

*SPREADING FRIENDS BOOKS  
FOR TRUTHS SERVICE;  
THE DISTRIBUTION OF QUAKER  
PRINTED LITERATURE IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.*

A more unwieldy clearer sub-title would have been “some aspects of the distribution of Quaker printed literature in (mostly) England, in (mostly) the eighteenth century.” It is not about the act of printing though some printers will be mentioned, and it is not really about the decisions leading up to publication except that the print run of any title is an aspect of its distribution. It would be wrong too in my period to assume that only the printed literature matters, oral transmission may have very important if only sporadically recorded, and some literature, journals for example, continued to be circulated in manuscript.

My period follows on from a better known one of strenuous effort by Friends to distribute literature amongst themselves, to enquirers and to other potential readers. The flavour of the last decade of the seventeenth century and the first of the nineteenth in English Quakerism seems to be similar enough to that of the eighteenth to justify occasional examples from either. I have done virtually no work on Ireland, Scotland and Wales, that is why they are almost overlooked here. The recently published *Oxford History of the Irish Book* says:

Protestants in Ireland, keen to stress that theirs was a religion of the word, insisted that it should be printed well as preached... the Quakers attended assiduously to this matter. However the Society of Friends still availed itself of scribal publication.<sup>1</sup>

It would have been possible to write a version of this paper just about North American Quakerism, even relying entirely on secondary sources. The trans-Atlantic movement of Friends' books, first eastwards then increasingly in both directions is of great importance. In the introduction to his 1960 collection of essays *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* Frederick Tolles argued: ‘Such was the cultural homogeneity of English and American Quakerism, at least down to the end of the eighteenth century, that I have felt justified throughout these essays in writing of the Society of Friends as one community.’<sup>2</sup>

Here I will only give occasional North American examples. Early in the eighteenth century there are numerous references in the minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings to books being supplied to Friends in North America and the West Indies, both standard Quaker literature and texts with a particular local relevance. In 1704 the Yearly Meeting in Pennsylvania wrote about their lack of a printer, hoping to recruit one from England, also sending single copies of three books costing nine shillings and asking for 200 copies of George Bishop's book of 'ye Suffering of Friends in New England.'<sup>3</sup>

So what aspects of distribution will be described here? The national system of distribution to Friends' meetings, undertaken by the Society's printer but directed mostly by the Meeting for Sufferings and the interaction of quarterly and monthly meetings covers the acquisition of books and pamphlets for meetings, individual Friends and onward distribution to non-Friends both in Britain and abroad. Local or individual initiatives could also result in publications, with or without consultation with the centre. Then there is the determined effort centrally to use Quaker literature wisely to reach people of influence at home and abroad, and to answer the accusations of anti-Quaker publications. There is the distribution of secondhand Quaker books. The whole paper gives an impression of the situation, not a definitive account. More work on the minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings and especially on local meetings' records where my use has been highly selective could produce interesting new material though it might simply confirm the general picture given here. It would probably add significantly to the picture of Quaker publishing outside London. All this could contribute a specialist aspect to the history of the book in England.<sup>4</sup> My theme is not especially original. Anna Littleboy touched on it in her 1920 presidential address to the Friends Historical Society.<sup>5</sup> Russell Mortimer went much further in his 1963 presidential address and two earlier articles and his work has been especially useful in thinking about Quaker printing and publishing outside London.<sup>6</sup> Some of the literature distributed in the eighteenth century will have been printed in the seventeenth. The recent completion of the retrospective cataloguing of printed material before 1801 in the Library of the Society of Friends means that we now have a much better idea than hitherto of the total number of titles. The Library holds more than 3,700 titles printed in the eighteenth century. Some of these are non-Quaker for example reference works on law or dictionaries; some anti-Quaker, though not such a high proportion as in the seventeenth century. The figure includes every separate printing of a title. The end figure for different Quaker publications will be rather lower than 3,700.

The first example in my main narrative seems to me to convey the possible impact of the gift of books in the early eighteenth century rather better than those that follow. This impact can easily be overlooked today when we are used to an abundance of cheap books and an overwhelming amount of material in print, not to mention information from newer media. Christopher Story, travelling to Ireland via Scotland in 1701 notes that Gilbert Molleson and some other Friends born in Scotland had provided 'some Friends books relating to the principles of truth, to be spread abroad in that nation'. He continues:

Another Friend and I, going to visit Friends in Ireland, and our way being through the west of Scotland we looked upon this a fit opportunity to disperse the books in that part of the nation, and four honest Friends going along with us, we had travelled but a little in Scotland, till we came to a country place where there was a mill, and several people about it. We passed by, and being gone but a little way, became uneasy, and not willing to miss the first step, we sent two Friends back again, with two of the books, who told the people that some of our Friends... in love to their country had sent these books to be distributed as a free gift... desiring them to peruse them, and let others have the reading of them. The people with great thankfulness received them; and almost in every town we gave the like account, and the people were so pleased, that some offered money, others desired us to drink, but as the books were a free gift, we could not accept anything on that account... [and in Dumfries, after a public meeting] the people were very desirous to receive the books, it seeming to be what they wanted, that if we had given more than we did, there were persons to receive them with great freedom... [and at Port Patrick] the last night we were, having part of the books to dispose of... [the] gift seemed more acceptable to many of them than if we had given them money.<sup>7</sup>

The best documented aspect of the distribution of Quaker literature to the whole country is that recorded in the minutes of the meetings at the national level which can be enriched from the records of meetings at various local levels. Russell Mortimer describes the basic central system very clearly, making three important points:

- 1 Friends were saved the work of central organization for distribution of their works. The printers undertook the clerical work, warehoused the stocks of books, and collected the money

for books sent down to the counties.

- 2 The printers working in close co-operation with Friends provided those whose duty it was to authorize publication with first hand information on the state of the market demand for various types of books.
- 3 Friends' subscription method provided an assured market for the product of the press - either by individual proffer to take off a fixed number of a work, or by the quota system by which each county took a fixed proportion of each work produced.<sup>8</sup>

Rules were made by Friends to ensure the effective operation of the system as in the 1693 advice issued as a printed document by the Meeting for Sufferings quoted in part here:

Renewed Advice To the Respective Monthly and Quarterly Meetings in England and Wales For Preserving and Spreading Friends Books for Truths Service. From the Meeting of Sufferings in London. Dear Friends, With our dear Love in the Truth unto you all, Therefore to let you understand, That our Friends have at several *Yearly Meetings* had under their serious Consideration, how all those Books that are Printed for the *Service of Truth*, and in the Unity of Friends, might most effectually be spread for General Service to Truth, and Information unto Friends and others: And at the last *Yearly Meeting*, who accordingly have taken Care and Pains therein, and settled as followeth.

That those that Print Friends Books, shall the first Opportunity after Printed within one Month at most, send to one of the Correspondents in the several Counties, *viz.*

For Your County, two books of a sort if under Six Pence for each *Monthly Meeting* in your County, and but one of a sort if above Six Pence *per Book* for these reasons.

*1st.* For Friends to have General Notice of what Books are Printed.

*2dly.* That they may send for what other Quantities they may see a Service for. And

*3dly.* That the Printer may encouraged in Printing for Friends,

*4thly.* That one Book at least of a sort that shall be Printed [except Collections] may be kept in each Monthly or Quarterly Meeting, for the Service of Friends and Truth, as there shall be occasion for the future. And was agreed at the yearly Meeting 1692. To be

Recommended to the Quarterly or Monthly Meetings, and desired by the said Meeting 1692 in the Printed Epistle.

*5thly.* Its agreed, that for Incouragement the Printer will allow two pence in the Shilling for all such Books.

*6thly.* Its agreed that some here shall be appointed two or three Weeks before each Quarter Day to Examine the Printer, to see that they send no Books but such as are approved by Friends, and no more than two of a sort as aforesaid; except the Friends in the County shall write for more, which its hoped they will not fail in, as they see a Service for them.

*7thly.* Its Agreed or Advised, that the Printers Account be fully cleared once a Year at the least by those Friends the County shall send up to the Yearly Meeting.

*8thly.* Its Agreed that the Name of the Printer Employed by Friends should be sent, with Directions how to write to him.

*And Dear Friends and Brethren,* Its tenderly and in Brotherly Love Advised and Recommended unto you, That ye be careful and diligent in the spreading of all such Books that are Printed for the *Service of Truth*, and are Written either in defence of it, or *Christian Doctrine*, or *Holy Profession*, or by way of *Epistle*, *Warning*, *Caution*, *Exhortation*, or *Prophesie*. That so we may not be any way or in any wise Remiss or Negligent in promoting that Holy and Eternal Truth it hath pleased Almighty God to bless us with the Knowledge of, and hath Raised us up to stand Witness for, in our Age and Generation, nor nothing may be wanting on our Parts to promote it, and the spreading of it, in order that the Nations may be Informed and brought into Knowledge of it, and therein come to know Peace and Acceptance with the Lord, and injoy his Blessing, For one End of the Lords Visiting us, and bringing us to the Knowledge thereof is, that we therein might be Instrumental for the good of others, and Faithfully serve him therein with our whole Hearts, and also with that Substance he hath Blessed us with, and made us Stewards of, that in the End we may give an account to him with joy, and may Receive the Reward of Eternal Life.

*Signed on behalf of the Meeting for Sufferings in London the 18th. of the 6th. Month, 1693. By Benji. Bealing.*

Our Ancient Friend, The Printer's Name is as followeth, to whom direct thus, For ANDREW SOWLE, at the *Crooked-Billet* in *Holywell-Lane* in *Shoreditch London*. Who hath long Served Truth and Friends, and suffered very great Losses, and gone through many

Hazards and Difficulties, with sore Prosecutions for the same; is now Ancient and Dark-Sighted, but his Daughter TACE SOWLE, who understands the Business very well, Carries on his Imploy.

Or, To *Tho. Northcott* at his Shop in *George-Yard* in *Lumbard-Street* London: One that served his Apprentice-ship with one that Bound, and sometimes procured Books for Friends, and hath now for some Years past, in like manner been Employed.

Postscript. *And this Agreement and Account herein sent, we think it needful you should Record it in your Quarterly Meeting Books, and Sometimes Read it for Remembrance and General Notice.*<sup>9</sup>

Things did not stand still, the contents of this paper were repeated, refined and amended and set down for permanent reference in the manuscript book of discipline, the *Christian and Brotherly Advices* of 1738 and its printed successors.<sup>10</sup> *Christian and Brotherly Advices* repeats a number of earlier advices, showing that they remained valid for some time. Points additional to the 1693 advice just quoted include: 'That no Old Books be sent to the Counties unspent for' (1672); that Friends in Scotland should take and pay for four hundred copies of any book printed in London written by a Scottish Friend as a contribution to the printing costs (1674); that the Meeting for Sufferings might decide to deliver books 'to the King and his Counsel, the Parliament and other Persons, Magistrates and Governors within this Nation, as also in Foreign parts beyond the Seas' (1679); that the printer to Friends should send books to the London correspondents of provincial meetings, who would then forward them to the county correspondents (1691); that Friends should be encouraged to be diligent in spreading 'books which are Answers to Adversarys' (1697) and that when the Morning Meeting wanted to give away books 'in Truth's Service' it should notify Meeting for Sufferings first (1706).

The costs referred to in the 1693 advice were increased in 1695 to two shillings and sixpence and reduced in 1697 to two shillings. In 1732 Meeting for Sufferings' responsibility to distribute books was stated. In 1759 meetings were recommended to make catalogues of Friends' books they owned and quarterly meetings were to tell the next Yearly Meeting whether this had been done. In 1777 advice originally given on distribution in 1682 and 1684 was reiterated:

it is agreed and desired, that every Quarterly Meeting in each County, take care weightily to consider, and advise amongst themselves, such Way, Method, Place and Places as are fit to sell,

publish and dispose of Friends Books given forth for the Service of Truth, and the Numbers they would receive...

Earlier advices were repeated again in the first printed books of discipline. A 1754 advice was added to the 1783 edition recommending providing the families of poor Friends with Friends Books 'particularly such as are adapted to the instruction and edification of their children'.<sup>11</sup> In 1802 an advice from 1801 recognised that authors might publish or reprint their own works at their own risk if the text was approved by the Morning Meeting.<sup>12</sup> All these rules were intended to achieve an effective distribution of literature published by or for the Society centrally, most of which was printed by the Society's designated printer.

Sometimes the Yearly Meeting made the decision about printing and distribution. For its annual printed epistle the run increased in the 1730s and 1740s from 2,000 to 3,500. In 1737 4,000 copies of the *Rules for Removals and Settlements* were to be printed, and distributed in proportion with epistles.<sup>13</sup> In 1744 1,000 copies of *Advice to Church Wardens* were to be distributed in the same way.<sup>14</sup> In 1747:

Two Small Tracts being reprinted by Order of the Morning Meeting & Meeting for Sufferings for Information concerning our Principles, intended to be given Gratis and spread as Friends may see a Service. One Friend of each County is desired to stay in this Place after the Breaking up of this Meeting, in Order to make a proper Division of the same amongst the several Counties.<sup>15</sup>

More usually these matters were dealt with by the meeting for Sufferings. The Morning Meeting's minutes usually cover the stage before determining quantities and distribution, the meeting considering the author's manuscript and whether or not it should be published. Sometimes these records shed light too on literature that was not printed by the Society's printer but which ended up with a provincial imprint.<sup>16</sup> The division between the work of the two meetings is not always as clearcut as that may suggest. Yearly Meeting's involvement also extended to some substantial publications, going into great detail for example on Besse's three volume *Abstract of Sufferings* published from 1733 to 1738, as well as receiving reports from and referring questions to Meeting for Sufferings.<sup>17</sup> In 1732 a printed proposal for printing the abstract by subscription was issued by Meeting for Sufferings, a format that was followed for a number of other titles. My examples here are based on examining a sample of

Sufferings minutes, not those of the whole century.

The 1701 printing of Barclay's *Apology* is a good example. In 1699 Meeting for Sufferings heard that the Morning Meeting had read through the *Apology* with a view to reprinting it.<sup>18</sup> At the next meeting it was decided that the reprinting should be with the intention of giving away a substantial number of copies.<sup>19</sup> A week later a draft proposal for reprinting the *Apology* by 'a voluntary subscription' was brought to Sufferings and at the beginning of the next month this was sent to thirty-six counties, i.e. quarterly meetings.<sup>20</sup> Early responses were that Kent would take forty copies, Cornwall twenty-four, Westmorland fifty and thirty each for Staffordshire and Huntingdonshire.<sup>21</sup> The orders swelled early in 1700, larger quantities being wanted by some counties, 129 by Oxfordshire, 231 by Nottinghamshire, 247 by Somersetshire, 250 by Lancashire and London monthly meetings, 145 for Southwark and 536 for Devonshire House.<sup>22</sup> Tace Sowle quoted a price of 2s6d bound in calf for each of 4,000 copies.<sup>23</sup>

A more complicated project was the publication of Barclay's *Apology* in French. It was decided early in 1700 that 1,500 copies would be printed, Meeting for Sufferings meeting the cost.<sup>24</sup> Printing was completed in 1702 and a committee appointed to consider the distribution of copies.<sup>25</sup> The list included 100 copies for Holland, thirty for Canterbury and Dover, twenty-five each for Bristol, Harwich and Denmark and twenty for Newcastle.<sup>26</sup> A year later it was noted that the bulk of the printing, almost 1,100 copies, had not yet been distributed.<sup>27</sup> Sufferings also decided to send copies to Friends in Lichfield and Nottingham for French prisoners there.<sup>28</sup> Years later in 1735 Sufferings heard that three copies were required 'for a Friend in Spittlefields to hand among the French People' and agreed to this, so stocks were still available.<sup>29</sup> So Sufferings could be concerned with the distribution of very small numbers of books as well as whole editions. 1735 was a year when there was some demand for French books, four other instances early in the year accounted for thirty-seven books of four different titles.<sup>30</sup>

The orders that came in for the 1736 edition of Barclay's *Apology* justified a printing of 4,000 copies on small paper and 2,000 on large. There was the usual variation in size of orders from the counties, London ordered 1,538 copies.<sup>31</sup> At the end of 1739 958 copies were available.<sup>32</sup>

There are number of examples where there was some degree of urgency in getting literature printed. These usually refer to brief texts for a non-Quaker readership such as the members of the House of Commons. On 28 11th. Month 1703 Sufferings wanted 400 copies of

a document on the Printing Bill printed by the next morning to give to Parliament.<sup>33</sup> 1,000 copies were printed within four days in 1704 of *Considerations on the Bill for preventing occasional Conformity*, twelve Friends were appointed to attend parliament with it the day after its delivery from the printer.<sup>34</sup> Next year 2,000 copies were required by the next evening of *Some considerations on a late Bill, intituled, An Act for preventing occasional conformity*, to be sent to correspondents for distribution to the counties.<sup>35</sup> Another kind of political need was to answer adverse publications. At the end of 1707 600 copies of *George Whitehead's Protestation against Francis Bugg's Persecution and Abuse of the People call'd Quakers...* were required, this time to be delivered to the members of parliament by the printer Thomas Raylton.<sup>36</sup> Francis Bugg's anti-Quaker campaigning generated a good deal of printing. On 15 1st month 1708/9 Sufferings noted that Bugg had just given fifty copies of his substantial *Quakerism Anatomiz'd* and of an abstract of it to members of the House of Commons so had 600 copies of *Observations on Francis Bugg's Abstract* printed and given to parliament.<sup>37</sup>

A more restricted gift resulted from the 1707 decision to give a copy of Barclay's *Apology* to each Scots member of each house of parliament, seventy in all.<sup>38</sup> The *Apology* was the most popular work for presentation to non-Friends. In 1736 Meeting for Sufferings agreed to give both the *Apology* and the *Abstract of Sufferings* to each member of both houses of parliament, 576 copies were delivered with forty-six more later. Friends were appointed to deal with the delivery to persons of distinction as quickly and privately as possible, and only by the appointed Friends.<sup>39</sup> In 1738 twelve copies of the *Apology* were to be given to judges.<sup>40</sup>

The Meeting for Sufferings was not always able to meet requests to supply books. George Whitehead's 1707 *A Serious Examination of George Keith's Pretended, Serious Call to the Quakers...* was clearly popular. 1,500 copies had been ordered to be printed and it was presumably too late to change the order when Devon Quarterly Meeting wanted 500 copies. They were allocated 250, a good part of the print-run for one quarterly meeting, and North Wales had a slightly later order cut from 200 to 100.<sup>41</sup> In a later example. the *Collection of Testimonies* 1760, the print order was doubled from 500 to 1,000 but there were in fact two printings, presumably each of 500.<sup>42</sup> In 1761 Sufferings recommended sending the 144 copies of Penn's *Primitive Christianity* required to Ireland but the printer Luke Hinde said that only ninety copies were available and forty-eight were sent.<sup>43</sup>

Meetings for Sufferings also made decisions about copies of books

to go to their authors. Daniel Phillips was given fifty copies of his *Vindiciae Veritatis...* in 1707 to dispose of as he saw fit, published in 1703 this had perhaps been selling slowly. Richard Claridge was also to be sent fifty of his books to dispose of as he saw occasion.<sup>44</sup> Thomas Ellwood declined the offer of 100 copies of his *The Glorious Brightness of the Gospel Day...* and it was decided to send fifty copies to North and South Carolina and fifty to Virginia and Maryland.<sup>45</sup>

Two contrasting examples of gifts to non-Quaker individuals come from the minutes of Meeting for Sufferings but there should surely be instances in local records too. In 1735 Meeting for Sufferings heard that 'David Barclay Reports that he, this Day did Deliver One of his Late Father Robt Barcalys Apologys in English, to the Prince of Wales, which he received very favourably.'<sup>46</sup> In 1760 Sufferings gave three books to an attorney, Samuel Dickinson, who had been helpful in a dispute: Barclay's *Apology*, Pearson's *Great Case of Tithes* and the 1757 collection of acts of parliament relative to the Quakers.<sup>47</sup>

There were gifts to non-Quaker institutions too. In 1760 Meeting for Sufferings agreed to present nine titles to the newly opened library of the British Museum. They included Fox's *Journal*, the works of both Penn and Penington, Sewel's *History* and Barclay's *Apology*.<sup>48</sup> In 1799 Joseph Gurney Bevan attempted to obtain a complete set of the printed epistles of Yearly Meeting for the Museum.<sup>49</sup> He proposed to Sufferings in 1803 that selections of Friends books should be provided for public libraries in London. Two members were appointed to join him as a 'Committee on the selection of books to be presented to Public Libraries.' The process went on until 1811. The beneficiary libraries in London were those of Sion College, the Library of the Dissenters in Red Cross Street (Dr Williams's Library), the British Museum, the Methodist Preachers Library and the Surrey Institution. Three libraries outside London were added: the East India College at Hertford and the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. Copies of seventy six different titles were given to the libraries, Sion College receiving twenty, Cambridge thirty-one and the British Museum forty-five including Barclay's *Apology* in seven languages. The records of the process shed light on the availability of Friends books. Two of the original titles designated for Sion College were not available and others substituted, similarly five for the British Museum could not be found. Perhaps it was not surprising that Edward Burrough's *The Memorable Works of a Son of Thunder and Consolation*, 1672 was no longer available but John Gough's 1789 *History* was not either. Those available dated from the end of the seventeenth century to very recent titles.<sup>50</sup>

There could be many more examples of donations more locally, by

individuals or meetings. Local members of the Society gave books to the newly founded parochial library at Reigate in Surrey at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This served as a public library strong in theology.<sup>51</sup>

Quaker books were also distributed abroad, not just to Quaker meetings but in the same way as at home to prominent individuals and by travelling Friends simply to possibly receptive people they encountered. Once again Barclay's *Apology* figures prominently in the numerous references in the minutes of Sufferings. In 1760-61 David Barclay was given six High Dutch (German) copies of the *Apology* to give away, John Hill was given fifteen copies of Barclay's *Theses Theologicae* in French and Samuel Fothergill was given twelve of the High Dutch *Apology* and six of Sewel's *History* in High Dutch.<sup>52</sup> The quantities of books and pamphlets could be considerable. In 1736 a gift was made to a person returning to Norway to distribute in Norway or Denmark. This comprised seventy copies of Penn's *Key*, fifty each of Barclay's *Catechism*, and Dell on *Baptism* all in Danish and four of Barclay's *Apology*, one Latin, one English and two High Dutch.<sup>53</sup> A couple of years later another Friend was given six of each of four titles to take to Norway.<sup>54</sup> Six copies of the *Apology* in Danish were required in 1741 for ships' masters going to Norway and Denmark. The next year more Danish literature was required for ships' masters at Falmouth: six *Apologies*, twenty *Keys* and twenty of Dell on *Baptism*.<sup>55</sup> These accounts remind us of the continuing attempt to spread the Quaker word in Northern Europe.

The presentation of literature to foreign diplomats and sovereigns was also regularly considered by Meeting for Sufferings. In 1709 it was agreed to present a Danish diplomat with the *Apology* in English, French and Latin, it was not yet available in Danish.<sup>56</sup> Later that year the governors of New England and New York were to be given the *Apology* and Ellwood's *Sacred History*.<sup>57</sup> The *Apology* in French and Latin was given to the Prince of Modena in 1735 and to the French Ambassador, King and the Cardinal in 1737.<sup>58</sup> In 1738 the *Apology* was newly available in Danish. It was to be given to the Danish Minister and to the King and Queen of Denmark.<sup>59</sup> A High Dutch *Apology* was given to the Russian Ambassador for the Czarina; he received French and Latin editions too, as did the King of Sardinia. A minute in 1738 records the completion of presentations to all ambassadors except the Portuguese.<sup>60</sup> This situation certainly continued into the nineteenth century, Anna Littleboy's 1919 article 'Quaker Embassies a century ago' treats this, efforts by Friends to translate, publish and circulate selected Quaker works and the provision of Quaker literature in 1808 for the 2,700 Danish prisoners of war in England.<sup>61</sup>

The majority of Friends books may have been printed and published in London and distributed by the Society's printers on behalf of the Society or on their own account through the network of Friends' meetings. But there were others printed and published outside London, commissioned by meetings or by individuals, whether the author or a patron. These may have appeared to meet a specific local need, they may have been published with the approval of Meeting for Sufferings where it saw no need for the Society to organise publication or their publication may have been discouraged from the centre. Before looking at a number of specific examples approached from local records and studies I will say something about provincial Quaker printing and publishing. There is scope for a substantial study of this theme greatly aided by the inclusion of details of the collections in Friends House in the English Short Title Catalogue. Though there is useful evidence of this printing and publishing activity Russell Mortimer expressed some caution about reading too much into this and drawing conclusions not justified by circumstances:

Printers congregated in local centres where there was jobbing and newspaper work for them, and pamphlet or book work might be quite a small proportion of their activity. Friends wishing to have something published would be limited in choice. Where a choice did exist, the selection of a printer for a certain piece of work by a Friend or meeting who did not consult London Friends might be made on many different grounds. The printer might even be a member of the Society, or one who had taken a Friend as an apprentice, or one who was known to be sympathetic, or one who had had satisfactory business dealings with Friends, or just one who was willing to do a good job of work, or the only one in the place.<sup>62</sup>

Mortimer is concerned primarily with printers and publishers. There is considerable overlap between the two, and booksellers, in the eighteenth century, looking at the eighteen names of those cited for the last quarter of the century in Edward Milligan's *Biographical Dictionary of British Quakers in Commerce and Industry 1775-1920* as involved in book related trades representing probably ten firms will illustrate this. <sup>63</sup> One was a bookseller, printer, publisher and stationer. I would have expected more than three of the ten booksellers to be stationers too. I would not have expected Stephen Ramplen of Ipswich to be a glazier and plumber as well as a printer. For the aspect of the distribution of books it is predictable in this

small sample that five booksellers were also printers and publishers, two more also printers, and two also publishers. There were twelve printers and nine publishers in all.<sup>64</sup> Mortimer says that up to 1750: 'Friends had had books printed and sold in nearly a score of places outside London' (provincial printing had begun a steady increase after the lapse of the restrictive Licensing Act in 1695.)<sup>65</sup> An examination of his list of printers and publishers outside London shows a dramatic increase in the second half of the century. It produces 119 individuals or perhaps 110 firms in 46 places in England; a further thirty-three firms in seven places in Ireland, Scotland and Wales combined. In England Bristol had fourteen firms, Norwich eight, Bath six, Birmingham five, Leeds seven and York eight. Dublin had twenty-one. It may sometimes be wrong to have inferred that two individuals bearing the same surname represent one firm. A handful of them, Lister in Leeds, Farley in Bristol, Fuller or Jackson in Dublin, will be well-known, others will have produced just one or two titles, some will not be Friends. In their output from 1732 to 1773 the Farleys printed approximately thirty Quaker titles of about 230 in all, but more than twice as many were works by John or Charles Wesley, including reprints.<sup>66</sup> Often eighteenth century imprints have a list of names of booksellers distributing a work as well as that of the printer/publisher.

Turning now to the evidence of local involvement with Quaker literature, based chiefly on local histories or published editions of minutes I will begin with Yorkshire. Pearson Thistlethwaite's careful presentation of material from minutes in his *Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting 1665-1966* provides a very rich account of various aspects of Quaker literature in Yorkshire.<sup>67</sup> He observes that Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting had three methods of determining how many copies of each book would be needed:

1. by deciding to buy a certain number for the Quarterly Meeting as a whole and then having a committee to decide on proportions in which they would be distributed to monthly meetings;
2. asking monthly meetings simply to order the numbers they wanted;
3. asking monthly meetings to invite subscriptions from individual Friends.

He records the quantities ordered by the Quarterly Meeting of forty-seven titles in the eighteenth century, in quantities ranging from fourteen, the number of monthly meetings in the Quarterly Meeting, to a staggering 3,000. There were twenty-five instances of

the order being for over a hundred copies, three of those were for over 1,000. There were large orders for some substantial books: 150 copies of William Penn's *Works* in 1724 and 642 copies of Barclay's *Apology* in 1734. In some cases it is clear that the orders were made up of copies for the meetings and for individuals, as in the 1731 order for 471 copies of Anthony Pearson's *Great Case of Tithes*, or 1,445 copies of David Hall's *A Compassionate Call...* in 1748.<sup>68</sup> Sometimes the Quarterly Meeting appears to have met the cost of a purchase. In 1767 eighty copies of a new impression of Samuel Bownas's *A Description of the Qualifications necessary to a Gospel Minister* were to be free of charge to monthly meetings. The first printed book of discipline was only available to meetings so Yorkshire took fifty-eight copies. Once individuals were allowed to buy personal copies 219 of the 1802 edition were ordered.

To an extent the Quarterly Meeting sometimes acted in the same way as the Morning Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, taking responsibility for producing literature for local use. It also forwarded material to London, for consideration by the Morning Meeting, which might be published there. Here are four examples of literature where printing, in quite large quantities, was arranged by the Quarterly Meeting:

In 1736 3,000 copies were printed of the small 1708 tract by Joshua Middleton, *A Tender and Compassionate Call to Prophane Swearers...* . It was printed in Leeds to be distributed among the Yorkshire monthly meetings. It was also printed in Dublin in 1736 and had been printed in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1735 for Durham Quarterly Meeting.<sup>69</sup>

In 1752 having decided that printing in London would be more expensive than in Leeds the Quarterly Meeting ordered 1,000 copies from the printer James Lister in Leeds of Sophia Hume's *An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of South Carolina, to bring their deeds to the light of Christ...* First printed in Philadelphia this was reprinted twice in Bristol in 1750 and 1751 and in London by the Society's printer Luke Hinde in 1752.<sup>70</sup>

Joseph Phipps [An Address] *To the Youth of Norwich Meeting*, was reprinted with a run of 3,000 copies in 1773 'by order of York Quarterly Meeting', for distribution to the youth of the county. This had been reprinted previously in Exeter and Dublin, in 1772 'by order of the Men's Meeting in Bristol' and a 1775 Lancaster printing 'by order of Lancaster Quarterly Meeting' before being printed by the Society's printer in London in 1776.<sup>71</sup>

Esther Tuke's [Epistle] *To Friends of York Quarterly Meeting*, published by the direction of that meeting justified 1,200 copies for distribution in Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Friends had an arrangement with a York bookseller Thomas Waite as early as 1673 to handle local distribution for them on commission. Other Quaker booksellers in York, Thomas Hammond or Nathaniel Bell, were used later. Thistlethwaite says that in 1777 the Quarterly Meeting asked monthly meetings 'to send in the names of local booksellers... or of other traders, in those market towns where there was no bookseller - who would be willing to act as agents for Quaker books published in London, on a sale or return basis'. It was possible to have books supplied unbound in York but cheaper if this was done in London. It was also cheaper for books to be sent from London by sea.

Though a very large quarterly meeting with a strong tradition of using and spreading Quaker literature Yorkshire's difference from others, including the London monthly meetings, is probably not great except for scale. Some of what can be found in local records or studies corresponds to the material in the minutes of Meeting for Sufferings for example on orders for the 1701 Barclay's *Apology*. Transactions on a smaller scale can be found in the local material. In 1713 the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting in Lincolnshire purchased six titles in a total of eight copies at a cost of 7s 3d for Brigg meeting and there are regular references to disbursements for books without naming them.<sup>72</sup> In 1712 the Longford Monthly Meeting in London: 'purchased a supply of R. Barclay's Catechism. Stephen Crisp's Primer, George Fox's Primer, for distribution amongst their young people; and increased their stock of those books a few years afterwards for the same purpose.'<sup>73</sup> Funds for acquiring books were not unlimited, in 1711 'we find a minute upon the occasion of a complaint having been made that Wandsworth Friends did not sufficiently encourage the printing of Friends' books' being explained by the poor current economic situation of local Friends 'when Trading in general is bad, as now it is.'<sup>74</sup>

Evidence will not be solely in minutes, a letter in the Cambridgeshire Area Meeting's archives shows the London printer writing directly about two titles to be dealt with in different ways in 1755:

Herewith are sent fourteen Benj : Holms's Life and Works, which please to convey to your Quarterly Meeting, for the Monthly Meetings to distribute as they see meet; As they are free of all Charge, except Carriage, it is expected that Regard be had to such who may desire to have them, but are not so well able to purchase. - I am directed by Benjamin's Executor, and Friends concern'd to give this Notice. -

Please also to acquaint the Meeting, That I have just printed, price Nine pence, An Epistle to the inhabitants of Carolina wrote by Sophia Hume; occasioned by the last Inundation of the Sea, whereby Charles-town, the Capital of that Province, with all its Inhabitants, were in the greatest danger of being overwhelm'd.

As I have no Order to send the above Book through the Counties, those Friends who are desirous of having it, may be supply' by

Thy Real Friend  
Luke Hinde<sup>75</sup>

Neither of the books in this letter is being distributed in the standard ways referred to before, the Holme is free of charge, the Hume a commercial undertaking by Hinde as publisher. A legacy from the author enabled the 1747 publication in Newcastle upon Tyne of *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story*, a number of copies 'to be bestowed upon the Publick as the Author's Legacy'. The printer produced additional copies for sale and a study of the distribution of books in Gloucestershire Quarterly Meeting (which usefully supplements my general observations here) notes that seven individual Friends acquired personal copies.<sup>76</sup>

Meeting libraries, where they existed, continued the distribution of books to Friends, again and again. Here I can do little more than note that some existed in the eighteenth century. They will have acquired books through the usual routes, purchase, free distribution from the centre, gifts from individual Friends and bequests. There are a few good examples in Beck and Ball's *London Friends' Meetings*, soon to be reprinted (now available). In his study of Essex Quakers Adrian Davies notes that there are records of book borrowing in Maldon from 1707-11, that 'at one time or another all Friends in the Maldon meeting had books from the Quaker repository' and that in October 1711 sixteen Friends had borrowed books.<sup>77</sup>

The final aspect of distribution I want to look at is that of secondhand or out of print Quaker literature. Much of whatever evidence survives will not be in the usual sources and it may be possible to piece together a more substantial account from private archives and book trade records. That there was some market for older Friends' books does emerge from the minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings as well. In 1705 Dr Lower was asked 'to Buy up some of Robt. Barclay's Lattin Apologies for friends', this must refer to the original 1676 edition.<sup>78</sup> There are references to the purchase of books for the Society's library, sometimes anti-Quaker works but including

a few older Quaker writings such as Samuel Fisher's *Baby-Baptism* of 1653 in 1707.<sup>79</sup> A major purchase prompted by Yearly Meeting in 1707 was of the stock held by Thomas Raylton of books printed in his predecessor Andrew Sowle's time up to his death in 1695. Friends appointed to look into the matter reported to Meeting for Sufferings in 1709: 'Having inspected the Books we find many valuable ones amongst them worthy to be dispersed for public service where friends' poverty may hinder the buying of them...'. Eventually, a price of fifty pounds was agreed for 37,011 sheets, it is difficult to estimate how many books or pamphlets, presumably all unbound, this may have represented.<sup>80</sup>

The scarcity of the original edition of Fox's *Journal* was the opening theme in a single sheet printed prospectus from the Society's printer in 1708, inviting subscriptions for a new two volume edition. This noted that it was 'out of Print, and very Scarce those Four of Five Years past, Advanced to, and Sold for 20s per Book whereas the first Price was but 13s'. The offer was at an attractive price, eight shillings and six pence or seven shillings and six pence if six were ordered.<sup>81</sup> It shows that there were recognised secondhand prices for some Quaker books.

One excellent example of an individual Friend's book buying is given in Isaac Fletcher's diary, edited by Angus Winchester, which in an appendix based on his account books records the purchase of seventy-nine books between 1756 and 1781. At least twelve of these were Friends books, mostly bought in London or from a Cockermouth stationer and bookbinder. They cost between three pence and eighteen shillings. The cheapest was James Nayler's *Works*, 1716, bought in 1773 at the sale of a bankrupt Whitehaven Friend, the dearest Ellwood's *Sacred History* bought in 1756. In 1760 Robert Barclay's works cost thirteen shillings, presumably the three volumes of 1717-18 and 1761 Sewel's *History* fourteen shillings. Seven of the books came from Luke Hinde in London, three of these could be described as current editions, the others went back as far as 1703.<sup>82</sup> Are there more useful records like this that I have overlooked?

The sale of books by auction should be an aspect of their distribution. Information in auction catalogues is not always helpful, the cheapest books will not normally be identified, the purchaser's identity may only be known if a marked up copy of the catalogue survives, many books in London sales will have passed into the secondhand trade and smaller collections will often have been included in general sales of property with minimal descriptions. Serious and substantial libraries belonging to Friends may only have contained a small minority of Quaker books. 4,400 or so books of

Benjamin Furly were sold in 1714, the 1,600 titles belonging to Dr John Fothergill in 1781. Fothergill's friend Peter Collinson died in 1768, his books seem to have been divided between his son and John Cator, the latter portion coming to auction in London in 1987.<sup>83</sup>

The distribution of books by bequest may often have resulted in disposal by auction. Wills could be another valuable source of information but may only refer to books without listing them. On the death of William Mead in 1713 his son distributed amongst the various meetings in the county of Essex a library of Friends' books collected by his father.<sup>84</sup> In her thesis on Derbyshire Quakers 1650-1761 Helen Forde notes that eighteen of sixty-three wills mention books or had them recorded in the house according to the inventory after death; it can reasonably be assumed that a good proportion would have been by Friends.<sup>85</sup> A published abstract of wills in the Quaker records in Dublin gives selected details from 176 eighteenth century wills. Only eight of the abstracts mention books, two of them just a bible while two are of the wills of Quaker booksellers, another in 1727 leaves a bequest towards printing Friends' books.<sup>86</sup>

I hope that the account given here of the business of distributing Friends' literature is a fair one, and reasonably comprehensive in its coverage of the different aspects of that despite the necessarily selective examination of the evidence. I would have liked to be able to say more about private patronage in the publishing of Quaker books, about the distribution of books to poorer Friends, and especially about the creation and use of meeting libraries. There is scope for serious study of that last theme, perhaps building on work done and yet to be done by local historians.

*David Hall*  
*Presidential Address given at*  
*Britain Yearly Meeting on 30 July 2009*

#### NOTES and REFERENCES

1. Vol. III, *The Irish Book in English 1550-1800*, ed by Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.46. The importance of the archival material is referred to on p.397.
2. Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p.x.
3. Minutes of the Meetings for Sufferings - hereafter YM/MfS/M - and the Morning Meeting are quoted or referred to by permission of the Library of the Religious Society of Friends in

- Britain - hereafter LSF. This extract is YM/MfS/M/17 p.173.
4. An up to date and detailed study of the English book trade in the eighteenth century can be found in James Raven, *The Business of Books* (New Haven Ct. and London, Yale University Press, 2007), especially chapters 5-10. The publication of volume V of *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1695-1830* is expected in the autumn of 2009.
  5. 'Devonshire House Reference Library with Notes on Early Printers and Printing in the Society of Friends', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 18 (1921), 1-16, 66-80; hereafter JFHS
  6. 'Quaker Printers, 1750-1850', JFHS 50 (1963), 100-133; 'The First Century of Quaker Printers' JFHS, 40 (1948), 37-49; (1949), 74-84. 'Biographical notices of printers and publishers of Friends' books up to 1750', *Journal of Documentation*, 3 (1947), 107-125.
  7. *The life of Christopher Story* in volume 1 of *Friends' Library*, Philadelphia, 1837, pp 160-1.
  8. Mortimer, 'The first century...', 1948, 39-41.
  9. The imprint is London, Printed for Friends, by T. Sowle...
  10. The first printed book of discipline is *Extracts from the minutes and advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends...* ([London]: printed by James Phillips, 1783), and the second, same title (London: printed and sold by W. Phillips, 1802).
  11. *Extracts*, 1783, p.16.
  12. *Extracts*, 1802, p.13.
  13. LSF YM/M/8 p.319.
  14. LSF YM/M/9 p.230.
  15. *Ibid*, p.543.
  16. The regulation of what was published has been described in David J. Hall, "'The fiery Tryal of their Infallible Examination'; self-control in the regulation of Quaker publishing in England from the 1670s to the mid 19th century", pp. 59-86 in *Censorship and the control of print in England and France 1600-1910* ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1992). Christine Trevett covers similar ground for Wales in 'Not fit to be printed'; the Welsh, the women and the Second Day's Morning Meeting', JFHS 59 (2001), 115-144.
  17. *An Abstract of the Sufferings of the People call'd Quakers For The Testimony of a Good Conscience...* [compiled by Joseph Besse] 3 vols (London: Printed and Sold by the Assigns of J. Sowle, 1733-8).
  18. LSF YM/MfS/M/14 p.65.
  19. *Ibid*. p.70.
  20. *Ibid*. pp.72, 85.
  21. *Ibid*. pp.111-3, 128-31.

22. Ibid. pp.173-9, 200.
23. Ibid. p.211. It was to be bound by another Quaker printer, Thomas Northcott. Subscribers were to be asked to pay half the price in advance as usual and the printer would receive a loan of £150 to buy paper.
24. Ibid. p.222. The cost was to be 3s per book plus 8d a copy for binding (YM/MfS/M/15 p.94).
25. LSSF YM/MfS/M/15 pp.321, 325, 335.
26. LSF YM/MfS/M/16 pp.37, 42-3.
27. Ibid. pp.233-5.
28. LSF YM/MfS/M/17 p.195.
29. LSF YM/MfS/M/26 p.31
30. LSF YM/MfS/M/26 pp.7, 37, 45, 84.
31. Ibid. p.14. It was to cost 2s unbound, 2s9d bound for the small paper copies, 2s6d unbound and 3s4d bound for the large paper.
32. LSF YM/MfS/M/27 p.83.
33. LSF YM/MfS/M/16 p.331.
34. LSF YM/MfS/M/17 p.148.
35. Ibid. pp.216-7.
36. LSF YM/MfS/M/19 p.38.
37. Ibid. p.207.
38. Ibid. pp.209, 213.
39. LSF YM/MfS/M/26 pp.231, 240, 248, 251. vol. 27 p.34.
40. LSF YM/MfS/M/26 p.504.
41. LSF YM/MfS/M/18 p.321.
42. see my 'A Collection of Testimonies, 1760: a bibliographical note', JFHS 54 (1982) pp.313-6.
43. LSF YM/MfS/M/31 p.4.
44. LSF YM/MfS/M/18 pp.257, 255.
45. Ibid. pp. 268-9.
46. LSF YM/MfS/M/26 p.12.
47. LSF YM/MfS/M/30 p.380.
48. Ibid. pp.421, 435-6.
49. LSF YM/MfS/M/40 p.333.
50. LSF YM/MfS/M/41 pp.3, 10, 18, 59, 86, 107, 192, 257, 274, 379.
51. see David W. Williams, 'English Parochial Libraries' *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, April 1978. pp. 138-147.
52. LSF YM/MfS/M/31 pp.71, 73.
53. LSF YM/MfS/M/26 p.185, figures include extra copies added at the next meeting.
54. Ibid. p.524.
55. LSF YM/MfS/M/27 pp.263, 339.
56. LSF YM/MfS/M/19 p.220.

57. Ibid. p.355.
58. LSF YM/MfS/M/26 pp.84, 362.
59. Ibid. p.437.
60. Ibid. pp. 453-4, 456-7.
61. *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, 53, 43-9.
62. Mortimer, 1963, 116.
63. (York: Sessions Book Trust, 2007).
64. None were bookbinders but they may of course have employed binders. James Raven suggests (op.cit. in note 4, p.139) that a number of booksellers employed in-house binders.
65. Mortimer, 1963, 101.
66. The information about the Farleys was garnered from the on-line *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue*, now incorporated in the *English Short Title Catalogue*, at a stage before the addition of details of LSF holdings to the latter.
67. (Harrogate: the author, 1979), pp.279-97. It must be treated with caution on some of the purely bibliographical information.
68. This, and perhaps orders from other quarterly meetings, may explain why it was printed twice in London that year.
69. Joseph Smith *A Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books* (London: Joseph Smith, 1867) vol. 2, p. 175.
70. Ibid. vol. 1, p.1019.
71. Ibid. vol. 2, p.413.
72. *The First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends 1669-1719*, ed. By Harold W. Brace, 3 vols (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society, 1948-51) III, p.43.
73. William Beck and T. Frederick Ball, *The London Friends' Meetings* (London: F. Bowyer Kitto, 1869) p.292.
74. Ibid. p.321.
75. Letter in Huntingdon Monthly Meeting papers, in the Cambridgeshire Archives at Shire Hall, Cambridge, reference R.59/25/10/9. I am grateful to Laurel Phillipson for drawing my attention to this letter. Published by permission of Cambridgeshire Area Meeting, Religious Society of Friends.
76. Ruth G. Burt, 'Quaker Books in the 18th Century From the point of view of a County Quarterly Meeting', *JFHS*, 38 (1946) pp.7-18.
77. Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.113.
78. LSF YM/MfS/M/18 p.35.
79. LSF YM/MfS/M/19 p.29.
80. Ibid., pp.246, 311.
81. LSF Port. AA 102
82. (Kendal: Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and

Archaeological Society, 1994) pp.480-2.

83. Bloomsbury Book Auctions, 22 October 1987. It is not suggested that the sale was of the entire library; lots included six Quaker books, three of which had been in Collinson's library.
84. Beck and Ball, p.279.
85. (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 1978), p.195.
86. *Quaker Records Dublin Abstracts of Wills* ed. by P. Beryl Eustace and Olive C. Goodbody (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1957).