

ANTHONY BENEZET: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SOCIAL
CRITIC, EDUCATOR AND ABOLITIONIST

by
Nancy Slocum Hornick

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
1974

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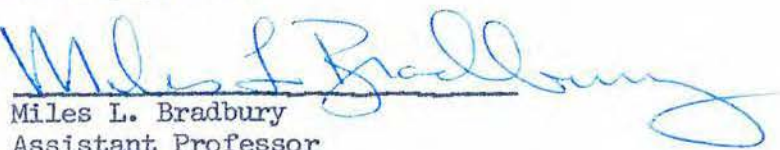
1974

APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: Anthony Benezet: Eighteenth Century Social Critic,
Educator and Abolitionist

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Doctor of Philosophy, 1974

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Date Approved:

August 7, 1974

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Anthony Benezet: Eighteenth Century Social Critic,
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Nancy Slocum Hornick, Doctor of Philosophy, 1974

Thesis directed by: Miles L. Bradbury, Assistant Professor

The career of Anthony Benezet (1713-1784), humanitarian leader, social critic, and educator of the revolutionary period, had roots in his French Huguenot background and English education. In 1731, Benezet emigrated from London to Philadelphia, where he worked for several years in an import-export business with his father and brothers. But he dropped his commercial pursuits and began teaching school, a vocation he found more satisfying. By 1743 he had taken the position of English School Master at the Quaker sponsored "Publick School" of Philadelphia, later known as the William Penn Charter School. For the next four decades, Benezet led the school through its greatest period of development. He was responsible for establishing the first permanent secondary level school for girls in the colonies, as well as the first full time school for black students, during his tenure. In addition he wrote school books, introduced numerous innovative teaching methods, modernized curricula, and ruled out harsh disciplinary measures in his classrooms, as part of a long campaign to humanize education and make it serve more effectively the needs of growing children and a changing society.

Benezet became the leading humanitarian reformer and social critic of late eighteenth century America, as well. In response to real needs created by the Seven Years' War and the Revolution, he tested his theories and bourgeois ideals in the laboratory of daily life. His utopian vision

of community rested on values drawn eclectically from many sources in Western civilization. These sources included his radical Protestant heritage, his rising middle-class economic background, the Whig political tradition, and contemporary Enlightenment thought. The result was a social vision of essentially traditional patterns in which every person contributed voluntarily and happily to the good of the whole community. On the basis of the Christian brotherhood ideal and his Quaker principle of peace in the family of mankind, Benezet pressed for the transformation of certain social institutions in order to preserve all that he saw as valuable from the past.

His goal was never to overturn the established social structure, but to change it drastically by gradual and peaceful methods. This called for a revolution of sentiments, in which rational people would become convinced of the need to correct various evils that threatened their collective happiness. Benezet wrote prolifically on the subjects of slavery, war, ignorance, and poverty, attacking what he believed to be the causes of these social cancers. Invariably, as he analyzed the problems, he concluded that they had roots in a spreading economic greed. He condemned the selfish acquisitiveness that threatened to overwhelm sociability and lead to inexcusable oppression of less aggressive groups--the children, black people, and poverty-ridden immigrants who comprised a growing segment of the city's population. Failure to correct these evils, he warned, meant ever worse chaos and social disorder.

Benezet's most significant campaign was that directed against slavery and the slave trade. His sustained attack on the institution was founded on an unequivocal assertion of the full intellectual and moral equality of the races. It was a concept he first proved to his own

satisfaction in his teaching of black students, beginning about 1750, and one that became the cornerstone of his antislavery campaign. From 1759 onward, Benezet's published research in African history, his exposés of the inhumanity of slavery, his synthesis of Christian and Enlightenment arguments, and his sustained political campaign against the institution, established his leadership in a growing libertarian movement in the colonies.

In 1766, amid repercussions from the Stamp Act, Benezet published his widely reprinted Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies. The book attacked English hypocrisy for condoning the slave trade while loudly proclaiming "British ideas of liberty." The American antislavery crusade, which peaked in 1774, became one important catalyst for inter-colonial cooperation and resistance to Great Britain, a powerful popular movement which patriot leaders found useful in their drive for independence. During and after the Revolution, however, antislavery sentiment became politically embarrassing--a divisive force in a nation struggling for survival. But in England and France, beginning in the mid-1780's, Benezet's books in the hands of his antislavery converts and colleagues, served as the basis for a sustained campaign to outlaw the slave trade and the institution of slavery throughout the world.

FOREWORD

The sources for factual data on Anthony Benezet's early life are scattered and contradictory, but certain important facts can be determined about his family background, including his father's economic and religious views and activities. Fugitive bits of information about the Benezet family have been located in records of French Huguenot societies in England and America. Numerous references to conversations with Anthony Benezet, recorded by French dignitaries visiting Philadelphia in the 1770's, offer insights into his early life, as well as valuable word portraits of the man's eccentricities and charismatic qualities. Extensive manuscript records in Philadelphia Quaker archives reveal much about his interests and activities. Some of his associates and former pupils have left brief published records of their contacts with him.

But the most useful extant documents on his life and work are the approximately 250 letters to, from, and about the Quaker schoolmaster. Some of his own letters are brief and business like, but generally they are long, chatty, introspective, often intensely political, sometimes witty, and never dull. Most of the subject matter falls naturally into categories of his major interests: education, antislavery, peace, Indians, gardening, religion, and the abuse of material wealth. Approximately 150 of the letters written by Benezet are printed in George Brookes' Friend Anthony Benezet (Philadelphia, 1937), along with selected letters to and about him. At least thirty more unpublished letters have come to light through the combing of English and American manuscript archives.

Still another important source of information is the vast output of Benezet's pen for publication. Approximately 200 pieces, varying in length from three to 200 pages, were published by him between 1759 and 1784. These books and tracts usually went through several editions during and after his life time, and were repeatedly reissued in German and French translations. They comprise an invaluable source of social, cultural, and intellectual insights into eighteenth century life and thought.

This biography will begin with a section outlining the chronological passage of Anthony Benezet through his life on three continents. Succeeding parts will deal analytically with the various aspects of his educational career, his philanthropic activities in and around Philadelphia, his peace crusade, and the major periods of antislavery campaigning. Quotations in this work have been edited to conform with modern spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, while retaining as far as possible the original meaning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For assistance in research, I would like to thank the staffs of the following libraries and archives: Haverford College Library Quaker Collection, Swarthmore College Friends' Historical Library, the Arch Street Meeting House Department of Records, and the Library of Congress Rare Book Room. It is a pleasure as well to express my appreciation to the staffs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Rhode Island Historical Society, and the Friends' House Library in London, England, for furnishing crucial documents.

I owe a very special debt of gratitude to the memory of Adrienne Koch, under whose direction this research originated. In addition, I wish to thank James B. Gilbert for his encouragement and critical interest in the work at every stage, and my advisor Miles Bradbury of the University of Maryland. Thanks are due also to Henry J. Cadbury, of Haverford College for sharing with me an article in manuscript on Anthony Benezet. My husband, John, has made his copying machine available to me at critical moments and helped with proof-reading. But more important, he has taken lively and greatly appreciated interest in the subject of this biography.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I. Manuscript References

FHL	Friends' House Library, London
HQC	Haverford College Library, Quaker Collection
HSP	Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
LYM	London Yearly Meeting
M. for S.	Meeting for Sufferings
PCS	Penn Charter School
PMM	Philadelphia Monthly Meeting
PYM	Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

II. Journals

<u>BFHA</u>	<u>Bulletin of Friends' Historical Association</u>
<u>FM</u>	<u>Friends' Miscellany</u>
<u>FQ</u>	<u>Friends' Quarterly</u>
<u>JNH</u>	<u>Journal of Negro History</u>
<u>PMHB</u>	<u>Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography</u>
<u>QH</u>	<u>Quaker History</u>

III. Books Cited Frequently

Brookes	George S. Brookes, <u>Friend Anthony Benezet</u> (Philadelphia, 1937)
Drake	Thomas E. Drake, <u>Quakers and Slavery in America</u> (Gloucester, Mass., 1965)
Davis	David Brion Davis, <u>The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture</u> (Thaca, N.Y., 1966)
Hoare	Prince Hoare, <u>Memoirs of Granville Sharp</u> (London, 1820)
James	Sydney V. James, <u>A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth Century America</u> (Cambridge, Mass., 1963)
Jordan	Winthrop D. Jordan, <u>White Over Black: The Development of American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812</u> (Chapel Hill, 1968)
Small	Samuel Small, Jr., comp., <u>Genealogical Records of George Small, Daniel Benezet, ...</u> (Philadelphia, 1905)
Vaux	Roberts Vaux, <u>Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet</u> (Philadelphia, 1817)
Woods	John A. Woods, ed., "Correspondence of Benjamin Rush and Granville Sharp, 1773-1809," <u>Journal of American Studies</u> , I (1967), 1-38.

INTRODUCTION

The name of Philadelphia Quaker Anthony Benezet (1713-1784) has been associated traditionally with the early stirrings of the eighteenth century antislavery movement in America. But the man whom Winthrop Jordan calls "a virtual one man abolition society," and who has been acclaimed "the father of the antislavery movement" by William Warren Sweet, has never received an adequate biographical treatment.¹ Two nineteenth century religious "Memoirs," and a 1937 biographical eulogy, plus a few scattered articles in Pennsylvania historical journals, comprise the whole of secondary studies.² No comprehensive analysis of Benezet's prolific and influential writings on the subject of slavery has been attempted.³

Yet Anthony Benezet was the first person to delineate fully the nature and extent of the problem of slavery. In addition, he developed the earliest comprehensive synthesis of religious and Enlightenment arguments against both the slave trade and the institution as practiced throughout the western world. And he personally launched the first large scale antislavery attack, pioneering methods that would be widely followed by later abolitionists in Europe as well as America. His persistent agitation of the cause during a period of growing colonial unrest had widespread, although unintended, political implications for a restive American populace.

But the antislavery campaign was only one aspect of a multi-dimensional career. Benezet's forty years as a successful schoolmaster equipped him with the necessary experience and leadership stature to

effect far reaching changes in Philadelphia educational policy and procedure. He was instrumental in getting the Society of Friends to open a pioneering school for black children and the first secondary school for girls in colonial America. In addition, he led in debrutalizing classroom discipline, simplifying methods of teaching, and developing a more practical curriculum in harmony with the real needs of potential citizens.

The Philadelphia Quaker whom Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh call "America's first great humanitarian reformer," wrote and worked industriously, also, to alleviate poverty.⁴ He noted that poverty actually increased all around him at the same time many of his established neighbors and friends were amassing vast fortunes in shipping, retailing, and industry. His analysis of the social, economic, and political implications of this phenomenon, and his prescription for changing it without overthrowing the social order that sustained it, offers in itself a fascinating area of historical inquiry. Benezet was convinced, except perhaps during a few speculative moments that contemporary institutions of property and politics were basically sound. But the ethic which he felt had made those institutions work was corrupted by slavery, ignorance, war, and greed. What makes Benezet so fascinating for the historian is the vigor with which he pursued an ethical view which was, in fact, antithetical to many of the institutions of his day. The result was that the Quaker plunged into the fore of reform activity in pursuit of an ideal which we could only label today conservative and paternalistic. Benezet's activities and writings on the subject of peace--he lived through three colonial wars, including the American Revolution--his

related work in dealing humanely with the complicated Indian situation on the frontiers of Pennsylvania, and his pioneering tracts on the subject of temperance all merit careful study, as well.

A life of such intense activism combined with thoughtful, and to some extent, original, analysis and criticism of society, suggests numerous other lines of inquiry. At the outset, it seems essential to investigate the significance of Benezet's French Huguenot birth, English education, and early Philadelphia business career, in his later social activism. Ironically, his emphasis on the family as the most crucial unit of society coexisted with his efforts to strengthen the role of the school as a means to protect children from the corrupting influence of home life. A desire to preserve traditional values seems to have prompted his otherwise puzzling attacks on one of the most thoroughly entrenched social and economic institutions of his day, the slave system. The tempo of his social criticism and politicized reform activities increased dramatically from his forties onward, rather than decreasing, as might be expected from an aging schoolmaster. All of his major accomplishments date from the last third of his long life, with some of the most important activity occurring in the last decade. An attempt must be made to explain the trend toward secularization and away from a narrow sectarianism that characterized the later years. Benezet became a leading figure in the American Enlightenment during the Revolutionary period, even as he insisted that his Quaker peace principles ruled out participation in the rebellion against British rule. Yet his natural rights campaign against slavery contributed heavily to the popularity of the drive for colonial independence.

There are certain basic themes uniting the diverse interests and seeming paradoxes of Anthony Benezet's career. His mental loom was dressed with warp threads of concern about the preservation of stable family and community life. Into these he wove a complicated pattern of ideas on religion, education, government, antislavery, economics, philosophy. Other predominant warp threads consisted of his unfailing concern for peaceful, orderly change, with the same weft moving regularly back and forth, ever weaving a rich eighteenth century pattern that only in its completed form reveals its intricate design, a design of universal dimensions and classical balance.

One must inquire into the ultimate goals of this concerned social weaver. The hypothesis to be tested in this biography is that in reality he sought to weave a tight, durable fabric, that was basically harmonious in design, balanced in execution. To this end he worked to strengthen the institutions of family, church, school, and established government, in order to preserve what he perceived as a threatened social order. And to the same end he struggled to maintain peace--to prevent the chaos of revolution. Slavery had to go because human beings kept forcibly in bondage would inevitably revolt, and because it was contrary to the unifying principle of voluntary cooperation. Schools had to step in when parents failed to educate their children properly for a responsible, independent life. Girls and black people should be educated to enrich their lives and to make them more efficient and cooperative contributors to the dominant culture. The poor, too, had to be cared for, educated, and their condition improved if they were to become "serviceable to society." And the accumulation of wealth should be avoided because it

led to selfish overindulgence and extravagant conduct, as well as slothfulness, which worked against community harmony. Intemperance, which always encouraged disruptive behavior, must be controlled. In all matters, a paternalistic attitude, couched in terms of the family image, prevailed. Kindly but firm persuasion rather than force would convince the recalcitrant and win their cooperation. Such was the design of an ideal social paradigm toward which Anthony Benezet worked steadily during the last half of his life.

This rather austere utopian vision stemmed in part from a practical conviction that rational good order, benign rulers, and moderation in all things, would result in a smooth running, harmonious community. It embodied to some extent a desire to preserve a familiar English Whig political tradition of well-disciplined individuals cooperating in a social compact that took no one's inherent honesty for granted, and therefore sought to strengthen its institutional mechanisms for social control. But the vision was most clearly the fruit of a dissenting Protestant religion that preached peace, brotherly love for all men, individual responsibility, integrity, and simplicity in human conduct. The religious roots supporting and sustaining Benezet's utopian goals stand out as his most fundamental motivation, upon which natural rights theory of the Enlightenment was effectively grafted. He was a basically pragmatic, religious thinker and activist who carried his ideals to such literal-minded lengths that he found himself calling for the abolition of vast quantities of private property in slaves, for greater equality in education, and for severe voluntary limitations upon the accumulation of wealth and power in any form.

The fact that Benezet perceived his contemporary society as disintegrating, especially in the area of family life, and acted to prevent its demise, does not necessarily mean that the social structure was actually collapsing--merely that it appeared to be shifting dangerously. He sought to channel the forms into regular, recognizable patterns. His efforts, perhaps, help to explain the spectacular success of the nuclear family, the school, the church, and the capitalist nation-state in the centuries since--now evidently woven more securely than even into the fabric of established society. But they also illuminate the origins and persistence of dissenting idealism in American society--a refusal to accept permanent stasis--with the resulting tension that is equally capable of creation and destruction. In many respects, Anthony Benezet emerges as a social weaver of major significance in the ongoing attempt to understand the role of those who would preserve the heritage of the past by seeking to change the future.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹Jordan, 357. William Warren Sweet, "Quaker Humanitarianism," Christian Century, LIV (1937), 1076.

²Vaux. Wilson Armistead, Memoirs of Anthony Benezet, Revised (London, 1859), Brookes.

³Rogert A. Bruns has recently made a good start in his two articles, "Anthony Benezet and the Natural Rights of the Negro," PMHB, XCVI (1972), 104-113; and JNH, LVI (1971), 230-238.

⁴Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), 259-260.

CHAPTER I

THE FAMILY SETTING

The uprooting of a whole family from the countryside of Europe and its eventual transplantation in an American coastal city was a common historical sequence in the history of the eighteenth century Atlantic community. The saga of the family of Anthony Benezet is only one of many, yet the events and experiences that it introduced to his life were to assume tremendous significance during the volatile years before and during the world's first great colonial revolution.

Jean Etienne Benezet and his young wife, Judith De la Mejanelle, were Huguenots--Protestants in a France that had outlawed Protestantism and persecuted its followers for many years. On a cold winter night in 1715, the young father and his pregnant wife fled their country and their comfortable home on the family estate near San Quentin, Picardy. With them in the wagon rode their two year old son, Anthony, his older sister, Judith, and probably Mde. Benezet's younger sister, Jeanne. They left behind a considerable fortune in personal and real property.¹

Jean Etienne Benezet had secured the services of an "adventurous" young man who accompanied them on the most dangerous part of the journey. Arriving at a military outpost on the French border, the refugees were stopped by a sentinel. The Benezet's young friend then confronted the guard with a lethal weapon in one hand and a pouch of money in the other. Announcing that his charges were innocent and "worthy," he demanded immediate passage for them. The sentinel was permitted a choice between

accepting the bribe or losing his life. Passage was quickly arranged, and the family sped on their way.²

They arrived safely at Rotterdam after the harrowing and no doubt uncomfortable twelve night journey of 170 miles from St. Quentin. Waiting to welcome them in Holland were other French Huguenot refugees--brothers and sisters of the Benezets, as well as aunts, uncles and old friends who had been driven out of their homeland earlier in the persecutions following the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Two weeks after their arrival, the birth and baptism of a daughter, Susanne, was greeted by Jean Etienne with the joyful words, "Praised be God that this infant is baptized in a Protestant Church!" But before summer, he recorded tersely, "Susanne is dead and is buried in the Walloon Church of Rotterdam." Hers was the second infant death among the young couple's first four children. The pattern would be repeated many times in the years ahead.³

The Benezets were among the last of the Huguenots to be forced out of France during the grim thirty year period following the Revocation. The times were characterized by intensive persecution, aimed at the total extermination of Protestantism in the country. Parents were required to send their children to Roman Catholic churches and catechism classes, where they were drilled regularly in "papist" doctrines. Parents suspected of trying to counteract the priests' teachings by home instruction were often imprisoned and their children abducted to convents where they could be more rigorously indoctrinated. Thousands of imprisoned Protestants were summarily executed or forced into slavery in chain gangs and ship's galleys.⁴

Late in life, Anthony Benezet recounted some of his family's sufferings in early eighteenth century France. "One of my uncles was hung by the intolerants, my aunt was put in a convent, two of my cousins died at the galleys," he told a friend, and "my fugitive father was hung in effigy for explaining the gospel differently from the priests."

Another relative, on his mother's side of the family, was the fugitive Paul de Rapin-Thoyras, Lord of Thoyras, near Castres, who became a renowned military leader and Whig historian of England.⁵

The saga of Anthony's "fugitive father" offers significant insights into the subsequent life of his oldest son. The Benezet family came originally from the South of France during the seventeenth century persecutions of Louis XIV. Increasingly insistent religious persecution formed the backdrop for the life of Jean Etienne Benezet as it had for his father and his grandfather before him.⁶

Louis Jean Benezet, the grandfather of Anthony, was a merchant and tariff officer for the superintendent of finances in Picardy. His oldest son, Jean Etienne, was born in 1683, two years before the Revocation. He was baptized at home in Abbeville by a Protestant minister, with "permission of the magistrates," and presented at baptism by his uncle, Antoine Benezet.⁷ A serious and deeply religious youth, Jean Etienne belonged to a group of French Protestants called "Inspirés de la Vaunage," descendants of the Camisards who had resisted the persecutions of the Revocation in the Cevennes mountains of Southern France. The "Inspirés," as they were called, believed in several doctrines congenial to Quakers. These included the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the soul of every believer, non-resistance, the universal priesthood

of believers, and the ministry of women.⁸ These roots in radical Calvinism would in time grow into luxuriantly flowering plants among certain of Jean Etienne's descendants.

The economic and social class background of the Benezets was also an important component in the shaping of the family members' aspirations and achievements. The genealogical records of three generations reveal that all the godfathers and the husbands of godmothers for the numerous Benezet children were merchants, bankers, or in two cases, high government financial officials. Most lived in the cities and towns of France, Holland, England, and later, America. Some were from noble families. Since godparents were either relatives or close friends of the parents, it is possible to trace the pattern of an emerging commercial upper middle class among these dedicated Protestants.⁹ This twin commitment to commerce and a radical Protestant religion, mutually reinforcing as it may have been to others in his family, was to become for Anthony Benezet a major source of tension in life.

The youthful Jean Etienne Benezet was evidently protected by the government and granted greater freedom than most French Protestants in the years following the Revocation, in acknowledgement of his father's status and services as "receveur des traites," first at Abbeville, until 1687, and then at St. Quentin until his death in 1710. In 1709, Jean Etienne had married the fourteen year old Protestant, Judith De la Mejanelle, daughter of a successful St. Quentin linen merchant and his noble-born wife. The connections of the De la Mejanelles at court may also have delayed the persecutory actions of the French government, following the death of the elder Benezet.¹⁰

Judith, according to an ancient and persistent tradition, was, for a brief moment of glory, a maid of honor at the court of Louis XIV. She was living in Paris with her mother, following her father's death, when she and Jean Etienne took their vows. She brought to the marriage a large dowry which included substantial landholdings--a fact acknowledged many years later by her husband in his will. By 1750, when the will was written, Jean Etienne had recouped the family's lost fortunes, and he bequeathed to his wife all of his properties, in "compensation for the fortune she brought me upon our inter-marriage."¹¹

In addition to the economic and physical attributes so frequently mentioned by all who have written about her, Judith seems to have been a devout Christian woman and unusually well-read for her day. In 1747, when she was in her fifties, Anthony went out borrowing a five volume set of philosophical correspondence for her to read, apparently at her request.¹² Certainly, too, she was a strong woman, possessed of the kind of fortitude and endurance that enabled her to survive fourteen pregnancies, rear the seven surviving children, and endure a life-long series of family moves from city to city, country to country, and continent to continent, under circumstances that would have overwhelmed a lesser person.

In view of the unpleasant prospects for French Protestants in their own land, it is not surprising that Jean Etienne decided to flee with his family, as so many had already done. He recorded the escape in the "Memorial," a family journal kept by his father, Louis Jean, before him:

God has put it into our hearts to abandon France and to withdraw to a Protestant country in order to profess freely

our holy religion; we have set out from St. Quentin with our two infants on the third of February, 1715.

The cryptic account reveals few factual details of the flight, but a great deal about Jean Etienne's own perception of the reason for it. The will of God and a desire to practice freely his religion stood out in his mind as the major, and perhaps the only, motivation to leave.¹³

Before his oldest child reached school age he decided he could no longer endure the degradation of living a public lie in private agony. He and Judith had already been compelled to have both their living children baptized in the Catholic church of St. Catherine, in accordance with the law. Jean Etienne recorded Anthony's birth on January 31, 1713, and wrote that he was baptized the next day by the curate of the parish. The godfather was Antoine Benezet, an uncle, and the "Subdelegate of the Governor of the city of Dunkerque"--also a leading merchant of that Northern port city. In the privacy of his journal, the young father wrote a carefully worded blessing for his son, "Dieu le veuille benir et le faire croistre en sa grace."¹⁴ The Protestant emphasis on Christian growth in grace, of proper spiritual nurture, is evident here. The precious family "Memorial" was one of the few possessions salvaged when the flight to Holland at last seemed unavoidable.

It is not clear, however, from the records whether the Benezets fled France before or after their property was confiscated by the French government. Jean Etienne's account explains simply that the family left at God's behest, thus freeing themselves to practice their religion without interference from the authorities. He does not mention property at all. Anthony, however, once explained that his father, "was ruined by the confiscation of all his goods," without revealing whether this

occurred before or after the family's flight.¹⁵ The two earliest secondary accounts of the matter differ significantly from each other, but both suggest that the property loss was at the crux of the decision to leave. Roberts Vaux, basing his 1817 biographical sketch of Anthony Benezet largely on letters from friends and relatives of his subject, and always attempting to portray the family in the best possible light, stated that the decision to flee followed the confiscation and yet was made purely for reasons of religious conscience. In contrast, Elizabeth Horsefield, the "favorite daughter" of Anthony's youngest brother, Daniel, told her version of the story to her grandchildren, who in turn wrote a "Memorial" of her life. In it she suggested that her grandfather had knowingly risked the loss of his property in France by his flight. That is, she implied that he deliberately chose religious freedom over property ownership.¹⁶ But there is no evidence that the Benezets might have retained the property had they remained in St. Quentin.

Most likely, the confiscation was inevitable, and they knew it. Many of the Huguenots whose property was taken by the government elected to remain in France, forming underground congregations that met in secret rural rendezvous. The prospect did not appeal to the socially prominent Benezets. Jean Etienne and Judith remained in France only as long as they could own their property. They had found it possible to live with the compromises demanded of them before 1715, such as their marriage and baptism of their children in the Catholic church. But the surrender of property was a different matter. It seems clear that the loss of their estate was a crucial precipitating cause for the sudden departure of the Benezets for Rotterdam.

But there may have been other threats as well as religious and economic ones. In his later years, Anthony generally chose to interpret his father's decision to leave in religious terms, but his reference to his father's hanging in effigy "for explaining the gospel differently" suggests that there was a real threat to his physical survival as well.¹⁷ If this was indeed the case, the elder Benezet displayed a commendable distaste for the martyr's role.

Six months after arriving in Holland, Jean Etienne made another revealing entry in the "Memorial."

The twenty-second of August, 1715, I set out from Rotterdam with my family to establish myself in England, and the twenty-sixth of the same month we disembarked at Greenwich, where my family remained for one month while I tried to find a house in London.¹⁸

Evidently, prospects for regaining the family's lost economic status looked better across the English channel than they did in Holland. Of the period in Rotterdam, we know little except the birth and death of Susanne. The city was crowded with French Protestant refugees who had found a welcome among Dutch Protestants, and no longer felt the scourge of religious persecution. Thus it seems clear that John Stephen Benezet's decision to move his family again was based on exactly what he said it was: the need "to establish" himself. There is no mention in the "Memorial" this time of a continuing search for religious freedom or a call from God, the only reasons given earlier for leaving France in the first place.

Again, the Benezets followed the route of many thousands of their countrymen and numerous kinsmen in exile. The greatest wave of French emigration to England had occurred in the immediate post-Revocation

years, 1685-1687. But the migration continued, and by 1718, nearly 100,000 French Protestant refugees had arrived in the British Isles, the vast majority of these settling in and around London. They tended to live in one of three districts: Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, and Soho, where French was spoken in shops, schools, churches, and streets. Working class families usually migrated to the East End French communities, where they found jobs as weavers in the flourishing silk mills.¹⁹

The Benezets settled in Soho district, in the more fashionable West End of London. There they joined their own former business associates, relatives and other expatriate nobility and gentry who worshipped regularly at the conforming French Anglican Church of the Savoy. John Stephen Benezet soon launched into the world of trade and commerce which already provided substantial incomes for some of the immigrants. In the first years in England, John Stephen and Judith and their rapidly growing family probably had to accept some degree of economic assistance from one source or another. This was not unusual under the circumstances. A large proportion of the formerly landed gentry and the dispossessed noblemen found it necessary to accept relief from the French churches in London. The records of these congregations show constant preoccupation with the details of helping new and penniless immigrants. They found jobs and housing for thousands, and provided for their financial needs until they could provide for themselves.²⁰

Parliament, too, appropriated "substantial sums" from public coffers for this use. Arrangements were made for "persons of quality," arriving in London with reduced means, to receive weekly allowances for a year or more. Their sons were placed in "suitable", i.e., the wealthiest, mercantile firms, and many of the men received high army commissions.²¹

The Benezets, with numerous family members already settled in London's West End, may have had sufficient aid from private sources. But the tradition of families, churches, and even governments helping their refugee members in times of economic distress was a lesson learned early and well by the young Anthony during his London years.

The most important of the numerous charitable organizations founded by the refugees was the French Hospital, incorporated in 1718. The hospital received generous contributions from the more successful French merchants who had migrated earlier, and offered asylum to hundreds of new arrivals needing shelter, apparently without regard to state of health. The work was supervised by the uprooted French gentry, including several close relatives of the John Stephen Benezets.²² Although his father was not listed among the board members, probably because he was a relative latecomer, and too busy getting established himself, Anthony must have been aware of and perhaps interested in the activities of his kinsmen at the hospital.

Death, as well as poverty, was a frequent part of the lives of the refugees. In the Benezet family, a high birth rate was halved by relentless infant mortality, an average ratio in the early eighteenth century. When Jean, their thirteenth child and last son was born on February 6, 1728, less than a year after the birth of his sister Gertrude, the outlook for his survival must have been poor. In contrast to the usual practice of waiting from one to seven days after a birth to have the child baptized in a church, the parents hastily arranged for a French minister to hold the service at their home on the same day. The fifteen year old Anthony and his twelve year old sister served as

emergency godparents. Anthony's godson died four days later in the London winter. During the six years just prior to sailing for the new world, the Benezets had their last four babies, none of whom survived.²³

Other indirect, and necessarily speculative, insights into the childhood of Anthony Benezet are suggested by the known facts of his place and time. Since at least a part of his early years were spent in the West End community of Wandsworth, it is possible that he attended the Friends' School there, taught by John Kuweidt. The school and its master were well-known for the use of advanced educational methods. In any case, Benezet was frequently described in later life as "a man of intelligence and learning," a person "of sense and reading," and similar phrases, whatever the limits of his formal education may have been.²⁴ Surrounded as he was in London by a French speaking community of high cultural standards, he grew up with bi-lingual fluency that would prove valuable to him in later years.

The first recorded suggestion of the strong-willed and independent personality that was characteristic of the late-maturing Anthony was revealed in the boy's first encounter with the world of commerce. He was apprenticed by his father in the usual way to a leading London counting house, but he disliked the work from the first. He left the apprenticeship, evidently without the permission of either his master or his father. He then bound himself out to a local cooper in hope of finding mechanical work more suited to his inclinations. But he discovered that this employment was too strenuous for his "frail constitution," and he seems to have floundered about without really settling into any occupation during the London years.²⁵

While Anthony was making his unsatisfactory adjustments to the demands of his father and his society that he should learn a respectable trade and succeed at it, John Stephen appeared to be progressing only slowly, but in an approved manner, toward his goal of establishing himself. He became a naturalized British citizen in 1729, as his brother had done two years earlier. But although he worked steadily in the mercantile business, he apparently made little headway toward the regaining of his lost fortunes during the years in England.²⁶

The elder Benezet refreshed his restless religious spirit in London with friendships among early Moravian brethren and Quakers. He was dissatisfied with the Anglican-affiliated French churches in his London neighborhood. It was the hierarchical structure of established religions that seems to have bothered him more than anything else. The stream of non-conformism in his personality ran deep. Anthony once explained to a friend that his father finally left England for America in part because he "was not much more pleased with [the priests] of England," than he had been with those of the Catholic church in France, and he wished "to get out of the way of all hierarchy."²⁷

A combination of factors then,--domestic, economic, and religious--lay behind the Benezets' unexplained departure for Philadelphia in 1731. The oldest children were reaching maturity but as yet unsettled either in marriage or business career. There were three adolescent girls and the eighteen year old Anthony to consider. One of the major problems for refugee families at this time was the rapid assimilation of the French youth into English culture. Parents lamented the defections, and French ministers preached sermons deploring "the growing aversion

of the young for the language of their fathers," and the tendency to intermarry.²⁸ Perhaps Anthony's rebellion in the apprenticeship matter, and his failure to work with his father in the London enterprises contributed to the urge to move on. Also, the deaths of four babies in a six year period must have had a depressing effect on the parents, even while they cared for the seven living children, including the three youngest--lively boys one year apart in age.

In view of the strong possibility that John Stephen Benezet's economic achievements fell below his expectations, along with the other discouragements in London, one thing seems clear. Whatever his satisfactions and disappointments may have been during the sixteen years in Protestant England, he remained unsatisfied, and another uprooting beckoned seductively with renewed hope for the future. He was never a man to accept defeat easily. Nearing fifty years of age, with a family of nine, John Stephen Benezet embarked for the new world. Perhaps the faded tribal wealth, prestige, and religious piety could at last be regained in the land of plenty and new beginnings. The motivation to succeed in life must have been strong to cause this new removal of such a great distance, with no known close relatives or old friends waiting this time to welcome the members of the clan.²⁹

The Benezets disembarked at the port of Philadelphia in November, 1731, just at the height of a severe smallpox epidemic, although they apparently escaped the disease. The city that received them was engrossed in building the foundations for its future economic and political eminence. Already it was overtaking the colonial power and prestige of Boston. Of the approximately 12,000 inhabitants, nearly all were hard-working

people, neither very rich nor very poor. Philadelphians were "almost wholly absorbed" in the process of "making a living and acquiring an estate.... Trade and politics held sway in tavern discussions. The heavy, materialistic quality of the community" pervaded the streets and homes. Political as well as economic power was firmly ensconced in the stolid businesslike Quaker leaders. "There was little gaiety and less elegance; a dreary commercialism, clothed in the austere garb of Quaker principles, permeated the very air."³⁰

But there was in the Philadelphia of the 1730's a small and growing band of young, restless spirits who would not always be content to commit themselves wholly to the grinding pursuit of wealth as their fathers were doing. The twenty year old Benjamin Franklin, fresh from a two year sojourn in England, had arrived in the city in 1726 to launch his remarkable cultural, political, intellectual, and humanitarian career, even as he worked energetically at his printing press enterprise. The warm friendship that developed over the years between Franklin and Anthony Benezet, and their cooperation in poor relief, the Pennsylvania Hospital, publishing, and most importantly, in launching the Anglo-American anti-slavery campaign, had its genesis in these early years. But in 1731, the cultural and intellectual life of Philadelphia was only beginning the phenomenal growth that would usher in its golden age as the world capital of the humanitarian movement.³¹ Anthony Benezet, stepping off the ship on that cold November day, young, uncertain, and already a disappointment to his strong-willed father, could not have known what kind of riches his life would generate in time.

There are no Benezets listed in surviving passenger lists from ships docking at Philadelphia during this period. Beginning in 1727, all non-British males over the age of sixteen disembarking from Europe were routinely required to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Most of the French Huguenots immigrating during the early eighteenth century were not citizens, and thus were included in the requirement. Even though John Stephen Benezet had already become a naturalized citizen during his London years, Anthony had not, and he did not comply with the law at this time.³² By several accounts, he was unusually small in stature, and may easily have been mistaken by the officials for younger than his eighteen years. Some connivance within the family intentionally to defy the regulation seems possible, too. Quakers always objected to oath-taking, and both father and son, although not yet officially members of the Society of Friends, had been strongly influenced by that sect during their last years in London. And their first religious connections in the new world were among Quakers. Yet, four years after his arrival in America, Anthony did decide to take the very unQuakerly oath of allegiance to Great Britain. His name heads the list of those Philadelphia County settlers who were naturalized in 1735, perhaps in anticipation of marriage or in connection with his shifting career plans.³³

J. William Frost, in his recent study of colonial Quaker family life, observes that in Philadelphia, "being a merchant was the most rapid path to financial security, particularly if trading was combined with shrewd land speculation." John Stephen Benezet found in the Quaker City an excellent milieu for his life-long ambitions. He launched out into the mercantile world soon after his arrival, probably with the aid

and encouragement of some of the well-established Quaker entrepreneurs, to whom he bore letters of recommendation from London colleagues.³⁴

The only specific information we have about Anthony's career activities during these early years comes in the form of allusions he made later on to having been "much among the buyer and seller," and thoroughly unhappy because of it. Suggestions made by adoring biographers that Anthony later martyred himself by leaving a highly successful commercial career to take up the low status job of teaching seem to have little basis in fact, except insofar as they are based on the demonstrable later successes of his father and younger brothers.³⁵ Anthony was neither especially successful nor happy in the world of buyers and sellers.

Success came slowly, even for John Stephen, with his clear sense of priorities in prospering Philadelphia. Competition was keen, and getting started in merchandizing difficult. The only son who was old enough to be of any help in the beginning was a reluctant merchant, at best. And there were problems at home with the younger boys. James, a lad in early adolescence with "an uncommon degree of vivacity," clashed constantly with his stern father, who was described by a family friend as a man "of an irritable disposition." John Stephen decided to apprentice the seemingly incorrigible child to a shoemaker, "one of the meanest trades he could find," in hopes of taming him. James, insisting that "his talents entitled him to a better position," promptly ran away, revealing the same high spirits that his older brother had shown in his apprenticeship crisis. James arrived in London as a stowaway aboard the Pennsylvania Packett. The boy won the good graces of a wealthy

merchant in London by returning a lost purse containing 3,000 pounds in bank notes he had found. As a reward for his honest behavior, which James attributed to his father's good training, the merchant sent a large shipment of dry goods as a gift to John Stephen, via the Packett's return trip, with James aboard. This shipment, according to a close friend of the family, became "the principal means of establishing the fortune of the Benezets in Philadelphia."³⁶ The anecdote cannot be precisely dated, but the most likely time period would fall between 1734 and 1737, when James was thirteen to sixteen years old.

Gradual improvements in the family's economic position can be traced with greater accuracy by noting their real estate purchases from 1735 onward. By that year, the Benezets had accumulated enough capital to purchase a two story house on Second Street, below Race Street, in Philadelphia, with a large garden in the rear.³⁷ Perhaps it was here that the frustrated twenty-two year old Anthony, still trying halfheartedly to succeed as a man of business in accordance with his father's wishes, developed what became a lifelong interest in gardening.

Land records of Philadelphia County indicate that John Stephen purchased 200 acres for 165 pounds, apparently on the outskirts of Germantown, in 1738--his first known speculative land purchase. Three years later he bought 1,000 acres in Bucks County, near the West Branch of the Delaware River, from William and Margaret Allen, at a cost of 1,050 pounds.³⁸ The old miseries of financial insecurity were gradually subsiding. Twelve years after their arrival in the port of Philadelphia, the Benezets were comfortably established in the new world. But for the oldest son, the taste of economic success was bitter, and the prospect

of a lifetime spent "among buyer and seller" left him uneasy and lethargic.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Brookes, 14, 15. Small, 193, 194. Vaux, 2-4.

²Ibid. Small, 194.

³John Stephen Benezet, "Memorial Commence le 16 Aoust, 1682," Small, 334-340, 338. See list of the fourteen children born to the Benezet's in three countries in Small, 199.

⁴Henry M. Baird, The Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (New York, 1895), II, 419-421.

⁵François, Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, Our Revolutionary Forefathers, 1779-1785, Eugene Parker Chase, tr. and ed. (Freeport, N.Y., 1969), 453. François Jean, Marques de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780-1782, Howard C. Rice, Jr., tr., (Chapel Hill, 1963), I, 165. Small, 191. François Benezet, a divinity student from Montpellier, and a practicing minister in Vigan, was condemned to death for illegal ministerial activities. He was accompanied to the gallows by an armed guard of 1,200 men, in order to ward off a threatened insurrection, and hung March 27, 1752, leaving a widow and small child. For an account of French Huguenots in the English Revolution of 1688, see M. Charles Weiss, History of Ten French Protestant Refugees (New York, 1854), I, 267-288.

⁶["Bulbucus,"] Sketch of the Benezet Family, Friends' Weekly Intelligencer, VI (1849), 234, 235. Anthony Benezet was descended from the same stock that in the nineteenth century lived in the Nimes and Congenies areas, in the Department of Gard, Southern France. This branch of the family became leading Quakers.

⁷Small, 192, 193.

⁸Henry Van Etten, "Quakerism in France," BFHA, XXVI (1937), 35.

⁹Small, 199-202. Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, XXV-XXXVII (London, 1921-1933) contain records of the French churches in London. These documents list occupations, religious activities, baptisms, marriages, and burials of members.

¹⁰Small, 193. Brookes, 13.

¹¹Small, 195-197. J. B. Laux, The Huguenot Element in Pennsylvania (New York, 1896), 19. Brookes, 8, 9, offers several relatively convincing bits of evidence supporting the "maid of Honor" assertion. Judith's portrait, extant in several alleged originals and copies, shows her to have been extraordinarily beautiful. No portraits of either Jean Etienne or Anthony survive.

¹²Albert Cook Myers, ed., The Courtship of Hannah Logan: The Diary of John Smith (Philadelphia, 1904), 174.

¹³J. S. Benezet, "Memorial," 338.

¹⁴Ibid., 337, 338. "May God bless him and cause him to grow in grace."

¹⁵J. S. Benezet, "Memorial," 338. Barbé-Marbois, Revolutionary Forefathers, 139.

¹⁶See Small, 193, for account of the existing sources on this point. Brookes, 13.

¹⁷Owen J. A. Roche, The Days of the Upright; The Story of the Huguenots (New York, 1965), 290, 291. Barbé-Marbois, Revolutionary Forefathers, 453.

¹⁸J. S. Benezet, "Memorial," 338.

¹⁹Smiles, Huguenots, 253-255.

²⁰The nine Benezet children born in London were all baptized in Soho District French churches. Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, XXVI (1922), i, ii, ix; and XXV (1921), ii, vi-viii. Lists of occupations of members reveal that Soho residents were primarily engaged in the professions and skilled trades, shopkeeping, shipping, or the military officer corps.

²¹Smiles, Huguenots, 252, 253.

²²Ibid., 280.

²³Small, 208.

²⁴Brookes, 17. Smiles, Huguenots, 255. Gérard de Rayneval to Count de Vergennes, Sept. 18, 1778, Brookes, 449-451. Thomas Arnold to Moses Brown, Sept. 8, 1774, Moses Brown Papers, II, Rhode Island Historical Society.

²⁵ Benjamin Rush, "Anecdotes of Anthony Benezet," Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical (Philadelphia, 1798). Vaux, 4, 5.

²⁶ "Letters of Denization and Acts of Naturalization," Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, XXVII (1923), 132, 134. See Small, 194. Brookes, 16, reports John Stephen Benezet's purchase of 1,000 acres in Pennsylvania as evidence of success in the London business, but fails to note that the land was not acquired until he had been trading in Philadelphia for ten years.

²⁷ Small, 194. Brookes, 19. Poetical Epistle to the Enslaved Africans (Philadelphia, 1790), 18. Chastellux, Travels I, 165.

²⁸ Quoted in Smiles, Huguenots, 278, 279. All the French churches in London were in a state of serious decline by 1730. Between 1731 and 1782, the Savoy and Spring Gardens churches, of which the Benezets had been members, were forced to close due to declining membership and financial difficulties. Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, XXVI (1922), xxviii.

²⁹ Brookes, 17. J. S. Benezet, "Memorial," 338. The "Memorial" ends with the death of Elizabeth in late December, 1730. There is no record of the family's decision to emigrate again.

³⁰ Brookes, 18. Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen; Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), 2, 3.

³¹ Ibid., 260.

³² Israel Daniel Rupp, Thirty Thousand Names of Immigrants in Pennsylvania from 1727-1776 (Philadelphia, 1876); and William Henry Egle, Names of Foreigners Who Took the Oath of Allegiance in Pennsylvania, 1727-1775 (Baltimore, 1967), 4. Ammon Stapleton, Memorials of the Huguenots in America (Carlisle, Pa., 1901), 147. French settlers in Pennsylvania usually immigrated in small family groups along with German or Swiss refugee groups. Philadelphia Huguenots never formed a distinct colony, and they affiliated with various local churches, especially German Reformed, Lutheran, and Quaker. Laux, 19.

³³ Baron Cromont de Bourg, quoted in Brookes, 131. Chastellux, Travels, I, 165. Brookes, 19. "A Memorial," Brookes, 172. Rupp, Thirty Thousand Names, Appendix II, 434, 435. J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, History of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1884), I, 207.

³⁴ J. William Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America (New York, 1973), 200. "A Memorial," Brookes, 172.

³⁵To Sarah Barney, 1756, FM, III (1832), 103.

³⁶["Bulbucus,"] Sketch of the Benezet family, Friends' Weekly Intelligencer, VI (1849), 235. This story was told after Benezet's death by "a friend of one of the nearest relations" of the Benezets. As oral history, several times removed, it must be accepted cautiously, with the assumption that the details became exaggerated during the century of retelling. Certainly the dramatic clash and subsequent reunion between father and son are believable enough--it was a recurring pattern in the family.

³⁷Small, 195.

³⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER II

CRISIS OF VOCATION

Even as John Stephen Benezet, late in life, realized his early ambition to retrieve the economic security of past generations, his first-born son began hesitantly at first to explore alternative vocational possibilities. Anthony's marriage to Joyce Marriot on May 13, 1736 with the accompanying move from his father's household, marked the beginning stage.¹ There was no recorded family quarrel, no sudden, traumatic decision to strike out in a direction different from the path his father had trodden so diligently. But it was only in the years after 1736 that any kind of serious commitment began developing, and that only gradually, in Anthony's life.

Joyce was the granddaughter of Griffith Owen, a respected Quaker minister, physician, and statesman. She was born about 1712, and lived in Burlington, New Jersey, with her Quaker parents, Samuel and Mary Marriot. In 1731, she was "admitted to sit in the Meeting of Ministers and Elders," in recognition of the fact that she had "for sometime appeared in public testimony," and that her ministry was "sound, lively, and edifying."² Her solid roots in the Quaker community complemented the unfocussed, migratory pattern of Anthony's youth. As a Quaker minister, Joyce followed a tradition which not only accepted women as spiritual equals with men in a theoretical sense, but to a limited extent practiced that basic principle in the life of the sect. Women of proven piety were allowed to "speak in meeting," and even to undertake "religious visits" to other towns and provinces, provided they

were instructed by the inner light of the Holy Spirit and given a written "certificate" by the Meeting to do so. But the Society maintained separate "women's meetings," parallel to and inferior to the men's meetings. These were limited to certain socially approved functions. Women's meetings were expected to participate in the visitation and relief of the diseased and destitute, take responsibility for cleaning the meeting houses and schools, and attend to other activities "appropriate to their sex." Often they could not, without the prior approval of the men's meeting, discipline their own erring members, or examine and receive new members.³

Joyce Benezet served as a minister in good standing all of her adult life. She frequently spoke and prayed aloud in public meetings, and carried a full measure of the responsibilities borne by the Quaker women. The Journal of Friend John Smith contains several references to Joyce's inspiring comments in meetings for worship, and the minutes of the Philadelphia Monthly Meetings, both men's and women's, frequently mentioned her day to day services.⁴

Joyce seems to have been a sociable, articulate person, and at the same time, "a plain but dignified and well-behaved gentlewoman," in the words of one who knew her well.⁵ Her two surviving letters, written to friends, suggest that she was a woman of warmth and refinement, with at least enough education to enable her to write grammatically correct letters in a beautiful hand. Beyond these insights, the brief correspondence says little directly about Joyce herself, except for the comment that she had been in ill-health, but not too "indisposed" to attend meetings regularly.⁶

The degree of Quaker affiliation that Anthony and his father had professed in London is unknown. Evidently it was tenuous and informal, for records of the Society of Friends in London do not mention them, nor did they present the usual transfer certificates of members in good standing at the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting upon their arrival in the new world. But they did carry with them letters of personal recommendation from London Quakers. Early in the 1730's they began attending the Philadelphia meeting often enough to be considered members, although, again, no formal record exists.⁷ Certainly, Anthony could not have been approved for marriage to Joyce Marriot without having firmly established his credentials as a Friend.

In accordance with Quaker custom, Joyce Marriot and Anthony Benezet had appeared together before Philadelphia Monthly Meeting on two occasions prior to their wedding date. Both times they solemnly "declared their intentions," and subjected themselves to the rigorous oversight that characterized Friends' matrimonial procedures. Sponsors from both men's and women's meetings appeared with them publically, and counseled and queried them privately as to their spiritual worthiness, integrity of conduct, and general suitability for marriage within the Society of Friends. Six members of the Benezet family and several Marriots were present at the simple ceremony on May 13, 1736.⁸ The solemn steps of their Quaker marriage and the interest manifested by both the religious and the natural families of the pair symbolized something highly significant in their lives--a public commitment to the Quaker faith, and the institution of the family.

Two children were born to Joyce and Anthony Benezet. A daughter, Mary, arrived on August 21, 1737. She lived approximately one year before her death on July 12, which was duly recorded in the family Bible. A second entry shows that a son, Anthony, was born June 16, 1743, and died six days later.⁹ Apparently there were no other children. Except for the Bible notations, neither parent referred to the deceased children in any form that has been preserved. It is intriguing to note, however, that Anthony carefully marked the following passage in one of the numerous medical books in his personal library: "I am fully persuaded that if anything in nature can prevent infertility, and bring fine healthy children, it is a milk and seed diet, continued by Father and Mother till the effect be produced."¹⁰

Except for the absence of a large number of children, the marriage was as traditional, in an eighteenth century Quakerly way, as the preliminaries and the wedding ceremony had been. The young couple frequently entertained a wide variety of Friends, neighbors, relatives, and transients in their home. Some of these people lived with them. Samuel Boulds, for example, a "poor scholar," and orphan under the care of Meeting, was apprenticed to Benezet to learn the profession of school teacher, and "to serve until he is 21 years of age." Other young scholars boarded at the Benezets' house, as did other schoolmasters from time to time. An oft-repeated comment in Anthony's letters follows an apology for haste and inaccuracies: "I am obliged to write with my friends or pupils about me," he explains. In addition to all this sociability, Anthony taught black children at home in the evenings. And Indians visiting Philadelphia stopped by the Benezets', alongside French army officers

and diplomats seeking lively conversation in their own tongue.¹¹

One of the couple's close friends, John Smith, recorded numerous social and religious occasions he enjoyed with the Benezets, sometimes at their home, sometimes at his, and often in other domestic circles or Meeting Houses. Both were frequently occupied in a daily round of church meetings, teas, dinner parties, visits, and good will errands to the poor, the ill, or the religious outcast. The religious activities were so thoroughly homogenized with the social interchange that it is impossible at times to make any clear distinction.¹² For them both, over the years, the Meeting became their social life, and their social life merged into their religion.

With his many activities outside the home, such as schoolwork, antislavery and peace lobbying, errands to the printer or to deliver overseas-directed packets to the care of prospective voyagers, Anthony was away much of the time. But he rarely traveled far from Philadelphia. His excursions outside the city were few, brief, and usually only to nearby areas.

Joyce, however, went on numerous "Religious visits" outside the province. In the summer of 1764, she and another minister, Sarah Morris, obtained certificates from Monthly Meeting for a visit to Quakers in Newport, Rhode Island, where they also visited the annual Yearly Meeting of New England. They returned several weeks later with certificates from that Society's jurisdiction "expressing satisfaction of Friends there with their religious visit, and their conduct and conversation among them."¹³ Religious visits were a common means of linking scattered Meetings together in a personal way, and rejuvenating and reinforcing

Quaker teachings. Both male and female ministers participated.

On another occasion, Joyce went to visit Friends and relatives in her home town of Burlington. While she was away, her husband sent her a warm message in a letter to a friend and colleague of his, George Dillwyn, who lived in Burlington. Tell her, he wrote, "that much, very much, love dwells in my heart towards her, and that I shall be very well pleased to have her with me, when consistent with her own satisfaction and peace."¹⁴ Why he chose to write these tender words to Dillwyn rather than directly to his wife remains a mystery. But the message suggests the gentle paternalism that was characteristic of the man. He urged Joyce to return home soon, but avoided a direct command. His sense of respect for her wishes in the matter, and her own already established independence of spirit are implicit, too.

When Anthony was away at an Indian treaty negotiation in Easton, Pennsylvania, Joyce sent him a message, also. It was scribbled in the margins of a letter written by John Pemberton to Quaker delegates. All the families of the men were well in Philadelphia, he reported, and "Joyce desires Anthony to take care of himself, and sends her love to him."¹⁵

In all, a pattern of openly professed love and respect, along with an almost childlike dependence on one another at times and a striking independence at other times, emerges from the scattered fragments that survive as the basis for a necessarily sketchy profile of a marriage. In the midst of all the gregarious functions of the household, the pair seems to have preserved a genuine concern for each other's welfare. Joyce's occasional extended "religious visits" away from the

somewhat overwhelming sociability of her home may have served as a safety valve that helped to preserve the warmth of the relationship through nearly a half century of married life. Both partners led such awesomely busy lives that one cannot imagine boredom with the domestic routine becoming a problem.

Anthony had a gift for lively, witty conversation that must have lightened the burdens of the couple's intensely serious and dedicated religious lives. Quakers generally were not renowned for their sense of humor. But Anthony seems frequently to have defied the somber image, and the French observer Barbé-Marbois noted that "his Quaker seriousness has not taken away from this good refugee any particle of his French vivacity," and that he was a person of "intelligence, wit, and fire."¹⁶ An example of the welcome strain of levity in Benezet's personality appears in his correspondence with John Smith of Burlington. Thanking Smith for a gift of geese, Benezet wrote that he often found "more pleasure and instruction from the animal creation than from the human," and that he looked upon animals "as the most grateful, as well as the most reasonable part of God's creation, with the exception of some honest Burlington Quakers, and others."¹⁷

Anthony Benezet was one of the many "whose first appearance by no means does him justice." One of his French friends described him as a man of "small stature, and humble and unimposing looks." Still another, more concisely, called him "small, old, and ugly," in his declining years, but also observed that "his countenance wears the stamp of a peaceful soul and the repose of a good conscience."¹⁸ All accounts describe a man singularly lacking in physical beauty, and personally

unconcerned about his appearance--one who chose his simple clothing with the primary goals of comfort and durability, so that he could pass it on in good and usable condition to the poor after several years' wear. But to the friends of Anthony Benezet as he grew older, his shabby appearance on the streets and in the homes of the increasingly fashionable Philadelphians only added to his reputation as a "model Quaker," one "wholly occupied with the welfare of mankind."¹⁹

The unusually extensive web of friendships Anthony enjoyed has been frequently noted, both in his own day and later. In Philadelphia he was equally at ease and cordially welcomed in the elegant residence of the Chevalier Luzerne, minister from the Court of Louis XVI, and in the humble and "middling" dwellings of John Woolman and other close friends. He visited regularly in the parlors of neighbors Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Benjamin Rush, discussing various humanitarian reforms. And as regularly he visited in the cottages of the city's poor, taking with him what assistance he could. The extent of his colonial and European correspondence is astonishing, too, even by eighteenth century standards. His long and thoughtful letters went to obscure, struggling schoolmasters and to the Queen of England, as well as to a wide range of people in between.²⁰

Yet, even with such a notable array of friendships, Benezet complained that he had few real friends, although he was in his own words, "naturally inclined to friendship." In a revealing letter to George Dillwyn, who was one of the few, he wrote:

The best of those who profess friendship (except one or two who are in some degree of John Woolman's spirit,) as long as I will join them in an exertion of zeal against what they

dislike in others, are very gracious, but as soon as I am in opposition to some wrong indulgence, are ready to turn about and vent with a fierceness and long continued displeasure I little expected; but I wish not to complain, but suffer in silence. I am sure it is for the best.²¹

The letter reveals more about certain characteristics in Anthony's personality than it does about the "friends" who inspired it. His intense religious idealism led him to expect a great deal from those in the world less dedicated than himself to his own high principles, or those who interpreted their spiritual obligations differently. The absolute assurance he had of his own correctness "in opposition to some wrong indulgence," bespeaks a strain of rigidity at odds with his warm and sympathetic approach to the fallen, the downtrodden, the unfortunate of the earth. And finally, his refined martyr complex when his demands on friendship met opposition, is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in this passage. The man's very intense, outgoing nature demanded a large network of friends, yet his perfectionist training resulted in frequent disappointment with those who would not serve his unattainably high purposes in the way he felt they should.

To "suffer in silence" seemed at times the only recourse. The unpleasantness of fighting back was out of the question--it would merely invite further contention rather than lead to a peaceful victory of good over evil. Anthony took quite seriously a passage on Martin Luther in a tract entitled, "Of the Insufficiency of the Reformation," in his personal library. He marked heavily a paragraph that dealt with the inability of Luther to control his temper. The author observed that the great reformer's regrettable tendency to "arguing, contending, disputing," created a stumbling block to achieving the real goals of the

reformation. Benezet's emphatic markings indicate his agreement with this assessment. With his reforming zeal for perfection, and his love of peace, he was not prepared to face the inevitable overt conflict his righteous demands stimulated. He trained himself deliberately, then, to suffer in silence, to curb his own "natural vivacity," which might easily have led him along other, more combative paths in his quixotic life.²²

The business years of Anthony's life are largely lost in obscurity. But his dissatisfaction with the market place was keen enough finally to lead him at age 26 into a field of endeavor previously unexplored by other members of his extensive family. Perhaps there were problems with his "irritable" father and his three brothers, who were all eight to ten years his junior, and strong-willed themselves. About this time the export-import enterprise was beginning to return a good profit, as indicated by John Stephen Benezet's first major land-speculation purchase. And Anthony throughout his life entertained moral objections to speculation, profit taking, and the general "worldliness" of commercial enterprise. Probably, too, the three years since his marriage to a pious Quaker minister had brought increased involvement in the Society of Friends, whose strictures against worldliness he took with ever greater seriousness. It was not an unusual phenomenon in Quaker circles for a person on the verge of business success to feel threatened spiritually by his own position. The pursuit of wealth had its serious dangers for the Christian. Sometimes a devout Friend would "retire" from his business, irrespective of age, in order to avoid the pitfalls of success. On the whole, however, the Society did not deprecate financial success if the

member remained faithful and was a "good steward" of his new wealth. In fact, the wealthy Quakers who continued to be active in meeting were also considered "weighty" Friends, and their opinions were generally influential.²³ But for Benezet, the spiritual hazards of diligence in trade outweighed the ostensible benefits, and even his "natural inclinations" urged him in other directions.

Anthony wrote to an associate in March of 1739 that he was leaving the family firm "to settle in the country." But his first venture on his own in the adult world turned out to be as disastrous as his youthful rebellion against his father's apprenticeship arrangements in London had been. This time, instead of trying to get started as a cooper, he and Joyce moved to Wilmington, Delaware, where he opened some unnamed type of manufacturing firm. The infant industry failed within six months.²⁴

One helpful insight into Anthony Benezet's retreat from the marketplace, of which the Wilmington fiasco was the first step, may be found in a letter he wrote to John Smith many years later. In it he complained that a person who sincerely tried to base his business ventures in ethical principles, or "right reason," could expect only to find himself being taken advantage of by others who claimed the "necessities of trade." His absolute morality, as always, was at odds with the conditions of the commercial world around him. "I had rather be otherwise employed" than in commerce, he wrote to another friend. He sought a vocation "more retired and quiet," more closely in harmony with his self described "free, open disposition." The need to reconcile somehow his unique personality with his environment, to find an equilibrium, to create a harmonious balance between himself and the demands of the world--it would be a

life-long quest. Brissot de Warville explained Anthony's move away from business and toward education concisely: "His integrity and his inclinations [were] at odds with the spirit of commerce."²⁵

Benezet's decision to become a teacher seems to have been made hesitantly. At first, he considered the school room a temporary haven from the buffetings of a hostile competitive world. The diminutive figure entering the Germantown classroom late in 1739 was ill prepared by prevailing standards to supervise the formal education of his young charges. His own schooling had been minimal at best, lacking in a classical foundation, and most of his time and energies had been absorbed by the demands of trade for more than a decade. But the likelihood that he had done a great deal of independent reading and thinking during those same years is great, in view of his well known habituation to books and libraries during the ensuing years of his life.²⁶ And his acquaintanceship with practical mathematics, especially accounting, his first-hand knowledge of the French and German languages, and his interest in religious subjects, all formed an integral part of the background he brought to the classroom. From these resources he assembled a curriculum that was unorthodox in his day, lacking as it did the traditional emphasis on the classical accomplishments.

He was not an ordinary teacher, and the school at which he launched his new career was appropriately different, too. Opened in 1702 by the distinguished colonial scholar and Quaker Daniel Pastorius, the school was already well known for its innovations, including the pragmatic simplicity of curriculum that became characteristic of classrooms sponsored by the Society of Friends. Thus, Anthony Benezet found the

Germantown school, at least in the beginning, congenial to his mind and training.²⁷

But if the curriculum presented no insurmountable problems for the new teacher, the inadequate salary did. Benezet took a part time job at the newly installed German language printing press of Christopher Sauer. Sauer published the first successful German newspaper in the colonies, beginning in the same year the Benezets moved to Germantown. With Anthony as proof-reader, Sauer also published tracts, books, and almanacs, and undertook the massive project of printing the first German Bible to be published in the colonies. Sauer was a kindred spirit, in addition to being Anthony's employer. He regularly gave copies of the new Bible away to poor people. Benezet and Sauer were both signers of a report printed at the Germantown press in 1739 warning Germans against too-hasty immigration to the new world. The broadside was reprinted in Frankfort the same year. From this period on, Sauer was closely associated with both Anthony and John Stephen Benezet in the publication of German religious and reform books, for distribution throughout the province. The two year period at Sauer's press gave Anthony a first hand knowledge of colonial publishing and the book trade, and the extra income made survival in Germantown possible.²⁸

But Joyce and Anthony were not long content with mere survival at this point in their lives. Although he did find teaching more compatible with his "natural inclinations" than the world of commerce, the low salary at Germantown rankled, and he complained to Philadelphian Israel Pemberton, a member of the Penn Charter School Board of Overseers, that he was required "to teach more scholars than I can effectually

perform, which to me is very disagreeable." In addition, Joyce was unhappy in Germantown. She was pregnant for the second time in the winter of 1742-43, and had repeatedly expressed a desire to move back among old friends and relatives in the Philadelphia Meeting. Also, there were unresolved problems that may have stemmed from jealousies between the two schools and schoolmasters in the town. Anthony reported to Pemberton that "the English master (who has been settled here about six months) complains heavily of my keeping school, tho I have not desired any of the people to take their children from him nor have any done it but one. Some of the chief inhabitants who have formerly complained of his drinking before I began now seem to speak well of and encourage him."²⁹

Accordingly, after nearly five years of marriage, which had included the death of one infant, failure in at least one business venture, and a less than satisfactory school job, Benezet applied for the higher paid position of English Schoolmaster at the Friends' Publick School in Philadelphia. In his letter to Israel Pemberton, he offered to teach reading and writing, arithmetic up through algebra, "merchants' accounts," the French and German languages (enough practical instruction to enable students to read the Bible and "to buy, sell, and talk of common things,") and spelling. As for remuneration, he would be content, he wrote, "with such a salary as will afford a frugal living." Because he had already proceeded far with plans to build a house in Germantown, he requested an early reply from Philadelphia Friends, so that he would know whether or not he should cancel the project. His circumstances made it unwise to continue if he would be soon moving.³⁰

Three days later, on November 27, the School's Board of Overseers resolved to offer employment to Benezet at a salary of 50 pounds for a year, "in consideration of his teaching fifteen poor children." Children of more affluent parents were expected to pay a tuition fee directly to the schoolmaster, who received free use of the school building. Benezet accepted the Board's terms immediately, and assumed his new duties early in 1743. Thus hastily, Anthony Benezet's distinguished forty one year career as a schoolmaster in the Penn Charter School began. During that period, he guided the school through what historian Thomas Woody called "its period of real greatness."³¹

The Publick School, as Penn Charter School is called in the minutes of the Board of Overseers, was a boy's school, with two basic departments: the English School and the Latin School. But since the Overseers found it difficult to attract and keep a qualified Latin master from England, that post sometimes remained vacant for relatively long periods. For several years after Benezet began teaching, this was the case, and his English School attracted the sons of many of Philadelphia's leading families. Even after Robert Willan arrived from England in 1748 to become Latin master, the English school remained popular, and many of the boys attended some sessions in both schools. The aging school building at Fourth and Chestnut Streets, in which Benezet began his long tenure, was replaced with a new and larger one by 1746.

Anthony's first year as Schoolmaster in the Friends' Publick School coincided with his father's retirement from his thriving business in Philadelphia. John Stephen, now completing his four decade quest for economic stability, finally felt free to concentrate upon another powerful impulse in his life. Always a religious maverick in the dissenting

tradition, he seems at last to have found a spiritual home among the Moravian Brethren--a sect whose call for a universal communion of all Christian faiths appealed strongly to him. He had first met Moravian minister Peter Bohler years earlier in London. When the Moravians sent missionaries and settlers to Pennsylvania in 1736, the Benezet house was open to them. The renowned Moravian theorist and organizer Count Ludwig Zinzendorf spent much time there during his visit to America in 1741-42, as did Bishop August Spangenberg.³³ The house became a center for Moravian planning, and a haven for ministers traveling between the European home bases and the frontier mission settlements of Bethlehem and Nazareth. In 1742, John Stephen Benezet served as director of a newly-organized weekly postal service between Bethlehem and Philadelphia. The same year, all three Benezet daughters, Judith, Susanne, and Marianne, married Moravian ministers from Europe. In 1743, John Stephen and his daughters became charter members of a new congregation of Brethren organized in Philadelphia. John Stephen became treasurer of the denomination in the new world.³⁴

Not surprisingly, the Society of Friends found the elder Benezet's defection disappointing. In March, 1743, he was disowned "for declining to attend" Meeting regularly, even after he "had been lovingly spoken to" about the matter. It was in 1743, too, that John Stephen and Judith, their children no longer dependent on them, moved from the large house on Race Street in Philadelphia to a home in Germantown. John Stephen turned his successful business over to his enterprising younger sons who soon began advertising shipments of drygoods in their own names in the Pennsylvania Gazette. In Germantown, he accepted a post on the Board of

Trustees of an interdenominational Charity School, sharing responsibilities with his friend, evangelist George Whitefield, among others.³⁵

Perhaps John Stephen's belated achievement of his own objectives in life, and his move away from Philadelphia, was related to the fact that Anthony now moved back to that city and entered upon the vocation of schoolmaster-reformer that was to occupy his mind and energies for most of the next four decades. He was the only one of the Benezet children who did not follow his father's footsteps in either secular or religious paths.

Anthony and Joyce Benezet lived contentedly in Philadelphia during the first decade at Penn Charter School except for the death of their only son, Anthony, a few months after their arrival. The quiet years provided a respite from the hectic pace of change and disappointment that had characterized their earlier married lives. It was a time of unknowing preparation for an even more frantic sequence of years still ahead. They may have resided temporarily in the large old house vacated by John Stephen and Judith when the older couple moved to Germantown. In the summer of 1745, they rented a house owned by Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, with a "piece of ground fenced off for a garden by itself," as requested by the Schoolmaster.³⁶

The garden meant more to Benezet than merely a method of supplementing his modest income; it was more, too, than a satisfying form of recreation, though both advantages accrued to him. He spent much time working the garden plot when the weather allowed it, sometimes in company with other members of his household (apprentices or students), and sometimes alone. Over the years he developed a sense of communion with the

natural world that he expressed in a variety of ways in life. His awakening interest in how things grow led him to develop and exchange exotic botanical specimens and information with his ever-widening network of friends and correspondents. John Bartram, a fellow Quaker and renowned American botanist, was one of these. Often his sharing of specimens with friends was accompanied by doses of advice on practical medicinal uses. Benezet's interest in horticulture, while not uncommon in the eighteenth century, had important religious and philosophical implications. It was for him an expression of the conviction that God reveals something of His nature in the works of Creation. It was rooted, too, in his English-Quaker faith in immediate experience as a channel for receiving the inspiration of the "inner light."³⁷

He was intensely interested in the smooth functioning of the human body, and its proper relationship to the natural environment. Fresh air, exercise, and above all, a correct diet, he considered essential. One outgrowth of this preoccupation was his decision, probably reached during this period, to become a vegetarian. Just how common vegetarianism was among Philadelphia Quakers generally during this period has not been established, but the practice was fairly widespread. Most Quakers, however, apparently believed with the larger society that the killing and eating of animals was legitimate, provided the killing was carried out as mercifully as possible.³⁸

Benezet's decision in the matter had both hygienic and personal components. His well marked medical books, most of which advocate a vegetarian diet, indicate that he considered the biological advantages of avoiding meat to be considerable. But probably even more important,

he had a sensitive respect for all living creatures--an almost mystical sense of oneness with the "animal kingdom." Dr. Benjamin Rush relates an anecdote about his friend that illustrates this well. Anthony, upon being invited by his brother's family to share a chicken dinner, replied with a characteristic half-humorous, half-serious, question: "What! Would you have me eat my neighbors?" Similarly, several early Philadelphia sources relate the story of Benezet's daily feeding of the rats outside his home. He explained this puzzling behavior to visitors, again with an unknown degree of seriousness, as a lesson in honesty for the rats. They were being taught not to steal food from his kitchen. The pack of rats grew accustomed to his solicitude, and "they would gather round his feet like chickens at feeding time."³⁹

The quiet years from the early 1740's to the early 1750's were lived out in relative obscurity, but they were not inactive. Benezet found that his decision to pursue a teaching career in Philadelphia did not completely settle either his mind or his accounts. He seems to have been recurrently drawn back into the world of commerce, at times combining business pursuits with school work and religious concerns. In March of 1744, he resumed correspondence with certain former mercantile colleagues in London. Most of the letters have disappeared, but surviving extracts from them indicate that he was attempting, among other things, to reconcile past differences, both spiritual and financial. To one he wrote that he still held his affection for old friends,

which neither difference of opinion, length of time, distance of place, nor even ill-usage, have been able to deface
 Thou hast sought for happiness and stability of mind with respect to the good and evil of this world, and that which is to come. Hast thou met with it? Or does the hurry

of the circle in which you, the busy part of the world,
continually turn, take so much of thy time that thou hast
little to spare for these thoughts?

At times he seemed drawn back into the international marketplace, "the busy part of the world," by an attractive force which, consciously, he labeled evil, and condemned. Yet he revealed a continuing fascination with it. In any case, the letters suggest that Benezet's relations with business colleagues had not always been cordial, that there were broken fences still in need of mending years later, and that the mending was part of an effort to reestablish business connections while proceeding at the same time with the more satisfying vocation of teaching. Both the tension and the close interrelationship between his Quaker faith and Quaker mercantilism are highlighted in this correspondence.⁴⁰

The same attraction-repulsion syndrome characterized Benezet's long career in education. After the first few years of apparent satisfaction with teaching, coupled with the occasional resumption of business affairs, the schoolmaster informed the Board of Overseers of the Publick School that he could no longer handle the overload created by teaching all the English School students, plus the writing and arithmetic lessons for boys in the Latin school, as he had been doing. Accordingly, an "usher," or assistant teacher, John Wilson of England, was hired to work under the Latin master, teaching the non-classical subjects. Wilson was paid sixty pound annually, Latin master John Willan, 150 pounds, and Benezet, fifty pounds. The salaries reflect both the lower status attributed to the English school, and the fact that students who could afford it were charged directly by the master for their tuition. Approximately one half of the English school students were "free" or "poor" scholars

in Benezet's classes.⁴¹ His withdrawal from teaching even a part of the Latin school curriculum was the first of a series of retreats from full time teaching.

The lessened class load after 1749 meant two things: Benezet could now devote more time to other pursuits that interested him, and he would be receiving a somewhat decreased income from paying students. Perhaps his income was supplemented now by increased returns from the family business ventures, in which he may have retained an interest. But there is no direct confirmation of this. We do know, however, that he began to spend more time in certain special interest educational projects around the year 1750, after partially freeing himself from a too heavy classroom schedule. It was about this time that he started teaching a few free black children in his home in the evenings. In effect, he had dismissed some of the privileged white children from his tutelage to leave time for the poor blacks.⁴²

In 1750, too, Benezet presented the first of a series of proposals to the various levels of the Philadelphia Society of Friends "for encouraging schools in the country, etc." He was concerned because children in rural areas were growing up without the benefits of the advanced schools in the city. But while the meetings approved of the principle involved in setting up country schools, they complained of geographical and financial difficulties that seemed insurmountable. Thus, while Benezet's proposal at mid-century was given merely polite recognizance, it planted the seeds that took root and would eventually bear fruit after nearly three decades of his patient cultivation, in a more congenial climate of historical circumstances.⁴³

By 1750, Benezet had become quite active in the affairs of his adopted faith. During the quiet years his numerous friendships among Quakers at all socio-economic levels matured and his prestige and leadership in meeting grew apace. He frequently spent long afternoons and evenings in the deliberations of Monthly Meeting and its committees, and of the Overseers of the Publick School. His name appears over and over on special committees assigned the routine tasks of "making enquiry into the conduct" of Friends seeking the Society's permission for marriage, or certificates addressed to other meetings.⁴⁴

He was often requested to investigate cases of alleged misbehavior of members, and to "labor with" offenders to bring them back from their errors, before disownment became necessary. But Benezet never became judgmental in carrying out these responsibilities, despite his increasingly strict personal moral code. In fact, his capacity for mercy and forgiveness to the social or religious deviant seemed almost infinite at times, and created some difficulties for Meeting. The minutes record his reluctance to give up on discipline cases, for he often expressed "some desire of laboring further" with seemingly incorrigible offenders whom other members wished to disown more quickly.⁴⁵ Throughout his long Quaker affiliation, Benezet consistently carried a large share of responsibility for the day to day "housekeeping" work of the Friends' family--the constant, routine supervision of the members' daily lives at the Monthly Meeting level.

More and more frequently, too, he was appointed by that lower body as representative to the higher councils of Quarterly and Yearly Meetings. Here he took a leading, if quiet, part in the important

policy making decisions of the Society from the 1750's onward. But even as his importance increased in the Society, he tended personally to grow less sectarian in outlook. In the middle of a business letter to a London merchant, written in the early 1750's, Benezet explained his religious affiliation this way:

Though I am joined in church fellowship with the people called Quakers, yet my heart is united in true gospel fellowship with the willing in God's Israel, let their distinguishing name or sect be as it may. My soul longs to be a possessor of that gospel charity, even the love of Christ, which embraces the whole universe--flowing for every individual, let his name or even erroneous opinion, be what it may, if so be that his heart is but sincere toward God.

It was the attitude of sincerity, the honest heart, that he valued above all theological disputation or narrow sectarianism, even at the risk of allowing "erroneous opinion" to flourish. As this passage suggests, he usually sided with the liberal elements in Meeting deliberations on moral and social questions. His comment in a letter to George Dillwyn describing a Friendly disagreement is typical of his attitude: "We treated pretty kindly upon the matter, only some [were] a little zealous for the law and the tradition." Again, he wrote John Smith deploring a "Pharisaical spirit, which is not enough guarded against by many good people amongst us."⁴⁶ Dogmatism that inhibited necessary changes annoyed him.

Benezet was an incurable activist, inclined to be outgoing and generous in his relations with other people. But there was in him, too, a powerful strain of quietism to balance, control, and even at times to thwart, the high-spirited tendencies. From the 1750's onward, his life alternated between extremes of prolonged frantic activity, and brief,

deliberate, withdrawals from public activity. The periods of withdrawal were characterized by keen introspection, self-criticism and sometimes self-pity. During these "lean times," as he called them, he would complain of his inability to feel close to God, and usually at the same time of various physical indispositions. Sometimes he found solace from reading the sermons of John Everard, explaining on one occasion, "I have scarce met with any book from which I have derived more solid edification." Everard was a "great spiritual separatist," Benezet wrote, and a "notable and doubtless very religious man," even though he lived "long before our Friends made their appearance."⁴⁷ Everard's works stressed the quietistic doctrines of passivity and resignation to the will of God, of prayer and fasting, and they deprecated all striving or manifestations of aggressive evangelical zeal. Benezet not only referred frequently to the sermons in his own times of quiet retreat, but he also gave away hundreds of copies, reprinted in Germantown at his request, to friends and correspondents. The inward looking days and weeks seem to have functioned as "rest periods"--times for calming, evaluating, and refueling a naturally active and energetic personality for ever more intense reentries into "the world"--for attacks upon the stubborn problems that refused to dissolve in the face of prayer and fasting.

Another recurring pattern of temporary mental withdrawal is revealed by the minutes of the several religious and educational organizations to which Benezet belonged. As his commitments to major social reform expanded, so did his tendency to forget the less pressing responsibilities he had assumed. "Anthony Benezet, having omitted to take the certificate of Isaac Cathrall's marriage to be recorded, is now

reminded thereof." Again, he inadvertently neglected to read a 1758 Epistle from London Yearly Meeting to the Fair Hill Meeting near his home, as directed by Yearly Meeting, and in January, 1759, he was "reminded thereof." At the following Monthly Meeting, he contritely announced that he had read the Epistle "as directed." His forgetfulness was a source of amusement to him at times, and when he grew older he commented to a young Friend that a failing memory had its advantages. "You can find entertainment in reading a book only once," he said, "but I enjoy that pleasure as often as I read it, for it is always new to me."⁴⁸

The first decade of Benezet's teaching career in Philadelphia had been directed primarily into activities of home, school, and church. On the whole it was a period of establishing his own vocational goals and exploring the limits of personal and social growth within the Society of Friends. Before the outbreak of the French and Indian War early in 1756, there had been little to indicate to the world that the life of Anthony Benezet would ever differ significantly from that of other middle class immigrants to the new world.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

¹Brookes, 23.

²Jean S. Straub, "Anthony Benezet: Teacher and Abolitionist of the Eighteenth Century," QH, LVII (1968), 3-16. Brookes, 23. Minutes of PMM, Aug. 29, 1731, quoted in Brookes, 24.

³James, 13, 14.

⁴Albert Cook Myers, ed., The Courtship of Hannah Logan: The Diary of John Smith (Philadelphia, 1904), 102, 114, 200.

⁵Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, 1825, Brookes, 470.

⁶Joyce Benezet to Sarah and Deborah Morris, Oct. 16, 1772, and to "Betty," n.d., HQC.

⁷Brookes, 16, 23. Small, 202. Margaret E. Hirst, The Quakers in Peace and War (London, 1923), 401. Vaux, 5. The "Advertisement" in Benezet's Some Historical Account of Guinea (4th ed., London, 1788), 10, notes that he became a Quaker "soon after his arrival in America." See "A Memorial," from PMM concerning Anthony Benezet, May 2, 1785, Brookes, 172.

⁸Brookes, 23.

⁹Fly leaf of Joyce's Bible, HQC.

¹⁰George Cheyne, M.D., The Natural Method of Curing the Diseases of the Body and the Disorders of the Mind (London, 1753), 287, HQC. Benezet became a vegetarian.

¹¹Minutes of PCS, I, Dec., 1753, Feb. 21, 1754, May 30, 1754, 113-152. Thomas Woody, Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania (New York, 1920), 217. The eccentric historian and Latin Schoolmaster, Robert Proud, also lived with the Benezets for years, prompting one researcher to note that Anthony Benezet's house was "a refuge for Negro slaves, exiled Acadians, and Robert Proud." John A. Neuenschwander, "Robert Proud: A Chronicle," PMHB, XCII (Oct., 1968), 495.

¹²See Myers, Courtship, 200, 207, 225, 243, 266, for examples.

¹³Joyce also made a religious visit to New York in 1763, along with Hannah Logan. A. Benezet to John Smith, May 8, 1763, Brookes, 247.

¹⁴Aug. 30, 1767, Brookes, 276.

¹⁵John Pemberton to Israel Pemberton, Philadelphia, July 28, 1756, Papers of the Friendly Association, I, 167, Department of Records, Arch Street Meeting House, Philadelphia.

¹⁶On Quakers' sense of humor, see J. William Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America (New York, 1973), 210. Francois Barbé-Marbois, Our Revolutionary Forefathers, Eugene Parker Chase, tr.^s and ed., (Freeport, N.Y., 1969), 139, 140.

¹⁷Italics Benezet's. To John Smith, Dec. 9, 1757 and Jan. 2, 1758, "Correspondence of Anthony Benezet and John Smith," The Friend, V (1832), 297.

¹⁸Thomas Arnold to Moses Brown, Sept. 8, 1774. Moses Brown papers, Rhode Island Historical Society. Francois Jean, Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America, 1780-1782, Howard C. Rice, Jr., tr. (Chapel Hill, 1963), I, 165. Baron Cromont de Bourg, "Diary of a French Officer," Magazine of American History, IV (1880), 381.

¹⁹Benjamin Rush, Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1798), 302. Chastellux, Travels, I, 165. This was a striking compliment from one who had little respect for Quakers as a group.

²⁰On Luzerne, see Cromont de Bourg, "Diary," 380, and, William B. Rawle, "Laurel Hill," PMHB, XXXV (1911), 385-414. "Sketch of the Life of Anthony Benezet," Rural Magazine and Literary Fireside, I (1820), 273. See below, chs. VII, XI, XII. The 265 pages of printed correspondence in Brookes provide a good introduction. Letter to a Schoolmaster, about 1752, Brookes, 208; To Charlotte, Queen of Britain, Aug. 25, 1783, Brookes, 402.

²¹Aug. 5, 1773, in Brookes, 403.

²²Anthony William Boehm, Several Discourses and Tracts (London, 1717), 335, HQC. Rush once wrote of Anthony Benezet that "he possessed a species of quixotism in acts of piety and benevolence. He embraced all mankind in the circle of his love." Rush to Sharp, Apr. 27, 1784, Woods, 22, 23.

²³Frost, 198. Examples of those who left business world for spiritual reasons: John Woolman left the market place for teaching and itinerant preaching; Moses Brown of Rhode Island gave up a thriving business for a career in education and reform as result of his conversion to Quaker faith.

²⁴"Biographical Notices of Anthony Benezet," FM, III, (1832), 97. Brookes, 26. Small, 202.

²⁵Jan. 8, 1765. Quoted in Frost, 203. To Sarah Barney, 1756, FM III, 103. Brissot, New Travels, 218.

²⁶Howard Brinton, "The Quaker Contribution to Higher Education in America," Pennsylvania History, XXV (1958), 241, discusses frequency and extent of self-education among colonial Friends.

²⁷See Brookes, 30; James Wickersham, A History of Education in Pennsylvania (Lancaster, Pa., 1886), 81, 82. Thomas Woody, Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania (New York, 1920), 47. Pastorius died in 1718.

²⁸Brookes, 27. Edward W. Hocker, Germantown, 1683-1933 (Germantown, Pa., 1933), 75-77. William C. Reichel, ed., Memorials of the Moravian Church (Philadelphia, 1870), I, 177, 181. Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Christopher Sauer: Pennsylvania-German Printer," PMHB, LXXXII (July, 1958), 326, 327.

²⁹To Israel Pemberton, Nov. 24, 1742, minutes of PCS, HQC. Also Brookes, 28-30.

³⁰Ibid. "Friends' Publick School" was the common name for the Penn Charter School, opened in 1689 and formally chartered in 1701 by William Penn. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 49-53.

³¹Minutes of PCS, I, 33, 121. Woody, Early Quaker Education 57. Brookes, 28, 30. There were two brief interruptions in Benezet's long career at PCS.

³²Woody, Early Quaker Education, 220, 221. Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen (New York, 1942), 32. Brookes, 33. While the Latin School was the most prestigious of the Friends' Schools, the greater popularity of the English School was no doubt related to the lower tuition fee.

³³See John R. Weinlick, "Colonial Moravians, Their Status Among the Churches," Pennsylvania History, XXVI (1959), 213-225, for details of Moravian belief in this period. They were similar to Quakers in

some respects, but more zealous evangelists. Reichel, Memorials, 11. Peter Bohler (1712-1775) later became a Moravian bishop.

³⁴Best source on J. S. Benezet and founding of the Moravian Church in America is Reichel, ed., Memorials, 14-17, 171-172. "Mr. Benezet, a merchant," and "Benjamin Franklin, Postmaster," were among those present at the Governor's house when Count Zinzendorf publically renounced his title and rank in May, 1742, for the sake of Christian simplicity. On the postal service, see J. W. Jordan, "Bethlehem Ferry," Pennsylvania Magazine, XXI, 104. Brookes, 20, 21. Small, 195. Weinlick, "Colonial Moravians," 216-219. Judith married David Bruce, missionary to the Indians, and after his death, Moravian physician John F. Otto. Susanne married John C. Pyrlaeus, and Marianne married Jacob Lischy. Reichel, 24-26, 57, 133, 138.

³⁵Minutes of PMM, Mar. 27, 1743, Brookes, 21. Pennsylvania Gazette, Sept. 15, 1743 carried the following advertisement: "Merchandize for Sale--Just imported from London, and to be sold by James and Daniel Benezet at their store on Pemberton's Wharf." The brothers exported furs, and imported dry goods. The charity school was merged with the Pennsylvania Academy in 1749, and eventually became the University of Pennsylvania, Small, 194, 195.

³⁶Minutes of PCS, I, 51.

³⁷Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, 1825, Brookes, 468. Benezet to Edward Cathrall, Nov. 25, 1764, Brookes, 253. Howard Brinton, in "Quaker Contribution," 245-248, suggests, too that the great interest of some Quakers in botanical pursuits, a hobby approved by the Society, filled the place of more "frivolous" entertainments enjoyed by non-Quakers. But such scientific hobbies were popular among 18th century Philadelphians of all religious persuasions, as well, and Benezet never seemed to need any kind of "entertainment" for its own sake.

³⁸Anna Cox Brinton, ed., Then and Now: Quaker Essays (Philadelphia, 1960), 194.

³⁹Rush, Essays, 303, 304. John F. Watson, Annals of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1857) I, 373. Someone in his household hung a collar around the neck of a rat which was then observed feeding for years afterward with the rest of the pack.

⁴⁰"Biographical Notices," FM III, 97, 98, ascribed to early or mid-40's. In the same business correspondence, Benezet also describes approvingly the "religious visits" of several English Friends in America.

⁴¹Minutes of PCS, I, 76, 77, 84. Numerous handwritten bills and receipts to wealthy Philadelphians for teaching their children, in A. Benezet's handwriting, are preserved in the HSP.

⁴²Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience (New York, 1970), I, 308.

⁴³Myers, Courtship, June 6, 1750, 293. See below, ch. V.

⁴⁴John Smith chronicles their social and religious life in this period in Myers, Courtship; and the Minutes of PMM mention Anthony and Joyce with increasing frequency. Examples in Minutes of PMM, Sept. 30, and Nov. 28, 1757, 53, 63.

⁴⁵See Minutes of PMM, May 30, 1760. Also, Myers, Courtship, 125, 157. Much of Benezet's correspondence reveals this same characteristic.

⁴⁶"Biographical Sketches," FM, III, 101. Italics mine. To George Dillwyn, Aug. 30, 1767, Brookes, 276. To John Smith, 1762, Brookes, 246.

⁴⁷To Samuel Fothergill, Oct. 1, 1757, Brookes, 222. To Sarah Barney, 1756, "Biographical Sketches," FM III, 103. John Everard, Some Gospel Treasures (Germantown, 1757). To Moses Brown, Nov., 1773, HQC.

⁴⁸Minutes of PMM, Nov. 24, 1758, 118. Jan. 26, 1759, and Feb. 28, 1759, 133. Also, May 27 and Aug. 26, 1757, 27, 42. Thomas Woodward, The Columbian Plutarch (Philadelphia, 1819), 78.

CHAPTER III

THE FAMILY OF MANKIND

Anthony Benezet was approximately forty years old when he began his long, colorful career as a social critic and reformer. Various events and circumstances combined to launch him into his astonishing series of campaigns for peace, fair treatment of Indians, temperance, poor relief, the abolition of slavery, and educational reform at this particular time.

John Stephen Benezet died in May of 1751. Anthony had rebelled against his stern, idealistic father all his life, and yet he was remarkably like him in many respects. Both were oldest sons. Both were intensely earnest idealists in a long tradition of religious dissent--headstrong and restless, perennially dissatisfied with things as they are. They shared the paternalistic spirit of those who believe they have received a higher truth and feel compelled to draw others into the light of that revelation. Yet both developed universalist sympathies rather than narrowly sectarian views. At the same time, both believed ardently in the preservation of a strong social order, with the family as the central core of society. John Stephen preserved his immediate family, and Anthony reached out to save the whole "Family of Mankind." The two were also extremely practical men who, once having accepted the rational necessity of a principle, attempted to put it into practice.

But they had parted company psychologically very early in their relationship over the matter of Anthony's vocation, or "calling."

Perhaps the split stemmed from deeper causes, but it must be evaluated on the basis of surviving documents. Scanty as they are, these reveal an economic conflict as the focus of disagreement. John Stephen experienced the trauma of wealth suddenly lost, and most of the remainder of his life was spent in the successful attempt to regain it. His son, reared from infancy in a home scarred by that same early loss, and geared to high economic priorities, rejected the father's unspoken assumption that financial security per se was a primary value. Anthony struggled against his father's consuming dominance as expressed in the demand for the boy to become as productive economically as possible. The son resisted that pressure, on the whole, throughout his lifetime. Ironically, his rationale and his inspiration was the professed Christian faith he had learned from his father, but he chose to channel his formidable will and energies through a religious body his father had pointedly rejected. The Quaker testimonies of simplicity, charity, and inner light holiness found their most ardent practitioner in the son of one who wrote that he fled his homeland "in order to profess freely our holy religion."¹ It was all quite reasonable. The son practiced what the father preached, and essentially rejected what he did.

But Anthony's rejection of commercial enterprise as a primary vocation was always characterized by ambivalence. Throughout his life he struggled with the tension between his need to be economically self-sufficient and a responsible property owner, as over against the call to devote all his time and energies to the service of God's family on earth. The latter seemed to him more suited to his nature and more in harmony with his faith. Yet the former pulled him back with recurring insistence

into "the busy part of the world."² He tended toward the more ascetic pole as he grew older, but with an energetic activism in reform causes that paralleled his father's determined pursuit of wealth.

The last of Anthony's recurring cycles of interest in the market-place occurred in the mid 1750's, while he continued to "keep school." Extracts from his correspondence with the Quaker Barneys of Newport and Nantucket indicate that they shipped oil to him and he reciprocated with chocolate, dry goods, and books. But the uneasiness he felt about these transactions may be gaged by the great emphasis he put on religious matters in the same letters. He commented at one point that he did not really believe himself suited to the commercial life, although his brothers had "met with good success in the market-place."³

For the first seventeen years of their marriage, Anthony and Joyce had lived in rented houses. But in 1753, without explanation, they gave up their Meeting-owned residence and purchased a two story home in a fashionable neighborhood near the school house. It was a comfortable frame structure of simple classical lines, and was to be their home for the remainder of their lives. The only drawback from Anthony's point of view was the lack of an adequate garden plot. This deficiency was soon remedied by the generosity of Mary Norris, a widowed neighbor and the mother of a student in Anthony's school. She set aside a section of her 12 acre lot for the schoolmaster's use, and for many years he cultivated there "those vegetables that formed so large a portion of his diet."⁴

By 1754, the tempo of Anthony Benezet's life was beginning to take on the increasingly active pace that became so characteristic of his later years. He spent very little time in sleep. Yet at the very

outset of his incredibly energetic public career, he announced to the Publick School Board of Overseers that he intended to resign his position in the English School "sometime before the hot weather of the ensuing summer." The reason given for this sudden decision, after twelve years of successful teaching, was that "the weakness of his constitution" would not permit his "constantly continuing so closely confined as the service of the school requires."⁵ This was just one of many examples of his pleading physical weakness or ill health as justification for dropping out of teaching temporarily. Yet in every case, he took on even more arduous loads of socio-religious service as soon as the classroom responsibilities were lightened.

This time, within a month of his resignation from the boy's English School, he reported to the Board of Overseers that he was "much solicited to keep a morning school for teaching girls reading, writing, arithmetic, and English grammar." He requested that the Board sponsor such a school, with himself as schoolmaster. The Overseers' minutes record this reply: "After some conversation* [the Board] agreed that if he will decline engaging in any business which the Board may judge likely to take off his attention to the school," his request should be granted. His annual salary was set at 80 pounds, and enrollment limited to thirty scholars.⁶ Evidently the schoolmaster already had a reputation for overloading himself with extra-curricular activities, including his business affairs.

There was little awareness, either by the Overseers or by the teacher, of the far-ranging significance of the new project they had agreed to undertake. The curriculum offered to girls in Benezet's new

*Meaning, usually, some disagreement in colonial Quaker circles.

school was quite advanced by prevailing standards, and has been hailed frequently by later historians of education as an important pioneering undertaking in the field.⁷ At the time, the school merely seemed a convenient way to handle the growing number of requests for female education and to provide a part-time teaching position for Anthony Benezet. The schoolmaster's inveterate experimentalism would eventually make the difference between a merely expedient classroom and a genuinely innovative educational achievement.

The Board's somber admonition to Benezet that he should "decline engaging in ... business" had no perceptible effect on the wiry, energetic man whose "frail constitution" sometimes slowed him temporarily, but rarely stopped him. The business letters continued at least until 1756, documenting his active trade connections in the Atlantic community.

In fact, the demands of his commercial ties and the concurrent increase in charitable activities seem to have been two of the major causes for his abrupt decision to resign again from his classroom responsibilities in the spring of 1755, after only a year in the new school. These reasons were not mentioned in the minutes, however. He left his pupils in the care of Mistress Ann Thornton, and turned his attention to other pressing matters.

One of these matters that had claimed his increasing attention since 1750, was slavery and slave trade. He and his close friend John Woolman had become more articulate in their pleas to slave owning Quakers who seemed to ignore their sect's teachings on brotherly love, and persisted in holding their fellow men in bondage. In 1754, with the support of several of their brethren, they had confronted Philadelphia Yearly

Meeting with a document often referred to as the "Epistle of 1754." Originally written, apparently, by Woolman, and edited and presented to the meetings by Benezet, the Epistle constituted a direct attack on the practice of slave-trading, and called for the education of presently owned slaves, looking toward their eventual emancipation. It was the most specific pronouncement against slavery yet made by the prestigious Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which ordered it published and widely distributed.⁸

During the ensuing years, one of Benezet's consuming interests was the publicizing and enforcing of the Society's increasingly rigorous stand on the matter, a stand for which he could claim a large share of responsibility. Mainly at the insistence of Benezet and Woolman, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1758 after a bitter struggle, passed the "Rule of 1758," threatening disownment to Friends who persisted in trading and keeping slaves. The following year, Benezet published his first major antislavery work, Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes, heralding a long series of similar works in the next quarter century.⁹

The summer and fall of 1755 had brought a host of difficulties to the people of Pennsylvania, and it was at least partly in response to these that Anthony Benezet began in earnest his humanitarian career. General Edward Braddock's ill-conceived expedition against the French at Fort Duquesne in July led rapidly to escalation of hostilities between Indians and the frontier settlers. By this time, Benezet had excused himself from the classroom, and could turn his attention to the problems of dislocated frontier inhabitants and French Acadians--the victims of

the opening rounds of the French and Indian War. In attending to the needs of the uprooted, he scurried around Philadelphia securing subscriptions of money, clothes, food, and medicine. He lobbied with the Legislature and the Governor's Council for relief measures--a project in which he was notably successful. He arranged foster homes for refugee children, and sent off wagons loaded with supplies for the homeless and destitute on the frontier.¹⁰

In 1756, Benezet was appointed to the newly organized Meeting for Sufferings, a powerful executive arm of the Friends' Yearly Meeting. He helped found the Friendly Association for working directly with the Indians. He attended several delicate treaty negotiations at Easton, in a role supportive of Indian claims, and in defiance of the provincial government's expressed wishes. During the 1756 and 1757 interval he also served as a manager of the Pennsylvania Hospital, a prestigious position in Philadelphia, and as a member of the Penn Charter School Board of Overseers.¹¹

All the activity of this disquieting period seems to have kept Anthony Benezet too busy to reflect deeply on religious matters. But by fall of 1757, he wrote his good friend Samuel Fothergill in London that he felt possessed by "the deepest sense of inward poverty." He had "not dared to meddle with religious things" for some time, he confided to the Quaker minister, who had only recently returned to England after a protracted religious visit to America. Benezet turned again for spiritual refreshment to the sermons of John Everard. He wrote Fothergill a few days later to say that "some degree of life" had returned as a result of his reading. Still, "an uncommon sense of poverty and desertion"

clung to him, and he lamented,

the weakness, the instability, the self, the remains of a subtle pride that hangs about human nature, even of those that are esteemed and are indeed good and wise, in the main. How liable to change, waver, and run from one extreme to the other.¹²

Benezet had a keen awareness of himself, his feelings, his weaknesses, his own personal problems, and a candid ability to express them to friends. The uncertainty and the "remains of a subtle pride" that plagued him would never fully go away, no matter how diligently he tried to conquer them. The extremes he referred to were the opposing poles of activism and quietism, always at war within him.

The spiritual malaise in the wake of two years' vacation from the classroom was partly related to the conditions under which he left the girls' school. He confessed privately to John Smith in December of 1757 that he had "quit the school with some rebuke and had ever since had a secret uneasiness about it." Before the year was out, he had resumed his old teaching post upon the same terms rejected by the interim teacher, Ann Thornton. She felt the terms were inadequate and had refused to continue in the position. Since women were consistently paid approximately one half of what male teachers received, it seems likely that Benezet returned as a penitent, accepting an absurdly low salary. Perhaps he did not need much, if his business connections during the same period had been successful. At any rate, he castigated himself for his own selfishness in ever leaving the school in the first place, and wrote Smith that if he had any reason for existence other than "serving self," it was "in the education of children. Happy for us," he continued, "if we know our service, and be willing to keep in

it, and not aspire higher."¹³ The decision to return to teaching seems to have settled his vocational uncertainties, and there are no further records of commercial activity.

Throughout the late fifties, and again in the sixties, the Benezets seriously considered moving to Burlington, New Jersey, Joyce's home town, and the residence of some of the couple's dearest friends, John and Hannah Smith, and the George Dillwyns. The hyperactivity occasioned by the war kept Anthony too busy to make the move at first, however, and then his resumption of teaching responsibilities settled the matter for a few years more. He found time in 1762 to write and publish a brief historical and anthropological study attacking the Atlantic slave trade, A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by Negroes and the Manner by Which the Slave-Trade is Carried on. The booklet reveals a widening acquaintance with the writings of Enlightenment thinkers, and shows a great deal of research into travelers' and seamens' accounts of the African trade. And the Benezet home continued to be a center of hospitality for visiting Indians, Quaker ministers, French refugees, students, teachers, and free and runaway blacks. Joyce made at least two of her extended "religious visits" in 1763 and 1764.¹⁴

There were evidently some financial problems, too, growing out of the economic dislocations of the war years. Payment of Benezet's salary and reimbursements for classroom expenses frequently fell behind, and in December, 1763, the Overseers noted that 45 pounds was owed to him, "which the treasurer, when in cash, is instructed to pay."¹⁵

Some of Benezet's correspondence in 1764 deals with a house he had built in Burlington, apparently with the intention of moving into it.

But he explained that "poor health" prevented the move, and the couple remained in Philadelphia for two more years, renting out the Burlington house.¹⁶

The failing health of Anthony's mother, Judith, may have been a factor in his lingering in Pennsylvania, as well. She died in 1765, leaving an interesting will. Anthony and her youngest son, Daniel, were appointed executors. To them she bequeathed 50 pounds for winter-time distribution "to the poor, especially the French and other strangers." Anthony was, at the time, deeply involved in aiding the penniless French Acadian refugees. John Stephen had willed his ample estate to his wife, with no instructions for charitable bequests before or after her death. The remainder of the estate Judith divided equally among the seven children.¹⁷

In May of 1766, Anthony submitted yet another resignation to the school's Board of Overseers, due to his "state of health," which necessitated some relaxation and a "change of air." The couple obtained a certificate of good standing from Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, and moved at last to Burlington in early summer. Joyce was received as a minister "possessing the gift of grace" and Anthony as an approved Elder in the Monthly Meeting there.¹⁸

Despite his frail health, which had served equally well as a reason for remaining in Philadelphia earlier and now for leaving Philadelphia, he managed to write one of his most important antislavery books during the summer and early fall of the same year. A Caution and a Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies, was an impassioned plea to leaders in England for an end to the slave trade. The book contained

also the author's first full marshalling of natural rights arguments. In the midst of the Stamp Act crisis, he made a solid connection between the much-proclaimed "British ideas of liberty" and the rights of the slave. The inconsistency of a people devoted to freedom tolerating Negro slavery was the dominant theme of the work. It was published by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in late 1766, and republished soon after in London. Benezet could not have foreseen the explosive political effects of the book in a land increasingly hostile to England and sensitive to "the rights of Englishmen."¹⁹

Without explanation, the following entry occurs in the February 27, 1767, minutes of the Penn Charter School Board:

Anthony Benezet, being returned to reside in this city,... and proposing again to keep a morning school for teaching poor girls; after some conversation with him, and a consideration of the proposal, it is agreed to employ him.

Perhaps the school's Overseers were willing to accept Anthony's various abrupt departures and returns to their classrooms in part because of a scarcity of teachers and the low pay he was willing to accept. This time he agreed to teach six half days a week for twenty pounds annually. He was specifically limited to twelve poor girls in the class, whose names he was required to submit to the Overseers twice a year for approval. These students could be admitted only by action of the Board. Five years later, however, during an inflationary period, the minutes reveal that Benezet was teaching nineteen poor girls, at no increase in salary.²⁰ It is quite possible that parents of paying pupils, some of the leading families of Philadelphia, objected to the large proportion of poor children, often the disliked French Acadians, that Benezet always managed

to admit to his classes. Pressures of this kind could explain the Board's recurring attempts to restrict his benevolent spirit in the matter.

Benezet's generosity grew constantly more expansive until his benevolence became legendary, and even by his own admission, something of a nuisance in Philadelphia circles. By the end of his lifetime, most of the leaders of Philadelphia, and many in England and France had written expressive commentaries on the man's seemingly infinite generosity. One of his most articulate admirers, Barbé-Marbois, observed that Benezet carried his "love of humanity to the point of madness"--an extreme dedication that the sophisticated Frenchman found admirable, if incomprehensible. His name became a synonym for humanitarian benevolence. The physician Benjamin Rush, once referred to Samuel Coates, who had aided him in a time of financial embarrassment, as "an Anthony Benezet in very stage of our late distresses."²¹

While others frequently remarked on the nearly incredible extent of Benezet's benevolence, he tormented himself with the conviction that he did too little for others. Confiding in a close friend in his old age, Benezet lamented the waste of the first half of his life. He explained "that had he attended with due care to the prospects of duty given him in his younger years,...he might have been instrumental for more extensive usefulness to mankind."²² The frantic round of service activities after age forty, then, may be seen on one level as compensation for what he saw as his own early failure to serve mankind--to fulfill his purpose on earth.

Beyond his need to fulfill himself in service to others, there was a notably creative strain in his late developing activism--a creativity of which he seemed largely unaware. One of his several path-breaking books on various subjects was an ingenious school book entitled The Pennsylvania Spelling Book. In addition to introducing graded and more meaningful material for children than earlier textbooks offered, he developed an entirely new system of dividing words into syllables by means of phonetic logic, rather than by the traditional complicated rules of grammar. And he originated a new and simplified system of spelling. But when schoolmasters complained about having to learn an unfamiliar way of doing things, he retreated to more traditional patterns in the second edition of his otherwise popular text.²³ He seemed to bridle his creativity intentionally at times, to avoid running too far ahead of his brethren, and to avoid contention.

Only in matters that he considered urgent for the welfare of mankind did he persist in promulgating his "strange" ideas, as he sometimes called them. In the field of education he was determined to rid the classroom of physical brutality. He refused to strike his students, and disciplined them as well as possible by kind example and patient reasoning.²⁴ But his seemingly infinite patience and understanding, combined with high, probably unattainable behavior standards for his pupils, led to tensions and resentments. A tender heart combined with perfectionist expectations inevitably created problems. At times his gentle techniques failed to keep an orderly classroom, and the resulting confusion may well have been related to his move from the boy's school to the girl's school. It may help also to explain his long love-hate

relationship to the classroom. But he did not back away from his disciplinary innovations.

The most important application of his perceptive genius to the problems of the day was of course his insight into and sustained attack upon the institution of slavery. He was the first person to define the problem in its full dimensions, the first to pinpoint the enormous significance of race prejudice in the social system and the role of acquisitive greed in the economic structure underlying it, the first to propose a plan for integrated gradual emancipation, the first to explore certain political pressure tactics for abolition, and finally, the first to synthesize and articulate the full range of religious and natural rights arguments against the system.²⁵ On these far-reaching issues, he refused to capitulate or retreat. They were for him crucial matters of principle.

His technique in publicizing the prophetic message he espoused was one of combined rational and emotional appeal to the human sensibilities of all who would listen. At first, he shared with his eighteenth century contemporaries the optimistic assurance that the truth had only to be spoken plainly, and the result would be an awakening of sluggish consciences in the light of it; that truth from whatever source, "natural" or Biblical, once clearly set forth must inevitably result in a general rallying to its standards by reasonable people everywhere. But the later writings show his growing disillusionment with the "reasonableness of mankind." He saw that only intense, sustained political and economic pressure, rather than preaching, be it ever so rational, ever so scriptural, would suffice for such a tremendous undertaking. And to his credit, he moved toward developing that necessary power base.

His unprecedented attack on race prejudice in American society had its roots in his characteristically experimental approach to problem solving. He constantly tested privately the limits of his ideas. One illustration of this is seen in his relationship to black Philadelphians. If his faith in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man was valid, then there was no rational justification for one group of men tyrannizing over another group. The crucial question here was whether or not blacks were of the same order of humanity, the same level of creation, as whites. Eighteenth century belief and practice was based on the assumption that blacks were inherently inferior. But from two sources, Benezet gathered first hand data contradicting that assumption. His practice, begun around 1750, of teaching blacks to read and write in his home, has already been mentioned. It led to his success, finally, in convincing the school Board in 1770 to sponsor another division of its growing school system--a full-time free school for Negroes--the first in the world. The graduates of this school became leaders in the Philadelphia free black community, living evidence of the high level of intelligence and general competence attainable by the race. Benezet never ceased to point out the inherent equality of blacks and whites, as proven in his educational laboratory. Another source of his increasingly firm convictions on the subject, according to one who knew him, was his

unwearied [activity] in collecting statistics and facts from the negroes themselves; he would often be seen on the wharves surrounded by a group of these people, whose story afterwards served as a basis for an argument or a touching appeal, in one of the almanacs or papers of the day.²⁶

Thus his proclivity for testing his ideas repeatedly in the daily routine of a busy life led him beyond mere intellectual convictions, and

into ever widening areas of action. From the late 1750's onward, he wrote prodigiously for publication. One of his most important books in the revolutionary decade was the extensively reprinted Some Historical Account of Guinea, 1771. It was a pioneering work in African history combined with an exhaustive statement of arguments against slavery. In addition, the book outlined a rational plan for gradual emancipation, including educational and land grant proposals for freedmen. He also wrote and published several more works on slavery, two each on Indians, peace, and temperance, two school books, and a popular history of the Quaker sect, during the next twelve years. In addition to his numerous tracts and books, he "composed and circulated many detached pieces through the medium of almanacs and newspapers."²⁷

By distributing his books with their "strange" ideas as widely as possible in the Atlantic community, Benezet opened the way for more direct attacks on the evils he saw in society. Soon after sending out one or more complete editions of his antislavery books, for example, he organized petitioning campaigns urging legislative action in the provinces. He sponsored such drives in both southern and northern colonies with a surprising degree of success. In America, the antislavery movement grew from obscurity to a broadly based popular movement in the decade prior to the Revolution, due in large part to Benezet's tireless efforts and those of the mostly Quaker lieutenants he recruited in other colonies.²⁸

But his campaign to enlist the support of leading English Quakers by the same means failed miserably before the war. One Englishman, however, the Anglican barrister Granville Sharp of London, responded enthusiastically to Benezet's antislavery initiative in 1772. Sharp was already

deeply involved in the legal struggle to outlaw slavery in England. With the encouragement he received at a crucial time from his new American co-worker, he went on to become the leading British theorist and publicist of the cause before 1787. The two men corresponded constantly prior to the Revolution, coordinating their efforts and exchanging anti-slavery materials and news. Benezet arranged the first meeting of Benjamin Franklin and Sharp by means of an introductory letter, thus opening a friendship that had far reaching humanitarian and political repercussions. It was Benezet who was the catalyst for Franklin's entry into the ranks of antislavery activism during this same period. After reading the copy of Some Historical Account that Benezet sent him, the renowned Methodist leader, John Wesley, also decided to write and work for the cause. And several years later, young Thomas Clarkson, honors student at Cambridge University, read the same book, and promptly commenced his long post-war leadership in the British abolition movement as a result.²⁹

In general, Benezet's antislavery campaign was successful beyond his own highest expectations in the colonies during the pre-war years, for reasons that will be discussed in later chapters. But in England, although important seeds were sown and commitments obtained from a very small group of middle class leaders, the movement did not arouse much interest until after the American Revolution, when it became associated with popular left wing politics.³⁰

Benezet's publications and his leadership in the antislavery ferment of the early 1770's contributed directly to the awakening of colonial agitation against Britain. He was close to several American

patriot leaders including Dr. Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin, and he lobbied persistently among delegates to the Continental Congresses and other legislative bodies. But he had no desire to encourage the political agitation of his time. On the contrary, he was above all else, a man of peace, and he was convinced that peaceful solutions to the threatening conflict could be found. Seeing as he did the relatively greater seriousness of the African slaves' oppression in the new world, he thought it absurd to consider war in the interests of white independence while hundreds of thousands of black people remained in bondage. Thus he argued strongly for the freedom of slaves, in part to avert violent rebellion, and against the freeing of colonists from British control, if that meant incurring violence.³¹ In this period of his life then the tension between his social activism, which invariably stimulated controversy, and his peace principles, which called for passive resignation even in the face of serious provocation, is most clearly apparent. It was a dilemma he never resolved; perhaps it was insoluble.

Following the Declaration of Independence, Benezet published another treatise on the slavery question as one section of a book he titled, Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects. The tract denounced the self-righteousness of a people who claimed their own independence in the ringing libertarian rhetoric of the 1776 Declaration, and yet failed to grant freedom to the slaves under their control.³²

During the war years, Benezet continued his teaching, with brief interruptions occasioned by soldiers quartered at the schoolhouse and when the Quaker classrooms were closed by the revolutionary government because teachers refused to take the required oath of allegiance. If

he was suspected or accused of disloyalty, as some other pacifist Quakers were, there is no record of it. His well known integrity and his friendships with patriot leaders may have protected him from the angry retaliations that some Friends suffered.³³

Benezet accomplished much of his most creative work in social criticism and reform during this period, stimulated by his great concern about the spreading disorder and violence he observed around him. Increasingly he believed that the proper education of children held the key to restoring a reasonable, peaceful society. Young minds could be molded and youthful behavior guided in the correct channels far more easily than adults could be changed. Thus, much of his writing in the 1770's and 1780's was aimed at young people as well as to "well-disposed" leaders of society. And his proposals and reports on educational reform in 1777 and 1778 formed the basis for the development of the model Pennsylvania Quaker school network--the forerunner of the public school system established in the next century.³⁴

The unceasing pressures of the girls' school, committee meetings, incessant publication, petitioning, etc., had left Benezet with too little time to supervise one of his favorite projects, the "Africans' School," that the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting had formally established at his insistence in 1770. By the early 1780's, problems of financing, inadequate instruction, and irregular attendance had taken a serious toll of the high academic standards first set down by the founder. In 1781, no suitable schoolmaster could be found to assume the low-paying, low-prestige position in the black school. So Benezet himself, by now nearly seventy years old, urged the Overseers to let him take over the

teaching. After overcoming some resistance from the Board, he resigned the prestigious post at the girls' school, where he had been Master for most of the past quarter century, moved the black school classes into his home, and taught them daily during the last two years of his life.³⁵

After the war, the slave trade was stepped up again, to Benezet's horror. In 1783 he launched the last great antislavery campaign of his life, sending enormous quantities of books, tracts and personal letters to leading Quakers, legislators, judges, and heads of state throughout the Atlantic community. This time his efforts were far more effective in England, and later in France, than they were in America, where political agitation for liberty had been replaced by concern for stability and cohesion. In both English and French editions, his books were widely republished in Europe after the war, and served as the basic resources for the powerful antislavery impetus that eventually ended in the abolition of the trade, and finally of the institution of slavery.³⁶

Throughout the war years and after, Benezet had actively cultivated friendships with French diplomats, attaches, and military officers stationed in Philadelphia. Despite their clear distaste for his pacifist stand, they liked and respected him personally. They were invariably fascinated by his lively wit, dedicated humanitarianism, and command of the French language. And they seem to have regarded him a bit nostalgically, as a link with the civilized society they had left behind.³⁷

And somewhat nostalgically, too, especially in his later years, Benezet displayed a strong sense of his French identity. Perhaps this was partly a reaction to the tensions of the Revolution in which his dual American and British loyalties struggled for dominance. He began

referring more and more frequently to "my countrymen," the French.³⁸

But there was considerable ambivalence in this identification, too. He could not easily overlook the harsh oppression suffered by his own family in France because of their religion, and at times, he remonstrated with his French friends about the tyranny of his native land. Although they assured him that the intervening century since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes had wrought great changes and a new climate of toleration, he persisted in dwelling on his family's sufferings at times. Barbé-Marbois wrote that "he tells of these persecutions as another man might talk of his titles of nobility." He wore them as spiritual badges, awarded by the Diety for his family's faithful service. Yet at other times, he assured his friends that those unhappy events were "long forgot." His former pupil, Deborah Logan, recalled that "he had a great and extremely natural partiality for his own nation, and his heart would warm" to other Frenchmen "in their individual distresses."³⁹

So, in a sense, both the outward influence and the inner life of Anthony Benezet retraced a wandering international pathway backwards through England and the land of his birth. He had sought in his early years for a stable, family based, community of brotherly love, a society wracked neither by intolerance nor by inordinate greed. Upon finding that his utopia did not exist, he tried in the last half of his life to create it. It was a vision and a task of overwhelming dimensions, and he would not be the last of the Americans to attempt it in the new world, only to become at last a citizen of the whole earth. For it was when he spoke and wrote in universal terms of "our fellow-men" that his language and his commitment surmounted the thinly veiled ambivalence of

his references to "my countrymen."⁴⁰ His original nationality, then, provided only a temporary haven--a port of call--on a circular journey to his ultimate destination, the Family of Mankind.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

¹John Stephen Benezet, "Memorial Commence le 16 Aoust, 1682," Small, 338.

²"Biographical Notices of Anthony Benezet," FM, III (1832), 98-102.

³Ibid.

⁴Minutes of PCS, I, 106. John F. Watson, Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 370, 371. Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, Brookes, 153. "A Memorial" from PMM concerning Benezet, Brookes, 173. Thomas Woodward, The Columbian Plutarch (Philadelphia, 1819), 79.

⁵Minutes of PCS, March 20, 1754, I, 115.

⁶Ibid., 116, 117. Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States (New York, 1929), I, 235.

⁷Woody, Women's Education, I, 201. Thomas Woody, Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania (New York, 1920), 217. James Mulhern, History of Secondary Education in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1933), 409, 410. James Wickersham, History of Education in Pennsylvania (Lancaster, Pa., 1886), 216. Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), 48, 49.

⁸Epistle reprinted in Brookes, 475, 476. Brookes credits Benezet with authorship of the Epistle, but the research by Janet Whitney, John Woolman: American Quaker (Boston, 1942), ch. 21, and the Minutes of PYM and PMM in 1754 indicate collaboration by the two men. See below, ch. X.

⁹Germantown, 1759.

¹⁰Correspondence of 1775 and 1776, Brookes, 212-219, 112, 113. See below, ch. VIII.

¹¹Peter Brock, Pacifism in the United States (Princeton, 1968), 140, 141. See below, ch. VIII. Howard Brinton, "The Quaker Contribution," Pennsylvania History, XXV (1958), 249. Minutes of PCS, I, Sept. 9, 1756, 147, 163. He resigned his Overseer's position upon returning to teaching in January, 1758.

¹²To Samuel Fothergill, Oct. 1 and 17, 1757, Brookes, 222, 223.

¹³Women teachers' salaries in the Friends' Schools were about the same as the one half pay scales generally observed by other schools of the time. To John Smith, Dec. 9, 1757, "Correspondence," The Friend, V (1832), 297.

¹⁴Minutes of PCS, I, 137. To John Smith, May 8, 1763, Brookes, 247. Minutes of PMM, May 25, and July 27, 1764, 229, 240.

¹⁵Minutes of PCS, I, 272.

¹⁶To Edward Cathrall, Nov. 15, 1764, Brookes, 253. To John Smith, May 5, 1765, Brookes, 262.

¹⁷Wills of John Stephen and Judith Benezet are reprinted in Small, 196-199. The sons were each to receive a lump sum, and the daughters to receive only the interest on the investment of their shares, as controlled by the executors who were instructed "not to pay the said interest into the hands of any other person." This was a legal maneuver to avoid the law stipulating that married women's inheritances became their husbands' property.

¹⁸Minutes of PCS, I, 304. Brookes, 44. Minutes of PMM, May 30 and June 27, 1766, 98, 101.

¹⁹Brookes, 44. See below, ch. X.

²⁰Minutes of PCS, I, 311, 312, and II, 12. Minutes of PMM, Apr. 24, 1767, 154. To George Dillwyn, Aug. 30, 1767, Brookes, 276.

²¹François, Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, Our Revolutionary Forefathers, Eugene Parker Chase, tr. and ed. (Freeport, N.Y., 1969), 139. To Mrs. Rush, Oct. 24, 1793, Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., Letters of Benjamin Rush (Princeton, 1951), II, 724.

²²To George Dillwyn, Apr. 15, 1767, Brookes, 271. "A Memorial," Brookes, 174. James Pemberton to John Pemberton, May 14, 1784, Brookes, 459.

²³Philadelphia, 1778. J. William Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America (New York, 1973), 115.

²⁴See Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783 (New York, 1970), I, 506, 507.

²⁵The achievements are traced and documented below in the chapters on the antislavery campaign, X-XII.

²⁶Benezet, A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes (Philadelphia, 1762), 8. Benezet, Short Observations on Slavery (Philadelphia, 1781), 11. See Jordan, 280, for significance of this early affirmation of racial equality, Robert Proud, Manuscript History of Philadelphia, 64. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 218. Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 254. Brookes, 45-48. Roger Bruns, "Anthony Benezet's Assertion of Negro Equality," JNH, LVI (1971), 230-232. Quote in Vaux, 29.

²⁷Plain Path to Christian Perfection (Philadelphia, 1772); Mighty Destroyer Displayed (Philadelphia, 1774); Pennsylvania Spelling Book (Philadelphia, 1776); Observations on Slavery (Philadelphia, 1778); Serious Reflections (Philadelphia, 1778); Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects (Philadelphia, 1778); First Book for Children (Philadelphia, 1778); A Short Account of Quakers (Philadelphia, 1780); Plainness and Innocent Simplicity (Philadelphia, 1782); Notes on the Slave Trade (Philadelphia, 1783); Case of Our Fellow Creatures (London, 1783). Joseph Smith, Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books (London, 1867), 246.

²⁸Rush to Sharp, 1773, Brookes, 445, 446. See below, ch. X.

²⁹See below, ch. XI. To Sharp, May 14, 1772, and May, 1773, Brookes, 290, 298. Sharp to Benezet, Aug. 21, 1772, Brookes, 418. To Franklin, Apr. 27, 1772, Brookes, 287. Franklin to Benezet, Aug. 22, 1772, and Feb. 10, 1773, Brookes, 422, 423. Arthur S. Pitt, "Franklin and the Quaker Movement Against Slavery," BFHA, XXXII (1943), 22-27. Rush to Sharp, May 1, 1773, Brookes, 445, 446. Sharp to Rush, Feb. 21, 1774, Brookes, 446. John Wesley, Thoughts Upon Slavery (Philadelphia, 1774). John Telford, ed., The Letters of John Wesley (London, 1931), VIII, 275. Thomas Clarkson, History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade (London, 1808), I, 207-210.

³⁰To Moses Brown, Dec. 28, 1773, HQC. To Samuel Allinson, Dec. 14, 1773, Brookes, 308-310. See below, ch. XII.

³¹To Samuel Allinson, Oct. 23, 1774, Brookes.

³²Later editions carry his name as author. Anonymity was dictated by the need to protect the Society of Friends from reprisals by the revolutionary government. The Overseers of the Press balked at approving antislavery materials during the war. Other important subjects were war, and the abuse of liquor.

³³On Quakers and wartime loyalties, see James, ch. XIII, and Frost, 201, 202. Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America (Chapel Hill, 1963), I, 276 ff, quoted in Brookes, 456.

³⁴Minutes of PCS, I, 1774-1778, Frost, 102. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 173-175. Minutes of PYM, 1778.

³⁵Brookes, 48-51. See below, ch. VI.

³⁶See Clarkson, Abolition, I, 67, 169, 451, 492. See below, ch. XII. Edward D. Seeber, Anti-Slavery Opinion in France (Baltimore, 1937), 119, 124, 125, 160, 197-199.

³⁷Barbé-Marbois, Revolutionary Forefathers; Chastellux, Travels, excerpt in Brookes, 456; and Jean Pierre Brissot de Warville, New Travels in the United States of America (New York, 1792), all of which refer frequently to Benezet.

³⁸To G. Dillwyn, July 30, 1780, Brookes, 345.

³⁹Barbé-Marbois, Revolutionary Forefathers, 139.

⁴⁰To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 5, 1773, Brookes, 307. Serious Reflections (Philadelphia, 1778), reprinted in Brookes, 496.

CHAPTER IV

CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

Major debates over educational goals and procedures in the last half of the eighteenth century were largely carried on in a rarified intellectual atmosphere by assorted moralists, philosophers, physicians, and clergymen. Problems associated with rearing and training the young were considered the province of moral philosophy, or epistemology. Anthony Benezet, however, was an exception among those who argued educational theory: a person who wrote and spoke from practical experience about the proper ways to instruct children. He lived in an age when rational experimentalism was becoming increasingly popular, yet the schoolmaster's position remained a low-status one. Unconcerned about status, Benezet proceeded to put his ideas to the test of practice among a generation that looked at its own offspring with ever-growing awe and rising expectations.¹ In the process of articulating his views and instituting innovations Benezet helped to clarify and guide the process of educational change that was occurring during his own time. His work foreshadowed to a remarkable extent developments that became pronounced in the two centuries after his days in the classroom ceased.

Changing concepts of childhood formed an important area of eighteenth century intellectual and social history. In the middle ages, human beings had been classified either as infants, needing constant physical care and protection, or as adults, responsible for their own well being and for contributing useful activities to the society around

them. Increasingly during the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, people became aware of the childhood years as a unique period in human life--a time of rather primitive irrationalism or pre-logicalism, as Jean Jacques Rousseau described it. But the discovery of childhood was a slow process. By the last half of the eighteenth century, childhood, at last recognized in Western civilization as a period of life different from infancy and from adulthood, had to be dealt with in some manner acceptable to society's goals. The institutions of family and school inherited this responsibility, with the school gradually becoming the more important of the two.²

John Locke in England, and Rousseau in France had contributed much of the philosophical underpinning for "enlightened" theories of childhood development. By the late nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud and John Dewey had set forth the basic outlines for what became an almost overwhelming preoccupation with the child's psychological and educational progress.³ But in the late eighteenth century, lesser known educators like Benezet began laying the practical groundwork for the reordering of parent-child relationships, the establishment of universal public schools, and the increasingly pragmatic teaching philosophies of the next two centuries.

Benezet saw his vocation as teacher within the framework of his religious world view. "Is greatness riches, world wisdom, or philosophy, vainly so called? No, by no means," he wrote to a fellow schoolmaster in 1755. "Having found the field in which the pearl lies, what now remains but that we sell all to purchase the same?" The field was education, and the pearl of great price was that precious discovery,

the youth of society, for whom no sacrifice would be too great, he was convinced. To "train up a child in the way he should go,"--to prepare the young adequately for service to the family of mankind--the task was ordained by God to be carried forward by His servants on earth.⁴

Benezet's educational philosophy was deeply rooted in the English Quaker tradition, although it was increasingly influenced in practice by contemporary Enlightenment thought. His early reading on education was limited to Quaker authors, apparently. He accepted, for example, with certain modifications, the basic educational theories of George Fox, Founder of Quakerism in seventeenth century England. First, and most important, Fox placed strong emphasis on moral and religious training by parents and teachers. Fox warned "masters and mistresses, fathers and mothers in private families, to take care that their children and servants might be trained up in the fear of the Lord; and that they themselves should be therein examples and patterns of sobriety and virtue to them." These admonitions, chiefly prohibitory in nature, became part of the official discipline of Quaker meetings everywhere. Secondly, education should have a strong practical value. Apprenticeship in a Quaker family other than one's own was highly recommended as the optimum way of learning a useful trade and good work habits. Thirdly, schools should be established, for boys and girls separately, "for teaching them whatsoever things were civil and useful." This advice was practiced only irregularly, and in the largest meetings, prior to the mid-eighteenth century. Fourthly, classical education was not necessary. Fox made no general condemnation of classical learning, but he insisted that "divine guidance" was the one prime requisite for understanding and proclaiming

the truth. Finally, education, both religious and practical, should be made available to all children, of whatever religion, race or economic background.⁵

Fox himself had had only a very limited education, and there is more than a trace of anti-intellectualism in his writings. While he recommended the establishment of schools, he never elaborated on the form and substance of them, and seemed to assign a much lower priority to schools than he did to familial responsibility for the education of children. Until the second half of the eighteenth century, the primary emphasis of Quaker education remained securely centered on training up children in a home--either their own or another to which they were apprenticed, or "put out." The situation was the same for most people in England and the colonies at the time, with the exception of upper middle class families whose male children, destined for professional careers, were sent to Latin Grammar Schools.

The family orientation of education is seen particularly in the care of the poor and orphans. Such children, always a concern of benevolent Quakers, were often put out to Friends' families almost at infancy. The Meeting sometimes assigned fatherless children to "proper" homes for rearing even over the mother's objections. Benezet disapproved of this kind of coercion, and called it "an aggravation of the sufferings of the poor." But he was often overruled. It was considered to be in the best interests of the community to place children where they would receive room, board, and some rudimentary education in exchange for the daily chores required of them. This was also the most practical (i.e., the least expensive) way of providing relief, or "charity," for the

overburdened mother, in lieu of helping her out financially. Poor children were considered deprived of satisfactory parental examples. There was an implicit assumption here that only those children whose parents could provide for them financially had adequate moral and spiritual guides at home. Later, when children were old enough, they could be apprenticed in the usual way to learn a "suitable" trade--meaning one appropriate to their sex and "station in life." This procedure was eminently practical, given the organization of the Society of Friends. If such children were not given proper training and oversight by Meeting, they might become "chargeable in future to Friends by reason of [their] incapacity to get [their] own livelihood unless some measures be taken to enable [them] by learning to do it." The Friends' Meeting, in short, took over the role of parents for the spiritual and financial guidance of orphans and other poor children, as part of supervising their education.⁶ The Meeting made sure that these children would learn some economically and socially valuable work, so that they would not become a moral blight or financial liability to the community.

But the Society of Friends was increasingly forced to consider matters regarding the children of members in good standing, both economically and spiritually. Anthony Benezet's interest in education in the third decade of the eighteenth century was part of a general increase in societal concern about childhood and youth. Family-centered educational patterns seemed to be failing. "Birthright," or hereditary membership had been officially sanctioned by Quakers in 1737, as a drastic counter-measure to declining membership. It meant essentially that children of Quakers were henceforth considered members of the Society from birth

onward, unless their behavior deviated so drastically from Friends' standards that disownment resulted. But by 1747, London Yearly Meeting found it necessary to remind its members that "virtue passes not by lineal succession, nor piety by inheritance," but only by constant vigilance and dedicated regard for the spiritual development of one's own children. Birthright membership, with its attendant dangers of secularization, led to growing emphasis on Quaker education, in the hope that schools could bolster a weakening structure.⁷

There were other factors in the new concern about formal education, of course. Increasing wealth and leisure in the colony made schooling feasible for more and more people. In the aftermath of the Great Awakening, numerous denominational schools were established, often in direct competition with Friends' schools. Private schools of all kinds had begun to flourish by mid century, many of them poorly taught, and in the eyes of some Quakers a direct threat to the purity of their own young. And on a more worldly plane, rarely mentioned in official circles of the Society, there was the practical realization that more education was necessary for success in an increasingly competitive social and economic environment.⁸

Every area of the child's life was becoming a subject of studious concern by the mid eighteenth century--its mental, physical, and moral development, all were of great interest to parents, Quakers and non-Quakers alike. But this keen observation by parents tended to be what Philippe Aries describes as a "coddling awareness"--a new sense of pride and fascination at the unfolding personalities of their own young, and a concern for their hygiene and physical health. Another kind of

awareness was more characteristic of teachers, like Benezet, who saw the child not as an entertaining extension of their own personalities, but rather as an extension of the ideal social structure. As such, the child required careful instruction and discipline to mold him or her into a responsible, rational member of the community. Benezet reacted with some irritation against the "coddling" tendencies of contemporary families, who took "undue pleasure" in their children's antics. He insisted, along with other moralists and educators, that firm ethical and religious guidance should replace indulgence, that a proper discipline was essential in the rearing of children for the good of both the children themselves and for the good of the larger society.⁹ Anthony Benezet, both a teacher and a Quaker Elder, had no children of his own to coddle. Faced daily, as he was, with a large class of other people's children, it is not surprising that he tended to share some of the austere ideals of schoolroom decorum characteristic of other schoolmasters and theologians in his day. But there were important differences.

The matter of the child's innate nature was under intensive discussion during this period. In a less sophisticated age, decisions about salvation or damnation of infants could safely be left to the discretion of the Almighty, since the helpless infant clearly was incapable of making moral choices. But the concept of childhood--a period in between the utter irresponsibility of infancy and the full moral and spiritual maturity expected of adults--posed serious problems for theologians and schoolmasters alike.

Quakers generally accepted the Calvinist view of humanity as totally depraved, including infants and children. That evil was inherent

in "every child born of woman" seems to have been an axiom of faith in most Quaker households, at least until well into the eighteenth century. David Hall's warning to parents in 1750 that they should not "awaken or indulge, but rather nip in the bud those seeds of pride so interwoven with, and implanted in the fallen Nature of Man" appears to be a typical admonition of the time. Furthermore, as they grew older, children were subjected by nature to greater and greater "animal desire and animal passion" which interfered with the operation of divine grace in their lives.¹⁰

It seems somewhat surprising then to find certain leading Quakers like Anthony Benezet and John Woolman speaking almost nonchalantly about the natural purity of young children. Woolman, wrote in 1768, "It is a lovely sight to behold innocent children!" And again, "That divine light which enlightens all men, I believe, does often shine in the minds of children very early."¹¹

Benezet had a similar, if somewhat more complicated view of the matter, but one which he never developed in any clear, concise statement. His letters and tracts on education do offer numerous glimpses of his basic operating assumptions, however. In 1758, he wrote to a friend in England that much of his time as a teacher was "bestowed in preventing the influx of evil" into the lives of children, implying, of course, that sin was something from outside, beseiging innocent young hearts. And he frequently emphasized the urgency of getting antislavery materials into the hands of young people "who have not yet been infected by the guilt of slave-trading," in hopes that the arguments would prove "instrumental to keep them from being defiled with this mighty evil." Thus, a

major concern of Benezet was the struggle to keep the years of childhood as free as possible from corruption by an essentially evil adult world. He lamented that the innocence of childhood was generally lost by "giving way to the selfish spirit," by "casting about for means by worldly business, stations, rich marriages, etc."--all the temptations of a corrupt adult society. In his later years, he advised adult Christians to seek after "a childlike, humble, innocent disposition of heart," as an antidote to a "proud, perverse nature." There was a strong suggestion here of the "child-as-redeemer" concept that Bernard Wishy dates from about 1870, nearly a century later.¹²

Benezet wrote a textbook in 1778 for the use of his elementary "scholars," entitled Pennsylvania Spelling Book. One of the reading lessons, a poem bearing the title, "Against Quarreling and Fighting," suggests that, while he tended to consider young children as basically good, he also saw how easy it was for them to "let angry passions rise," presumably from the depths of a soul inherently tainted by sin.

Let dogs delight to bark and bite, for this they mostly do;
 Let bears and lions growl and fight, for 'tis their nature, too.
 But children, you should never let such angry passions rise;
 Your little hands were never made, to tear each other's eyes.
 Let love through all your actions run, and all your words be mild;
 Live like the blessed Virgin's Son, that sweet and lovely child.¹³

One wonders what, if anything, went through the mind of a child haltingly reading this advice loud, and later copying it painstakingly into his notebook. It was permissible for dogs and bears and lions to follow their natural instincts, without instruction, but human children had to learn at school, from adults, what the Deity commanded them to do and say. Were words like "love," and "sweet," and "mild," meaningful

at all to the children who must have been six to eight years old when they "learned" such lessons? And if the blessed Virgin's Son was perfect, could one ever hope to "live like ... that sweet and lovely child."?

If one failed to do so, one failed the command to perfection. A child who sometimes felt the urge to "tear another's eyes" must have learned early that somewhere within an evil animal nature, a lack of human perfection, did indeed reside. But the guilty animal inside had to be subdued and hidden--it was not supposed to be there at all, especially when one's gentle teacher believed one to be pure and innocent. Thus children learned that the burden of innocence was difficult to bear. But they probably felt the need to try, at least as long as they had to sit in a schoolroom under a teacher who had faith in their inner purity. Perhaps a simple, clear repetition of the earlier Puritan school book maxim, "In Adam's fall we sinned all," would have been easier to cope with for the eighteenth century Quaker child. It had at least the advantage of setting up a context in which a child was not expected to be perfect, and offered an explanation for inner urges labeled evil by society.¹⁴

But whatever Benezet's exact theological underpinnings on the point of childish nature, one thing was quite as clear to him, as it was to most parents, teachers, and ministers in the late eighteenth century: The years of childhood were tremendously important, and a heavy weight of responsibility rested on adults to teach the young the ways of truth, for the sake of society's future. The problems were legion. How best to accomplish this high goal? Who should do the teaching? And what were the ways of truth, anyway, in a changing world?

Up until mid-century, Friends everywhere took the advice of George Fox as to the supreme importance of the family as the great school of

life. This was not a new development with Fox, nor was it limited to Quakers, but the strong stamp of his approval on family-centered education reinforced the idea for generations of Friends and anchored resistance to the establishment of schools. In 1723, the London Yearly Meeting had issued an Epistle of Advice to parents, "Care for the education of their children," and the admonitions it contained were frequently repeated in Meetings everywhere throughout the century. When Benezet began teaching school in 1739, he shared the general view of his time that the primary responsibilities for most of life's lessons rested with parents. Just what were the responsibilities that adults in families had for their own young and for their apprentices?¹⁵

Basically, the Society of Friends urged parents to be particularly concerned about their children's religious upbringing. Parents should set a good example of piety at home and at Meeting. They should restrain their children from

falling into temptations frequently presenting to ensnare them, ...from keeping frivolous company, improper indulgences in fashionable attire, gaming, horse-racing, non-Quaker speech, going to places of public diversion,...or having or reading any books or papers that have any tendency to prejudice the profession of the Christian religion.¹⁶

Benezet's ideal of family life, like that of other Quaker leaders of his time, was an exalted one, based on the religious vision of "ye beneficent Father of the family of mankind, whose love and regard to his children...remained unchangeable." The vision of perfection, of divine, loving order--the Christian family on earth as a type of the universal family of God--underlay his admonitions to parents, children and servants. And in practice, all family members had certain absolute responsibilities. Repeatedly, in letters, in Meetings, and in his

published works on education, Benezet expounded the ideal.¹⁷

Parents must be firm, but loving, in dealing with their young. They must never "give way...to the willful demands of their children, who may be carried away in the air and the world." Parents must not fail to reach children early with proper discipline, never harsh and cruel, but loving and tender, with a "steady resolution." The importance of training youth in the earliest years without indulgence was an urgent matter. Repeatedly Benezet quoted Solomon (Prov. 22:6) that the child trained up in the way he should go will not depart from it when he is older.¹⁸

Parents were constantly admonished not to seek after wealth in this world, expecting "nothing from [the world] but bread and trouble," but instead they should "freely dedicate themselves to the care of youth." Benezet had a great deal to say in most of his writings about the corrupting effect of parents' acquisitiveness on their children. When Israel Pemberton, a close friend and leading Quaker, died in 1779, Benezet wrote to another friend,

Perhaps thou wilt say as my great neighbor, I. P., who has left 60, or 70,000 pounds for the corruption of his offspring behind him said to me about twenty years ago when I was recommending a proper care over his children: 'It's tiresome to hear Anthony Benezet always saying the same thing.'

This was the period in which numerous Quaker families, including the Pembertons, amassed large fortunes in shipping and merchandising. The "tiresome" voice of Anthony Benezet, endlessly pointing out the dangers to youth of parental preoccupation with profit-making, seems to have gone largely unheeded.¹⁹

But if the schoolmaster's advice was rarely taken by parents, he may have succeeded in making them feel guilty for their failures. He worked hard at developing a sense of responsibility in parents for their offsprings' moral and spiritual development. If parental influence was of the proper kind, i.e., constant, "tender" oversight of children's development, rather than preoccupation with "the piling up of fortunes," then their efforts would surely be rewarded, he reasoned. But he sternly admonished parents who followed the path of selfish gain--they would have to bear a heavy load of guilt for overindulging their young, while simultaneously neglecting their spiritual growth. The weight of blame on such parents was an enormous burden to carry to one's grave, in Benezet's view. His later intimation that if they could not do a good job of rearing their own children, they could at least support the schools financially, involved a clear manipulation of guilt feelings, intentional or not.²⁰

Benezet accepted the customary division of responsibilities by sex for child care. Fathers and mothers had separate and distinct obligations. But in fact, his persistent emphasis on "constant oversight" at a time when fathers were actually away from home for longer and longer periods, absorbed in economic pursuits, may have contributed to the growing isolation of the mother in the home. If the father was not there, and children must be "watched over tenderly" all the time, the responsibility increasingly fell to her almost by default.

Children should be instructed, admonished, and disciplined by a loving, godly father, according to Benezet, and this required considerable time and attention to matters at home. He had read carefully William

Penn's book, Fruits of a Father's Love: Advice to His Children, Relating to Their Civil and Religious Conduct. Central to Penn's view was the father's responsibility for the instruction of his children in certain primary virtues. These virtues, much like Benjamin Franklin's famous list in the Autobiography, included humility, patience, mercy, charity, generosity, justice and righteousness, integrity, gratitude, diligence ("shun diversions; think only of the present business, till that be done."), frugality ("a virtue not of little use in life, the better to be rich,") temperance, and finally, the inner light for spiritual guidance.²¹

Penn's essay served as a model for Benezet's own sermonette entitled "Christian Precepts Under the Character of a Pious Father, Instructing His Children," published as one of the reading lessons in his 1778 Pennsylvania Spelling Book. He stressed much the same virtues, of which fathers should be living examples, but the differences in emphasis are instructive. Benezet saw himself in a kind of surrogate father role vis a vis his young pupils. His father-message to his children-pupils began with the direct admonition to "fear, worship, and love God," the universal father of all mankind.

Your youth and little minds are only yet acquainted with my family, and therefore you think there is no happiness out of it; but my children, you belong to a greater family than mine; you are members of the family of this Almighty father of all nations, who has created numberless generations of men, to be fellow members of one and the same society in heaven.

There was no hint of narrow Quaker tribalism here. On the contrary, there was a clear attempt to capture children's minds for a wider, universal vision of family relationships. Benezet continued by admonishing

his charges: "You do well to reverence and obey my authority, because God has given me power over you to bring you up in his fear." This heavenly Father, who was the source of the earthly father's authority, commanded them to love one another as they loved themselves. This led to the wisdom of using their lives to improve "the common good of all men." The "Pious Father" instructed his children in both their religious and their civil duties. In addition, he would from time to time "compel" obedience when they fell prey to temptations. Just how this was to be done he did not clearly specify. But whatever methods were used for discipline, it was to be administered in love, not anger, for the good of the children.²²

In his schoolbooks and his classroom, then, Benezet tried to fill in the fatherly responsibilities that he saw being abdicated by real-life fathers. If natural fathers failed in their duty to instruct their children properly, the schoolmaster must do his best to make up for the loss.

If fathers were, at least theoretically, responsible for the loving instruction of their children in matters of life and religion, for setting a good example of a holy life, and for the occasional necessity of "correcting" erring children, mothers also had certain carefully defined duties. Benezet took a lively interest in the functions of motherhood, and frequently instructed women in their proper duties at home, in his correspondence and in print. Mothers, like fathers, were to set a good example of godly living for their children, and it was especially important that they make the regular "attendance of public worship" a part of that example.²³

In a letter to an English Friend, Benezet comments on the "amazing fact" that the "Divine Intelligence" had qualified so many Quakers, "even weak and illiterate women, to be eminent instruments for the propagation of truth." Friends accepted the "testimony" in meetings of female ministers who could be as well illuminated by the inner light as men. Yet Benezet found it very difficult to concede to women who were mothers the right to follow that same inner light when it led away from home and children, even for "religious visits." He mellowed somewhat on this point in later years, but he was appalled in 1751 when his younger sister, Susanna Pyrleus, decided to go with her husband on a missionary journey to Europe. Benezet and two of his brothers wrote their sister a letter voicing strong disapproval, although they argued that her husband should go if he felt the trip to be God's will. Their objection to Susanna's going was based primarily on the grounds that no mother should leave her own children for "any service, civil or religious," to go abroad, and that any advice she might receive to the contrary should be regarded as the "suggestion of the enemy of her soul," i.e., Satan. Furthermore, in her brothers' opinion she was not "qualified" to undertake such a mission of spiritual leadership. They accused her of mistaking a desire of "seeing new places and strange things" for a "call" from God. As the Bible advised women in an earlier day, they wrote, she should stay home and "mind her own business and learn in silence, and by watching and prayer seek after true acquaintance with her own heart." They suggested that if she went to Europe, her husband might die there, leaving her helpless and stranded in a foreign land. And finally, their mother was ill, and might die if Susanna left, since

she disapproved so thoroughly of her daughter's intended trip, and was "very much grieved" thinking of it.²⁴ In all, the letter supplies a thorough statement of the primary limitations and obligations of a woman's life in colonial Philadelphia, signed by one who tended generously to support the causes of children, slaves, Indians, the poor, and other categories of oppressed peoples. Clearly, for a mother, the responsibilities of family nurture took precedence over anything else, civil, religious, or personal. What she must not do was spelled out as clearly as what she was expected to do: She should not claim qualifications for leadership outside the home, display any independence of male guidance, or displease her parents and brothers.

If there were firm limits to the ways in which a mother could express her piety, she was just as strongly admonished to become more spiritual, for the sake of her children in particular and society in general. Benezet's correspondence contains frequent pleas for the conversion and spiritual growth of women--far more frequent than his religious appeals to men. He often sent religious books, written "by spiritual minded men," to women whom he believed needed conversion. And there were repetitive lamentations about the proliferation of rich, fashionable "attire and ornamentation" to be seen among the women of the city. Dressing in such a manner was clearly calculated to "allure the wanton," he wrote. How different that was from the way in which the "holy women of old apparelled themselves, in true hospitality and the service of the sick, the poor, the widow. [To be] loaded with children...was their employ and delight."²⁵

Mothers were responsible for keeping peace between the children in their families. When the serenity of the home was interrupted by siblings who "fall out, and chide, and fight; the wife will make their anger cool, at least before 'tis night," according to a reading lesson in the Pennsylvania Spelling Book.²⁶

One purpose of Benezet's Pennsylvania Spelling Book was to offer instruction in an easy and attractive manner that mothers would find useful. He suggested that "the good mothers situate in lonely places, where instruction cannot be procured, may be enabled to instruct first themselves and then their children."²⁷ The assumption that mothers would be the ones to teach their children the rudimentary skills of reading and writing, as well as moral lessons, rather than fathers, is found in the same book with the sermonette, "A Pious Father Instructing His Children." Benezet's practical accomodation to the realities of changing times is apparent here. Even if the ideal called for father to be the official educator of young ones, mother, in point of fact, was taking over that important role in father's absence. So, in addition to becoming spiritually equipped to set a godly example for her children, mother also must learn to read, write, and spell, so that she could teach them, as well.

The children too had certain definite obligations to the smooth functioning of family life, most of which may be summed up in one admonition, endlessly reworded and repeated: "Observe cheerfully and readily, to comply with your parents' commands; always addressing them with honor and respect." This was one of the lessons children should learn at home, of course. But by the last half of the eighteenth century, it

had become such a powerful refrain of the teacher and his schoolbooks that it supplied one more evidence of shifting responsibilities, or at the very least, the school's efforts to reinforce a fading ideal.²⁸

One poem, a reading lesson required for all of Benezet's pupils, carries this point and a number of others as well.

Let children that would fear the Lord,
Hear what their teachers say;
With reverence meet their parents' word,
And with delight obey.

Have we not heard what dreadful plagues
Are threatened by the Lord,
To him that breaks his fathers' law
Or mocks his mother's word.

What heavy guilt upon him lies!
How cursed is his name;
The ravens shall pick out his eyes,
And Eagles eat the same.

But those who worship God, and give,
Their parents honour due,
Here on this earth they long shall live,
And live hereafter, too.²⁹

If harsh physical punishment was ruled out for parents dealing with their young, it was still perfectly allowable to the Diety in his inscrutable wisdom and justice.

Beyond the supreme admonition to obey their parents, children were constantly advised to love one another, as a matter of will and Christian duty. In the "Rules of Conduct" for pupils proposed by Benezet and accepted by the Overseers of the schools, students should behave courteously toward their classmates; to be kind and helpful, "not mocking" to other scholars; to be honest, reverent, soft-spoken, gentle, forgiving, modest, civil and compliant to all and to choose upright, sober companions. As part of the same code, children were instructed to love and

respect siblings and servants at home, and to observe good table manners, as well. Further, they must arise early, and start the day with prayer. At meeting, they were required to arrive promptly, enter quietly and remain silent in meditation, and "be not impatient to be gone" at the close of worship. The "Rules of Conduct" covered life at home and at church, as well as at school.³⁰

The general rules of behavior applied to children of both sexes. In addition, the conduct and role of girls received special attention from Benezet. His concern for the spirituality of married women was, if anything, intensified, in the case of the girls under his tutelage.³¹

In his "Pious Father" piece he addressed himself to the matter.

And you, my dear daughters, consider yourselves as mothers, and sisters, and friends, and relations, to all that want your assistance; and never allow yourselves to be idle, whilst others are in want of anything your hands can make for him. When you go out, let humility, modesty, and a decent carriage, be all the state you take upon you, and let tenderness, compassion and good nature, be all the fine breeding that you show in any place. If evil speaking, scandal, or backbiting be the conversation where you happen to be, keep your heart and tongue to yourselves; be as much grieved as if you were among cursing and swearing, and retire as soon as you can.

And when the time came to marry, he advised the girls to wait as long as necessary until they could "find a man that has those perfections which you are laboring after yourselves, who is likely to be a friend to all your virtues, and with whom it is better to live than want the benefit of his example."³²

The fullest expression of his attitudes toward the female young is contained in a long letter published at his request. The letter was addressed to "S. N.", a maturing girl whom Benezet felt needed considerable guidance. It contained "mournful reflections" regarding the

inconsistency of "the general behavior and appearance of our young women" with the "purity of our [Quaker] profession." Dress and conduct should conform at all times to Scriptural teaching. He reminded "S. N." of "the apostles' injunction, 'that Christian women ought to be arrayed in modest apparel, not costly, but with sobriety and shamefacedness.'" Their clothing should be appropriate "to the sober ends of an industrious, frugal life; a life of affection and care, not only in their own families, but as sisters to many who may suffer for want of their assistance."

He warned against "conformity to vain and foolish fashions," adopted "to please and...allure the wanton." Such clothing was clearly "contrary to that humble, self-denying state of service, which is required of them," and was worn by girls who wished to appear "as ladies, delighting themselves...in sitting as queens to be looked at and admired." Instead, they should fulfill "the sober ends of life, in the service we owe to one another." The latest fashion, "that of allowing their long skirts, even their rich silks, to trail on the ground," constituted such an audacious travesty upon Christian principles that Benezet termed it "an act of open rebellion" against Christ. Evils of this magnitude, combined with the deliberate dismissal of "all consideration of delicacy and neatness," proceed from "folly and corruption" in the hearts of young females. To remedy this situation, he wrote, "pious sentiments" must be "enforced upon our young women," lest they cause themselves "in solemn time,...inexpressible pain."³³ The fear of overt female sexuality, and its effects on individuals (especially "the wanton") and on society generally was clear in this letter.

Benezet called upon young women not only to abandon their sinful ways, but to turn their attention to the uplifting of a backsliding community. The idea of woman as potential savior of family and society was articulated clearly in this same letter. "The eyes of thoughtful people are upon us [as Quakers]; they mark and despise us for our inconsistency." Young female Friends had a high responsibility to live so that "by their conduct" they will hold up "the hands of their parents and friends, in strengthening the little good that remains among us." He believed that young women, especially, should lead the way to moral and spiritual regeneration of home and community.³⁴ If they failed, only "inexpressible pain" would result, and it was clear where the guilt must rest.

Benezet stressed the special need of young women for the virtue of humility. In 1781, he had an "uplifting" letter written by Elizabeth Webb published for distribution. He sent a supply of these letters to his colleague George Dillwyn, with the suggestion that they would be "an acceptable present to our young women friends.... There is an humbling, tendering spirit runs thro' the whole, which I trust would be of service to such." After giving away his entire supply of the printed "humbling" letters, Benezet, with some difficulty, persuaded the Overseers of the press to put out several more reprintings. The letter became a popular gift item despite the Overseers' initial hesitations.³⁵

When Benezet sent "two little books for thy little maid" to his friend John Smith in 1762, his action revealed another important facet of his interest in girls. He considered their minds worth cultivating,

for whatever reasons. The books he sent in this case were apparently difficult, adult-level reading, for he wrote that he thought it wise to put "in children's hands a book wrote in the usual stile." He felt this exposure to non-Quaker reading material might help "to strike at a Pharisaical spirit which is not enough guarded against among us." By exposing a girl's mind to important and "worthy" reading material from outside the Quaker sect, he indicated a certain respect for female intelligence unusual in his day. His leadership in teaching girls advanced subjects at school, and even his genuine, if obsessive, concern with feminine spirituality, may also reveal a desire to upgrade woman's position, even while he contributed to the suppression of behavior patterns he considered unfeminine and dangerously subversive. Certainly he believed that sexuality had to be firmly subjugated in women. But his interest in educating the female mind while insisting on the woman-as-servant-and-savior pattern did not appear inconsistent to him. His goal was education for service. Better trained minds and spirits meant, he believed, more dedicated wives, sisters, and mothers. The girls he taught at school did not see any problem here either, apparently. They were learning to be better companions for husbands and mothers for children. Nearly a century would elapse before a Philadelphia woman became conscious, in any public way, of the dilemma to which a well trained mind and a repressed body subjected her. One of the two female leaders of the first women's rights convention, in 1848, was Lucretia Mott, an educated Quaker minister.³⁶

Benezet tried diligently to make his ideal of family life, and the position of children within it, a reality. The role of the school

in his scheme of things was initially a supportive one--it should help to reinforce those lessons learned so well at home, at least in theory. In addition, the school should protect the innocent child a few years longer from the encroaching evils of a corrupt, overly competitive adult society. It should help the family to prepare its young for their prescribed roles as servants of God and the larger community; and to perpetuate the family ideal by rearing a new generation trained in the responsibilities of parental and brotherly love. The right kind of religious dedication plus the right kind of family life added up to the right kind of society in his mind. The school was only one part of the educative process.³⁷

But the gap which always exists between the ideal and the real widened rapidly in the eighteenth century, and Benezet watched the steady erosion of his hopes with a mixture of sadness and a certain satisfaction. The realization came gradually to him that the family, parents in particular, either would not or could not carry out their crucial part of the ideal whole. It was not enough for the school to perform a holding action for children until they were mature enough and spiritual enough and educated enough to assume the adult role unscathed. The school seemed to him literally forced to take the initiative when the failure of family life became an inescapable menace to harmonious community life. All those absolute virtues that ideally flowed from religious training in the family would have to be taught in schools if they were to survive the disintegrating effects of new wealth, "worldliness", and finally revolution.

As early as 1758, Benezet had observed that some otherwise good parents really did care sincerely about their children, but it was "generally but an indulgent and partial care" they gave--not so watchful as that which the miser exercises over his "gold," or "the ambitious to gain honors." The connection he made between the neglect of family-centered education, and the pursuit of worldly riches and status became a constant refrain of his letters and books for the next quarter of a century. He was convinced that the increase in wealth of many Quaker parents led directly to the growing "supiness and sloth" in their children. And the same parental acquisitiveness tended to "puff up the minds of their children," giving them "wings with which they soar above the truth, and become wedded to the world." This tendency of youths to outgrow the venerable truths of their fathers had been a concern of Quakers even before the "Birthright membership" decision of 1737, as it had for generations of Puritans. Benezet firmly associated the malady with the accumulation of Quaker fortunes--a phenomenon of rapidly growing proportions after mid-century.³⁸

In their selfish building up of personal wealth, Friends were guilty, too, he announced, of a growing hypocrisy that inevitably had a bad effect on their young. The Quaker charity testimonies, "though sometimes declared in the gallery, are much too contradicted in practice, ...when indeed they ought to be the things chiefly and most frequently remembered and enforced, more especially upon the youth."³⁹

Another evil spawned by parental greed was the retreat from individual spiritual integrity so highly valued by Benezet.

Has not our conformity to the world, our business engagements of life, in order to please ourselves and gain wealth,...

has it not naturally led us and begot a desire in our children to live in conformity to other people; hence the sumptuousness of our dwellings, our equipage, our dress; furniture and the luxury of our tables have become a snare to us and a matter of offence to the thinking part of mankind.

Children reared in such an atmosphere could hardly be expected to remain true to the Quaker ideal of "plainness and simplicity," for their early home training led them to desire the idle luxuries and ornamentation of a worldly life. In fact, Benezet's concern lay in teaching the young to conform to a Quaker ideal rather than a "worldly" one.⁴⁰

Benezet worried, too, about the widespread practice of marrying for wealth, rather than on the basis of mutual esteem and religious compatibility. His correspondence includes several almost gossipy accounts of men who made the mistake of "seeking to advance themselves and families by rich marriages even with persons in other respects not desirable." One Samuel Nottingham, a Quaker minister, had married a rich widow who owned slaves. Benezet noted that she was "a well-minded woman,...much attached to the Negroes, who...are well-used," but he condemned the marriage, stating that she had "brought on all [Samuel's] difficulties and pierced him through with many sorrows."⁴¹

For relief from an unhappy marriage, Benezet offered some advice to another friend in whose wife "the selfish nature [was] unsubdued, the human heart hard and bad." He should do as Benezet himself did when the stresses of life became too demanding: Resolve, he wrote, "to seek for strength and comfort in retirement and silence," in the "worship of God....Come away from any hope of true happiness in this world, or expectation of any real comfort or strength but from God alone."⁴²

Benezet, observing the prevalence of unhappy marriages, and other evidences of adult failure and corruption, concluded that now more than ever children needed the guidance of the enlightened school to bring them safely to a responsible maturity. He explained to his friend Samuel Fothergill as early as 1758 that the greediness of contemporary society sprang less from "corruption of heart" than it did from "a wrong education." Parents, too, during the revolutionary period, turned increasingly to the school as savior of the young, and hope for the future. But their ideas of the school's function did not correspond exactly with the schoolmaster's. Benezet's writings in the late 1770's reveal what he felt to be the cause of the rapidly increasing popular interest in education. He observed that parents were sending their young to school for the wrong reasons. "Our sons," he wrote in the Pennsylvania Spelling Book,

are generally exhorted to improvement from principles of covetousness or a desire of distinction. To accumulate wealth and shine in the eyes of the world are set before them as the most desirable objects. It is also much to be lamented that our daughters also, whose right education is of the utmost importance to human life, should be so much indulged in a fondness for themselves, a love of dress, and a desire for being the objects of admiration.

The boys were sent to school so they would get ahead in the world and eventually add to the family fortune and prestige. The girls were sent so they might become greater "objects of admiration" for those same high-achieving boys. Such was the dismal view of reality that Benezet perceived in Revolutionary Philadelphia.⁴³

Looking "mournfully" about him then, observing unhappy, greedy families and their selfish slothful children, Benezet decided that the

only hope for the future of society lay in taking firm action. As many children as possible should be placed in a well organized, expanded Quaker school system, under dedicated, qualified teachers. Much of his energy during the revolutionary years went into this educational reform campaign. The knowledge that many parents supported his campaign for reasons quite antithetical to his own purposes seems not to have dampened his ardor. His faith in the power of formal education to mold the young in his own image was strong, for he believed the school could salvage the parent's failures.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

¹Bernard Wishy, The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture (Philadelphia, 1972), 67. Philippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life, Robert Baldick, tr. (New York, 1962), 118-128.

²Aries, Centuries, 118, 119, 128. Bernard Bailyn, Education in the Forming of American Society (New York, 1972), 21.

³Wishy, Child and Republic, vii, vix.

⁴To Benjamin Coffin, Mar. 9, 1755, To John Smith, Apr. 21, 1767, Brookes, 211, 269.

⁵George Fox, Journal (London, 1852), I, 53-73; II, 57, 76, 105. See Thomas Woody, Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania (New York, 1920), 7-13, for discussion of Fox's educational theories.

⁶See quote in Brookes, 477. James, 65. Quote from Minutes of Falls Monthly Meeting, July 1, 1761, in James, 52, 53. On apprenticeship as servitude, see Bailyn, Education, 17.

⁷The words "childhood" and "youth" were used virtually synonymously in the eighteenth century. Wishy, Child and Republic, x. Benezet sometimes distinguished between "older" and "younger scholars," the latter just learning to read and write, but no ages were ever referred to. James, 70. Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends Held in London (London, 1858), 213.

⁸James, 70, 71. Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), 40-44, 66-69.

⁹See Aries, Centuries, 130-133.

¹⁰David Hall, An Epistle of Caution and Love (3rd ed., London, 1750), 27. James, 62-64.

¹¹John Woolman, Considerations on Pure Wisdom (Philadelphia, 1768), 17, 19.

¹²To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, and Oct. 24, 1771, to G. Dillwyn, Sept. 11, 1779, Brookes, 230, 280, 336, 337. Wishy, Child and Republic, 85.

¹³Pennsylvania Spelling Book (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1779), 88.

¹⁴The New England Primer (2nd ed., Boston, 1691). James Wickersham, History of Education in Pennsylvania (Lancaster, Pa., 1886), 195.

¹⁵Woody, Early Quaker Education, 277. The words "apprentice" and "servant" were often used interchangeably during this period. Bailyn, Education, 29-36.

¹⁶Minutes of PMM, Nov. 24, 1769. Quote in James, 63, 64. In general, masters and mistresses were held responsible for the spiritual growth of apprentices and servants, thus the term "parents" is used in this work to signify both natural parents and those adults legally responsible for other children in their care.

¹⁷To S. Allinson, Oct. 23, 1774, To Susanna Pyrleus, 1751, Brookes, 321, 207. Benezet, Some Necessary Remarks on the Education of Youth (Philadelphia, 1777), and Some Observations Relating to Schools (Philadelphia, 1778).

¹⁸To Moses Brown, July 1, 1780, HQC. To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, To John Smith, Apr. 21, 1767, Brookes, 229, 230, 269.

¹⁹To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, To G. Dillwyn, Sept. 11, 1779, Brookes, 232, 337. Frederick Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia (New York, 1963). Certain demographic factors, such as the rapidly declining fertility rate among Quakers, in comparison with the overall society, seem to indicate, among other things, that parents were taking the rearing of children more seriously, rather than less, by the 1770's, according to Robert V. Wells, "Family Size and Fertility Control in Eighteenth Century America: A Study of Quaker Families," Population Studies, XXV (1971), 73-82.

²⁰To G. Dillwyn, Sept. 11, 1779, Brookes, 337. See below, ch. V, on parental guilt and the growth of schools.

²¹William Penn, Fruits of a Father's Love (3rd ed., London, 1760), 30-58. Benezet's personal copy in HQC.

²²Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 81-87.

²³To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 4, 1779, To Susanna Pyrleus, 1751, Brookes, 334, 207. See also, Pennsylvania Spelling Book, Introduction.

²⁴To Morris Birbeck, Oct. 16, 1781, Brookes, 362. The so-called equality between the sexes in the Society was a relative matter. Quaker women sometimes spoke in Meeting and a few were ordained as ministers (a non-professional calling). But women were segregated into separate meetings, far less powerful than the men's, in the Society's structure. Women's meetings performed "duties appropriate to their sex," such as caring for the poor, cleaning the meeting houses, etc. They usually did not have full control of their own funds, and were required to submit names of applicants for membership, certificates, etc., to the men's meetings for final action. The equality of the sexes meant that all were equal in the eyes of God: all must obey the inner light and the commands of God. But the relationship between men and women in everyday social life seemed to be relatively consistent with those ideals and practices of the larger colonial society. See James, 13, 14. Anthony, Daniel, and Philip Benezet to Susanna Pyrleus, 1751, Brookes, 207, 208. The Pyrleus's were Moravians. Susanna went to Europe anyway, and took the children with her. Her mother lived another 14 years, dying in 1765. Benezet either softened his position in later years on the matter of women traveling away from home, or else had no choice when he allowed his wife (childless) to go out of the province on religious visits, accompanied by a female friend. To John Smith, May 8, 1763. Brookes, 247, 248.

²⁵To Sophia Hume, Feb. 16, 1768, FHL. To "S. N.," about 1777, To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 5, 1773, Brookes, 407-410, 307.

²⁶Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 88.

²⁷To G. Dillwyn, July 12 or 14, 1778, Brookes, 327, 328. Pennsylvania Spelling Book, Preface.

²⁸Ibid., 168.

²⁹Ibid., 62.

³⁰Some Necessary Remarks. This sums up the frequent lessons on proper behavior in the Pennsylvania Spelling Book, also. See 88, 168.

³¹On his death bed "amid the agonies of his expiring moments," Benezet plead with a woman Friend to publish a letter of advice he had written her seven years earlier. He still felt the same concern for the spirituality of maturing young women, but now "with greater weight." The letter was addressed to "S. N.," n.d., about 1777, Brookes, 407-410. "Explanation of Anthony Benezet's letter to S. N.," Evening Fireside, Vol. I (1805), 169.

³²Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 85, 86. Benezet's advice on "waiting" seems not to have had the effect of pushing back the age of marriage. It was 22.14 years for Quaker women before the Revolution, and 22.9 in the early 1800's; an insignificant increase easily accounted for by other factors. Wells, "Family Size," 76.

³³To "S. N.," about 1777, Brookes, 407-410, 471. Note Benezet's inconsistency on the matter of childhood innocence. This attack on the sinful nature of the female young does not fit in with his theories of youthful innocence frequently expressed elsewhere.

³⁴Ibid., 410.

³⁵T. G. Dillwyn, July, 1780, May 1781, 1783, Brookes, 347, 355, 375. The Overseers of the Press may have been uncooperative because of financial strains, due at least in part to Benezet's enthusiastic endorsement of literally hundreds of books, letters and tracts for re-printing during these years.

³⁶To John Smith, 1762, Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, 1845, Brookes, 246, 466-470. Deborah Logan had been one of Benezet's students for several years. The other main leader of the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who had been influenced by Mott several years earlier on the matter of women's rights.

³⁷Bailyn, Education, 14.

³⁸To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 229, 230. Although Wishy dates this kind of attack on indulgent parents from the 1830's, it had in fact begun many centuries before Benezet. Bailyn notes that just such parental failure to educate the young lay behind the Massachusetts law establishing schools in 1642, and the complaint was not new then. Bailyn, Education, 26 ff. To Sophia Hume, Feb. 16, 1768, FHL.

³⁹To John Smith, Aug. 1, 1760, Brookes, 241. In a letter to G. Dillwyn, Benezet lamented also the hypocrisy of most clergymen of his day. To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 5, 1773, Brookes, 304.

⁴⁰To James Pemberton, Jan. 28, 1778, Brookes, 327.

⁴¹To Morris Birbeck, Oct. 16, 1781, Brookes, 363. To Moses Brown, May 9, 1774, HQC.

⁴²To "S.," March 31, 1775, To G. Dillwyn, Feb. 15, 1774, Brookes, 323, 324, 315.

⁴³To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 231. On the increased zeal for schools in the revolutionary period, see Bailyn, Education, 14, 15, Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, ch. II, and below, ch. V. Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 5. To G. Dillwyn, July, 1780, Brookes, 347.

CHAPTER V

CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

Based on his years of classroom experience and his Quaker religious principles, Benezet developed educational objectives that aimed at first to supplement, and eventually in many ways to replace, the collapsing family-centered educational ideal. It was his response to the acquisitiveness of a rising capitalism, which he perceived as harmful to youth and detrimental to society as a whole. Some day, he believed, a group of people would arise who would "absolutely refuse wealth,...and thereby remove from themselves and their children that grievous snare, which has arisen from the society's being so fond of amassing and enjoying wealth."¹ But in the meantime, the practical problem of how to proceed toward this utopian vision demanded a solution. Benezet's answer, of course, was to surround the lives of growing children with the proper environment--to build up the right kind of educational system. And the system he had in mind called for an intensive strengthening of goals, curriculum, methods, teaching staff, funding, and administration.

The schoolmaster's goals for education were stated succinctly in his eight page report of 1777, Some Necessary Remarks on the Education of Youth, which was approved and published by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. "The religious and civil education of our young people is an affair of the greatest importance," he began, "as it not only concerns the happiness of individuals, but the welfare of society." Children should be taught, above all, to be "useful and serviceable in life," and secondly, to be "fitted for eternal happiness." The public good, of course, took precedence

over private interests, a traditional eighteenth century outlook. Schools were responsible for teaching children to love God and their neighbors, and to regard truth highly, as part of their socialization. In addition, according to Benezet's report, "a government of the appetites and passions, should be, as much as possible, enforced on the youth." In short, the school should guide children to "grow up in virtue and knowledge, and qualified to be useful members of society."² The goals of the school, then, had become basically the same as those assigned earlier to families.

To turn out "serviceable" young men and women, the schools had to perform two functions, the one religious--to educate children morally and spiritually in accordance with Friends' principles; and the other practical--to prepare them for some economically viable vocation. The religious goal of education was not, for Benezet, a dogmatic kind of creedal indoctrination. Ideally, and he could not conceive of the serious matter of education on any other plane, the school should imbue pupils with "a true estimate of human life, and the amendment of the heart, whence obedience and love to God, benignity to men and a tender regard for the whole creation would necessarily flow." His emphasis on the "whole creation" was not an isolated afterthought. His classroom demeanor, reading textbook, and correspondence all reveal an acute ecological awareness. Consider for example this poem in the section of "Easy Lessons":

Hear when the bird sings in the tree;
See when the fish swim in the brook;
And let a hard heart be far from thee;
God loves to find a mind that's kind.

And again: "Dost thou not hear the young birds, when out of their nest,

they call on God for food; Hurt them not, my son, for he who made them hears their cry." With more advanced students he recommended the use of microscopes in the classroom for the study of minute parts of creation. The instruction of children in their relationship to the natural environment was, of course, considered a religious, rather than a "practical" matter. Benezet's personal interest in horticulture and biology was characteristic of the Enlightenment period, and of many Quakers. But his enthusiasm for teaching children these subjects seems to be new.³

In fact, Benezet saw the long range significance of controlling the child's intellectual and spiritual growth almost entirely in a religious, utopian perspective. He had no conscious political ambitions for the two generations of children he trained, but he envisioned a purer society, with an equitable economic basis that would arise voluntarily from brotherly love and sharing. Optimistically, he saw education as a vehicle for changing the direction of an increasingly competitive society. He would guide it back toward the value structure of an earlier day, when, he believed, people had worked together in peaceful harmony according to Christian precepts.

All children, regardless of background, should have this basic religious instruction. However on the practical level, pupils needed only such "useful parts of learning, as their respective situations may make necessary, to answer all the good purposes of life." There was a class bias implied here that was also characteristic of the day. Since the overall good of society was of supreme importance, schools should prepare students to fill well whatever vocational slot was appropriate to their economic and social background. Benezet insisted on maintaining

a quota system for poor children in Quaker schools. The policy had been established earlier, but was endangered in the 1760's and 1770's by the increasing popularity of schools. The education of poor children at the Society's expense was a matter of great importance to Benezet, not so much from equalitarian principles but because he felt that the good of the larger society and of the children themselves required it.⁴

A great deal of controversy emerged after 1750 as to how much and what kind of secular knowledge should be incorporated into the schools' curriculum. Those with traditional elitist views of education felt that Latin and Greek were indispensable and acquirements for an educated man. The classical "grammar schools" of colonial America resisted the mounting pressure to train youth in the proper use of the vernacular, and the various practical subjects. In the last half of the century, "English Schools," teaching a broad range of subjects in addition to modern languages were becoming increasingly popular.⁵

Benezet was a leading advocate and practitioner of the new pragmatic education. He objected to the teaching of Latin and Greek on two grounds. In the first place, young people on the whole did not need it. Classical language study was tedious and unrewarding to children. Only boys destined for the "study of phisic" would have any real use for it. In this he was in full agreement with Benjamin Franklin, who insisted that the Philadelphia Academy, founded in 1751, emphasize the English course. Secondly, the reading of the classics was positively harmful, for it tended to nourish "the spirit of war," and other unchristian attitudes. Despite Benezet's insistence that instruction in Latin and Greek was both unnecessary and corrupting to youth, Quakers on the whole

were divided on the matter, and throughout the late eighteenth century some of the leading families continued to support the Latin School, a division of Penn Charter School, and send their sons there. But Benezet's English School became the more popular and faster growing section of the Friends' Public School.⁶

When Benezet took up his teaching post in Philadelphia in 1743, he offered instruction in reading, writing, and spelling of the English, French, and German languages, in addition to several levels of mathematics. He also taught "merchant's accounts, mensuration, viz., in measuring, timber, brick work, land, and gaging." He was hired to teach a class of approximately thirty pupils, including fifteen poor children. But his classes always had more than the prescribed number of students. The practical cast of his curriculum was as well suited to the working class of Philadelphia as it was to the merchant-shipper population, and the school operated under his direction for several years without a Latin master at all. When Benezet complained in 1748 that he had more pupils than one teacher could reasonably handle, Robert Willan was hired to take over the Latin School. From then on, the two parts of the school operated rather independently, except that some students seem to have been enrolled for both curricula.⁷

By the last years of his teaching career, Benezet had added several more subjects in the English School. He wrote that he taught English grammar and composition, physical science, anatomy, principles of business "adapted to civil uses of life," and "such parts of history as may tend to give them a right idea of the corruption of the human heart, the dreadful nature and effect of war, [and] the advantage of

virtue." He also added astronomy and geography to the curriculum. This broad scope of subject matter was more extensive than that offered by most other schools of the times, with the exception of Franklin's Academy, also in the forefront of educational innovation. Apparently, many of Benezet's pupils studied only a part of the subjects offered--those most directly applicable to their intended careers.⁸

His curriculum for the girls' school which he founded in 1754 was based on essentially the same theological premises as that for boys. As far as religious instruction was concerned the only difference seemed to be his relatively greater zeal for instructing girls in the basic precepts. But there were important substantive differences in practical subjects, rooted in his traditional sex-role assumptions and his relentless practicality. "My mode of teaching is something different to boys, these must be made acquainted with more tables than girls, and some other rules unnecessary to them." Boys also received advanced instruction in "square roots, cube roots, decimal fractions," and girls did not. Girls were instructed in the traditional female arts of needlework, manners, etc., although Benezet himself rarely alluded to this, and it is not clear who actually taught this part of the curriculum. He believed it wise to separate boys from girls at school, and had a separate entrance and staircase built for the girls' section of the schoolhouse.⁹

For his time, Benezet's achievements in the field of women's education were impressive, nonetheless. He established and taught what appears to be the first secondary level "Public" school exclusively for females anywhere. And he introduced the teaching of advanced English grammar and composition into the curriculum, also apparently for the

first time. A writer well versed in educational innovations recorded in a 1780 issue of the American Journal of Education his surprise to discover girls "parsing" English in Philadelphia.¹⁰

The practical curriculum offered in Benezet's classrooms was implicitly anti-intellectual, for any subject that did not have an obvious useful function was left untaught. The teaching of history was justified only on the grounds that it reinforced certain social and religious mores acceptable to Quaker ideals. Mathematics was taught as an adjunct to the business and civil needs of the socio-economic structure. This anti-theoretical bias was thus deeply built into a school in the forefront of Philadelphia educational "progress" in the last half of the eighteenth century. The purpose was in part a negative religious one--to protect youth from exposure to godless intellectualism of classical writers and contemporary philosophers. But the intensely practical emphasis of the Friends' Publick School curriculum also reveals clearly the extent to which formal education was assuming responsibility for guiding the young into approved social and economic channels.¹¹

Benezet, a true eighteenth century person and a prolific writer, had enormous faith in the effectiveness of persuasion through the printed word. He was convinced that children exposed daily to "right-minded" reading materials would almost as a matter of course become "right-minded" themselves as they matured. Unable to find a satisfactory English textbook, and wishing to try out some of his own educational theories, he wrote a reader for his students which he hoped would be useful in other schools as well. The Pennsylvania Spelling Book was finally approved by the Quaker Overseers after eighteen months of "deliberations", and

published in 1778. It proved popular in Friends' schools throughout the colonies and in England and Ireland as well.¹²

In the preface to the Spelling Book, Benezet explained that his purpose was "to render the instruction of youth as easy as possible." His "deviation from the common mode" of presenting complicated reading and spelling materials to children was a deliberate attempt to convey learning through "short lessons, oft-repeated," which were "more useful to the learner than long [ones], too often tediously dwelt on." Thus the first part of the book, for beginning scholars, was subdivided into "such short lessons as may not be burdensome, either to the master or scholar."¹³

The lessons were geared to be plainly intelligible. Benezet advised the teacher to "use his best endeavours that [pupils] be made to understand the reason of what they are doing." He cautioned too, against "perplexing" students unnecessarily with the fine points of grammar. All instruction should be simplified as much as possible, consistent with sound learning, and only those grammatical rules essential for the correct writing of the English language should be taught. The author followed a general policy of "rather consulting and favoring the ear than observing the established rule," as he explained.¹⁴

The Spelling Book lessons increased gradually in difficulty. A list of words on a page was followed by another page or more of poems or prose homilies, using the same words in a meaningful context. Some of these lessons had a whimsical, if didactic, tone that was calculated to make learning easier for children. Example:

Go to the Ant, you that love sloth,
Think on her ways and be wise:

She takes care to lay up a store:
To lay up food in the right time.

And again:

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy;
All play and no work makes Jack a meer toy.

Note that the words used here were all of one syllable, easily pronounced, and they carried a simple traditional message of industriousness and moderation. By the end of the book, pupils had been drawn along into very complicated "language and precepts,...such as our best authors afford." These included the "Maxims" of William Penn, and selections from The Oeconomy of Human Life, by Robert Dodsley.¹⁵

In addition, as he stated several times, he believed that education should actually be fun. He hoped that pupils would not only understand their lessons but "take pleasure" in them as well. Learning should be implemented "in such a way as may prove a delightful rather than a painful labor both to teachers and pupils." Despite his distaste for "indulgent" child-rearing practices at home, an element of parallel "coddling" was beginning to appear in the schoolmaster's own classroom.¹⁶

Since the Pennsylvania Spelling Book progressed from the earliest lessons through the most advanced, it was meant to last pupils for several years. This created a problem, because the younger children, not yet trained in the proper care of a book, tended to be hard on it. By continual use, they sometimes defaced it before they had completed all the lessons. So, confronting the problem directly, Benezet issued a short introductory primer, A First Book For Children, in 1778, along with a revised and enlarged edition of the original Pennsylvania Spelling Book. In the primer, he had the alphabet printed in large letters on both

sides of the title page. A notice at the bottom of the title page explained, "When the above alphabets are defaced, this leaf may be pasted upon the cover, and that on the other side used."¹⁷ Another symptom of incipient "coddling" in the classroom, perhaps. The gentle schoolmaster realized that he would have to make concessions to the natural childish propensity to deface schoolbooks.

Benezet instructed other schoolmasters in the proper techniques for using schoolbooks in the classroom. He recommended, in his 1778 report on education, that teachers should dictate "worthy" materials for the pupils to write down. After correcting the spelling and handwriting, they should have students copy the passage again into their notebooks, with a "strong, free hand." A supply of good books from "historical and religious authors," in addition to spelling books and the Bible should be kept in the school room, and students encouraged to read aloud from them, "with proper emphasis." By "proper emphasis" he meant that pupils should be required "early to speak loud, slow, and intelligible, and be sure to...observe proper stops." Persistence of the master in this would ensure the development of correct habits, habits which older students reading aloud in the classroom would pass on to younger ones. He demanded high standards of educational excellence in reading, along with his attempts to make learning more pleasurable.¹⁸

But Benezet never limited the use of books to the classroom. Throughout his lifetime he sent out enormous quantities of literature "conducive to the Chrisitan education of the youth." Much of this material he compiled or wrote himself, with the simplicity and clarity that characterized his Quaker approach to life. By writing his adult

books "as simply as we would speak it," he felt that even the most complicated ideas and maxims could be made intelligible and attractive to the young. When he discovered Isaac Watts' hymnal entitled Divine and Moral Songs for Children, he sent a copy to John Smith for his little son, observing that the "sentiments" in the song book were unusually well expressed for children. At the end of his life he bequeathed his own personal library of about 200 volumes to the Friends' Library, "in order to make that institution as profitable to our youth" as possible.¹⁹

The physical setting for formal education should be pleasant, light, and spacious, in Benezet's opinion. He insisted on having a schoolhouse that was a comfortable and attractive place, conducive to learning. Upon his arrival in Philadelphia in 1743, he had a large window cut into the dark side of his classroom for ventilation and light in the aging school building. Two years later he had convinced the Overseers of the Publick School to construct a larger and more satisfactory building.²⁰

Benezet believed that children needed time and space for recreation as part of the learning process. One of his former students wrote this description of one phase of school life under Benezet:

Lest his pupils should be injured by too strict confinement during school hours, we were divided into three classes, and suffered to go, one class at a time, into a very large apartment adjoining, where abundance of means were provided for means of recreation and exercise.

The special "apartment" had been built at Benezet's request for this purpose, an early venture into physical education. The recreation facilities were a somewhat startling innovation among Quakers who firmly discouraged all types of "idleness" and games.²¹

Because he believed that classrooms should not be overcrowded, Benezet insisted that class size be limited, so that a master could effectively educate those under his care. But usually when he mentioned this problem, he coupled it with a warning against cutting down the quotas of poor children as a means to limit total enrollment. The need to economize was a constant threat to the ideal of educating all classes of children, and the manipulation of class size was one approach advocated by administrators to extend the funds available.²²

While Benezet used some of the older techniques of medieval schoolmasters, such as copying and recopying maxims into notebooks, he also pioneered some methods that have since hardened into modern maxims of educational practice. "Learning by doing," and "child-centered education," are concepts that have roots in the experimental classrooms of the Philadelphia Friends. Benezet moved gradually from a rather traditional emphasis on formalistic training to a more active involvement of pupils' energies in the learning process. He was, in fact, bringing his methods of teaching into closer relationship to the kind of subjects he taught. An example of this may be seen in his development of a new method for teaching arithmetic. He had pupils set up merchant's account books, with columns for "debits," "interest," "credits," "balance," etc. By increasing the difficulty of work in these books, many forms of arithmetic were introduced in an orderly manner, from the simplest sums to advanced calculations. Thus, children learned real skills that would be useful in adult life (at least for the future merchants, shippers, and financiers among them), as well as mastering the theoretical fundamentals. For the brightest boys "of genius or leisure," he introduced

more advanced forms of mathematics in practical problems.²³

Benezet developed and used inductive methods of education increasingly as he grew older, rather than the deductive scholastic approach he inherited from earlier schoolmasters. In teaching arithmetic, for example, he had students use methods they already knew, such as adding or subtracting, to work out problems that illustrated the general rules for multiplying or dividing. He advocated, in his words, "a bringing into practice the rules before learned."²⁴

Benezet systematically tailored his teaching to the needs and abilities of individual pupils. When his friend George Dillwyn became a member of a committee to establish a new Quaker school in Burlington Meeting, he wrote asking for more specific information on Benezet's teaching methods. The schoolmaster replied with a long letter which included this information:

I proceeded in one case in as short a method as the pupil's understanding and the rules would permit; being near marriageable, and of good capacity, we had but little time....I always endeavor to make such scholars whose capacity will take it, which is not the case of all, understand it well.

He referred here to a teaching project in advanced mathematics. Not only did he work with pupils individually according to their needs and abilities, but he tried to lay such a firm foundation of understanding and motivation that students "by accident prevented from further learning will be able to make most calculations, and much open their understanding for further knowledge."²⁵

Another of his recorded individualized projects was the teaching of a little deaf-mute girl. He worked with her regularly for two years, and successfully guided her into a "useful and intelligent communication

with her society." Although he did not develop this particular area of teaching any further, he made important pioneering contributions to the understanding and treatment of the problem in the Philadelphia area. Only later did the French Abbe L'Epee perfect the methods first practiced, apparently, by Benezet.²⁶

In addition to sending books and tracts to former pupils and children of his friends, Benezet sent more concrete educational materials, as well. In 1767, for example, along with some rare botanical specimens for John Smith in New Jersey, he sent a "common small pot, with a little orange tree" for a child named Sammy Burling, so that he might learn by observation how plants grow.²⁷

One of the best illustrations of Benezet's teaching by means of concrete example from the "ordinary occurrences of life," is the so-called "mouse-episode" that has become almost mythical in the retelling by everyone who has taken an interest in Anthony Benezet. The lesson here was a practical one about a moral truth the schoolmaster considered important. From the account written by William Dillwyn, who was one of the pupils involved in the anecdote, the following story emerges: Two boys built a small pillory and imprisoned a live mouse in it. Arriving early at school one day, they placed the contraption, mouse and all, on Benezet's desk, along with a small sign which explained:

"I stand here, my honest Friends,
For stealing cheese and candle-ends."

When the schoolmaster walked up to his desk, he asked quietly, "Who put thee here, poor thing?" Looking around the class, he spotted guilty expressions on two faces, and asked the culprits to "stand on the bench."

He observed to the class that even though the mouse "may have taken the cheese and candles without leave, for which most people would have deprived it of its life, W. D. and S. C. more compassionately put it in this confinement." He then opened the pillory, saying, "Go, poor thing, go," and the class watched, fascinated, as the mouse scurried under a cabinet. The two boys on the bench waited apprehensively for news of their punishment. But to their relief, Benezet used the opportunity to encourage kindness, as opposed to brutality. He reprimanded the boys firmly, and shamed them for oppressing another creature. But then he said that since they had "wisely and mercifully imprisoned the mouse, rather than put it to death, they should go out at four o'clock that afternoon," without further punishment.²⁸

The mouse episode is also an excellent example of Benezet's approach to discipline and punishment in the school. Consistent with his Quaker devotion to the peace principle, and his genuine respect for children as human beings, he objected to harsh physical punishment in any form. He discarded the rods and rulers generally in use in schools of his day, and substituted a mild but firm, and sometimes humorous, solution to the problem of improper behavior among students. In this, Benezet was in basic accord with William Penn, George Fox, and John Woolman, all of whom disapproved harsh physical punishment of children.²⁹ But Benezet seems to have been among the first to apply the theory effectively in the classroom.

That his gentle methods of discipline worked reasonably well seems beyond question from the general satisfaction of pupils, parents, Overseers of the school, and other teachers who wrote to him for advice.

He believed that an example of gentle, upright conduct set by the schoolmaster would do more to keep an orderly classroom, conducive to learning, than any amount of harsh repressive measures. That he did insist on an orderly classroom is suggested by the stringent "Rules of Conduct" written by Benezet for pupils in the Quaker schools. He used "premiums," usually gift books, as rewards for good behavior, although this practice was frowned upon by most other Quaker teachers.³⁰

Some failures and setbacks in his disciplinary methods were inevitable, and one of these was recorded during his first year in the Philadelphia school. A pupil named John Lewis, whom the schoolmaster found incorrigible, "left the school and was put to another....on my showing some dislike to his parents concerning him," Benezet explained candidly to the Overseers.³¹ If all else failed, expulsion was the final solution.

Benezet evidently used one method of pupil control extensively without ever consciously advocating it. His gentle approach to punishment, when it became necessary, included the refined use of guilt and shame to drive home a lesson. The two frightened boys standing on a bench awaiting the schoolmaster's verdict, constitute a case in point. Clearly, they did not anticipate corporal punishment, as Benezet's views regarding whipping, etc., were well known. Still, he did not tell them that their punishment would merely consist of staying in after school until he had completed what must have been a humiliating little sermon delivered in front of their peers, while they stood, trembling on the bench.³²

Benezet never questioned the need for an orderly authoritarian structure, in family, school, or society. He did attack on many fronts

the brutal methods used to enforce that orderly structure. But any kind of enforcement, when combined with a world view based on an inner light-peace ethic, has its built-in difficulties. Benezet probably never realized that his own methods for pupil control contained elements of mental and spiritual brutality more effective in the long run than the outward coercion practiced by the harsher schoolmasters, slave-owners, and Indian fighters he so roundly condemned. Yet the problem of how to control children long enough to socialize them adequately, without violating their inner nature, was one that Benezet recognized and tried to cope with. But, like teachers and parents ever since, he failed in what may be by definition an impossible task.³³

The stumbling block for Benezet and the teachers who tried to follow his pioneering example was that of reconciling an increasing respect for the beauty and innocence of the natural child with inflexible demands for traditional Christian morality in child rearing. It appeared to Benezet at first that education was simply a matter of reaching the innocent child early enough with Christian precepts, which the youngster would willingly accept if properly instructed. But proper instruction seemed to require a certain amount of enforcement of the prescribed rules of conduct, and the problem became one of internalizing necessary restraints, as well as encouraging the natural beauty of the child's nature. How else could one protect the child from the snares of an evil society as he or she grew up? How else could an absolute morality be preserved for the future? No one, certainly not Benezet, raised the question of whether or not the traditional forms were worth preserving.

Benezet's enlightened methods evolved during many years of practical experience in the classroom. He seems to have worked independently, without knowledge of earlier educational innovators like Johann Amos Comenius, or John Locke, whose experimental approaches had been remarkably similar. In any case, Benezet moved well in advance of most other American educators. By his emphasis on the individual child's potential, by his interest in relating lessons to daily life, by his desire that pupils should understand rather than simply memorize, by his encouragement of physical expressiveness, and by his insistence on making learning as easy and pleasant as possible, he helped to open an educational Pandora's box of immense proportions for later generations.³⁴

While he tried to cope with the appalling realization that most parents could no longer be trusted with the proper education of their own children, Benezet became increasingly concerned about the qualifications of schoolmasters upon whom grave new responsibilities were devolving. The teacher's position was enormously important because he or she was the adult closest to the child during school hours, the longest part of the day. "Children catch the vices of those with whom they converse, and...impressions made on their tender minds are deep and lasting," observed Benezet. Therefore, those impressions made by the schoolmaster had a great significance. Teachers must not only set an example of upright Christian behavior for their charges to imitate, but they should be well qualified to teach all their subjects, he believed. A good writing hand, and care in spelling and grammar were "materially necessary in a schoolmaster," also.³⁵

His conception of his personal calling was a mystical, religious one. Teaching, he wrote, and

the watching over every opportunity of instilling noble and Christian principles in the tender minds of youth, is the greatest and most acceptable sacrifice and service we can offer to the great Father and head of the family of the whole earth, and the most exalted duty a Christian mind can be engaged in.

Both the "sacrifice" and the heavenly family images were important here. Bernard Wishy points out that the idea of the teacher as an almost superhuman embodiment of all the virtues pupils should acquire, became an important corollary of the nineteenth century concept of mother's divine mission to save and uplift her family.³⁶ Again, Benezet seemed to be setting the stage for subsequent acts in a dramatic continuum.

To the Quaker schoolmaster, teaching was not only "the greatest and most acceptable sacrifice" one could offer to the Father, but also a pleasant, even joyful, opportunity for constructive work in the world. "It is a great mistake," he wrote, "to think that the education of youth is toilsome and disagreeable."³⁷ He seemed genuinely to have enjoyed children and the educating of them, much of the time, but occasionally he became discouraged and took a hard look at the disadvantages of school teaching.

For one thing, education was a demanding field of service, "as arduous to the teacher as it is of advantage to the youth." And the society's rewards to those entrusted with the education of its young were meager. Benezet wrote a young colleague not to be too discouraged because he was "disregarded by worldly men, or because [his] talents, or station in life, may seem mean, compared with others." The consolation he offered was that the young schoolmaster's enforced humility

would find "favor with God."³⁸

Another drawback to teaching as a career was the low pay. He complained that unless a boy was destined for one of the professions, he was generally limited to a rather minimal education, taught "no matter by whom, but the cheaper the better.... Thus it happens that persons in every way unqualified, both in learning and in morals, are, for the sake of having done it cheaper, entrusted with the education of children." The pay for teachers in English schools was indeed low, even for a person of long experience and frugal habits like Benezet. His salary in 1750 remained fifty pounds a year, while the more prestigious Latin School master earned 150 pounds.³⁹

Even though well qualified teachers were badly needed in the province, he advised educated young Englishmen interested in teaching in America to remain in their homeland, where such positions carried reasonable remuneration. Americans, Friends as well as others, he called "shamefully penurious" when it came to paying for their children's schooling. Sometimes single young men could earn enough barely to support themselves at teaching, in the cities, but they had to depend on near-charity for room and board at the whim of parents, he warned. Married men with families found things nearly impossible. This situation probably explains in part the constant turnover and shortage of teachers in Philadelphia's schools during this period.⁴⁰

Female teachers had been employed irregularly in Quaker schools of Philadelphia since 1699. For the half-pay they received, the school mistresses were expected to teach the children considered most difficult and least desirable--the youngest, poorest ones. Benezet offered one

indirect explanation for this practice, with his usual candor.

Masters should not be encumbered with children who are too young to write, these should either be in a special school for such, or with a Mistress; they take up the time of the [advanced students] more properly the object of a well qualified person; and having no employ and young are difficult to keep quiet.⁴¹

Despite the large number of young women he educated in his school, he showed little inclination to encourage the careers of women teachers either his own graduates or others.

Benezet did, however, offer considerable assistance, along with many words of encouragement and advice, for young men teachers. He wrote an Essay on Grammar, especially for young masters "who have understood the education of the youth," but who felt themselves inadequate in the use of English, due to their foreign birth. For these potentially excellent teachers, he appended his Essay to the second edition of the Pennsylvania Spelling Book. Beginning teachers were advised to study constantly to improve their own teaching. He requested and received financial aid from the Overseers on several occasions, to be used in the support and training of young teachers.⁴²

Benezet's concern for the status, qualifications, and salaries of younger teachers was perhaps a significant preliminary step toward what would become during the next century formal teacher training certification and professionalization. And his instruction of large numbers of young Philadelphia women led directly to greater female participation in the field of education, although he apparently never intended such an outcome. Rebecca Jones, one of his graduates, conducted a popular Philadelphia school for 23 years.⁴³

Benezet, with his persistent emphasis on practical matters regarding the school, took on the major problems of financing the Quaker educational network. As early as 1758, he was suggesting privately that the "governments of this world," if they were "influenced by true wisdom," would already "have made the proper education of the youth their first and special care." But he realized the improbability of creating a government-subsidized school system in his time. His suggestions, he admitted in the same letter, were characterized by "strangeness of thought." Still he dreamed of a better day ahead when public education and other "good and necessary works" would no longer be omitted "solely because custom has allowed them to be passed over as not necessary."⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Benezet constantly solicited funds for schools from Friends as a group and from individuals. The three customary forms of financial support for Quaker schools were: (1) Voluntary subscriptions from Friends, (2) Bequests and legacies, and (3) The "rate" or tuition charged to children whose parents could afford to pay. By 1770, Benezet had begun insisting that even people who had no children should be expected to help support schools, "without regard to any immediate advantage they are to reap."⁴⁵

The late seventeenth century "Frames of Government" of Pennsylvania Province had included provisions for public education which were never implemented. But Charter of 1701 did not mention it, nor had the colonial government taken any such responsibility since that time. The Society of Friends had assumed much of the load, and the Philadelphia Academy and other private schools also flourished, especially after mid-century. Still, in the absence of government-subsidized education, Benezet and

a strong clique within the Society felt they should take even greater initiative in assuming responsibility for the poor children in the province as well as for their own young. Benezet called on Friends in 1758 to

dedicate themselves to the care of youth, not limiting themselves to the narrow views of fleshly ties, nor even to religious denominations, but looking upon themselves as fathers and brothers of all that want their help, taking more special care to make the poor and helpless the first objects of such care.

Quaker principles and prosperity, combined with the withdrawal from political office-holding, created in Benezet's view an ideal milieu for Friends "as a people, rather than others, to serve God and our country in the education of the youth." Furthermore, the social chaos and dislocations of the Seven Years' War had made the proper education of all children seem more urgent than ever.⁴⁶

The hope of government sponsored and supported education remained a fantasy dream for Benezet in his own time, but he could and did work toward establishing an extensive Quaker school system that was open to children of all denominations. The opportunity to implement his school plan, however, did not arrive until the years of the American Revolution.

The Revolution precipitated a long smoldering generational crisis in Friends' families. Efforts to control and restructure their childrens' lives along more strict Quakerly paths, became a clear part of Meeting deliberations. Philadelphia Monthly Meeting in 1775 noted "a sorrowful neglect of restraining [the young] from such conversation and company as tended to lead them astray." One of the ways in which some Quaker youths were being led "astray," was by the popular patriotic enthusiasm

for joining the militia--a direct contradiction to the Society's peace principles. And increasing numbers of young Friends were "marrying out" of the Society. By 1777, one of the major concerns of the Meeting was that of "promoting a reformation of speech, behavior, apparel, etc." among the young.⁴⁷

The Philadelphia Monthly Meeting became involved in an intriguing dispute between parents and the schools as to which group was basically responsible for the childrens' worsening behavior, and their distressing tendency to associate too freely with non-Quakers. In July of 1779, the Meeting sent a committee of ten to visit the nine-member Overseers of the Penn Charter Schools, ostensibly to offer assistance in promoting "a more pious education of youth." The visiting group asked, in effect, whether the Board was keeping Quaker children separated from non-Quakers, and what was being done to keep students off the streets during non-school hours. They made it clear that Meeting considered the teachers and Overseers' efforts to secure parental cooperation in these matters to be "most evidently wanting." Finally, there was a pointed enquiry as to whether or not funds were being properly dispersed in accordance with the donors' directions. The Board made a written reply to this transparent challenge to its integrity and competence that was a masterpiece of polite Quaker rhetoric veneered over a steel-hard position. In the first place, parents, not teacher or Overseers, were primarily responsible for "the preservation of our children from a corrupting connection" with non-Quakers. Furthermore, even the best classroom instruction was ineffectual if parents neglected their duty to "restrain [children] from running at large in the streets." The Board reported without apology

that only two of their nine schools limited enrollment to the children of Friends. There was a limit, then, to how much responsibility the schools would assume for the "proper instruction of the youth."⁴⁸ This confrontation apparently ended the argument for a time and Benezet, along with most of the other teachers, continued to instruct children of all denominations in his classes.

The problems of dealing with youth during the Revolutionary upheaval became so acute that the way was finally cleared for Benezet to press his educational proposals to a successful conclusion. He had long believed that a stronger, purer school system was essential to combat the increasing defections of Quaker youths, and to restore order in the larger society. He was appointed chairman in 1777 of a fourteen member committee of Yearly Meeting, assigned "to consider seriously the subject of education." Much of the material in Some Necessary Remarks on the Education of the Youth, published that year by Benezet in the form of recommendations to Yearly Meeting, was incorporated into the formal report adopted in 1778. This report, entitled, Some Observations Relating to the Establishment of Schools was well-received and acted upon by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting with considerable enthusiasm.⁴⁹

Benezet's report of 1778 carried a three-fold message on some of the same subjects he had been stressing for years to parents and Overseers of the schools: administration, teachers, and funds. He began by referring members to earlier injunctions, especially that of Yearly Meeting in 1750, to which he had first submitted an educational proposal. That Meeting had recommended the hiring and adequate support of qualified teachers, for the "training up of our youth in useful learning." The

failure of most meetings to comply, however, had led to "many hurtful and corrupt things [gaining] ground among us." Thus it had now become necessary to establish a well organized system of instruction, administered by active supervisory boards to be set up in each Monthly Meeting. Each of these committees of "Overseers" would be directly responsible to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. This firm clamp down on previously lax or non-existent schools throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey constituted a major break with the easy-going traditional pattern, in which decision-making on education was left up to the individual meetings and/or families. The new tightening up of administration, as explained in the report, was necessary so that "the matter may rest on a solid foundation, and every possible encouragement and assistance may be afforded to Friends, in the settlement of schools, procuring masters, etc., etc., throughout the whole extent of the Yearly Meeting." ⁵⁰

As for teachers, only Quakers should be hired, and these should be married men of high moral and spiritual qualifications, with scholarly accomplishments as a secondary consideration. The Report recommended that each Monthly Meeting provide a guaranteed salary and a plot of land large enough for a permanent schoolmaster and his family to live comfortably, with orchard, garden plot, stable and grazing land for a cow. Such provisions would obviate the common practice of hiring a single master and boarding him out among private households. The ideal teacher was a "staid person, with a family, who will be likely to remain a considerable time." Meetings should deliberately avoid hiring "transient persons, often of doubtful character."⁵¹ The desired characteristics in a schoolmaster turned out to be essentially those to be enforced for the school

itself: stability, moral purity, orderliness, and permanence. And the description of the ideal teacher bore a striking resemblance to the author of the Report.

The crucial matter of funding this enlarged and centralized school system received careful attention in the report. Approximately 3,000 Tories, most of them strong supporters of schools, had fled Philadelphia with the British army a few weeks before Meeting convened. Benezet noted a "backwardness among us to contribute that part of our substance" which is necessary for the "virtuous education of our youth." At this point the report resembled a stern sermon more than an official proposal for improving an educational system. Members were reminded that they were merely stewards of their wealth. The use of money for private advantage or "hoarding" it to pass on to one's own children was condemned out of hand, as detrimental to society in general and to youth in particular. The wealth of individual families could be spent for no better purpose than for the communal education of the young, the report emphasized.⁵²

Responsibility for the schools' fiscal matters was to rest with the Overseers in Monthly Meetings. No tax assessment was suggested at this time, but pressure in the form of "Friendly visits" was to be put on non-contributing members. The Report recommended the establishment of endowments for schools by subscription and/or bequests, "the increase of which might be employed in paying the Masters' salaries, if necessary, and promoting the education of the poorer Friends' children."⁵³ It would be easy to read selfish motives into such a suggestion in Benezet's Report of 1778. But in fact, the Master's salary and tuition for poor

children were the only major expenses of most Quaker schools at the time. Classes were usually held in the Meeting Houses during the week, except for the large Philadelphia school house. There is no evidence that Benezet sought a larger salary for himself, but he knew that younger masters with children could not live on the salaries currently offered by the smaller Meetings. The emphasis on teacher's pay was a necessary part of any plan to expand the schools.

The Quaker community stood threatened from within by a decline in religious interest among the young, and from without by a revolutionary political haulocaust. Benezet made use of this historical context to strike at what he saw as an even more insidious threat to Quaker survival--the erosion of Christian principles of brotherly love by competitive economic forces that had been gathering momentum for a century or more. He perceived these economic pressures in moralistic terms of selfishness and greed, and he struggled against them in the interests of his young charges, his sect, and his society.

By acting affirmatively on the Report of 1778, the Quakers took considerably increased corporate responsibility for the training of their children. The step marked a major new emphasis on self-preservation of the socio-religious community by means of institutionalized education. Parents did two things by their action. First they agreed to turn over a greater proportion of their own childrens' lives to the care and nurture of a community sponsored institution. And secondly, they committed themselves to a larger economic outlay in behalf of those same children--to give the schools regular financial support. Parents would henceforth increasingly relinquish direct oversight of their

childrens' spiritual welfare and practical training to the care of "experts" in the education process.⁵⁴ The school agreed to take on a major share of socializing their children and preparing them for the work of the economy, in return for a certain reasonable outlay of cash. Education was rapidly becoming a well-organized community matter.

It would be incorrect to assume that the Report of 1778 marked a sudden, drastic change in Quaker policy. Friends rarely, if ever, acted precipitously, especially on such serious matters as their childrens' education. Except for the organizational structure, the basic proposals had been around in the form of "Advices" for nearly a century. But the report, and its eager acceptance, was nevertheless a tangible milestone in an ongoing process. In a letter written during the summer of 1779, Benezet observed to a friend that "the concern for the establishment of schools appears to gain ground," and his comment was probably an understatement. Within six years after the adoption of the report, the Philadelphia Penn Charter School system had expanded from the thirty pupil school Benezet took over in 1743 to more than ten schools with a total of 434 students, of whom seventy were poor or "free scholars." In 1779, Yearly Meetings in New York, Baltimore, New England, and Virginia all accepted "Anthony's report," as it was commonly called, and began their attempts to implement it. By 1800, nearly every uaker Meeting House had its own school.⁵⁵

The Revolutionary period marked the beginning of a new era of importance for both Quaker and non-Quaker schools at all levels, a development that led directly to the widespread establishment of government sponsored public schools in the early nineteenth century. Yet

among Quakers, at least, it seems incorrect to suggest that the growth of an extensive practical type school system was a democratic development, inspired by libertarian ideas of the Revolution, as many historians have claimed.⁵⁶ Friends were far more interested in reclaiming a lost social order through rigorous training of their young during the Revolution than they were in furthering egalitarian goals. Benezet did indeed seek to promote public, non-sectarian education. Yet he explained frequently that he believed all children should receive a practical education in order to fit them for their "proper stations" in society, but not necessarily for equal stations.

Benezet's initial satisfaction with the growth of the schools after 1778 was based on his belief that the Society of Friends was at last reasserting its earlier, ideally strong sense of communal responsibility for child rearing and Christian nurture which had been undermined by the privatized scramble for family fortunes. Yet Benezet's emphasis on practical education led exactly where he did not want his students to go. He repeatedly condemned the very materialistic society which he devotedly equipped them to serve. The skills they learned, and the steady application of those skills in daily life, rather than the pious maxims their schoolmaster stressed, became the basis for their American success story. They learned, in the main, to conform to the real values of their parents and peers, rather than the "Quakerly" ideal of humble service to mankind, as stressed in their lesson books.⁵⁷

In the last years of his life, Anthony Benezet, the aging advocate of education for all, wrote to a close friend, "Upon the whole, the unlearned are freer from snares, and have a better chance to be chosen."⁵⁸

If "to be chosen" was indeed the greatest good of all, where had the schoolmaster's forty dedicated years of instruction led? Wisely, perhaps, he never asked.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V

¹To Moses Brown, July 1, 1780, HQC. Underlining Benezet's.

²Benezet, Some Necessary Remarks (Philadelphia, 1777), 1-3.
Bernard Bailyn, Education in the Forming of American Society (New York, 1972), 29-32.

³Thomas Woody, Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania (New York, 1969), 21, 22. James, 60. Bailyn, Education, 19. To John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, Brookes, 390. Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 16, 17, 29. Benezet was a friend of Quaker naturalist John Bartram, and was himself deeply interested in horticulture. He frequently sent some of his newly developed hybrid plants to friends.

⁴To David Barclay, 1782, Brookes, 370. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 32, 33. See Minutes of PCS, I, 291, 292, 313, HQC.

⁵Lawrence A. Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience (New York, 1970), 500.

⁶To John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, To Morris Birbeck, Oct. 16, 1781, To Robert Pleasants, Oct. 23, 1780, Brookes, 389, 360-362, 451. See Bailyn, Education, 35, and Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), 42-44.

⁷To Israel Pemberton, Nov. 24, 1742, HQC. Minutes of PCS, Nov. 27, 1742, HQC. Jean S. Straub, "Anthony Benezet: Teacher and Abolitionist," QH, LVII (1968), 4.

⁸To John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, Brookes, 390. James Mulhern, History of Secondary Education in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1933), 142.

⁹To George Dillwyn, Aug. 4, 1779, Brookes, 333. Minutes of PCS, I, 117.

¹⁰Mulhern, Secondary Education, 409-410. "Parsing" was the study of the grammatical structure of sentences by breaking them down into functional parts.

¹¹Bernard Wishy, The Child and the Republic (Philadelphia, 1968), 71, 72, discusses anti-intellectualism in nineteenth century schools.

See Bailyn, Education, 21, on early education as an instrument of social purpose.

¹²To G. Dillwyn, 12 or 14, 1778, Brookes, 327, 328. On available schoolbooks for children at the time, see Woody, Early Quaker Education, 193. Minutes of PCS, II, 60, 61, 77.

¹³Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 3. To G. Dillwyn, July, 1778, Brookes, 327, 328.

¹⁴Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 66, 165. To Morris Birbeck, Oct. 16, 1781, Brookes, 359.

¹⁵Ibid., 16, 17. To Morris Birbeck, Oct. 16, 1781, Brookes, 358-363.

¹⁶To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 4, 1779, To John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, Brookes, 333, 388, 394.

¹⁷A First Book for Children (Philadelphia, 1778), title page.

¹⁸Some Necessary Remarks, 5. To "A Schoolmaster," 1752, Brookes, 209.

¹⁹To G. Dillwyn, n.d., To John Smith, Dec. 11, 1760, Brookes, 278, 243. Minutes of PCS, July 15, 1786, HQC.

²⁰Brookes, 33.

²¹Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, 1825, Brookes, 467. Vaux, 11. J. William Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America (New York, 1973), 81.

²²Some Necessary Remarks, 5.

²³To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 4, 1779, Brookes, 333. Some Necessary Remarks, 5 ff.

²⁴To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 4, 1779, Brookes, 333.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Vaux, 10, 11.

²⁷To John Smith, 1767, Brookes, 267.

²⁸Logan to Vaux, 1825, Brookes, 466-470. "Anthony Benezet," The Friend, IV (1831), 187.

²⁹William Penn, Fruits of a Father's Love (3rd ed., London, 1760), 26, passage on "gentle discipline" marked in pen in Benezet's personal copy, HQC. For discussion of the usual modes of punishment, i.e., beating, whipping, etc., common in Philadelphia's schools, see John F. Watson, Annals of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 292. See also, James Wickersham, History of Education in Pennsylvania (Lancaster, Pa., 1886), 207.

³⁰Brookes, 3, 4. Some Necessary Remarks, 5. See above, ch. IV. Minutes of PCS, I, 100, 117. Jean S. Straub, "Quaker School Life in Philadelphia," PMHB, LXXIX (1965), 448-456.

³¹Minutes of PCS, Dec. 23, 1743.

³²See Wishy, Child and Republic, 48, 49, on use of guilt feelings and shame as punishment in nineteenth century schools.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 119.

³⁵Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 4, 162. This sounds much like the tabula rasa theory of John Locke, regarding the blank and totally impressionable minds of young children. But there is no evidence that Benezet ever read Locke on education. Letter to "A Schoolmaster," 1752, Brookes, 208-210.

³⁶To Samuel Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 230. Wishy, Child and Republic, 90.

³⁷To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 232.

³⁸Benezet, Some Observations Relating to the Establishment of Schools (Philadelphia, 1778), 1. To "A Schoolmaster," 1752, Brookes, 210. See Philippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life, Robert Baldick, tr. (New York, 1962), 378, 379, on the matter of low status of schoolmasters in Europe during the same period. Aries concludes that conservative hostility toward the schools lay behind this.

³⁹Some Necessary Remarks, 2. To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 232. Mulhern, Secondary Education, 45.

⁴⁰To G. Dillwyn, Feb. 15, 1774, Brookes, 316, 317. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 62, 207, 208. Salaries in non-Quaker schools were roughly equivalent to those at PCS during this period.

⁴¹Minutes of PMM, Jan. 31, 1699. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 54, 59, 243. Minutes of PCS, 1755. To G. Dillwyn, Feb., 1782, Brookes, 371.

⁴²To "A Schoolmaster," 1752, To G. Dillwyn, July, 1780, Brookes, 208-210, 346. Minutes of PCS, II, 36.

⁴³Brookes, 41.

⁴⁴To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 232, 233.

⁴⁵Some Necessary Remarks, 4, Woody, Early Quaker Education, 60.

⁴⁶Woody, Early Quaker Education, 41, 42. Public schools were not actually established in Pennsylvania until well into the nineteenth century. To S. Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 232, 233. Underlining mine.

⁴⁷Quoted in James, 73, 74. Peter Brock, Pacifism in the United States (Princeton, 1968), 202, 203. Frost, Quaker Family, 105.

⁴⁸Minutes of PCS, July 9, 12, 1779, I, 94-97.

⁴⁹Quoted, Straub, "Anthony Benezet," 6. See Brookes, 53. Under pressure from Benezet, Burlington Meeting was at work establishing a school using his Pennsylvania Spelling Book and his suggestions on curriculum and teaching methods. James, 70-74. To G. Dillwyn, July, 1778, and 1779, Brookes, 327-330. The Report was signed by Benezet and Isaac Zane, both committee members.

⁵⁰Some Observations, 1, 2.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., 2. Sam Bass Warner, The Private City (Philadelphia, 1968), 25.

⁵³Some Observations, 2.

⁵⁴It is doubtful that eighteenth century Quakers saw the issues involved in quite this perspective. The long range implications of the proposals could not have been envisioned in 1778.

⁵⁵To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 4, 1779, Brookes, 333. James, 74, 75, 254. Minutes of PCS, II, 194. Frost, Quaker Family, 96, 97, reports that the initial successes were short-lived, and that the report had a lasting impact only in the heavily Quaker Philadelphia area.

⁵⁶Wickersham, Education, 86, 87. Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, ch. II. Wishy, Child and Republic. Bailyn, Education, 3-49.

⁵⁷There were exceptions to this. His former students, the brothers George and William Dillwyn, for example, spent their lives in devoted humanitarian service.

⁵⁸To G. Dillwyn, July 6, 1780, Brookes, 350.

CHAPTER VI

THE AFRICANS' SCHOOL: TOWARD A THEORY OF FULL EQUALITY

Anthony Benezet's Philadelphia had grown to a city of approximately 18,000 inhabitants by the year 1750, when he first began his experiments in teaching black children to read, write, and do simple arithmetic. The port city had never had a large slave population, owing largely to the nature of its economy. Estimates of the black population at mid-century range upward from 3,000, of which an unknown proportion were freemen. A very few of the slaves were tutored in the homes of their masters, and of those, most were taught only enough to read the Bible and catechism. White public sentiment against instructing blacks was such that a "Mr. Bolton" had been arraigned in court for teaching Negroes in his Philadelphia school as late as 1740.¹ Free blacks apparently had no formal educational opportunities.

One of Benezet's most significant long range contributions to the position of African-Americans was his sustained thirty four year effort to provide for them a "suitable" education. The experience he gained in training black intellectual and moral faculties led directly to his most incisive argument in the evolving antislavery campaign. It provided the solid foundation for his pioneering assertion of innate racial equality, and for his attack on racial prejudice as a major prop for inequality.

As W. E. B. DuBois has noted with two-edged perception, "Anthony Benezet and the Friends of Philadelphia have the honor of first recognizing

the fact that the welfare of the State demands the education of Negro children." In fact, Benezet believed that the instruction of all children was the proper concern of the state in its own best interests. It was the universality of his inclusion of the blacks, along with the poor whites and the female young, that made his educational drive so important.²

Probably, one impetus for his early home teaching of free blacks originated in his spontaneous friendships with many of them. His frequent conversations with members of the black community on the streets and in the market place confirmed his faith in the brotherhood of all mankind. Certainly he saw no reason to deny his black friends the same opportunities for spiritual and intellectual growth that he believed so important for his white students. He summed up the reasons for educating blacks in these words:

Having observed the many disadvantages these afflicted people labor under in point of education and otherwise, a tender care has taken place to promote their instruction in school learning, and also their religious and temporal welfare, in order to qualify them for becoming reputable members of society.³

The few earlier attempts than Anthony Benezet's to instruct Negroes had been mainly religious, oriented toward "saving souls" and using Scripture to regulate moral behavior. William Edmundson, traveling companion of George Fox in the New World, had argued in the late seventeenth century that the instruction of blacks in Christian precepts would help maintain slavery, rather than destroy it. And somewhat later, evangelist George Whitefield insisted that religious training was quite useful for the control of slaves, who should be taught "to obey their masters" as part of the "Christianizing" process.⁴

But even these arguments for religious education met with increasing hostility in the eighteenth century. There was a widespread belief that only heathens could be enslaved in the first place, with a disquieting corollary that once slaves were converted to Christianity, they should be freed. In practice, a process of this kind would surely subvert the whole profitable development of the slave system. If only non-Christians could be slaves, religious instruction was tantamount to inviting rebellion. And there was the ever present fear that literate slaves might find more incendiary reading material than the specified Scriptures to guide their actions.⁵

Considering the widespread hostility to the education of blacks, it is not surprising that George Whitefield's projected Christian school for Negroes was a total failure. Whitefield, a friend of the Benezet family, never objected to slavery. He believed that slaves should be taught obedience to Scriptural commands, as a means of disciplining them into a more efficient work force without the use of brutal coercion. In 1740, the same year that Mr. Bolton was arraigned in Philadelphia for teaching black children, Whitefield purchased 5,000 acres of land at the forks of the Delaware River. There, on a site called Nazareth, he planned to build his training school. He worked closely with John Stephen Benezet, who had been his friend and host during preaching tours in the Philadelphia area. The elder Benezet served as manager for the school project, but the undertaking failed to attract sufficient capital to succeed. In addition, the first wave of missionary teacher-builders at Nazareth confronted serious hostilities from local Indians who objected to yet another invasion of their lands by white settlers. After a few

months, the major financial backer, William Seward, died, and the project was abandoned.⁶

The failure of Whitefield's project was of course known to Anthony Benezet because of his father's deep involvement in it. But Anthony and Whitefield, who were nearly the same age and had known each other from their youth in England, had serious differences of opinion in at least two areas. For one thing, Benezet disliked the evangelist's "enthusiasm," or zealous, emotional brand of proselytizing Christianity, and apparently did not support the evangelistic services Whitefield held in Philadelphia. And Whitefield's willingness to propagate slavery, even a benevolent kind, was increasingly disturbing to Benezet, and created the most serious barrier to their continuing friendship.⁷

Whitefield, still stinging from the collapse of his Nazareth plans, announced in 1741 that slave labor would be necessary for the success of his newest educational project--the "Bethesda" Orphan House on a 640 acre plantation near Savannah, Georgia. He defended his position with the statement that he would "make their lives comfortable, and lay a foundation for breeding up their posterity in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Whitefield was a key figure in the official decision to allow slavery in Georgia, where it had earlier been outlawed. He brought in a large number of slaves to cultivate the rice and flax crops for Bethesda as soon as the changed law made it possible. Nevertheless, Benezet apparently felt that Whitefield would eventually be converted to the antislavery cause and free his "property." But the evangelist died in 1770 and willed the slaves to his patroness, the Lady Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, rather than emancipating them. Benezet

could no longer restrain his anguish. He wrote Lady Huntingdon a long letter urging her to free the slaves as a Christian duty. She replied that she intended to do so, but the Revolution intervened before any action was taken, and the slaves continued to be held at Bethesda as part of the Countess' estate until after 1784.⁸

The failure of both Whitefield's Nazareth project and Mr. Bolton's school probably served as a caution to Anthony Benezet in his own desire to found a free school for the black children of Philadelphia. He began his teaching quietly at home, without seeking outside financial support of any kind, rather than attempting to start a full-fledged school at first. He understood the highly controversial nature of his actions, and he had no desire to provoke overt conflict in the community. He did not write anything about his work until many years later, but he continued for twenty years the unobtrusive evening classes in the same basic subjects that he taught to his white pupils during the daytime.⁹

The home teaching of Philadelphia's free blacks proved to be highly successful, and a source of satisfaction to Benezet. It was evidently one of the topics of conversation he shared with his neighbor, Benjamin Franklin, as their friendship ripened in the early 1750's. In 1757, Franklin traveled to London as agent for the Pennsylvania Assembly. As a result of the good impressions he had received from Benezet's evening classes, he initiated contacts with Bray's Associates, a London philanthropic society. Upon Franklin's recommendation, the Bray group decided to found a school for the instruction of free blacks in Philadelphia. The Associates worked through the Anglican church. Consequently their classes emphasized Bible reading, catechism, and the practical arts--

scarcely the equal of the general curriculum Benezet offered his students. The school opened at Christ Church, beginning in November, 1758, and continued for many years with several interruptions, most notably during and after the Revolution. Three more religious schools were established by the Bray Associates in 1760, at New York City, Williamsburg, Virginia, and New Port, Rhode Island, in the widening circle of influence initiated by the quiet Philadelphia schoolmaster.¹⁰

By 1770, Benezet's patient and effective demonstration of the educability of blacks had convinced several other leading members of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting of the feasibility of a Quaker-sponsored school. As a result of the Society's increasingly strong antislavery testimony, many Friends were preparing their slaves for emancipation. A school could aid the process by providing both vocational training and moral instruction. And there was a growing interest in schools generally because of the possibilities for social indoctrination during a period of revolutionary agitation.

Thus, the socio-political milieu of January, 1770, provided an appropriate setting for Anthony Benezet to offer a far-reaching proposal to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting--the formal establishment of a school for free blacks. His proposal was accepted, and an "Africans' School" became the newest division of the Penn Charter School. According to the minutes, the Africans' School would provide such "religious and literary instruction as would qualify them for the proper enjoyment of freedom, and for becoming useful and worthy citizens."¹² That is, the new school for blacks was organized both for their own benefit and for that of the surrounding society. The pupils' "religious and literary" education would

enable them to be "useful and worthy," and to enjoy being so. Clearly, an element of self-interest motivated the Friends' action, and it co-existed harmoniously with their benevolent idealism.

The Quakers saw their new enterprise as a missionary endeavour, not only to the students but also as an example to other Christian groups. All Friends were urged to support the school in the "hope that in other places a concern of the same kind will be raised, as the good effects of our care become more known and observed." The hope was not disappointed, for the fear of a large class of undisciplined free blacks existed in white society throughout the colonies.¹³

At the time schoolmaster in the Friends' girls' school, Anthony Benezet regularly attended sessions of the Overseers' "Committee on the School for Africans." He seems to have been an ex-officio member and prestigious consultant, as well as a regular contributor of funds. In any case, he played an important part in policy-making decisions of the Committee throughout the remainder of his life.¹⁴

The first class opened on June 28, 1770, in a large rented room on Pear Street, "over the potash works." Twenty two pupils, half of them girls and half boys, attended class the first day, and the student body increased to thirty six within the next two months. The earliest students were mostly children of assorted ages, but later, "many cases occurred of men and women far advanced in life, attending,...often at great personal sacrifice." Very young students had to be excluded early, however. In October, 1770, the decision was made not to admit any more children under six years of age. A similar rule was operative in the parallel schools for white children. The rented upstairs room proved

unsatisfactory, and in 1773, a new school house, 32 feet by 18 feet, was constructed on the lot next to the Quaker Alms House on Walnut and Fourth Streets. Care was taken to build a fence between the two buildings so as "not to incommode the habitations of the poor Friends."¹⁵

Not only were black children taught separately from whites, but they were also treated differently, in that the sexes were mixed in the classroom, a practice not approved for white children. Benezet's views on this situation in the new school are unknown, but it may be that he was forced into concessions on these points in order to obtain approval for the Africans' School at all.¹⁶

The curriculum bore the same practical stamp that characterized Benezet's other classes. All the students studied English reading, writing, and arithmetic. The girls learned sewing and knitting from a mistress, while the boys went on to more advanced academic work. The reading and writing was undoubtedly suffused with Christian precepts, as in all the Friends' schools, but no attempt was made to limit reading to religious maxims. A French visitor to the school many years later described a curriculum substantially unchanged. And he was particularly impressed with the effect of the instruction on the demeanor of female pupils. "The black girls," he wrote, "have the appearance of decency, attention, and submission. It is a nursery of good servants and virtuous housekeepers."¹⁷ Benezet would have added that the school had demonstrated, too, the high innate moral and mental abilities of its students, who were worthy of their freedom, in part because they had learned self-discipline.

All the Quaker schools faced a series of difficult problems during the revolutionary 1770's. Although the Africans' School became a relatively popular object of Philadelphia Friends' philanthropy, there were numerous occasions when income from subscriptions and legacies failed to cover necessary expenditures. Two leading supporters of the school, Daniel Stanton and Joseph Hilburn, died in 1771, leaving substantial bequests to the school. The gifts made possible a new building that was completed in 1773. But funds for day to day operation became increasingly scarce with the outbreak of war. By 1777, the cryptic aside "to be paid when in cash" appeared frequently alongside authorizations for expenditures, and payment of teacher's salaries often fell behind. Rampant inflation meant that many of the Friends' subscriptions, pledged earlier in paper currency, helped little in the crisis. Collecting committees were appointed and exhorted by the Overseers to "renewed diligence" and "greater exertion," to keep the school in operation.¹⁸

The securing of qualified teachers became a major problem for the school, as well. Benezet insisted from the first that "teachers employed should be persons interested in the real well-doing of the scholars," in his mind a far more important qualification for good teaching than being "highly learned."¹⁹ But most teachers, however well qualified in a religious sense, had economic needs that could not be totally ignored. Few could afford not to know when, or even whether, they would be paid for their services.

When Moles Patterson was hired to teach the first classes for eighty pounds annually, the Overseers' minutes recorded that

the salary to the master was higher than we should have agreed to, if we could have engaged one that we thought suitable, on easier terms, or if a mistress capable of the service, could have been procured, but neither at the time offering...

But even the salary which the committee considered extravagant was apparently insufficient for Patterson, who resigned before his one year contract was out. Of his account, the Overseers noted that "some of the articles appear to be overcharged." Patterson's wife, Ann, then took over the school on a temporary basis. She soon proved herself an extremely capable teacher, according to the minutes. But she refused the Board's offer of a permanent position at forty pounds annually, one half the salary her husband had received for precisely the same responsibilities. The Overseers then hired a schoolmaster who died within a few months of assuming the position. The school was forced to close for six weeks until a replacement could be found.²⁰

Eventually a young man named David Estaugh was hired "on trial." Estaugh was an apprentice of Benezet's who was preparing to be a teacher. Classes reopened in April, 1773. During this period, Benezet himself was frantically busy with his first major antislavery petitioning campaign which he was conducting simultaneously in England and the colonies, in addition to his regular girls' school responsibilities in the mornings. Nevertheless, seeing the precarious situation in the black school, he agreed to attend classes there daily to help the inexperienced Estaugh with his new duties. But by the end of the year, the young man had found "the employment too heavy, [and] he chose to resign it."²¹

An older and more experienced teacher, Jacob Lehre, was next in the procession. Benezet greeted his arrival with relief, and expressed

satisfaction with Lehre's religious dedication. The new master found the school deficient in the necessary books and supplies. His complaint to the Overseers resulted in the immediate procuring of Testaments, spelling books, and primers to replace the old ones, now "much torn and abused."²²

But Lehre's efficiency in supplying his classroom with books, and his religious dedication, were not sufficient to attract and keep enough interested pupils at their desks. During his tenure, the problem of attendance became acute. Although a total of 250 black students received elementary instruction between 1770 and 1775, attendance had been falling off since Lehre took over at the end of 1773. By January, 1775, only nine pupils were regularly in class. Deeply concerned, the Overseers decided to visit all the parents and guardians of the children enrolled to encourage better attendance, and if necessary, to admit poor white children in order to fill up the classroom. Both steps were actually taken, and by April, forty black and six white children regularly took their places under Lehre's tutelage, at least temporarily.²³

There were several reasons for the dramatic shifts in attendance patterns at the school. Officially the Overseers blamed the pupils themselves for "their neglect," which had resulted in "their not improving so much as we expected." But Benezet, sensitive to the environmental factors working against the black students, saw the problem in a different light. These children, like the poor whites, were subject to various demands on their time, which they could not control, he noted. Often they were required to work to help support their own families, or to serve in homes where they were apprenticed. Frequently they received

little encouragement, or even met active opposition, to attending classes. In addition, at times the schoolmasters had fallen below the standards of good teaching expected of them, and consequently student interest lagged.²⁴

By April, 1776, the aging Lehre had to be requested "to seek employment more likely to suit him" elsewhere. The attendance problem had become acute again, despite combined efforts of many black parents and visiting Overseers. He was finally dismissed in December, 1776, and the school closed again briefly until a suitable teacher could be found.²⁵

The report sent to Monthly Meeting the following February constituted both a revised statement of the goals set for the Africans' school by its sponsors, and an urgent plea for stronger financial backing in the face of continuing difficulties.

We are, after upwards of seven years experience, confirmed in believing that by a religious care to discharge our duty towards these long oppressed people, they may receive much benefit, and the increasing concern that appears to restore them to their right to liberty, encourages us to hope that Friends in general will be more and more united in a faithful fulfilling of their trust, by instructing them in necessary learning, and the ways and means of a livelihood suitable to their stations.²⁶

The Overseers' specific emphasis on "ways and means of a livelihood," was new to their stated goals for black education, but the idea behind it was not. The earlier goal of creating "useful and worthy citizens" covered the vocational ideal. The new urgency felt by the Committee justified the more precise statement--it was a language all prospective donors could understand. More and more slaves were being emancipated in Philadelphia, many by masters who fled the country. A generation of free blacks left untrained for any income-producing vocation could only

mean future social disturbances and endless calls for charity donations. And the further phrase, "suitable to their stations," was clearly understood in the eighteenth century as an assurance of firmly delimited social and economic boundaries beyond which students were not expected to aspire. The black school was presented as a prudent investment for Quakers caught up in the revolutionary upheaval.

The February subscription drive was successful, and the school reopened almost immediately with John Houghton as schoolmaster. But his five year tenure was a difficult one, too, in many ways. Houghton was not a young man, and his failing health became a major problem. In addition, the Revolution created at times nearly insurmountable financial and logistical difficulties. By 1781, the Overseers reported a deficit of seventy four pounds, much of which was due in uncollectable subscriptions. The school's minutes recorded that "a part of this period was remarkable for commotion, and contending armies taking, evacuating, and repossessing this city; that schools...were generally suspended for a time." Shortages of all kinds plagued the classroom. Yet despite the confusion, Friends continued to superintend the black school, and it was, "with some intermission," kept open with a total enrollment of 250 students during the difficult five year span.²⁷

Houghton's health declined further, and the financial situation of the school grew steadily worse during the late war years. The outlook for the school's survival was indeed poor by March of 1781, when Benezet wrote of his concern and his proposed remedy to a close friend:

The education of the poor blacks...has been so much the object of my consideration that I solicited to be appointed master of the School we have for a long time maintained for

their education; notwithstanding that situation would have been less profitable or in the eyes of most people less honorable than the school I now attend; but my friends, perhaps from a fear the service would be too arduous or some other cause put me by. If the place be vacant I shall renew my application, for it has been indeed a matter of concern to me.²⁸

During the following year, Benezet struggled with mounting difficulties to keep the school in operation. Finally, Houghton resigned. The Board, no doubt wearied with Benezet's repeated pleas, and unable to find another replacement, accepted his offer to take over the teaching. Despite the tremendous inflation of the war years, Benezet accepted the same salary that Moles Patterson had found insufficient twelve years earlier. In a concession to his age and "infirm" constitution, he received permission to hold the classes in his home, with a small allowance provided for rental. Yet he carried on his last great burst of anti-slavery work during these same years. He also made regular visits to his pupils' homes, "in order to excite scholars to a diligent attendance."²⁹ If he was aware that his firm take-over of the school at a critical juncture kept it from being abandoned by the Society, he did not mention the fact. But his action proved to be the turning point, and from that time onward the black school prospered and grew.

Along with his concern for the formal education of as many of Philadelphia's free blacks as possible, Benezet was keenly interested in the situation of young black apprentices during the same period. He believed that those in urban areas needed protection, both from the inevitable corruption of city life, and from abuse by unthinking or tyrannical masters. In a letter dealing with the matter of freed slaves among Quakers, he recommended apprenticing young black boys in the homes

of rural Friends.

I am very averse to placing [them] in this city except it be to some of the low trades, shoemaking; to place them for menial service in the kitchen or stable I refuse to be concerned, as from the leisure they have, and conversation of servants, etc., they are mostly corrupted.

In short, if they were bound out in the city at all, it should only be to learn semi-skilled trades. There was no suggestion here, however, that some might be trained in the "higher" trades of commerce or the professions. Benezet felt that apprentices, "if pretty well grown," should be paid "a sufficient compensation for their service." They should be protected from exploitation and channeled into "suitable" trades. But unfortunately, he had observed a "backwardness of Friends among us to promote the welfare of the blacks except where there was a prospect of advantage to themselves."³⁰ The comment was a recurring counterpoint theme in his endless attempt to orchestrate the Africans harmoniously into the American composition. Benezet was genuinely concerned for the moral and physical well-being of the young freedmen themselves, and this concern underlay his feeling that they should be placed with rural families when possible rather than in the city. He shared the utopian vision of his day--an agricultural paradise where pious family life could be combined with healthful outdoor work to produce virtuous citizens, of whatever race. This goal, rather than any desire to get rid of Philadelphia's young black population, apparently motivated his thinking and recommendations on the matter.

Benezet instructed daily classes averaging between fifteen and thirty five pupils, most of whom made acceptable progress in their studies. He seems to have been given complete control of the school beginning in

June, 1782. The Board of Overseers did not hold any official meetings during his tenure, apparently entrusting the entire operation to Benezet's experienced care.³¹

But his health, too, was deteriorating and he seemed increasingly aware of the delicate nature of his own mortality. His letters of this period suggest that he deliberately willed to live on after 1780 primarily as a result of urgent inner promptings of the "Divine Architect" who maintained "some deep purpose" for his "human frame." He began making very specific plans, "in case of my demise," for perpetuating the work in behalf of the "oppressed Africans." By October of 1781, he had written that "time and age press close upon me....the world with its fugitive being and false appearance passeth swiftly away, and it's he alone who doeth the will of God who will abide." The divine will at that point he perceived to be a mandate to take over the precarious fortunes of the black school. The work became the "deep purpose" for which he remained tied to the earth. But by summer of 1783, the old desire for peaceful repose was upon him again, "the most earnest longing of my mind," he wrote. Still, "necessary action seems continually presenting, which I dare not refuse."³² It was the recurring struggle of his life, but especially poignant now, for the repose he sought was permanent. Yet the work was not quite completed; the ideal society still beckoned seductively into the future.

In the last weeks of his life, Benezet laid the foundations for the perpetuation of the Africans' School. He arranged as efficiently as possible for a continuing teaching staff and adequate financing--in the past the two most difficult problems. He composed a letter to the

Overseers urging that his friend and one-time teaching assistant, Joseph Clark, "a person who makes it a principle to do his duty," should succeed him as master of the school. Clark, he wrote, was presently employed in "a more advantageous school," but was interested in assuming the lower-paying position upon Benezet's retirement, "by a desire of doing good to the black people."³³

Benezet went to considerable lengths in securing adequate funds to keep the school operating. The war years had taught him the insufficiency of depending on annual subscription drives and occasional small legacies if the project were to survive permanently. He wrote to leading English Friends and philanthropists, to plead the cause of black education in America and the Philadelphia Africans' School in particular. One of these men, the radical clergyman Thomas Wilson of Bath, responded with a gift of fifty pounds sterling for Benezet's use in establishing the school. He promised more to follow, but his death soon after cut off further donations.³⁴

In his urgency to insure the survival of the school, Benezet took what was for him an unusually rash step. By the end of the Revolution, British Quakers had accumulated a substantial fund earmarked for war relief of American Friends. Since hostilities had ceased, Benezet felt that the money was more urgently needed for other purposes. Thus he decided in August, 1783, to present a proposal to the London Quakers. As he explained to William Dillwyn, the idea was solely his own, "unknown to Friends" in Philadelphia. He requested that the war relief funds be diverted for the "relief and education" of American free blacks. He believed that the request stood little chance of being approved by

Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, whose individual members had vested interests in the fund. But the urgency of the need and his own sense of impending death outweighed for him the principles of group unity and "sense of the meeting" which ordinarily restrained his generous impulses within bounds thought proper by Friends.³⁵

Response to Benezet's plea was delayed, probably due to the "weighty" nature of the discussions it provoked as David Barclay and others on the London Yearly Meeting's subcommittee to oversee the fund deliberated. Three years passed before Barclay sent the committee's contribution of 500 pounds sterling to Philadelphia as a permanent endowment for the Friends' African School.³⁶

Benezet's personal determination to solidify the school's financial basis amounted to more than appeals for funds from others. He arranged to dispose of his own modest estate in a way that would ensure his objective. His will, signed March, 1784, left his estate for the use of his wife, who was "ancient and feeble," until her death. He willed a few small token legacies to certain poor black and Acadian neighbors, relatives, and the "hire-maid." But all the rest was assigned for the perpetual endowment of the school, "to hire and employ a religious-minded person or persons, to teach a number of Negro, mulatto, or Indian children to read, write, arithmetic, plain accounts, needlework, etc." In addition he left his large personal library for the school.³⁷

Sources vary on the amount of the bequest, from 700 pounds to over 2,000, but the latter figure seems to be more accurate. After Joyce's death from a stroke on July 19, 1786, Friends invested the Benezet legacy in "ground rents," which by 1800 were returning an annual

income of nearly 200 pounds to the school's coffers--its main source of support.³⁸ With the addition of the 500 pound gift from London Friends, solicited earlier by Benezet, the endowment made possible a substantial increase in the size of the school and its facilities. Two teachers rather than one were hired and a second story constructed atop the school building to accomodate another class. The new addition was used by a mistress "to teach the younger children and girls," while on the lower floor, a master handled the instruction of "the larger children and grown persons." This division by age marked the beginning of secondary level education for the black males of Philadelphia.³⁹

Benezet saw his role in the permanent establishment of the Africans' School as his crowning achievement in life. In his direct personal service as master of the school from 1782 onward, he had found at last the full satisfaction that signified his arrival at the destination of his life-long quest for vocational fulfillment. In his seventieth year he wrote a revealing letter to his old friend, Benjamin Franklin.

I have solicited and obtained the office of teacher of black children and others of that people, an employment which though not attended with so great pecuniary advantages as others might be, yet affords me much satisfaction. I know no station in life I should prefer before it.⁴⁰

He had at last achieved that prized inward assurance of time and talents well spent for the "Family of Mankind." And the early desire for wealth and honor--that great enemy of true brotherhood--had ultimately been subdued.

In 1784, the 35 pupil institution known informally as "Benezet's School" was the only one in Philadelphia for black students. Encouraged by the founder's bequest, Philadelphia Monthly Meeting issued a report

that stressed the need for another similar school in the near future. Two years later, the recommendation became a reality. Sunday Schools for working students, and Night Schools for adults followed rapidly, as did more day schools. By 1837, there were 25 institutions, with a total enrollment of 1,732 black children, operating under various auspices in the city. In the school begun by Benezet alone, over 8,000 pupils had matriculated by 1866. It set the pattern, also, for many other "African Schools" organized throughout the United States.⁴¹

But a far more significant index of Benezet's educational contribution to the black community is found in the records of the known graduates of his school. Several of the school's alumni assumed the leadership of Philadelphia's growing free black population. Former slaves Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, who became co-founders of the Free African Society, had studied there. They organized the Society as a result of their indignation at being forced to sit in a segregated section of St. George's Church in Philadelphia. The two led a walk-out of black worshippers from a Sunday morning service in 1787, and promptly organized their followers into an "ethical and beneficial brotherhood." The formation of the Free African Society, which met for a time in the Quaker School House, was a step of tremendous significance. It constituted the first real social organization among blacks for their own mutual benefit, heralding the beginning of community race pride in a non-sectarian structure. The Free African Society set up Quaker-like marriage ceremonies for its members and attempted ethical guidance of members' lives. The group worked with Benjamin Rush and other abolitionists, but refused to become involved in late eighteenth century colonization

schemes, "apprehending every pious man is a citizen of the whole world"-- echoes of one of Anthony Benezet's favorite classroom maxims!⁴²

Later, Jones founded the first black Episcopal Church in America and served as its rector. Allen was founder and first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. James Forten, another outstanding former student of Benezet's school, became a leading Philadelphia manufacturer and shipper. Along with Jones and Allen, Forten led in the free black petitioning of Congress for repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

As early as 1786, Forten had begun holding classes in his own home to teach the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic to the local children of his race. Forten led opposition to the proposed registration of all Philadelphia blacks in 1813. With Allen he also led the dramatic 1817 mass black protest against the increasingly determined deportation policies of the American Colonization Society. It was Forten, too, who was largely responsible for convincing the nineteenth century abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison of the inhumanity of colonization policy, and encouraged him onward to the unconditional emancipation position.⁴³ Benezet had argued cogently against colonization in his widely read Some Historical Account of Guinea. That book and Benezet's Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies were valued possessions of Forten, possessions that formed an important link with the antebellum abolitionist movement. And finally, Forten helped to launch the Negro Convention Movement, the first interstate black political organization, for "the abolition of slavery in the South and racial discrimination in the North," a full three years before the 1833 founding of the American

Anti-Slavery Society.⁴⁴ In all, the story of Benezet's alumni was a continuing saga of leadership in struggles, victories, defeats, and renewed efforts for racial equality.

Roberts Vaux, Benezet's earliest memorialist and correspondence editor, observed that the success of the Africans' School "powerfully contributed to recommend their race to the notice, and the cause of their sufferings to the investigation, of many persons who had previously held both in contempt." One of the people so impressed was Brissot de Warville, who became one of the leading exponents of racial equality in France, and a founder and president of the Societe des Amis des Noirs. Brissot visited Benezet's School in Philadelphia and later reported:

There appears to be no difference between the powers of memory of a curly head and those with straight hair, and today I have proof of this. I have seen, questioned, and listened to Negro children, some read well, others recited from memory, others did sums quite rapidly.... It is to Benezet that humanity owes this useful establishment.

English Friends, too, began investigations into the rational potential of blacks, on the basis of "some proofs of the Negro children's advancement in learning in this school" in Philadelphia, and their conclusions supplied sound arguments for use in the British antislavery campaign.⁴⁵

As early as 1762, Benezet had announced publically his conviction that "Negroes are generally sensible, humane, and sociable, and that their capacity is as good, and as capable of improvement, as that of white people." He reiterated basically the same observation in his Caution and Warning in 1766.⁴⁶ No fuller statement of this position came from his pen during the next fifteen years, possibly owing to fears of slave insurrection in the South if such clear-cut declarations of

equality were widely publicized. But by 1781, his pamphlet entitled Short Observations on Slavery made a strong third person assertion of full racial equality, based on his own experience:

A. Benezet, teacher of a school...for the instruction of the black children and others of that people, has for many years, had the opportunity of knowing the temper and genius of the Africans; particularly those under his tuition, who have been many, of different ages; and he can with truth and sincerity declare, that he has found among them as great variety of talents, equally capable of improvement, as among a like number of whites.⁴⁷

He knew the time was short for him now. The full truth had to be spoken, whatever the risks, and he was well aware of his own unique qualifications to speak on the matter.

In contrast to his liberal contemporaries, whose attitudes have been aptly described as "a be-kind-to-animals paternalism toward the blacks," Benezet's paternalism aimed to raise the level of free Negroes to their full intellectual, moral and spiritual potential--which he saw as in no way inferior to that of whites. He observed in Some Historical Account that slaves rarely excelled in their mental faculties only because "few of them have any reasonable prospect of any other than a state of slavery." Thus,

though their natural capacities were ever so good, they have neither inducement or opportunity to exert them to advantage. This naturally tends to depress their minds, and sink their spirits into habits of idleness and sloth, which they would... have been free from had they stood upon an equal footing with white people.⁴⁸

Inequality produced the alleged inferiority, which in turn was used to justify the inequality--a self-perpetuating circle that could only be broken by enlightened education.

But it should not be inferred that Benezet's ideas of black intellectual and moral equality necessarily extended to social and economic equality. In the same way that he visualized an ideal social order of harmonious, voluntary, and subordinate relationships between teacher and pupil, master and servant, man and woman, he seemed content to prepare black children for a position of happy, willing, service in "the useful purposes of life." Achievement of high social status and the acquisition of wealth, should not be important, anyway, to rational creatures formed in the divine image, regardless of color. In the light of his own scale of values, then, he placed the blacks on the highest possible plane of equality with their white brethren. It was, again, both a practical and spiritual matter of first things first, and he saw no serious contradictions here.

Following Benezet's unequivocal assertions of mental and moral equality of the races, the subject was intensely discussed in intellectual circles, particularly in the decade following the American Revolution. In 1790, Philadelphian Charles Crawford brought out the second and greatly enlarged edition of his important Observations Upon Negro-Slavery. This new version of his 1784 work contained a long chapter defending blacks' mental capacities. He cited the results of Benezet's school as irrefutable proof of his position, as Brissot and others did in France and England. On the basis of this evidence, however, Crawford went further in his conclusions than Benezet had done, claiming for Negroes "all the rights of men," including intermarriage with whites and the franchise.⁴⁹ He was, of course, far ahead of his time. But the important breakthrough had been made during the years of patient daily lessons in the home and school

of Anthony Benezet. The evidence was in an available for use.

In 1781, Benezet had written that

the notion entertained by some that the blacks are inferior to the whites in their capacities, is vulgar prejudice, founded on the pride or ignorance of their lordly masters.

The assertion of mental and moral equality led directly to an attack on race prejudice, which Benezet both revealed and challenged as a chief support of slavery. The following year, the Overseers of the Africans' School made a significant addition to the stated purposes of their educational efforts. Now, beside "qualifying them for the useful purposes of life," and for the "proper enjoyment of freedom," the committee observed that the training would remove "the prejudices entertained by some to their disadvantage."⁵⁰ Yet underneath their new theoretical commitment to Benezet's concern about race prejudice, most Friends retained the usual racial attitudes of their day. They applauded in the schoolmaster a kind of saintliness that was to be encouraged in one who devoted his life to the education of children. But they found it difficult to act upon his insights in their own daily rounds. Benjamin Rush pronounced Benezet himself "to be free from prejudices of all kinds." And all who knew the Quaker schoolmaster appreciated to some degree his unquestioned personal integrity. But they could not live by his high standards. The Society of Friends found it expedient to continue its patterns of social and even religious discrimination along racial lines in its Meetings and schools.⁵¹ Whether or not Benezet ever directly challenged this arrangement is unknown. He probably felt that the supplying of an adequate education and the abolition of slavery were the most urgent matters, after which a riper time would surely arrive for striking down the barriers to

social intercourse between black and white. The practical moderation, the quiet gradualism of his personality would seem to suggest such a response, at any rate.

Both Benezet's assertion of moral and mental equality, and his attack on race prejudice grew directly out of his pioneering experience in the field of education for blacks. They distinguished him from earlier and contemporary advocates of emancipation who were merely repelled by the brutality and immorality of the master-slave relationship, and who sought to purge the conscience of white society of the most obvious evils. Benezet could no longer accept a theory of society that labeled darker races inferior species, thus justifying their enslavement. He had achieved a breakthrough in social thought that would require many subsequent generations to explore and even begin to implement. He had begun in fact to undermine his own paternalistic world view. But such far-ranging implications were not yet in focus, even in the revolutionary 1770's.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VI

¹Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience (New York, 1970), 308. W. E. B. DuBois, The Philadelphia Negro (Philadelphia, 1899), 13. Jordan, 133.

²Rogert Bruns, "Anthony Benezet's Assertion of Negro Equality," JNH, VLI (1971), 230-238. DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 83. To Samuel Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 232.

³Herbert Aptheker, "The Quakers and Negro Slavery," JNH, XXV (1940), 353, 354. Vaux, 19-22. Benezet, A Short Account of the People Called Quakers (Philadelphia, 1780), 2, 3.

⁴Aptheker, "Quakers," 333. Milton Cantor, "The Image of the Negro in Colonial Literature," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (1963), 454, 455. Also, see Thomas Woody, Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania (New York, 1920), 232.

⁵Cantor, "Image," 454, 455.

⁶See James Wickersham, A History of Education in Pennsylvania (Lancaster, Pa., 1886), 250. Thomas Clarkson, The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade (London, 1808), I, 182; Woody, Early Quaker Education, 232. George Whitefield, Journal (London, 1960), VI, May 7, 1740, 419. Arnold A. Dallimore, George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth Century Revival (London, 1970), I, 594, 595.

⁷Brookes, 96, 97. Soon after John Stephen Benezet moved to Germantown in 1743, and Anthony moved to Philadelphia, Whitefield wrote to Benjamin Franklin that he planned to visit the city soon, but since his "old friend and host, Mr. Benezet," no longer lived there, he did not know where he would stay. Apparently, staying with Anthony Benezet, whose house normally was quite hospitable, was not an alternative for Whitefield at the time.

⁸Stuart C. Henry, George Whitefield, Wayfaring Witness (New York, Nashville, Tenn., 1957), 116, 117. Thomas Gamble, Jr., Bethesda, an Historical Sketch (Savannah, Ga., 1902), 64-76. Lucia Myers, Lady Huntingdon, Friend of the Wesleys (Montgomery, Ala., 1956), 45. Benezet and Whitefield apparently reconciled their friendship in 1770, just before the latter's death. To George Dillwyn, 1770, Brookes, 278, 279.

²Robert Proud, Manuscript History of Philadelphia, 64. Brookes, 45-48. Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), 254. James, 136, 235-237. Night Schools for whites were fairly common in Philadelphia from mid-century on. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 187.

¹⁰Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 254, 255. Richard I. Shelling, "Benjamin Franklin and the Dr. Bray Associates," PMHB, LXIII (1939), 285, 286. Wickersham, Education, 249. Arthur S. Pitt, "Franklin and the Quaker Movement Against Slavery," BFHA, XXXII (1943), 21, 22.

¹¹Woody, Early Quaker Education, 239-241. See below, ch. X.

¹²Woody, Early Quaker Education, 239-246. A Brief Sketch of the Schools for Black People and Their Descendants (Philadelphia, 1867), 3, 16.

¹³Ibid., 11.

¹⁴Minutes of the Africans' School, Dept. of Records, Arch St. Meeting House, Philadelphia, I (1770-1811). Anthony Benezet's name appears regularly with the list of those in attendance, though he was not listed as a member of the committee.

¹⁵Minutes of the Africans' School, 8-18. Brief Sketch, 6-8. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 70, 71.

¹⁶Minutes of PCS, I, 117. On Quakers and racism, see Drake, 16, 17, 120.

¹⁷Minutes of the Africans' School, 3, 4. Brief Sketch, 5, 6. Minutes of PMM, March 30, 1770, 370. Jean Pierre Brissot de Warville, New Travels in America Performed in 1788. Mara Soceanu Vamos, tr., and, Durand Escheverria, ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 157, quoted in Brookes, 51, 52.

¹⁸Woody, Early Quaker Education, 64, 242. Minutes of the Africans' School, 16. Minutes of PMM, Apr. 26, 1771, 444, and Dec. 25, 1772, 145. Brief Sketch, 29, 10.

¹⁹Brief Sketch, 32. Will of Anthony Benezet, in Brookes, 166.

²⁰Minutes of the Africans' School, 12-14, 24, 31, 35, 36.

- 21 Minutes of the Africans' School, 25, 36. Brief Sketch, 10.
- 22 To George Dillwyn, Feb. 15, 1774, Brookes, 317. Minutes of the Africans' School, 37, 28.
- 23 Brief Sketch, 12, 130. DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 84. Minutes of the Africans' School, 48, 49.
- 24 Brief Sketch, 9, 17. Will of Anthony Benezet, in Brookes, 166. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 243.
- 25 Minutes of the Africans' School, 53, 54. Brief Sketch, 12.
- 26 Minutes of the Africans' School, Feb. 22, 1777, 59.
- 27 Minutes of the Africans' School, 54, 55. James Pemberton to John Pemberton, May 14, 1784, Brookes, 458. Brief Sketch, 13, 14. Woody, Early Quaker Education, 242, 243. The British army occupied Philadelphia from Sept., 1777-June, 1778.
- 28 To Robert Pleasants, March 17, 1781, Brookes, 352.
- 29 Minutes of the Africans' School, 62, 63. Brief Sketch, 13-15.
- 30 To Robert Pleasants, Mar. 17, 1781, Brookes, 352, 353.
- 31 Minutes of PMM, Jan. 30, 1784, 128. Edward R. Turner, The Negro in Pennsylvania 1639-1861 (Washington, D.C., 1911); 128-129.
- 32 To George Dillwyn, Aug. 6, 1780, and Aug. 17, 1783, To Morris Birbeck, Oct. 16, 1781, Brookes, 348-358, 363, 400.
- 33 Quoted in Brief Sketch, 15. To G. Dillwyn, Feb. 15, 1774, Brookes, 317. Clark, when faced with the actual proposition after Benezet's death, declined to accept, citing unnamed "circumstances" that made it necessary for him to continue in his present position. Brief Sketch, 17.
- 34 Benezet, Some Historical Account of Guinea (4th ed., London, 1788), xi. Also, Granville Sharp to Benjamin Rush, July 10, 1784, Woods, 24.
- 35 To William Dillwyn, Aug. 20, 1783, Brookes, 282, 283. See James, 236.

³⁶Carter G. Woodson, Education of the Negro Prior to 1861 (New York, 1915), 79. Brief Sketch, 19. See Below, ch. XII. Barclay was a grandson of the famous Quaker theologian of the same name.

³⁷Small, 202. Brief Sketch, 16, 17, 21. Brookes, 167. Pennsylvania Gazette, obituary, May 12, 1784.

³⁸James Pemberton to John Pemberton, May 14, 1784, Brookes, 458, cites the 700 pound figure, as opposed to the Pennsylvania Gazette obituary, May 12, 1784, which claims "above 2,000 pounds." Woody, Early Quaker Education, 245, 246, documents the income from Benezet's bequest. The school also received 117 pounds annually from other sources in the same year.

³⁹Brief Sketch, 18. Wickersham, Education, 250, 251. Benjamin Davies, Some Account of the City of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1794), 65. DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 84.

⁴⁰To Franklin, Mar. 5, 1783, Brookes, 387.

⁴¹"Benezet's School" later became known as the "Raspberry Street School." Woody, Early Quaker Education, 243, 246-261. Wickersham, Education, 251. DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 85. After 1795, the school began instructing some Indian children, also, Woody, 263. Dwight L. Dumond, Antislavery and the Crusade for Freedom in America (Ann Arbor, 1961), 52. Brief Sketch, 29. Jordan, 357, mentions a black school started by Robert Pleasants on his Virginia plantation in 1782. Pleasants and Benezet had corresponded on the matter.

⁴²Jordan, 357. Brief Sketch, 20, 21. Henry J. Cadbury, "Negro Membership in the Society of Friends," JNH, XXI (1936), 154. Also, Henry J. Cadbury, "One Good Friend" FQ (1974), 204. Quote from Free African Society letter to the Negro Union of Newport, R.I., 1788, DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 18-23. William J. Simmons, Men of Mark (New York, 1968), 491, 492. Benezet, too, refused to have anything to do with colonization schemes.

⁴³DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 21-23. Simmons, Men of Mark, 491, 492. Ira Vernon Brown, The Negro in Pennsylvania History (University Park, Pa., 1970), 17. Russell Adams, Great Negroes, Past and Present (3rd ed., Chicago, 1969), 14, 28, 100, 107. Esther Morris Douty, Forten the Sailmaker (Chicago, 1968), 13-20, 144, 154, records Forten's experiences in Benezet's school in 1774-1775, and the schoolmaster's assistance in finding a suitable apprenticeship for the lad after his father died. On Forten and Garrison, see Douty, 53, 54, 154. Also, William Lloyd Garrison, Thoughts on African Colonization (Boston, 1832), II, 9, 10; and Walter M. Merrill, ed., The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), I, 196, 197.

⁴⁴Douty, Forten, 53, 54. Some Historical Account, 116. Caution and Warning (Philadelphia, 1766). Ray Allen Billington, "James Forten, Forgotten Abolitionist," Negro History Bulletin (1949), 1-6. Adams, Great Negroes, 107.

⁴⁵Vaux, 29. Brissot, New Travels, Letter XIX, 217, 218. Some Historical Account, xi. One student whose neat handwriting was sent to London, was James Forten, according to Douty, Forten, 13.

⁴⁶A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes (Philadelphia, 1762), 8; Caution and Warning, 12.

⁴⁷Short Observations on Slavery (Philadelphia, 1781), 11, 12.

⁴⁸Bruns, "Anthony Benezet's Assertion," 232. Some Historical Account, 112.

⁴⁹See Jordan, 446, for evidence of extensive discussion of this subject, and Benezet's influence. Crawford, (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1790), 20-32, 117, 118. On Crawford himself see Lewis Leary, "Charles Crawford: Forgotten Poet of Early Philadelphia," PMHB, LXXXIII (1959), 293-306.

⁵⁰Benezet, Short Observations, 11, 12. Quoted in Brief Sketch, 14.

⁵¹See Drake, Quakers and Slavery, 120, 121. Rush to Granville Sharp, May 13, 1774, Woods, 5.

CHAPTER VII

HUMANITARIANISM AND THE ECONOMIC REALITIES

Benjamin Rush once described the humanitarianism of his friend Anthony Benezet in a few simple, perceptive sentences.

His soul was alive to the temporal and spiritual interests of all mankind. He seemed to possess a species of Quixotism in acts of piety and benevolence. He embraced all mankind in the circle of his love. Indians and Africans were as dear to him as the citizens of Pennsylvania.¹

But the nature and significance of Benezet's service to his fellow man, was in fact far more complex than Rush and others among his contemporaries could have realized. Responding with his Quaker faith to real needs created by the colonial wars and the rise of new economic forces, Benezet developed a social critique and activism of universal dimensions.

Benezet's vision of the ideal society lay at the heart of his charitable activities. His conception of true Christian community involved no new institutions, no fundamental change in the social order, but a revolution of sentiments. In this world, all affairs, of society, of business, of family, would be guided by benevolence and a gentle paternalism. All people would share as brothers and sisters in a just, voluntary distribution of wealth, according to their needs. These needs varied, of course, in relation to a person's "station in life." And the level of that station was a matter best left to the will of God, the Father of mankind. All members of the universal human brotherhood shared an equality of social responsibility within a stable social hierarchy. People defined as dependent members of the community--children,

blacks, women, the poor and the aged--needed the benign oversight, care, and instruction of wise men. This guidance could best be provided in the individual family and reinforced by churches (Meetings), schools, and the state. All adults should pursue a personally satisfying "suitable calling," serviceable to society and appropriate to their sex and socio-economic background. Life in this ideal community would be characterized by regularity, simplicity, a cooperative spirit, and a high moral tone. All of society's institutions should work together in providing necessary services such as health care, poor relief, the settlement of disputes, and the education of children for the public good. Freedom from brutal coercion, combined with the proper training of youthful and dependent citizens in self-discipline, would lead directly to the ideal of universal voluntary service for the family of mankind.

The vision was not new with Anthony Benezet in his time. Rather, it represented the logical conjunction of Enlightenment thought with the earlier Protestant social theory of Calvinism. It also involved the practical needs of a nascent capitalism to create and train a dependable work force. But Benezet was among the first of the American social critics to see that the ideal was not working--that the City of Brotherly Love was fast becoming at mid century a disorderly conglomeration of acquisitive entrepreneurs whose selfish, competitive interests were diametrically opposed to those of the weaker and less aggressive members of the indigent classes. He warned sternly that the material interests of the private family were becoming paramount, to the detriment of the public welfare and the happiness of the family of man. Only disaster could result from such perversion. "If Mankind are indeed

brethren," he asked, "can it be agreeable to the good Father of the family, that one should engross so much, and employ it to feed the corruptions of his offspring; while others are under such manifest disadvantage for want of help?" He believed that such greed was clearly evil, and resulted in the oppression of the poor. In addition, "when the cup of iniquity is full, must not the inevitable consequence be, the pouring forth the judgments of God upon the oppressors?" he inquired in Some Historical Account of Guinea. He became convinced that this selfish tribal acquisitiveness led directly to the havoc of wars, poverty, slavery and general social chaos.²

Such criticism in his adopted Philadelphia placed him squarely in the dilemma of the Pennsylvania Quakers, whose increasing riches and power seemed to make the Christian Commonwealth more distant than ever. With a determination born of his conviction that ideas demand action, he began in the 1750's to insist that the more fortunate inhabitants of the community contribute liberally to the care of the indigent and downtrodden victims of Philadelphia's frantic rush for individual wealth. He was not alone in his efforts. Other "strict Quakers" like his friends Israel, John, and James Pemberton, John Woolman, John Reynell, and John Churchman worked with him in many of the benevolent projects. And his non-Quaker friends like Benjamin Franklin and later, Dr. Benjamin Rush, joined also in the growing benevolent movement. But Benezet, whom Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh have aptly called "America's first great humanitarian reformer," by his example and influence led the others in a variety of quiet but important ways.³

By 1756 he had given up his own business interests and at least

half of his teaching load in order to devote himself more fully to the "welfare of mankind." From that time on he remained unencumbered with the distractions of the private commercial pursuits followed by most of his Quaker friends, and free, too, from the intense political involvements of a Franklin or a Rush. Humanitarianism became his full time preoccupation, of which the morning hours in the classroom constituted an integral part. Yet his contributions in the leadership of the movement would have been seriously curtailed had it not been for the spectacular economic success of his Philadelphia neighbors whose financial support undergirded his campaigns. By the time of the Revolution, Philadelphia had become the world capital of the humanitarian movement, with Anthony Benezet outstanding among those responsible.⁴

To understand Benezet's role in awakening his adopted city to the needs of its unfortunate lower economic strata, his personal background must be recalled. Benezet's own family history had been one of traumatic upheavals--fluctuating social, economic and geographical circumstances on a background of intense religious idealism. His personal experience had encompassed the miseries of being poor, of being an alien refugee in a strange land, of being persecuted for conscience's sake.⁵ He knew that the needs of the homeless and poverty stricken were real ones, and were not necessarily occasioned by their own slothfulness or sinful natures. There were, indeed, deplorable causes for the degrading conditions, but these were to be found in the unreasonable greed of the larger society, and were within the powers of that same society to correct. The compassionate response of Benezet to human suffering he saw about him had, then, deep roots in his own

personal pilgrimage through life. By mid century he no longer suffered personally from such misfortunes. He had found a stable family life within the Quaker fellowship, and a secure place for himself as respected schoolmaster in the community. But his memory was keen.

From the time of their arrival in Philadelphia, both Benezets had been actively engaged in the relief work of Quakers among their own small percentage of poor people--widows, orphans, the diseased and the aged. This kind of communal charity was traditional among Friends, who had consistently cared for their own since the earliest days of persecution in seventeenth century England. By 1750, the city had a rapidly growing population of non-Quaker indigents, many of them recent immigrants. Benezet was concerned about these people, whose needs were generally ignored by a larger society that felt no responsibility for them. He believed that the decline of a communal model for mutual help was seriously undermining social harmony. His response was to join a few other community leaders in organizing non-sectarian benevolent associations. The Pennsylvania Hospital was the first of these early projects.⁶

With the outbreak of hostilities in October, 1755, just prior to the Seven Years' War, urgent new needs for benevolence arose. Frontier settlers of many religious faiths streamed South and East toward Philadelphia, seeking protection from Indian raids, and leaving fall harvests, homes, and even winter clothes behind in their haste. "Christian Indians," some of them Moravian converts of Benezet's sisters and their missionary husbands, also fled the outlying danger spots. All these refugees stood in need of food and shelter. In November, 454 French Catholic Acadians,

forcibly uprooted from their Nova Scotia farms by a suspicious British ministry, were landed in Philadelphia. Homeless and destitute, they were political, cultural and religious aliens in a city already profoundly alarmed by the disorders of border war.⁷ The English, Indian and French refugees were by and large innocent victims of nations blundering into war. They looked to Philadelphians for aid in their predicament.

In addition to memories of his own personal experiences and the obvious needs of the war victims, a third motivation propelled Benezet's sudden entry into the front ranks of colonial humanitarianism. The Society of Friends was undergoing a profound religious awakening from a long slumber. Material success and the exercise of political power had taken a steadily heavier toll of the spiritual vitality characteristic of seventeenth century settlers in Pennsylvania. In addition, growing pressure on the Assembly to prepare for war and the defense of the frontier meant that some of the leading Quaker politicians, the "strict" pacifist members of the legislature, had to resign their positions in 1756. Accustomed to the exercise of power, these men turned their energies to religious and benevolent matters, and other forms of extra-governmental influence on public affairs.⁸

A series of visiting Quaker ministers from England in the mid fifties called on their colonial colleagues to rededicate their lives and fortunes to the service of God and the Meeting. The advice was timely. The younger generation seemed inclined to turn away completely from their inherited faith. Waves of German, Irish and Scotch Irish immigrants had diluted the control of old Quaker families, and threatened

to undermine social order with their rowdy, impious ways. Anglicans and Presbyterians steadily increased their power in the Assembly. Wars and frontier unrest threatened both the prosperity and the tranquility of Province and Meeting alike. And worst of all, in the eyes of many, some of the "weightiest" Quakers--those most successful in government and business--seemed to turn their backs on their sect's commitment to peace principles.⁹ These unsettling conditions resulted in a powerful new emphasis on spiritual matters, led by the ministers and elders of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and the English visitors.¹⁰

The faith to which Quakers were so firmly recalled was based on a fundamental belief in the direct illumination of every human being by an "inner light" of divine origin. The inner light doctrine had subversive implications for the tenet of mankind's natural depravity--a position clearly stated by Quaker theologian Robert Barclay in the Apology for the True Christian Divinity, in 1676. Most Friends, more interested in daily living than they were in theological disputation, tended to accept unquestioningly both the inner light message and a vague belief in man's sinful nature. And the Society's general deemphasis on doctrine led away from abstract analysis. In Meeting as well as in personal life, they stressed a few simple "testimonies" as guides and measures for daily existence. According to Quaker historian Frederick Tolles, these testimonies were peace, simplicity, equality, and community--all eminently practical, and potentially revolutionary, principles.¹¹

But by the mid eighteenth century, the testimonies had hardened into religious dogma piously spoken but taken seriously only when convenient. The peace testimony had become the most blatantly prostituted

of all, for it was used to keep dissent out of Meeting. By refusing to deliberate on controversial matters, in the name of peace and unity, Friends often managed to preserve a virtual stasis. But simplicity, too, had become an outward form of dress and "plain speech," while homes, furniture, and daily lives expressed a growing fondness for elegant display. Equality was a nebulous term for the "spiritual" relationship to God, and had little to do with everyday relationships between people. The wealthy Friends were far more influential than those who were poor, and decision making in the Society was almost totally male-dominated. As for community, the concept was meaningful only for members in good standing, who did indeed preserve the tradition of helping one another.¹²

Thus as Friends began to seek out the full meaning of their formal religious profession early in the 1750's, they discovered, not a dynamic Society, but a static one, badly in need of regeneration. A deepening understanding of and commitment to the Quaker testimonies led Anthony Benezet into unexpected discoveries and dilemmas. And increasingly after mid century, he called on himself and his fellow members to practice their profession.

By April of 1756, Benezet described a spiritual awakening among Philadelphia Quakers to a friend in England. Despite

the troubles and confusion which for many months past, have surrounded us, and which in some respect, are like to increase,...many of our Friends begin to rouse from that lethargy in which they have too long been plunged, thro' a love of this world.¹³

The Quaker awakening shared some common elements with the evangelical "Great Awakening" of the previous decade. Tolles has traced

the similarities to a common grounding in the doctrine of immediate inspiration. And he observed that "the historical function of both movements in their time was to shift the basis of religious authority from outward belief to inward experience, from intellectual assent to experiential certainty."¹⁴ There was, too, a common austere moral code and a prophetic note in preaching. But if outward belief and intellectual assent assumed less importance to evangelical Protestants in relation to the critical "conversion experience," belief in such theological doctrines as the Trinity, the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and the divinity of Christ was still very much a part of the necessary equipment for salvation.

For the Quakers, on the other hand, the inner light commitment tended sharply away from sudden, emotional conversions, and toward a gradual growth in grace--a practical matter of improving behavior for which doctrinal purity held little relevance. This emphasis on using one's life steadily and effectively for good lay behind Benezet's efforts to serve the family of mankind. By extension, he encouraged Meeting to do the same. He wrote his close friend John Smith, urging a greater concern "in the Society for the promotion of practical Christianity." Christian activism, the expression of benevolence toward fellow men, could cleanse Friends of "that selfishness which is the parent of obduracy of heart."¹⁵

But there was, too, a growing emphasis on quietism, on introspective other-worldliness that counseled withdrawal from active involvement in "matters of the flesh." Two of his closest friends, John Woolman and the English minister Samuel Fothergill, were deeply

committed to quietism. Indeed, Benezet's favorite book was John Everard's Some Gospel Treasures, a sixteenth century work on the practice of inward piety.¹⁶

He deplored the "enthusiasm" of the evangelical preachers and their converts. These zealots displayed, he thought, "a mixed fire in great measure proceeding from the passions of the creature being warmed, ...and even in some I have feared from the melody of their own voice." He himself found it difficult to strike a comfortable balance between the "dangerous snare" presented by an "enthusiastic spirit," on the one hand, and the "allurements of the flesh" on the other. One had to renew one's inner life continually in solitary meditation, and yet go out among the world's people to serve without becoming contaminated by worldliness. He often castigated himself for moving too far to one extreme or the other. But on the whole his periods of activism became increasingly frequent and prolonged, broken less and less often by the depressed, withdrawn times. Yet the tension always remained to serve a generally creative function in his life.¹⁷

Ironically, Benezet's growing dedication to Quaker principles during the fifties resulted in his moving away from a narrow sectarian base for his activities. The Society of Friends as a whole seemed to be turning inward in an effort to buttress its diminishing membership, reclaim its fading spirituality, and protect itself from the encroachments of the outside world.¹⁸ In the same period, Benezet began his outward bound movement. Rather than retreating from the world to help build a private holy community, he increasingly involved himself in efforts to construct an all-inclusive family of mankind.

But some of the most powerful Philadelphia Quakers, such as Israel and James Pemberton, John Reynell, and Abel James, worked with Benezet, and provided most of the financing for projects to aid needy outsiders. Bereft of their official influence in the province and unable to secure Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's formal sponsorship for some of their projects, they founded several socio-political organizations that fell under the jurisdiction of neither church nor state. The Pennsylvania Hospital and the Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians were two of the most important. The wealthy Pembertons and their friends used the new institutions for their own purposes--not strictly benevolent by any means.¹⁹

Benezet was at first quite active in these organizations. But his major efforts were reserved for other charitable activities. He complained of getting little cooperation from his "weighty" friends for his projects to help the destitute but politically unpopular French Acadian exiles, and the poverty-ridden blacks. These outcasts were being ignored by church, state, and now by the new societies. Apparently, he detected mixed motives in some of the organizers, in particular a desire to regain lost political prestige and to profit financially from the benevolent projects. His letter about friends who were very cooperative as long as he worked diligently on their favorite projects, but who turned on him the minute he pointed out "some wrong indulgence," suggests this as a partial explanation for his increasingly anti-organizational approach to benevolence. He was unable to control the powerful personalities and complex motivations of his prestigious Quakers neighbors. Yet he needed their wealth and influence to help ease sufferings of the poor.²⁰

During the early fifties Benezet began developing his close personal friendships with non-Quakers. From his neighbor, Benjamin Franklin, he gained a greater, more universal perspective on benevolence. Later, after the young physician Benjamin Rush set up his practice in Philadelphia in 1769, Benezet found stimulating companionship in his lively mind and spirit. He discovered that his new friends and neighbors, in spite of their militaristic views, were men he could respect in many ways. They shared with him a wide spectrum of humanitarian interests.²¹

By the 1770's, several French diplomats and literary figures living temporarily in Philadelphia were exchanging ideas and books with their exiled countryman. Benezet discussed with them the problems of war and slavery, and learned all he could about progress in science, philosophy and the humanities in France. One typical visit, with Major General François Jean Chastellux, took place in 1780. The general later wrote that, while other citizens were preoccupied with the "noise of arms," and allowed "the amor patriae" to prevail over benevolent considerations, Benezet inquired about newly discovered French methods of resuscitating drowned persons. Chastellux promised to send him some of the new equipment at the earliest possible date.²²

The motivating factors that fueled Benezet's three decade humanitarian drive, then, can be summarized briefly. First, his own personal and family history of early poverty, of religious oppression, and of the alien refugee experience, lingered on in his memory as a significant base for empathy with other sufferers. Then the outbreak of the Seven Years' War resulted in thousands of uprooted people with real needs

very similar to those he remembered. The war also threatened to destroy or at least seriously to damage the relatively stable, harmonious society of Philadelphia, in which he had found a haven. In addition, the Quaker faith, with its radical Protestant roots provided a congenial theory of human brotherhood. And finally, reinforcing and perpetuating the other factors, the new and invigorating Enlightenment natural rights philosophy offered an intellectual framework broad enough to encompass the most far reaching humanitarian concepts and practices. Thus the energetic dedication of Benezet to solving the human problems of his day seems highly appropriate. The man, the time, the place, all were coordinated for optimum effect.

By 1750 Benezet had undertaken the instruction of black students of varied religious persuasions in his home. His first steps into non-Quaker humanitarian activity beyond his own doorstep began in 1751, about the time of his father's death. In that year, the popular Philadelphia physician and surgeon, Dr. Thomas Bond, approached Benjamin Franklin with an idea for a community hospital. Franklin, greatly interested, began publishing articles in the Pennsylvania Gazette to arouse interest in the project, and urged other public-spirited persons to support it. By May, numerous leading Philadelphians had signed a petition to the Assembly, and over 2,000 pounds had been privately subscribed for the project. The legislators accordingly authorized the founding of the first general hospital in America, "for the relief of the sick poor ...and for the reception and cure of lunatics."²³ The names of Anthony Benezet and many other Friends were among the 36 listed as voting contributors present at the first general meeting of the hospital corporation.

These members, all of whom had donated ten pounds or more, elected a twelve man Board of Managers to administer the project. The Board was non-sectarian, including non-Quakers Franklin and Dr. Bond, as well as "weighty" Friends Israel Pemberton, Jr., and John Reynell. Membership crossed political boundaries as well as religious ones.²⁴

But hospital finances were controlled by the Quakers. John Reynell, a prominent Philadelphia merchant, was elected treasurer by the Friendly majority. And the first 1,000 pounds in the treasurer's hands were promptly borrowed by James and Israel Pemberton, who "took the money merely as a means to further contribute to the Hospital's interest," according to the minutes of the Board. The other managers may have been somewhat skeptical of this arrangement, as they required Reynell, the Pembertons' brother-in-law, to put up security of 1,000 pounds "for the faithful performance of his office." They also stipulated that the Pemberton brothers would be required to "repay any part of it sooner than the allotted time, should it be wanted to make provision for the Building."²⁵ No records remain of the particulars in this arrangement--specifically, what interest, if any, the Pembertons paid. But one noteworthy element of the transaction is the easy translation of benevolent funds into finance capital.

Israel Pemberton, Jr., with whom Anthony Benezet worked closely for many years, exemplified in his life the Pennsylvania Quakers' problem of maintaining public influence while simultaneously relinquishing political authority. Pemberton was an aggressive and successful merchant-shipper, a grandson of one of Pennsylvania's most influential settlers, and himself a leading figure in the province and in the Society of Friends.

He had been elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1750, but was defeated in a bid for reelection in the next year. At this point he turned his formidable energies to lobbying and various civic and benevolent projects, while continuing to pursue his religious and business activities. He served as chairman of the Quaker Overseers of the Public Schools for many years. The leading role he played in the Pennsylvania Hospital was one expression of his zeal for organizing and influencing public events outside of official government channels.²⁶

Close to Benezet in age, religious profession, active temperament, and interests in benevolence and education, Pemberton was yet in some ways a polar opposite to the gentle schoolmaster. Benezet deplored the blatant acquisitiveness of his colleague and friend, and upbraided him for it, although he found Pemberton's financial backing indispensable. And Pemberton, of course, found Benezet's moralistic criticisms grossly distasteful, complaining, "It's tiresome to hear Anthony Benezet always saying the same thing."²⁷ But despite their differences, the two worked effectively together for nearly four decades in Philadelphia. Benezet's highly sensitive conscience provided a stimulus to Pemberton's benevolent impulses, and the businessman provided the practical means to carry out many of the schoolmaster's idealistic proposals.

When the Pennsylvania Hospital was founded, the Quaker party was under intense political fire for its refusal to vote taxes for military defense of the frontier. Accused of being penurious and callous to the dangers faced by rural settlers, Friends attempted to prove their willingness to serve the public good. In June, 1752, Governor James Hamilton wrote privately to Proprietor Thomas Penn advising him not to make a

contribution of proprietary land on which to build the hospital. The background information provided by the Governor was a bit biased, but highly instructive:

One particular Society [Friends], by making it a point with their people to subscribe small sums, will have the entire management of it, and are desirous, by the contributions of others, to build a reputation to themselves, without ever having done anything of this kind in conjunction with people of other persuasions [in the past].

It may well be, too, that the hospital's chief founder, Benjamin Franklin, was using the generosity of Friends to establish more firmly his own anti-proprietary political leadership.²⁸

In any event, the new hospital project was a popular success that launched a remarkable half-century of humanitarian endeavors in Philadelphia. By the beginning of Benezet's tenure on the Board in 1757, the hospital project had progressed rapidly. The first quarters, located in a rented house on Market Street, opened to patients in February of 1752. The first outpatient clinic was opened the same year. In 1753, the Managers decided to provide patients with light manual labor, "if only to keep them out of mischief." Evidently women were the main objects of concern here, for the equipment provided consisted of "large and small spinning wheels, and two pairs of cards" for their use. Female patients were required to assist in the nursing care of other patients, and in the housekeeping tasks of the hospital.²⁹ What work men did, if any, was not recorded.

By May, 1755, a parade through the heart of Philadelphia, headed by the Managers and other leading men of the province, marked the laying of a cornerstone for the first permanent building, at Eighth and Spruce

Streets. The following year, in the newly completed East wing, Benezet began his year as a Manager of the hospital. He took his new duties quite seriously, and apparently spent long hours at the hospital with patients and doctors. In 1758, he wrote his friend John Smith a letter that suggests that managers had more than a merely administrative function.

Since I have attended the hospital as one of its managers, I am become so strong by often viewing the wounded patients when dressed by the surgeons, that I think I could assist, if it were needful, in cutting off a man's leg.³⁰

Well before Benezet became a Manager in the hospital, however, he had plunged rather suddenly into a series of other humanitarian activities. In July, 1755, a courier arrived in Philadelphia with the ominous news of General Edward Braddock's defeat by Indians and Frenchmen near Fort Duquesne. Despite repeated warnings of French encroachment and Indian dissatisfaction on the Pennsylvania frontier, the Assembly had remained immobilized on matters of defense. Frenchmen were now in virtual control of the Ohio Valley, and successfully courting Indian allegiance. News of spreading Indian raids began pouring into Philadelphia.³¹

In late October, the Delaware and Shawnee Indians, previously friendly to the British, but unhappy about white settlement on their hunting lands, launched a series of ferocious attacks along the open Pennsylvania frontier. Many families on isolated farms were murdered, captured, or burned out, and the survivors spread panic as they fled. Outlying Scotch-Irish and German settlers suffered the most. A contingent of angry German refugees marched into Philadelphia late in the fall,

drawing their mutilated dead along Market Street to demonstrate their anger at government inaction and to strengthen their demands for protection. Then, late in November, the massacre of fourteen peaceful Moravian missionaries and their children at an outpost at Gnadenhütten in Northampton County resulted in the general desertion of farms and rural communities throughout the province. Terrified refugees inundated the few towns, which were converted into armed camps.³²

From Bethlehem, a major center for fleeing settlers and the few remaining friendly Indians, Moravian Bishop August Spangenberg sent out a desperate plea for help in early December. Spangenberg had assumed responsibility for supplying the immediate needs of 1,000 homeless newcomers who suddenly tripled the town's population. The Bishop had been a close friend and co-worker of Anthony Benezet's father, John Stephen, before his death. He was also well acquainted with the Benezet daughters at least one of whom, Judith, lived at Bethlehem with her Moravian physician husband and two children. Spangenberg knew of Benezet's interests in charitable activities among Friends, and probably was aware, too, of his tendency to discount sectarian prejudices in matters involving human need. He also knew that the Bethlehem community lay under a cloud of official suspicion in Philadelphia, owing to rumors that it harbored a nucleus of French spies and arms smugglers. Thus, rather than seeking aid from a government he doubted would act favorably enough or quickly enough, he sent an urgent message to Anthony Benezet.³³

In December, George Klein, the Moravian conductor of a stage line between Bethlehem and Philadelphia, delivered Spangenberg's plea to Benezet's door. Benezet conferred quickly with a few individual Friends and began "to raise some money from among ourselves for the immediate

relief of such as actually suffer from want of clothing, bedding, etc." With the assistance of Joseph Norris and John Pemberton, Benezet collected about 200 pounds currency, and purchased the requested items.³⁴

Along with the wagon load of supplies, Benezet sent Spangenberg some advice on their distribution. Families having financial resources or relatives in the area should receive only small emergency rations, whereas those who "have no means of procuring themselves necessities" should receive more. Benezet also urged the Bishop to appoint "such tender prudent persons as will have a regard to the particular need" of each recipient, to handle the distribution. He urged discretion, that the Friends' private benevolence might "in no degree prevent or lessen the assistance which you and your distressed neighbors are to receive from the government." The letter concluded with an inventory of supplies en route to Bethlehem--shoes, stockings, blankets, hundreds of yards of warm materials for clothing, etc. The goods probably came from Pemberton's retail dry goods store.³⁵

Two weeks later, Benezet sent off a second wagon of supplies to fill specific needs detailed by George Klein. The letter accompanying this new shipment made it clear that refugee Indians were just as welcome to clothing and supplies as were whites, since some disagreement had arisen at Bethlehem on the matter. Benezet seemed indignant that the question had come up at all. "It never was our intention to deprive the poor Indians of such part of what we have sent as you may think they stood in immediate need of," he explained to Spangenberg. Immediate need, as determined by the Bishop, was the primary criterion for distribution.³⁶

With this shipment, Klein also relayed fifteen pounds "to buy grain for the poor people," and 47 "falling axes of the best sort," in accordance with Spangenberg's request. Benezet felt some apprehension about the axes, and wanted to be sure they would be used for peaceful purposes. He specifically cautioned that "they be given to such persons as will make the best use of them." His meaning was clear, but the actual instructions left much to the Bishop's judgement.³⁷

Almost everyone in Philadelphia knew that Benjamin Franklin, a Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the province, had been sent to Bethlehem and other Northwestern towns only two weeks earlier, to coordinate frontier defenses, and to build forts for military garrisons. Supplies for his expedition had to pass along the fifty five mile long road to Bethlehem, which was only slightly better than a rocky cow path in 1755. Spangenberg's request for the "best sort" of falling axes came shortly after a long and cordial meeting he had with Franklin on December 30, concerning defense for the area. The Commissioner knew Benezet well enough not to request axes for military purposes himself, and in view of Spangenberg's already established communication and supply lines, he may have prudently worked through the Bishop to secure a last-minute need. Certainly such a plan would have been characteristic of Franklin. At any rate, soon after the arrival of the supplies, Commissioner and his party of frontier militia men moved out of Bethlehem with a wagon train and "a special body of axemen...who were to fell the trees" for a fort in Lehigh Gap. The pacifist Quaker who shipped 47 "falling axes" to the frontier, with some uneasiness, may or may not have suspected their possible destination. But he piously hoped they would be used

only to build housing for the needy.³⁸

Aware that his private campaign was inadequate to meet the overwhelming needs at Bethlehem, Benezet took their case to Isaac Norris, Speaker of the Assembly, and a nominal Quaker. He presented Norris with hand copied extracts of letters from Spangenberg and Joseph Powell, another frontier missionary, describing the situation and the specific needs for relief supplies. To strengthen his petition he urged the clergymen to get Benjamin Franklin's certification of the needs, which he wrote, "will doubtless be easily obtained and would remove all the difficulties that might prevent our succeeding." The "difficulties" referred to the bitter animosity toward Quaker pacifists. He also explained that there was a "great demand on the Commissioners for money," since the Assembly had just made an appropriation for frontier relief, and that Franklin's statement should be secured without delay. The certification, when obtained, should be presented in Philadelphia by William Edmonds, Northampton County delegate to the Assembly, "or some other prudent English brother." Anyone of French or German extraction would certainly face difficulties.³⁹

Beyond his immediate concern to relieve the physical sufferings of refugees in midwinter, Benezet considered the long range problems presented by their situation. The Indian attacks were continuing, and in any event, settlers could not return to burned out farms beyond the mountains any time soon. "As it will not be possible to maintain so many people as have taken refuge among you idle," he wrote the Bishop, it will be "absolutely necessary" to get them settled and productive at the earliest possible date, preferably before spring. He suggested

building temporary towns, patterned along New England lines, "in a square, with the town in the middle, by which the inhabitants living together might support and assist one another." There was a strong possibility that certain public spirited "gentlemen who have considerable tracts of land between Bethlehem and the mountains," might be persuaded to offer suitable land for low rents. Such a plan would set a good example for other frontier areas, that might also "be settled in a manner which would be a security" to the already existing towns. The question of whether the refugees would care to be settled again in a precarious buffer zone apparently did not occur to him at this time. Had the question arisen, he most surely would have urged consideration of their views, as he always disliked coercion. But his concern with providing stability and security in a rational, cooperative plan for social order was evident throughout the letter.⁴⁰

Benezet continued his direct private efforts to aid the frontier refugees on a large scale as long as he was needed--until the slower moving organizations of church and state entered upon the work with their vastly greater resources. In the fall of 1756, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting formally organized a "Meeting for Sufferings," a permanent Quaker relief group with executive functions. Benezet was a delegate from his Monthly Meeting, and he worked for many years in this capacity to help shape and administer the Society's benevolent concerns. Among other things he was appointed to the committee that had special responsibility for Quaker refugees, and thus continued some of his previous activities. His committee found temporary Quaker foster homes in Philadelphia for children of refugee Friends who were "conveniently placed...to the relief

of the sufferers and benefit of the children."⁴¹

But the sectarian limits of the Monthly Meeting and the Meeting for Sufferings irritated Benezet. In 1760 he reiterated an earlier request to be relieved of his post as an Overseer of the poor Friends, so that he could devote his charitable energies to others who needed them more. Seeing that he was "very solicitous to be discharged," the Meeting reluctantly granted his petition.⁴² The time thus freed he immediately diverted to the antislavery campaign and the care of his outcast countrymen, the French Acadians.

The Acadians, French-descended farmers known as "the neutrals," had been unceremoniously banished from their lands in Nova Scotia for refusing to sign a British oath of allegiance. Over a thousand of them were scattered among the American colonies in an effort to break up a suspected nucleus of enemy collaborators. Families had been indiscriminately separated, their goods confiscated, and all civil rights suspended as the neutrals were herded aboard ships under crowded and unsanitary conditions. In the fall of 1755, three sloops sailed for Pennsylvania, carrying 454 angry Acadian men, women and children.⁴³

Conditions in Philadelphia were not conducive to a cordial reception for the exiles. Penniless, speaking only French, and Roman Catholic in religion, their arrival coincided with news of another Indian massacre at Lancaster. Distrust and fear of the Catholic French, as the alleged instigators of Indian atrocities, ran high in all sectors of the population. The popular suspicion of the exiles was described in a letter written by Governor Robert Hunter Morris.

The people here,...are very uneasy at the thought of having a number of enemies scattered in the very bowels of the

country, who may go from time to time with intelligence, and join their countrymen now employed against us, or foment some intestine commotion in connection with the Irish and German Catholics, in this province.

The Society of Friends, now caught in heavy political crossfire, did not care to concern itself with the plight of another unpopular group. Yet Anthony Benezet, whom a neighbor later described as "almost their only friend," took on the Acadians' cause.⁴⁴

On November 19, 1755, the Governor announced to his Council the arrival in the harbor of the first sloop from Nova Scotia, with 168 exiles aboard. Armed guards were placed on the ship to prevent a landing, until a decision could be made about the disposition of the unwelcome and unwilling passengers. Then on the 23rd, two more shiploads were ordered to wait "at a convenient distance from town," as the Governor "did not think it safe to permit them to land." The same day, probably because of his French background, reputable standing in the community, and willingness to serve, Benezet was assigned the unpleasant task of going aboard the disease-ridden sloops, "to take account of the numbers of the neutrals and the provisions on board,...and to superintend the victualling [of] them and their guards." He responded quickly, and the next day reported his findings. The Assembly voted "to allow such reasonable expenses" as Benezet might incur in supplying the needs. The Legislators released a portion of the tax money already allocated "for the King's use," a controversial appropriation intended for defense and relief on the frontier. Responsibility for the welfare of the new arrivals was quite willingly turned over to Benezet. The Governor and Council were, in fact, happy to divest themselves of a sticky political problem. And in the Assembly, Franklin's Quaker party found the charity

a conveniently peaceful use of a part of the hotly debated "King's use" taxes.⁴⁵

But the first wave of generosity in the wake of Benezet's report passed quickly after the exiles were finally given permission to land "at the nearest place to the pest house." They had been four months in transit, the last two weeks of which were spent under guard in the Philadelphia harbor. Despite Benezet's pleas, the harbor incarceration might have gone on indefinitely had not the captains of the three sloops demanded the removal of their human cargo.⁴⁶

Upon disembarking, the neutrals discovered that their new home was located in "ancient and miserably inadequate army barracks." Alternatives for care of the indigent in Philadelphia were few. The Pennsylvania Hospital cared temporarily for the poor who were mentally or physically ill, but as yet the new building had not been completed, and the rented quarters were already overcrowded. Infants and children of the indigent were often "bound out" as apprentices, or servants. The almshouse (or "pest house"), also badly overcrowded, accommodated an undifferentiated group of society's dependents. And finally, outright charity, either private, or government sponsored, was the last resort.⁴⁷ None of these solutions seemed satisfactory for so large an influx.

From the eighteenth century religious point of view, poverty was to be expected in the world, and should be relieved by the more fortunate if it became severe or a threat to the social order. It produced no self-conscious criticism of the society in which it existed. The poor were always present as a normal part of the community rather than a danger in it. But the Acadians were not a product of Philadelphia

society; they were a foreign element, and both the size of the group and its enemy-status nationality seemed a clear threat to the natural order of things. It was excessively expensive, and perhaps highly dangerous, to maintain the neutrals, who were described in the local newspapers as "no better than so many scorpions in the bowels of the country."⁴⁸

Thus, the government of Pennsylvania appropriated funds in March, 1756, to disperse the exiles into the outlying counties, so recently depopulated by Indian attacks. The Assembly justified the action by calling it a means "to give them an opportunity of exercising their own labor and industry." The plan was similar to Benezet's earlier proposal for the frontier refugees, but he was not one of the Commissioners named to execute it. He refused, in fact, to participate in a forced dispersal. The Acadians, with at least one candid friend to explain the situation in their own language, had no desire to sacrifice their scalps in a buffer zone around Philadelphia. Nor did they wish to be permanently separated from each other. Most of them stubbornly refused to accept the Assembly's decision. With Benezet's help and encouragement, they countered with a petition requesting their return to their farms in Nova Scotia.⁴⁹

Exasperated by the "ingratitude" of their indigent charges, the Assembly retaliated by calling for the forced "binding out" of all Acadian children, boys up to 21 years of age, and girls to 18. The apprenticed children, in addition to working all day, were to be taught to read and write English and to perform a "reputable and profitable occupation." Furious but helpless, the exiles refused to allow their

children to become servants in Protestant households. They pled either for treatment as prisoners of war or deportation to France or to their homeland. Many of them refused to work at menial tasks in an alien society, and some who did seek employment failed because of the intense prejudice against them in the city.⁵⁰

Benezet encouraged the exiles' determination to preserve their ethnic identity. He spent much of his time attending to the basic survival needs of the group and acting as liaison between the hostile government and the embittered exiles. Early in March, 1757, the new British Commander-in-Chief, John, Earl of Loudoun, visited Philadelphia. The Earl ordered the arrest of five Acadian "ringleaders," men whom he claimed "stir up all the disturbance these people make in Pennsylvania, and who persuade them to go and join the enemy and who prevent them from submitting to any regulation made in the country...to allow their children to be put out to work." He charged that the men had "uttered menacing speeches against his Majesty and his liege subjects." Loudoun sent the men to England without trial, and recommended to William Pitt that they be impressed aboard war ships. Their fate remains unknown, and they were not heard from again in Philadelphia.⁵¹

There is evidence that Loudoun attempted to involve Benezet in a similar incident the following month. After returning to his base in New York, the commander wrote to Benezet "in the absence of Governor Denny," virtually ordering him to locate a certain Acadian, outfit him with a horse and supplies, and send him to the New York headquarters immediately. No reason was given. There was no recorded reply, probably because one was never made. It was Benezet's way simply to resist

passively, often by ignoring demands upon him that he considered unjust or unreasonable.⁵²

Following the Earl's arrest of their leaders, the Acadians did become more docile, and consequently their needs were increasingly ignored by the Assembly's Commissioners for oversight of the poor. The Commissioners deliberately neglected their responsibilities on the grounds that the exiles were lazy and uncooperative foreigners. Incensed, Benezet appealed to the Assembly in August, 1757, insisting that the neutrals were "worthy of commiseration." He "strongly recommended to the Commissioners to do all in their power for them." The next month, after investigating Benezet's complaints, the Assembly granted an additional allotment and confessed that "the Overseers of late have neglected and refused to give the usual subsistence, whereby many of [the neutrals] are in the most necessitous and distressing circumstances and likely to perish for want of the necessary relief." The following year, Benezet submitted another petition calling for aid made necessary by "the extreme poverty and distress of many aged and sick persons among the neutrals." Conditions must have been miserable indeed, for during the first four years in Philadelphia, one half of the exiles died.⁵³

By 1758, it was clear to everyone that many of the Acadians were permanent residents of Philadelphia--most had stubbornly refused to move to the frontier, and the British government refused to send them home. After much effort, Benezet secured the use of some property belonging to Samuel Emlen, a wealthy Quaker, at Sixth and Pine Streets, on which to build a row of simple one story houses. His endless solicitations finally produced enough money to begin the construction, which he personally supervised. In July of 1759, the Assembly voted to reimburse

him 30 pounds for his efforts, and again the next year another equal sum was paid to him for "building cabins for neutrals."⁵⁴

Benezet enrolled Acadian children gratis in his classroom, with their parent's approval. In this he encountered resistance from the Overseers of the Friends' Publick School, who claimed that such children could not be depended upon to attend school regularly. The schoolmaster formally accepted responsibility for their attendance and behavior, and thus silenced the objections. Benezet also offered the exiles instruction in several vocational skills, at their request. He taught some of them how to manufacture wooden shoes and linsey cloth, so that they could become self supporting.⁵⁵

Working closely with the neutrals to find a solution to their difficulties, Benezet helped the dispirited and leaderless group draft a petition to the King. He persuaded James Pemberton and Evan Morgan, an Anglican Warden and member of the Assembly to join him in "waiting upon" the Governor with the petition. The Governor readily agreed to forward the document to His Majesty but warned that "it would scarcely be looked at, unless backed by some solicitation at Court, which would be attended by some expense." So, wearily, Benezet set out on still another round of fund raising. He wrote John Smith at this time of his discouragement.

I cannot as yet get anybody to go with me, and I don't think it prudent to go alone, being looked upon as an importunate solicitor, and people being apt to be soured at the mentioning of subscription,...are ready to cast out inconsiderate expressions, which I am not always able to bear with Christian patience.

Still, with his usual "generous obstinacy," so well described by a

contemporary, he managed to collect the 100 pounds needed to call the petition to the King's attention. There was no recorded reply.⁵⁶

By 1761, the Assembly, at the repeated urgings of Benezet, had appropriated a total of nearly 7,000 pounds for relief of the neutrals--approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per person per year for the care of virtual prisoners. Only small additional amounts came from private sources, and apparently none at all from the Crown or the Proprietors. By 1762, direct government aid for the exiles had ended entirely. Benezet personally gave away clothing and supplies from his home, including two newly purchased blankets, without the knowledge of his wife Joyce. Her reaction to this kind of generosity is unknown, but after a quarter century of married life, she had undoubtedly become somewhat philosophical about such matters. Benezet also paid out small regular allowances from his personal income to several of the most needy. After the war ended, probably in hopes that the intense anti-Acadian feelings had subsided, Benezet submitted to the Assembly a modest bill for his own expenditures on behalf of "divers of the aged and infirm French neutrals." He was not reimbursed, however. Nor was John Hill, a joiner, who sought payment for making sixteen coffins for indigent exiles.⁵⁷

When the Marquis Barbé-Marbois visited Pennsylvania in 1779-1780, he wrote that he found there 1,000 "Acadians who look upon [Benezet] as their father." But earlier, there had been some among the neutrals who found his solicitous care hard to understand, even suspicious. An old man among them suggested that their benefactor really intended to sell them as slaves. Benezet, upon hearing the charge, simply "lifted up his hands and laughed immoderately."⁵⁸

In the process of carrying out his own version of "practical Christianity" Benezet began to realize the larger economic implications of humanitarianism. "I am tired with begging," he wrote John Smith in 1760. In his experience, the nuisance factor was one of the hardest parts, especially since it should not be present at all. Without being urged, true Christians should express their loving concern for the needy in deeds as well as words. "I do not mean barely the act of giving to the poor," he wrote Smith in regard to benevolence, "but I mean true charity, i.e., the love which was in Christ, which is the root of everything that is good." Christians practicing this "true charity" would do so cheerfully, and not "grudgingly, [or] with upbraidings to the poor, needy, and afflicted."⁵⁹

One rationale Benezet frequently encountered for withholding private aid to the Acadians was that "it's a matter which the Government ought to see to." He compared the situation to a Biblical parable and asked, "Did the good Samaritan hold himself excused from relieving the wounded traveler, because there were laws in Judea, and persons to whom the duty of taking care of the distressed stranger belonged?"⁶⁰ True charity demanded the generous, personal dedication of one's time and substance to those in need, rather than the avoidance of responsibility by expecting the government to do it all.

Benezet could arrange his own life in the pattern of true charity as he understood it. But the problem of convincing others to do so--to answer the growing needs of Philadelphia's poor--was more difficult. Charity was expensive. By dedicating his life to helping others, it became more difficult, if not impossible, to earn personally the

necessary financial support for his generous impulses. The obvious solution was to persuade those who spent their lives making money to underwrite benevolent goals. But the very characteristics that caused some to scramble to the top of the economic ladder, as Benezet was well aware, also made it difficult for them to part with the rewards. Thus, somehow, acquisitive impulses must be moderated, and charitable ones encouraged, if wealth were ever to be distributed more equitably.⁶¹

Throughout his later life, he refined and elaborated on the convictions regarding wealth and poverty that he developed in the fires of charity work during the Seven Years' War. He concluded finally that the wealth acquired in commercial pursuits, "after a sober subsistence for ourselves and moderate provision for our children, is really the property of the rest of the family of mankind." He described approvingly a primitive communal society he had read about, in which "every spring an equal division of the lands of the District...was made between the inhabitants in proportion to their wants....The advantage and justice of such a wise regulation was obvious," he explained to a correspondent.⁶² This attitude toward wealth--that in reality it should belong to all human beings equally in accordance with their needs--contrasted sharply with his father's, and the society's, conventional economic beliefs and practices.

Yet, he never advocated the forcible abolition of private property, or any other form of economic coercion, except for moderate taxation to meet the peaceful needs of society. He hoped that voluntary sharing would become widespread as people learned and began to practice the lessons of brotherly love about which he wrote and taught. The

concept of stewardship was to be the means of forging the necessary link between belief and action. But in later years, he wrote of his discouragement with this rational approach: "Indeed, though all will generally allow they are but stewards of their substance, yet few are willing to realize this truth as to feel and act as being such."⁶³ His ideals for the "family of mankind" were as high as those he set for himself, and they were beginning to look as unattainable.

Given the stubborn refusal of most wealthy people to part with their riches willingly, then, and the peaceable principle that ruled out coercion, how could the real needs of the poor be met? The question had brought Benezet face to face with the complicated realities of secular political power. When individual Christians and churches could not be persuaded to care for the unfortunate, pressure had to be exerted at the highest levels of government. It was a practical matter. Political appeals through governmental channels were distasteful to him--they seemed tainted by "worldliness." Yet there seemed to be no workable alternative. The suffering of his fellow men affected him deeply, and he was forced by his own Christian idealism to aid them through secular channels if necessary.

In 1771, he described in Some Historical Account of Guinea, a principle of brotherly love which "proceeds from God.--It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity." That "perfect sincerity" was the "true piety which speaks the same language in the hearts of faithful men in all ages, for the relief of their fellow creatures from oppression of every kind."⁶⁴

His years of work among the poor had taught him to admire rather than disdain them. Late in life, he penned this advice for his pupils: "Love and respect poor people; you will often find simplicity, innocence, patience and piety among them." These were great virtues in his scale of values, virtues that deserved society's rewards, rather than its condemnation and oppression.⁶⁵

The pushing of his Quaker ideas and experiences to their logical conclusions had led Benezet to a secularized and politically volatile position. To free one's "fellow creatures from oppression of every kind" was a goal that issued directly from the injunction to love one's neighbors as oneself. He had begun with the inner light, the peace testimony, simplicity, equality, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. In the process of applying the principles, he arrived finally at a destination which demanded an end to oppression for all creatures, albeit under the orderly guidance of a benign paternalism. Of all the types of oppression that he would abolish, the worst was the economic tyranny that produced poverty, war, and slavery in the family of mankind.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VII

¹Rush to Granville Sharp, April 27, 1784, Woods, 22, 23.

²Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth (Philadelphia, 1968), Part I. Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (New York, 1942), ch. VII. To Samuel Allinson, Mar. 30, 1774, HQC. Benezet, The Mighty Destroyer Displayed (Philadelphia, 1774). Quotes in letter to John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, Brookes, 393; and Some Historical Account (4th ed., London, 1788), 78.

³Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 259, 260.

⁴Ibid.

⁵See above, ch. I.

⁶James, 193-215. There were some Quakers at every economic level in Philadelphia, but the vast majority were in middle and upper brackets. See J. William Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America (New York, 1973), 205.

⁷See Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 230-232; James, 60-75, 169-192; and below, ch. VIII.

⁸James, 316-334.

⁹See below, ch. VIII.

¹⁰James, 214, 215.

¹¹Robert Barclay, An Apology for the True Christian Divinity (Philadelphia, 1908), V. See also, Frederick B. Tolles, Quakers and the Atlantic Culture (New York, 1960), 106-107. Frost, Quaker Family, 192-193.

¹²Frederick B. Tolles, ed., Journal of John Woolman and Plea for the Poor (New York, 1961), vii, viii. James, ch. I, II. Frost, Quaker Family, 192-210.

¹³James, 214, 215. To Jonah Thompson, Apr. 24, 1756, Brookes, 220, 221.

¹⁴Tolles, Quakers, 104-106.

¹⁵Ibid., 109 ff. Frost, Quaker Family, 220. To John Smith, Aug. 1, 1760, Brookes, 241.

¹⁶To Sophia Hume, Feb. 16, 1768, FHL.

¹⁷To Samuel Fothergill, Oct. 17, 1757, Brookes, 222, 223. On comparison between evangelical revivalism and Quaker awakening, see Tolles, Quakers, 104-110.

¹⁸Frost, Quaker Family, 188. Davis, 327-330. James, 1-22. Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House (Chapel Hill, 1948), 48-51, 97-100.

¹⁹James, ch. X, XI. Theodore Thayer, Israel Pemberton, King of the Quakers (Philadelphia, 1943), and Theodore Thayer, "The Friendly Association," PMHB, LXVII (1943), 356-376.

²⁰To George Dillwyn, Aug. 5, 1773, Brookes, 403. See also to Samuel Fothergill, Oct. 17, 1757, Brookes, 223, which suggests some major disillusionment with his friends and co-workers just at the time he resigned from the Pennsylvania Hospital managership and curtailed his activities with the Friendly Association. James, 214, 215. See below, ch. VIII, on Benezet's disillusionment with Friendly Association and its organizers.

²¹See above, ch. II, on Philadelphia friendships.

²²François Jean, Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America, Howard C. Rice, Jr., tr. (Chapel Hill, 1963), extract reprinted in Brookes, 455.

²³Sydney P. Clark, Pennsylvania Hospital (New York, 1951), 5-8. Howard Brinton, "The Quaker Contribution to Higher Education in Colonial America," Pennsylvania History, XXV (1958), 249. Thomas G. Morton, The History of the Pennsylvania Hospital (Philadelphia, 1895), 5-13.

²⁴Morton, History, 12, 13, 43. Benjamin Franklin, Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital (Philadelphia, 1817), I, 129 ff., II, 11. Benezet's contribution was the minimum required for membership, 10 pounds.

²⁵Quoted from Minutes of the Pennsylvania Hospital, in Morton, History, 27.

²⁶Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 56.

²⁷To James Pemberton, Jan. 28, 1779, To George Dillwyn, Sept. 11, 1779, Brookes, 325-327, 337.

²⁸Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 36-38. Hamilton to Thomas Penn, June 19, 1752, Morton, History, 14, 15.

²⁹Clark, Pennsylvania Hospital, 18, 33.

³⁰Ibid., 11, 12, 14. Franklin, Account, II, 51-53. To John Smith, Jan. 2, 1758, The Friend, V, (1832), 297.

³¹Robert L. D. Davidson, War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania: 1682-1756 (New York, 1957), ch. 7-9. Peter Brock, Pacifism in the U.S. from the Colonial Era to the First World War (Princeton, 1968), 136, 137.

³²Davidson, War Comes, ch. IX. James Bennett Nolan, General Benjamin Franklin: The Military Career of a Philosopher (Philadelphia, 1936), 14, 15.

³³Nolan, General Benjamin Franklin, 29, 91. To Joseph Spangenberg, Dec. 25, 1755, Jan. 8, 1756, Brookes, 212-215. Judith Benezet's husband was probably the "very agreeable" doctor whom Benjamin Franklin described as his companion and medical teacher at Bethlehem and on the expedition to build Ft. Allen, Franklin to Deborah Franklin, Jan. 31, 1756, Leonard W. Labaree, ed., The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (New Haven, 1963), VI, 382.

³⁴To Spangenberg, Dec. 25, 1755, Jan. 8, 1756, Brookes, 212-215.

³⁵To Spangenberg, Dec. 25, 1755, Brookes, 212-214. A relief bill passed the Assembly in the wake of the Indian attacks.

³⁶To Spangenberg, Jan. 8, 1756, Brookes, 215.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid. On Franklin's expedition, see Nolan, General Benjamin Franklin, v, 60-64. Franklin's active military career lasted only six weeks (Dec. 18, 1755-Feb. 5, 1756), a period prior to his official appointment as a Colonel in the Philadelphia Regiment of "Associators."

The "relief" appropriation was primarily a war tax to raise a militia and pay for military defense of the frontier. See below, ch. VIII.

³⁹To Spangenberg, Jan. 24, 1756, Brookes, 217, 218. Franklin, accompanied by William Edmonds as guide, was on the Fort Allen expedition at the time. Both men returned to Philadelphia on Feb. 5 for the reconvening of the Assembly. Nolan, General Benjamin Franklin, 64.

⁴⁰To Spangenberg, Jan. 24, 1756, Brookes, 218, 219.

⁴¹Minutes of PMM, M. for S., 1756-1775, Sept. 23, 1756, p. 30; Feb. 10, 1757, p. 60; and Aug. 19, 1757.

⁴²Minutes of PMM, Aug. 14, 1760, 271.

⁴³Henry J. Cadbury, Friendly Heritage: Letters from the Quaker Past (Norwalk, Conn., 1972), 121. Brookes, 64. Howard M. Jones, America and French Culture, 1750-1848 (Chapel Hill, 1927), 506-507. Colonial Records, VI, 711 ff.

⁴⁴Jones, French Culture, 107, 506, 507. Brookes, 66. Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, 1825, Brookes, 468. Pennsylvania Archives, II, 506. Colonial Records, VI, 712.

⁴⁵Brookes, 63-67. Colonial Records, VI, 711 ff. Votes of the Assembly, 524. Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 231. "King's use" taxes discussed below, ch. VIII.

⁴⁶Brookes, 64. Colonial Records, VI, 711 ff.

⁴⁷Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 231. See David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston, 1971), xiii; Also Gerald N. Grob, Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875 (New York, 1973), 18-22, on alternatives for the indigent in colonial society.

⁴⁸See Rothman, Discovery, 4-6, and Grob, Mental Institutions, 15, on poverty in colonial society. Quote in Jones, French Culture, 107, 506, 507.

⁴⁹Brookes, 67, 68. Votes of the Assembly, V, 278. Pennsylvania Archives, II, 690, 694. William B. Reed, "The Acadian Exiles or French Neutrals in Pennsylvania," Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1858), VI, 297, 298.

⁵⁰Reed, "Acadian Exiles," 300, 301. Brookes, 67, 68.

⁵¹Loudoun to William Pitt, Apr. 25, 1757, quote in Reed, "Acadian Exiles," 303-306.

⁵²To Benezet from William Cotterell, for the Earl of Loudoun, May 16, 1757, Henry E. Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California.

⁵³Brookes, 67-72. Votes of the Assembly, V, 6, 13, VII, 717. Reed, "Acadian Exiles," 306, 307.

⁵⁴Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 231. Brookes, 64. Votes of the Assembly, V, 126.

⁵⁵Frost, Quaker Family, 97. Thomas Woody, Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania (New York, 1930), 217. Minutes of PCS, I, 244. Brookes, 73, 74. Vaux, 87.

⁵⁶To John Smith, Aug. 1, 1760, Brookes, 239, 240. Memorial to the King quoted in Brookes, 71, 72. François, Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, Our Revolutionary Forefathers, Eugene Parker Chase, tr. and ed. (Freeport, N. Y., 1969), in Brookes, 453.

⁵⁷Reed, "Acadian Exiles," 302, 309, 310. Brookes, 73, 74. Vaux, 98.

⁵⁸Vaux, 88, 99. Reed, "Acadian Exiles," 311.

⁵⁹To John Smith, Feb. 8, 1760, Aug. 1, 1760, To George Dillwyn, Feb. 15, 1774, Brookes, 237, 241, 316.

⁶⁰To John Smith, Aug. 1, 1760, Brookes, 240, 241.

⁶¹Ibid. Also, to George Dillwyn, Apr., 1767, HQC. To G. Dillwyn, Feb. 15, 1774, Brookes, 316.

⁶²To George Dillwyn, Aug. 5, 1773, Brookes, 307. To G. Dillwyn, Apr., 1767, HQC.

⁶³To Moses Brown, Nov., 1773, HQC.

⁶⁴Some Historical Account, 63, 41. Underlining mine.

⁶⁵Pennsylvania Spelling Book, 86.

CHAPTER VIII

INDIANS, PACIFISM, AND THE CRISIS OF POWER

The career of Anthony Benezet spanned three wars on the American continent. During the first of these, King George's War (1744-1748), hostilities remained largely confined to Canada and to New England and New York border warfare. Thus they did not constitute a practical problem for Pennsylvania Quakers. By contrast, however, the province was engulfed early and late in the savage frontier fighting of the French and Indian War (1756-1763), and again by the battles of contending forces during the American Revolution. And even when no official war was in progress, warlike emergencies involving privateers, riotous mobs, or settler-Indian skirmishes often challenged the peaceable principles of the Society of Friends.¹ With the outbreak of the French and Indian War, pacifist Quakers had to face the dilemma created by their desire to retain control of events while withdrawing from political power in the interests of religious purity.

Quaker pacifism had developed gradually during the seventeenth century, although it had roots going back at least as far as the early sixteenth century Anabaptist dissenters of the Reformation. The peace testimony became an established tenet of the English Society of Friends in 1661, with a declaration against taking up arms for any reason, political or spiritual. Quakers traditionally paid taxes to the established government, however, without questioning the use to be made of the funds. For nearly a century, the pacifism of most Friends was a concept limited primarily to the refusal to participate in organized warfare.²

Several small pacifist groups settled in Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, in part because of the religious freedom extended by that province. Moravian, Mennonite, and Swenkfelder pacifists, along with the Quakers, supported established law and government, while holding that magistrates had no authority over matters of religious conviction. Friends were unique among the perfectionist sects, however, in their assumption of political power. The pietist groups believed that Christians should not hold political office or participate in any of the judicial or law enforcement functions of government, and should remain totally nonresistant in the face of government force used against them. But Quakers sought to combine the perfectionism of their radical Protestant heritage with the strict Calvinist goal of government by dedicated Christians. In addition, Quaker pacifism had firm roots in the English rationalist tradition, which increasingly tended to look upon war as repugnant to humane ideals of brotherhood and unity.³

Benezet supported the perfectionist view when faced with the question of encouraging or discouraging office-holding among Friends. He believed that personal holiness could not be reconciled with the demands of governmental responsibility and the necessities of political compromise. If Quakers were to live righteous lives, the tasks of government must be left to others.

Yet Benezet's emphasis on personal holiness for believers did not lead him to advocate non-involvement with government. He practiced a pacifism of non-violent but militant resistance to laws he considered unjust, and he made repeated attempts to influence legislation. Beginning in the 1750's, his aggressive use of lobbying techniques and reform

publications revealed a determined militance in the interest of social improvement. Yet he remained unwaveringly opposed to the direct participation of Friends as law makers or law enforcers of the government. And he consistently resisted all forms of participation in wars.⁴

Quaker pacifism prior to the Seven Years' War meant to most Friends a literal and clear cut series of Biblical commands. "Thou shalt not kill." "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." "Resist not evil." But with the quickening spiritual pulse of the Society, and the impact of wartime conditions, a few Friends explored deeper levels of meaning in the peace testimony. Anthony Benezet, along with the English visiting minister, Samuel Fothergill, and John Woolman and John Churchman took the lead among those who looked beyond the superficial aspects of pacifism.⁵

Benezet's penchant for applying religious precepts in daily life eventually led him further than any of his contemporaries in analyzing and practicing the theory. He moved toward a fusion of his already strong sense of humanitarianism with the peace testimony. Pacifism emerged as a fundamental guiding principle for human relationships, rather than merely a condition of negative personal morality in time of war. The testimony undergirded his convictions about gentle guidance in place of brutal coercion in the classroom, for example. It also meant cooperating with and helping one's fellow human beings, rather than exploiting them in forceful economic competition. He attempted to explain his views in a letter to his good friend John Smith in 1757. Christ taught "that ye 'resist not evil' but rather suffer wrong, and thus 'overcome evil with good'.... The most sensible suffering is to give up our interest, and suffer matters to go contrary to our judgement,

in common affairs," he wrote. Pacifism became for Benezet a relevant, indeed crucial, guide in economics, education, politics, and the Society of Friends. It touched all of life.⁶

His commitment to peace principles, as he understood them, led Benezet to defend the rights of less rigorously dedicated Friends to dissent from those same principles without harsh penalties. The zeal of some leading "strict" Quakers to reform the Society during the war encouraged a legalistic enforcement of the peace testimony. Many Friends were disowned by the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting for failure to observe the letter of pacifism--a disciplinary practice that Benezet tried on many occasions to mitigate. He praised the less rigid stance of Moravians and Mennonites, who, he wrote, are "wiser than we in allowing some of their members to dissent in the article of defensive war...without casting them from their religious care and example." The Society of Friends, however, did not accept Benezet's more relaxed position in dealing with offenders until the twentieth century.⁷

Defensive war presented a special case in Benezet's view. Although he objected to the disownment of dissenters, he personally could not condone a defensive war. Yet he considered carefully James Logan's controversial position on the matter. Logan (1674-1751), a leading Quaker statesman in his day, held that defensive war might be necessary for a people who accumulated valuable property. Rich Quakers should not expect others to fight to protect their wealth if they were unwilling to defend it themselves. If they would keep the vast holdings that aroused the envy and lust of enemies, they must either protect it forcibly or freely give it up, and they were willing to do neither. It was

patently illogical, in Logan's view. Benezet read carefully "an original paper...written by James Logan in 1741...declarative of his sentiments with the relation there is between defensive war and the support of the government." But while he appreciated the honesty and force of Logan's argument, he believed that a true understanding of pacifism should lead, not to defensive war, but rather to a willing surrender of private possessions if necessary--to a "sensible suffering" that would result in spiritual rewards and the maintenance of peace.⁸

By the mid 1750's, however, the loyalty of Friends to their pacifist principles was about to undergo far more serious challenges than that presented by Logan's abstract position paper, logical as it may have been. Alienated Indians of the Delaware tribe presented a new threat to provincial security and prosperity. During William Penn's proprietorship, Indian relations had been characterized by at least the outward appearance of good will. Penn himself genuinely appreciated the native Americans, whose culture and language he studied and whose hospitality he often enjoyed and reciprocated. He administered Indian affairs humanely, and his famous treaty of eternal friendship was a model of justice and respect. Penn's successors, however, did not share his attitudes. The proprietors' "Walking Purchase" of 1737 fraudulently deprived the Delawares of nearly all the fertile land in the southeast quarter of Pennsylvania, and drove them into the mountains. Still the Indians did not rebel outwardly, in part because of the Quaker Assembly's outlay of approximately 8,300 pounds over a fifteen year period "to defray the expenses of treaties designed to promote a good understanding with the Indians."⁹

The Delaware tribe constituted only a minor and politically weak segment of the powerful Six Nations Indian Confederacy. In the early 1750's, the Delwares were a subject tribe of the Iroquois, who were in turn vulnerable in the struggle of European colonial powers for control of the Ohio Valley. At first this presented few difficulties, because the Six Nations were generally pro-British in an area controlled by Britain. But French influence and military authority spread rapidly through the Ohio Valley during this period. At the same time Virginians connected with the Ohio Land Company vigorously pressed their overlapping claims. And Pennsylvania's Scotch-Irish and German immigrants pushed ever further west into Indian territory. After about 1750, the combined pressures led to serious divisions within the leadership of the Indian Confederacy, and growing hostility to white settlers. The Pennsylvania legislature did nothing for the defense of the Ohio frontier, despite repeated warnings of French encroachment and Indian defections. The relatively small Delaware tribe, closest to Philadelphia geographically, was caught in a net of conflicting political and economic strands which they did not create and could not escape, regardless of past treaty commitments to William Penn and his heirs.¹⁰

In an attempt to counteract the growing French presence, which was reinforced by 1753 with a line of three new forts, Pennsylvania Governor James Hamilton appointed a board of Indian Commissioners among whom was Benjamin Franklin. By this time, the possibility of winning the entire Confederacy seemed remote, so the commission attempted to pacify the restless frontier tribes directly. Along with colonial leaders of Virginia and Maryland they held treaty negotiations at

Carlisle, Pennsylvania, exchanging gifts and promises of peace with the intoxicated Indians. A larger conference, called by the British Board of Trade to deal with the problem, convened at Albany, New York, in 1754, with sullen representatives of the Six Nations. The British leaders promised Indian chiefs that the Allegheny Mountains would be the limit of settlements. But at the same time, Pennsylvania's John Penn, son of the founder, and Richard Peters, the governor's secretary, "purchased" all of Western Pennsylvania for 2,000 pieces of eight from some of the Iroquois, in secret negotiations. This area was the ancestral hunting land of the Delawares. The "Albany Purchase," when it became known, confirmed the suspicions of all the other Indians that the English and the French "were contesting which of them should have their lands." They could trust neither side. And the Delawares, their lands sold without their consent, revolted against their Iroquois masters and refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Albany Purchase.¹¹

In the summer of 1755, General Edward Braddock marched out to his resounding defeat by Indians and French near Fort Duquesne. The Delaware tribe now found itself under pressures from French-sympathizing Senecas to the West, and Indian-hating German and Scotch-Irish settlers to the East and South. Seething with resentment at the British-affiliated Iroquois, convinced by Braddock's debacle of the weakness of English forces, and angered by the land hunger of William Penn's descendants, the Delawares soon began launching their desperate assaults against Pennsylvania's frontier outposts.¹²

The change of allegiance of their old friends the Delawares seemed at first incomprehensible to the Quakers in Philadelphia. They

had insisted for generations that peace could be maintained by simply negotiating candidly with the Indians, without the use of force. Now they believed that the fault must lie with the proprietary party's mismanagement of Indian affairs. Few, if any, Quakers were among the victims of the frontier attacks, a fact which seemed to prove that peace principles were indeed workable in practice. Yet surviving correspondence suggests that the Quaker settlers were among the first to desert their farms for the relative safety of the fortified towns, although they themselves did not carry guns. Benezet mentioned that one family of Friends was "burnt out beyond ye mountain," in one of his letters to Bishop Spangenberg. Fothergill wrote his wife about a whole settlement of Quakers he had visited earlier who by November had "all removed, through fear of the Indians," to safer locations.¹³

While the Indians were behaving in an extraordinary way on the frontier, a series of "calamities" shook Philadelphia. An "alarming and terrible" earthquake rattled china and windows in Philadelphia the night of November 18, 1755, according to Fothergill's account. Both the Indian massacres and the "awful visitation" of the earthquake showed that God kept his powers "in readiness to execute his purposes of chastisement and reproof." Early the same month, he wrote, a report spread through Philadelphia: "One thousand eight hundred French and Indians [are] within seventy miles of this city, on their march to it." But this was later exposed as a false rumor.¹⁴

The community faced internal problems as well. War was accompanied by an evident decline in morality. Militia men drilled in the streets of formerly peaceful Philadelphia. And these same young men

in February, 1756, conducted a "rude indecent uproar and demonstration" in front of the executive mansion to demand the appointment of Benjamin Franklin as their commanding officer. Benezet was assigned by Philadelphia Monthly Meeting to a committee for "consideration of the prevalence of profanity and vice in various shapes among the inhabitants of this city, which has appeared of late to increase." Among other corrupting influences cited by Meeting, a new theater company was forming in Philadelphia. By 1760, the committee's lobbying had ensured passage of an Assembly bill outlawing the drama troupe, and prohibiting other "ensnaring and irreligious entertainments." Friends believed that only by ridding their own community of vice could the Quaker remnant restore the shattered peace of a stable and prosperous society. In fact, with their continual petitioning and lobbying against "corruption" during the war, Quakers were attempting to clear themselves of guilt by acquiescence in the matter. But they were actually changing very little.¹⁵

Foreign immigrants were regularly blamed for the spreading social disorder. Many of the non-pacifist newcomers who streamed into the province after 1713 had been forced by economic conditions to settle in the outlying frontier areas. There they purchased cheap land from agents who had sometimes obtained it unfairly from the Indians, if they had paid for it at all. The only alternative for the new arrivals was to remain in the city, where jobs were scarce and immigrants emphatically unwelcome. Some, recently released from English jails, posed a special kind of threat to Philadelphia society, prompting Franklin's whimsical proposal in the Gazette that native American rattlesnakes might be exchanged for the felons sent into the colony by British authorities.

The thousands of Germans who had arrived in the city early in the 1750's seemed the worst threat, however. Franklin's concern that "they will soon outnumber us" was shared by the entire English speaking community. As a result, the Quaker dominated Assembly had passed a restrictive immigration bill early in 1755, aimed primarily at Germans.¹⁶ The new law, combined with wartime conditions, cut down drastically on the number of new arrivals. But the apparent threat to social order by those already there increased with the outbreak of war, rather than diminishing.

Looking back over the period in his Short Account of the People Called Quakers, written in 1779, Benezet blamed the immigrants by implication, for Indian atrocities. Despite his often demonstrated sympathies with uprooted peoples, he was convinced that in this case, their lack of Quaker ideals had helped to precipitate the war. "The changes which ...have gradually prevailed in this once peaceful land, principally owing to the great accession of people of different dispositions from the first settlers," had led the province into war, causing it to suffer "severely from the incursions of the natives."¹⁷

Another flagrant evil in society that Benezet pointed out in 1759 as a precipitating "cause of the calamities we at present suffer," was the immoral and brutally executed slave trade. In Observations on the Inslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negros, his first published book on the subject, he emphasized the collective guilt of the community for allowing the "dreadful traffic" to continue. Beginning with a powerful Jeremiad, he announced that "the just Judge of all the earth" was clearly punishing society by allowing the war to go on. "When a people offend as a nation, or in public capacity, the justice of his moral government

requires that as a nation they be punished, which is generally done [as now] by war, famine, or pestilence."¹⁸

But above all, the war erupted from human greed and pride, in Benezet's view. These "times of war, of conquests and bloodshed" might have been avoided, he wrote, if the "deceitfulness of wealth and honor had not blinded" the eyes of society's leaders. Thus he reiterated, both publically and privately, a constant theme in his writing. Beginning about 1756, he pointed to the selfish acquisitiveness of a commercial people as the chief cause of disastrous wars.¹⁹

When Governor Robert Hunter Morris reported that the Quaker pacifists were calling Braddock's defeat a "just judgment" of God "upon our forces," he was speaking accurately as well as indignantly. Benezet, among other Friends, made similar statements. But to Morris and his colleagues, the judgment should have fallen upon the pacifists, whose stubborn refusal to provide for frontier defenses seemed to him the real source of the trouble. Earlier, General Braddock himself had been angry at the lack of cooperation he encountered from Quaker Philadelphians prior to his expedition. He complained that the Americans "coaxed us over here to fight their battles, and then, by God, they overcharge us for wagons and supplies and refuse to fight in their own quarrel."²⁰

But the matter was more complex than the Governor, the General, or the Quakers cared to admit. The "political" Friends in the Assembly were not solidly united in their pacifism, but they agreed in their dislike of the proprietary party and its interests. Passage of a large appropriations bill for defense following Braddock's defeat hinged on the question of whether or not the proprietors would allow their

enormous estates to be taxed along with those of private citizens. Many Quakers were willing to pay defense taxes, provided the proprietors shared the burden. But Pennsylvania governors had consistently vetoed earlier tax bills calling for assessments on the proprietary estates. In late 1755, while Indians raided one settlement after another with impunity, bitter charges and counter-charges flew between the Franklin-led Quaker party and the proprietary faction, each blaming the other for holding up emergency funds.²¹

The Quaker party was badly divided internally on the tax question. Despite Franklin's careful wording of the latest bill, everyone knew that funds "for the King's use," and "for the relief of distressed persons on the frontier" really mean a huge property tax for war purposes. Under the leadership of James Pemberton, several "strict" Quakers in the Assembly fought against their own party's bill, on grounds of the peace testimony. Many other Friends, including Speaker of the House, Isaac Norris, were convinced that defensive war was justified, and they urged passage of a bill with firm guarantees that proprietary as well as private estates would be taxed. Economic and political factors were more important than were religious peace principles, despite the pious rhetoric.²²

While the Assembly deliberated, pacifist Quakers outside the legislature met to discuss their dilemma. The subject was so controversial that the Yearly Meeting in late summer, 1755, had refused to take a stand either for or against payment of "King's use" taxes. But the spiritual reform influence had grown rapidly during the recent upheavals. Led by Benezet, Woolman, Churchman, John Reynell, and the

Pemberton brothers, the "strict" Quakers sought a return to basic principles, especially pacifism. And they were increasingly convinced that the pure peace testimony precluded the payment of war taxes under any circumstances.²³

Nearly all Friends agreed that a renewal of religious dedication was called for in the "present distresses," but many still believed that the traditional Quaker commitment to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's"--that is, to pay all lawful taxes demanded by the government--remained valid. Friends generally were being blamed for obstructing passage of the defense bill and thereby encouraging the bloodshed by their pacifism. They were also accused of insensitivity to the sufferings of others, and an inexcusable parsimoniousness. As the beleaguered Quakers met in December to discuss the matter, angry frontiersmen paraded by the Meeting House windows carrying bloody cadavers to punctuate their demands for protection. It was an emotion-charged time, scarcely conducive to the kind of rational deliberation prized by Friends. John Woolman later described the meeting as "the most weighty that ever I was at."²⁴

Finally, unable to obtain a "sense of the Meeting" decision, Benezet and eighteen other "reform" Quakers, including Samuel Fothergill, signed a private document entitled "An Epistle of Tender Love and Caution to Friends in Pennsylvania." The Epistle protested the war measures then being enacted by the Assembly, denounced all military preparations, and warned that the signers would refuse to pay taxes levied for such purposes. The protest was a new and somewhat frightening step for Friends. Woolman spoke for all the rebels when he wrote, "to refuse the active

payment of a tax which our Society generally paid [before], was exceedingly disagreeable, but to do a thing contrary to my conscience appeared yet more dreadful." Some months earlier, Benezet had copied into his New Testament fly leaf this "advice" from the Yearly Meeting of 1753: "As it behooves us, obedient subjects religiously to observe the close connection of those excellent precepts, fear God; honor the King; so let us be mindful not to defraud the King of any of his customs, duties or exise."²⁵ The commitment to religious tradition and established government was powerful, but for a growing minority the pull of conscience, the inner light, now emerged even more strongly. The days of the older, politically oriented Friends were numbered.

The protest Epistle, without the Society's approval, was delivered to the Pennsylvania legislature. Despite the dissenters' efforts, however, two war emergency bills passed the Assembly before the end of the year. One was the militia bill to raise, train, and equip a voluntary fighting force. The other was the even more controversial appropriation of 60,000 pounds, to which the proprietors had at the last minute agreed to contribute 5,000 pounds in return for immunity to property taxation.²⁶

The protest and threatened tax boycott added to the rapidly increasing tensions between the strict pacifist Friends and the Quakers who still controlled the Assembly. The legislators replied to the purifiers' challenge with a sharply worded communique. They charged that the dissenters had overstepped their bounds and delivered "an unadvised and indiscreet application to the house at this time." Franklin had already departed for the frontier, and the Indian warfare continued to spread panic--there would be no turning back. The breach between

reforming Friends and the government founded by their ancestors widened daily.²⁷

The protest also occasioned a major disagreement between London Quakers--always the spiritual advisors and guides for the colonial meetings--and the new reform element in Philadelphia. Letters from influential British Friends urged not only the payment of the taxes as levied, "for support of civil government," but also an immediate stop to the agitation. The British Parliament, antagonized by the lack of cooperation in Philadelphia, had threatened to exclude all Pennsylvania Friends from the legislature by means of a "test oath" of British loyalty--an oath no conscientious Quaker could take. Thus, there was a flood of advice from London Friends about "rendering unto Caesar," by now a code phrase for support of the established political order. American Quakers were advised to think of the tax as "a measure for the 'relief of the distressed'" rather than what it obviously was--a war tax. Stubborn refusal might jeopardize all Quaker political influence in the new world, the Londoners warned.²⁸

The ties of finance, family, and faith still drew a tight web of fellowship and mutual dependence back and forth across the Atlantic. On both sides, sober deliberations ensued for the purpose of settling the dispute. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting convened a high level committee of thirteen to consider problems arising from the Parliament's threat to cut off Quaker civil liberties with the test oath, and to work out a reconciliation with London Friends. Benezet, a committee member, was assigned the task of drafting a letter to London Yearly Meeting explaining the local situation and requesting cooperation in countering the

oath threat. The Committee soon approved two documents to be sent to London. One was an "Address of the People Called Quakers," to proprietors Thomas and Richard Penn, requesting exemption of Friends from provisions of a new military bill then under consideration. The other was a long letter to London Friends agreeing that American Quakers should voluntarily withdraw from the Assembly rather than be forced to compromise their principles. In return, London leaders would secure, if possible, firm assurances from the Crown's representatives that "our religious and civil privileges would be preserved to us"--that no test oath would be imposed.²⁹

The plan suited London Quakers, who had already begun urging such a strategy. Dr. John Fothergill, brother of Samuel, was chief physician and a confidant of Thomas Penn in London, and a man of considerable political influence in British circles. He won a promise that the test oath would not be required, in return for his personal pledge to secure a Quaker withdrawal from the Assembly. To this end he wrote strong letters to the Pembertons and others urging immediate political resignations. Then two more prestigious "visiting ministers" from London, John Hunt and Christopher Wilson, were dispatched to Philadelphia to convince Quaker Assemblymen that they should resign their posts quickly. The emissaries also had instructions "to explain and enforce our known principles and practice respecting the payment of taxes for the support of civil government." London Yearly Meeting did not yield easily its traditional moral and spiritual authority over the younger Quaker group, and the tax question remained a source of friction between British and American Friends until the Revolution.³⁰

Even before Hunt and Wilson landed in Philadelphia, however, James Pemberton had led a group of six strict Quaker Assemblymen in the formal resignation of their posts. The urgent messages from London, coupled with visits from several Philadelphia Friends had convinced them that the move was necessary. Apparently the Americans did not know it at the time, but several influential London Quakers had interests in the Ohio Company which were jeopardized by the lack of frontier defenses.³¹

Benezet was pleased with the resignations although he had hoped for a larger number. The action should have been taken sooner, he believed, because it was impossible for Friends "in times of war,... to maintain the government and be honest and true to that noble, evangelike testimony which God has given us to bear." He considered it unchristian as well as impractical to indulge in a dual morality--one for public office that compromised the peace principle, and another for a private spirituality.³²

The resignations were followed by others and control of the province soon passed completely into non-pacifist hands. Yet the Quaker party, under Franklin and several "political" Friends like Isaac Norris, continued to control Pennsylvania with solid Quaker and German voter support until the Revolution. Free of the pacifist element, the Assembly voted strong continuing support for war measures.³³

The peace Quakers found themselves more isolated than ever. As early as August, 1755, Governor Morris had set the tone by labeling the Quaker Assembly a threat to the security of the province. By winter, the frontier warfare had "occasioned great troubles, and raised the

clamour of the people against Friends," according to one observer. One frontier community printed a typical popular attack in verse:

In many things change but the name
Quakers and Indians are the same;...
Those who the Indians' cause maintain
Would take the part of bloody Cain
And sell their very souls for gain.³⁴

Quakers who steadfastly refused to pay the war taxes, despite pressures from both London and the State House, soon faced hostile tax collectors. By November, 1756, James Pemberton reported to Samuel Fothergill that "many in this city particularly suffered by distraint of their goods, some being near cast into jail."³⁵

Friends, keenly sensitive to all this, looked to their Society for encouragement as they had traditionally done in troubled times. Benezet applauded this movement. Quakers were learning "patience, and charity for one another," through the trials, he wrote an English Friend, "even though we should as it were have lost some skin or got a broken head in the fray." The turmoil seemed to be leading Friends back "to the ancient standard of truth in themselves"--the inner light. And finally, through the "present troubles" Quakers would be "fairly jostled out of most posts of honor and profit in the government." He had never known a Quaker who became a "better Christian by being made Judge, Justice, Sheriff, or any other officer of the kind." But he knew of many made worse by it, who in fact had become "almost quite unquakered."³⁶

While this spiritual renewal was taking place within the Society, outward circumstances required constant decisions. Throughout late 1755 and 1756, temporary interim committees of Monthly and Yearly Meetings had been operating to deal with wartime emergencies. In December, 1756,

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting officially organized the Meeting for Sufferings--a permanent executive committee empowered to act for the Society between its annual meetings. In structure and function it closely resembled the London Yearly Meeting's long established committee of the same name.³⁷

Benezet was one of the twenty seven original members of the Meeting for Sufferings, and continued to the end of his life to serve on it. One of his special areas of responsibility was the drafting of petitions and addresses of the Society to government officials, admonitory epistles to other colonial meetings, and the all-important explanatory letters to London. He was also a frequent member of smaller committees instructed to "wait upon" various officials in the interests of peace, morality, and the needs of "the distressed." In addition, he usually had responsibility for the publication and distribution of books, tracts, and smaller items designed by the Meeting to further Quaker-approved causes and encourage moral behavior. Many of these materials he wrote himself, including some of his most important works on anti-slavery, peace, education, and Quaker history. His was the untitled position of chief theorist and public relations person for the Society of Friends in the colonies during the most difficult period of its existence, the era spanning the Seven Years' War and the Revolution.³⁸

Early in the war, Benezet worked closely with some other members of the Yearly Meeting in renewed efforts to rebuild the tarnished Quaker reputation in the community. The group's announced goal was the restoration of peace with the Indians by the practical application of pacifism. The men who launched this campaign in 1756 were basically the same ones who had signed the tax protest late the previous year. They were the

reformers, the strict, idealistic pacifists who had been in the forefront of the movement for spiritual renewal and withdrawal from government office holding by Friends. They formed the nucleus of the new Meeting for Sufferings organized at approximately the same time. All were leaders in their community, and most were wealthy men. Some had been members of the Assembly.³⁹

The public and private accusations against these men were perhaps no more justified than were their own claims that the war was the fault, not of pacifist Quakers and their Indian friends, but rather of greedy proprietary interests in league with blood-thirsty, land-hungry frontiersmen. Neither side in the dispute was in a position to understand the larger context of two great colonial powers contending for far more than the Pennsylvania backwoods. But each side knew well the political necessity of fastening blame for the war on the other.

The vehicle for Quaker efforts to save the Society of Friends, the Indians, and the Province, was "The Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures." The Association was organized formally in November, 1756, but it actually began at least seven months earlier.⁴⁰

On April 12, 1756, Governor Morris, in conjunction with his Council and the Assembly, had declared war on the Delaware and Shawnee Indians. At the same time, he set a bounty for Indian scalps, taken dead or alive from men, women, or children, and ordered the deployment of a large militia force to destroy Delaware towns. Horrified, Benezet and the reformist group of twenty pacifist Friends, assembled to draw up strong protests to the Governor and the Assembly. They called for

an immediate reconsideration of the war declaration. In addition, they announced their willingness to subscribe large sums for restoring peace with the Indians, "even though a much larger part of our estates should be necessary than the heaviest taxes a war can be expected to require." Israel Pemberton and Benezet visited the Governor and offered to raise as much as 5,000 pounds for the purpose of reconciling the Indians. But the Governor, who had just formally declared the opening of hostilities, would not reconsider.⁴¹ Clearly, the Friends' influence, already drastically diminished, would have little effect on events. Their frustration led to the exploration of alternative methods for effecting change.

In mid April, with the cooperation of Indian agent and translator, Conrad Weiser, Benezet, Pemberton, and others met with a group of friendly Indians and interpreters for dinner and an "occasional conversation" at the Pembertons' home. The evening ended cordially, but the minutes of the meeting explained that no decisions were made at that time, "it being the custom not to enter too largely on any subject at the first conference" among the Indians. More "conversations" were held, at which the Indians accepted belts of wampum and agreed to seek the backing of their tribes for a peace treaty. Governor Morris, however, refused to cooperate with the plan which called for a cessation of hostilities, and objected to the interference of "private persons" in official affairs. He later changed his mind about a treaty under pressure from Sir William Johnson, British colonial Indian agent in New York, however, and agreed to initiate negotiations that summer. In the meantime he had to rescind temporarily the declaration of war, to the Friends' delight. The

Delawares halted their raids until the treaty discussions could be held.⁴²

On July 19, a messenger arrived in Philadelphia announcing the arrival at Easton, Pennsylvania, of a band of Delawares led by Chief Teedyscung. The Indians were ready to begin peace negotiations. Benezet and the Pembertons convened an informal meeting soon after, at which interested Friends subscribed over 2,000 pounds for gifts to the Indians. These gifts, they explained, were made to offer "some satisfaction to the Indians who have already done terrible damage and disturbance to the frontier...and therewith if possible, to procure a peace to this country." Some Friends diverted tax money into the Indian fund, to prove their willingness to spend money for the public good. Some gifts may have constituted a form of penance for past years of "falling away into worldliness." Their recorded statement suggests that a basic motivation was the desire to restore social order in the form of "peace to this country." And the most practical way to do that in their way of thinking, was to purchase it, "if possible."⁴³

The site of the treaty negotiations, had been laid out in 1750 at the forks of the Delaware River in Bucks County. Easton remained in 1756 a primitive "huddle of log cabins surrounding a crude stone jail," at the end of an "unfinished deserted path-way," much as Benjamin Franklin had found it a few months earlier on his frontier expedition. But when necessary, wagons could be towed laboriously along the old Indian trail. Both the Governor's party and the twenty Quakers who attended the conference brought wagon loads of their own provisions and gifts for the Indians.⁴⁴

Accommodations for the gentlemen from Philadelphia were as primitive as the road and the settlement itself. Benezet and the others slept on the floor of an abandoned cabin whose owners had fled to a safer area. Friends shared their first evening's meal with Indians who visited their cabin. With some difficulty, they persuaded the Indians to return to their own quarters that night "without taking a drop of strong liquor,...that the next day they might be fit for business." The Governor disapproved of such fraternizing, however, and he set a guard near the Quaker lodging to prevent a recurrence.⁴⁵

But the "business" did not begin for several days. The Governor preferred to await the arrival of Conrad Weiser, even though two other qualified interpreters had been present from the first. The morning that Weiser arrived, the Governor had left for the day on a fishing excursion. The Indians became irritated and bored by the unnecessary delay. They were unhappy, too, at the official interference with communications with their Quaker friends. To pacify them, the government party provided a large supply of liquor. Indian assent was then easily obtained to the British proposals. Governor Morris declared peace with the Indians and war against the French. He refused to allow the Quakers to distribute their 250 pounds' worth of gifts directly to the Indians. Instead he combined them with the smaller amount of gifts from the provincial government, which included liquor and ammunition. The Friends were angered by the action, but the conference ended amicably anyway. The Governor's secretary, Richard Peters, admitted that "if the Quakers had not...added their large present to that provided by the Assembly, we should have been ruined, the Indians would have gone away

dissatisfied, and matters infinitely worse."⁴⁶

The ensuing "peace" was uneasy, however, and broken by bloody skirmishes. Franklin, among others, believed that the treaty had been effort wasted, and insisted in August that there would never be "a firm peace with the Indians, till we have drubbed them." The Quakers, although discouraged at the new fighting, continued their peace efforts. Upon learning that the Delawares were willing to return in October for further negotiations, Israel Pemberton urged the Yearly Meeting to sponsor the activities of the unofficial Indian affairs committee. But the Meeting decided against participation in "public affairs beyond its jurisdiction." Meeting did, however, encourage its interested members by expressing an "approbation of the design." Disappointed, the group began independent preparations for the next treaty by calling for more subscriptions and organizing itself more efficiently.⁴⁷

The Friendly Association was formally launched on Nov. 2, 1756. One of the first orders of business was the drafting of an address to the new "Commander-in-Chief of the Province of Pennsylvania," Lieutenant Governor William Denny. The new Governor seemed more willing to cooperate with Friends. In response to the address he granted permission for Association members to attend the forthcoming treaty negotiations. Committees purchased 500 pounds worth of gifts for the Indians. They also provisioned the wagons with "necessaries" for Quaker delegates, including liquor and beds to be set up in the primitive quarters.⁴⁸

Treaty negotiations opened November 8. At the urging of Commissioner Franklin and the Quakers, Governor Denny asked the Indians the cause of their disaffection. Israel Pemberton had spent considerable

time with Chief Teedyuscung, suggesting to him "suitable" replies to this likely query. The chief made a speech claiming that Delaware alienation resulted entirely from repeated land frauds perpetrated by the Proprietors and their agents, from the 1737 "Walking Purchase" to the Albany Purchase of 1754. Furious at this, Secretary Richard Peters refused to record Teedyuscung's speech in the minutes. He charged the Quakers with implanting absurd ideas in the Indians' heads, and upbraided Friends for taking their own detailed notes of the speech. But the Governor promised to investigate the Indian's charges and to make adequate restitution for any injustices discovered.⁴⁹

There may well have been other matters than the Quaker-proprietary feud at stake during the November meetings, however. Some of the leading Friends had to spend time and effort "in correcting [Quaker] misapprehensions concerning the conduct and views of members of the Association," and in convincing members to be "united in the prosecution of their work." Just what the "misapprehensions" were is not totally clear from existing records. But it is significant that the emissaries from London, who were always close to the Pembertons, attended the treaty for unexplained reasons. Hunt and Wilson spent so much time in secret consultations with the Indian leaders that Governor Denny reprimanded them. Events in London and Philadelphia following the conference suggest that the matter of contention may have been closely connected to plans for securing the Indian fur trade and perhaps land speculation as well.⁵⁰

Immediately upon returning to Philadelphia, the Friendly Association was reorganized under the leadership of Israel Pemberton into a more tightly centralized and efficient operation. Two close Pemberton

associates, John Reynell and Abel James, assumed positions as treasurer and clerk, respectively. Sixteen trustees, all Quakers and heavy contributors were elected and given exclusive power over the disposition of funds contributed by members. They were also empowered to call meetings of the membership, keep minutes, make decisions and act on behalf of the Association. A general meeting could only be called, otherwise, by written notification by at least sixteen members who had subscribed 200 pounds or more, well above the twelve pound per member average. The reorganized Association had investment characteristics as well as benevolent ones. Before the end of the year, the new trustees were instructed to "get the minutes of the General Meeting and of the former Trustees revised, in order to be fairly entered into a book." What might have needed revision remains unknown, but only the newer version of the minutes still exists.⁵¹

Although Benezet had been an active organizer and trustee from the beginning of the Association, and could still satisfy the minimum requirements of at least a ten pound contribution and membership in the Society of Friends, he was either squeezed out of the governing board by the pressures of the reorganization, or he chose voluntarily to withdraw at this time. But his removal did not signify a decreasing interest in Indian affairs, as his subsequent activities revealed. And he did not leave the general membership of the organization. He continued to support Association projects, such as

the maintenance of Indian children...to educate [them] in the principles of the Christian religion, to qualify them for interpreters, and in that or some other station, to become more serviceable to themselves and the government.

The training of poor children for suitable work had always seemed a worthy goal to him. But the majority of Association funds were not being used for such purposes. The increasing emphasis on high finance, and whatever goals may have motivated it, undoubtedly created a problem for his sense of values.⁵² His withdrawal from a position of leadership at this time may have been, then, another of his silent protests in the face of organizational policies and practices he could neither condone nor change. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the end of Benezet's trusteeship was not a matter of his choice but a result of Pemberton's aggressive maneuvering of the Association into more manageable channels.

The Quakers made several unsuccessful attempts to see official public documents relating to the disputed Indian lands. On one occasion they were turned away by Secretary Peters, who explained that the record books required "the greatest secrecy," and the Governor could "not allow the perusal of them to any but those concerned in the administration." Failing to achieve their goal, the trustees decided to embarrass the Governor and his interests by publishing their own minutes of the Easton treaty negotiations, including Teedyuscung's accusatory speech. They sought the anti-proprietary Assembly's approval for the project, and received full cooperation. The Legislature ordered "the minutes to be forthwith printed for the public good."⁵³

Members of the Friendly Association increased the tempo of their activities in the spring of 1757 in preparation for a third Easton conference. Benezet was assigned responsibility for designing and striking a silver medal to be presented to the Indians as a goodwill gesture.

The medal depicted William Penn sharing a peace pipe with a Chieftan beneath a sun that symbolized eternal friendship between the two races. Many of these medals were struck by the silversmith Joseph Richardson, whose bill to the Association for 133 pounds indicates that major significance was attached to the project.⁵⁴

After assembling a large supply of miscellaneous gifts, Association members learned that Governor Denny had suddenly become less cooperative. He refused them permission either to attend personally or to deliver their gifts. He condemned their "most extraordinary procedure" of presuming "to treat with foreign princes," and labeled their earlier contacts with Indians as "the highest invasion of his Majesty's prerogative royal." The Friends replied that they would go to the Easton negotiations anyway and deliver their gifts in defiance of the prerogative. They were certain the Indians would refuse to negotiate without them in any case.⁵⁵

The Friendly Association was represented by approximately 35 members at the July, 1757, conference. The Friends watched with delight as the 300 Indians refused to join the conferences until Charles Thomson, Quaker Latin Schoolmaster, was appointed official recording clerk. "After an altercation lasting four days," according to Association minutes, the Indian demand "was acceded to" by the Governor.⁵⁶

The Indians present, some of whom were French-affiliated Senecas, revealed a great deal of animosity toward whites in general. Benezet described the situation as volatile and dangerous. He wrote John Smith later that he was greatly relieved when Teedyuscung at last proclaimed a tentative peace,

not only on the public account, but also on our own who were there, for I had not been without some apprehension at different times that we were in danger of being scalped, which, with all my philosophy afforded but an uncomfortable thought.

But he was in full sympathy with the "poor natives," who "have just cause for complaint on many accounts." He also believed the Indians to be "quite in earnest in their desire for peace." They requested help in building permanent houses, cultivating their own lands, starting schools for their children, and entering into trade with honest men--a worthy program in Quaker eyes. The negotiations ended with a tenuous peace which the Governor's party obtained by plying the natives with liquor and then presenting them with inadequate land deed documents. The Indians also received promises of houses, teachers, and "honest trade."⁵⁷

The Friends' role among the Indians at the conferences led to ever mounting criticism by the proprietary party and considerable perplexity on the part of London Quakers who had to field charges relayed to royal officials by Peters and Denny. William Peters, brother of the Secretary, charged in a written deposition, for example, that the Quakers had hindered and delayed the peace. They had, Peters wrote, bribed the Indians with "many new shirts, and a great deal of silver and other trinkets," to accuse the proprietors of land frauds leading to war.⁵⁸

Philadelphia Friends zealously countered the attacks. Benezet was assigned by the Meeting for Sufferings to write an "impartial account" of the Quakers' role at Easton, and "their endeavors towards restoring peace with the Indians." They took the step, they explained, to correct numerous "gross misrepresentations" of Friends' actions that had been

propagated both in England and in Pennsylvania. Whatever the full truth of the matter, translator Conrad Weiser's change from sympathy with the Friendly Association to criticism of it as a result of the conferences is pertinent. In a letter to Governor Denny, Weiser wrote that the Association's leaders had "appeared so eager to bring the cause of the war,...on the Proprietors' back, that they forgot all reasonable discretion." As a result, he concluded, "the Indians learned of our weakness by being informed of our divisions."⁵⁹

Although the 1757 treaty with Teedyuscung's Delwares resulted in a peace of sorts, other hostile bands continued to clash with frontier settlers and militia from time to time. Benezet worked to get at the causes of the trouble and remedy them when he could. He was convinced that gaining an understanding of the Indians' grievances and negotiating honestly with them made more sense than sending out troops and offering bounties for scalps. Workmen returning from the construction of Teedyuscung's new village at Wyoming, Pennsylvania, had reported that the peaceful Indians' settlement was in immediate danger from jealous Minisinks--a subgroup related to the Delawares. The Minisinks had been raiding the New Jersey and Pennsylvania frontiers, and Benezet believed that the Jersey policy of a harsh and vengeful war of extermination was making things worse. He wrote John Smith, a leading Burlington Quaker and politician, urging him to head a lobbying group at the forthcoming meeting of the New Jersey Indian commissioners. The delegation should, Benezet wrote, insist on a withdrawal of the provincial declaration of war, and also try to "prevent your back-settlers taking any inconsiderate step which may continue and increase the enmity between us and the Indians."⁶⁰

He worked, too, on a special committee of the Meeting for Sufferings to investigate the legitimacy of Indian claims to Quaker-occupied lands in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The purpose, as stated in the minutes of July 13, 1758, was to inquire

what Indians were native inhabitants of that country, and where they are now settled, in order that...methods can be taken consistent with our stations and a due regard to the authority of the government, to propose a satisfaction to such who may have a just claim to the lands on which those Friends are settled.

If Quaker frontiersmen were in any way contributing to the present crisis, the Meeting wished to know about it, and make full amends to unjustly dispossessed natives. The Governor's Council, however, considered this one more meddlesome Quaker attempt to create Indian dissatisfaction with earlier government treaty agreements.⁶¹

Still another, larger, Easton conference convened in October, 1758. Over 500 Indians from many tribes attended, along with the governors of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Commissioners, interpreters and the inevitable large contingent of Quakers. The Indians disputed a great deal among themselves and stayed drunk most of the time. Whites wrangled over land and charged one another with secret bargaining for rich Indian areas near Wyoming. Israel Pemberton repeatedly tried to get the Six Nations' Chiefs to deed millions of acres of fertile Wyoming land to his friend Teedyuscung and the Delawares. Pemberton was then charged by the proprietary party with seeking the land for his own purposes. Finally, an embittered Cayuga Chief summed up the proceedings by announcing: "If the English know not how to manage Indian affairs, they should not call us together. They have invited us here to brighten the chain of peace, and have spent a fortnight disputing about

lands." The negotiations ended with an "entertainment" given by the Governors' party, at which the intoxicated Chiefs signed deeds confirming all previous "purchases" of lands. The British in turn promised to prevent settlement and private traders west of the Alleghenies.⁶²

The next month, General John Forbes led a substantial force to victory over the French at Fort Duquesne, which was promptly rechristened Fort Pitt. With the expulsion of the French from the Ohio country, new opportunities and new problems surfaced for the Friendly Association and its members. Throughout the fall, Pemberton had been canvassing wealthy Friends in the colonies and in England for increased subscriptions to the Association. This activity was closely related to Pemberton's keen interest in the extension of "honest trade" among the Indians in the wake of the expected French retreat.⁶³ For several years, the Quakers had lobbied the Assembly for effective regulation of the Indian trade. Complaints of cheating by unscrupulous white traders were frequently cited by Teedyuscung and his followers as one cause of the hostilities. A weak bill had been enacted in the fall of 1757, setting up a provincial trading post at Shamokin. But the Assembly lacked funds to stock the post, so Pemberton quickly supplied 200 pounds worth of merchandise on credit. A more extensive trade act became law in the spring of 1758, setting firm prices for all goods, prohibiting the sale of liquor to Indians by private dealers, and prohibiting independents from trading at all beyond the Alleghenies. A Commission headed by John Reynell was set up to administer the Act, and to license official traders.⁶⁴

In October, Pemberton received word from his London colleagues that they had shipped 800 pounds worth of "goods suitable for the Indians,

...to promote a commerce with them." Pemberton expressed a belated concern that the Quakers would be accused more vehemently than ever of "acting on self-interested motives, and partly with having a view to engross the trade." He thought such objections might be overcome in time, however.⁶⁵

By late 1758, Pemberton held almost total control over the finances of the Friendly Association, and his close colleague Reynell headed the Assembly's Indian Trade Commission. Pemberton was in a position to dictate who would be hired as licensed agents "for negotiating trade with the Indians." He also enjoyed the confidence of General Forbes, whom he had advised earlier on Indian affairs. As his men rebuilt Fort Pitt, the General sent out a request to Philadelphia for gifts and trade articles to use with the area Indians, now that their French allies were gone. The Assembly, as usual, was short of funds, but Pemberton came up with 1,500 pounds of Friendly Association money to outfit wagons and hire drivers for the trip to "Pittsburgh" as the Quakers called the fort. Pemberton instructed his agent to transport any goods not needed by the General on to Cumberland, Maryland, to use in private exchange for Indian furs. Maryland did not have a restrictive trade law.⁶⁶

Pemberton's international shipping empire was based on the export of furs and agricultural products from the middle colonies--an enterprise that had been seriously disrupted by the Seven Years' War, and one which urgently needed rebuilding by the time Fort Pitt fell to the English. By this period, too, Pemberton had turned much of his business acumen to speculation in real property, mortgages, and interest notes. It was

the same road to commercial success followed by many Friends in eighteenth century Philadelphia. It was also the one deliberately scorned by Anthony Benezet in 1756, when he made his final decision to travel the narrow path of humanitarian self-denial. But his recurring tinges of resentment, and a tendency to berate the acquisitiveness of his friend the successful Israel Pemberton, led him now to new levels of indignation. Pemberton had finally overstepped the bounds of his enormous prestige and influence among Quakers, especially Anthony Benezet.⁶⁷

Benezet and an unknown number of the trustees and members of the Friendly Association gathered hastily on December 25, 1758. They debated the improprieties of Pemberton's latest action, even as the entrepreneur himself galloped away after his wagon train with last minute instructions. The protesters drafted a curt letter, probably the work of Benezet, acting in his usual capacity among groups of Friends. The letter warned Pemberton that "to prosecute thy said intentions of setting a store at Fort Cumberland at this time and in the manner thou proposed is very exceptionable and will be productive of bad consequences." Upon his return, Pemberton received the letter with considerable irritation which was heightened by the knowledge that his closest supporters had not been notified of the meeting. Nevertheless, as a good Quaker, he bowed to the larger group's consensus and returned the 1,500 pounds to the treasury from personal funds. Thereafter, he ordered all the goods sold for a profit, and subsequently sent four more, larger wagon trains west in the trade, with his personally chosen agents in charge.⁶⁸

The revolt against Pemberton's commercialization of the Friendly Association had repercussions in the Meeting for Sufferings, as well.

The cornering of the Indian trade threatened to bring down the wrath of the whole province on the Society of Friends, and to defame the valid accomplishments of the Association. Friends again moved swiftly to defend their collective name and standing in the community. Benezet and others were appointed by the Meeting for Sufferings to a committee charged with procuring a "Report of Council" sent to London by the Governor. The report, according to the Meeting for Sufferings minutes, contained "very virulent and unjust aspersions tending to vilify and injure us as a religious Society." London Quakers knew of the report and demanded an explanation from the Philadelphia brethren, who had never seen it. Friends wanted to know exactly what charges had been made. Benezet and Hugh Roberts repeatedly sought a copy of the document from the Governor, without success. They also visited a February meeting of the Friendly Association trustees, seeking a full account of the "business" they had "been engaged in, in promoting a pacification with the Indians." A great deal of energy was expended in these efforts to document and justify Friendly Association activities to London Friends and to the outside world, even as the membership of the Association revolted against its own leadership on the same matters.⁶⁹

From 1759 to its demise around 1763, the Association continued to be controlled largely by the Pemberton-Reynell-Zane group, but it had been permanently crippled by the trade revolt. The official minutes stopped in 1760. The Association had been intermittently successful in its stated object of securing peace with the Indians. And it could also look back with some satisfaction on its efforts to shift the blame for frontier warfare to the proprietary party.⁷⁰

How successful the more covert aims of some of the Association's leaders may have been remains a partial mystery. Well over 5,000 pounds entered the coffers between 1756 and 1763, and much of the capital was out at interest among the wealthier members most of the time. Approximately 2,800 pounds was spent for gifts and other expenses related to securing peaceful treaties and "extending the British interest with the Indians." But only a miniscule amount went into projects for improving their actual condition. Repeated Indian requests for teachers and ministers to live in their villages remained largely unfilled, except by Moravians who had little or no connection with the Friendly Association.⁷¹

Israel Pemberton's Indian trade made some profit for him, but less than he had hoped, and he eventually withdrew from it altogether. The evidence of his Western land speculation has been seriously distorted by repeated "revisions" of the minutes, and the disappearance of some relevant correspondence. As long as Quakers controlled the Assembly, there had been frequent and generous appropriations for securing Indian friendship through gifts "for obtaining more of their land," as the Pemberton-descended historian Samuel Parrish explained in his early account of the Friendly Association. Following the exclusion crisis, financing of Indian affairs was effectively transferred from the Assembly to the private Association. By 1758 that group was tightly controlled by Pemberton. Some personal attempts to acquire large tracts of frontier land can be traced by piecing together fugitive bits of information. These include the several secret errands to Wyoming by Pemberton's in-law and staunch supporter, Isaac Zane, which were financed by the Association. The Zanes and Pembertons did acquire land holdings in the area, and some

members of the family settled there. At least two of the "visiting ministers" from London, John Hunt and Thomas Gawthorp, were deeply involved with Pemberton in frontier land deals. And there is evidence that much of his interest in Indian affairs during the war involved continuing jealousy of the Virginia Ohio Company speculation--a rivalry that had roots as far back as the 1740's in provincial politics.⁷²

As the Friendly Association declined, following Pemberton's takeover, Benezet increased his direct personal involvement with Indians. He wrote two brief but extraordinary "accounts" describing his impressions of certain Indian friends. The first, "An Account of the Behaviour and Sentiments of a Number of Well-Disposed Indians Mostly of the Minusing Tribe," was written in 1760. Under the leadership of a chieftan named Papunahung, a few of the Minusings, or "minisinks," had adopted pacifist doctrines. Thus they had refused to participate in the bloody frontier warfare. In July, 1760, Papunahung and some of his people came to Philadelphia, both to visit Friends and to return three white captives they had "redeemed from the other Indians."⁷³

Benezet's account begins with a narrative description of the Indians' meeting with the Governor when they released the prisoners. Papunahung made a speech about peace, which he sealed with two strings of wampum. He refused the Governor's offer of a reward for returning the captives. Instead, he requested that no more liquor be sold, traded, or given to the tribes' young men, and that fair prices be firmly established for the fur trade. The young Indians, he noted, had been tempted to cheat by leaving paws, ears, etc., on the skins because the traders had repeatedly lured them in with promises of higher prices than they

actually paid. The Governor then promised that "care should be taken to prevent the cause of complaint," and he encouraged them "to persevere in their religious progress."⁷⁴

During their stay in Philadelphia, the Minisinks attended Friends' Meetings regularly, and "kept themselves quite free from drink, and behaved soberly and orderly." On their return trip to their village at Wyalusing, Benezet accompanied them as far as his sister's home at Bethlehem, to make "some further observations upon their conversations and conduct on the way." He was particularly impressed with the religious faith and demeanor of Papunahung, who told of Quaker-like experiences in receiving direct spiritual enlightenment. In a lonely five day vigil in the wilderness, the Chief had achieved a sense

of the virtues and nature of several herbs, roots, plants, and trees, and the different relation they had one to another, and he was made sensible that man stood in the nearest relation to God of any other part of the creation.

Papunahung also told Benezet that he preferred quiet meditation rather than religious disputation. He had noticed that such argument led people to "stand up in opposition one against the other, as tho' they strove to throw each other down or to see which is the wisest. Now these things should not be." Christians should converse calmly and reverently, the Chief believed, "without being in a heat or angry."⁷⁵

Fascinated at what he heard, Benezet asked for more of the edifying native wisdom before they parted company at Bethlehem. Papunahung was apparently surprised at the request, and he remained silent at first. Finally he replied, "People of different notions about religion have spoken to me, all directing me to their particular way." Acknowledging his amazement that a religious white teacher should ask guidance from

him, he observed, "It discovers a good disposition in you to love to hear good counsel." This journey and acquaintance with Papunahung, wrote Benezet, afforded him personally "much satisfaction and instruction."⁷⁶

The idea of an untutored Indian, wise in the ways of the earth, the possessor of a reasonable natural religion, and a full human being in harmony with his environment, was in 1760 still a relatively unarticulated concept in America. It was the French Enlightenment "Natural man" in the fullest sense. European philosophers discussed such natural phenomena in idealistic terms. But Americans, faced with real Indians, had been either too hostile or too paternal in their attitudes to consider them religious or philosophic instructors. For Benezet, the new appreciation grew directly from personal encounters with Indians such as the Minisink Chief, as he applied his ideal of Christian brotherhood in daily life. Historian Henry Joel Cadbury suggests that this Account of Indians, published in London in 1761, was probably one of the first printed sources for the literary "Noble Savage" tradition as it developed in England.⁷⁷

Benezet attended another Easton conference the following summer, as did Papunahung with many of his tribesmen and some 400 other Indians from several nations. Some of the Quakers spent a great deal of time socializing and worshipping with Papunahung's group during the three week negotiations. Benezet preserved a brief record of these informal contacts and a later encounter at Philadelphia in his "Account of Papunahung's Second Visit to Friends the fourth of the eighth month, 1761." Again he noted approvingly that these Indians "behaved in an orderly, becoming manner."⁷⁸

One of the more interesting interchanges he recorded occurred at Easton. Papunahung attempted to present the Quakers with some valuable bundles of furs as tokens of friendship and of gratitude to the great spirit for giving his braves a good hunt. But "this being an offer unexpected by us," wrote Benezet,

and the value of the present much greater than appeared fit for us to accept, it was replied, that we did not think it was right for us to receive presents from them, it being more suitable for us to give than to receive.

The refusal offended Papunahung, who could no longer "converse with the same openness and freedom, as he had done before." Then the Quakers reversed their pious stand and arranged to accept the present after first notifying the Governor of the situation. Benezet explained that "the exchanging presents was with them so firmly established as a testimony of friendship," that refusal to accept a gift was "understood as a declaration" that no friendship really existed. The Quakers, with their spontaneous interest in the material value of the gift, and fearful about the effect of official opinion, had reacted in a way that seriously jeopardized their prized fellowship with the Indians.⁷⁹

But the breach healed gradually, and Papunahung, with a few of his followers, traveled to Philadelphia following the treaty for a two weeks' visit among Friends. A series of Meetings was held with them in various Quaker homes, including Benezet's. From the "Account" it appears that the "solid conversations" with the Indians had both a social and a religious dimension. If other matters such as the fur trade were discussed by some people, Benezet omitted to mention it. He himself was fascinated with his guests' native wisdom and their spiritual experiences.

After relating a series of anecdotes, he concluded that the Indians had a sufficient natural religion to live orderly, plain, and useful lives. There was no suggestion of attempts to convert the Indians. He reported that they attended most of the Quaker meetings during their stay, however. One Indian spoke for ten or fifteen minutes "in a decent and becoming manner," and created "a religious awe over the Meeting, especially among the younger people."⁸⁰

But Benezet's ability and desire to accept instruction from the Indians was a rare quality in his own day, as well as later. The Overseers of the Press--some of the same people who had contributed so generously to the Friendly Association--refused to publish Benezet's accounts of Indians, nor did they share the young people's awe of the dark skinned visitors at Meeting.⁸¹

Benezet again accompanied the Indians as far as Bethlehem, following their Philadelphia visit. People in the frontier town were alarmed by recent warnings of an impending Indian attack. With this ominous piece of news on their minds, Benezet and another Friend headed back toward Philadelphia. On the way they met another Quaker party and warned them of the danger of proceeding farther on the road.⁸²

Indian relations on the frontier deteriorated the following year. Soldiers and settlers continued to move beyond the Alleghenies, despite treaty promises. In an effort to forestall an impending Indian rebellion, the British announced the Proclamation of 1763. But it came too late. By early summer, angry Indians led by the Ottawa Chief Pontiac began another rampage comparable to the 1755-1756 attacks.⁸³

Benezet wrote a strong letter to Sir Jeffry Amherst in July, 1763, assessing the frontier situation and calling for a rational, peaceful resolution to the conflict. Amherst, British Commander-in-Chief at the time, was preparing to launch an all out campaign of virtual extermination against the Indians. Benezet urged instead an expedition to evacuate all white settlers and military garrisons from west of the mountains, leaving the area in Indian control, as repeatedly promised. He reiterated the various treaty pledges, and quoted a Chief's complaint at the 1762 negotiations: "You promised to go away as soon as you drove the French away; and yet you stay there and build houses, and make it stronger and stronger every day." Thus, Benezet continued, "the apprehension the Indians are under, that the English intend by degrees to dispossess them of their land, is the cause of the cruel violence they have lately committed." Correct the cause of the trouble, do not punish its victims, he demanded.⁸⁴

But the situation was beyond the reach of rational debate, and Benezet feared for his friends, Indian and white, on the frontier. In December, news reached Philadelphia of the infamous "Paxton Boys" massacre of a village of peaceful Conestoga Indians near Lancaster. Another group of friendly Christian Indians from Bethlehem, threatened with a similar fate, was moved to Philadelphia for safety. In February, 500 heavily armed "Paxton Boys" headed for the city, intent on the murder of Indians and Quakers alike. A band of armed Philadelphia citizens, including some young Quakers, gathered to defend the pacifists of both races. For a strange, incongruous hour, the hodge-podge militia took shelter from bad weather in the Quaker Meeting House, stacking guns in

a corner. A detachment of British regulars marched with Benjamin Franklin and other Commissioners to meet the invaders at Germantown. Franklin's diplomacy combined with the show of force was enough to disperse the Paxton Boys.⁸⁵

But the Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting now had a new problem to cope with. Many of the older pacifists demanded the disownment of the "young men who took up arms" during the uprising. Benezet counselled "laboring with" the young men, however, in an effort to convince them of their error and encourage a public repentance. This was the course actually followed, but a few of the youths displayed a stubborn "disposition to vindicate their conduct." The Philadelphia Meeting continued to fuss over the matter for several years. In 1767, a "large and weighty" Meeting finally decided to drop the disownment procedures-- to Benezet's great relief.⁸⁶

A similar matter, known to Friends as the "Wagon Affair," apparently involved the sale by one or more influential Quakers of arms and ammunition to frontier Indians. The wagons referred to may have been those of Israel Pemberton, consigned first to Pittsburgh and then to Cumberland. At least one shipment had carried some military supplies. The controversy was first mentioned by Benezet in a letter to Smith soon after the revolt against Pemberton's Indian trade activities. As usual, when the Meeting contemplated strict disciplinary action, Benezet urged mercy and patience toward the offender, even though he disapproved their actions. "It's very hard for persons in trade," he wrote, "not to be, even inadvertently, more or less engaged in matters that border very near, if not exceed the wagon affair."⁸⁷ If Pemberton was indeed implicated

in the "affair," as seems likely, he was never actually disciplined for it.

The year 1756 had been a turning point, both in the life of Anthony Benezet, and in the Society of Friends. For Benezet it marked the final turning away from the merchant-shipper career expected of him both by his family and by many of his religious associates. It marked, too, the full acceptance of a new vocation--that of "servant of mankind." His personal pilgrimage had a parallel in the Society's withdrawal from formal political power and its new determination to act in accordance with religious tenets rather than upon the demands of a population at war. As Brent E. Barksdale has stated, "The Society as a whole finally became convinced of the basic inconsistencies between their perfectionist ethic and the demands of public office."⁸⁸ For Benezet the dimensions of choice were even more restricted by his tendency to follow out the full logic of his convictions. The perfectionist ethic, especially the peace testimony, for him precluded the competitive milieu of the market place with its inevitable use of economic force. His pacifist convictions forced him into greater self-reliance at the same time he was becoming more involved in the service of the human brotherhood.

Although he strained against the "worldly" motives of some members in the Friendly Association, he nevertheless worked within the group as well as outside. He moved steadily toward a practical expression of his faith in the possibility of a humane, balanced, peaceful society, as opposed to the chaos of war. To this end, he emphasized the need to keep Indian hunting grounds entirely free of white settlers and soldiers.

He had the extraordinary, if unappreciated, perception to understand how incompatible were the two contending cultures of Pennsylvania. The white colonists whose civilization was based on competition for land and resources could not tolerate an Indian culture with its opposite relationship to the land as a shared resource. Nor could the more simple native economy, based on a cooperative sense of values, long survive without protection from a rising capitalism.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VIII

¹Peter Brock, Pacifism in the United States (Princeton, 1968), 22, 23.

²J. William Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America (New York, 1973), 191. Brock, Pacifism, 3-8. Amelia Mott Gummere, ed., The Journal and Essays of John Woolman (New York, 1922), 207.

³Brock, Pacifism, 3-17. Brent E. Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy in Colonial Pennsylvania (Stanford, 1961), 2. Mainstream leaders of the Reformation, including Calvin and Luther, repudiated pacifism, and approved Christian participation in wars ordered by lawful government authority.

⁴See Brock, Pacifism, 10, for discussion of the varieties of pacifism in Pennsylvania. Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 2.

⁵See Staughton Lynd, ed., Nonviolence in America (New York, 1966), xvi. Lynd dates the change to a broader concept at the Revolution, however.

⁶To John Smith, Dec. 13, 1757, Brookes, 224, 225. See Brock, Pacifism, 27-54, for account of John Woolman's pacifist commitment.

⁷To Samuel Smith, May 17, 1765, Brookes, 265. See also, Brock, Pacifism, 22. The Moravian view of pacifism in defensive war was considerably modified by the realities of their exposed situation on the frontier. See Benjamin Franklin's comments on the matter, Autobiography, L. Jesse Lemisch, ed., (New York, 1961), 157. He concluded that "common sense, aided by present danger, will sometimes be too strong for whimsical opinions."

⁸To John Smith, May 2, 1765, Brookes, 261. Logan's letter published in PMHB, VI (1882), 402 ff.

⁹Frank P. Jennings, "Miquon's Passing: Indian-European Relations in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1674-1755," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965), 65, 66. Lynd, Nonviolence, xx. Rayner W. Kelsey, Friends and the Indians (Philadelphia, 1917), 49. Although no exact copy of the treaty exists, there is an abundance of evidence that it did take place at Shackamaxon in 1683. James, 182. Robert L. D. Davidson, War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania (New York, 1957), 77. Samuel Parrish, Some Chapters in the History of the Friendly Association (Philadelphia, 1877), 7.

¹⁰Theodore Thayer, Israel Pemberton, King of the Quakers (Philadelphia, 1943), 60-69, 91.

¹¹Theodore Thayer, Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy (Harrisburg, Pa., 1953), 32. Quote from Isaac Norris Letter Book, 1719-1756, 68, Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 69. Also, 66-69, 77, 78.

¹²Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 77, 78, 91. Sherman P. Uhler, Pennsylvania's Indian Relations to 1754 (Allentown, Pa., 1951), Frederick B. Tolles, "The Twilight of the Holy Experiment; a Contemporary View," BFHS, XLV (1956), 31.

¹³S. Fothergill to his wife, Nov. 6, 1755, George Crosfield, ed., Memoirs of Samuel Fothergill (Liverpool, 1843), 219. Benezet to Joseph Spangenberg, Dec. 25, 1755, Brookes, 213. Letter of I. Pemberton, 1758, quoted in Kelsey, Friends and Indians, 75, 76. Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 27.

¹⁴To his wife, Nov. 6, and 24, 1755, and to Dr. John Fothergill, Nov. 24, 1755, Crosfield, Memoirs, 291, 224, 225.

¹⁵Minutes of PMM, Aug. 28, 1761, 362. See also Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 47. James Bennett Nolan, General Benjamin Franklin (Philadelphia, 1936), 44-46. Frost, Quaker Family, 209.

¹⁶Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt (New York, 1938), 135. Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 27, 48. Franklin to Richard Jackson, May 9, 1753, Leonard W. Labaree, ed., Papers of Benjamin Franklin (New Haven, 1961), IV, 485.

¹⁷Benezet, Short Account of Quakers (Philadelphia, 1780), 9.

¹⁸Benezet, Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes, with Some Advice Thereon (2nd ed., Germantown, Pa., 1760), 1, 2. Jordan, 300, suggests that Benezet was the first to point out collective aspects of guilt and responsibility in the slave trade.

¹⁹To Jonah Thompson, Apr. 24, 1756, Brookes, 220. See also, Benezet, Thoughts on the Nature of War (Philadelphia, 1766), 6.

²⁰Pennsylvania Archives, 4th Ser., II, 489, 490, Brock, Pacifism, 137. Braddock quoted in Nolan, General Benjamin Franklin, 10.

²¹Brock, Pacifism, 137, 138. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 85-87.

²²Brock, Pacifism, 136-139. Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 19-21. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 88-90.

²³See John Woolman's account of the controversy, Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 205-210. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 90.

²⁴Best primary source is Woolman's account, Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 205-210. See also, Brock, Pacifism, 140, 141. S. Fothergill to his wife, Dec. 17, 1755, Crosfield, Memoirs, 232.

²⁵Brock, Pacifism, 12, 140, 141. Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 205, 206. Other signers included John Churchman, John Reynell, Israel and John Pemberton. For many years, Quakers had uncomplainingly paid taxes "in the mixture," meaning that an unspecified part went for military purposes. Benezet's New Testament in HQC.

²⁶Brock, Pacifism, 138. Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 19-21. To Spangenberg, Jan. 24, 1756, Brookes, 217. Tolles "Twilight," 31.

²⁷Brock, Pacifism, 139, 140. Henry J. Cadbury, Friendly Heritage (Norwalk, Conn., 1972), 303, 304.

²⁸Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 115. Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 33. S. Fothergill to John Churchman, Oct. 26, 1756, Crosfield, Memoirs, 276. See Davis, 328, 329, for discussion of Atlantic Quaker community as a powerful international political pressure group by the 1750's.

²⁹Minutes of PYM, Sept. 20-26, 1755, May 7, 1756, 4-10. Frost, Quaker Family, 191. Brock, Pacifism, 141-144.

³⁰James, 166, 167. J. Fothergill letter of Mar. 16, 1756, quoted in Brock, Pacifism, 144. Quote in Cadbury, Friendly Heritage, 303, 304. Brock, Pacifism, 141-143. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 79. The London reprint of J. Woolman's Journal in 1775 omits the section on tax refusal.

³¹Tolles, "Twilight," 32. Frost, Quaker Family, 191. S. Fothergill to his wife, Nov. 6, 1755, Crosfield, Memoirs, 219. Jack D. Marietta, "Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Society of Friends, 1682-1776," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1969).

³²To Jonah Thompson, Apr. 24, 1756, Brookes, 220.

³³Tolles, "Twilight," 32. Arthur Zilversmit, The First Emancipation (Chicago, 1967), 125. Brock, Pacifism, 143. The Quaker party's popularity at this time also sprang from its championing of paper money. Thayer, Pennsylvania Politics, 33.

³⁴Brock, Pacifism, 137, 144. Pennsylvania Archives, 4th Ser., II, 478, 489, 490. S. Fothergill to his wife, Jan. 19, 1756, Crosfield, Memoirs, 240. Verse quoted in Brookes, 115. Frost, Quaker Family, 192.

³⁵Quoted in Brock, Pacifism, 151.

³⁶To Jonah Thompson, Aug. 28, 1759, FHL, Swarthmore Collection.

³⁷Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Dec. 11, 1756, 32. Thomas E. Drake, Quakers and Slavery in America (New Haven, 1950), 203.

³⁸Kelsey, Friends and Indians, 75. Minutes of PYM, M. for S., 1756-1784, are replete with documentation for this paragraph. Typical examples: July 14, 1757, 93, when Benezet and John Reynell reported satisfactory completion of their assignment to visit the Mayor of Philadelphia, present a petition on freedom of conscience, and to explain the Quaker position on the matter. Jan., 1, 1757, 54, Benezet placed on a committee to draft address to the Assembly on "Liberty of Conscience." Feb. 24, 1757, 61, 62, Benezet assigned to committee "to use their endeavors with" members of the Assembly against a proposed curtailment of civil and religious liberties inherent in the pending militia bill. He was also ordered to draft letter to LYM explaining the dangers of the bill and urging Friends' intervention in behalf of Philadelphia Quakers.

³⁹See Brock, Pacifism, 149, 150. Parrish, Friendly Association, 24, 25.

⁴⁰See Parrish, Friendly Association, for the fullest treatment and extensive use of MS sources. A more recent study is Theodore Thayer, "The Friendly Association," PMHB, LXVII (1943). Friends in the Assembly who voted for the war measures against Indians were disowned by the Society, Brookes, 114.

⁴¹Brock, Pacifism, 145-147. Papers of the Friendly Association, I. 95, 99, Arch Street Dept. of Records, Philadelphia. Tolles, "Twilight," 32. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 98, 99. Thayer, "Friendly Association," 358.

⁴²Papers of the Friendly Association, I, 103. Parrish, Friendly Association, 12-17. Thayer, "Friendly Association," 358-361.

⁴³Parrish, Friendly Association, 16-18, 52. Thayer, "Friendly Association," 361, 362. Kelsey, Friends and Indians, 67.

⁴⁴William C. Reichel, ed., Memorials of the Moravian Church, I, (Philadelphia, 1870), 237. Nolan, General Benjamin Franklin, 30.

⁴⁵Parrish, Friendly Association, 18, 19. Brookes, 115. Gov. Morris informed Israel Pemberton that he considered all the Quakers at Easton "His Majesty's enemies." Their presence was tolerated only because of the size of their gifts and the Indians' earlier insistence that they be present at the treaty.

⁴⁶Parrish, Friendly Association, 19-22, 39. Quote in Thayer, "Friendly Association," 363.

⁴⁷B. Franklin to Thomas Pownall, Aug. 19, 1756, Labaree, Papers of Benjamin Franklin, VI, 487. Parrish, Friendly Association, 24. James, 178.

⁴⁸Parrish, Friendly Association, 25-29.

⁴⁹Ibid., 34-40. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 126-131.

⁵⁰Ibid., 126-131, 158-161. Parrish, Friendly Association, 32, 38.

⁵¹Ibid., 41-48.

⁵²Ibid., 45, 90, deals with the lesser known aspects of Friendly Association activities for indigent or orphan Indians. These activities received far less attention and less money than treaty related matters. Brookes, 115, describes Benezet's continuing direct personal involvement with Indians.

⁵³Parrish, Friendly Association, 57-60.

⁵⁴Brookes, 114. Joseph Elkinton, Anthony Benezet and His Times (Philadelphia, 1898), 21. Parrish, Friendly Association, 60-69.

⁵⁵Ibid., 69-73.

⁵⁶Ibid., 76, 77. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 140, 141.

⁵⁷To John Smith, Aug. 20, 1757, The Friend, V, (1832), 297. See Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 140-146, for details of treaty.

⁵⁸Brock, Pacifism, 150. Parrish, Friendly Association, 77-79. Pennsylvania Archives, 1757, Ser. 1, III, 274, 275.

⁵⁹Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Aug. 10, 1757, 96. Weiser to Denny, Oct. 27, 1757. Pennsylvania Archives, Ser. 1, III, 313, 314.

⁶⁰To J. Smith, June 14, 1758, Brookes, 227, 228.

⁶¹Minutes of PYM, M. for S., 1756-1775, May 11, 1758, 126, 127; July 13, 1758, 132, 133. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 148.

⁶²Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 169. Parrish, Friendly Association, Brock, Pacifism, 150. Lois Mulkearn, ed., George Mercer Papers Relating to the Ohio Company of Virginia (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1954), xiv.

⁶³Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 169, 170. Parrish, Friendly Association, 92, 98-106.

⁶⁴Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 158. James, 186, 187.

⁶⁵Parrish, Friendly Association, 92. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 159, 160.

⁶⁶Parrish, Friendly Association, 90, 109-112. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 171-173.

⁶⁷Ibid., 11, 24. Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House (New York, 1963).

⁶⁸Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 172, 173. Parrish, Friendly Association, 110, 111. James, 188, 189.

⁶⁹Minutes, PYM, M. for S., Jan. 12, 1759, 142-144. Jan. 25, 1759, 146. Feb. 1, 1759, 147. Parrish, Friendly Association, 108.

⁷⁰Brock, Pacifism, 150. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 186.

⁷¹Kelsey, Friends and Indians, 68. Brock, Pacifism, 150. James, 190-192. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 190-191. Parrish, Friendly Association, 90-105. Israel Pemberton later claimed that the Association did not send teachers to the Indians because they could not find qualified persons for the task. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 192.

⁷²Parrish, Friendly Association, 7, 113-121. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 23, 32, 175. For overview of relation of certain London Quakers to the Ohio Company, see Mulkearn, George Mercer Papers, Introduction. Clearly there was rivalry between some London Friends over the Ohio lands, as well. See also, Joseph H. Coates, ed., The Journal of Isaac Zane to Wyoming, PMHB, XXX (1906), 417-426.

⁷³Benezet, Account of Indians (London, 1761), reprinted in Brookes, 479-485. James, 96, 97. Amelia Mott Gummere, "Papunahung, the Indian Chief," BFHA, IX (1920), 114-117. Papunahung (1705-1775) was converted to the Moravian faith in 1763, along with his family and tribe, under guidance of missionary David Zeisberger. Both of Benezet's "Accounts" were based on a combination of notes taken by Woolman, Pemberton, and possibly others, in addition to Benezet's own observations.

⁷⁴Benezet, Account of Indians, Brookes, 479-481.

⁷⁵Ibid., 482-485.

⁷⁶Ibid., 484, 482.

⁷⁷Davis, 5, 6. Henry J. Cadbury, "One Good Friend and His Influence," FQ, (1974), 203.

⁷⁸Brookes, 118. Benezet, "Papunahung's Second Visit," Brookes, 488.

⁷⁹Ibid., 487.

⁸⁰Ibid., 488, 490.

⁸¹Ibid., 488-492. Cadbury, "One Good Friend," 203. Friends never encouraged Indians or Negroes to join their Meetings.

⁸²George Vaux, ed., "Extracts from the Diary of Hannah Callender," PMHB, XII (1888), 448.

⁸³Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 186.

⁸⁴To Sir Jefferey Amherst, July, 1763, Brookes, 248-253.

⁸⁵Brock, Pacifism, 155, 156. Kelsey, Friends and Indians, 69, 70. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 189. Israel Pemberton was a particular target of the Paxton Boys' threats.

⁸⁶Brock, Pacifism, 156. Benezet to George Dillwyn, Apr., 1767, Brookes, 269.

⁸⁷Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 172. To J. Smith, Feb. 20, 1759, Brookes, 234, 235.

⁸⁸Barksdale, Pacifism and Democracy, 40, 49.

CHAPTER IX

REVOLUTIONARY PACIFISM

The savage frontier fighting during Pontiac's Rebellion was only the first of the "public disturbances and calamities" that characterized the period following the Seven Years' War. For the pacifist Quakers of Philadelphia, the times demanded another series of difficult and unpopular decisions. Nearly all the Philadelphia merchants, including the wealthy Friends of Benezet's reform circle, actively resisted the new British trade regulations during the 1765 Stamp Act crisis by signing the non-importation agreements. But a reaction set in among the financially pinched dry goods merchants, and the Pembertons and others of the "strict" group began to pull back. Their reasons for the change were both economic and religious, but only the latter were publically announced. By the time of the Townshend Acts in 1767, Quakers were sharply divided on the question of protest. And increasingly, the powerful voice of Philadelphia's Society of Friends called members away from the rising popular clamor for sanctions against Britain.¹

In 1769, Philadelphia Monthly Meeting debated whether to allow members to continue participating in the city's Committee of Merchants and Traders. The "solid sense and judgement" of the Meeting was that Friends should withdraw from the patriot organization, since it was "inconsistent" with the Quaker profession. Furthermore, Friends were advised to avoid "the frequent general meetings of the people of this city, on the subject of public affairs, and to keep in stillness and quietness."

Most Friends were convinced that such popular gatherings constituted dangerous preludes to riots, violence, and other forms of moral corruption. Benezet was appointed to visit Quakers who persisted in maintaining their membership on the radical Merchant's Committee, and urge them to resign. He reported in September that he had carried out his assignment, that the offenders took the Meeting's advice "weightily under consideration, and there appears a hope of its being useful."² But as yet no provisions existed for enforcing the Society's recommendations with formal disciplinary measures.

On the eve of the Revolution, Philadelphia lacked an effective municipal government. The "Municipal Corporation" functioned only as a recording office and regulator of city markets. One constable served the city of 40,000, occasionally assisted in his police duties by private citizens. With the rising incidence of potentially riotous gatherings, and the general lack of supervision by responsible magistrates, Quakers acted decisively to protect their own members. They were especially concerned about their vulnerable youth amid the temptations of the growing unrest. Beginning in October, 1773, and throughout the next decade, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting sent out regular warnings to members of all the colonial Meetings. Friends were advised against participation in any form of revolutionary activity, including non-violent forms of resistance to British authority. Non-involvement in political matters at any level became the official position of the Society. It was increasingly enforced by "laboring with" offenders in extended visits, and if that failed, by the threat of disownment.³

Benezet objected to the use of violence, not only against persons and animals, but against property as well. The attitude was a part of his pacifistic reverence for all of creation. He wrote to his friend Moses Brown in Rhode Island expressing strong disapproval of the Boston Tea Party in 1773. "The violence which we understand was lately committed at Boston in the destruction of the tea is a matter of concern to us," he wrote.

We much desire the members of our society and others who profess to have a testimony to bear to the peaceable suffering spirit of the Gospel, will be careful not to join with or⁴ strengthen in word or heart anything of that nature.

Another social problem that had concerned Benezet for some time was closely related to the rise in "public commotions" like the tea party: the intemperate use of intoxicating liquors. Within the five square blocks of the Middle Ward in which he lived, his walking errands frequently took him past several breweries and a distillery. Eighteen of the city's tavern keepers did business in Middle Ward, along with merchants, doctors, and a wide variety of less prestigious occupations. Drunkenness had occasionally created difficulties for the Monthly Meeting in the past. A typical case recorded in the minutes was that of a poor Friend who in 1758 had been "addicted to drunkenness, whereby his family is in danger of suffering and he becomes negligent of paying his just debts,...and is very extravagant in his general conduct." After admonishing the man several times, Meeting finally absolved itself of responsibility by disowning him. His debts and his conduct would no longer be chargeable to Quakers as a group, even though his family remained to be cared for.⁵

Benezet agonized over matters of this kind. He urged the Society to avoid such disownments whenever possible, and instead to press for government action to prevent the easy accessibility of liquor. Like many later reformers, he reasoned at first that limiting the supply would eliminate excess use. In 1762 he succeeded in moving Philadelphia Monthly Meeting to request that the Assembly reduce the number of licenses for liquor sales. The same year, Meeting sent representatives to visit three of its members who kept taverns, because their businesses had become "a snare and a temptation to many of the youth and others."⁶

But Benezet gradually became aware that such measures were inadequate to the growing dimensions of the problem. The Meeting's efforts had little long-range effect and no further temperance pronouncements came from the Society until the outbreak of the Revolution. But Benezet could not ignore the matter. The costs in human suffering and disorder were too high. One of the more discouraging aspects of the problem was a fact that he called to Samuel Fothergill's attention in a letter. Many of the most dedicated Quakers regularly added

1,000 pounds to 1,000 pounds, and 10,000 pounds to 10,000 pounds,...by the importation and sale of large quantities of rum, etc., which, though good in its place, yet,... from the excessive use of it may truly be said to be the greatest curse that ever befell the English nation, and if possible, yet more so, the poor natives of this land.

He had written these words in 1758, following his experiences at several Indian treaty negotiations. He knew, too, of the Pembertons' regular importation of rum and wine in their large merchant fleet. He chided the offenders, while he pondered the relationship between profits and intemperance.⁷

Benezet himself did not drink at all. He had suppressed the desire to do so by drinking three or four cups of tea in the late afternoon to revive himself after the day of teaching. Still, if the use of liquors was "good in its place," as he conceded, the question of how to keep it in that proper place was one that demanded his growing attention. The Society's restrictive actions had failed to alleviate the problem of intemperance, and the merchant fleets regularly increased their cargoes of rum. Clearly, more effective methods would have to be found.⁸

He began consulting medical books. And he made his own careful observations of the way in which liquor worked on his friends, both rich and poor, who overindulged at the social gatherings he attended. Finally, he decided to compile his findings in a book. He planned both to analyze the dimensions of the problem and to explore feasible alternatives for solving it. No such books existed at the time, although some writers, usually physicians, had set down dire warnings about the effects of "strong drink," with moralistic preachments against over-use. He found the work difficult and disquieting, he wrote to Samuel Allinson in July of 1774, a short time before he completed it. He hoped for a period of quiet relaxation after he finished the book he had "been painfully making." And then he intended to present copies to "members of every Assembly on the continent."⁹

While the book was still in manuscript, Benezet showed it to Jacob Lindley, a young man who had spoken on the subject at Yearly Meeting. The youth was visiting in Philadelphia, and a relative stranger, so Benezet invited him home for dinner after the Meeting. Lindley later described with delight

the simplicity of his table--they had for dinner corn beef cabbage and potatoes and for dessert a huge pie on an earthen dish like those made for laborers on a farm, the whole seasoned with a most cordial hospitality and warmth of affection, truly characteristic.

Following the meal, Benezet led his young guest to his study where they discussed the manuscript. The older man asked Lindley to add a signed paragraph or two, to be included in the work. Lindley timidly declined the invitation, but he never ceased to marvel at the expansive nature of the man who so spontaneously encouraged "an obscure and illiterate youth" to share in the authorship of an important work.¹⁰

Benezet's book, The Mighty Distroyer Displayed, was published late in 1774 by Philadelphia Overseers of the Press. In it he described the misuse of strong drink as an enormous social disorder that had been too long ignored by community leaders. He wrote that the very familiarity of such problems "takes away our attention, and robs things of their power" to shock and to stimulate corrective action. Thus, his first task was to delineate the full extent of the problem.¹¹

A dependence on liquor developed very easily in many people, he noted. This dependence was a form of disease that in recent years had "become so notoriously epidemical as to debilitate and destroy multitudes." He noted that "the unhappy dram-drinkers are so absolutely bound in slavery to these infernal spirits that they seem to have lost the power of delivering themselves from this worst of bondage."¹²

Excessive drinking was destructive in every way imaginable. The very distillation process corrupted the good natural grain and grapes, destroyed their healthful properties and replaced them with harmful ones. Both the human body and soul, created in the Divine image, suffered

unspeakable degradation by the overuse of the "infernal spirits." Benezet quoted lurid accounts from doctors detailing specific evil effects on the body. Liquors, "being caustic, burning spirits, which by inflaming the solids, and thickening the liquids, cause obstructions, which bring on many fatal diseases." In addition, the drinks "rot the entrails, such as liver, stomach, and bowels." Dr. Hoffman, the physician quoted here, obtained evidence for his statements "by opening the bodies of those who are killed by drinking." Intemperance also shortened the normal life span, a statement Benezet supported by comparing the long-lived, non-drinking women in the West Indies with the heavy-drinking men of the same place who died young.¹³

Too much liquor also depraved peoples' morals, numbed the "feelings of their minds," and created an "insensitivity to the workings of grace in the soul." This inevitably led to a turning away from social responsibility. As always, Benezet's concern for spiritual welfare was closely connected with his interest in a better life in this world. Liquor, he wrote, "not only heightens the passions of men and depraves their morals; but what is infinitely worse,...they become profane and abandoned, and to the last degree regardless of their duty to God and man." Drunkards even failed to care for their families, who lived in poverty and misery as a result. The worst thing, then, was failure to carry one's proper share of the communal burden, among one's fellow human beings--to participate in the destruction of social order. Here he pinpointed the most serious dimension of the problem. Intemperance was to be compared with war and slavery for all three led directly to

disorder, poverty, suffering, and death--the enemies of harmonious community life.¹⁴

The book refers several times to recent increases in the extent of the problem. "Never before," he noted in one place, has society been disordered "to the enormous degree that it has of late years arrived at, by the excessive use of these...spirituous liquors." No longer was it confined to the lower classes, or even "among mechanics and tradesmen." It had now become so "epidemical," that "many otherwise good and judicious people, have, unwarily to themselves and others, fallen in with the common herd, a sacrifice to this might devourer."¹⁵ The blurring of class characteristics was an unsettling element in Benezet's concept of the ideal society.

Working people, "the common herd," often became victims of the disease because their employers supplied them with regular rations of rum, he wrote. Harvest workers were kept intoxicated, ostensibly to prevent deaths from fatigue and heat exhaustion. But he argued that more deaths were caused by the overuse of rum in the fields than by the natural conditions. He recommended that, instead of rum, "more frequent intervals of rest, with a little food should be allowed the reapers, and small drinks such as molasses and water made agreeable with a little cider, small beer, or even milk and water." Thus they would be enabled "to perform their work to their employers' satisfaction and their own advantage."¹⁶

Benezet saw one fundamental reason behind the alarming increase in drunkenness in the colony, and it was a purely materialistic one.

The great call for our provisions brought us into connections with those countries from whence rum was procured; and the desire of gain has since in a progressive increase induced our traders to bring us plenty of distilled spirits.

The "arguments commonly advanced" for the expanding rum-import trade included its value as a source of public revenue, and the need for liquor as a means to get people to work. But these were not the real reasons for the growth of the trade, according to Benezet. Private profit was the culprit. As for tax income from liquor, he asked,

Is it a sound policy to encourage vice in the people, because a present revenue arises from their debaucheries? Where will the revenue be when the people who should pay them are destroyed? Are not a hardy, industrious, healthy people always found to be the most able to contribute amply to the support of the government?

And a "hardy industrious people," freed of the bondage of strong drink, would be a better work force, as well. All the arguments of his opponents in the matter, then, were "vain, though plausible pretenses; the true motive is the desire for gain," by individuals and firms.¹⁷

Having defined the problem and named the cause, Benezet began trying to solve it. There were some steps that people already in various stages of habituation could take to ease the pangs of withdrawal. He had found that the frequent use of milder drinks, warm broth or tea, was helpful "to recruit our spirits when dissipated through application of labor." Pure water was, he believed, nature's original and best drink, and he offered several suggestions for purifying water to avoid contamination.¹⁸

But the problem was generally too extensive for individual solutions, and Benezet emphasized the responsibility of society's leaders in combating it. To employers who had regularly supplied their workers

with rum, he recommended the use of gentle methods to break the habit. They should "by degrees mix water with the spirit," until at last no liquor at all remained. If workers suffered from a "gnawing in the stomach" during the gradual process, they could be given broth or tea.¹⁹

He suggested, too, that civic minded persons should boycott taverns entirely. Citizens could also urge their political representatives to "discourage the increase of spirituous liquors, either by importation, distillation, or otherwise." Next, he appealed directly to public officials. He urged "the governors of the nations, as guardians and tender fathers, to guard the people committed to their charge from this Mighty Destroyer." Historically, the only rulers who had seriously tried to stop the abuse of liquor by their people were the Indian chiefs who pled in vain with the white man, he observed. Legislators had it in their power to suppress the sale of liquor by the simple expedient of levying exorbitant taxes on it.²⁰

If these measures failed, or if the message of the Mighty Destroyer went unheeded, the consequences could be catastrophic. The Creator would not always be patient, he warned. "This disease has now attained so enormous a pitch, that...nothing less than God's severe fatherly correction will effectually cure it."²¹

Following the publication of The Mighty Destroyer, the Society took a renewed interest in the problem. Current public disorders emphasized the need for sobriety as nothing else could have done. The book was widely read and distributed by Friends, and became a guide-book for action by Quakers and non-Quakers alike. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting sent out numerous copies to other colonial Meetings, urging at the same

time a strengthening of the discipline on the subject. Moses Brown was one Friend profoundly influenced by the book, and he promptly took up his long crusade against the abuses of liquor in New England. The young Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush also felt the impact of Benezet's The Mighty Destroyer. After reading it he decided to write the first of his influential attacks on intemperance, Sermons to Gentlemen, in 1776.²²

Benezet's temperance campaign took place within a larger moral reform atmosphere, much like that generated during the French and Indian War. Friends, concerned about their wayward children, and the misbehavior of immigrants, again renewed their lobbying and petitioning to government officials. Benezet was a member of several delegations from Monthly and Yearly Meeting urging passage and enforcement of laws against "stage-plays, horse-racing, swearing, drunkenness, whoredom, cards, dice, etc." But the law makers found less and less time for such matters, as they concentrated on more pressing demands of another impending war.²³

Even as Benezet worked with a troubled spirit over his temperance manuscript, the new City Tavern of Philadelphia had opened on the corner of Walnut and Second Streets, two blocks from his home. Soon assorted revolutionary committees formed and conducted meetings within its walls, and colorful banquets entertained leading patriots and their guests.²⁴ Benezet's new book attacked the very "abuses" now practiced so openly at the new tavern in connection with revolutionary planning. The Society's hearty approval and subsidy for the temperance work was not unrelated to explosive political developments unfolding in the city. Strong drink threatened more than the moral purity of Quaker youth and German immigrants--it could be a dangerous catalyst to revolution. Boycotting taverns

might have political as well as moral implications.

On May 19, 1774, Paul Revere arrived at City Tavern with news of the closing of Boston's port. Word of critical shortages and suffering in the Bay Colony began to circulate in Philadelphia, and Friends pondered their responsibility in the matter. At first they decided against sending aid to New England, to avoid giving the impression of encouraging insurrection, or being "considered as approvers of their conduct." But after some firm encouragement from London Yearly Meeting, and the pleas of the more liberal local members, the decision was reversed. Benezet worked on the committee that raised nearly 4,000 pounds for the relief of New England "Friends and others in this time of public calamity." The "and others" was an important qualification, and a matter that had caused considerable dissension in Meeting. But the funds were finally sent to the care of Moses Brown for distribution in the summer of 1775. Most of the money was actually dispersed to meet the needs of non-Quakers, who seemed to be in the most desperate straits.²⁵

The Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia in September, 1774, amid rising tensions. Benezet visited the delegates individually to urge a peaceful resolution of the dispute with Britain, and inter-colonial action against slavery. He had received a letter from his Quaker colleague Robert Pleasants, of Virginia, commending the delegates from that province as "men of influence and capacity" who had displayed "favorable sentiments and services to Friends,...particularly Patrick Henry." A similar letter came from New Jersey attorney Samuel Allinson, encouraging contact with all the delegates. Benezet described his conversation with Patrick Henry in a reply to Allinson. After discussing

the need to end the slave trade, he had argued for a peaceful settlement on both religious and humanitarian grounds. Henry, apparently unimpressed, observed that many Friends he knew seemed to be of a very aggressive spirit, in contrast to the meek non-resistance doctrines propounded by Benezet. Sadly, the Quaker explained that many so-called Friends "had no other claim to our principles than as they were children or grand-children of those who professed." Benezet deplored the "violent spirit" which some nominal Quakers, including at least two members of the Continental Congress, displayed.²⁶

He was increasingly troubled by that violent spirit, not only among the Congressmen, but among people on the streets and in their businesses. He wrote Allinson of his concern about the "unchristian, yea unnatural, and cruel measures proposed by many, too many, who seem to have worked themselves to such a pitch that it looks as if they were athirst for blood!" Worse still, the warlike spirit infected the Society of Friends, the very citadel of pacifism. And it was becoming difficult to maintain even his own personal equilibrium in such an atmosphere, he confessed. He sought an inward peace, but discovered a lingering warfare between "nature and grace."²⁷

As the Continental Congress, under increasingly firm patriot control, debated the next move for the colonies, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting completed a difficult task. No longer could it allow members to remain affiliated with the rebellious government, in defiance of the Society's clearly-stated position. Committees which nearly always included Benezet, had been sent on their repeated missions to persistent offenders, warning them of impending disownment. By 1776, the process

had been completed, and the last Quaker office holders had either resigned, left their religious communion, or been disowned.²⁸

Meanwhile, the Society had to settle the question of its relations with the new revolutionary groups and "illegal assemblies" that were inexorably taking control of government at all levels. On January 4, 1775, the Meeting for Sufferings named Benezet chairman of an important committee to recommend appropriate action. His committee presented its final report in the form of a "Testimony of the People Called Quakers, Given Forth by a Meeting of the Representatives of Said People,...the 24th Day of the First Month, 1775." With 35 members of the Meeting for Sufferings and "divers others" present, the "Testimony" was unanimously approved. The Meeting ordered an initial printing of 3,000 copies, and soon after 3,000 more, plus 1,500 copies in the German language.²⁹

The statement was a brief and unequivocal proclamation of loyalty to the Crown. It called on Quakers everywhere strictly to avoid any measures that might "excite disaffection to the king, as supreme magistrate, or to the legal authority of his government," for such measures were "destructive of the peace and harmony of the civil society." Furthermore, it called for solid opposition to "every usurpation of power and authority that is in opposition to the laws and government of England, and against all combinations, insurrections, conspiracies, and illegal assemblies." The Quaker position, according to the "Testimony," was prompted by convictions of the "consciencious discharge of our duty to almighty God, 'by whom kings reign and princes decree justice.'"³⁰

Approximately one half of the Quakers on the American continent were members of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, although there were six

other Yearly Meetings along the Eastern seaboard. Philadelphia was the unquestioned leader, and soon after publication of the "Testimony," the other Meetings followed with similar public declarations.³¹

London Quakers, however, had objections to Philadelphia's public statement. An urgent epistle from British Friend Dr. John Fothergill insisted that "submission to the prevailing power must be your duty." And Fothergill informed James Pemberton that the "prevailing power is the general voice of America." The American Friends' declaration was in fact making it more difficult for the Londoners to uphold their own liberal position in countering the Crown's hard line toward the colonies. The Philadelphia Quakers seemed determined to support their very oppressors.³²

But the increasingly independent Friends in America ignored London's moderate advice. They published The Ancient Testimony and Principles of the People Called Quakers Renewed, with respect to the King and Government,...addressed to the People in General, in January, 1776. The new, longer broadside reiterated the strong anti-independence stand, and called for a return to an earlier era under the King's rule, a time "favored with peace and plenty." The document quoted the words of the "Ancient Testimony" of 1696 which stated that

the setting up and putting down kings and governments is God's peculiar prerogative, for causes best known to himself: and that it is not our business to have any hand or contrivance therein; nor to be busybodies above our station, much less to plot or contrive the ruin or overturn of any of them.

The four page testimony called for a return to the policies of "our ancestors," during whose reign "the principle of justice and mercy"

presided, and the province was "preserved in tranquility and peace, free from the desolating calamities of war; and their endeavors were wonderfully blessed and prospered."³³ The document overflowed with nostalgia for the days of unquestioned Quaker control of the land, and for the brilliant prosperity of a bygone day.

A few months after the Declaration of Independence, the Meeting for Sufferings sent a published epistle to all Meetings on the continent. This new position paper urged Friends to stand firm in their peace principles. Quakers were specifically prohibited from participation in all revolutionary activities, including payment of fines in lieu of military service, war-connected business dealings, and the taking of test-oaths. The epistle did not declare formal allegiance to any government, but merely called for total non-involvement with war measures. The determination of the Society to preserve itself was its clearest message. "Neither outward sufferings, persecutions, nor any outward thing that is below, will hinder or break our heavenly fellowship." A post-script recommended the reading aloud of the epistle in families and Meetings everywhere.³⁴

It would be difficult, and perhaps a little ridiculous, to defend the Society of Friends from charges of loyalism, when their own published documents explicitly declared their fealty to the Crown before December, 1776. Yet there is no evidence to indicate that any of the American Meetings deliberately aided the military efforts of either side. Individual Friends who did so were promptly disowned when their actions were known. But there was an unabashed partiality for British rule among most Quakers that was apparent throughout the seventies. As late as

1780, Benezet was still "none too friendly towards independence," according to a letter of the French diplomat the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois. And his attitude was widespread among Friends.³⁵

A number of reasons for the persistence of Quaker loyalty to Britain are suggested by the Testimonies of 1775-1776, and by the minutes of Meetings and private correspondence of the period. The peace testimony had become a firm absolute of Quaker faith earlier in the century. From the out-of-power perspective of Quaker leadership in the seventies, the radical colonists were the aggressors, rather than the British. Radicals and Quakers formed opposing political factions in Pennsylvania. In addition, Friends were convinced that Christians should remain loyal to the established government instead of fighting to overturn it. Their estates and their civil liberties seemed more secure if the status quo was maintained. Further, despite their frequent disagreements with London Friends, the Americans held very dear their fruitful economic, religious, and family ties with England. Philadelphia Friends suffered from a highly developed sense of social and moral responsibility that dated back to their days in political power. Even as they turned inward during times of spiritual renewal, the very insecurities spawned by the loss of tangible power had made them seek aggressively for new ways to exert their reforming influence. It was imperative that social order be preserved in the larger community, and they moved resolutely to strengthen it. How else could the province, indeed the vast and threatening continent, be kept safe for a dissenting minority like the Friends? Given their principles, what could such a revolution mean for Quakers except further loss--loss of their hitherto secure economic predominance, loss

of their children's dedication to the faith, loss perhaps of the hierarchical social order with its dependable rule of the well-born, loss even of the ultimate human protector, the King of England. The presence in Philadelphia of the violence-prone strangers who sat in the Continental Congress seemed to the Quaker elite a poor and dangerous substitute for the orderly processes of parliamentary government conducted at a safe distance in London under the watchful surveillance of other powerful Quakers. Friends had never relished the prospect of change they could not control, less so in 1776 than ever.

The Quakers had issued the broadsides outlining their pacifist, pro-British stand with only superficial references to the rationale behind their position. Benezet seems to have been the only Friend to attempt a fuller published exposition of the peace testimony before or during the Revolution. As early as 1765, he had urged Samuel Smith to record the history of pacifism in depth in his history of the province, and sent him some pertinent data on the pacifist sects of Pennsylvania. The Stamp Act Crisis agitated the political environment at the time. Benezet, of course, saw history as a useful means of propagating morally elevating principles. He also had begun to think about the value of publicizing and perhaps popularizing peace doctrines among non-Quakers himself.³⁶

In 1766, he published the first edition of Thoughts on the Nature of War, Extracted from a Sermon on the 29th November, 1759. No author was given, probably because unknown, but the work has the peculiar flavor of Benezet's writing only in certain sections. Evidently he used a part of a sermon by a Protestant minister verbatim, adding to and embellishing

it with his own observations. The result was a concise, rational, Christian critique of war which he published in new and larger editions in 1776 and 1778. Thoughts on War appears to be the oldest treatise on pacifism published in America. Authorship has been generally attributed fully to Benezet, but it would be more accurate to credit him mainly with rescuing a sermon fragment from oblivion and expanding it to support the Quakers' case for peace.³⁷

The argument against war was simple and direct. War was defined as "the premeditated and determined destruction of human beings, of creatures originally formed after the image of God." War was caused, ultimately, by "the apostasy and fall of man, as the natural and penal effect of breaking loose from divine government, the fundamental law of which is love." The fallen nature of man led him into war from the combined evil motives of the lust for glory, the avarice of wealth, and the desire for power. Human history moved in a circular pattern: War, followed by exhaustion, led to peace. Then the revival of trade and commerce built on sensuality and greed, resulting in another war. The grim results of war were both temporal and spiritual. "Property is confounded, scattered, and destroyed; laws are trampled under foot; government despised, and the ties of all civil and domestic order broken into pieces." And even worse, men lost their souls in war, and were "driven into eternity, in the bitterness of enmity and wrath--some inflamed with drunkenness, some fired with lust; and all stained with blood." At the present stage of human history, when whole nations professed Christianity, they must begin to act collectively on the same principles given to guide individual Christian lives.³⁸

Before the war was over, Benezet would go beyond this brief, thirteen page study of war, to publish a more extensive analysis of the implications of the peace testimony. But before he found time to do so, he sent copies of Thoughts on War to many people in positions of power, including Frederick the Great of Prussia, Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress in 1776, and the governors of the American states. To Laurens he expressed the hope that the treatise might "lessen, if not remove, any prejudice which our Friends' refusal to join in any military operation may have occasioned." Another copy of the pamphlet and an antislavery treatise went to John Jay during his Congressional presidency in 1779. These, too, were accompanied by a letter from Benezet, similar to the earlier one to Laurens, but this time urging that an official distinction be made between non-cooperators "who are active in opposition, and those who have been restrained from an apprehension of duty." He acknowledged by that time that Quakers were "indeed friends to, and really concerned for the welfare of America." Quakers, he explained, deplored wars because they were destructive of morality, of property, and of life itself, and therefore they felt bound to oppose them.³⁹ Benezet was as concerned as any of the Friends about the public reputation of the Society at this critical juncture. If the Quakers were not to be driven underground in the province as the Huguenots had been in France less than a century earlier, such preventive efforts seemed urgently needed now.

These fears had some foundation. In 1777, the radical Pennsylvania legislature imposed the long-dreaded test oath on its citizens. The oath required a renunciation of loyalty to the king and an affirmation of allegiance to the new government. Quakers had traditionally resisted

oath-taking as anti-Christian, and they now proceeded to enforce the discipline against it. In his Account of the People Called Quakers, written during this period, Benezet explained the Friends' position: "Where the mind is under the tie and bond of truth, there can be no necessity for oaths and affirmations, which are evidently the least regarded by those who make the freest use of them." Friends' protests were ignored by the legislators, however. Their schools were forced to close for a brief period because no teacher was allowed in a classroom without satisfying "the test." Travel outside the province was severely restricted as well, for the borders were closed to non-oath takers.⁴⁰

But the Friends were not wholly united on the test oath matter. Among those who rebelled against Meeting's firm stand was Benezet's good friend, Samuel Wetherill, a cloth manufacturer and also a respected Quaker minister. He had been active in promoting the cause of independence, however, and had assumed the leadership of dissident Friends in Pennsylvania. Wetherill's group believed that members should be allowed to support the new government, even to the extent of military participation, if they felt inner light guidance to do so. The confrontation in Meeting was painful for both Benezet and Wetherill. Repeatedly, Benezet urged the maverick minister to return to the fold. On one occasion, Benezet argued that no matter how badly England behaved toward the colonists, "we as a people ought not to have taken any part but mildly and tenderly to have exhorted people to follow after peace." But Wetherill would not be convinced, and he was finally disowned in 1779, with Benezet abstaining from the decision. Wetherill gathered together a small group of "Free Quakers" who shared his patriot loyalties and libertarian religious viewpoint, and organized a church in 1781.⁴¹

Some of Benezet's efforts to "treat with" Quaker dissidents were more successful in the long run. Among these were the young Yarnall brothers, Peter and Mordecai, who were disowned by Meeting for serving in the continental army. Benezet never gave up on them, and they later "repented" and were reinstated, eventually to become faithful Quaker ministers. He seems to have retained his personal friendships among religious outcasts, regardless of whether or not they reentered the Society. The wealthy patriot pharmacist Christopher Marshall had been disowned by Friends in 1751 for other reasons, and he later joined Wetherill and the "Free Quakers." Marshall noted in his diary that "Anthony Benezet came to pay a visit" in October, 1776. "We held conversation for near an hour on religion and politics."⁴²

The wrath of American patriots toward British-sympathizing Quakers continued to rise along with the threat to Philadelphia of approaching Redcoats. Early in September, 1777, seventeen of the wealthiest Friends, including the three Pemberton brothers, were arrested by the revolutionary government on vague charges that they were "inimically disposed toward the American states." Their homes were searched for weapons and their papers ransacked, along with those of the Meeting for Sufferings, for evidence of treason. Nothing incriminating was found, but a document purported to contain treasonable material from the "Spanktown, New York, Yearly Meeting" was soon produced by authorities.⁴³

The "gentlemen prisoners," as the official records called them, made several desperate legal attempts to regain their freedom and their civil rights during their incarceration at Mason's Lodge in Philadelphia. But their pleas meant little to powerful patriots like Richard Henry

Lee, who observed that the Quakers had the arrogance "to call for the protection of those laws and that government, which they expressly disclaim, and refuse to give any allegiance to."⁴⁴

A few days later, the "gentlemen prisoners" were paraded out of town in their own elegant carriages. Some townspeople watched sympathetically. But others--"a few of the lower class,...rabble," according to James Pemberton's Journal,--"threw some stones at one or two of the hindmost carriages." The exiles were then comfortably quartered in exile at Winchester, Virginia.⁴⁵

The Meeting for Sufferings on September 18 addressed itself to the problems presented by the abrupt banishment of so many members. Benezet was placed on the committee to make recommendations. But since Yearly Meeting was only two weeks away, the committee decided to turn the matter over to the general membership. Benezet himself seemed in no great hurry to act, possibly because his own health, both physical and spiritual, was in a "low state" at the time. Finally, in October, a month after the arrests, Yearly Meeting produced a "Testimony" calculated to clear the Society and its members of the treason charges. In particular, the "Testimony" denied any knowledge of the spurious Spanktown Meeting document, which "was never written at any of our Meetings, or by any of our Friends." In fact, no such Meeting existed. The innocence of the prisoners was proclaimed and their release demanded.⁴⁶

The group imprisonment was clearly political. The seventeen Quakers and three Anglicans were considered Tories by most Philadelphians, and Peter Brock claims that they would not have been arrested at all had they been known as pure pacifists. Certainly the most outspoken

pacifist of them all, Anthony Benezet, did not share their fate.⁴⁷

Another probable factor was economic. In a letter to his exiled colleagues, written late in January, 1778, Benezet combined restrained sentiments of sympathy with an elaborate rebuke for "worldliness," especially that of a financial nature. He was troubled about the whole affair, he wrote. He felt that the imprisonment was an act of God for the purpose of calling Friends to an "amendment" of their ways. The patriot oppressors were

instruments in God's hands in our sufferings; they are poor creatures under the influence of a selfish, corrupt mind who know not what they do. But let us deeply attend to a consideration of how far we, among others, for want of living up to what we...so loudly profess, have contributed to the calamity.

Despite Friends' outward profession against worldliness, the desire "to please ourselves and gain wealth" had led to a notably unchristian display of elegance in homes and clothing, he reminded the exiles. Under the circumstances, Benezet concluded that the present sufferings seemed

calculated to bring us to ourselves,...as the trials and devastations are greater upon those whose possessions are most expensive....I trust this, at least, will teach us, in the future, to live more agreeable to our profession; whereby our wants being made less, the perplexing, dangerous snares which attend the amassing and use of wealth would be much lessened.⁴⁸

There is no recorded reply to the epistle, but it is not difficult to imagine the recipients' chagrin at its contents, after four months of enforced exile. The men were some of the wealthiest among Philadelphia Quakers, as well as the most highly suspect politically. Their inevitable concern about the fate of their fortunes and families, under the current conditions, was well placed. Israel Pemberton, among others, suffered severe economic reverses during the Revolution. He returned

to Philadelphia after the April, 1778, release of the group, to find his estates ravaged and his firm heavily in debt. Both he and his wife died within a year.⁴⁹

But physical, political, and economic reverses were not confined to the "Tory" Quakers, as the exiles were often called. The Continental Army had retreated from Philadelphia in September, 1777, carrying away all the supplies and food it could transport. When General William Howe and the British forces occupied the city, normal supply sources on the continent were cut off. Widespread unemployment, depreciating currency, scarcities of food and fuel--all meant extensive misery for most of the remaining 20,000 inhabitants.⁵⁰

When the American army returned to Philadelphia in June, the situation worsened for Quaker pacifists, and 1778 proved to be the worst year of all. Friends were harassed constantly for their alleged disloyalty, and two Quakers were actually hanged by patriots in the province. Benezet served regularly on committees seeking the release of Friends imprisoned for refusal to cooperate with military and test oath demands of the government. But often the pleas were futile. Confiscation of Quaker property was common, sometimes far in excess of the amount owed for taxes, fine, or in lieu of military service. The test oath requirement for members of the Society was finally lifted late in 1778, but "other forms of persecution and annoyance" continued unabated. Altogether, property worth more than 38,500 pounds, according to one historian, was confiscated from Pennsylvania Quakers.⁵¹

Benezet worked indefatigably for the relief of war victims of all faiths. Soldiers were sometimes quartered in the homes of people who

could scarcely feed and clothe themselves. Benezet went directly to Generals and other commanding officers to insist on relief from the forced quartering in hardship cases, and he was often successful. He also spent considerable time arranging aid for the wounded of both sides, and for relief of prisoners of war.⁵²

Benezet published several of his more important tracts during this same hectic year. The educational writings, Essay on Grammar, the First Book for Children, and the extensive revision of the Pennsylvania Spelling Book have already been discussed. He also combined several of his treatises into one book entitled Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects. One of the tracts, Observations on Slavery, was a thirteen page broadside calling for the freedom of the African-Americans on the basis of the Declaration of Independence. A condensation of The Mighty Destroyer, entitled Remarks on the Nature and Bad Effects of Spirituous Liquors, and a revised version of Thoughts on War were also included.⁵³

But a separately published pamphlet entitled, Serious Reflections Affectionately Recommended to the Well-Disposed of Every Religious Denomination had the greatest significance for the peace campaign. In its three brief pages, Serious Reflections concluded that war should not be blamed on "enemies who are still our brethren," because all people are the children of God. Rather, he wrote, "let us look nowhere else but in ourselves for the cause of our miseries." The real warfare was taking place within the human heart, he explained. Instead of fighting "against those we esteem our foes," people should refuse war, and struggle for mastery over their own hatreds and the greed of "this vain world."⁵⁴

The message in Serious Reflections had become a universal one. The peace testimony could no longer be confined to one or a few religious sects, because the destructiveness of war had become total. Even dedicated pacifists, their families and estates, were no longer immune from the pervasive, malevolent effects. And even those same dedicated pacifists could not completely rid their own Meeting House or their own hearts of warfare, so long as they lived in a corrupt society. Somehow outsiders, especially political and business leaders everywhere, must be convinced of the absurdity of war. The simple expedient of blaming others, outsiders, accomplished nothing. But the Society of Friends now systematically excluded non-conformers, thus precluding growth. So Benezet moved increasingly to reach non-Quakers. He firmly believed that the peace and brotherhood principle was the one hope of saving a world gone awry. Hence, he badgered British as well as American officials in an intensified peace campaign, stimulated by the spreading destruction that seemed to get worse the harder he worked to alleviate it. He mailed out hundreds of copies of Serious Reflections and Serious Considerations to government and military leaders on both sides of the conflict.

In June, he received a letter from Ambrose Serle, General Howe's Secretary, thanking him for his gift of peace and antislavery publications, which Serle intended to "keep by" for the sake of his friendship with the author. Serle expressed hope for a better time ahead, in heaven, when such peaceable principles could be practiced. In the meantime, however, he assumed that peace would remain an individual matter within the heart of the Christian. Benezet must have found it disappointing

to read such a sympathetic inversion of his "peace within" argument.⁵⁵

Other recipients of his tracts reacted with less tact, even overt disgust. Governor William Livingston of New Jersey wrote in the same year: "The one on slave-keeping is excellent, but the arguments against...war have been answered a thousand times."⁵⁶

By the time he wrote to President John Jay in 1779, Benezet was no longer propounding the idea that war was a deliberate punishment by God for the nations' evil doing. He had seen too much suffering. "By the deplorable effects which attend on these dreadful contests," he wrote, "it is evident that it cannot be agreeable to God." For God was love, and war the antithesis of love. War only aggravated the natural sinfulness of the human heart, propelling men "into greater wrath, and evil of every kind." The remarks revealed an important step in Benezet's intellectual and spiritual growth. The Christian could not simply stand aside and pray for peace, trying merely to cleanse his own heart of guilt. Benezet's recent experience had convinced him that more was required. Only mankind could take the responsibility for tragedies so hideous as war--a loving God could not be blamed, or expected to right the wrong. Only those who spawned the evil could cure it, he now believed.⁵⁷

Benezet continued to urge official tolerance of the Quakers themselves, as well as the universal adoption of peace principles by government. He decided sometime in 1778 or 1779 to write a brief, popular book expounding the Friends' history and principles. A published work of this kind would be more thorough, impressive, and efficient, he concluded, than hundreds of time-consuming hand-written letters. He

wrote his former pupil, George Dillwyn, in the fall of 1779 that he intended the book "to profit three sorts of people: first, foreigners; next, persons of some rank and literature of our own nation," and finally, Quaker youth who had grown too impatient to read the longer classics by William Penn and Robert Barclay. Dillwyn, who served as a consultant and editor for many of Benezet's publications during this period, responded enthusiastically to the new project. A need certainly existed to justify and expound the Quaker position among all three groups. The "foreigners" in rural areas continued to persecute pacifist Friends. In the city, it was imperative that "persons of rank and literature"--those in power--understand and become more sympathetic to Friendly ideals. And the youth, the only hope for renewal and long term survival of the sect, must be reached, as well.⁵⁸

Benezet explained to Dillwyn, too, that he hoped to stimulate serious thought among his readers about three questions concerning Friends: Why did they first attempt to throw off the "cumbersome shackles so firmly established by custom and folly?" Also, he queried, "In what other points do they dissent?" And finally, "Have they been able to make way in gaining any establishment against the stream of folly and prejudice which they must have had to encounter?" The questions were, in fact, the pivotal ones of his own pilgrimage through life. In trying to arouse his readers' curiosity about them, he sought to probe the fundamental processes of social change as he perceived them. He wrote Dillwyn, that he intended to emphasize "several radical truths" of the Quaker profession, among them the peace principle and the "call from the letter and form to the power" of the Gospel.⁵⁹

These concepts seemed to him basic essentials for explaining the Quaker way to outsiders, and perhaps his own way to himself. Certainly many non-Quakers would have to be convinced of these "radical truths" before major social improvements could be made.

In 1780, the Meeting for Sufferings published the first of many editions of A Short Account of the People Called Quakers, Their Rise, Religious Principles, and Settlement in America. The first nine pages related the history of Quakerism from the experience of George Fox through the colonial period in Pennsylvania. This section emphasized the 1701 Charter by which "toleration and liberty of conscience was established." The liberal Charter, Benezet wrote, "promoted and maintained a true sense of religion, which penal laws have ever failed of effecting." And he referred pointedly to the vast numbers of religious refugees from Europe who had benefitted from the early Friends' tolerant principles. He then stressed the necessity of preserving freedom of conscience for the welfare of everyone in the province.⁶⁰

The second and longer part of the Short Account was an explanatory section on Friends' religious beliefs and practices, all of which, he emphasized, were grounded in the universal inner light testimony. He explained the Society's distinctive tenets simply, with emphasis on pacifism, the antislavery stand, the refusal to take oaths, and the plain style of life and language. All were presented as purely religious testimonies, and Benezet handled even the Quaker insistence on civil liberties as a call for religious freedom, rather than as a political matter. He seems not to have been aware of the highly political nature of the book.⁶¹

The Meeting for Sufferings, at the recommendation of the Overseers of the Press, republished the Short Account several times in English, German, and French editions during the next three years. The book had a relatively large readership both within and outside of Quaker circles, as attested by frequent references to it in late eighteenth century correspondence and publications.⁶²

The matter of wartime taxation was again the most troublesome aspect of the peace testimony for Friends, causing more serious friction with revolutionary authorities than the refusal to serve in the army or submit to the test oath. It was also a greater problem within the Society, for widespread disagreement existed about what proportion, if any, of taxes levied by an "illegal" government should be paid.⁶³

Around 1780, Benezet collected his "Thoughts on the Payment of Taxes" into a manuscript. At the request of Moses Brown, he sent a copy to Quakers in New England, where the subject was also "much under consideration of Friends." Apparently the treatise was never published, and no copy exists today. But the ideas it contained were discussed at length in the surviving correspondence between Benezet, Brown and George Dillwyn.⁶⁴

The Society called for refusal to pay all taxes to the "illegal" patriot government. Benezet and Brown agreed that this position was in part contradictory to another important Quaker principle, that is, the willing payment of taxes demanded for civil uses by the government in power. Benezet believed that the very complexity of the situation meant that one "honest-hearted brother" might interpret his duty very differently from another. To require all members to act in conformity

on the issue was "a great mistake, and has a tendency to beget hypocrisy [rather] than true fellowship," he observed. Strict enforcement, "in a wrong zeal," also threatened to split the Society even more seriously than the Wetherill case and the Free Quaker movement had done.⁶⁵

Yet the tax-refusal position was "founded on truth," Benezet wrote. He supported it in principle and in practice himself. He saw the discipline as an important means to draw members back into a closer reliance on God, because the wealthy were the most likely to suffer reprisals for non-payment. Benezet felt that

the love of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, the desire of amassing wealth...is the great rock against which our Society has dashed. From this mighty snare, I trust, the Almighty will deliver us by means of this testimony.

The tax question, then, was closely bound up with his general attitude toward wealth, Christianity, and the survival of the Society of Friends. A true understanding of Quakerism would preclude the accumulation of fortunes in the first place, he believed. And now the time had arrived to return to those basic foundations of the faith. But even "putting Christianity out of the question," he continued,

let me say that there is a certain proportion of wealth in the world which should be applied and circulate for the general benefit and comfort of mankind, according to each's particular circumstance....Now that one more knowing or crafty than the rest should, by buying cheap and selling dear, get possessed of such a heap, which might answer the sober wants of hundreds,...and finally leave it solely to his heir or heirs, to the gratifying their idleness and pride,--this appears to me an atrocious degree of vanity.

He then outlined his vision of a future voluntary society in which the people would distribute wealth peacefully according to genuine needs, enough "to enable them to follow their several callings."⁶⁶

So the problem of tax payment to a warring government, like the problem of war itself and numerous other social disorders with which Benezet struggled, was directly related to the problem of greed--of "getting cheap and selling dear." It is not surprising that his manuscript containing "Thoughts on the Payment of Taxes" was never published by the Quaker Overseers of the Press, dominated as that group was by the wealthy capitalists who had already lost more than they cared to think about.

Beginning around 1778, Benezet began to develop his friendships with French diplomats and military men. He welcomed the new arrivals in his native French and was soon serving their needs in a variety of ways, from making introductions in the city to arranging for house rentals. He spent a great deal of time in visits and discussions with them about philosophical, humanitarian and political matters. He became, in fact, the chief arbiter between the British sympathizing Quakers and the Franco-American political coalition in Philadelphia during the last years of the war. He tried repeatedly to secure relief for war-oppressed Quakers in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and New York through pleas to his "countrymen," as he called them, whose political influence in patriot councils he understood well.⁶⁷

At least one of these men, the French Minister Conrad Alexander Gerard de Rayneval, tried to use Benezet for his own political purposes. In accordance with his instructions from the Count de Vergennes, Rayneval attempted to placate the hostile Philadelphia Quakers and convince them to support the new government. In September, 1778, the Minister wrote Vergennes that he had had several extensive discussions with a venerable

Quaker leader named Anthony Benezet. Rayneval reported that Benezet explained the Friends' position to him and kept urging release of Quaker prisoners. But the Minister had replied that it was not his mission "to arrest the energies of the American government, and that when the Quakers had performed their duties they would no longer be in fear of persecution." The Minister also claimed that Benezet yielded to his arguments that Friends should pay all taxes levied on them by the government, and that he agreed to go to his "fraternity" and urge a change in policy. This seems unlikely, however, in view of Benezet's characteristic integrity on such matters. And there is no evidence to suggest that he made the switch. The Minister, clearly unhappy with the stubborn Friend, may have reported in this way to his far-off superior simply to excuse himself from any further wasting of his time in fruitless consultations. In any case, the tone of the letter was starkly hostile toward the Quaker, and seems to undercut historian Bernard Fay's contention that Benezet and Rayneval were warm friends.

With the other Frenchmen in the province, however, Benezet did enjoy cordial relationships that led to growing cooperation between his alienated Quaker colleagues and the new power structure. One of the conversations that revealed both his methods and his message to his "countrymen" was recorded in detail by a Major General in Rochambeau's army, François Jean Chastellux. "Confidence being established between us," wrote the General, "we fell on the topic of the miseries of war." "Friend," Benezet addressed him,

I know thou art a man of letters and a member of the French Academy: the men of letters have written a great many good things of late; they have attacked errors and prejudices, and above all, intolerance: will they not

endeavor, too, to disgust men with the horrors of war,
and to make them live together like friends and brethren?

A long and pleasant discussion followed, after which Benezet urged the General to offer what protection he could to the persecuted Quakers in Rhode Island. The General was cooperative and agreed "with great pleasure" to read Benezet's tracts on war and on the Quakers, as well. The visit was the first of many.⁶⁹

Probably his closest friendship among the French elite in Philadelphia was that with the Chevalier Luzerne, Minister from the Court of France from 1780 to 1784. At a farewell party for the Minister just prior to his return to France, Benezet offered a public expression of gratitude and friendship that "exceeded them all," according to Luzerne. "They memory shall always be dear to us," Benezet announced before the assembled guests.

Thou hast never ceased to be a minister of peace among us. Thou has spared nothing to soften all that war holds of what is inhuman and to enable those who do not exercise the profession of arms to withstand its calamities.

Amid the festivities of the ball, Benezet's seriousness of purpose and the warmth of his affectionate personality combined to produce a toast to peace and human brotherhood across political, religious and cultural lines.⁷⁰

In 1780, Benezet injured one of his eyes. As a result he found reading and writing increasingly difficult, and even the process of "collecting ideas" in his mind became "laborious." Thus he hoped soon to "have done publishing," he wrote to a friend. But there was much more awaiting his attention.⁷¹ In the next three and a half years, he completed three more works on slavery and his most important essays on peace and on Indians.

The Plainness and Innocent Simplicity of the Christian Religion, with Its Salutary Effects, Compared to the Corrupting Nature and Dreadful Effects of War, a 38 page analysis of pacifism and its grim alternative, was first published in 1782. This new study was Benezet's own work, with only a few brief quoted passages from French and English authors. It was grounded in secular humanitarianism, as well as religious arguments, and showed, if anything, an even greater devotion to social stability than the earlier Thoughts on the Nature of War revealed. Yet, no matter how good a society's goals might be, brutal, coercive means were neither justified nor effective, he cautioned. Genuine peace in any society, or between countries, could be achieved only by the voluntary cooperation of the citizens and their leaders, a condition which the use of force discouraged. Sometimes in particular cases it became necessary "to regulate the weak and ill-disposed" individuals in a community, he wrote, but this did not justify the resort to organized violence of one group of people against another group.

Government is the ordinance of God, a compact and agreement of a number of people, mutually to support justice and order among themselves; upon an infringement of that order, restraint becomes necessary....which falls solely upon the transgressors, upon the breach of their own agreement; hence civil government will always be necessary, for the maintenance of the peace and happiness of mankind. But the case is vastly different in the prosecution of war, when people engage in military service as a profession.

The use of force could be justified only when necessary to keep social order, but never to destroy it. Organized warfare led men to take pleasure in conquest, dulling and corrupting their consciences in the process. Soldiers lost respect for fellow human beings, and for personal morality as well. Thus the enforcement of just and orderly government on earth was totally subverted by warfare.⁷²

Benezet showed increasing interest in historical causation in this essay. He observed that the growth of militarism in the world was related to changing family patterns and the inheritance of land and wealth. Under the pressures of expanding populations, many of the younger sons in Europe entered military professions since they could not inherit the family estate. Then "the disorderly passions of the human mind, instead of being modified by the soft endearments of social life," were increased. With large, trained armies at their command, these men became bored with inactivity and eager to go into battle, even for trivial reasons. A case in point was the last German war, in which 200,000 men died and "cities and extent of countries [were] laid waste." The conflict erupted over

whether the King of Prussia or the Queen of Hungary, should govern Silesia, founded upon some ancient contract between their ancestors, in which it is doubtful the people of that province were ever consulted.⁷³

Rulers, he believed, had a special obligation to guide their people away from military pursuits rather than into them. He cited the long, peaceful rule of the pre-Christian Roman monarch Numa Pompilius as a good example of one who avoided war. Numa encouraged his citizens in "cultivating their land, and the other innocent employments of a country life, which proved an excellent school of simplicity, frugality, and other moral virtues." He applauded, too, the work of enlightened, peaceful Indian chiefs in leading their tribes into peaceful endeavors. Government leaders also had a distinct responsibility to protect those of their people who, even during times of war "apprehend themselves called out of the spirit of war, to the promotion of harmony and love," i.e., Quakers.⁷⁴

Benezet projected his historical perception into the future, to a time when "prejudice" in favor of war would be dispelled. "Men will see their mistake," he wrote,

and be as much astonished at their blindness and folly,
and look with as much abhorrence at that cruelty,...as
they now are at the recital of the folly of our ancestors
...in the time of the crusades.⁷⁵

After completing the peace essay, Benezet wrote to Benjamin Franklin, enclosing a copy and advising him of his intention to translate and publish a French edition in the near future. He was concerned about his countrymen's tendency "to pursue an imaginary and vain notion of gaining honor, or,...immortal fame in warlike achievements." He wanted to awaken in them "a consideration wherein true nobility consists."⁷⁶ The essay was eventually published in Philadelphia, in London, and several times in Ireland, but apparently not in France.

Benezet also advised Franklin of some disturbing news about "our old friends, the Moravian Indians." A large band of frontiersmen had recently attacked a group of 96 peaceful Indians as they harvested their crops, and murdered all the children, women, and men of the village.⁷⁷

Angry at the massacre, yet unwilling to demand corporal punishment for the offenders, Benezet launched one of his most significant publishing projects, this time with the encouragement of the Governor of Pennsylvania. The Governor had written him "a kind letter," indicating that he felt responsible for "promoting the true happiness of society." He asked for Benezet's help in that pursuit: "I hope you will, without reserve, communicate to me any hint that may occur to you in that I may be able to improve." The Governor received considerably more than the "hint" he requested. Benezet had hesitated to publish

his 53 page work, Some Observations on Indians earlier only because he was uncertain whether he could do the Indians justice without endangering "the peace and safety of the country"--always a primary consideration. The Governor's letter allayed his fears.⁷⁸

Most of the Quakers who had attended the Easton treaties of the 1750's were dead now, except for Isaac Zane. And Zane agreed with Benezet that their Indian experiences and knowledge should "not be buried" with them. There was a three-fold purpose in Benezet's mind as he worked on the manuscript during the last year of his life. He wrote Dillwyn that he wished to lessen the prejudice against Indians, to relate accurately the facts of the Moravian Indian massacre, and to encourage friendly, peaceful, trade and settlement opportunities for both races on the frontier. He had long since realized that his hope of containing white settlement East of the mountains was gone. Some Observations on Indians was, in fact, a compendium of information and arguments for a reasonable, just coexistence of the races on the American continent, based on the peace principle. Benezet expressed the hope that it might "be instructive in our future transactions with our Indian neighbors, in several settlements now likely to be made on lands belonging to them." The "peace and safety" of settlers depended "on the maintenance of a friendly intercourse" between the races. The penalty for failure would be high: a recurrence of "those grievous calamities which an Indian war often has, and will again, undoubtedly produce." Respecting the Indians and living peacefully with them was demanded by all the tenets of natural justice, by the expedient dictates of maintaining social order, and lastly, by "our duty as Christians."⁷⁹

Benezet studied diaries, journals, reports, and letters of several men who had lived and worked among the Indians for many years. Some of those people, like the interpreter Conrad Weiser, and the Moravian missionary-teacher, Frederick Post, were his close friends, and he discussed the manuscript with them. He also used the extensive records of the Friendly Association, the Enquiry into the Cause of the Alienation of the Delawares, by Charles Thomson, and two volumes of Indian treaties. But the most important sources for his book were the Indians themselves, as he knew them from his own experience. He frequently quoted them as the best authorities on their own lives and culture.⁸⁰

In the preface to Some Observations on Indians, Benezet stated that he did not wish to "promote a spirit of retaliation, nor to excite a discontent among the Indians," in his writing about them as rational creatures with immortal souls. Rather he wanted to correct some widely-held but erroneous views concerning them. Such a disclaimer was probably necessary in 1784. Friends remained in public disfavor for their pacifism and their treaty activities. Furthermore, the Indians had generally sided with the British during the Revolution, thus increasing the already high level of animosity felt toward them by most white Americans. Benezet's stated assumption that white people were "not superior to the tawney Indian" unless they excelled him in living harmonious lives, must have upset many of his contemporaries. The idea of the Indian as an equal to the white man was so new that it would have to be introduced carefully to a hostile audience.⁸¹

To this end, Benezet devoted a large segment of the book to an anthropological-ethical study of "natural" Indian values, such as generosity, personal respect for other people, loyalty to family and

friends, a concern for justice, and a strong sense of responsibility to provide for dependent members of the tribe. Indian "vices" so loudly condemned by whites, i.e., excessive drinking and cruelty in war, had been learned from the oppressors themselves. Even though the natives might appear at first to be savage and lawless, upon closer acquaintance, one realized that "the Indians enjoy all the advantages" of a healthy society in their natural state. He referred to the research of the Frenchman, Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix, to support his own observations on the harmonious and stable nature of Indian tribal life.⁸²

The earliest European settlers had received kindness and hospitality from the Indians, he observed, as long as they treated their hosts with "justice and humanity." But when "the adventurers, from a thirst for gain," began dealing unfairly with the natives, and taking their land, trouble inevitably resulted. Many writers since the early years had portrayed Indians as "naturally ferocious, treacherous, and ungrateful," he wrote. But he considered it unfair to judge their character "from instances in which they have been provoked to a degree of fury and vengeance by unjust and cruel treatment from Europeans." He condemned the recent popular vindications of the raids on tribal villages. These accounts falsely claimed "that the whole race of Indians are a people prone to every vice, and destitute of every virtue; and without the capacity for improvement." One such account had been recently published by Hugh H. Brackenridge, A Narrative of the Late Expedition Against the Indians. The hate-filled tract glorified the use of violence to remove natives from choice western lands.⁸³

Propaganda of this sort had been perpetrated "to make way for the proposal of endeavoring the universal extirpation of Indians from the face of the earth," Benezet charged. The murderous inhumanity of a campaign to exterminate an entire race had to be stopped before it went any further. "We cry out against Indian cruelty," he wrote, "but is anything the Indians have done...more inconsistent with justice, reason, and humanity, than the murder of those Moravian Indians; a peaceable, innocent people?"⁸⁴

He had begun to see Indians, like Africans, not only as fully human, but perhaps, in their natural state, before the advent of European corruption, as even slightly superior beings.

If their dispositions and natural powers are duly considered, they will be found to be equally with our own, capable of improvement in knowledge and virtue; and the apparent difference between us and them, is chiefly owing to our different ways of life, and different ideas of what is necessary and desirable, and the advantage of education, which puts it in our power to gloss over our own conduct, however evil; and to set theirs, however defensible, in the most odious point of light.

There were, then, dangers in a rational civilization, tendencies leading away from the chiefest values of humanity, rather than toward them.

Only as long as Indian tribal living remained uncontaminated by Western culture did it retain the essential "commendable qualities," he noted.

Indians, left to themselves, "manifest a nobleness of soul, and constancy of mind, at which we rarely arrive with all our philosophy and religion," concluded Benezet.⁸⁵ His fine sense of the ironies of history, of the predicament of human civilization, is nowhere clearer than in this study on Indians.

As early as 1780, Friends had begun to accept the inevitability of being ruled by the revolutionary government. In that year, the Meeting for Sufferings indirectly, and probably unintentionally, acknowledged American nationhood. The Meeting suggested that British failure to subdue the colonies was a judgment of God upon the mother country for its refusal to halt the slave trade. American states were in fact better than England, because they were in the process of outlawing the trade. But no formal statement of a new allegiance was ever made. And even after the end of the war, the Yearly Meeting came out firmly against paying taxes which would be used to pay off the heavy Revolutionary War debt. Like Benezet, most Quakers were "none too happy about independence," but since it was a fact, they began to deal with it on a practical basis.⁸⁶

The supremacy of the peace principle offers a key to understanding Benezet's position and his contributions in this area. The political and economic ideals of John Locke and his American exponents had provided the framework for the "right to revolution" doctrine that sparked the war. One of their most basic operative assumptions was that individual men had a natural right to possess property that must be protected by whatever means necessary. Locke wrote,

If the innocent honest man must quietly quit all he has for peace sake, to him who will lay violent hands on it, I desire it may be considered what kind of peace there will be in the world, which consists only in violence and rapine; and which is to be maintained only for the benefit of robbers and oppressors.⁸⁷

The position seemed unassailable in a society that placed property ownership above other values. But for Benezet and the small band of Quaker

pacifists for whom he articulated ideas, the war forced a significant clarification and a deeper commitment to an unpopular ethic. The Revolutionary violence convinced him that the radical Christian principle of non-resistance, whether stated in religious or humanitarian terms, eventually demanded a choice between the right to possess wealth and the obligation to live in peace with one's fellow men--between the urge to compete for possessions and the need to cooperate for social harmony. For Benezet the choice was clear. For most other Quakers, it was less so, yet few attempted to refute him.

For Benezet, the problem of Locke's "robbers and oppressors" who would resort to "violence and rapine" to overrule human rights, was a matter of maintaining social order judiciously in local communities. Benezet never denied the need for regulating community behavior and disciplining serious offenders by physical restraints if absolutely necessary. But he believed that a community based on true peace principles would have few such cases, because violence generally proceeded from envy and greed for others' excessive possessions. War, not peace, produced the conditions that disrupted the social fabric, that promoted widespread brutality. Only in a framework of peaceful cooperation could any community, any nation, hope to maintain a sober, orderly way of life for its citizens. Peace and social order were as inseparable as peace and possessiveness were antithetical, in Benezet's world view.

By the end of Benezet's life, the "founding fathers" who had led the colonies triumphantly through six years of war, had begun to sound very much like the pacifist Quaker. Peace at last became fashionable for a time, as well as highly expedient for national survival. The

causes of war could be traced to a desire for profit and power, observed the Federalist Papers, and its evil effect on the national economy, on constitutional government, and on both public and private morals was catastrophic. And the old Indian fighter Benjamin Franklin declared that "there has never been, nor ever will be, any such thing as a good war or a bad peace."⁸⁸

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IX

¹Peter Brock, Pacifism in the U.S. from the Colonial Era to the First World War (Princeton, 1968), 184. Theodore Thayer, Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy, 1740-1776 (Harrisburg, Pa., 1953), 125. All of Benezet's brothers, Daniel, James, and Philip, signed the non-importation agreements and went on to take active parts alongside their sons in various revolutionary activities. Small, 205-211. J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, History of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1884), I, 215, 272, 409.

²Minutes of PMM, Aug. 25 and Sept. 29, 1769, 343, 350. James, 242.

³Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Private City (Philadelphia, 1968), 9. Brock, Pacifism, 185. James, 242, 243.

⁴To Moses Brown, Dec. 28, 1773, HQC.

⁵Warner, Private City, 17, 19. Minutes of PMM, Dec. 29, 1758, 127.

⁶James, 255.

⁷To Samuel Fothergill, Nov. 27, 1758, Brookes, 23. James, 255. Theodore Thayer, Israel Pemberton, King of the Quakers (Philadelphia, 1943), 9. 10.

⁸Benjamin Rush, A Warning Voice to the Intemperate (Philadelphia, 1817), 10. Rush records here that Benezet personally told him of the tea habit in his life.

⁹To Samuel Allinson, July 16, 1774. HQC, Allinson Family Papers.

¹⁰Benjamin Ferris to Roberts Vaux, July 28, 1816, Brookes, 465.

¹¹Benezet, The Mighty Destroyer Displayed, in Some Account of the Dreadful Havoc Made by the Mistaken Use as Well as Abuse of Distilled Spiritous Liquors (Philadelphia, 1773), 11.

¹²Ibid., 5, 8.

¹³Ibid., 4, 8.

¹⁴Ibid., 14. See also, Benezet, Remarks on the Nature and Bad Effects of Spiritous Liquors, bound with Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects (Philadelphia, 1778), 41. See, too, Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 260.

¹⁵Mighty Destroyer, 15, 29, 37, 38.

¹⁶Ibid., 18.

¹⁷Ibid., 20, 21, 9, 45.

¹⁸Ibid., 38-42, 29.

¹⁹Ibid., 46.

²⁰Ibid., 8, 11, 44. James, 257.

²¹Mighty Destroyer, 9.

²²Henry J. Cadbury, "One Good Friend and His Influence," FQ (1974), 206, 207. James, 255-257. Mack Thompson, Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer (Chapel Hill, 1962), 100. Brookes, 150.

²³James, 255. Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Jan. 4, 1770, 302; June 21 and 24, 1770, 315; Mar. 27, 1773, 376-78. German immigration had increased dramatically again following the Seven Years' War.

²⁴Warner, Private City, Part I.

²⁵James, 243, 258. Brock, Pacifism, 193, 194. Minutes of PYM, M. for S., June 29, 1775, 9.

²⁶Brookes, 125, 126. To Samuel Allinson, Oct. 23, 1774, Brookes, 322. Brock, Pacifism, 230.

²⁷To Samuel Allinson, Oct. 23, 1774, Brookes, 322.

²⁸Brock, Pacifism, 186, 230, 231.

²⁹Minutes of PYM, M. for S., 1756-75, Jan. 4, 19, 24, Feb. 16, 1775, 445-448, 451. The proprietary government of Pennsylvania was overthrown and a new liberal state constitution adopted in September, 1776. Copies of the Testimony of the People Called Quakers, Jan. 24, 1775 (Philadelphia, 1775) at HQC.

³⁰Testimony, Jan. 24, 1775. See also, Brock, Pacifism, 186-190, for description of the various "peace" declarations of 1775, 76.

³¹Brock, Pacifism, 184-187.

³²J. Fothergill to James Pemberton, March, 1775, quoted in Arthur J. Mekeel, "The Quakers in the American Revolution," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1939), 81. Brock, Pacifism, 188.

³³Ancient Testimony (Philadelphia, Jan. 20, 1776), HQC. It was in reaction to this document that Thomas Paine wrote his angry "Epistle to the Quakers," accusing Friends of being traitors to their own principles, since the colonists' enemies "likewise bear arms." Robert P. Falk, "Thomas Paine and the Attitude of the Quakers to the American Revolution," PMHB, LXIII (1939), 306.

³⁴To Our Friends and Brethren in Religious Profession, in These and Adjacent Provinces (Philadelphia, 1776), HQC.

³⁵François Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, Our Revolutionary Forefathers (Freeport, N.Y., 1969), extract in Brookes, 453.

³⁶To Samuel Smith, May 17, 1765, Brookes, 264.

³⁷Brock fails to mention Thoughts on the Nature of War (Philadelphia, 1766), and writes that throughout the eighteenth century, little if any attempt was made by Quakers to expound pacifism, 12, 191. Earlier tracts on the subject have not been located.

³⁸Thoughts (3rd ed., Philadelphia, 1778, bound with Serious Considerations), 3, 4, 6, 8, 9.

³⁹Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen, 259. To Henry Laurens, Dec., 1776, Brookes, 324, 325. No reply from these men survives. Frederick of Prussia was soon after engaged in war with Austria, 1778. To John Jay, Feb. 7, 1779, Brookes, 331.

⁴⁰Brock, Pacifism, 204, 205. Benezet, A Short Account of the People Called Quakers (Philadelphia, 1780), 22.

⁴¹To G. Dillwyn, Aug. 4, 1779, and Sept. 11, 1779, Brookes, 334-337. See also account by Brock, Pacifism, 233, 235.

⁴²Ibid., 203. Quote in Brookes, 134.

⁴³Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789 (Washington, D.C., 1922), VIII, 1777, 694, 707, 713-719, 722. Thomas Gilpin, Exiles

in Virginia, 1777-1778 (Philadelphia, 1848), 35-45. James, 245. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 221, 222.

⁴⁴Journals, VIII, Sept. 8, 1777, 722. Quote in Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 221, 222.

⁴⁵Quote in Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 221, 226. The prisoners were well-treated at Winchester and had considerable freedom to travel, do business, etc. Two prisoners, Thomas Gilpin and John Hunt, died of illness in March, 1778.

⁴⁶Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Sept. 18, 27, 1777, 131, 132. See Benezet to James Pemberton, et al., Jan. 28, 1778, Brookes, 325. PYM, "A Testimony," Sept. 29-Oct. 4, 1774, quoted in full, Gilpin, Exiles, 57-59. The "SpankTown Paper," in Gilpin, Exiles, 62.

⁴⁷Gilpin, Exiles, 187. Brock, Pacifism, 253. Nine of the alleged Loyalists had been signers of the non-importation agreement in 1765, but had afterward withdrawn from all such involvements. Brock, Pacifism, 184.

⁴⁸To James Pemberton, et al., Jan. 28, 1778, Brookes, 325-327.

⁴⁹Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 231-233. Gilpin, Exiles, 35-45.

⁵⁰James, 261. Falk, "Paine and the Quakers," 308. Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Aug. 5, 1778, 162.

⁵¹Falk, "Paine and the Quakers," 308. Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Aug. 5, 1778, 162. Thayer, Israel Pemberton, 232. Brock, Pacifism, 238. Mekeel, "Quakers," 155, 156.

⁵²Benjamin Rush, Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical (Philadelphia, 1806), 303. Brookes, 137. Vaux, 144. These sources provide additional details on the services performed by Benezet.

⁵³These works published in Philadelphia, 1778. On the slavery tract, see below, ch. XII.

⁵⁴Serious Reflections reprinted in Brookes, 495-497.

⁵⁵To Benezet, June 2, 1778, Brookes, 129, 130.

⁵⁶Quoted in Vaux, 42. Livingston was the first elected governor of New Jersey, serving from 1776 until his death in 1790.

- ⁵⁷To John Jay, Feb. 7, 1779, Brookes, 331.
- ⁵⁸To G. Dillwyn, Sept. 11, 1779, Brookes, 336.
- ⁵⁹To G. Dillwyn, 1779, Brookes, 328. Benezet, Short Account of Quakers (Philadelphia, 1780).
- ⁶⁰Short Account of Quakers, 6.
- ⁶¹Ibid., 9-27.
- ⁶²Minutes of PYM, M. for S., II, 1775-1785, 1-401, record the publication history.
- ⁶³Brock, Pacifism, 222.
- ⁶⁴To Benezet from Moses Brown, Mar. 9, Oct. 2, and Dec. 24, 1780, Brookes, 427, 431, 432, 435. To Moses Brown from Benezet, July 1, 1780, HQC. To G. Dillwyn, July, 1780, Brookes, 347. The tract also is mentioned in a letter R. Pleasants, also Mar. 17, 1781, Brookes, 353.
- ⁶⁵To Brown, July 1, 1780, HQC. To Benezet from Brown, Oct. 2, 1780, Brookes, 431, 432. To G. Dillwyn, July, 1780, Brookes, 347. See Brock, Pacifism, 218-220, and Thompson, Moses Brown, 143-145.
- ⁶⁶To Brown, July 1, 1780, HQC.
- ⁶⁷See above, ch. III. To Count de Vergennes from Gérard de Rayneval, Sept. 18, 1778, Brookes, 451. François Jean, Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America, Howard C. Rice, Jr., tr. (Chapel Hill, 1963), I, 165. Extract in Brookes, 457.
- ⁶⁸Rayneval to Vergennes, Sept. 18, 1778, Brookes, 451. Bernard Fay, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America, Ramon Guthrie, tr. (New York, 1966).
- ⁶⁹Chastellux, Travels, 165. Brookes, 455, 456.
- ⁷⁰"Sketch of the Life of Anthony Benezet," Rural Magazine and Literary Evening Fireside, I (1820), 173. Brookes, 135, 136.
- ⁷¹To G. Dillwyn, July and Aug. 6, 1780, Brookes, 346, 348.
- ⁷²Plainness and Innocent Simplicity (Philadelphia, 1780), 20, 14-17. To G. Dillwyn, July, 1781, Brookes, 356.

- 73 Plainness and Innocent Simplicity, 29-31.
12. 74 Ibid., 3-5, 21-25. See also, Benezet, Short Account of Quakers,
- 75 Plainness and Innocent Simplicity, 18, 19.
- 76 To Franklin, Mar. 5, 1783, Brookes, 386.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 To G. Dillwyn, July, 1783, Brookes, 377, 378.
- 79 To G. Dillwyn, July and Sept, 1783, Brookes, 377-380. Observations on Indians (Philadelphia, 1784), 50-52, 6, 7.
- 80 To G. Dillwyn, July and Sept., 1783, Brookes, 377-380. Benezet referred to the Enquiry as though it had been written by Israel Pemberton, but it was published by Thomson in London, 1759.
- 81 Observations on Indians, iii-v.
- 82 Ibid., 10-23. De Charlevoix (1682-1761) was an historian and early student of primitive cultures in the New World.
- 83 Observations on Indians, 8, 9, 35. Brackenridge, Narrative (Philadelphia, 1783).
- 84 Observations on Indians, 34, 6, 7.
- 85 Ibid., 40, 10-23.
- 86 Minutes of PYM, M. for S., I, 1780, 20, 21. See James, 246. Brock, Pacifism, 221.
- 87 Quoted in Staughton Lynd, ed., Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History (New York, 1966), xxii, xxiii.
- 88 Merle E. Curti, Peace or War; The American Struggle, 1636-1936 (New York, 1936), 23-25.

CHAPTER X

ANTISLAVERY: THE PROBLEM DISCOVERED

On May 1, 1773, Benjamin Rush initiated a long correspondence on colonial politics and reform causes with Granville Sharp of London. The first letter in the series contains a striking reference to the work and influence of a mutual friend of the two men. "Great events have been brought about by small beginnings," Rush wrote. "Anthony Benezet stood alone a few years ago in opposing Negro slavery in Philadelphia, and now three-fourths of the province as well as the city cry out against it." Even allowing for Rush's well-known propensity to exaggerate, his statement, along with similar ones by Benjamin Franklin and other contemporaries, indicates that Benezet played a pivotal role in the dawning anti-slavery consciousness.¹ Isolated antislavery spokesmen had appeared in the Western world before Anthony Benezet, and many followed him. But perhaps no single abolitionist in any historical period offered so much that was new in his day, or acted so effectively to awaken the Atlantic Community to the magnitude of the slavery problem, and to launch the international crusade for emancipation.

The few scattered antislavery protests in America before mid-century had originated among Quakers, with the exception of Puritan Judge Samuel Sewall of Boston. Sewall's tract, The Selling of Joseph, published in 1700, attacked the slave trade mainly on Old Testament grounds. And he warned that unless African imports were halted, white colonial society would be disastrously overwhelmed by an inferior race.²

Quaker founder George Fox had urged his followers to treat their slaves well, and provide training in Christian precepts for them. But he did not condemn slavery or the African trade. Nor did others, apparently, until the Quaker Meeting at Germantown, Pennsylvania, issued a protest in 1688 against slavery as a violation of the peace testimony. These Rhineland immigrants under the leadership of the scholarly Daniel Pastorius, were skilled artisans who had no economic need for slave labor. Their local protest moved up through Quarterly Meeting to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. There it was dropped as discreetly as possible, being "adjudged not to be so proper" an action for "weighty" Friends to take.³ The formal Germantown protest may have been unknown to Benezet and his contemporaries, who never referred to it. But the spirit that generated the antislavery attitude of the little community may well have been alive when Benezet served as schoolmaster and printer's assistant there half a century later.

Another noteworthy attack on slavery came from a schismatic Pennsylvania group called "Christian Quakers," in 1693. Led by the controversial minister George Keith, the Meeting issued "An Exhortation and Caution to Friends Concerning Buying and Keeping of Negroes." The statement acknowledged that blacks constituted "a real part of mankind, for whom Christ has shed his precious blood," and, referring to the peace testimony, warned Friends to avoid all contacts with slavery.⁴

The Keithian protest could be ignored by mainstream Quakerism because it originated in an unrecognized branch of the sect. But when other scattered antislavery pleas began to surface in legitimate Meetings, they were less easily thrust aside. Under increasing pressure

from non-urban groups, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting first tentatively recommended in 1696 that Friends should "not encourage" the slave trade, and urged proper Christian care and training of Negroes. During the first half of the eighteenth century, men like William Southeby, Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford agitated for a firm stand against slavery in Pennsylvania, with few tangible results except to find themselves ostracized and disciplined. Both Lay and Sandiford were finally disowned by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.⁵

Still, the climate of opinion had been gradually changing within the Society. In 1730, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting moved cautiously to admonish Friends against purchasing any additional slaves, "it being disagreeable to the sense of this Meeting." Then, the year after Benezet moved to Philadelphia, and following a long official silence on the subject, the 1743 Yearly Meeting gently queried whether Friends were free of guilt in importing or buying slaves. In fact, many were not, but they managed to silence dissenting voices by appeals to brotherly love and unity within the Society, or in some cases by simply ignoring anti-slavery spokesmen. In 1747, European traveler Peter Kalm observed that the Quakers had "as many negros as other people."⁶

Between the time of George Fox's gentle admonition on the treatment of slaves, and the period of Benezet's campaign, major changes had occurred in the nature of slavery as an institution in the New World. By 1700, Negro slavery had evolved from a form of indentured servitude to an increasingly rigid and permanent structure, firmly reinforced by racial prejudice and claims of economic necessity. The African trade had become a major cornerstone of international trade in British America.⁷

When Benezet first took an active interest in the slavery question, during the decade of the 1740's, Friends had become accustomed to mild admonitions from Meeting on the subject. But Quaker slaveholders, many of them among the wealthiest and most powerful men in Pennsylvania, still retained their basic control over the Society. No action that seriously threatened their slave property was allowed to pass. Meetings could talk endlessly about the evils of slavery, so long as no forceful action was taken to abolish the trade. Nothing concrete was actually done to eradicate the practice of buying and selling slaves by Friends, in fact, until the mid 1750's. And then for the next thirty years the process was slow and painful--often equivocal and sometimes bitterly divisive.⁸

Quaker antislavery opinion was stiffening gradually by the mid 1750's for several reasons. With the outbreak of the Seven Years' War and the concurrent retreat from political power, Pennsylvania Friends sought renewed spiritual strength in their traditional testimonies of peace, brotherly love and simplicity. Visiting ministers from London, shocked by their first sight of chattel slavery, encouraged the incipient antislavery testimony of the rising, reform-minded "strict" Quakers. The movement for moral renewal within the Society was a concrete expression of this religious movement, "a great shaking amongst our dry bones," in Benezet's words. As the war continued, Benezet, among others, insisted that the carnage was a "just retribution from the righteous Creator" for allowing the slave trade to go unchecked.⁹

There was another factor in the growing antislavery interest among Friends as a group. The new spokesmen for Negro freedom were

less abrasive, and generally more respected in the Society than their earlier counterparts had been. Benezet and his colleagues used tactics that were congenial to Quakers. They patiently cultivated individual support for their convictions, while they called tactfully, if insistently, for action in Meetings. They conducted, in fact, a sophisticated political campaign in the Society. For example, Benezet wrote to John Smith in New Jersey, after learning that a strong proslavery leader among Philadelphia Friends planned to attend a Yearly Meeting at Flushing, New York. Benezet urged Smith and another antislavery Friend, Edward Cathrall, to go to the Meeting themselves, which they "ought to do, except unavoidably prevented." The matter had been under discussion for the last three Yearly Meetings in New York, Benezet wrote, and he felt it was not time for positive action against slaveholding.

Our honest Friend Benjamin Trotter proposes to be there, and may want a poise on either hand, I mean a check upon his zeal in his public appearances and a caution against his relaxness and extreme weak arguments in favor of the practice of keeping negroes.¹⁰

Benezet and his reform-minded colleagues valued not only the unity of the Meeting but the good will of outsiders as well. This concern for unanimity allowed the men to continue their active anti-slavery work within the fellowship, with limited successes. But it also meant that actual abolition might be delayed indefinitely, even among Quakers. And it meant, too, that any antislavery publications by abolitionist Friends would have to be muted in tone and limited in extent, in order to meet the conservative requirements of the Quaker Overseers of the Press. The Overseers strictly censored all projected publications submitted by members. Later, Benezet would refuse to

accept this discipline, but in the early stages of the campaign he worked within the prescribed limits.

Benezet was deeply involved in the antislavery movement for more than a decade before he published his first antislavery tract in 1759. He knew slavery at first hand, for it was a part of Philadelphia's public life. At the Old London Coffee House, three blocks from his home, slaves and horses were auctioned regularly on market days. Several of his neighbors in the five square block Middle Ward owned slaves, and even his brother James was the master of three slaves. Benezet began his known antislavery work during the 1740's, in conjunction with his close friend, John Woolman. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's 1743 cautionary query regarding slave-trading may have been the occasion of Benezet's first outward commitment to the cause. By 1750, possibly even earlier, he was teaching black children at his home, without the official approval or subsidy of Meeting. Apparently he was discreet enough in this that no one tried to stop him.¹¹

Unfortunately, Benezet left no journal or autobiography as Woolman did, describing in detail his early awakening to the moral evil of slavery and his subsequent efforts to combat it. As a result, the work of Woolman in behalf of the slave has been discussed frequently by later historians, biographers and editors, while Benezet's far more extensive and effective campaign has remained relatively unknown. Mary Locke, whose research into the antislavery movement in America before 1808, published in 1901, continues to be one of the most important studies of the subject, came closer than more recent authors to perceiving the relative historical significance of the two men when she wrote:

There is probably no other man...who did so much for the antislavery movement as Anthony Benezet. John Woolman's influence was less widely felt. Though he traveled in England as well as in America, his labors were confined to his own sect, and his written works were less widely circulated than those of his contemporary.

And Thomas Clarkson, the acknowledged leader of the British antislavery drive in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wrote even more specifically on the matter in 1808. Clarkson observed that Woolman occupied himself primarily with the moral evils of slavery in America among his fellow Quakers. But Benezet attacked both the international slave trade and the whole institution of slavery, and wrote not "for America only, but for Europe also, and...spread a knowledge of the hated traffic through the great society of the world." Clarkson himself had become convinced of the antislavery cause through reading one of Benezet's books in 1784.¹²

Nevertheless, Woolman's early and keen sensitivity to the sufferings of American slaves must have had a profound impact on his friend, and probably served as a catalyst to help unleash the enormous mental and physical energies that Benezet later poured into the crusade. The 26 year old Woolman wrote the first part of his antislavery work, Some Considerations upon the Keeping of Negroes, in 1746, following a six week religious tour of Virginia. The subject was so controversial that he did not publish it for eight years, but circulated it in manuscript among family and friends. Undoubtedly, Benezet was one of the early readers of the handwritten document, and he was the person primarily responsible for getting it finally approved by Meeting and published.¹³

In 1754, Benezet and Woolman jointly pressed their antislavery message at the highest level of American Quakerism. Benezet read a carefully edited and revised extract from his friend's manuscript to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and requested that it be adopted as the official position of the Society. The "Epistle of 1754" deplored the recent increase in the number of slaves owned by Quakers, and firmly advised all Friends to "keep clear" of the buying and selling of slaves in the future. The appeal rested on the "Grent Commandment" of the New Testament: "Love one another, as I have loved you." The brutality and deprivation of liberty inherent in slavery was denounced as inconsistent with the dictates of God and "the common liberty of mankind," as well. In conclusion, the Epistle urged slave owners "seriously to weigh the cause of detaining them in Bondage. If it be for your own private gain, or any other motive than their good, it is much to be feared that the love of God...is not the prevailing principle in you."¹⁴

When the general message of the Epistle of 1754 was approved by Meeting, after considerable debate, Benezet was assigned the responsibility for its final editing and publication. Some portions of the final draft were taken directly from Woolman's Considerations, and others were composed separately--probably by Benezet. Certainly the Epistle's reference to "the common liberty of mankind" foreshadows Benezet's future arguments in the crusade, rather than Woolman's. In any case, the printing and extensive distribution of the Epistle of 1754 marked the first public dissemination of Quaker antislavery views. But it did not unequivocally condemn the keeping of slaves under certain conditions "for their own good,"--a qualification expounded in Woolman's Considerations--

nor did it make any specific provision to enforce the advice against buying and selling.¹⁵

Benezet also arranged for the separate publication in booklet form of Woolman's tract before the end of 1754, with the reluctant approval of the Overseers of the Press. In the years ahead, the two friends would work closely together in other writing and publishing ventures, especially on the subjects of slavery and education. Woolman frequently referred to Benezet's later writings in his own works, and Benezet never lost his great admiration and respect for Woolman's intense spirituality.¹⁶

Of the two men, Benezet was the more practical in dealing with the problems of social change that fascinated them both. Woolman's approach was essentially spiritual, and he played the role of the witnessing prophet calling his sect to repentance for sins such as slaveholding. Benezet, beginning at much the same point, moved steadily into a more secular, political, and universal struggle involving a goal-oriented strategy for actual change. Increasingly he saw his duty as a responsibility for producing tangible results in the world around him. He became the leading strategist, organizer, and publicist of the international antislavery movement. Both men were leaders of the rising generation of "strict Quakers"--those who insisted that profession and practice should harmonize. But Benezet increasingly asked as much of all mankind as he expected of his own sect.¹⁷

After the decision of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to publish the Epistle of 1754, Benezet regularly served on committees assigned to visit with Quaker slaveholders. He urged them to prepare their Negroes for

manumission, and not to purchase any others. But he found the response to his efforts discouraging, and by October of 1757, he reported to Samuel Fothergill that the situation among Pennsylvania Friends seemed "painful in many respects." His own spiritual life had reached a low ebb as well, and he hoped for renewal in "retirement, silence, and prayer," seeking "comfort and establishment in God alone." It was to be only a temporary retreat however--one involving disillusionments with fellow Quaker reformers like Israel Pemberton and the Friendly Association, as well as with the stubborn slaveholders who resisted the Meeting's testimony. All of this was compounded by the recurring problems of his teaching career during the period.¹⁸

By December, however, his depression began to lift. He sent an antislavery tract to John Smith, and a letter explaining his awareness that "books treating of Negroes are not much in fashion among you." Yet he felt it was time to alert "all persons, but more especially the youth" to the evils of the trade. This message signalled the beginning of a renewed attack on the problem that had not been solved by the pious pronouncements of the Meeting three years earlier.¹⁹

Benezet spent much of his time during 1758 in securing support for a new and much stronger antislavery position--this time with provisions for enforcement. No organization in the world, Quaker or otherwise, had ever taken such a controversial and unequivocal stand on the matter of slavery as that which Benezet and his colleagues now sought. The Yearly Meeting convened amid rising tensions generated earlier in the year. In clear contempt of the Epistle of 1754, several Philadelphia Friends had purchased slaves during the summer. In an effort to ward

off the harassment of endless visits by strict Quakers, and to regain the initiative in the struggle, these men requested that the Epistle be reconsidered at Yearly Meeting. They intended to put down the growing antislavery agitation permanently if possible.²⁰ The lines by now were clearly drawn.

Even filtered through the restrained, charitable language of John Woolman's Journal, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1758 appears as an acrimonious test of strength between the older, politically oriented, conservative Friends, and the group led by Benezet and Woolman. Among the "several weighty matters" discussed was the question of whether to allow members to continue holding government office during wartime, despite Meeting's clear advice against it. On this point, the older men were soundly defeated by a decision not to allow politicians to participate in future business and policy-making meetings of the Society. But the most serious struggle took place over the slavery question. As Woolman put it, "many Friends appeared to be deeply bowed under the weight of the work, and manifested much firmness" in their conviction that Friends should not purchase or own slaves. But others "appeared concerned lest the Meeting should go into such measures as might give uneasiness to many brethren, alledging that...the Lord in time to come, might open up a way for the deliverance of these people." Woolman feared exactly that, and warned that if the delay continued, God might indeed act, by sending "terrible things in righteousness among Friends," to punish His people.²¹

Sensing their defeat, the conservative group proposed that members "in future" be prohibited from buying slaves. But the reforming wing of

the Society overcame even this resistance, and Woolman, savoring the victory, reported that "the love of truth in a good degree prevailed." The outcome, known as the "Rule of 1758," clearly condemned both slave trading and slave keeping. Monthly Meetings were instructed to appoint committees to visit offenders. Friends who refused to prepare their slaves for emancipation at the earliest possible time, would be ousted from all the Society's meaningful activities except attendance at worship.²²

The struggle marked another milestone in Benezet's life. He had loathed slavery for years. But his retiring, other-worldly emphasis on peace and unity in Meeting--the desire to avoid conflict--made it difficult for him to take a firm stand on such a controversial issue as slavery. The 1758 Meeting pointed up not only his personal dilemma, but that of the Quakers as a group and even of the larger society: Active effort for social justice collided with the desire for tranquility and withdrawal from "the world" into a secure spiritual haven. For Benezet, challenging the status quo on such a deeply felt matter as slavery, helped to clarify the issues. Evidently the battle suggested that he could not avoid active, even aggressive initiative, if the case against slavery was to become anything more than a high-minded theoretical position. He had worked intermittently in the public arena before, reacting humanely to aid poverty stricken refugees, Indians, and blacks. But after the struggle of 1758, he launched the premeditated, sustained efforts for basic social change that characterized the remainder of his life. While he did not neglect the continuing needs of the poor and distressed near his home, he sought increasingly to find and eradicate

the underlying causes of such misery throughout the Western world. The brotherhood ideal called for thoroughgoing changes. Of these, the most urgent, to his mind, was the restoration of freedom and human dignity to "our fellow creatures, the oppressed Africans." After 1758, major innovations in an entrenched social system necessitated for him militant, but peaceful, struggle.

Three months before the Yearly Meeting's precedent setting Rule of 1758, London Yearly Meeting had formulated a strong condemnation of the slave trade. The British "Epistle from the Yearly Meeting" admonished Friends everywhere to "avoid being any way concerned" in the trade. But it did not explicitly condemn slavery, nor did it provide for enforcement of its advice among members. Still, Benezet found the prestigious London group's admonition a useful tool in his campaign. He secured permission of the Philadelphia Overseers of the Press to reprint the London epistle for distribution throughout the colonies.²⁴

During the fall and winter, he compiled his first antislavery tract, an eleven page essay based on primary materials from European and American sources, including Woolman's tract, and pulled together with his own comments. He entitled the work Observations on the Enslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes. With the Overseers' approval and subsidy, it was published in 1759 in a small volume bound with copies of the London Epistle.²⁵

The main body of the tract consisted of quoted passages from the works of several men who had been personally involved in the slave trade, a technique Benezet continued to develop and use in later publications. "Authors of candor," he called his sources, "who have written from their

own knowledge." Later, a former slave ship master verified the data he read in Benezet's tracts. "I can confidently affirm," he wrote,

that the accounts given by Benezet and other witnesses quoted by him are by no means exaggerated, but rather short of what I have many times seen with horror and deep concern....His treatises appear to me incontrovertible and supported by good authority.

The Quaker schoolmaster carefully annotated his sources with footnotes.²⁶

Benezet used the quoted passages to depict barbarous scenes with slave traders cruelly tearing Africans from their homeland and herding them into cargo ships like animals, to be sold in the New World. These passages also told of the harsh "seasoning process" in the West Indies. Benezet assumed that such ugly evidence by eyewitnesses, in conjunction with introductory religious exhortations and the London Meeting's clear advice, would suffice to convince people that the trade should be halted. He did not attempt in this tract to answer the proslavery arguments of the day, on grounds that the real motive for slavery was "selfish avarice," and therefore clearly absurd in the light of the Christian religion.²⁷ Such total confidence in the persuasiveness of scriptural injunction would soon disappear from his work.

An apocalyptic note appeared in Observations on Enslaving as it would in most of the later works. In this case, Benezet attributed the sufferings of Friends in the Seven Years' War to their callous pursuit of wealth by means of slavery. "The calamities we at present suffer," he wrote, emanated from an angry God in punishment for corporate guilt. If even worse catastrophies were to be avoided in the future, society's greatest evil would have to be abolished. Benezet was one of the first to warn publically of collective guilt for the sins of slave-trading.

The Calvinism of his forebears surfaced here to remind him, and through him his readers, that the sins of one part of society could be ignored by the other part only at the peril of all.²⁸

The passage Benezet chose to quote from Woolman in Observations on Enslaving illustrates the radical social implications of "inner light" religious theory, and sets the tone for his entire antislavery campaign.

Customs generally approved and opinions received by youth from their superiors, become like the natural produce of a soil, especially when they are suited to favorite inclinations: But...it would be the highest wisdom to forego customs and popular opinions, and try our deeds by the infallible standard of truth.

That "infallible standard of truth" Benezet defined as "the pure spirit of grace which leads all those who in sincerity obey its dictates into a conduct consistent with their Christian profession." He outlined that conduct in New Testament terms: "to love the Lord our God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourself: So as never to do to another that which in like circumstances we would not have done to us." The Christian must measure his actions, then, not by the dictates of accepted practice or authoritarian pronouncements. Rather he should behave in an individually and socially responsible way, on the basis of Christ's great commandment, forgoing "customs and popular opinions."²⁹ The Biblical seeds of subversion had fallen on fertile soil in the life of Anthony Benezet.

During the three years following publication of Observations on Enslaving, Benezet spent a great deal of time distributing copies of the tract both in person and by shipment to other provinces. He also experimented with various political maneuvers within the Society in successful efforts to keep the Rule of 1758 from being recinded. He served, too,

on numerous committees of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting to help work out the intricate problems involved in the new manumission policy. Early in 1760, for example, he attempted to free a slave who had been promised freedom by his dying master. The executor of the estate, a Quaker, had sold the man, however, and Benezet worked "to obtain justice for the Negro." The result was not recorded.³⁰

Benezet's connections with London Quakers during the critical period of Philadelphia's stiffening antislavery position are partially traceable through his correspondence with the visiting ministers Samuel Fothergill, Thomas Gawthorp, and Jonah Thompson, all of whom had returned to England prior to the London Yearly Meeting of June, 1758. He now supplied them with quantities of his tract, to encourage and strengthen their antislavery commitment, and with news of other humanitarian and religious activities of Philadelphia Friends. The correspondence and mutual exchange of ideas was part of a developing communications network that would later facilitate concerted antislavery political action in the Atlantic Community. By the 1761 Yearly Meeting, London Friends were ready to take the step the Philadelphians had taken in 1758: a firm prohibition of slavetrading by members.³¹

Benezet's Observations on Enslaving had been brief, optimistic, and largely compiled from the work of other authors. In 1762, however, Benezet published a much longer work, A Short Account of that Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes and the Manner by Which the Slave Trade Is Carried On. This new treatise was based on extensive research in European sources. It revealed a more secular viewpoint and presented a far more comprehensive analysis of the slavery problem than the earlier

work had done. For the first time, he claimed unequivocally that slavery was itself as reprehensible as the slave trade, thus closing a legalistic loophole that slave owners had been using to their own advantage. The book was also Benezet's first serious attempt to answer the proslavery arguments of his day and to formulate a counterattack. The Short Account of Africa acknowledged implicitly that certain economic, social, and political forces had become too powerful in the eighteenth century to be overcome by the pious quotation and exposition of biblical injunctions alone. The earlier tract had emphasized the "judgements of God," and the "kingdom of God and his righteousness," but the new book dwelt more extensively on the human side of the slavery problem. It described the history and suffering of African victims, and the responsibility of white men to eradicate the "monstrous traffic in human flesh."³²

In 1759, Observations on the Enslaving had assumed that once the unpleasant facts of the slave trade became generally known, and the commands of God explained, the practice would be halted. But the Short Account of Africa, three years later, began with these words:

It is a truth, as sorrowful as obvious, that mankind too generally are actuated by false motives, and substitute an imaginary interest in the room of that which is real and permanent. And it must be acknowledged...that weakness and inbred corruption attends human nature.

Only a pervasive evil in man's makeup, then, could explain why slavery had become so entrenched in the new world. Self-seeking white men, he observed, had convinced themselves that, since slavery was economically profitable, it was therefore necessary and even good. And they propounded theories of racial inequality to justify it. He had begun to take his opposition seriously.³³

Benezet confronted three basic arguments in favor of slavery. The common assumption of Negro racial inferiority, both mental and moral, was one of the most entrenched attitudes of his day, even among those who disapproved of slavery on religious grounds. Benezet claimed that the inferiority argument grew out of an insidious racial prejudice. The prejudice had arisen because white people, from earliest childhood, saw Negroes "constantly employed in servile labor." And this association of blacks with servility had "a natural tendency to create in us an idea of a superiority over them, which induces most people to look upon them as an ignorant and contemptible part of mankind." Benezet explained both the phenomena of seeming racial defects in blacks, and the prejudice of whites, in terms of a Lockean environmentalism.³⁴

He was attacking the pervasive racism that had existed in the colonies from the beginning. Quaker Meetings were always prejudiced toward blacks, despite the antislavery testimonies of the eighteenth century. The Society generally refused blacks membership, and even denied them burial space. Such practices were common in all the denominations. The Quaker-dominated Assembly of Pennsylvania, dealing with a relatively small Negro population, had regularly passed legislation to restrict the status and behavior of blacks, both slave and free. From 1706 onward, Negroes were forbidden to assemble in groups without permission, or to purchase liquor or firearms. By 1726, a comprehensive black code "for the better regulation of Negroes in this province" reinforced the general racism of the larger society. A deep seated conviction of Negro inferiority surfaced, too, in attitudes expressed later in the century by such otherwise revolutionary leaders as Thomas

Jefferson and Patrick Henry--men of the Enlightenment, who acknowledged the disadvantages of slavery but could not become abolitionists, or even part with their own slaves.³⁵

But the force of racial prejudice in relation to slavery had remained unrecognized until 1762, when Benezet, in the Short Account of Africa, and Woolman, in Part II of his Considerations, defined and attacked it. Woolman had observed in Part I that whites, by enslaving blacks, created morally unhealthy conditions which led to "too great disparity between us and them." No doubt the two friends pondered and discussed the implications of this insight as they groped for means to overcome the powerful institution.³⁶

But the most important argument for Benezet was his own experience. For more than a decade before writing the Short Account of Africa, Benezet had been teaching black children to read and write. His success in the work led directly to his clear affirmation in 1762 that "Negroes are generally sensible, humane, and sociable; and that their capacity is as good, and as capable of improvement, as that of the white people." Here he moved beyond the negative condemnation of racial prejudice to make the earliest emphatic statement by any author of the principle of innate racial equality, as historian Roger Bruns has recently shown. The assertion became the cornerstone of his entire subsequent antislavery career.³⁷

The equality theme also illustrates a major difference between Benezet's antislavery campaign and that of John Woolman. Although Woolman was also concerned about the effects of slavery on the black person, he focused on the white Christian. He was interested in how

individuals and Meetings might absolve themselves of the guilt of slavery and thereby achieve

a life guided by the wisdom from above, agreeable with justice, equity, and mercy,...consistent and amiable, and truly beneficial to society. The serenity and calmness of mind in it, affords unparalleled comfort in this life, and the end of it is blessed.

Furthermore, Woolman continued to hold, as he had in Part I of Considerations, that slavery should not be condemned if the master was kind, and engaged in it for the slave's own good. "Whatever a man does in a spirit of charity, to him it is not sin," he explained.³⁸

Benezet, on the other hand, while never overlooking the benefits to whites that gradual emancipation would bring, focused primarily on the blacks themselves--their African heritage, their trials in bondage, their social, moral and intellectual strengths, and their inherent natural right to liberty--in short, their full humanity. Approximately three fourths of the Short Account of Africa deals specifically with blacks rather than whites. He even examined the origins and consequences of the slave trade from the African point of view, and drew extensively on African evidence for his antislavery position.³⁹

In fine Enlightenment style, Benezet provided substantial "proofs" of balanced and ethical tribal cultures in the West African ancestral home of slaves. He quoted several eyewitness descriptions of the mild climate, of balanced communal economies, of harmonious personal relationships, and of stable family life enjoyed by Africans in their natural state. Then he contrasted these "noble savage" passages with testimony on the effects produced on those same tribes in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by slave traders, especially in the coastal

areas. A tragic state of disorder had been initiated by some chieftans to satisfy the European demand for more slaves. One "Factor," or agent, of the African Company who had lived for ten years in Guinea, observed,

The discerning natives account it their greatest unhappiness that they were ever visited by the Europeans:--that we Christians introduced the traffic of slaves, and that before our coming they lived in peace; but they say, that wherever Christianity goes, there comes with it a sword, a gun, powder, and ball.

Benezet attacked the hypocrisy of traders who exploited an otherwise harmonious society while they labeled their victims "inferior" and "degenerate." He did not defend or try to hide the practice of some African chieftans in the prosecution of wars to procure slaves for their own profit. But he pointed out repeatedly that without the white "Christian" traders to purchase victims, such wars and enslavements would be drastically curtailed.⁴⁰ He placed blame for the atrocities squarely with Western society.

A second rationale for carrying on the trade and keeping slaves in bondage, Benezet pointed out, was "an insatiable desire of gain," although proslavery people rarely admitted it. He rejected outright the traders' assertion that slaves purchased in Africa were humanely rescued from pre-existing intertribal warfare. He produced several first hand accounts to show that

the wars and incursions made by Negroes, one upon the other, are mostly at the solicitation of the Europeans, who instigate them...to procure slaves to load their vessels....For though it is scarce to be doubted that there were wars among some of the Negroes, before the Europeans began to trade with them, yet certain it is, that these calamities are not only since that time prodigiously increased, [but] the Europeans by encouraging them thereto, and gladly purchasing the captives they take, are become not only parties with them therein, but the sole cause of that increase.

Such a direct affront to the peace testimony in the interests of profit could scarcely be overlooked or ignored by "honest Quakers." To one author who justified the practices on the grounds of economic "necessity," Benezet replied, "What necessity does the author mean? No other necessity appears but that arising from the desire of amassing riches, a necessity laid on worldly men by their hard task-master the devil?"⁴¹

But the economic opposition, disguised as it usually was in pious language about "Christianizing" and "civilizing" the Africans, would require a far more extensive analysis than Benezet had yet undertaken. At the outset of his campaign, he was not yet fully aware of the extent to which economics influenced and controlled decisions of governments and individuals in regard to slavery. To attack the "monstrous evil" entailed, in the words of one student of the slavery problem, "a fight with the shipping interest, the planters, the sugar-refiners, the investors, and the government, rallied in alliance to defend the rights of property." It meant the audacity to strike at the heart of a world empire--at an economy sustained by an internationally accepted institution.⁴²

Both sides in the spreading slavery controversy feared the possibility of slave insurrection, and each accused the other of inviting such a catastrophe. Benezet attacked this third pro-slavery argument by inverting it to strengthen his own case. Conscious of the ominous forebodings all around him, he emphasized the fallacy of perpetuating the institution that created the fear. His warnings of potential danger from slave uprisings were muted and rather guarded in the published works, however, to avoid the accusation that he preached slave rebellion to

those blacks who could read. He knew he was vulnerable here, as Philadelphia's best known teacher of Negro students. In a personal letter that accompanied a gift of his Short Account of Africa, he confided to an English Friend,

Much more might have been said in the treatise of the civil and temporal evil [of slavery]...with respect to the danger our southern colonies are exposed to from the vast disproportion there is between the number of the Negroes and the whites, but it was too tender a point to expose to the view of such of the blacks as can read.

Further, he observed that should "the Negroes become sensible of their strength, so as to rise upon their masters, who can express the horror and distress" that would result? The thought appalled the peace-loving Benezet, who lived among daily reminders of bloody Indian uprisings in the Seven Years' War--the "just judgements of God" upon an unrepentant people. And he knew, too, and deplored, the strength of retaliatory impulses, when white supremacy was challenged by the rebellion of darker skinned people, no matter how just their cause.⁴³

Benezet was convinced that the only way to avoid such a double tragedy was to do justice to the oppressed African people, for their own good as well as for the welfare of the larger society. To this end, he suggested in the first edition of the Short Account of Africa that owners should not only manumit their slaves, but educate them, and

use all reasonable endeavors, to enable them to procure a comfortable living, not only as an act of justice to individuals, but as a debt due to them, on account of the oppression and injustice perpetrated on them, or their ancestors.

The suggestion that past injustices to an entire race should be indemnified in the present, mild as it was, must have startled readers in 1762. Several earlier antislavery spokesmen and pronouncements by Quaker

Meetings had suggested giving slaves a rudimentary training in Christian precepts and the virtues of hard work, as precautionary measures for maintaining social and economic order--goals Benezet by no means disdained. But he now went much further, to speak of black peoples' rights to "a comfortable living," and of debts owed them by a guilty white population.⁴⁴

The idea was controversial, despite Benezet's accompanying affirmation of the sacredness of property rights. He suggested that presently owned slaves might be kept until they "have sufficiently paid, by their labor, for their purchase or bringing up." The contradiction between the concept of indemnification for past wrongs and the need for a slave to repay his purchase price did not escape the attention of "well-disposed" Friends in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, however. The Overseers of the Press apparently refused to approve the publication of "Anthony's little book," because it had to be printed anonymously in the first two editions. Funds for the work probably came privately from others of the "strict" Quakers and the author himself, as they had for the second edition of Observations on Enslaving.⁴⁵

Benezet published a revised and considerably enlarged second edition of the Short Account of Africa in the same year. The most striking change in the new version was the addition of a long and detailed proposal for emancipation by government action. Before introducing the plan, however, he first ruled out African colonization, on grounds of justice to the blacks: "Must they be sent to Africa?" he asked. "That would be to expose them in a strange land, to greater difficulties than many of them labor under at present." He remained firmly opposed to the

principle of African colonization throughout his life.⁴⁶

To the claim that an emancipation program without colonization would result in general social disorder, he replied carefully.

Indeed it must be granted there are difficulties in the way. Nor can any general change be made, or reformation be effected, without some. But the difficulties are not so great but that they may be surmounted.⁴⁷

In order to make the transition reasonably smooth, he proposed a series of government supervised steps toward full emancipation. First, slave importation should be halted completely by legislation. Then, presently owned slaves, "after serving so long as shall be adequate to the money paid, or the charge of bringing them up," should be legally freed. Ex-slaves would be required to remain as residents in the counties where they were already known during a transition period. The process would be supervised by "courts of justice" rather than by exploitive former masters or employers. Under the benevolent oversight of the court's Overseers of the Poor, the freedmen would receive training as "useful members of the community." They would "be obliged to act circumspectly and make a proper use of their liberty," as well. When they had adjusted satisfactorily to this liberty, they should be given small farms of at least twenty acres from the public domain.⁴⁸

He listed numerous practical advantages of his plan, all of which were expedient arguments, frankly calculated to win popular and official support and to secure passage in the Assembly.

This would encourage them to exert their abilities, and become industrious subjects. Both planters and tradesmen would be plentifully supplied with cheerful and willing-minded laborers; much vacant land would be cultivated, the produce of the country greatly increased. Arts and manufactures advanced; the taxes for the support of government lessened to individuals by the increase of taxables.

And finally, the free blacks, "instead of giving just cause of fearful apprehensions,...as they certainly must in their present condition,* would become interested in the country's security and welfare."⁴⁹

Characteristically, Benezet's concern was two-fold. He sought to correct the most blatant social injustices, while avoiding social chaos. The necessary changes should be made by means of orderly, enlightened procedures, the most serious abuses to be corrected first, with the rights of all parties involved protected in the process. Yet his concern for legal restraints upon freed slaves was more strongly oriented toward protecting white society than toward helping blacks attain full human rights. This is in contrast to his earlier emphasis in the first edition of the Short Account of Africa, on indemnifying past wrongs. Probably the very cautious nature of the new proposals, and the numerous built-in safeguards against possible public disorder seemed necessary if the plan was to receive consideration by responsible parties. The fact that his elaborate proposal did not appear until the second edition suggests that reaction to the first edition had been negative, and that Benezet felt the pressure to make his main goal--emancipation--more palatable to white readers.

The grounds for Benezet's attack on the proslavery arguments consisted of the fundamental principles of his religious world view, expressed clearly by 1762 in natural rights language as well as the more familiar biblical phrases. He saw no conflict between the Christian ideal of

* Benezet's footnote contains a warning in very small print that in the Southern provinces "the great disproportion between them and the white people will always be a just cause of terror."

brotherhood and the secular expression of its meaning for him. His God was a just, loving, patient father of all mankind who called his children to love and serve one another. Thus each human being enjoyed the natural, or God-given right to a life of peace, respect, and reasonable physical comfort among his fellow men. Cruelty, coercion, poverty, brutality--all were ruled out by the standards of God the father, as well as by the concept of natural justice. In a typical combination of the two ideas, he wrote, "Thanks be to the Great Father of the family of the whole earth, that some are raised up...to declare against so unparalleled an invasion upon the rights and liberties of mankind."⁵⁰

Like so much of Benezet's writing, the passage above reveals the dilemma of the thinking religious person in the eighteenth century. The concept of God as prime mover in human affairs was a basic part of his heritage. Yet increasingly, as he entered more fully into his crusades for social change, he emphasized the responsibility of people themselves to correct the wrongs that they had created. If they were free to stray so far from God's perfect will, they were equally free to return to it. God had acted to "raise up" men, himself included, and men must themselves act to effect change in human affairs. The pious Quaker's God was beginning to look more and more like His remote, mechanistic, Deist counterpart.

The Short Account of Africa was hurriedly written, in the midst of Benezet's numerous other demanding activities. It was poorly organized, and lacked both the classical polish and the formal systematic analysis of problems that might have given it more weight among the government leaders he hoped to influence. But there were compensating features in

the writing style he was developing that led to the wide distribution and powerful social impact of his works. For one thing, he carefully documented his charges against slavery's practitioners. At the same time he deliberately understated his claims and arguments. He explained in a personal letter that he "purposely aimed at being below, rather than above the truth," in his book. This practice contributed to the growing reputation for integrity that his works were beginning to achieve.⁵¹

His writing also had an urgency about it that makes it fascinating reading even two centuries later. He related anecdotes in colorful, emotional language to describe conditions in Africa, the horrors of middle-passage, and the situation of slaves in the colonies--with no details spared. The urgent, persuasive tone of his books reflected Benezet's own personal abhorrence of slavery as well as his attempt to convey a sense of moral indignation to others. Also, the earthy nature of some of the passages he quoted undoubtedly served to keep his readers' attention focused on the subject. Certainly the widespread popularity of Benezet's tracts owed something to the fact that the most generally available literature of the day consisted of abstract sermons or philosophical discourses. The respected Quaker's indignant exposés of the slave trade must have been a welcome diversion to the pious.

The Short Account of Africa proved an immediate success in the colonies, despite the apparent hostility of the Quaker Overseers of the Press. Three separate editions were published in Pennsylvania in 1762, and at least six more by 1768. The book inspired Edward Physick's proposal that the Philadelphia Junto discuss the question, "Is it a good policy to admit the importation of Negro slaves into America?" on September 3, 1762. And Benezet's pioneering technique of quoting passages

from the writings of actual participants in the slave trade to support his arguments was adopted by John Woolman to strengthen Part II of Considerations, his last antislavery work. But the impact of the Short Account of Africa was confined mainly to the province at first. Later in the decade it was translated into German and French, and by 1768 new editions had appeared in Dublin, London, and Paris.⁵²

By 1762, Benezet had moved beyond Woolman's position in several ways. In defining the problem of slavery, in developing the arguments against it, and in pioneering new techniques to combat it, his restless sense of justice and social order impelled him to expand his spheres of influence--geographical as well as social, political and religious. Woolman, on the other hand, remained content until his death in 1774 to plead personally with individual Quakers and with organized Meetings for an end to the practice.

The peace treaty with France in 1763 and the simultaneous rejuvenation of the slave trade, led to the launching of Benezet's first serious antislavery initiative outside the province. He wrote long letters to Quaker minister and author Joseph Phipps, and to Dr. John Fothergill, among other British leaders, enclosing copies of his Short Account of Africa and Woolman's Considerations. He wrote of his growing concern about the role of government in countenancing the slave trade. He admitted the possibility that "our late and present gracious kings, and many worthy men in government," who could have stopped the trade, simply were unaware of the "corrupt motives" and cruelties underlying the trade. Thus, he proposed that British Friends should reprint his Short Account of Africa with its marshalling of the factual data and arguments, and distribute it "among those in power," particularly the King, his

councillors, and all members of Parliament.⁵³

The situation had grown more serious in recent weeks, he explained to Phipps and Fothergill, for several reasons. England had acquired substantial new slave "factories," or trading posts on the Senegal River in West Africa by which profits in the "man-trade" would soon be multiplied. Slave imports were already increasing rapidly in the colonies. The British had also secured vast new tracts of western lands in America as a result of the war. There was a strong possibility, Benezet wrote, that runaway slaves might seek refuge in the wilderness territory, and use the land as a staging area for slave uprisings in the South, perhaps in concert with disaffected Indian tribes. But if Parliament could be persuaded to outlaw the trade and practice of slavery in the British Empire, the threat of such a calamity would be greatly reduced. The lands, instead of harboring angry fugitives, could be parceled out as farms to responsible, free black families. He had learned from the war the futility of trying to keep the enormous Western frontier peaceful by means of isolated provincial action, either politically oriented, or religiously inspired by Quakers in a Friendly Association. The very magnitude of the New World's slavery problem would require correspondingly great power to produce a solution. "A proper check" on the trade, he wrote, must originate in England. The British, if they were truly concerned with "the civil as well as religious welfare of their country, and desirous to avert those judgements which evils of so deep a dye" invited, must act quickly to stop the trade and emancipate those Africans now in "perpetual bondage."⁵⁴

The early results of this campaign at the seat of imperial power were disappointing to Benezet. Apparently the recipients of his long epistles and gifts of antislavery books did not even reply to the sender. That summer London Yearly Meeting did discuss the matter again, but ended by simply reiterating the earlier pious but unenforced warnings against being contaminated by the trade. The Short Account of Africa was not even published in England until five years later, in contrast to its warm reception in America.⁵⁵

Rather than discouraging him permanently, however, the failure of his letter writing campaign to English Friends stimulated his determination to find more effective means. In 1766, the Benezets moved to Burlington, New Jersey, for a few months, during one of Anthony's periodic brief withdrawals from teaching. He used the time for a new and momentous project in behalf of the "oppressed Africans."

By now thoroughly aware of the international nature of the slave trade, and of the leading role played by British merchants and shippers in it, he decided to attack the heart of the problem. He entitled this new book, A Caution and a Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions....Submitted to the Serious Consideration of All, More Especially Those in Power. Aimed directly at Englishmen in highly responsible positions, the work was an eloquent challenge to the existence of slavery among a people dedicated to liberty and natural rights. In contrast to the Short Account of Africa, which opened with a lament about the sinfulness of human nature, A Caution and Warning started out on a more positive, secular note.

At a time when the general rights and liberties of mankind, and the preservation of those valuable privileges, transmitted to us from our ancestors, are become so much the subjects of universal consideration; can it be an inquiry indifferent to any, how many of those who distinguish themselves as the advocates of liberty, remain insensible and inattentive to the treatment of thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-men, who from motives of avarice, and the inexorable decree of tyrant custom, are at this very time kept in the most deplorable state of slavery, in many parts of the British Dominions?

Thinking men everywhere, he reasoned, and most especially Englishmen, with their keen sensitivity to human rights, would inevitably cast off the barbarism of slavery, once they realized its true nature.⁵⁶

Drawing extensively on English and French sources, Benezet laid out in fresh detail the history, practice, and statistics of the slave trade in Africa and the colonies, on the assumption that most Britons could not possibly be aware from personal experience of how brutal and inhumane this source of their prosperity really was. A typical passage described a scene at a colonial slave auction which he had probably witnessed himself at the Old London Coffee House. Upon arrival at colonial ports aboard British vessels, the slaves were put on the block

naked, without any distinction of sexes, to the brutal examination of their purchasers; and this, it may well be judged, is to many of them another occasion of deep distress, especially to the females. Add to this, that near connections must now again be separated, to go with their several purchasers. In this melancholy scene mothers are seen hanging over their daughters, bedewing their naked breasts with tears, and daughters clinging to their parents, not knowing what new stage of distress must follow their separation...Why indeed, if they will not separate as readily as their owners think proper, the whipper is called for, and the lash exercised upon their naked bodies, till obliged to part.⁵⁷

Much of the book was filled with such descriptions of the human costs of the economically profitable trade. The point of such poignant

and titillating passages, however, Benezet reiterated again and again: The practice of slavery was wholly inconsistent with "the apprehensions Englishmen have always had of what natural justice requires." He reminded his readers that

Britons boast themselves to be a generous, humane people, who have a true sense of the importance of liberty; but is this a true character, whilst that barbarous, savage slave-trade, with all its attendant horrors, receives countenance and protection from the Legislature?

Slaves, like Britons, were "free by nature," he insisted. And although "God gave to man dominion" over his creation, He "imposed no involuntary subjection of one man to another."⁵⁸

He summed up the effects of slavery, and found them wholly detrimental to both the social and economic order.

It introduces idleness, discourages marriage, corrupts the youth, ruins and debauches morals, excites continual apprehensions of dangers, and frequent alarms, to which the whites are necessarily exposed from so great an increase of a people, that by their bondage and oppressions, become natural enemies, yet at the same time, are filling the places and eating the bread of those who would be support and security of the country.

Presumably, "those who would be support and security" were free workers of either race. A more overwhelmingly subversive influence than slavery to the peace and prosperity of the world community could scarcely be imagined. As he had done earlier, he attacked the "fake and fallacious arguments" for slavery, all of which, he observed, masked either an inexcusable greed or insidious racial prejudice. Again he proclaimed the principle of innate racial equality, and concluded that the institution of slavery was wholly "inconsistent with the plainest precepts of the Gospel, the dictates of reason, and every common sentiment of humanity." The new appeal did not completely overlook the religious sentiments of

benevolent Quakers, but Benezet now demanded black emancipation primarily on the basis of the natural rights of all mankind.⁵⁹

On September 18, 1766, the Meeting for Sufferings tentatively approved the manuscript of A Caution and Warning for publication, and "recommended the Overseers of the Press carefully to revise and examine whether the quotations are exactly copied, and what else relating thereto as they deem necessary." The new willingness to sponsor Benezet's anti-slavery writing came in the wake of the Stamp Act Crisis. While the procedure for examining and publishing Quaker materials was routine, it moved faster than usual in this case. Undoubtedly the focus of this new book on England's responsibility for the crimes of the slave trade helped smooth the way with disgruntled Quaker merchants. On October 17, the first edition of 2,000 copies was published by the Philadelphia Meeting. The work was "to be dispersed on this continent" and in England with the recommendation that it be reprinted by Quakers there. Five months later, Benezet wrote his friend John Smith that a second printing of 2,000 copies had been necessary in Philadelphia. Still other reprints and several new editions followed in 1767, '68, '69, '70, '84, '85, and at least one in the nineteenth and another in the twentieth centuries. Benezet personally sent many parcels of the Caution and Warning to Meetings throughout the colonies, including the Southern provinces of Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia.⁶⁰

The leaders of the non-importation movement at first were wealthy Quaker merchants, with close ties to English shippers. Some were also members of the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings, which acted with such unusual dispatch to publish and disseminate the Caution and Warning.

The Society's sudden interest in Benezet's new book, a work that was similar in many ways to the 1762 Short Account of Africa, except for the added political dimension of its "British liberties" thesis, must be seen in the context of rising tensions between the colonies and the parent state. It became, with or without the intent of its author, a convenient colonial weapon in the hostile atmosphere, and its history suggests that the prewar antislavery movement was a stimulant to, as well as stimulated by, the revolutionary fervor.

On April 29, 1767, Benezet wrote to David Barclay, a leading London Quaker who had known his father many years previously. A packet containing copies of the Caution and Warning accompanied the letter. Benezet urged Barclay to deliver the books to "persons of interest and power" in the kingdom. The letter's main argument against the trade was the imminent danger of slave insurrection in the southern colonies if action were not taken immediately. In response to Benezet's appeal and to the official request of the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings, Barclay and others in the London Yearly Meeting who were sympathetic to their American trade connections, quickly republished the work in an edition of 1,500 copies. Of these, approximately 800 copies were delivered "to Members of Parliament and Officers of the Crown." Again in 1767, and early in 1768, new printings were made in London to satisfy the interest in Benezet's book. But as tensions between the British government and the colonies grew, official sentiment against the American anti-slavery crusade hardened in England. Only one of Benezet's works was published there between 1768 and 1784.⁶¹

In his expanding campaign, Benezet made use of antislavery materials from a variety of sources. Together with his Caution and Warning, he mailed out numerous copies of a strictly political antislavery address delivered to the Assembly of Virginia, which had been originally published in the Virginia Gazette, March 19, 1767. He bound copies of the address with later editions of his own books, as a kind of emphatic postscript, in order to facilitate a wider distribution of the southern document throughout the empire.⁶²

In the same month that Benezet wrote the letter to Barclay, he also took a step he had been pondering for sometime, but had delayed because he found himself "in great measure incapable with sufficient clearness to express my ideas." Now the time had come, he felt, to seek cooperation with other religious denominations against the slavery curse. He had come across a sermon preached by the Anglican Bishop of Gloucester, William Warburton, before an anniversary meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, in London, February, 1766. The Society enjoyed enormous prestige in England, and had an extensive network of missionary outposts throughout the world. The Bishop had condemned the practice of holding "property in rational creatures" in his address. Benezet published an extract from the sermon and had it, too, bound with some editions of the Caution and Warning. Now he decided to contact the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel directly in an appeal for concerted religious and political action against slavery in the Western world.⁶³

The Bishop's attack on slavery had become a matter of contention within the S.P.G., as Benezet discovered when he read the Society's

Transactions for 1766. Late in April, 1767, he wrote to the London headquarters to encourage support for Warburton's outspoken position, and to urge the Society to launch a campaign against slavery. He enclosed a packet of his own books to help in a cause "wherein Christianity and the welfare of the nation are so deeply concerned." As he said, he considered the Society, with its religious base and extensive influence in the Empire, peculiarly well suited to press for social change. He sent a similar letter and book to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Secker, who served as president of the Society.⁶⁴

Archbishop Secker apparently did not reply, possibly because he was in his final illness by late 1767. But the Society, after nearly a year's delay, did answer Benezet's overture in a letter written by the secretary, Dr. Daniel Burton. Burton assured him that his plea had been considered, "with all due attention," and that he was held in "great esteem." Burton then defended the Society's policy of keeping slaves on its plantations in Barbadoes, where they were treated with "the utmost kindness." He hoped that the good example set by the Society's agents there would have a "proper" influence on other colonial slaveowners. But the Society, he emphasized,

cannot condemn the practice of keeping slaves as unlawful, finding the contrary very plainly implied in the precepts given by the apostles, both to masters and servants, which last were for the most part slaves; And if the doctrine of the unlawfulness of slavery should be taught in our colonies, ...the poor creatures themselves, if they come to look on this doctrine, will be so strongly tempted by it to rebel against their masters, that the most dreadful consequences to both will be likely to follow. And therefore, tho' the Society is fully satisfied that your intention in this matter is perfectly good, yet they most earnestly beg you not to go farther in publishing your notions, but rather retract them.⁶⁵

There could no longer be any question in Benezet's mind about which side was in control of the S.P.G.'s internal struggle over slavery. The prospect for inter-faith cooperation in the matter now seemed remote.

Benezet's brief correspondence with the S.P.G. illustrated an anomaly of antislavery thought in the eighteenth century--the diverging paths taken by Anglican and Quaker leadership. Both groups, at about mid-century, held a position of religious equalitarianism. The Negro's soul was equally important with that of the white person's in God's sight. And there was general agreement that slaves should be instructed in Christianity and treated well. Black skin was considered a physical defect, however, and both Anglicans and Quakers had tended to look upon blacks as socially, mentally, and physically inferior to whites. But by the mid-1760's, this easy agreement had disappeared. Anglicans had moved firmly toward a full rationale for the defense of slavery, while Quakers increasingly condemned it.⁶⁶

Benezet himself had moved from virtual obscurity into a position of both theoretical and practical leadership in the antislavery movement during the two decades since 1750. To a degree, he was the movement. His belief in the brotherhood of man combined with his early cautious experiments in the education of free black children had led to his firm conviction of the full moral and intellectual equality of the races. In addition, his expanding Enlightenment commitment provided a solid rational basis for the campaign. He had experimented, too, with various kinds of arguments, in sounding out the opposition, and discovered that people everywhere were incredibly attached to their purses and their prejudices. It was Dr. Rush, again, who wrote some years later,

My friend the late Anthony Benezet, one of the greatest and best men that ever lived, used to say that 'the height of all charity was to bear with the unreasonableness of mankind.'⁶⁷

That kind of charity Benezet needed in abundance as he struggled to awaken the sluggish minds and consciences of an ever growing number and variety of people.

By the late 1760's, political agitation against the autocratic trade restrictions of Great Britain had begun to show affinities with the antislavery cause. Patriot leaders would one by one discover the value of Benezet's crusade to their immediate goals, much as he had already taken up the cry for "British liberties" in the slave's behalf. The natural rights arguments that the Quaker leader had appropriated so effectively for his campaign to free the oppressed African now ushered in a parallel and even more extensive rhetoric of colonial emancipation.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER X

¹Rush to Granville Sharp, May 1, 1773, and Nov. 28, 1783, Woods, 2, 20. Rush to Franklin, May 1, 1773, Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., The Letters of Benjamin Rush, (Princeton, 1951), I, 79. Thomas Clarkson, History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade (London, 1808), I, 169, 170. Jean Pierre Brissot de Warville, New Travels in the U.S.A. Mara Socearu, tr., and Durand Echeverria, ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 219.

²Davis, 342-348, discusses Sewall's tract. Arthur Zilversmit, The First Emancipation, The Abolition of Slavery in the North (Chicago, 1967), 58-60. Lawrence W. Towner, "The Sewall-Saffin Dialogue on Slavery," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., XXI (1964), 40-52.

³Drake, 5-8, 11, 12. See Benezet, A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies (Philadelphia, 1766), 38, for extract from Fox's 1671 discourse on the treatment of slaves in Barbadoes. James, 108. Quote in Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 56. W. E. B. DuBois, The Philadelphia Negro (Philadelphia, 1899), 11, 12. Davis, 308-326.

⁴Ethlyn Kirby, George Keith, 1638-1716 (New York, 1942), 88-90. Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 57, 58. Peter Brock, Pacifism in the U.S. (Princeton, 1968), 94. The "Exhortation" is reprinted in PMHB, XIII (1889), 267-269. James, 29.

⁵Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 57-69. Kenneth L. Carroll, "William Southeby, Early Quaker Antislavery Writer," PMHB, LXXXIX (1965), 416-427. James, 124-126.

⁶Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 65. Edward Needles, An Historical Memoir of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (Philadelphia, 1848), 13. Amelia Mott Gummere, ed., Journal of John Woolman, (New York, 1922), 216. DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 12. Herbert Aptheker, "The Quakers and Negro Slavery," JNH, XXV (1940), 342. See also Drake, 50, 51.

⁷James, 126. Davis, 244, 245.

⁸See James, 128-137.

⁹Ibid., 137. Davis, 330. Brock, Pacifism, 134-136. Benezet to Samuel Fothergill, Oct. 17, 1757, To Jonah Thompson, Apr. 24, 1756, Brookes, 220-223.

¹⁰See Gummere, ed., Journal of John Woolman, 82, 349, 397, 475, on coordinated antislavery campaign of Benezet and Woolman. To John Smith, May 8, 1763, Brookes, 247, 248. Drake, 64, 65.

¹¹Ezra Michener, Retrospect of Early Quakerism, Being Extracts from the Records of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and the Meetings Composing It (Philadelphia, 1860), 342. Auguste Jorns, The Quakers as Pioneers in Social Work, Thomas Kite Brown, Jr., tr. (Port Washington, N.Y., 1931), 206. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Private City (Philadelphia, 1968), 15, 20. Heads of Families, Pennsylvania, 1790 Census (Washington, D.C., 1908), 50. See above, ch. VI. Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 18, 19. As the 19 year old Woolman wrote out a bill of sale for a Negro woman for his employer, it struck him that slavery was incompatible with his Quaker profession.

¹²See especially Davis, 489-493, for example of recent twentieth century historiography extolling Woolman at expense of Benezet in anti-slavery movement. Mary S. Locke, Anti-Slavery in America from the Introduction of African Slaves to the Prohibition of the Slave Trade (Boston, 1901), 28. Phillips Moulton, "John Woolman's Approach to Social Action," Church History, XXXV (1966), 399-407. Clarkson, Abolition, I, 167. See below, ch. XII.

¹³Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 334. Edwin H. Cady, John Woolman: The Mind of the Quaker Saint (New York, 1965), 78, 79.

¹⁴The Epistle of 1754 is reprinted in Brookes, 475-477. Brookes, 80, 81, claims authorship for Benezet, while Janet Whitney, John Woolman: American Quaker (Boston, 1942), 191-194, claims the entire epistle for Woolman. Neither biographer is wholly convincing. See Drake, 56, and Michener, Retrospect, 342.

¹⁵Drake, 56.

¹⁶Ibid. Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 349, 458, 397. Jordan, 274. To George Dillwyn, July 12 or 14, 1778, Brookes, 327, 328.

¹⁷Samuel Fothergill to James Wilson, Nov. 9, 1756, George Crosfield, ed., Memoirs of Samuel Fothergill, (Liverpool, 1843), 281, 282, described conflicts between younger "reforming" Friends and older "political" Friends in PYM.

¹⁸Minutes of PMM, Aug. 26, 1757, 44. To S. Fothergill, Oct. 17, 1757, Brookes, 223. See above, ch. V.

- ¹⁹To John Smith, Dec. 30, 1757, Brookes, 225.
- ²⁰Davis, 330. LYM, Extracts from the Minutes (London, 1802), 176. Drake, 59-61.
- ²¹Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 215-217.
- ²²Ibid. Michener, Retrospect, 346, 347. Drake, 59-61. James, 131.
- ²³Quote from title of Benezet's last tract, The Case of Our Fellow Creatures, the Oppressed Africans (London, 1783).
- ²⁴LYM, Epistles from the Yearly Meeting (London, 1858), I, Epistle of 1758, 305-309.
- ²⁵Benezet, Observations on the Enslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negroes (Philadelphia, 1759). See letter to John Smith, Feb. 8, 1760, concerning problems of financing a 1760 edition of this tract, Brookes, 237.
- ²⁶Benezet, Some Historical Account of Guinea (4th ed., London, 1788), 81. Henry Gandy to William Dillwyn, July 26, 1783, quoted in Some Historical Account (3rd ed., Philadelphia, 1785), 130-131.
- ²⁷Observations on Enslaving (Philadelphia, 1760) 1, 9.
- ²⁸Ibid., 2-4. Jordan, 300.
- ²⁹Observations on Enslaving, 2, 3. Woolman, Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes, I, in Gummere, ed., Journal of John Woolman, 334.
- ³⁰See letters to John Smith, Feb. 8, 1760, 1762, May 8, 1763, Brookes, 235-237, 244-248. Minutes of FMM, Apr. 25, 1760, 248.
- ³¹See for example, To Samuel Fothergill, Oct. 1 and 17, 1757, Brookes, 222-224. To Jonah Thompson, Apr. 24, 1756, Brookes, 220. William L. Sachse, The Colonial American in Britain (Madison, Wis., 1956), 88. Davis, 327-330. James, 1-22, Dumond, Antislavery, 19. No doubt the decreasing profits from the trade, due to the Seven Years' War, facilitated this decision by London Yearly Meeting.
- ³²Short Account of Africa (Philadelphia, 1762), 6, 7, 27, 64. Observations on Enslaving, 2. Locke, Anti-Slavery, 28. The 18th century proslavery arguments are discussed in Davis, 150-152, 186, 392-395. On the increasingly secular emphasis in the antislavery argument, see Milton Cantor, "The Image of the Negro in Colonial Literature," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (1963), 472-474.

³³Short Account of Africa, 3, 4.

³⁴Ibid., 8. This passage draws some phrases from Woolman's Considerations, I, 339. Benezet quoted extracts from Locke in later antislavery tracts, and his educational innovations suggest that he may have studied Locke's treatise on the subject. A copy of Locke's On Toleration (Wilmington, 1764) was in Benezet's library, now in HQC, but was acquired after publication of the Short Account of Africa.

³⁵Woolman, Considerations, II, 368. James, 234. Aptheker, "Quakers," 331-362. Carl N. Degler, "Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice," Comparative Studies in History and Society, II (1959), 49-66. Davis, 23, 24. Jordan, 80, 257-259, 273-283. Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (Boston, 1801), 229-230, 237, 240. Patrick Henry to Robert Pleasants, Jan. 18, 1773, Brookes, 443. DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 13.

³⁶Woolman, Considerations, I, 339. Jordan, 274, 275. Cantor, "Image," 452-477.

³⁷Short Account of Africa, 8. See above ch. VI, on Africans' School on Benezet's teaching experience. Roger A. Bruns, "Anthony Benezet's Assertion of Negro Equality," JNH, LVI (1971), 230-238. Jordan, 282.

³⁸Woolman, Considerations, I, 346, II, 352.

³⁹Louis R. Harlan, The Negro in American History, Publication No. 61, Service Center for Teachers of History (Baltimore, Md., 1965), 6, observes: "We have a rich historical literature on the subject of slavery. Unfortunately, however, it has centered too exclusively around the debate over the morality of slavery and too little has been written from the viewpoint of the slave himself." Benezet was far more sensitive to this problem than many later historians have been.

⁴⁰Short Account of Africa, 10. Davis, 467, criticizes Benezet for idealizing West African tribal culture. But in fact, Benezet also related the unpleasant native side of intertribal warfare. He maintained that the white slave traders provided both the capital and motivation for it, however.

⁴¹Short Account of Africa, 8-12, 16, 21. See Donald L. Robinson, Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820 (New York, 1971), 18, on source of the "just war" argument in John Locke's Two Treatises on Government. For fuller development of this theme, see Benezet, Caution and Warning, 16.

⁴²Edward C. P. Lascelles, Granville Sharp and the Freedom of Slaves in England (London, 1928), 55. Leonard C. Lashley, "Anthony Benezet and His Anti-Slavery Activities," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1939), 126-132.

⁴³To Joseph Phipps, May 28, 1763, FHL, Spriggs MSS.

⁴⁴Short Account of Africa, 27, 28. Locke, Anti-Slavery, 31. Davis, 311.

⁴⁵Short Account of Africa, 27, 28. To John Smith, Feb. 8, 1760, Brookes, 237. Observations on Enslaving (2nd ed., Germantown, Pa., 1760).

⁴⁶Short Account of Africa (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1762), 69-72. See above, ch. VI.

⁴⁷Short Account of Africa, 69, 70.

⁴⁸Ibid., 70, 71.

⁴⁹Ibid., 71, 72.

⁵⁰Short Account of Africa (1st ed.), 22.

⁵¹To Joseph Phipps, May 28, 1763, FHL. Some Historical Account, (4th ed., London, 1788) Printer's foreward.

⁵²Bibliographical quantification of Benezet's works is at best inaccurate. The following sources were consulted to establish publication information: Charles Evans, American Bibliography; The National Union Catalogue of Books; Joseph Sabin, Bibliotheca Americana (New York, 1968); Joseph Smith, Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books (London, 1867); Charles Hildeburn, A Century of Printing: The Issues of the Press in Pennsylvania, 1685-1784 (Philadelphia, 1885); and the catalogue of the Rare Book Room, Library of Congress. Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, Rebels and Gentlemen (New York, 1942), 256. Gummere, Journal of John Woolman, 370-381.

⁵³To Joseph Phipps, May 28, 1763, FHL.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵LYM, Epistles, I, 1763, 326-328.

⁵⁶Caution and Warning (Philadelphia, 1766), 3, 30. He drew statistics from the Liverpool Memorandum, a shipping trade log, to show that more than 30,000 slaves were transported to America in one year (1753) from that port alone. Other ships from Bristol and London brought the total to over 100,000 slaves annually--a figure that increased following the Seven Years' War. See DuBois, Suppression of the African Slave Trade (New York, 1896), 5. Davis, 9.

⁵⁷Caution and Warning, 22.

⁵⁸Ibid., 22, 28, 31-33.

⁵⁹Ibid., 4, 5, 12. Also, to Joseph Phipps, May 28, 1763, FHL.

⁶⁰Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Sept. 18, 1766, 265. Oct. 17, 1766, 266. Sept. 1, 1769. See also, letters to John Smith, Mar. 27, 1767 and Apr. 21, 1767, Brookes, 267, 269. To Parmenas Horton, June 12, 1767, and to George Dillwyn, Dec. 23, 1771, Brookes, 275, 283.

⁶¹To D. Barclay, Apr. 29, 1767, FHL. Henry J. Cadbury, Colonial Quaker Antecedents to the British Abolition of Slavery (London, 1933), 13. Davis, 488. Benezet to Henry Laurens, Dec., 1776, Brookes, 325. Some Historical Account was published privately in London, 1772, by Granville Sharp, but it did not sell well.

⁶²Copies bound with 1768 edition of Caution and Warning, in 1771 edition of Some Historical Account, and 1782 edition of Plainness and Innocent Simplicity.

⁶³To G. Dillwyn, Apr. 1767, Brookes, 268, 269. Caution and Warning, appendix, 1-4. See Clarkson, Abolition, I, 61-63. LYM did not include the sermon extract in the London edition of 1767.

⁶⁴To the S.P.G., Apr. 26, 1767, to Thomas Secker, n.d., Brookes, 272-274.

⁶⁵S.P.G. to Benezet, Feb. 3, 1768, Brookes, 417, 418.

⁶⁶See Jordan, 196, 197, and Davis, 222. The Anglican position changed again after the Revolution, due in part to the work of Granville Sharp among the bishops and archbishops in England, as well as to the changing political and economic conditions in the empire. See below, ch. XII.

⁶⁷Rush to John Adams, July 21, 1789, Butterfield, The Letters of Benjamin Rush, I, 525.

CHAPTER XI

ANTISLAVERY AND REVOLUTION

Beginning with his earliest antislavery pronouncements, Benezet had blamed European greed for the evils of the slave trade. But it was not clear before 1763 whether or not he included the European-descended American colonists among those responsible for halting it. A footnote in the second edition of the Short Account of Africa (1762) suggested that the British, with their "uncommon sense of the benefit of liberty," carried a particular culpability. Beginning with the letters to English Friends in 1763, however, he placed the responsibility unmistakably at the doorstep of the non-colonial British. He did this, as he explained later, because the trade was "maintained under the sanction of laws made by our representatives in Parliament." He anticipated nearly insurmountable difficulties in any attempt to outlaw the trade on a colony by colony basis. And he feared a royal veto even if such concerted action could be achieved among the bickering provinces. His 1763 letter to Englishman Joseph Phipps stated his conviction that "a proper check" to the trade "must come from among you." And the popular 1766 Caution and Warning was written specifically to urge action by the British government.¹ This narrowing emphasis on English responsibility for halting the trade was for Benezet a practical matter, involving a realistic appraisal of the possible alternatives, rather than an assertion of American innocence. In the hands of his less disinterested colleagues, it was to become a convenient political weapon for arousing public

support behind the independence movement, by showing the British to be incorrigible tyrants.

Benezet, of course, saw the miserable condition of the African slaves as a far more glaring injustice than anything suffered by the complaining white colonists. Both logically and morally, he believed, the abolition of Negro slavery should take precedence over any attempt by whites to seek colonial independence. But his widely circulated view of the incongruity between "British liberties" and African slavery lent itself easily to another use. If withholding those British liberties from African-Americans was clearly unjust and hypocritical, as he insisted, it seemed to many that withholding them from British-Americans was an even worse travesty. As early as 1764, Boston lawyer James Otis had briefly introduced the antislavery theme into his extensively distributed treatise, The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved. Otis made a strong plea for resistance to English tyranny by white colonists, who "are by law of nature free born, as indeed all men are, black or white."²

The imagery of white Americans being systematically reduced to a state of slavery by the British grew apace with the popularity of Benezet's continuing attacks on the African trade. During the winter of 1765-66, the Sons of Liberty in several colonies labeled the Stamp Act a "plot to enslave Americans." And by 1773, Benjamin Rush, who attributed the rapid growth of antislavery sentiment in America almost entirely to Benezet's efforts, observed to a sympathetic English friend that the

spirit of liberty and religion with regard to the poor Negroes spreads through this country....Let this encourage us to persevere in adding blow to blow to the monster of British tyranny in America.

About the same time, Rush published a letter addressed "To His Fellow Countrymen: on Patriotism," in the Pennsylvania Journal. In it, a strong call to rebellion against English trade restrictions rested firmly on the antislavery idea--transferred directly to white Americans: "Let us with heart and hand oppose the landing of [the tea]. The baneful chests contain...something worse than death--the seeds of SLAVERY."³

The excitement about slavery and the "rights of Englishmen," as developed by Benezet on behalf of the blacks, and as proclaimed by disgruntled colonists in their own interests, derived from a powerful tradition in British politics. One of the important expositions of the radical Whig heritage, from which most of the patriot leadership and the Quaker reformers sprang, was a fifteen volume work entitled The History of England, as Well Ecclesiastical as Civil, published in London between 1725 and 1731. The volumes were written by Huguenot historian Paul Rapin-Thoyras, a great-uncle of Benezet, who had emigrated from France to Holland, and thence to England with William of Orange. Rapin-Thoyras' History had become a useful source of information for colonial attempts to model popular assemblies after the House of Commons. It was a vast repository of radical Whig traditions. One of the most insistent themes developed by Rapin-Thoyras was one that reverberated regularly back and forth across the Atlantic throughout the late eighteenth century: the necessity for a free people to protect themselves against the encroachments of government upon personal and civil liberties. Failure

to do so would inevitably result in the degradation of slavery.⁴ The doctrine was easily popularized among colonists who saw the actuality of Negro servitude all about them, and wished to avoid such a condition for themselves.

Benezet meanwhile had been encouraged by the generally brisk circulation of Caution and Warning. By 1770, he was at work on another, longer, antislavery book. He wrote Samuel Fothergill that

time has given an opportunity of a farther insight in the progress and consequence [of slavery], and it appeared proper to make some additions, in order to set the origin and nature of the trade, etc., in a more regular order than had yet been done.

In addition, the earlier work was out of print, and a new one needed "for the information of the rising generation." In May, 1771, he sent the completed manuscript of Some Historical Account of Guinea, Its Situation, Produce and the General Disposition of Its Inhabitants, with an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade, to his friend and editor, George Dillwyn, in Burlington. It was published later in the year, and became the most influential and comprehensive work on African history, as well as the most effective antislavery argument, of the eighteenth century. Thomas Clarkson, the earliest historian of the abolition movement, wrote of Some Historical Account in 1808 that it "became instrumental beyond any other work ever before published in disseminating a proper knowledge and detestation of this trade."⁵

In Some Historical Account, Benezet set out to unmask the real motive for the slave trade--the interest "in reaping the gain of this infamous traffic." He charged that proslavery claims about saving the lives of captives from African wars in order to introduce them to

Christianity and civilization were blatant lies. Much of the earlier sympathy he had entertained about the nature of his opposition had faded now. To prove his point, he presented the 121 page historical study of Western African tribes, slavery, and the trade itself, which had been "artfully misrepresented by those whose interest leads them to vindicate it." Some of the material had appeared earlier, either in his Short Account of Africa, or in Caution and Warning. But much was additional evidence to strengthen his claim that before Europeans developed the trade, the West African tribes had existed in a relatively idyllic society. He presented new data on the various tribes, their customs, governments, and economies. The African people generally lived in harmony with one another. They dressed, ate, and spoke with admirable simplicity, and were intelligent, sober, and industrious--notably all characteristics of the Quaker social ideal. It was a description of Benezet's own vision of the true family of mankind.⁶

But the harmonious African society had been desecrated by the "iniquitous traffic." In another section, Benezet traced the history of slavery in the western world. He concluded that the American southern and island colonies had developed the most degrading and inhumane form of servitude ever practiced by Christian nations. It was far worse than the relatively benign forms in use by "heathen" African tribes, he noted, and worse, too, than the more controlled structures of South American slavery. He quoted sections from laws regarding slaves, and accounts of brutal treatment in the Southern colonies and the West Indies to support his contention. Slaves in the British colonies had no legal rights at all, and their servitude was perpetual. Furthermore, the

mental and physical deprivation suffered by slaves in the new world "naturally tends to depress their minds," he wrote, "and sink their spirits into habits of idleness and sloth, which they would...have been free from had they stood upon an equal footing with the white people."⁷

Benezet pondered the question of how this kind of oppression had become so widespread in the liberty-conscious British colonies. He found the primary cause where he had always found the source of social disorders he probed. Chattel slavery, the whole concept of human beings as property, he wrote, had arisen because "all other considerations have given way to an insatiable desire of gain." Simple greed had led to the unjust laws that perpetuated the institution. Indicting this legalized evil, Benezet contended that "no legislature on earth can alter the nature of things, so as to make that to be right which is contrary to the law of God." He continued, "Injustice may be methodized and established by law, but still it will be injustice, as much as it was before."⁸ How was it then, he asked, that laws favorable to the barbarous slave trade had gone so long unchallenged in the Legislature? And why had "the executive part of the government so long [left] the trading subjects at liberty to trample on the most precious rights of others?" The whole slave system constituted a direct denial of the "common rights of mankind, on which the British constitution was founded." The power of the "trading subjects" had grown to such proportions that the very foundations of humane government had been undermined. Benezet had discovered not only the strength and motivation of his opponents, but their occupational identity as well. He was attacking, in short, the very political-economic foundations of modern Western

civilisation. These "trading subjects" claimed to be faithful Christians. The irony was more than Benezet could accept. "Let us diligently compare," he wrote, "the situation of those ignorant [Africans] and these enlightened Christians: then lift up the scale and say, which of the two are the greater savages?"⁹

Some Historical Account concluded with two chapters calling for gradual emancipation, on a plan almost identical to that proposed nearly a decade earlier in the second edition of the Short Account of Africa. To this Benezet added a suggestion that the Atlantic slave trade be replaced with an intercontinental system of "fair, friendly, and humane commerce with the Africans." By eliminating the horrors of intertribal warfare to gain slaves, Europeans might

form and cement such commercial friendships and alliances as might be necessary to introduce the arts and sciences among them and engage their attention to instruction in the principles of the Christian religion, which is the only foundation of every social virtue. Africa has about 10,000 miles of seacoast, and extends in depth near 3,000 miles from east to west, and as much from north to south, stored with vast treasures and materials necessary for the trade and manufactures of Great Britain; and from its climate, and the fruitfulness of its soil, capable, under proper management, of producing...most of the commodities which are imported into Europe from those parts of America subject to the English government; and as, in return, they would take our manufactures, the advantages of this trade would soon become so great, that it is evident this subject merits the regard and attention of the government.¹⁰

It was a broad vision of economic imperialism within the mercantile framework. How such a plan might inhibit the "trading subjects" from continuing to "trample on the most precious rights of others," he never explained.

Benezet's grounds for antislavery argument remained essentially unchanged in Some Historical Account. The appeal to higher law, sometimes called "God," but increasingly conceived as "natural rights" and "British liberties," provided the solid foundation. There was a higher percentage of material written by Benezet himself than in the earlier works. On the whole the new book reflected a growing self confidence that sprang from thorough mastery of the subject, experience in writing, and a feeling of success accompanying the increasing popularity of his once heretical views.

During the fall and winter of 1771-72, Benezet was busy with several printing projects, of which the publication and distribution of Some Historical Account was the most important. Near the end of December, he wrote Dillwyn that "several hundred of my Negro books are gone or engaged,...so that I believe a new edition will soon be wanted." The work received considerable attention both inside and outside the Quaker fellowship. In Boston, the 1773 commencement exercises at Harvard College featured "A Forensic Dispute on the Legality of Enslaving the Africans," by two graduates debating whether or not laws favoring slavery were "agreeable to the law of nature." The antislavery advocate acknowledged his debt to Benezet's African data and arguments in Some Historical Account, and quoted liberally from it. His views prevailed in the debate.¹¹

Benezet sent numerous copies of the book to Englishmen, beginning with a shipment of six in October, 1771, to Samuel Fothergill. He then supplies the Quaker manufacturers John and Henry Gurney with copies, along with a letter indicating some post-publication discouragement. "I have but small expectation of the service this publication may be of,

considering the selfishness which so much prevails," he wrote, "however I shall have the satisfaction of having done what I could to set this weighty matter in a true point of view." In the same letter, he again commented on the difficulty of publicizing the crusade indiscriminately in the colonies, because of the fear "of saying that which may be construed as making the Negroes acquainted with their own strength, and terrify the people." Because of this problem, he urged the Gurneys to publish antislavery materials in the English "public prints," in hopes of reaching "those in whose power it is to procure a remedy." He still envisioned the task as a British responsibility, primarily. The letter also revealed Benezet's almost messianic compulsion, both as an individual and for the Quakers as a group, to press for the abolition of the slave trade. He compared their situation to that of the Hebrew woman Esther, whose words seemed to him exactly appropriate. "May we altogether hold our peace? Who knows if we are not intended for such a service as this? And what judgements may fall on us, when deliverance arises another way?" Knowledge of the wrongs he had delineated in the accompanying book entailed action to correct them. "Is it not the duty of everyone who knows these things to do all in their power...to bring this matter before the King and Parliament?"¹²

He sent a parcel of books and a similar message to Quaker schoolmaster, Richard Shackleton, in Ireland later in the year. Benezet observed pointedly that an "honest" Christian government could have countenanced the evils of the slave trade for so long only if the unpleasant facts had been misrepresented to those in power. Otherwise, "we could not have so long continued in a practice so inconsistent with

British ideas of liberty." The phrase "British ideas of liberty" was becoming a litany in his publications and correspondence. And he could not refrain from repeating the obvious question:

Is it not strange that while so much noise is made about the maintenance of liberty throughout the British empire, this prodigious infringement of every human and sacred tie should be overlooked in the case of these miserable Africans?

To forestall the possible objection that Quakers should avoid political confrontations, Benezet argued that the sect, as a persecuted minority in the past had frequently presented its own case before the highest tribunals of government. And Friends' "sufferings have been by no means comparable to the present case."¹³

The letter to Shackleton was perhaps Benezet's most articulate attack on British hypocrisy generally and Quaker hypocrisy in particular. Although, to Benezet's disappointment there was no reply, the letter and its enclosure of Some Historical Account may have had an indirect effect. Shackleton had been a fellow student with Edmund Burke at the Quaker school in Ballitore, Ireland. The two kept up a close friendship through correspondence and occasional visits in later years. Benezet was aware of this, and had chosen to write Shackleton in part because of his political connections, as he admitted in the letter. This indirect avenue may have been related to Burke's important decision several years later to support the British movement to outlaw the slave trade.¹⁴

Other British recipients of Benezet's urgent letters and anti-slavery books at this time included Thomas Corbin, John Elliot, Mark Beaufoy, David Barclay, and Thomas Wagstaffe, "the most weighty of our Friends in London," he noted. Benezet may not have known that Barclay

and several other wealthy London Quakers were members of the Royal African Company. The only reply by a British Friend came from Dr. John Fothergill, who supported the antislavery position theoretically, but with strong reservations. In his characteristic, self-assigned role as fatherly advisor to Philadelphia Friends, he wrote Benezet to advocate caution, and to warn that any attempt at immediate emancipation in the South would encounter insurmountable difficulties. In a conciliatory tone, Benezet replied that he was not calling for the manumission of presently owned slaves immediately, but only in the "remote future," when "Providence would fit them for freedom." He too was concerned about the dangers that might accompany a sudden freeing of slaves, "as well to themselves, as to the whites." Nevertheless, he felt that action should be initiated by Parliament right away to abolish the slave trade, that manumission should be legally encouraged, and that ex-slaves should be settled "among the white people" on vacant public lands. Fothergill's cautious attitude helps to explain why London Yearly Meeting did not republish the antislavery book at that time.¹⁵ Almost reluctantly, Benezet turned to non-Quakers, rather than retreat into inaction.

His growing emphasis on British responsibility for halting the trade did not preclude an ambitious campaign in the provinces to further his goal. He had already sent out thousands of his books and innumerable personal letters on the matter. He concentrated especially on Virginia, where his friends, the Quakers Robert Pleasants, Edward Stabler, and Warner Mifflin, distributed his books enthusiastically. As early as January, 1772, Benezet received encouraging word from visiting English minister John Hunt, who had just returned to Philadelphia from a tour of

the Southern colonies. Hunt reported that antislavery sentiment had grown tremendously during the past few months. He estimated that in Maryland and Virginia alone, between ten and twenty thousand people would willingly sign a petition to Parliament for an end to the trade. Many of these people were not Quakers, Benezet noted in a letter relaying the good news to a friend.¹⁶

Immediately he intensified his letter writing and book distribution campaign in Virginia, where conditions seemed especially encouraging, in order to stimulate interest in such a petition. Significantly, it was in Virginia, of all the colonies, where the concept of British guilt for slavery became the most popular--an idea given widespread credence by Benezet's books. And it was of Virginia that Edmund Burke observed in the course of his efforts to conciliate the colonies, that "men who own slaves are particularly conscious of the distinction between freedom and bondage, and extremely jealous of their own liberty."¹⁷ Responding in part to popular pressure, as well as to the interests of its own members, the House of Burgesses in 1772 voted to petition the King for an end to the slave trade. The House warned that the trade endangered "the very existence of his Majesty's American dominions." There were of course other reasons besides the love of British liberties that prompted this and other anti-slave trade actions, among them a fear of too many blacks in the colonies, and the stark realities of planter indebtedness. Nevertheless, Benjamin Franklin, among others, chose later to attribute the startling popularity of the Virginia movement to abolish the trade, and the passage of the petition, to the writings of Anthony Benezet.¹⁸

In the spring of 1772, Franklin wrote to Benezet expressing agreement with the antislavery views in Some Historical Account. That letter has been lost, but its message is clear from Benezet's reply and Franklin's subsequent correspondence and activities. Benezet wrote of his own joy in receiving news from "a real friend and fellow traveler on a dangerous and heavy road." He lauded Franklin's decision to support the antislavery cause for humanitarian reasons. And he wrote that he, too, looked forward to Franklin's expressed wish of spending a long winter evening at the hearth conversing "soberly...on past dangers and better future prospects." But Benezet did not stop with a simple expression of approval for Franklin's new antislavery position. When the anticipated long winter evening arrived he wrote, he hoped "our present diligence may...furnish a comfortable reflection that in the day time we did what we could towards carrying on the great and good designs of the Father of the family." He then urged Franklin to busy himself in the present, doing all in his power to end "that terrible evil."¹⁹

He confided to Franklin that although he had already written many of the leading Friends in London, he suspected that their "fear of acting in so unpopular a cause, or the prevalency of that unfeeling disposition for the miseries of others" would prevent effective action. But Franklin, he hoped, would be strong enough to meet the "disagreeable opposition from too many, who sell their country and their God for gold, [and] laugh at human nature and compassion." He then related some recent statistics on the extent of slave importation in the colonies, and reported on the progress of the campaign in Virginia, Maryland, and New England.²⁰

Franklin published an antislavery article in the London Chronicle of June, 1772, using extracts and statistics from Benezet's letter. When he informed Benezet of the publication, he reported that he had added "some close remarks on the hypocrisy of this country, which encourages such a detestable commerce,...while it piqued itself on its virtue, love and liberty, and the equity of its courts." The article called for abolition of the trade and gradual emancipation as well. Franklin also wrote that he planned to publish the Address of the Virginia Assembly to the King, a copy of which Benezet had already forwarded to him. The letter ended with expansive encouragement for "your labors."²¹

The correspondence and exchange of information continued intermittently until 1784. Historian Lawrence Cremin views the antislavery exchanges as one of Franklin's many self-education projects, comparable to the correspondence with Peter Collinson on electricity and Noah Webster on orthography. Arthur Pitt's research on Franklin's antislavery interests concludes that:

Benezet was largely responsible for Franklin's abandonment of his merely economic interest in slavery and becoming deeply concerned with its humanitarian implications.

Pitt also credits Benezet with winning Franklin over to sponsorship of the abolition movement in Pennsylvania. There is evidence to support these claims. But perhaps more to the point, the timing of Franklin's commitment to a firm antislavery position, and his emphasis on the "hypocrisy" of England, suggest that he found the cause expedient for his own and his country's political purposes as well. Only six years earlier he had very nearly been left behind by the rapid fluctuations

in Pennsylvania politics when he at first supported the Stamp Act. Now the sudden growth of antislavery feeling in the colonies had become unmistakable, and Benjamin Franklin was a fast learner. It was Benezet who supplied him with both the evidence of, and the arguments for, the new movement.²²

Given his intense interest in the cause of the slave, it was probably inevitable that Benezet would join forces with the earliest leader of the English antislavery movement, Granville Sharp (1735-1813). A few British authors had attacked the abuses of slavery in their writings before Sharp began his campaign in the 1770's. But, in the words of Thomas Clarkson, who assumed leadership later in the century, Sharp "was distinguished from those who preceded him by this particular, that ...he was both a writer and an actor in the cause. In fact, he was the first laborer in it in England." Clarkson's emphasis on the distinction between writer and actor was grounded in his own years of antislavery experience before the trade was finally abolished in the British empire.²³ And Benezet played a significant role in the development of Sharp's interest and activity, as he had done with nearly all the newly articulate antislavery spokesmen of the period.

Sharp was the grandson of John Sharp, Archbishop of York, and the son of an Anglican Rector. He retained his affiliation with the Church of England throughout his life. He first became interested in slavery through his religiously motivated experiences in aiding indigent blacks find jobs and medical care. He soon discovered that healthy Negroes in England were often kidnapped and shipped to the West Indies as slaves, regardless of their legal status. In 1767, he assisted a

slave from Barbados whose master had severely beaten him and then left him to die on a London street. Sharp got medical care for the man, and eventually found him a job. The slave's owner saw his former property at work one day, and forced him back into captivity aboard a ship ready to sail for the islands. Incensed, Sharp secured a writ of habeas corpus and successfully defended the man's right to freedom in the courts. The former owner, a lawyer, retaliated by prosecuting Sharp for theft, for "having robbed the original master...of a slave." Sharp's legal defense of himself in the case led to his life-long commitment to the antislavery cause. Although he was a government functionary in the Ordnance Department, and not a lawyer, he eventually became the leading legal expert on the subject of slavery and English law.²⁴

As Sharp began the preparation of his brief, he happened on a used copy of Benezet's Short Account of Africa, written five years earlier, on the shelf of a London bookstore. He was so impressed with the information and arguments the work contained that he added a conclusion of his own and republished it in London.²⁵ Ironically, then, the first English edition of Benezet's antislavery works was sponsored by an Anglican barrister, rather than the British Quakers to whom he had entrusted copies and requests for reprinting.

Sharp was acquitted of the theft charges against him. In 1768, he published the gist of his legal brief in a tract entitled, A Representation of the Injustice of Tolerating Slavery in England. The case rested on appeals to the combined laws of God, nature, and English jurisprudence. Early in 1770, Benezet received a copy of Sharp's tract from his friend Samuel Allinson in Burlington, New Jersey, and noted that it

would be "of particular service" in the work he was presently engaged in--the writing of Some Historical Account. He found it so useful, in fact, that he appended a long extract from Sharp's treatise to his own work, in order to make the careful legal reasoning available in America.²⁶

Not content with his victory of 1769, Sharp wanted to obtain an unequivocal ruling on the constitutionality of slavery in England. Early in 1772, he took on the case of a Virginia slave, James Somerset, whose master had brought him to London. Somerset ran away, was recaptured, and nearly shipped to Jamaica. While the case was pending at the Court of King's Bench, Sharp wrote to Dr. John Fothergill, who was perhaps the best known Quaker in London, requesting several copies of Benezet's newest book, Some Historical Account. The work had not yet been published in England, but Sharp correctly assumed that the Quakers would have a supply from Philadelphia. He had already seen a copy himself, because he commented to Fothergill, "My fellow-laborer, Mr. Benezet, has very judiciously extracted the very marrow of my book"--a reference to the appended section bound with Benezet's work. Other passages in the book, he noted, were

so concise, and yet so full and unanswerable, especially on some points where our lawyers stick, that I wish,... to procure copies for three (if not twelve) judges, and four for counsel.

Soon after, Sharp acknowledged receipt of the requested copies and expressed his pleasure that Benezet's book had just been reprinted in London. He then furnished copies to all the judges and counsel in the Somerset case, and to "Lord Mansfield, the Chief Justice, and to Lord North, First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury." On June 22, 1722, the

court handed down a landmark decision: "that as soon as any slave sets his foot on English ground he becomes free."²⁷

On the day of the Somerset ruling, Sharp received a long personal letter from Benezet. It was the first of many in an intense correspondence between the leading antislavery advocates on opposite sides of the Atlantic, an exchange, according to an English historian, that "was destined to influence [Sharp's] whole career." Benezet made it clear in his introductory letter that he did not regard the antislavery struggle as the special domain of Quakers, and reported that people of many different professions in America desired an end to the trade, as well as to slavery. Furthermore, these Anglo-Americans were eager to work with Sharp and others to bring pressure on the King and Parliament for laws prohibiting the practice. "This we have a right to do," he wrote emphatically, and added that it was an obligation "on behalf of truth," as well.²⁸

Benezet apologized for publishing extracts from Sharp's work without first consulting him. He believed that the urgency of the message and Sharp's own zeal would justify rapid action. He had wanted to distribute the 1771 volumes immediately, especially in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and New England, where legislation effecting the trade was most likely. People in the Southern provinces were increasingly "convinced of the inexpediency, if not all of them of the iniquity" of the traffic, and he believed the time was right for sending a "representation" to the King and Parliament from the colonies. But he was uncertain whether support could be secured for antislavery petitions in England.²⁹

The letter had a powerful impact on Sharp, arriving as it did in

the hour of his historic legal victory. He responded warmly.

You need not have made an apology for having abridged my book. It is a sufficient satisfaction to me to find that you thought it capable of doing some service in a cause which we have both of us much at heart. I not only approve, sir, of the abridgement you have made of my arguments in particular, but of your whole performance.

Sharp urged Benezet to proceed with his plan for petitioning Parliament, but only on the subject of the slave trade, "which is protected and encouraged" by that body. "But with respect to the toleration of slavery in the colonies," he advised emphatically, "I apprehend the British Parliament has no right to interfere." He made this distinction, he explained, because "the colonies cannot be too much upon their guard with respect to the dignity and independence of their own assemblies on this point." And the "colonies have a right themselves to prohibit such importation...with the King's concurrence." This advice was based on the argument, already prevalent in America, that Parliament had nothing to do with the colonies' internal laws. Earlier discussions had been limited to matters of taxation, however. Sharp's letter signified the widening scope of the principle.³⁰

Sharp offered to use all channels open to him to present any petitions gathered by Benezet to the King or Parliament. He noted that Pennsylvania's agent, Franklin, would be a good person to present that colony's memorials. But he cautioned that "Colony agents in general are rather prejudiced in favor of the slave trade, on account of their offices' connections and continuous intercourse with interested people." The agents' business connections with "interested people"--men involved in the trade--presented a serious challenge to the victory so recently

won at court. In reaction to the Somerset decision, the "West-India merchants" were applying to Parliament for legislation to legalize the possession of slaves in England, Sharp informed Benezet. Hence, a good show of petitions from America would "afford an excellent argument against the pretended necessity of holding slaves in the colonies, which is always alleged as a reason for...the African trade."³¹

Sharp's message reached Benezet in October, 1772,--a "long, intelligent letter...calling for our help from this side of the water." Benezet immediately set to work publicizing Sharp's request. And he reprinted thousands of copies of an important enclosure: Sharp's letter to Lord North delineating the rights of the colonial assemblies to regulate their own affairs in the matter of slavery. The letter was widely circulated throughout the colonies. It specifically linked the anti-slavery movement the "rights of the colonies," and the "dignity and independence of their assemblies." Sharp stated again that "no Parliament on earth can have a just right to enact laws for places which it does not represent." The letter fueled an already spreading brush fire of rebellion against all attempts to enslave human beings.³²

Benezet also wrote to Samuel Allinson, who was by this time a well-known New Jersey attorney, asking him to draw up suitable petitions in the light of Sharp's suggestions. Allinson responded with two petitions, "perhaps some might call them remonstrances,...or rather argumentative petitions." The documents signified his "willingness to serve the antislavery cause," he wrote. Benezet began circulating copies of the petitions immediately in Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York.³³

One of the most interesting reactions to this extensive campaign came from a young Virginia planter and politician, Patrick Henry. Quaker Robert Pleasants, then in the process of freeing his own slaves, had given a copy of Some Historical Account to Henry at Benezet's request. Henry read the book and then wrote to Pleasants in January to thank him and express his interest in the antislavery movement. Although he made no commitment to act favorably on the pleas, he explained that he actually agreed with Benezet and Pleasants that slavery was a "lamentable evil." Paraphrasing Benezet, he asked,

Is it not amazing, that at a time when the rights of humanity are defined and understood with precision in a country above all others fond of liberty: that... we find men...adopting a principle as repugnant to humanity, as it is inconsistent with the Bible and destructive to liberty?³⁴

Henry then heaped lavish praise upon the Quakers, many of whom were his constituents, and promised to "honor" them in "their noble effort to abolish slavery." However, he wrote, "would anyone believe that I am master of slaves of my own purchase? I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them. I will not, I cannot justify it." He expressed faith that the abolition of slavery might occur at some future date, and that meanwhile, slaves should be well treated. Yet he concluded that "a serious review" of the subject "gives a gloomy perspective to future times."³⁵ It was the kind of agreement-opposition that was becoming increasingly familiar, and painful, to Benezet.

Meanwhile, encouraged by the news from America, Sharp began searching out English support for the campaign. He wrote to Dr. Fothergill, urging him to circulate a petition in his London circles, as Benezet was doing in the colonies. Sharp also launched an ambitious

program of canvassing the Anglican Bishops and Archbishops, dispensing his own and Benezet's antislavery writings to each one. By 1779, nearly all the Bishops had finally pledged their support--a remarkable change in the twelve years since Benezet had first contacted the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.³⁶

As a result of a request and written introduction from Benezet, Sharp and Benjamin Franklin met in London and began "to act in concert in the affair of slavery," according to one of Franklin's letters. In fact, the two would cooperate even more zealously in another project aimed at colonial independence only a few months later. Benezet had also written the British Methodist leader, John Wesley, sending him a copy of Some Historical Account. Convinced by the book, Wesley promised Benezet that he would consult with Sharp about the "expediency of some weekly publication in the newspapers, on the origin, nature, and dreadful effects of the slave-trade." Whether this weekly publicity materialized or not is unknown, but Wesley and Sharp did cooperate on other antislavery projects.³⁷

Granville Sharp's biographers have emphasized the importance of the Benezet-Sharp correspondence initiated during the historic Somerset controversy. According to Prince Hoare, who edited the two volume Memoirs of Granville Sharp, the correspondence "was destined to influence Sharp's whole career" and to have a broad impact on Revolutionary politics. The Benezet letters and books gave direction to Sharp's efforts, leading him to explore the root of the problem--the slave trade. He became convinced that ruling out slavery in England was only the beginning. Benezet's correspondence stimulated Sharp to enlarge the

scope of his campaign from that early goal to the eventual objective of abolishing the trade and practice throughout the empire. In addition, Benezet's persistence strengthened his English friend's resolve to carry the antislavery campaign into the highest circles of government. The letters put Sharp into close contact with some of the most articulate and influential of the colonial leaders at a crucial time. And finally, the correspondence revealed an "unforeseen connection of interests" that played an important role in Sharp's decision to champion colonial rights well beyond the subject of Negro slavery in the "great political strife" of the 1770's. This last facet of his influence, Benezet would not have cared to claim, perhaps, but Sharp's subsequent activities and writings make clear the connection.³⁸

Still, Sharp could never accept Benezet's advanced position concerning the nature of Negroes, their innate intellectual and moral equality with whites. He simply did not like black-skinned people, although he was willing to aid them. "I am far from having any particular esteem for the Negro," he wrote privately, "but I think myself obliged to consider them as men." This negative attitude was characteristic of most late eighteenth century antislavery leaders, in fact. The failure of Sharp and his contemporaries to accept the implications of racial equality led eventually to the development of African colonization as a means to remove ex-slaves from proximity to white populations. The colonization movement and its goals stood in sharp contrast to Benezet's proposals to "settle them among the white people."³⁹

By the winter of 1772-1773, the campaign had become avowedly ecumenical. The deist Franklin, the Anglican Sharp, and the Methodist Wesley, committed themselves to the antislavery struggle, alongside the

Quaker Benezet. And in Philadelphia, the young Presbyterian, Benjamin Rush, would soon enter the lists in response to Benezet's persuasiveness.

Early in 1773, Benezet reported to Sharp, Franklin, Fothergill, and others, on the outcome of the Pennsylvania petitioning campaign. The petitions, to be presented first to the legislature and then to the King, called for an end to the slave trade and the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Many people had signed eagerly, he wrote. "If time would have allowed, I am persuaded we might have had ten thousand signatures." But the petitions had been delayed by wealthy merchants in the Assembly. Benezet visited Dr. Benjamin Rush, and pleaded with him to express his nascent antislavery views publically, in order to help secure passage of the bill. The twenty seven year old Rush hesitated. He owned a slave himself, and he had only recently begun to build up the kind of respected and lucrative medical practice he desired. He had not yet begun the extensive humanitarian and political involvement that would later characterize his life. Nevertheless, he yielded to Benezet's entreaties, and within a few days produced a powerful anti-slavery tract entitled, An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America upon Slave-Keeping. Although the Address was published anonymously, his authorship soon became known. Rush's style combined both emotional and logical appeals to the government to outlaw human bondage. He stressed the incongruity of slavery in the colonies at a time when "the eyes of all Europe are fixed upon you to preserve an asylum for freedom in this country, after the last pillars of it are fallen in other quarters of the globe." Americans, he explained, should set their own affairs in order if they would attack British tyranny.

But he placed the ultimate responsibility on Britain for allowing the trade at all. The assemblies of America should combine, he argued, to petition the King and Parliament for the dissolution of the African Company. "It is by this incorporated band of robbers that the trade has been chiefly carried on to America." An ambiguous statement encompassed the thesis of his pamphlet: "The plant of liberty is of so tender a nature that it cannot thrive long in the neighborhood of slavery." That he referred not only to the slavery of Africans but also of white colonists, especially the latter, was unmistakably clear, however.⁴⁰

As Rush feared, the pamphlet created considerable controversy, and he believed it adversely affected his medical practice. He later felt compelled to write A Vindication of the Address in defense of his outspoken position. The original tract has been widely credited with helping to secure passage of a bill which doubled the duty on slaves to twenty pounds, thus virtually halting further importation into Pennsylvania. Benezet saw the new act as a partial step in the right direction, and he waited impatiently to learn whether or not the King and Council would approve it. In fact, the passage of the bill was closely related to other non-importation actions in the colonies, and was an integral part of the general rebellion against British economic "tyranny."⁴¹

It was through Benezet's introduction that Rush first contacted Granville Sharp and sent him a copy of his Address. Rush suggested that Sharp might wish to reprint the tract in London. This letter, written May 1, 1773, opened a lively correspondence on the subjects of slavery and colonial politics, that continued for thirty six years. Rush also sent Franklin a copy, and a letter attributing the origin of the tract

to Benezet's request, thus, perhaps justifying the "rashness" of his act.⁴²

The increasingly severe laws governing the importation of slaves into Pennsylvania obviously cannot be attributed entirely to any one person or one single cause. Nevertheless, each law restricting the trade into the province, beginning with the ten pound duty levied early in 1761, and culminating in the 1773 act, followed within several months the publication of one of Benezet's major antislavery tracts. In the last case, Rush's pamphlet, produced at Benezet's request, strengthened the effect of his Some Historical Account.⁴³ The facts suggest that there was an important connection. Either Benezet's works did have some direct impact on Pennsylvanians' thinking and actions on the subject, or else he had a remarkable sense of timing. Probably both factors operated, but the first may well have been more important.

The petitioning campaigns had been successful even beyond Benezet's expectations in other colonies as well as in Pennsylvania. Within a year after the Pennsylvania Act, copies of which he circulated as extensively as possible, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Jersey had all passed similar bills, only to have them overturned by governors and/or councils in most cases.⁴⁴

Thomas Clarkson once penned an accurate description of Benezet's characteristic methods of furthering his antislavery goals.

Anthony Benezet may be considered as one of the most zealous, vigilant, and active advocates, which the cause of the oppressed Africans ever had....If a person called upon him who was going on a journey, his first thoughts usually were, how he could make him an instrument in favor [of antislavery] and he either gave him tracts to distribute, or he sent letters by him, or he gave him some commission on the subject, so that he was the means of employing several persons at the same time...in advancing the work.

And Benjamin Rush recalled meeting his friend on a street corner.

In one hand he carried a subscription paper and a petition; in the other he carried a small pamphlet on the unlawfulness of the African slave-trade, and a letter directed to the King of Prussia upon the unlawfulness of war.

Evidently it was not an unusual encounter.⁴⁵

But Benezet used other, less direct methods, as well. He did not disdain shrewd political maneuvers to influence decisions by legislatures and Meetings. And he inspired several well known men to write antislavery tracts and publish articles. Occasionally he appealed to motives that he condemned in other contexts. For example, he suggested to George Dillwyn that in order to win Samuel Smith over to an antislavery position, he might show him that the cause was so just "that it must in the end be an honor to those who will have appeared the first promoters of it."⁴⁶

Benezet had combined his vigorously direct methods with more imaginative ones quite effectively to popularize antislavery ideas by mid 1773. In America, as well as England, his co-workers in the cause were mostly ordinary, "middling" people, and not the major political and social leaders, with the exception of Benjamin Franklin. Rush and Sharp were only beginning their careers. These articulate spokesmen were addressing a growing popular audience. "The people, both here and in all the neighboring governments, seem to rouse from their slumber," Benezet wrote happily in August. And Rush had recently proclaimed Benezet's remarkable success in winning "three fourths of the province" to his view point. Franklin, too, noted the "great effects" of Benezet's work among the people, generally, and by summer he wrote Benezet that

he saw good "reason to hope our colonies may in time get clear of a practice that disgraces them."⁴⁷

But the optimism was premature, and to some extent even unfounded.

Two years earlier, Benezet had complained that he could not get leading Quakers in Philadelphia to read his manuscript of Some Historical Account, for they were "so taken up with other matters that I can expect little help from them." The "other matters" of business and politics, rather than overt hostility to his crusade, he found, continued to be among the greatest obstacles to complete success. Another way of avoiding the issue in the colonies was the diversion of criticism to the West Indies, where the practice of slavery was allegedly more harsh and cruel. This tack was artfully pioneered by James Otis early in the colonial rebellion. But the most serious problem arose in part from a distortion of emphasis on Benezet's own popularization of the parliamentary responsibility theme. If England was responsible for the trade, England was also to blame for it--a way of thinking increasingly used to justify American practices, and to add fuel to political rebellion. Thus, although few responsible spokesmen publically defended the slave trade against the growing clamor to end it by 1773, various ways of avoiding actual abolition were already being worked out. In fact the popular antislavery campaign was being rapidly diverted into a useful means of arousing anti-British sentiment. Slaves were, after all, property. And one of the most dearly held tenets of revolutionary ideology was grounded in allegiance to the rights of property ownership.⁴⁸

Benezet must have become aware during the fall of 1773 that the success of his crusade was not what it appeared to be and that perhaps

the anti-slave trade acts of the colonial assemblies to some extent deliberately courted royal vetoes. By arousing widespread moral indignation along with economic and political rebellion, perhaps the patriot leaders were effectively solidifying colonial support for independence. Benezet's uneasiness was reflected in a letter to Moses Brown, of Rhode Island, another new friend gained through his antislavery endeavors. He described one of his recurrent bouts of spiritual and physical malaise in the wake of two years of frantic activism. "A fear of being through my natural activity seduced" into the service of the "grand adversary," he wrote, "causes me of late to choose silence, even from what may be termed good things, and to look to him in whom strength is to be found, in as much stillness as I am capable of." He did not specify exactly what activities constituted service to the "grand adversary." Evidently, he suspected that the goals of his campaign, good as they were, had begun to usurp his primary allegiance, rather than the "Father of mankind." He had been reading Woolman's Journal about this time, and was reminded that "it's the heart God calls for."⁴⁹

Yet along with a copy of John Everard's Some Gospel Treasures, the inevitable accompaniment of his quietist periods, he also sent Brown several tracts on slavery. He urged Brown to read these himself, circulate them widely in New England, and publish them in various periodicals. This seemed especially urgent to him since so many people in those provinces were still "fitting out vessels for the Guinea trade." Benezet's next letter to Brown, a month later, expressed great enthusiasm for the latter's decision to emancipate all his slaves as a result of his new profession of the Quaker faith. Probably, Brown's action was directly

related to his reading of the antislavery tract, Some Historical Account, although Benezet did not mention this, and the letter from Brown has not survived. Within a few months, Brown was leading the antislavery forces in Rhode Island in a campaign that was finally successful in 1784.⁵⁰

By December of his sixtieth year, Benezet was moving again with his characteristic energy, less encumbered by the doubts and partial withdrawal that had marked the fall. He wrote a strong letter to Granville Sharp, impatiently requesting information by return ship on the fate at the hands of the British government of the Virginia petition and the Pennsylvania Act taxing slave imports. Upon receiving the letter Sharp went almost immediately to call on Lord Dartmouth, the Secretary of State of Great Britain, at his home. There he learned that no action at all had been taken on the Virginia petition. As for the Pennsylvania Act, his Lordship claimed he had not even seen it, and thus could not comment on it. Sharp was ready, however, with a copy of the Act, which Benezet had enclosed in his letter. After a long discussion, during which Sharp "took the liberty of exclaiming very earnestly against...attending to political or mercenary pleas for tolerating slavery or the slave trade," the Secretary "promised to take particular notice of it" in the presentation to the King. Sharp believed he was sincere. But, owing to solid opposition from English shipping interests, neither the Virginia nor Pennsylvania actions received royal approval.⁵¹

Soon after Sharp's consultation with Lord Dartmouth, he had to send discouraging news to Benjamin Rush. He had attempted to get Rush's Address reprinted in London, but no publisher would take the job. Those

he approached replied that sales of antislavery materials in England were too poor to defray the cost of printing. The 1772 London edition of Benezet's Some Historical Account had been "a considerable loser for want of sale." Sharp had personally bought and distributed most of the copies and was forced to do the same with his own tracts. Clearly, antislavery was a far less popular topic in London than it was in the American colonies, where Benezet's, Sharp's, and Rush's tracts had gone through repeated editions at Philadelphia, New York, and Boston in 1773 alone.⁵²

Another popular antislavery tract was published in the colonies in 1773 by a former pupil and amanuensis of Benezet, William Dillwyn, of Burlington, New Jersey, brother of George Dillwyn. William Dillwyn had copied at least one draft of the Caution and Warning manuscript during Benezet's residence in Burlington. Dillwyn had also had recent first hand experience with slavery. In 1772, carrying letters of introduction from his former teacher to "several of the principal people" in the South, Dillwyn had set out on a fact-finding mission in the heart of slave territory. He carried out Benezet's instructions to record meticulously his observations of the system. As a result of this trip, Dillwyn wrote his pamphlet. Thereafter he worked actively in the anti-slavery campaign, both in America and in England. The tract, entitled Brief Considerations on Slavery and the Expediency of its Abolition, was first printed anonymously in Burlington, in connection with the New Jersey petition drive that Dillwyn led. Brief Considerations has been incorrectly attributed to Benezet, but it was William Dillwyn's work, referred to in manuscript correspondence of Sharp, Allinson, and Benezet, and later by Thomas Clarkson.⁵³

Dillwyn distributed his tract throughout New Jersey and elsewhere, and accumulated 3,000 signatures on his petition calling for the emancipation of all slaves in the province. He led a delegation to Trenton early in 1774 to present the petition to the assembly. As a result, an act was passed similar to that of Pennsylvania which raised the import tax to a prohibitive level. Again, the popular petition called for the abolition of slavery, but succeeded only in interfering with the slave import trade. This new law, too, was vetoed by the Governor's council, on grounds that "opposition to the slave trade served as a blind for encouraging general resistance to the King's will," perhaps one of the council's more perceptive comments on the subject.⁵⁴ One of the ironies of this and the other antislavery petition drives of the period was the fact that Dillwyn, like Benezet, Brown, and probably many of the signers, were genuinely concerned about the African slavery they protested, and had little or no sympathy for the independence goals toward which their efforts were used.

In February, 1774, Sharp sent Benezet and Rush copies of still another new antislavery tract, this one by the Reverend John Wesley. Two years earlier, according to his Journal, Wesley had read with great interest Benezet's Some Historical Account, and became convinced of the truth of it. Later, he decided to write his own treatise on the subject. Wesley's Thoughts Upon Slavery drew heavily from Benezet's work, and many passages were close to verbatim quotes. When he received Wesley's small book, Benezet was pleased. He sent a letter to the author, in care of William Dillwyn, who was sailing for England. Benezet had "immediately agreed with the printer to have it republished here," he

wrote, with some explanatory footnotes and an appendix added. The tract became enormously popular in America, due in part to Benezet's indefatigable distribution system and the author's renown. But the book was widely read in England only after the American Revolution.⁵⁵

Despite the encouragement of Wesley's Thoughts on Slavery, Benezet felt less optimistic than he had the previous spring. He slowed his frantic pace of activity and pondered various problems and set-backs in correspondence with Brown, Sharp, and Allinson. The New York assembly's recent act for gradual emancipation had been vetoed by the Governor. Various anti-slave trade actions by Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey had been thwarted. He assumed that little more could be done by the colonial legislatures until the British government became more cooperative--an unlikely prospect in the increasingly belligerent atmosphere. But Sharp urged perseverance. Benezet, trying half-heartedly now to keep things going, encouraged Brown in the Rhode Island petitioning and publicity campaign, despite the growing opposition "from the African Company and West Indies Merchants' interests." Benezet also exhorted Brown to continue a paternal "watchfulness" over his freed slaves, who "are, when left to themselves not only as children, but as children set free in an alien country." This led him into a sympathetic discussion of the problems faced by southerners who wished to emancipate slaves, in the face of legal restraints against manumission. Freed blacks themselves were the focus of his concern, however, for they faced not only manifold moral temptations and a lack of education, but also the constant threat of reenslavement through kidnapping for resale.⁵⁶

Another problem Benezet considered at length about this time was that of runaway slaves. Sharp had written a legal justification for aiding escaped slaves to freedom. He cited Biblical law from the book of Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant who is escaped from his master unto thee." On the basis of an English common law maxim, "that the inferior [i.e. human] law must give place to the superior [divine]," Sharp declared that statutes which defied either reason or divine law should be disobeyed. And he placed all laws condoning slavery, especially those about fugitives, in this category. The advice was explosive in a society committed to principles of the sacredness of private property. Benezet liked Sharp's rationale, however, and consulted with Benjamin Rush as to whether he should publish it. Rush suggested that it might be dangerous to do so--slaveowners "would knock us in the head if we did." Benezet evidently decided that there was already enough antagonism and brutality connected with the slave question for he put Sharp's advice aside temporarily, commenting that "it will in future profitably be made use of." Within a year his interest in civil disobedience on behalf of black people would lead to the establishment of the first abolition society in the world, The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage.⁵⁷

Two developments in the summer of 1774 involved Benezet in another frantic round of activities. The first was a major decision of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting actually to disown members who refused to prepare their able-bodied slaves for manumission--a decision toward which he had worked for at least fifteen years. No longer would the simple refusal to buy and sell slaves suffice. The action necessitated more visits to

the last recalcitrant members, and resulted, in 1776, in Meeting's announcement that it was finally "clear" of the odious practice among its membership. Benezet's support of such drastic action, when he had consistently urged lenience and liberty of individual conscience in other matters, was a measure of his absolute abhorrence of the whole concept of human bondage. Another action of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting reaffirmed the peace principle, and reiterated the 1773 stand warning members against cooperation with revolutionary committees or agitators for independence.⁵⁸

The other important event of the summer nearly catapulted Benezet inadvertently into the center of the revolutionary maelstrom, despite Meeting's clear advice and his own peace convictions. Sharp had been working on another antislavery tract, but he decided in the spring that publicizing the cause of American colonial liberties would "necessarily retard the publication of my other tract against domestic slavery."

"Indeed," he wrote to Benezet and Rush,

I think the late infringements on the civil rights of the colonists afford an opportunity...of urging home to the slaveholders the horrid effects and unlawfulness of arbitrary power, whether it appears in domestic or political slavery.

The "late infringements" were the Coercive Acts, calculated by Parliament to subdue rebellious Massachusetts in the wake of the Boston Tea Party. In his new tract defending the colonists, Sharp inextricably combined the cause of "American subjects" with that of African slaves even more effectively than it had been done before. He entitled the pamphlet A Declaration of the People's Natural Right to a Share in the Legislature.⁵⁹

Sharp's Declaration marked an important shift of emphasis in his libertarian concerns. He translated his arguments for the freedom of African slaves directly into a case for complete independence of the colonial legislatures from the Parliament at Westminster, while they retained loyalty to the King. Previously his main emphasis had been reserved for the black slave. The new work did not deprecate that cause--in fact, the Declaration built directly upon it by calling for an end to chattel slavery as a necessary prerequisite to preserving the endangered British constitution. Americans must end African slavery if they wished to retain their own freedom, he warned. "The most general punishment for tyranny and oppression is political slavery." As he had done privately in regard to runaway slaves he now argued publically that laws made by legislatures were enforceable only insofar as they did not conflict with the individual's "superior covenant and duty to God." He had moved beyond the traditional "rights of Englishmen" and very close to the "right of revolution." Unrestrained by the Quaker peace testimony, Sharp was prepared to face the inevitable conflict his radical thinking implied--for white colonists, at least.⁶⁰

Benezet was not at all interested in agitating for American independence, but Sharp's reassuring letters and arguments about the importance of ridding the colonies of slavery and thus preserving the British constitution seemed reasonable to him. Perhaps Sharp was right when he wrote that the Intolerable Acts offered "an opportunity that ought not to be missed" to eradicate slavery; perhaps such a course would even avert the threatening hostilities. When Benjamin Franklin in London secured the first 250 copies of the Declaration from Sharp, he sent them

immediately to Benezet for distribution and republication, just in time for the September convening of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Sharp's treatise became instantly popular, and was reprinted at least four times in the colonies before the end of the year.⁶¹

The project was to be the last cooperative venture of the Benezet-Sharp-Franklin combination until after the Revolution. Benezet apparently never repudiated the tract or his part in distributing it. But there was no further exchange of correspondence between him and Sharp, although except for one brief intermission, Rush and Sharp continued writing for many years. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's decision the previous summer to insist that Quakers avoid contact with revolutionary causes may have resulted in a visit to Benezet from other elders cautioning against his friendships with patriots like Rush and Franklin. More likely, however, Benezet himself at last realized fully the end for which the antislavery campaign was being used. About this time, he replied to a letter from Samuel Allinson:

I beg thou wilt spare complimenting me about the importance of my engagements...I am much out of humor with most of what I have been long doing, as well as with myself. I am rather fearful, much of my activity has been nothing, indeed less than nothing.

Antislavery had become almost indistinguishable from advocacy of revolution, and he could no longer ignore that fact. Sorrowfully, he turned to other humanitarian and religious causes, for a time.⁶² He could not conceive of overriding his most fundamental value--peace in the family of mankind--for any real or imagined virtues of colonial revolution. Nor could he ever, apparently, consider breaking off his ties with the sect that had sustained him in an alien land, that had become his own family.

In the fall of 1774, Benezet turned his primary attention to the problems of averting war with England. His antislavery activities during the preceding decade had in many ways contributed to the turmoil he now tried to calm. His tracts on slavery and British liberties had begun to stir American public interest in the 1760's, and by the early 1770's, they clearly "suited the public mood as well as the policy of Friends," as the major historian of Quaker antislavery activities put it. It was the heyday of radical pamphleteering in the colonies, and Benezet had a long start in getting his message into the public eye.⁶³

There were striking similarities in the methods he developed in the crusade with those first used on a wide scale in 1773 to stimulate colonial rebellion against English authority. Sam Adams organized the Committee of Correspondence in Boston late in 1772, and soon similar organizations sprang up in the other colonies.⁶⁴ Benezet led his antislavery colleagues, as Adams led his patriots, in the voluminous circulation of letters, petitions, and tracts. The publicity contained news, facts about exploitation, denunciations of oppressive tyrannies, and proclamations of the rights of subject peoples. Both groups urged intercolonial cooperation in their movements, and both placed responsibility for the major evil of American society--slavery--on the British. The stage was set for the drama ahead.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XI

¹Short Account of Africa (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1766), 8, 9, 22, 23, 25, 56. To Joseph Phipps, May 28, 1763, FHL, Spriggs MSS. To John and Henry Gurney, Jan. 10, 1772, Brookes, 285. Caution and Warning (Philadelphia, 1766), 28. See Edmund S. Morgan, The Birth of the Republic, 1763-1789 (Chicago, 1956), 4, 5, on intercolonial rivalries that precluded concerted action in the 1760's. Drake, 86.

²James Otis, Rights of the British Colonies (Boston, 1764), 29.

³Quoted in Donald L. Robinson, Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820 (New York, 1971), 66. Rush to Granville Sharp, Oct. 19, 1773, Woods, 3. Signed "Hamden," Oct. 20, 1773, in Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., The Letters of Benjamin Rush (Princeton, 1951), I, 84. See Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 233-246, on the rhetorical identification between slavery and colonial grievances.

⁴Rapin-Thoyras, History of England, Nicolas Tindal, tr. (London, 1725-1731). Jack P. Greene, "Political Mimesis: A Consideration of the Historical and Cultural Roots of Legislative Behavior in the British Colonies in the Eighteenth Century," American Historical Review, LXXV, (1969), 345. See also, Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969), 107-114. Peter Brock, Pacifism in the United States (Princeton, 1968), 134. Bailyn, Ideological Origins, 41.

⁵To S. Allinson, May 11, 1770, to S. Fothergill, Oct. 24, 1771, to G. Dillwyn, May 2, 1771, Brookes, 279-281. Thomas Clarkson, History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade (London, 1808), I, 169.

⁶Some Historical Account (4th ed., London, 1788), Intro., xiii-xv, 1-12.

⁷Ibid., 54-71, 112.

⁸Ibid., 82, 110.

⁹Ibid., 106, 55.

¹⁰See above, ch. X. Some Historical Account, 121.

¹¹To G. Dillwyn, Dec. 23, 1771, Brookes, 283. A Forensic Dispute (Boston, 1773).

¹²To S. Fothergill, Oct. 24, 1771, to J. and H. Gurney, Jan. 10, 1772, Brookes, 281, 284-286.

¹³To Shackleton, June 6, 1772, Brookes, 294.

¹⁴Thomas Copeland, ed., The Correspondence of Edmund Burke (Cambridge, 1958), II, 129. To Shackleton, June 6, 1772, Brookes, 295. Henry J. Cadbury, "One Good Friend and His Influence," FQ (1974), 205, and Colonial Quaker Antecedents to the British Abolition of Slavery (London, 1933), 10. Burke was born in Ireland, and became an English Whig, and an M.P. in 1765. He supported repeal of the Stamp Act. Robert Elliot Barkan, ed., Edmund Burke: On the American Revolution, (2nd ed., Gloucester, Mass., 1972), x, xi.

¹⁵David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), 305, deals with Quaker involvement in the Royal African Company. To J. Fothergill, Apr. 28, 1773, to B. Franklin, Apr. 27, 1772, Brookes, 302, 287. On the danger of insurrection, Benezet wrote another friend the following year that such fear "may be carried too far." He considered it more dangerous to ignore the problem. To R. Pleasants, Apr. 8, 1773, Brookes, 301.

¹⁶To J. and H. Gurney, Jan. 10, 1722, to B. Franklin, Apr. 27, 1772, to R. Pleasants, Apr. 8, 1773, to Allinson, Dec. 14, 1773, Brookes, 286, 289, 298, 302, 309.

¹⁷Robinson, Slavery, 104. Jordan, 301.

¹⁸G. Sharp to the Bishop of London, 1795, Hoare, 116, 117, discusses the Virginia petition. Jordan, 301. Verner W. Crane, Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press (Chapel Hill, 1950), 186-192. Albert H. Smyth, ed., Writings of Benjamin Franklin (New York, 1905), VIII, 16, 17.

¹⁹To Franklin, Apr. 27, 1772, Brookes, 287. This antislavery correspondence was initiated by Benezet, along with a gift copy of Some Historical Account.

²⁰To Franklin, Apr. 27, 1772, Brookes, 288, 289.

²¹Franklin to Benezet, Aug. 22, 1772, Brookes, 422. London Chronicle, June 20, 1772. Benezet also sent copies of the Virginia Address to many English Quakers at the same time. Arthur S. Pitt, "Franklin and the Quaker Movement Against Slavery," BFHA, XXXII (1943), 24. Crane, Letters to the Press, 221, 222.

²²Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience (New York, 1970), 373. Pitt, "Franklin," 26, 27. See also, Crane, Letters to the Press, 186-192, 221, 222. Franklin wrote in 1772 that Benezet's efforts had "already been attended with great effects." Franklin to Benezet, Aug. 22, 1772, Brookes, 422.

²³Clarkson, Abolition, I, 67, 256.

²⁴Woods, I. Edward C. P. Lascelles, Granville Sharp and the Freedom of Slaves in England (London, 1928), 16-24. Hoare, 32-45.

²⁵Hoare, 43, 97. The book did not sell well in London.

²⁶Sharp, Representation (London, 1768). Hoare, 40, 97. To S. Allinson, May 11, 1770, Brookes, 280.

²⁷Hoare, 50-53, 69. Sharp to Fothergill, Apr. 18, 1772, Hoare, 81, 82. Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 25-34, 64. Sharp to Benezet, Aug. 21, 1772, HQC.

²⁸Hoare, 96. To Sharp, May 14, 1772, Brookes, 291. Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 36.

²⁹To Sharp, May 14, 1772, Brookes, 291.

³⁰Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 38, 39, describes Sharp's reaction to Benezet's letter. Sharp to Benezet, Aug. 21, 1772, Brookes, 419. Sharp to Mr. Lloyd, for the Archbishop of York, July 30, 1772, Hoare, 184.

³¹Sharp to Benezet, Aug. 21, 1772. Copy at HQC contains section on colonial agents that is missing in Brookes' copy of the same letter, 419-421. The feared legislation was not passed by Parliament, despite several attempts, however.

³²To Allinson, Oct. 30, 1772, Allinson to Benezet, Nov. 19, 1772, Sharp to Benezet, Aug. 21, 1772, Brookes, 296, 297, 420-423. Sharp to Lord North, Feb. 18, 1772, Hoare, 79.

³³To Allinson, Oct. 30, 1772, Nov. 30, 1772, Allinson to Benezet, Nov. 19, 1772, Brookes, 296, 297, 422, 423. To Sharp, Nov. 8, 1772, Feb. 18, 1773, Hoare, 112, 113.

³⁴Henry to Pleasants, Jan. 18, 1773, Brookes, 443, 444. Some Historical Account, xiii, 77.

³⁵Henry to Pleasants, Jan. 18, 1773, Brookes, 443, 444.

³⁶Sharp to Benezet, Aug. 21, 1772, Brookes, 420. Fothergill replied that he would do what he could, but promised nothing. Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 63, 64. Hoare, 105, 106, 182-190. Bishop of St. David's to Sharp, Mar. 14, 1779, Hoare, 187.

³⁷Franklin to Benezet, Feb. 10, 1773. To Sharp, Apr., 1773, Brookes, 424, 298. Nehemiah Curnock, ed., Journal of John Wesley (London, 1840), Feb. 12, 1772. Brookes, 84-86. Benezet to Sharp, May 14, 1772, Brookes, 291.

³⁸Hoare, Granville Sharp, 96, 97, 115.

³⁹See Roger Bruns, "Anthony Benezet's Assertion of Negro Equality," JNH, LVI (1971), 232, 233. Quote in Bruns from letter of Sharp to Jacob Bryant, Oct. 19, 1772, Granville Sharp Letterbook, York Minster Library, Dean's Park, York, England. The Letterbook contains many similar comments by Sharp. Some Historical Account, 116-118. To J. Fothergill, Apr. 28, 1773, Brookes, 303.

⁴⁰To Sharp, Feb. 18, 1773, Hoare, 113. Sharp to Benezet, Aug. 21, 1772, Brookes, 421. Drake, 86. Benjamin Rush, Autobiography, George W. Corner, ed. (Princeton, 1948), 82, 83. To Robert Pleasants, Apr. 8, 1773, Brookes, 298-301. David Hawke, Benjamin Rush: Revolutionary Gadfly (New York, 1971), 104-106, 360. Address (Philadelphia, 1773), 21, 28. Donald J. D'Elia, "Dr. Benjamin Rush and the Negro," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXX (1969), 413, claims this was Rush's first and best written attack on the social injustices of his time. Rush to Franklin, May 1, 1773, Butterfield, Letters of Benjamin Rush, I, 79.

⁴¹Hawke, Benjamin Rush, 106. Sharp to Bishop of London, 1795, Benezet to Sharp, Mar. 29, 1773, Hoare, 116, 117, 113. W. E. B. DuBois, The Suppression of the African Slave Trade (New York, 1896), 15, 25, 26, 37-42. Drake, 86. Robinson, Slavery, 79, 80. To Franklin, May 1, 1773, Butterfield, Letters of Benjamin Rush, I, 79.

⁴²Woods, 1-38. Rush to Sharp, May 1, 1773, Woods, 2. Sharp was unable to get Rush's tract published in London. Sharp to Rush, Feb. 21, 1774, Brookes, 446, 447.

⁴³For details on the acts of 1761, 1768, and 1773, see DuBois, Suppression, 213, 219-225.

⁴⁴Ibid., 222, 223.

⁴⁵Clarkson, Abolition, I, 169, 170. Benjamin Rush, Essays, Literary Moral, and Philosophical (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1806), 303. See also, Brissot de Warville, New Travels in the U.S.A., Mara Soceanu Vamos, tr., and Durand Escheverria, ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 219.

⁴⁶See above, ch. X, to G. Dillwyn, Aug. 5, 1773, Brookes, 305.

⁴⁷To Dillwyn, Aug. 5, 1773, Brookes, 305. Rush to Sharp, May 1, 1773, Woods, 2. Franklin to Benezet, Aug. 22, 1772, and July 14, 1773, Brookes, 422, 425.

⁴⁸To Dillwyn, May 2, 1771, Brookes, 279. Robinson, Slavery, 3, 4, 86, 87. On Otis, see Bernard Bailyn, Pamphlets of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), I, 439, 440.

⁴⁹To Brown, Nov., 1773, HQC. To Allinson, Dec. 14, 1773, Brookes, 310. See Robinson, Slavery, 79, 80, Davis 142, and DuBois, Suppression, 15, 25, 26, 37-42, for evidence of colonial assemblies' courting of royal vetoes.

⁵⁰To Brown, Nov., 1773, and Dec. 28, 1773; HQC. Mack Thompson, Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer (Chapel Hill, 1962), 100-104.

⁵¹To Sharp, Dec., 1773, received in January in London, Hoare, 114. Sharp to the Bishop of London, 1795, Hoare, 118. Drake, 86. Sharp and Dartmouth became friends and later consulted on matters related to American independence, Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 44-46.

⁵²Sharp to Rush, Feb. 21, 1774, Brookes, 447.

⁵³Brief Considerations (Burlington, N.J., 1773). Sharp to Allinson and Benezet, July 28, 1774, HQC. Clarkson, Abolition, I, 196-198. Benezet to Allinson, Dec. 14, 1773, Brookes, 309. Cadbury, "One Good Friend," 2-4.

⁵⁴Clarkson, Abolition, I, 187. Drake, 87.

⁵⁵Sharp to Rush, Feb. 21, 1774, Brookes, 447. Curnock, Journal of John Wesley, Feb. 12, 1772, V, 686, 687. Wesley to Prince Hoare, Aug. 18, 1787, Telford, Letters of John Wesley, VIII, 275. See Brookes, 84, 85, for comparison of texts of Benezet's 1772 and Wesley's 1774 books. Benezet to Wesley, May 23, 1774, Brookes, 318.

⁵⁶To Sharp, Mar. 16, 1774, Hoare, 114, 115. To Allinson, Mar. 3, 1774, Vaux, 50. To Brown, May 9, 1774, HQC.

⁵⁷To Allinson, Mar. 3, 1774, Vaux, 50. Deut. 23:15, 16. See below, ch. XII, on the formation of Pennsylvania Abolition Society.

⁵⁸Drake, 71. Nathan Kite, Brief Statement of the Rise and Progress of the Testimony of the Religious Society of Friends, Against Slavery and the Slave Trade (Philadelphia, 1843), 24-31. See above, ch. X.

⁵⁹Sharp to Rush and Benezet, July 27, 1774, Woods, 10. Sharp, Declaration (London, 1774).

⁶⁰Sharp to Rush and Benezet, July 27, 1774, Woods, 10. Sharp to Allinson and Benezet, July 28, 1774, HQC. Sharp, Declaration, xxii-xxiii, xxix.

⁶¹Sharp to Rush and Benezet, July 27, 1774, Woods, 10. Sharp to Benezet and Allinson, July 28, 1774, HQC. Hoare, 122. Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 43. Publication information on Sharp's Declaration in Thomas R. Adams, American Independence: A Bibliographical Study (Providence, 1965), entries 139 e-h.

⁶²Rush-Sharp correspondence, Woods, 1 ff. Thomas Jefferson, A Summary View of the Rights of British America (New York, 1892), 24, uses slavery as both weapon and excuse for colonial rebellion against England.

⁶³Drake, 86. Bailyn, Ideological Origins, 1-21.

⁶⁴Morgan, Birth of the Republic, 57.

CHAPTER XII

ANTISLAVERY AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY

Looking back on Anthony Benezet's pre-revolutionary publicity campaign against slavery, Granville Sharp observed:

It is remarkable, that an humble endeavor to oppose domestic tyranny and slavery, without any other view, should be the means of warning the Americans of the natural independence of their Assemblies with respect to the British Parliament.¹

The antislavery cause had become, by mid 1774, one of the powerful uniting forces in colonial opposition to Great Britain. After its beginnings among a few relatively unknown Quakers in the 1750's, it had developed as an essentially popular movement with middle class leadership. The "founding fathers" of American independence took little interest in it until Benjamin Franklin's sensitive political antennae picked up strong signals from his colonial constituents. And Franklin's part in the crusade was peripheral during this period. Thomas Jefferson had made an abortive attempt to ease manumission laws in Virginia in 1769, and the colonies had attempted unsuccessfully to halt the external slave trade. But the dangers of colonial slavery had been thoroughly publicized by patriot leaders, and the British government seemed determined to prove the warnings true. With the publication of Jefferson's A Summary View of the Rights of British America, at the convening of the First Continental Congress in September, 1774, the value of the anti-slavery crusade to the independence movement was spelled out by a leading patriot. Jefferson was pressing for a strong anti-British stand, of

course, when he wrote

The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in these colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa; yet our repeated attempts to effect this by prohibitions, and by imposing duties which might amount to a prohibition, have been hitherto defeated by his majesty's negative.²

On the whole, the delegates to the Congress thought Jefferson's Summary View "too bold" and refused to endorse it officially. But they did not object to his use of the slave trade issue as a grievance against British rule. Thus, when Anthony Benezet visited the delegates individually, insisting on "the absolute necessity...of ceasing at least from any further import of Negroes," he was warmly received by most, although not for the reasons that interested him.³

Condemnation of the slave trade had long since become a useful part of the American economic sanctions against England. Slavery had in any case become unprofitable in the Northern and Middle colonies, and everywhere slave markets were overstocked with human wares at depressed prices. A growing fear of slave insurrections in the South, nourished by Benezet's writings, and the increasing disproportion of blacks over whites had convinced many Southern planters that the trade, at least, should be temporarily curtailed, if not abolished. In addition, the planters were by 1774 deeply in debt to the Royal African Company. A Charleston, South Carolina, manifesto explained,

The planters are greatly in arrears to the merchants; a stoppage of importation would give them all an opportunity to extricate themselves from debt. The merchants would have time to settle their accounts, and be ready with the return of liberty to renew the trade.

A vote against the slave trade, then, meant for many delegates only a temporary expedient, devoid of the moral, spiritual, or philosophical motivation on which Benezet based his pleas.⁴

On October 20, 1774, the newly formed Continental Association adopted the following resolution:

We will neither import nor purchase, any slave imported after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities or manufactures to those who are concerned with it.

Benjamin Rush wrote a jubilant letter to Sharp, containing the news of the boycott, and added, with pious overoptimism,

We have now turned from our wickedness....The emancipation of slaves in America will now be attended with few difficulties....I venture to predict there will be not a Negro slave in North America in forty years.⁵

Benezet's reaction was more guarded, as a result of his conferences with the delegates, especially Patrick Henry. In describing that interview, he wrote that he saw little reason to hope for a peaceful settlement with Britain, now that the war-fever had produced a "thirst for blood." He realized that the Congressional action against the trade was taken primarily as part of the general severing of commercial ties with England--a preliminary move in rebellion.⁶

By the time the Congress ratified the Association articles in July, 1775, the identification of the antislavery cause with colonial liberties had reached its height. The trade had been effectively curbed, and as predicted by many, slave prices within the colonies gradually began to rise. Thus, both the moralistic abolitionist forces, always a minority of those who condemned the trade, and the larger group whose

interests were largely economic and political, were pleased with the new display of American righteousness and unity. When Thomas Paine arrived in Philadelphia the same year, he emphasized yet again the connection between black and white slavery. "We have enslaved multitudes," he wrote, "and now are threatened with the same."⁷ He had taken up the already popular theme, a rallying cry of considerable emotional impact that was still an essential, quasi-religious basis for cementing colonial unity.

However, despite all the clamor, domestic slavery in the colonies survived the Revolution almost intact. Political leaders who seemed genuinely concerned about the anomaly, in private, failed to take a public stand at the one time in American history when there was deep and widespread popular revulsion against the practice, in the South as well as the North. Patrick Henry's ambiguous position is one typical example. So is that of Henry Laurens of South Carolina, who read one of Benezet's tracts, and wrote his son in 1776 that he was "watchful for an opportunity" to free his slaves, but felt it would have to come later, at a more "propitious" time. Laurens also feared that his neighbors who had large slave holdings might learn of this antislavery views, and label him "a promoter not only of strange, but of dangerous doctrines." Jefferson, the most outspoken Southern antislavery spokesman in high political circles, harbored blatantly racist attitudes, and remained a slaveholder to the end of his life.⁸

In the North, Sam Adams detested slavery and worked quietly for abolition of the trade in Massachusetts, but he never attempted to interfere with it outside his own province because it might prove an obstacle

to colonial unity. Even Benezet's good friend and sometime colleague in the moral crusade, Benjamin Rush, continued to own a slave for twenty years and failed to support the war-time bill to abolish slavery in Pennsylvania.⁹

On April 6, 1776, the Second Continental Congress voted that "no slaves be imported into any of the thirteen colonies." This agreement was considerably weaker than that of the 1774 Association. It made little difference, at the time, because the demand for slaves was at a minimum, and the Atlantic trade was already at a standstill. But the weakening of the earlier position signified a tightening control over the popular movement by men who led the revolution.¹⁰ The antislavery enthusiasm had already served its purpose, and now threatened to become a divisive, rather than a unifying force.

When Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, he included a paragraph condemning King George for protecting the slave trade, and placing full blame for its existence on England. He was trying to avoid offense to the slave dealers of Boston, Newport, New York, and Charleston, and to justify American conduct in the eyes of the world as well. But even this clause was stricken from the final document by men from the Southern provinces who wanted no irrevocable declarations to hinder a later resumption of the trade.¹¹

Benezet harbored few illusions by 1776 about the ease with which slavery could be eradicated in the Atlantic community. He now found it increasingly difficult to secure the cooperation of others in his continuing crusade. The early pronouncements of the Continental Congresses and the actions taken by their own assemblies against the trade had

suggested to many Northerners, at least, that the struggle was nearly over, as Rush had claimed. Among his pacifist Quaker colleagues, survival as a religious fellowship now assumed greater importance than freedom for the slave, except within the local membership. The Meeting's final action against slavery followed the Declaration of Independence by a few weeks. Since the first formal Quaker protest in Pennsylvania, it had taken nearly a century for antislavery to become in fact, as well as in theory, "the sense of the Meeting." By the end of the turbulent year, Friends felt assured that they had cleared themselves of guilt, and could expect better times ahead.¹²

Benezet alternated during the war years between quiet periods of concentration on his educational and benevolent interests within the Quaker framework, and bursts of active involvement in the problems of the larger society--most notably the antislavery campaign. His concern about the disintegration of orderly justice in the family of man rose as war-spawned confusion and violence spread. Less than two years after the Declaration of Independence he published a group of his tracts, some new and some old, bound together in a volume entitled Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects. These subjects included war, intemperance, and slavery, all of which, he observed again, arose from the same "corrupt root," and "unwarrantable desire of gain and a lust for amassing wealth." Now the country was suffering from the results of its own greed. One essay, entitled Observations on Slavery, leveled a thirteen page attack on the blatant hypocrisy of a people who declared their own independence from "tyranny" on the basis of natural rights, while continuing to hold other human beings as slaves. Benezet opened

his broadside with direct quotations of equalitarian rhetoric from the Declaration of Independence, and then stated indignantly,

That after these and other declarations of the same kind have been so publically made to the world, slavery should continue in its full force in the colonies...is a great aggravation of that guilt which has so long lain upon America.¹³

This was strong language from a member of a persecuted sect that had already seen many of its leaders fined, imprisoned or banished for their refusal to cooperate with the revolutionary government. Benezet's attacks on the hypocrisy of slave-owing champions of British liberties resembled the sarcastic taunts of Tories like Samuel Johnson, who asked, "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?" Not surprisingly, the Quaker Overseers of the Press declined to sponsor the book. It was clearly inconsistent with the low profile they wished to maintain in difficult times.¹⁴

Benezet's latest publication sparked the new movement that developed in 1778 and 1779 actually to abolish domestic slavery in Pennsylvania. He published it privately just prior to the renewal of agitation in which he took a prominent part. On the surface, it seemed a poor time to launch a new campaign. The Continental army had recently reoccupied Philadelphia, and patriot leaders showed no inclination to favor Quaker causes. Friends in general stayed out of sight, their former influence and power at an all-time low in the Assembly. But the radical Scotch Presbyterians who now controlled the Pennsylvania government had no use for slavery, or for the wealthy and conservative slave traders who had been well represented in the Assembly before the Revolution. Now almost alone among Friends still working publically for the antislavery cause, Benezet

launched another vigorous lobbying campaign. He visited every member of the legislature, argued in favor of an emancipation bill, and distributed his tracts to all. The measure was popular among the people generally. It passed the Assembly on March 1, 1780, by a vote of 43 to 21. Passage was secured by providing that presently owned slaves must continue to serve their masters until age twenty eight, in order to compensate masters for costs of rearing and loss of property. All children born henceforth in Pennsylvania were born free. The preamble to the act appealed to the ideology of the Revolution in language similar to that of Benezet in Observations on Slavery. It stated explicitly that people engaged in a struggle for their own freedom should grant the same to others under their control. The law was the first in the world providing for the abolition of slavery, and served as a model for later action by Northern states as they sought to reconcile property rights with natural human rights to liberty.¹⁵

Despite the growing American enthusiasm for outlawing the slave trade during the pre-revolutionary decade, and the numerous fruitless acts to stop importations from 1772 through 1774, the only specific legislation to abolish domestic slavery anywhere in the colonies before or during the Revolution was the gradual emancipation law of Pennsylvania, where only $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent of the population was black. Other Northern states followed, gradually, beginning four years later. The movement was essentially a popular one--articulated in large part by the moralistic campaign of Benezet and his colleagues, but guided and controlled by a rising ruling class of patriot leaders. And only as long as antislavery served the useful purpose of pulling the colonies together was it

encouraged by patriot leaders.¹⁶

Benezet had not only questioned but determinedly attacked the institution of chattel slavery long before anyone in the colonies began calling for American independence. His critique had stimulated chain reactions of antislavery thought and rhetoric throughout the colonies and to a limited extent in England as well. But the most far reaching effect of his campaign during the eighteenth century was its unintended contribution to the American political awakening that precipitated the Revolution. Antislavery played a significant role in popularizing natural rights theory in the colonies, rather than vice versa.¹⁷

When Benjamin Franklin sailed for France to begin peace negotiations, he carried a letter from Benezet to the Abbé Raynal, French humanitarian, historian, and philosopher. That message never reached the Abbé, for unknown reasons, but a later version did. The letter reopened Benezet's last and most extensive antislavery campaign. It also revealed the distance Benezet had moved from his early, largely religious, base of the 1750's to a secularized philosophical position for social change. He had contributed to the climate that made the Declaration of Independence possible, but he had also been influenced by that document. Now he espoused happiness, per se, as an important goal for society, and urged Raynal to continue doing everything in his power "to render men reasonable, useful, and consequently happy." The principles of a harmonious society were "not confined by parentage or country, but... embrace the whole creation." He suggested blithely to Raynal that Louis XVI should be encouraged to "set an example to the other potentates of Europe" by outlawing the slave trade. The ideal social order must be

universal, and benevolently enforced by the rulers of the world, he believed.¹⁸

Along with the letter Benezet sent a copy of his latest publication, Short Observations on Slavery, which combined a series of extracts from Raynal's writings on the subject with his own lengthy introduction. By 1781, he was enraged that so much time had elapsed since the Declaration of Independence with still nothing done by the American government to carry out the exalted principles vis a vis the slaves. As Jefferson had done in the preamble to the Declaration to justify colonial independence, Benezet appealed now to the court of world opinion on the matter of black liberty. While the American claims of freedom reverberated internationally, did it not "appear wonderfully inconsistent and a matter of astonishment to the whole world" that these same Americans still held slaves, and had not even begun a program of gradual emancipation? Benezet's powerful introduction called for immediate abolition of the trade and for emancipation laws to halt the practice of "bondage without condition, without end, and without appeal."¹⁹

In a cordial response to Benezet, the Abbé Raynal replied that he was delighted with both the letter and the accompanying antislavery material. "Never was any present more agreeable to me." The correspondence was published the following summer in at least two Philadelphia newspapers, and again in an antislavery anthology of 1785.²⁰

With the exception of Rush's Address Upon Slave-Keeping in 1774, all the American antislavery literature of the Revolutionary decade was written by Quakers, and none of those were Philadelphians except Benezet. There seems to have been a growing consensus among Friends in their

American headquarters that antislavery writings must be suppressed. The movement had become far too closely identified with political rebellion, in the minds of leading Quakers, who had already cleared their own guilt in the matter. Several times Benezet complained to Dillwyn that he was having increasing difficulty in getting his works approved by the Overseers of the Press. In 1783, he wrote,

I have now had for I think more than six months before the Meeting for Suffering an essay, a short but full representation of the...advantage which would accrue from the abolition of slavery.

But the new work, he wrote, had "a kind of damp cast upon it" by Philadelphia Friends, which he believed arose "from a contraction of ideas." The Overseers had actively discouraged the publication of anything controversial, except in their own defense, throughout the war, and the tendency seemed to Benezet to be getting worse now that the war was over.²¹

By this time, his zeal to publicize antislavery was creating friction not only among the Philadelphians but among his own fellow workers in the cause elsewhere. David Cooper, a New Jersey Friend, had written a manuscript entitled, "A Serious Address to the Rulers of America on the Inconsistency of their Conduct Respecting Slavery," and signed it "A Tanner." Benezet read it in 1783 and guessed its authorship. He wrote Cooper immediately to suggest the publication of it together with his own latest work, still in manuscript also. Cooper was irritated, because he wished to keep his anonymity. He confided to a friend, "I regret he saw it, concluding I might near as well have put my name to it." He was also unhappy when he read Benezet's manuscript

because he thought the Philadelphian had "quoted the words of Congress out of my manuscript, which he ought not to have done." Benezet, of course, had "quoted the words of Congress" from the Declaration of Independence in his 1778 tract five years earlier, and had repeated them in 1781 in Short Observations.²²

In the larger society, as well as among Friends, antislavery had become a political liability. As the war dragged on, the topic was mentioned less and less frequently by top national leaders. By the end of the fighting, the international slave trade had passed its nadir and was beginning to pick up again. Opposition hardened in the South to antislavery agitation. Both American and British slave dealers suddenly began swarming to fill a backlog demand for slaves, with rapidly rising prices. Thus the question of the trade was no longer a matter of intercolonial agreement, but rather a serious threat to continued unity. Politicians now preferred to hold antislavery agitation underground if possible. Attacks on American political integrity like Benezet's contrasts between the Declaration of Independence and the reality of slavery were acutely embarrassing to the American government.²³

Although the Overseers of the Press refused to publish any of his wartime antislavery tracts, Benezet did gain the approval of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for another petition and address to the Congress of the United States requesting an end to the trade. The Yearly Meeting consisted of the entire Quaker membership in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. It was a popular gathering, in contrast to the much smaller, elite group of the Philadelphia Overseers, who were members of the executive Meeting for Sufferings. Benezet and the committee

appointed by the Yearly Meeting quickly drew up a two page "Address," reminding Congress of "the solemn Declaration often repeated in favor of universal liberty," and obtained the signatures of 535 Friends. Heading a delegation to the October 6, 1783, session of Congress at Princetown, New Jersey, Benezet, now seventy years old, made his last journey. He presented the Address to President Elias Boudinot and the assembled representatives of the new states. The Friends were received politely, according to Benezet's written report, but when a vote was finally taken in January, the measure was defeated.²⁴

Even before the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's petition to Congress, Benezet had resumed the attack across the Atlantic, beginning with the message to Raynal. He addressed long letters and antislavery tracts to Charlotte, Queen of England, and to the monarchs of France and Portugal. The letter to the Queen was accompanied by elaborately bound copies of his antislavery books, and instructions to William Dillwyn who carried them, to be certain that they did "indeed come into the Queen's hands." Dillwyn arranged for the American Quaker artist Benjamin West, then resident in London and a favorite at court, to present the materials to her majesty. The Queen, according to Clarkson's later report, received the gifts from West "with remarks of peculiar condescension and attention."²⁵

Benezet also sent out another barrage of letters and tracts to Benjamin Franklin, Granville Sharp, David Barclay, John Fothergill, John Gough, Thomas Wagstaffe, and others. Again he urged a coordinated political campaign to halt the reinvigorated trade. This time, in striking contrast to the 1773 response, the Londoners reacted enthusiastically. London Yearly Meeting recorded an interesting resolution in

its minutes of 1783:

This Meeting, having in a very weighty and solemn manner considered the recommendations of our brethren in America to take under consideration an application to those in power in favor of the poor enslaved Negroes, it is the solid judgement of this Meeting that this weighty work should begin by an address to the King.²⁶

Aware that a motion on the resumption of the trade was soon to come before the House of Commons, the London Friends acted quickly. A permanent committee of six was appointed to carry on the work. One of these men was Benezet's close friend and former pupil, William Dillwyn, now a London resident. Dillwyn, in particular, entered into his newly assigned task with enthusiasm. He immediately sent requests back to America for more antislavery materials, as few were available in England. Benezet sent him some large shipments in August, containing multiple copies of his own tracts, Wesley's Thoughts on Slavery, Rush's Address, Raynal's extracts in Short Observations, Woolman's Considerations, and Cooper's Serious Address. It was a nearly complete library of American anti-slavery publications since 1766. Benezet urged Dillwyn to contact Granville Sharp right away, as Sharp was the person in England "most likely to furnish the necessary assistance."²⁷

In one of the many transatlantic shipments of antislavery letters and writings that year, Benezet had sent a copy of his manuscript, "The Case of our Fellow Creatures, the Oppressed Africans." It was the essay he had tried so long and unsuccessfully to get the Philadelphia Overseers to publish. Dillwyn and the new London antislavery committee printed 2,000 copies of the tract almost immediately, however. On November 28, 1783, the Meeting officially presented the tract to Parliament at the

head of 258 signatures of British Friends. This was the first of many such English petitions that deluged Parliament during the next quarter century--an action Benezet had been urging for twenty years.²⁸

The Case of Our Fellow Creatures was a brief, strongly worded appeal for "the wise and humane interposition of the legislature" in the matter of slavery. The essay-petition called for "a prohibition of this traffic in the future," and "the extension of relief to those who already groan in bondage." The demands were total--the outlawing of both the trade, and slavery itself, throughout the empire, on humanitarian grounds. Upon learning the nature of London Yearly Meeting's petition, Lord North seemed mildly sympathetic, but he informed the Friends that their request was obviously impossible, since the trade was "necessary to almost every nation in Europe."²⁹ The clash between the humanitarian grounds of "justice and mercy" for abolition, and the government's insistence on the economic necessity for the trade would remain the crux of the conflict in the future, as it had been, in fact, for so long.

But in the New World, the antislavery movement had lost its momentum, especially in Pennsylvania, where the 1780 abolition law promised a permanent end to the whole divisive problem. Benezet, however, found serious flaws in the Pennsylvania Act. Although it provided for the gradual emancipation of slaves on grounds of natural rights, the law also authorized the capture and return of fugitive slaves to owners in other states. And it allowed masters to retain their slaves during periods of temporary residency or travel in Pennsylvania.³⁰

As early as 1774, and probably long before, Benezet had been concerned about the cruelties and injustices involved in the recapture of runaways, and the kidnaping of free blacks for sale as slaves. He and Sharp had corresponded before the war on the legal principles involved, and were in agreement that neither divine nor natural law sanctioned the return of runaway slaves to their masters. And kidnaping of freemen was clearly illegal by any law. When the Pennsylvania Assembly enacted the fugitive slave provision, Benezet decided he could not in good conscience obey it. His daily contacts with black students and their families brought a constant series of injustices to free and escaped Negroes to his attention, and he had often been involved in seeking redress for them. He wrote John Pemberton in 1783 about the problems created when members of Congress brought slaves to Philadelphia. He was convinced that those who escaped while in the city were entitled to protection and liberty, "even if they have no legal claim." To aid these fugitives meant heavy expenses for their subsistence and sometimes for court battles as well.³¹

As a result of these concerns, Benezet had helped to organize the Pennsylvania Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, in 1775. Wartime conditions had forced the group to disband, officially, but it was reorganized early in 1784. About the same time, Benezet wrote his will, and included in it a legacy of fifty pounds to the Society for legal aid and relief for blacks "who apprehend themselves unlawfully detained in slavery." This was the Society that George Washington complained about in 1786, and claimed that its activities were both illegal and unjust. "Slaves who are happy and contented

with their present masters are tampered with and induced to leave them," Washington wrote.³²

During the last year of his life, Benezet had been, even for him, extraordinarily busy. The resumption of the slave trade had prompted his renewed antislavery activities, and his work as teacher of black children and champion of Pennsylvania's adult Negro population, too, had demanded a great deal of his aging body. In one of the rare quiet times when he could reflect on his own needs, he wrote Benjamin Franklin in France that he longed for the companionship of old friends, and discussions "worthy the consideration of immortal spirits." He urged Franklin to "return and spend the remainder of thy time in retirement and quiet among thy old friends, when we might confer upon those weighty matters which can scarce be done by writing." But neither Franklin nor Benezet could so easily lay aside the heavy load of public responsibility each had taken up long ago, for the illusion of "retirement and quiet."³³

In one of his last antislavery tracts, Benezet had written, as though to himself

In the hour of reflection,...when people...review the transactions of their past life, how much comfort will it afford those who, laying aside all views of interest, have labored by precept and example to deprecate and remove an evil of so deep a dye...SLAVERY.

For him, the "hour of reflection" lasted only through the one week of his final illness. He remained, despite the pain of what Dr. Rush diagnosed as "an intestinal debility" brought on by a vegetarian diet, "fully sensible" until his death on May 3, 1784.³⁴

Numerous first hand descriptions of Benezet's funeral have survived, and all emphasize two aspects in particular. It was "the greatest

assembly which had ever been seen at a Philadelphia funeral." One source reported "several thousands" in attendance. And the crowd was racially integrated, with "several hundred blacks" present, apparently a highly unusual occurrence.³⁵

After the funeral, author-historian and publisher Ebenezer Hazard, postmaster general of the United States, wrote, "This state has lost one of its most valuable citizens....He was truly a Friend... to all mankind." Hazard's comment on the state's loss in connection with Benezet's benevolence is significant in view of the lack of consistent government provision for the needs of its poverty-ridden charges. Not until the following century would the state begin to assume responsibility for the type of services the gentle Quaker voluntarily performed, and then only in an impersonal, institutionalized manner that substituted a degree of security for a heavy burden of regimentation.³⁶

But a passage in James Pemberton's letter to his brother John was in some ways a more appropriate eulogy than any of the others that have survived.

His removal occasions a chasm in many respects not easily supplied, and an additional weight which few will be disposed to bear, the spirit of trade and business engrossing too much the time and attention of some who might take a share of it to the relief of others.

It was an honest, practical, tribute, one Benezet would have understood well.³⁷

Anthony Benezet lived long enough to launch what became the most successful and far reaching campaign of his career. In England and France, more than in America, his antislavery writings and contacts formed the solid foundation for a massive international assault on the institution he struggled so long to abolish.

The antislavery committee appointed by the London Society of Friends in 1783 followed the first publication of Benezet's Case of Our Fellow Creatures with a second edition of 2,000 copies early in 1784. These were bound with a new edition of Caution and Warning, by order of the Meeting, and distributed to King George III, the Queen, the Prince of Wales, and every member of Parliament, as a start. Before the end of the year, a third printing of 10,000 copies was considered necessary. In addition, Dillwyn arranged for a large new edition of Some Historical Account of Guinea. The committee called on the Headmasters of the public schools, including Eton, Harrow, Charterhouse, Westminster, and Winchester during 1784 and 1785, in order to distribute Benezet's books among the future leaders of England. They initiated probably the first concerted African studies program anywhere.³⁸

About the time of Benezet's death, the vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge proposed a timely subject for the annual Latin dissertation contest for graduating seniors: "Anne Liceat Invitos in Servitutem Dare?"--"Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?" Young Thomas Clarkson, winner of a prize for his Latin essay on another topic the year before, had a reputation to uphold. By his own account, he began the study of slavery in order to enhance his position as top scholar at Cambridge.³⁹

Clarkson had access to few primary sources on the question, however. He felt "at a loss for materials," he wrote later in his massive account of the British antislavery campaign, The History of the Abolition. He nearly abandoned the project at the outset. But he noticed a newspaper advertisement for the new edition of Anthony Benezet's book, Some Historical Account, and he hurried to London to purchase a copy. "In this precious book I found almost all I wanted," he recalled later. "I obtained, by means of it, a knowledge of...the great authorities of Adamson, Moore, Bardot, Smith, Bosman, and others" who had witnessed or participated in the trade. He accepted the accuracy of the accounts because the authors all had first-hand knowledge of the conditions they described. And since they wrote "when the abolition was not even thought of, they could not have been biased with any view to that event."⁴⁰ In short, Clarkson was convinced of the veracity of Benezet's sources, and he soon became certain, too, about the truth of the Quaker's antislavery arguments.

Clarkson described his personal agony in writing the essay. The sordid facts were new to him, and disturbing.

It was but one gloomy subject from morning to night.... It became now not so much a trial for academic reputation as for the production of a work which might be useful to injured Africa. And keeping this in mind after the perusal of Benezet, I always slept with a candle in my room, that I might rise out of bed and put down such thoughts as might occur to me in the night,...conceiving that no arguments of any moment should be lost in so great a cause.

The degree of intensity that the young student focused on his work would become the hallmark of a career dedicated to the extinction of slavery in the British empire.⁴¹

Clarkson completed the "painful task" and won the first prize. But after reading his dissertation at Cambridge, he rode back to his London home in a depressed state. Dismounting from his horse on a grassy spot along the road, he mulled over the significance of what he had learned and written about the African trade. "If the contents of the essay were true," he wrote later, and he believed they were, "it was time some person should see these calamities to their end." The antislavery thesis of Benezet had become Clarkson's own, and he believed it demanded action. The young Clarkson became convinced that the "some person" would be himself.⁴²

During the ensuing months, Clarkson translated his dissertation from the Latin, and published it as An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African. He contacted London Quakers, among them Benezet's old pupil William Dillwyn, and publisher James Phillips, who in turn introduced him to Granville Sharp. Clarkson worked closely with his new colleagues to distribute his own work and the republished books of Benezet. He contacted all the influential people he knew or could get introductions to, in his new enthusiasm for the antislavery cause.⁴³

Clarkson became one of the charter members of "The Committee Instituted in June, 1787, for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade,"--an independent, non-sectarian society that assumed leadership in the fast growing English antislavery movement. Granville Sharp was elected chairman of the new "London Committee," as it was soon called, and Dillwyn was one of the most active members. No longer controlled by the peace and unity disciplines of Quaker sponsorship, the committee

had greater freedom of direction and method than its predecessor, although many of its members were Friends. Still, the Anglican Clarkson recorded that the group had arrived at a "sense of the committee" on an important matter shortly after its organization. The new secular orientation, even with its lingering Quaker influences, illustrated the growing tendency of Friends to become involved with non-denominational humanitarian causes, a direction begun by Benezet and his Philadelphia circle many years earlier.⁴⁴

The important decision reached by the "sense of the committee" in June, 1787, was one of objectives. Members shared a desire to abolish slavery from the empire, but they decided to attack the source of supply first--the African trade--and to leave the even more sensitive matter of slavery itself until later. Granville Sharp disagreed, believing that the whole problem should be dealt with at once. Sharp had always been a "loner," and he had accepted the presidency of the London Committee with considerable reluctance. Not only did he disagree with his committee on a basic matter of goals, but he never really liked Quakers, who made up a majority of the organization. He had once described his friend Benezet as being "unhappily involved in the errors of Quakerism." Thus, although he continued to be named president, the title was essentially honorary, for he took little part in the committee's work. Sharp remained largely outside the mainstream of the growing post-war movement to abolish the trade.⁴⁵

Thomas Clarkson soon became the prime mover in the London Committee, working closely with Dillwyn. His indefatigable investigations of the trade carried him to port cities throughout England and the continent, where he compiled facts and testimony from seamen, ship's logs,

etc., for use in the campaign. He also made numerous speeches, wrote prolifically, raised funds, and organized local antislavery committees everywhere he went. He has been credited by historians "with most of the spadework in the early days of the agitation which made abolition possible." And beyond his research and grass-roots organizational work, Clarkson directly influenced a number of leading Englishmen in various ways and degrees in their commitment to the movement. Among these were William Wilberforce, leader of the Parliamentary battle, William Pitt, Lord Grenville, and Bennet Langston, his close personal friend. Langston's circle of associates included Edmund Burke, Dr. Johnson, and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Clarkson arranged for social occasions and interviews with these men whenever possible, to press his case.⁴⁶

Soon after its formation, the London Committee received from the Philadelphia Abolition Society a letter of congratulation and encouragement in the work. The Philadelphia group had been reorganized on the foundations of the 1775 and 1784 Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, whose work Benezet had helped to underwrite with his legacy. The officers elected in 1787 included Benjamin Franklin, president, James Pemberton and Jonathan Pemrose, vice-presidents, and Benjamin Rush and Tench Coxe, secretaries. From the work of black students in "Benezet's School," Rush and Coxe sent the London Committee "specimens of writing and drawing" as "proofs of the good effects of the manumission of slaves." These materials were then displayed in England to show the high intellectual capacity of free blacks.⁴⁷

Antislavery advocates in New York had organized a Society in 1785 along the lines of the Philadelphia group, with John Jay as president.

Before his death, Benezet had corresponded with Jay and sent him, too, packets of "African books." By 1787, the New York, Pennsylvania, and London societies were exchanging memberships, as well as evidence of free Negro mental achievement. Granville Sharp was awarded honorary memberships in both American organizations, as was Richard Price of the London group. And an extensive network of correspondence among active participants would soon expand to include an important group of French philosophes as well.⁴⁸

The London Committee continued to lean heavily on the writings of Benezet to publicize their cause and educate Britons to the realities of the trade. In 1788, Dillwyn arranged again for new editions of Some Historical Account and Caution and Warning. John Wesley, who had based his Thoughts upon Slavery on Benezet's earlier works, wrote Clarkson that he was publishing an enlarged edition of his book for the committee's use, and announced a personal lobbying campaign for Parliamentary abolition of the trade among all the influential people he could reach.⁴⁹

Meanwhile the Committee canvassed the citizenry to secure signatures on petitions to Parliament, King and Council. This effort was quite successful, resulting in numerous lists from churches and towns in the first massive outpouring of English public sentiment against the trade. Dissenting churches were especially active, and the results of Sharp's long crusade among the Anglican hierarchy were evident also. Abolition had become a popular cause in England since the end of the war, as it had been in America before it. Thomas Percival, a friend of Benjamin Franklin, wrote him in 1788:

It will afford you much satisfaction that the people of Great Britain are now awakened by the example of America

to a just sense of the iniquity and cruelty of the slave trade.

And the official Epistle from London Yearly Meeting of the same year observed approvingly that there was a new antislavery awakening "among all ranks of people."⁵⁰

The petitions of 1787 and 1788 resulted in the passage of a bill in Parliament to alleviate the worst abuses of the slave trade--the first of many regulatory actions. But a complete prohibition was still far away. The revolutionary upheavals across the English Channel, in the wake of the successful American rebellion, contributed to a climate of fear and official suspicion of libertarian causes. Antislavery workers were labeled "Jacobins," and their movement accused of fomenting revolution. A bloody slave uprising on San Domingo in 1791 was blamed on the London Committee, and added to the determination of conservative leaders to stifle the movement. Most British merchants, convinced that abolishing the slave trade would spell ruin for English commerce, fought desperately against abolition. But spurred on by Committee members and their wide popular support, spokesmen in Parliament under the leadership of William Wilberforce kept up annual attacks on the trade.⁵¹

Charges of complicity between English antislavery workers and French radicals, although exaggerated, were not wholly misplaced. One of the many publicity projects of the London Committee in 1787 had been the mailing of several thousand "circular letters" describing its functions and goals. Some of these were mailed to contacts in France who had already received shipments of antislavery tracts from England and America. Brissot de Warville, leader of the Girondist faction, replied enthusiastically to one of these letters, offering his services in the campaign.

His letter was followed by a similar one from the Marquis de Lafayette. Both men were awarded honorary memberships in the London Committee, and were encouraged to form a similar organization in France. Thomas Clarkson traveled to Paris to assist in setting up the new committee. Early in 1788, Brissot and Etienne de Clavière announced that the Société des Amis des Noirs had been organized in Paris, with the Marquis de Condorcet as president, and several leading French philosophes as active members. Even women "were not thought unworthy of being honorary and assistant members," Clarkson noted later.⁵²

The interest of left wing French intellectuals in the antislavery movement had been growing for two decades--a development closely interwoven with the friendships and writings of Anthony Benezet, and with the American Revolution. In the 1760's, Benezet had begun popularizing Baron Montesquieu's critical views on slavery in America, and he was soon doing the same with the Abbé Raynal's writings. He had frequently quoted Voltaire's comments on the subject, as well. His numerous friendships with the aristocratic Frenchmen in Philadelphia during and after the Revolution opened personal contacts in which the antislavery theme was prominent. Many of these leaders returned to France to publicize their American adventures at a time of rapidly spreading interest in republican ideals and manners. Benezet was almost invariably described as an example of all that was best in the revolutionary new world. Journals and descriptive works by men like Brissot, the Marquis de Chastellux, Barbé-Marbois, and especially the "American Farmer," Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, spread lavish praise for the Franco-American Benezet. His name became widely known in pre-revolutionary France. Brissot concluded

one typical French description of Benezet in these words:

The life of this extraordinary man should be known to thinking men; that is, to those who respect more the benefactors of humanity than they do the flattered and basely idolized oppressors of mankind.⁵³

In 1781, the Marquis de Condorcet published one of the earliest, and probably the most important of the specifically antislavery books by a Frenchman, Reflexions sur l'Esclavage, under the pseudonym of Joachim Schwartz. Like most other late eighteenth century writers on the subject, he drew heavily on the factual material and arguments compiled earlier by Benezet. Condorcet quoted at length from Some Historical Account, and appended a table of American legislation against the slave trade and a copy of Pennsylvania's emancipation law.⁵⁴

Benezet's own French editions of Caution and Warning (1767), and A Short Account of the Quakers (1780, 1783), circulated widely in France, along with accounts of his humanitarian work. In April 1783, the Mercure de France took a firm editorial stand against the rising antislavery agitation. Slavery was not at all contrary to nature, the writer insisted, and he "begs the friends of the Quakers to spare the world any more quotations from Antoine Benezet." But the Mercure had conceded defeat on the slavery issue by 1785, and even referred to "Antoine Benezet, that missionary of humanity," as one of those rare "men who are often sublime." A few months later, a second French edition of the Caution and Warning was published in Paris.⁵⁵

The great vogue of "quotations from Antoine Benezet," plus the continuous exchange of encouraging letters and news between antislavery advocates in Britain, America, and France, provided the setting, then, for the formal organization in 1788 of the Société des Amis des Noirs in

Paris. One of the major activities of the Société was its work in translating, publishing, and distributing antislavery tracts and books from all three countries. Benezet's Some Historical Account came out in French that year, as did Clarkson's prize-winning dissertation, and John Wesley's Thoughts on Slavery. Along with Condorcet's Reflexions, these works were all directly indebted to Benezet's early research and publication, and they headed the list of recommended reading circulated by the Société.⁵⁶

Although his writings became far more influential in England and France after the Revolution than they were in America at the same time, Benezet's works continued to be preeminent in the antislavery movement in his adopted land. Soon after his death, the Philadelphia Overseers of the Press, somewhat sheepishly, perhaps, instructed the treasurer to pay for publishing and binding 2,000 pamphlets, "the last publication of our Friend Anthony Benezet," according to the minutes. Copies were presented to all members of Congress and to the Pennsylvania and New Jersey legislatures. This was The Case of Our Fellow Creatures, the Oppressed Africans, that London Friends had already published in two large editions and presented to members of Parliament in the opening round of their campaign against the slave trade.⁵⁷

Although the American Quakers had little more to say about Benezet, except for a few pious "memorials," many continued to be involved in the antislavery cause. In Rhode Island, the converted Friend, Moses Brown, led efforts to secure passage of the 1784 emancipation law and helped to establish that state's first antislavery society in 1789. Benezet's close friend, Warner Mifflin of Virginia and later

of Delaware, freed his numerous slaves and went on to oppose slavery in the federal Congress, and to write tracts against it. The wealthy Virginia planter, Robert Pleasants, emancipated his own 88 slaves in 1786 and established a school for free black children on his plantation. By 1792, there were at least twelve abolition societies in America, and most of these had a high proportion of Quaker members.⁵⁸

But leadership in the American antislavery movement was increasingly shared by non-Quakers beginning in the 1780's. By 1799, all the states from Pennsylvania northward had officially outlawed slavery in their borders and restricted the trade. The major battles from 1787 on, however, were fought in the national arena. In 1790, Benezet's old friends led a head-on confrontation in Congress when antislavery petitions from the Pennsylvania and New York abolition societies and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting were presented. The name of the aging Benjamin Franklin headed the list of petitioners for a strong national antislavery bill. Elias Boudinot of New Jersey spoke in favor of the petition, citing in his speech the antislavery works that Benezet had sent him several years earlier. Benjamin Rush, who in 1787 committed himself at last irrevocably to the antislavery cause, also worked for the bill. It was defeated, however, after intense debate that revealed the emerging sectional schism in the new nation. No real progress was made until 1808, when the trade was ended, as originally scheduled in the United States Constitution, and following the British abolition victory of 1807.⁵⁹

Articles about and by Benezet were published and republished occasionally after his death until well into the nineteenth century. Two of his antislavery books were republished during the revived abolition

campaign of the antebellum period. After his extensive bibliographical study of the movement, the historian Dwight Dumond concluded that the works of Benezet and Woolman "were the most precious possessions of every antislavery leader of the nineteenth century."⁶⁰

In France, throughout the crucial years from 1787 to 1794, when the Convention decreed the immediate abolition of slavery and the trade throughout all the French possessions, Benezet's books and those of the men he encouraged and taught, had remained the major source of intellectual stimulation. One of his admirers, Brissot de Warville, made a circular journey in 1788 that symbolized well the humanitarian pathway Benezet had taken in his lifetime. Brissot, the chief French antislavery organizer, traveled to London from Paris to visit the London Committee. He then sailed for New York and Philadelphia, where he solidified the links of the Atlantic community's antislavery chain and visited the "African School." He returned to his homeland more determined than ever to unite, if possible, all mankind into one great family of brotherhood and equality. Brissot became, as Benezet had been before him, the personification of the international abolition campaign. And Brissot's effusive paeans of praise to his predecessor's achievements were succinctly summarized by an English publisher in 1817, when he wrote that Benezet "succeeded in influencing and awakening all Europe to the plight of the Negroes."⁶¹

With Brissot's visit to the new world and return to France, the movement had come full circle. The problem of slavery and the trade that undergirded it had first been defined and attacked in the land where

it flourished. Largely through the influence of an obscure Quaker immigrant from France, the alarm was sounded throughout the British empire and thence to the very home of the Enlightenment.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XII

¹Hoare, 120.

²Donald L. Robinson, Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820 (New York, 1971), 81, 82. Jefferson, A Summary View (Brooklyn, 1892), 24.

³Benezet to Allinson, Oct. 23, 1774, Brookes, 321, 322. Jefferson, A Summary View, 5.

⁴Quote in W. E. B. DuBois, The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the U.S.A., 1638-1870 (New York, 1896), 41-44. Peter Force, ed. American Archives, 4th Ser., I (Washington, D.C., 1837), 511. Reginald Coupland, The British Anti-Slavery Movement (London, 1933), 83. Robinson, Slavery, 3, 4.

⁵Rush to Sharp, Nov. 1, 1774, Woods, 13.

⁶To Allinson, Oct. 23, 1774, Brookes, 321, 322.

⁷DuBois, Suppression, 45-47. Quote in Jordan, 299, 300.

⁸Robinson, Slavery, 80-83, 90-93. See Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (Boston, 1801), Query XIV. Lawrence Cremin, American Education: the Colonial Experience, 1607-1783 (New York, 1970), 443. See above, ch. XI, on Henry. Robert McColey, Slavery in Jeffersonian Virginia (2nd ed., Urbana, Ill., 1973), 127-129.

⁹Robinson, Slavery, 80, 81. David Hawke Freeman, Benjamin Rush: Revolutionary Gadfly (New York, 1971), 360. Rush always suffered to some degree from a guilt burden because of these facts. His writings are full of eulogies to Benezet. One description of a dream he had clearly reveals his sense of failure to do the Africans justice in contrast to Benezet, whom Rush envisioned receiving heavenly homage from eternal throngs of free blacks, while Rush himself was ignored. Brookes, 170.

¹⁰Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789 (Washington, D.C., 1922), II, 122. Mary Locke, Anti-Slavery in America from the Introduction of African Slaves to the Prohibition of the Slave Trade, 1619-1808 (Boston, 1901), 73.

¹¹Robinson, Slavery, 82. See copy of first draft of the Declaration of Independence, in Journals of the Continental Congress, VI, 1093-1098.

¹²Drake, 72, 90, 91.

¹³Serious Considerations (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1778), 27-29. The first edition (Philadelphia, 1769), did not include Observations on Slavery in the same form. The new edition included Thoughts on the Nature of War, and Remarks on the Nature of Spiritous Liquours.

¹⁴Quote in Robinson, Slavery, 80.

¹⁵Rush, Address to the American Philosophical Society, (Philadelphia, 1786) gives Benezet the entire credit for passage of the 1780 abolition law. See also, Hawke, Benjamin Rush, 360. Vaux, 92. Drake, 86. Locke, Anti-Slavery, 78. DuBois, Suppression, 225. Pennsylvania Packet, Mar. 13, Sept. 16, and Dec. 25, 1779, and Jan. 1, 1780. Pennsylvania Gazette, Dec. 29, 1779. Robinson, Slavery, 30, 31. Arthur Zilver-smit, The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North (Chicago, 1967), 124-138. Matthew Carey and James Bioren, Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, (Philadelphia, 1803), II, 246-251.

¹⁶Robinson, Slavery, 22-24, 78, 86. Robinson shows that slavery was not disappearing in the South as suggested so often, and that patriot leaders knew it was not at the time. Slavery, 3, 4, 22.

¹⁷For the view that the antislavery movement stemmed from the Revolution, see Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 232. Staughton Lynd, Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism (New York, 1968), 3-13; and Jordan, 291, 292, although Jordan offers some evidence of the primary role of anti-slavery, as well.

¹⁸To the Abbé Raynal, July 16, 1781, Brookes, 365. Raynal to Benezet, Dec. 26, 1781, Brookes, 438.

¹⁹Short Observations on Slavery (Philadelphia, 1781), 1-6. To John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, Brookes, 394. Benezet delivered copies to all members of Congress and sent many to other provinces and to Europe.

²⁰Raynal to Benezet, Dec. 26, 1781, Brookes, 438. Pennsylvania Evening Post and Public Advertiser, June 17, 1782, and Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer June 15, 1782. Baxter's Directions to Slaveholders, Revived (Philadelphia, 1785).

²¹Henry J. Cadbury, "Quaker Bibliographical Notes," BFHA, XXVI (1937), 52, 53. See above, ch. X. To G. Dillwyn, May, 1781, and 1783, Brookes, 355, 374.

²²Cooper to Allinson, June 15, 1783, Brookes, 457. Drake, 92.

²³Rush to Sharp, Nov. 28, 1783, Woods, 20. Locke, Anti-Slavery, 73. Drake, 91. DuBois, Suppression, 48 ff.

²⁴Drake, 93, 94. Journals of the Continental Congress, XXV, 660. Minutes of PYM, M. for S., Oct. 8, and 16, 1783, 417, HQC. Copy of the 1783 Address and Benezet's report at Swarthmore College Quaker Collection, Philadelphia.

²⁵To W. Dillwyn, Aug. 20, 1783, Brookes, 383. To G. Dillwyn, 1783, Brookes, 373. Vaux, 41. Benjamin Rush, Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1806), 303. Thomas Clarkson, History of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade (London, 1808), I, 172. Vaux, 41.

²⁶See letter to John Gough, May 29, 1783, for example, Brookes, 375-377. Drake, 91, 92. Reginald Coupland, Wilberforce, a Narrative (New York, 1968), 86. Henry J. Cadbury, Colonial Quaker Antecedents to the British Abolition of Slavery (London, 1933), 15. To W. Dillwyn, Aug. 20, 1783, Brookes, 381.

²⁷Ibid. To G. Dillwyn, 1783, Brookes, 373, 374. Epistles from the London Yearly Meeting, (London, 1858), II, 57.

²⁸Case of Our Fellow Creatures, signed by LYM Clerk, John Ady, Nov. 28, 1783 (London, 1783). Coupland, Wilberforce, 86.

²⁹Case of Our Fellow Creatures, 14. Elizabeth Donnan, ed., Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America (New York, 1965), II, lv. Coupland, Wilberforce, 85. Drake, 92.

³⁰Drake, 94. DuBois, Suppression, 225.

³¹To Allinson, Mar. 30, 1774, to John Pemberton, Aug. 10, 1783, Brookes, 311, 397. See above, ch. XI.

³²Vaux, 92, 93. Drake, 90, 94. Codicil to will of Benezet, Brookes, 169. Washington to Robert Morris, Apr. 12, 1786, quoted in Drake, 96.

³³To Franklin, Mar. 5, 1783, Brookes, 387.

³⁴Short Observations on Slavery, 12. Rush, Essays, 303, 304. Pennsylvania Gazette, May 12, 1784. James Pemberton to John Pemberton, May 4 and 14, 1784, Brookes, 157, 459.

³⁵Vaux, 134. Pennsylvania Gazette, May 12, 1784. Drake, 94. Henry D. Biddle, ed., Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker (Philadelphia, 1889), 153. John F. Watson, Annals of Philadelphia in the Olden Time (Philadelphia, 1845), I, 373. Rush, Essays, 304.

³⁶Hazard to Jeremy Belknap, 1784, quoted in Brookes, 156. See David Rothman, Discovery of the Asylum; Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston, 1971), xiii, xix, on the rise of institutionalized care of dependent members of society.

³⁷James Pemberton to John Pemberton, May 14, 1784, Brookes, 460.

³⁸Leonard C. Lashley, "Anthony Benezet and His Anti-slavery Activities," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1939), 120. Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 64. Coupland, Wilberforce, 86. Hoare, 398.

³⁹Clarkson, Abolition, I, 205, 206. Davis, 408.

⁴⁰Clarkson, Abolition, I, 207, 208. The 1784 edition of Some Historical Account was the first to be printed in England since 1772.

⁴¹Clarkson, Abolition, I, 208, 209.

⁴²Ibid., 210-212. Clarkson's description of the episode reveals striking parallels to a religious conversion experience.

⁴³Ibid., 213-230.

⁴⁴Ibid., 255-257, 284. Donnan, Documents, II, liv. Sharp resigned his government post after the war began. Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 39-42. Hoare, 123-127.

⁴⁵Clarkson, Abolition, I, 283-288. Hoare, 412-415. Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 69-72.

⁴⁶Ibid., 65, 66. Jean Pierre Brissot de Warville, New Travels in the U.S.A. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 154. Lashley, "Anthony Benezet," 110. Clarkson, Abolition, I, 219, 220, 412, 473-476. Coupland, British Anti-Slavery Movement, 68, 73.

⁴⁷Clarkson, Abolition, I, 461. Edward Needles, An Historical

Memoir of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (Philadelphia, 1848), 15, 16, 26, 33. Drake, 94. Official name: Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, and for Improving the Condition of the African Race. Some Historical Account, xi.

⁴⁸Brookes, 130. Drake, 98. Hoare, 251, 252. Needles, Historical Memoir, 15-26. Michael Kraus, The Atlantic Civilization: Eighteenth Century Origins (Ithaca, N.Y., 1949), 149.

⁴⁹London editions of Some Historical Account published in 1772, '84, '88, 1815, 1968; of Caution and Warning, 1767, '68, '84, '88. Wesley to Clarkson, Aug., 1787, Wesley to Samuel Hoare, Aug. 18, 1787, Wesley to Sharp, Oct. 11, 1787, Telford, The Letters of John Wesley, VIII, 6, 7, 275, 276, 16.

⁵⁰Hoare, 398, 399. Percival to Franklin, June 25, 1788, quoted, Kraus, Atlantic Civilization, 150. Epistles from LYM, II, 74.

⁵¹Lascelles, Granville Sharp, 66-77. Hoare, 400-409. Donnan, Documents, II, lv-lxii. Edith Philips, The Good Quaker in French Legend (Philadelphia, 1932), 134. Parliament outlawed the slave trade in 1807.

⁵²Clarkson, Abolition, I, 444-447, 459, 466, 467, 492; II, 27-31. Hoare, 398. Shelby T. McCloy, The Humanitarian Movement in Eighteenth Century France (Lexington, Ky., 1957), 95. Louis Gottschalk, Lafayette Between the American and the French Revolution (Chicago, 1950), 370. Edward D. Seeber, Anti-Slavery Opinion in France During the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore, 1937), 160.

⁵³A Short Account of Africa, Caution and Warning, and Some Historical Account all quote from Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws, Book 11, on the bad effects of slavery on both masters and slaves. Raynal's, Histoire Philosophique des deux Indes, 1770, was highly critical of slave system in the new world. See Davis, 13-17; and McCloy, Humanitarian Movement, 88, 89. Brissot, New Travels, 218, 219. Francois Jean, Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America, Howard C. Rice, Jr., tr., (Chapel Hill, 1963), I, 165. Francois, Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, Our Revolutionary Forefathers, Eugene Parker Chase, tr. and ed., (Freeport, N.Y., 1969), 138-141. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Lettres d'un Cultivateur Americain (2nd ed., Paris, 1787). The second edition included a chapter of eulogy and biography on Benezet. Seeber, Anti-Slavery in France, 119-142, deals with the impact of French accounts of American life, and the particular emphasis on Benezet. Philips, Good Quaker, 110-135, discusses the intense interest of the French intelligentsia in American Quaker simplicity and egalitarianism at this time.

⁵⁴Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, Reflexions sur l'Esclavage des Negres. (Paris, 1781). McCloy, Humanitarian Movement, 90. Lashley, "Anthony Benezet," 121, 122, tabulates the extensive quotes from Benezet.

⁵⁵French titles: Advertisement a la Grande-Bretagne et a Sus Colonies.... (Paris, 1767, 1785); Observations sur l'Origine, les Principes, et l'Establissement...de Quakers (Paris, 1780, 1783). Mercure issues of Apr., 1783, and Jan., 1785, quoted in Philips, Good Quaker, 112, 113. Seeber, Anti-Slavery in France, 124, 125.

⁵⁶Ibid., 161-164. Gottschalk, Lafayette, 228, 229. Kraus, Atlantic Civilization, 150, 151. Also prominent on the list: Caution and Warning, and Sharp's treatises.

⁵⁷Minutes of PYM, M. for S., June 17, 1784, 434. The Friend, Aug. 17, 1894, 536. Drake, 94.

⁵⁸Mack Thompson, Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer (Chapel Hill, 1962), 183. Robinson, Slavery, 50. Brookes, 443, 444. Drake, 76, 100, 107. McColley, Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia, 155-159.

⁵⁹Drake, 94, 103-107. Jordan, 325, 326, 343, 344. Needles, Historical Memoir, 15, 16, 26. Staughton Lynd, ed., Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History (New York, 1966), xxiv. Rush gave 5,200 acres of land to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in 1794, for the foundation of a Negro colony to be named "Benezet." The project failed to materialize. Donald J. D'Elia, "Dr. Benjamin Rush and the Negro," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXX, (1969), 421. Thomas Woodward, The Columbian Plutarch (Philadelphia, 1819), 283.

⁶⁰Examples: "Anthony Benezet," The African Repository, IV (1828), 61, 62. Rural Magazine and Literary Fireside, quoted in A. H. Smyth, Philadelphia Magazines and Their Contributors, 199. Vaux, Memoirs (1817). Drake, 155. Benezet and Wesley, Views of American Slavery (Philadelphia, 1858), included large sections of Caution and Warning, and Short Account of Africa. Dwight Dumond, Antislavery, The Crusade for Freedom in America (Ann Arbor, 1961), 18.

⁶¹Seeber, Anti-Slavery in France, 160. Kennedy, Lafayette and Slavery, 30, 35. In 1802, Napoleon restored the slave trade to its pre-1787 position. Clarkson, Abolition, I, 500; II, 31, 32. Kraus, Atlantic Civilization, 151. McCloy, Humanitarian Movement, 94. Benezet, Observations sur l'Origine (London, 1817), Publisher's Introduction, ix.

CONCLUSION

Defining the significance of human personality in a rapidly changing world, Benezet in the last year of his life, wrote these words: "It is not the color of our skin, outward circumstance, or profession, but the state and temper of the mind" that reveals our true identity.¹ No longer could rigid measures of race, class, or religion offer a dependable index to the worth of an individual. He was convinced that attitudes ("the state and temper of the mind") were the best indicators of a person's character. Amid the rapid economic and political fluctuations of the late eighteenth century, it was imperative to reestablish some recognizable standard for judging the worth of human beings. Otherwise, as he had discovered, the chaotic dislocations of wars, slavery, and poverty led irrationally to the degradation of certain groups and individuals for the undeserved benefit of others.

Anthony Benezet sought to coordinate his essentially static utopian ideals for society with the realities of a changing world. He wished to conserve the traditional values of Western civilization, which for him embodied a stable, peaceful, family relationship--a universal, equal brotherhood. He expressed it well when he wrote, in his Short Account of Quakers:

It is a situation of society beautiful in prospect and happy in the enjoyment, when men mutually give and receive liberty to live, with equality and affection; if not belonging to the same visible church, yet to the same fraternity of mankind; agreeable to our blessed Saviour's doctrine, 'One is your master; and all ye are brethren.'²

But to transform the vision into a reality in his lifetime involved vigorous efforts to change the very society he would preserve. He developed a rational critique of Christian civilization, and launched a searching exposé of the forces that had corrupted his ideal vision. The unbridled greed inherent in economic competition, with the resulting impersonalized oppression of human beings, he saw as the crux of the problem. "The love of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, the desire of amassing wealth,...is the great rock against which our Society has dashed," he wrote in 1780.³

He probed the theme of rootlessness in eighteenth century society. And he concluded that the goal of upward social and economic mobility in a land of immigrants,--and in Europe a dislocated rural population--led to a deplorable irresponsibility of the privileged classes for the poorer ones.

Another analytical theme in his critique of society was his search for the meaning of vocation in times of change. His colleagues in Philadelphia had so diligently followed their "callings" that their very success had become the mortal enemy of the ideal community. They might have spent many leisure hours in helping the less fortunate, as he frequently reminded them, but instead they stubbornly devoted themselves wholly to the selfish pursuit of wealth. The true meaning of vocation, as he saw it, was to fit one's "natural inclinations" with the needs of the larger society. If that combination led to financial rewards from the public, one was morally obligated to spread the gains voluntarily among those whose vocations were less lucrative, such as schoolteachers, and among the dependent classes like children and the aged.

Increasingly in later life, he denounced all forms of oppression. Once he had viewed the control of one group of men over another as an evidence of the will of God. Those ordained to rule should, of course, do so benevolently. But, in fact, he had observed that masters of men generally became oppressive rather than benign. By the end of his life, he was insisting that human beings should take responsibility for their own lives, insofar as they were able to do so, and that no individual or group had a right to rule over another without that other's consent. It was a part of the Enlightenment theory that fitted perfectly with his own experience and growing convictions. He did not see this change as a denial of his Christian profession, but rather as the outward, practical expression of it.

Perhaps the most insistent theme of Benezet's life and work can be summed up in the word "education." His concern for training people, young and old, male and female, black and white, to fill a useful place in society, constituted the bedrock of his own sense of vocation. The ideal family of mankind could never be achieved without the voluntary contributions of self-disciplined lives. He published his books in German as well as English in order to instruct the large Pennsylvania immigrant population. He developed a simple, direct writing style to reach the largest possible number of impressionable young people with his vision of peaceful, orderly social intercourse. All his books were in a sense school books. If society was so far from perfect, he believed he could reorder it most effectively through the education of the "state and temper of the mind."

But the irony of Benezet's intensive effort to recreate his ideal of social harmony through enlightenment was that it led in a different direction altogether. The radical tendencies inherent in his "inner light" analysis, his keen social criticism, increasingly justified disorder rather than the desired goals of rational, peaceful change to a more just and stable order. At times, he almost lost sight of those goals in his quest for solutions to the problems. His vision of an equal brotherhood in the family of God meant, in practice, a complete disruption in established hierarchical patterns. His theory of individual responsibility for mutual progress could be distorted to encourage an already thriving laissez faire attitude in economics--the very focal point of his sharpest attacks. He worked to strengthen family life as the basic foundation for a smoothly functioning society, only to discover that the family was usurping the place of God and the larger community to become the repository for the selfish accumulation of wealth and tribal pride.

Anthony Benezet tested the limits of bourgeois social values through his struggle against the abuses of the rising economic, political, and social system. But he never rejected these values completely. He moved determinedly toward a theory of individual rights in a society that traditionally perceived the homogeneous "public good" as the highest good--a position he himself enthusiastically supported. It was a question of what constituted the "public good." In a world community that took little interest in the rights of minority groups, much less those of poverty-oppressed individuals, a society that cared only for

the rights of the "more judicious part of the subjects," as John Adams put it, Benezet attacked the decaying core of the very civilization he desired to preserve.⁴ He was both herald of the future and patriarch of the past--a producer and a product of the ongoing dialectic between innovation and anachronism in western civilization.

FOOTNOTES

CONCLUSION

¹Benezet, Some Observations on Indians (Philadelphia, 1784), 36.

²Benezet, A Short Account of Quakers (Philadelphia, 1780), 8.

³To Moses Brown, July 1, 1780, HQC.

⁴John Adams, "Novanglus," Charles F. Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams (Boston, 1851), IV, 82.

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