

## Tace Sowle

(London: 1691 – 1749)

## Andrew Sowle

(London: circa 1660 – circa 1690)

Tace Sowle succeeded to the business of her father, Andrew Sowle, in 1691 and became the leading Quaker printer of her generation. Immediately after taking over the Sowle press, she expanded its production, with her name appearing in more than two hundred imprints during the first fifteen years of her career. Her press was the primary channel through which the Friends' work was published, and she printed the major works of the founders of Quakerism, such as George Fox, Margaret Askew Fell Fox, Robert Barclay, James Naylor, William Penn, George Whitehead, and Isaac Penington. Quakers relied on their printers to organize the local, national, and international distribution of their books, and the Sowle press was an important exception to the rule that printing houses generally did not retail their own products. For more than half a century Tace Sowle served the largest Nonconformist sect in England not only as the primary printer but also as the primary publisher, warehouse, collecting agent, and adviser on market demands. From the time that Andrew Sowle set up a secret press some time before the Restoration until 1829, when the business can no longer be traced, this unique publishing operation flourished both in London and, through family connections, in America.

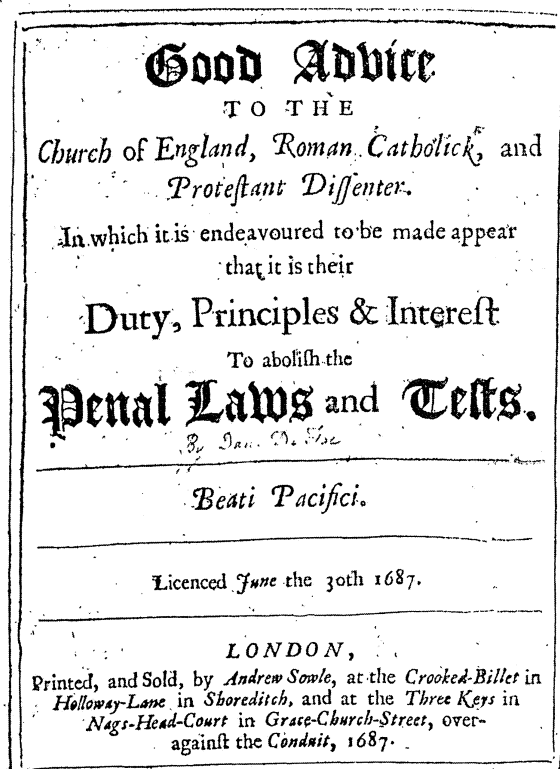
As the Quakers' sobriquet – "Publishers of Truth" – suggests, early Friends used extensively the power of the printed word to shape public opinion and foment sociopolitical change. Quaker commitment to the use of the press may be inferred from the fact that in 1659 and 1660 this illegal Nonconformist sect, despite comprising less than 1 percent of the population, published about 10 percent of all the titles printed in England. Between the beginnings of the movement in the early 1650s and the appearance of the first Quaker bibliography in 1708, 440 Quaker authors produced 2,678 different publications. At this time of harsh persecution and strict press licensing, this sect published no fewer than 2.25 million books and tracts. Products of the Sowle press not only influenced the internal devel-

opment of the movement but also mediated relationships among the Friends, the government, and the public at large.

Early Quakers were perceived as posing a serious threat to the social order, and in general Friends' books could not even be submitted for licensing with any hope of approval. From the passing of the Licensing Act in 1662 until its lapse in 1679, Friends' books rarely show printers' names in imprints. Because of the risks involved, Quaker works were generally published only by those in sympathy with the Friends. Other early printers and publishers of Quaker works include Giles Calvert, Thomas Simmonds, Robert Wilson, Mary Westwood, Benjamin Clark, and Thomas Northcott. Yet by the time Tace Sowle succeeded to her father's business in 1691, Andrew Sowle had established a virtual monopoly over Quaker printing, and after the lapse of the Licensing Act the worst persecution was over.

Andrew Sowle served his apprenticeship with Ruth Raworth, one of the many Nonconformist women printers and publishers of her generation. During the third year of Sowle's apprenticeship Raworth married Thomas Newcomb, an important radical (Puritan) publisher. After this apprenticeship in illegal printing and publishing, Sowle was freed in 1653. While he began to print for the fledgling Quaker movement almost immediately, the location of his first press remains a secret. Sometime after the Restoration he openly set up shop in Holloway Lane, Shoreditch, "at the sign of the Crooked Billet." This location served as his printing house, shop, and personal residence, and he lived there about thirty years.

John Tomkins's important collection of early Quaker biographies, *Piety Promoted, in a Collection of Dying Sayings of Many of the People Called Quakers* (1701), tells of Andrew Sowle's repeated losses at the hands of government authorities for having printed unauthorized materials. William Penn records that Sowle's printing house was "often searched, and his materials, as presses, letter, &c. as



*Title page for one of the more than eighty Quaker works, printed by Andrew Sowle, who – as his imprint specifies – had a shop off Grace Church Street, near the main Quaker meetinghouse (courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University)*

often broke to pieces, and taken away, as any Friends' books were found printing by him." Penn states that this government harassment of the Sowle press went on "for many years together: during which time . . . [Sowle] met with great losses, and had, at one time by his adversaries, about a thousand reams of printed books taken from him." Given this hostile climate, it is not surprising that Sowle's name does not appear in imprints before 1680. The first imprint showing his name gives his address as "Devonshire New Buildings" near Bishopsgate Street, the site of the first public Quaker meetings in London. In 1687 imprints indicate that his books were sold at the Three Keys in Nag's Head Court off Gracechurch Street, across from the main meetinghouse.

Sometime near the Restoration, Andrew Sowle married a woman named Jane, and the couple had two daughters, both of whom were trained in the family business. Elizabeth, the youngest, married her parents' apprentice, William Bradford, in

the early 1680s, and she later immigrated with him to Pennsylvania, where the two became the first Quaker printers in the American colonies. (William Bradford later defected from the Friends and became the first government printer for the province of New York.) Tace Sowle, the elder daughter, was freed of the Stationers' Company by patrimony in 1695 and became her father's legal successor. By 1690 Andrew Sowle was described as "an old man" and nearly blind, and after this date his name no longer appears in imprints. In actuality Tace Sowle succeeded her father in 1691, and she had probably assumed management of the printing house sometime earlier. Andrew Sowle died at his house in Shoreditch in 1695, attended by his friend William Penn. During the eleven years that his name had appeared in imprints, Andrew Sowle published far more than eighty items for the Friends.

Immediately after Andrew Sowle's death, Tace and Jane Sowle gave up the Shoreditch address and combined printing house, shop, and residence at White-Hart Court in Gracechurch Street, across from their old shop at Nag's Head Court. They also acquired a shop in Leadenhall Street at the sign of the Bible. The fact that Tace Sowle bound two new apprentices within the first two years of her own freedom may attest to her ambition. She immediately increased the production of the Sowle press – from an average of seven works per year for the years 1687–1690 to an average of twenty-three works per year one decade later. The eleven-year period between her formal, legal take-over in 1695 and her marriage in 1706 was the busiest of her career, and in fact the busiest in the 150-year history of the Sowle press. In her first fifteen years as a printer for the Friends, Tace Sowle published more than three hundred works.

In 1705 bookseller John Dunton described Tace Sowle as

both a Printer as well as a bookseller, and the Daughter of one; and understands her Trade very well, being a good Compositor herself. Her love and piety to her aged Mother is eminently remarkable; even to that degree, that she keeps herself unmarried for this very reason . . . that it may not be out of her power to let her Mother have always the chief command in her house.

Sowle did in fact marry the following year (1706), but she nevertheless ensured that her mother would remain the primary power in the house. Seventy-five-year-old Jane Sowle became the nominal head of the family press the same year that her daughter was married. Imprints after this date read "J.

Sowle,” and for the next thirty years Tace Sowle’s own name disappears.

Tace Sowle never gave up her name for that of her husband, Thomas Raylton, but instead used the compound “Tace Sowle Raylton.” Thomas Raylton was not a member of the Stationers’ Company, and he apparently never actively participated in the production of printed works. Unlike his wife and mother-in-law, he had no training or experience as a printer. His apprenticeship was as a blacksmith, but at the time of his marriage into the Sowle business he was working as a hosier. Records show that he did help in warehousing and distributing books (customarily the wife’s job in male-headed printing households) and in negotiating with the Friends. But records also show that Tace Sowle Raylton continued to oversee the production of publications – as she had done for sixteen years before she was married, and as she would do for another twenty-six years after she was widowed.

R. S. Mortimer indicates that from 1706 through 1738 “the Sowle press continued as the main Quaker publisher, issuing upwards of three hundred works in just over thirty years.” When Jane Sowle died in 1711 at the age of eighty, imprints began showing “assigns of J. Sowle” – that is, Tace Sowle Raylton. After 1715 the Leadenhall Street outlet was abandoned for a new shop in George Yard in Lombard Street, also at the sign of the Bible. After 1716, when Tace moved her printing house to the George Yard site as well, this would remain the location of the Sowle press and its successors for the next century.

After the death of Thomas Raylton in 1723, Tace Sowle Raylton continued to manage her printing house. In 1736 she employed a foreman – Luke Hinde, a relative. Thirty years after her name had disappeared from imprints, it suddenly reappeared, beginning with an edition of Robert Barclay’s *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1736), printed by “T. Sowle Raylton and Luke Hinde.” In 1739, when Tace Sowle Raylton was seventy-three years old, Luke Hinde became her partner, and from 1739 until her death in 1749 the two published about seventy works for the Friends – “a much smaller output than the two hundred issued during the years 1690–1706,” Mortimer writes, “but none the less including the main Quaker authors of their period.”

In November 1749 Tace Sowle Raylton, a wealthy, independent businesswoman with two houses and additional real estate in Blackfriars, died at eighty-three years of age. Her will left fifty

pounds to her “nephew William Bradford of New York in America printer” and thirty pounds to the London Women’s Meeting, which was to distribute this to the poor. Her printing house and the bulk of her estate went to Luke Hinde, who succeeded her. Hinde continued to publish for the Friends until his own death in 1766, whereupon he was succeeded by his second wife, Mary Phillips Hinde.

Without employing a foreman or remarrying, Mary Phillips Hinde continued as the Friends’ printer and publisher for nearly a decade, during which time the press imprints began to show “No. 2 George Yard” instead of “the Bible.” In 1775 she turned the business over to James Phillips, a relation, and twenty-two years later Phillips took his son, William Phillips, as a partner, and the firm became “James Phillips and Son.” William Phillips succeeded his father in 1800 and continued to publish Quaker literature for nearly thirty years, although not at the rate of his predecessors. During 1805 and 1806 William Phillips appears to have had a partner named Fardon, but from 1807 until his death in 1828 he again worked alone. The “C. Phillips” whose name appears in one imprint in 1829 was his second wife, Christiana Walduck Phillips, who spent several months trying to settle outstanding accounts with the Friends following the death of her husband. After 1829 the Sowle-Hinde-Phillips dynasty disappeared, marking the end of an era for the Quaker press. In 1828 the Meeting for Sufferings (which had overseen details of production since the 1670s) established a printing committee to take care of publishing matters and turned its attention to other affairs.

To understand the operation of the Sowle press, one must first understand the workings of Quaker central organization, for this body acted in the capacity of the modern publisher (financing production, supplying printers with copies, and overseeing national and international distribution). After the intensified persecution of Quakers in the early years of the Restoration, George Fox and other leading Friends designed a program to give the movement organizational strength. Monthly and quarterly meetings were established in the various districts and counties throughout England, with national business meetings to be attended by representatives of these groups. Many organizational bodies that met in London – particularly the Yearly Meeting, the Second Day’s Morning Meeting, and the Meeting for Sufferings – shared central control of the society. From the beginning, one of the primary purposes of Quaker central organization was to supervise and control the Quaker press.

During the Restoration the Quakers were the most heavily prosecuted Nonconformist sect in England, and after more than fifteen thousand Friends had been imprisoned, it is easy to see why Quaker leaders sought to ensure that their authors would avoid unnecessarily provoking the authorities. George Fox had been concerned with such matters from the earliest days of the movement, and by 1672 a complex system of internal review was established. The problems with this internal censorship are obvious – in the marginalizing or silencing of dissenting voices and in the decline of a movement with the potential to effect radical social change into the respectable quietism of the eighteenth century. On a more positive note, however, Thomas O'Malley notes that “by employing caution and political sensitivity” and by attempting to speak with something approaching a collective voice, this persecuted minority managed to survive. Unlike many other women printers and publishers of her day, Tace Sowle managed to stay out of jail.

The three bodies of central organization that controlled the Quaker press were the Yearly Meeting, the Morning Meeting, and the Meeting for Sufferings. Each of these bodies had its own duties, yet each closely cooperated with the others. The Yearly Meeting met annually in London in late May or early June and was composed of representatives from major cities and the counties. On the second day of the meeting a committee of ten Friends met to review the year's distribution of books, and later in the day the proposals of these Friends were reviewed by the group. At the first Yearly Meeting in 1672, the committee of ten established a set of policies that was to stand throughout the eighteenth century. One such policy specified that no books or editions were to be produced without their approval. The committee was to decide the number of books that were to be sent to each county and to whom they were to be sent. A printer was to send books abroad only when he or she was instructed to do so, and in the quantities ordered.

The official board overseeing the censorship of Quaker publications was the Morning Meeting, which gathered weekly in London starting in September 1673 and included about a dozen “antient men Friends.” Because its primary task was to approve manuscripts before they were printed, the Morning Meeting spent most of its time reading books aloud, debating them line by line with meticulous care, and deciding which specific passages were to be altered or omitted. Pamela M. Ambrose observes that “no author or subject [was] beyond the scrutiny of the committee, and no one, whatever

their status, [was] guaranteed publication.” Books not passed for printing immediately were either sent back to the author with detailed suggestions for revision or rejected outright as untimely, unsuitable, or too dangerous. Even books to be reprinted had to be reedited, for the political climate of Restoration England (and hence the conditions of publication) shifted from decade to decade. Orders to print or reprint had to be recorded in the minute book of the meeting by the official secretary. Approved books were then passed to the Meeting for Sufferings, which met weekly in London beginning in 1675 and coordinated the details of production and distribution.

By Tace Sowle's day the major sources of financing for Quaker publishing were general collections and moneys that Quarterly Meetings paid directly to printers for books. At the first Yearly Meeting in 1672 a general stock was created to cover the expenses of publishing, and from this stock (and sometimes from the loans of individual Friends for particular projects) Tace Sowle would be advanced sums of up to £300. Books were frequently printed in editions of one thousand copies, and while the Friends were constantly concerned about costs, they clearly could pay for such numbers with ease. This central organization also supplied Sowle with copies to print from, although they did not necessarily own those copies.

Central organization allowed the early Friends to distribute their books with an efficiency unparalleled in their time. It is a paradox of early Quakerism that the Friends' modes of publication were at once innovatively underground and blatantly open. They devised complex strategies to minimize detection and prosecution, yet they kept printed tracts and books flowing into the hands of those in power. In *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (1955) William C. Braithwaite quotes from a letter to George Fox in 1660, for instance, recounting how some copies of one work “is [*sic*] given abroad in Whitehall, and others of them is sold in divers shops, and some of the women cries them about the streets.”

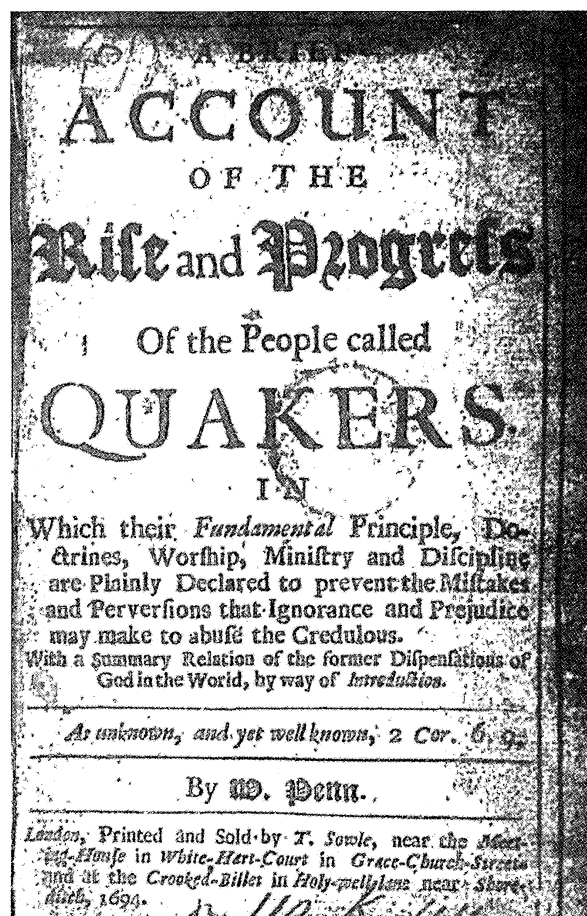
As early as the 1650s Quaker books reached continental Europe and the American colonies and spread throughout England, Ireland, and Wales as traveling preachers carried printed materials with them. Works from the Sowle press were delivered to Monthly Meetings throughout Great Britain and Ireland (in 1691, to 151 meetings in England and Wales alone) and to booksellers willing to vend them in “Cityes and Great Townes.” Books were also shipped to continental Europe – especially to Holland, Germany, France, and Spain – and to the

"Czar of Muscovy" in a special delivery. Sowle's books were distributed throughout the American colonies, including Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, and North and South Carolina. In 1722 a special delivery was made to her nephew, printer Andrew Bradford, who found it easier to import seven hundred copies of the first Quaker history, Willem Sewel's *The History of the Rise, Increase and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers* (1722), from his aunt Tace in London than to print them himself. Regular shipments of Sowle's books also reached the West Indies, including Antigua, Barbados, and Jamaica.

Sowle's methods of local distribution were equally thorough. Books were sold at her own retail outlets, distributed by women wholesalers to other retailers who would sell them, and delivered to coffeehouses and other public places such as Turners' Hall, where between 1696 and 1700 apostate Quaker George Keith was holding his anti-Quaker rallies. Tracts were hand-delivered by Friends to the king and his council, to members of Parliament, and to magistrates, clergymen, and other religious and political authorities both locally and throughout the nation – as well as to those "in foreign partes beyond the seas." Sowle's books, for instance, are known to have reached the governors of New York and New England colonies.

A great advantage of serving as primary publisher to the Friends was the Quaker quota system of distribution, whereby each district automatically received an allotment of every Quaker book produced. In the early days of central organization, individual counties were responsible for paying printers for any number of books automatically sent to them, but this system quickly proved unworkable, and policies were revised. From 1680 through 1690 printers sent only those books that different localities had requested by title and quantity – a practice that led to a much smaller total distribution and caused policies to be reevaluated again.

From 1691 each Monthly Meeting was required to take two copies of every work priced under sixpence and one copy of more expensive works, and printers once again sent all books automatically as soon as they were printed. In 1695 the Yearly Meeting confirmed the success of this policy and raised the quota to two copies of every work priced under two shillings and sixpence, and one copy of more expensive works. This collective agreement that all Friends throughout the country were to maintain a standing subscription to all officially authorized books was an innovative and suc-



Title page for *A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers* (1694) by William Penn, the prolific Quaker author whose Works Tace Sowle printed in 1726

cessful form of mass subscription publishing – the first of its kind on such a scale in England.

In the *Yearly Meeting Epistle* of 1695 the Friends explained that they had implemented the quota system not only to further missionary aims but also to ensure material ones of immediate concern to Sowle: to provide "for some Ease to Friends concerned in the Printing." Tace Sowle was guaranteed a large volume of work as long as she printed officially approved books in the manner that the Friends required. Friends in the counties could also order Quaker books in addition to those works automatically sent to them. To stimulate their interest Sowle customarily bound lengthy trade lists into the backs of the works that she printed, and in 1708 she printed the first Quaker bibliography, John Whiting's *A Catalogue of Friends Books; Written by Many of the People, Called Quakers*.

In addition to having a guaranteed market, loans of capital, and assistance with distribution, other advantages of serving as a publisher for the Friends included help in collecting bills and even some protection against piracy. Because Sowle was producing and distributing huge international consignments, she sometimes had to extend large sums of credit for years at a time, and in particularly difficult collection cases she appealed to Quaker leaders for assistance. When she first took over her family press in 1691, for instance, one of the first things that she did was to attempt to settle her father's outstanding accounts. The minutes of the 13 April 1691 Morning Meeting record that at the age of twenty-five she attended in order to show this august body of Quaker leaders "severall Accounts of Books sent to Barbados and Bristoll some Years since and not paid for." Four Friends were appointed to write Barbados and Bristol, but a year later the debts were still outstanding. On 29 January 1683 disputes about one printer's having reprinted the books of another led the Morning Meeting to rule that Friends' printers were not to reprint or distribute another printer's books without explicit permission – a method for stabilizing book trade practices that was also ahead of its time.

Of course, serving as the Friends' primary printer and publisher also imposed considerable disadvantages as well. Whether Sowle was performing as printer, publisher, warehouser, accountant, or consultant on market demands, Sowle was always "on call," and central organization expected her services at the same price charged by tradespeople "of the world." At the same time, however, from her earliest years in the trade Sowle was making recommendations to central organization about what should be published, and the Friends' leadership listened to her advice. Minutes of the 13 July 1691 meeting record that Sowle's first recommendation was for the works of Elizabeth Bathurst – including her "Sayings of Women" – to be printed in a collected edition (*Truth Vindicated by the Faithful Testimony and Writings of . . . Elizabeth Bathurst*, 1705), and the Morning Meeting consented, "she first Acquainting Charles Bathurst and his wife of it." At this time of strict internal control the occasional willingness of the Friends to leave publishing matters to Tace Sowle's judgment is remarkable. In response to a particular crisis in 1698, for instance, records of a 27 November meeting show that the Morning Meeting ordered her to print one thousand copies of one work and one thousand copies of

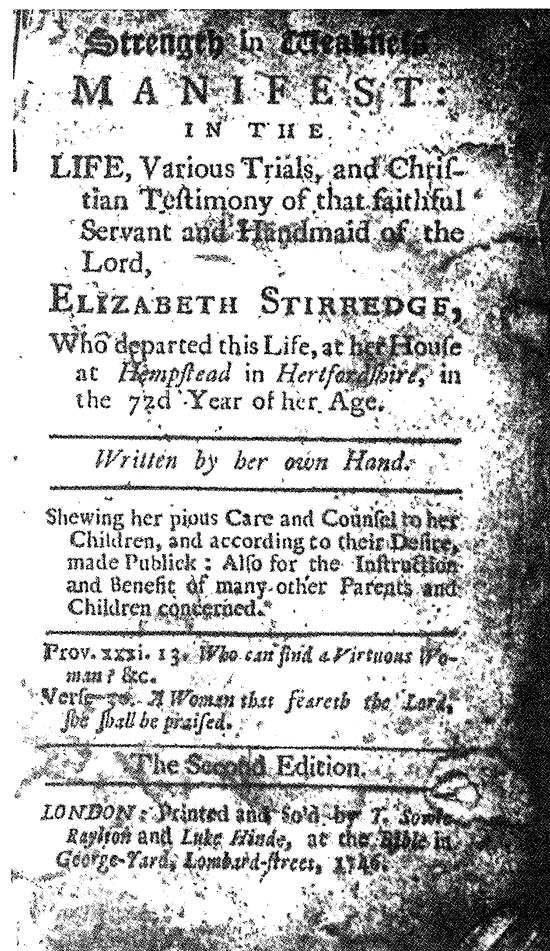
another, "and also to Print what more she sees meet."

To the Quakers, by far her most important contribution was that of publishing the first folio edition of the works of Fox, the founder of their sect. In 1691, the year of Fox's death, a committee of Friends met "to consider the fittest method to divide his Writings into." While historians such as Braithwaite single out the publication of Fox's *Journal* (1694) as "beyond question the most important literary event in the history of the Friends," early Friends saw Fox's journal, epistles, and doctrinal books as one coherent publishing project and the writings themselves as a unit. This is reflected on the title pages of the first edition, where the *Journal* is identified as "The First Volume" and the *Epistles* (1698) as "The Second Volume," while the *Gospel-Truth Demonstrated, in a Collection of Doctrinal Books* (1706), although not so marked, forms the third volume. When Tace Sowle was entrusted with the first volume of this major publishing project, she had just taken over her family press. The publication of Fox's folio works kept her busy for more than a decade.

Editing, printing, and correcting the first volume of these works took three years, and in 1694 the Friends finally announced their plans for distributing this volume "throughout the World." By the following year the task of editing the materials for the second volume was nearly completed, and the Yearly Meeting began looking ahead to the third volume, the doctrinal books. In 1695, five years *after* she had taken over the management of the Sowle press and four years after she had undertaken this major publishing project for the Friends, Sowle was freed by the Stationers' Company. Either that year or the next, the Friends awarded her the job of printing the 420 works comprising Fox's *Epistles*.

In 1697 the Friends met her request for an advance of £100 to cover initial printing costs, and in March of the following year the committee in charge reported that they had "treated with Tace Sowle about printing ['G. ff's Epistles'] but not having agreed with her." By the end of the month an agreement had been reached on such details of publication as edition size, format, font, and paper, but significantly, Sowle had been unwilling to budge concerning the price. She had promised to do the job only "at a price not exceeding one penny per sheet," "and if she can afford them lower . . . she will."

By the end of November 1698 the *Epistles* were finally printed – more than four years after the edit-



*Title page for the second edition (1746) of Elizabeth Stirredge's frequently reprinted journal*

ing of this complex volume had begun. While Sowle had been able to print about ten sheets a week, the process had been frequently delayed by the inability of the committee to keep her supplied with edited copy. The following spring the Yearly Meeting of 1699 "enquire[d] of Tace Sowle, why the Collection of G. ff's Epistles are [*sic*] so dear." Not surprisingly, they were soon satisfied that "she [could] afford it no Cheaper."

The Friends turned to the doctrinal books and immediately agreed to advance Sowle money for expenses. By 1704 the committee was especially eager to settle publication details, as subscribers had already been found for 939 copies of this final volume. Sowle originally estimated the size of the job to be "200 sheets at least" and estimated a fair price to be fourteen shillings per book, bound in calves' leather. The volume would eventually require about seventy sheets more than she had estimated,

and the price would be raised to eighteen shillings. The Yearly Meeting guaranteed that it would purchase one thousand copies and authorized the Meeting for Sufferings to lend her, "for Incouragement of printing G. F's Doctrinal Books," "any sume . . . not exceeding 300 pounds."

By 1706 the doctrinal books were finally printed as *Gospel-Truth Demonstrated in a Collection of Doctrinal Books*. Less than one year after this volume was completed, the Friends were told that "Tace upon her Examination is now fully satisfied" that the Friends had taken the allotment of one thousand copies for which they had initially subscribed. The Meeting then agreed to write to Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Pennsylvania, "and all other places in America that Correspond with Friends" to inform booksellers that "they may take off such Quantities as they shall please to write for." Thirteen years after this massive publishing project had begun, the



publication and initial distribution of George Fox's works in folio was complete.

In addition to the works of George Fox, Sowle also published the major works of theologian Robert Barclay, whose *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* was a staple of the Sowle press. First published in Latin in 1676 and in English in 1678, the *Apology* systematized the principles of Quakerism and became a virtual handbook for the Friends. Sowle published Barclay's *Apology* at least five times in English (1701, 1702, 1703, 1733, and 1736) as well as in French (1702), Spanish (1710), Latin (1729), and Danish (1738). She also published Barclay's *A Catechism and Confession of Faith*, which had been first published in 1673 and which Sowle published at least three times – in English (1716 and 1740) and in Latin (1727). In 1717 she published an edition of Barclay's *Anarchy of the Ranters and Other Libertines* (first published in 1676), and in the following year she reprinted a collection of Barclay's writings that had been first published in 1682 as *Truth Triumphant*.

William Penn had been a close friend of Andrew Sowle, and the Sowle press published nearly all of this prolific author's works. Tace Sowle published editions of Penn's major works such as *No Cross, No Crown* (first published by Andrew Sowle in 1669), *A Key Opening a Way to Every Common Understanding* (first published in 1692 and reprinted in English, French, and Danish), and *A Brief Account of the . . . People Called Quakers* (first published in 1694). Tace Sowle also published at least one edition of Penn's *Primitive Christianity Revived* (first published in 1696), *The Christian-Quaker* (first published in 1673), the related *Discourse of the General Rule of Faith* (first published in 1699), *Some Fruits of Solitude* (first published in 1693), *More Fruits of Solitude* (first published in 1702), and many other books by Penn. She also published separately Penn's *Preface to [George Fox's] Journal* (1694), a work widely considered to be Penn's finest writing, and in 1726 she produced an edition of his *Works*.

Between 1701 and 1740 Sowle printed the first seven parts of *Piety Promoted, in a Collection of Dying Sayings of Many of the People Called Quakers*, a collection of biographical accounts of early Friends (including Andrew Sowle and Thomas Raylton, but not Tace Sowle). She also published the aforementioned *History of the . . . Christian People Called Quakers*, Sewel's history of the sect that was widely read by Quakers throughout the eighteenth century and brought to the attention of an even wider audience in the nineteenth century by the praise of Charles

Lamb. It remains an important source for historians of Quakerism today.

Sowle routinely published basic works intended to maintain movement cohesion: she was printing the annual *Yearly Meeting Epistle*, in quantities of six hundred to one thousand copies, for example, from the time that she was twenty-five years old. While her publication of the first Quaker bibliography, the aforementioned *Catalogue of Friends Books* by John Whiting, was initially intended for advertising purposes, that work has served as the basis for bibliographies of Quaker writings ever since.

From the earliest days of her career Tace Sowle was a major printer and publisher of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Nonconformist women writers. For seventeenth-century women writers in particular, the importance of having access to the Quaker publishing "support system" may be surmised from the fact that Quaker women produced twice as many printed editions as any other female group. The Sowle press printed more than one hundred works by at least fourteen different women writers. These women include Bathurst; Sarah Cheevers; Elizabeth Chester; Anne Docwra; Mary Edwards; Alice Ellis; Katharine Evans; Jane Fearon; Alice Hayes; Elizabeth Jacob; Mary Mollineaux; Elizabeth Stirredge; Jane Truswell; Margaret Fell Fox, the "mother of Quakerism"; and Jane Lead, the prolific theosophical visionary.

Several works of these women were published many times, particularly the works of Bathurst, Hayes, Mollineaux, and Stirredge. Sowle printed at least three of the six eighteenth-century editions of Bathurst's *Truth Vindicated by the Faithful Testimony and Writings of . . . Elizabeth Bathurst* (1695, first published in 1679 as *Truth's Vindication*). In 1749 Sowle and Hinde printed Hayes's *A Legacy, or Widow's Mite* (1723), a work that was published five times before the end of the eighteenth century. Mollineaux's *Fruits of Retirement*, first published by Sowle in 1702, was published at least eight times before 1800 – four times in England and an additional four times in Pennsylvania. Stirredge's journal, *Strength in Weakness Manifest: In the Life, Various Trials, and Christian Testimony of . . . Elizabeth Stirredge* (published by the Sowle press in 1711 and 1746), was published at least four times in the eighteenth century.

In 1710 Sowle published Fell Fox's autobiographical *A Brief Collection of Remarkable Passages and Occurrences Relating to the Birth, Education, Life, Conversion, Travels, Services, and Deep Sufferings of . . . Margaret Fell; but by her Second Marriage, Margaret Fell Fox*. In 1715 she published an edition of Katharine



Evans and Sarah Cheevers's *A Brief History of the Voyage . . . to the Island of Malta*, an account of their three-year imprisonment by the Inquisition that had been first published in 1662 as *This Is a Short Relation*.

The half century spanned by Tace Sowle's career was one of the most formative periods in the history of the British press, as well as a decisive period in Quaker history. As the primary printer and publisher for the largest Nonconformist sect in England, Tace Sowle published nearly six hundred items during her fifty-eight-year career. By the end of its 150-year history the Sowle-Hinde-Phillips firm was one of the longest-running printing houses in England, and the house had seen its greatest development under Tace Sowle's management. Her role as one of the most important Nonconformist publishers of her generation has yet-unrealized implications for the history of the British book trade, for the history of religious Nonconformity, and for the economic and political history of women.

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— Paula J. McDowell