: J. Sowle, 1726), II, p. 327.

60. Farnworth, *Scriptures vindication*, p. 6.

61. Fisher, *Testimony of truth exalted*, p. 555.

62. Hill, *English Bible*, p. 11.

63. Birkel and Angell, 'Witness of Farnworth'.

64. ODNB, s.v. 'Richard Farnworth', by R. Greaves; Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, pp. 224-26.

65. Birkel and Angell, 'Witness of Farnworth'; Angell, S.W., 'Renegade Oxonian: Samuel Fisher's Importance in Formulating a Quaker Understanding of Scripture', in Dandelion and Angell (eds.), *Early Quakers and their Theology*.

66. Quotation from Ellis Hooke in Fisher, *Testimony of truth exalted*, front matter. See also Angell, 'Renegade Oxonian'; Hall, E., 'The theology of Samuel Fisher, Quaker', unpublished BD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1960; Hill, C., *The world turned upside down: radical ideas during the English revolution*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, p. 259; and ODNB articles on Samuel Fisher (by S. Villani), Ambrose Rigge (by R. Greaves), William Caton (by N. McDowell), John Stubbs (by C. Gill), and George Fox (by H.L. Ingle).

67. Testimonies by Ellis Hooke, Luke Howard, and William Penn, in Fisher, *Testimony of truth exalted*, front matter.

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77. Fisher, *Testimony of truth exalted*, p. 194.

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85. Cadbury, 'Early Quakerism and Uncanonical Lore', pp. 179-82.
86. Fox, 'Looking glass for the Jews', in *Works*, Philadelphia and New York: Marcus T.C. Gould and Isaac T. Hopper, 1831, V, pp. 72, 83-84. A search of the Digital Quaker Collection of the Earlham School of Religion produced no other instances of Fox's usage of passages from the Apocrypha.
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