

# *'A Tender Regard to the Whole Creation': Anthony Benezet and the Emergence of An Eighteenth-Century Quaker Ecology*

RECENT CONCERN with the effects of environmental disruption in America has shifted our gaze backward, inevitably, to the origins of our environmental attitudes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nonetheless, we still imperfectly understand the multiplicity of relationships of our colonial ancestors to the "new-found-land" of the western hemisphere. As recently as 1973 a prominent historian of the wilderness in English-America could summarize the late colonial period in the simplicities of frontiersmen "exploiting" nature, Daniel Boone bespeaking "the beauty of the mountains," or Mark Catesby and the Bartrams hurrying into the woods for botanical and ornithological forays. Richard Goodwin in 1974 put the matter rather too simplistically: "the necessities of conquest [of the environment] must always arouse the desire not merely to subdue but to destroy." Against this backdrop, Cecelia Tichi's *New World, New Earth*, published in 1979, presents a deeper and more subtle appreciation of the Puritan imperative to "re-form" or "trans-form" the New World into a millennial "New Earth" for the anticipated Second Coming of Christ. Puritans in good conscience could then appropriate land from "savages" for quasi-religious transformation in what Cotton Mather would call "The New English Israel."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roderick Nash, "The American Wilderness in Historical Perspective," in Carroll Pursell, ed., *From Conservation to Ecology: The Development of Environmental Concern* (New York, 1973); Richard Goodwin, "Reflections (The American Social Process—II)," *New Yorker* (28 April, 1974), 40; Cecelia Tichi, *New World, New Earth: Environmental Reform in American Literature from the Puritans through Whitman* (New Haven and London, 1979), 2, 10, 27.

Students of seventeenth and eighteenth century environmental history need not assume, however, that Puritan thinking dominated everything north of the Chesapeake. We need, for instance, to explore potentially disparate visions of the environment in Quaker, Anglican, and Anglo-Dutch societies. Moreover, we have yet to begin seriously to unravel in our early history religious and secular attitudes toward living things. How did colonial Americans, to cite one example, perceive their relationship to themselves and to the profusion of wild life and domesticated animals with which they shared a continent? In short, we have yet to commence the serious investigation of seventeenth and eighteenth century American ecologies.<sup>2</sup>

The exploration of alternate ecological paradigms in colonial America might best proceed with an analysis of Quaker thought for by the eighteenth century a unique ethos pervaded the Quaker colonies on the banks of the Delaware. It is true that Friends shared with their Puritan kin a spiritual outlook inimical to "creaturely" or "unregenerate" man.<sup>3</sup> Quakers, if anything, strove to outdo their Yankee cousins in their condemnation of sensuality and frivolity, of stage acting and gaming, of cock-fighting, even of dancing or idle whistling. Still, a difference persisted. The Quaker emphasis on the benevolent God of the New Testament, whose injunctions to man subsumed the Sermon on the Mount and whose saving grace flowed potentially to the hearts of all men, elevated the status of human beings, regenerate and unregenerate alike. The prophetic message of "the eternal Christ" and the collective mysticism of the Quaker meeting indirectly enhanced the dignity of the faithful and of the would-be faithful as well. By the eighteenth century, Quakers perceived themselves to be "a people among peoples," benevolent toward their own society and "tender" in a fashion respecting the temporal needs of "the world's people."

<sup>2</sup> In his study of "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," Lynn White, Jr. points out that the word "ecology" did not first appear in the English language until 1873. Obviously I employ the word "ecology"—and the idea cluster that it connotes—in the broadest sense, recognizing that a distinctive Quaker ecology predates the use of the technical terminology of present day biologists. See Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," as quoted in Ian G. Barbour, ed., *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology* (Reading, Massachusetts, 1973), 20.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief study of Quaker theology, see J. William Frost, "The Dry Bones of Quaker Theology," *The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends* (New York, 1973), 10-29.

Consistent with this compassionate mentality, Friends labored to alleviate human misery, constructed and supported in Philadelphia the Almshouse and the Bettering House, founded the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, and enhanced their civic standing through their association with the Pennsylvania Hospital at Eighth and Spruce. The retreat from "creaturely power" and the abdication of political authority in Pennsylvania which began in 1756 and essentially culminated in 1776 intensified within the Society of Friends this quest for religious purity and "disinterested" humanitarian service. Within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, prominent Friends including John Woolman, Anthony Benezet, John Churchman, and James and John Pemberton upheld the peace "testimonies" of the Society during "the sufferings" of the French and Indian War. As the American Revolution approached, the reform tradition within the Society of Friends became the legacy of a new generation of Friends such as Nicholas Waln, Rebecca Jones, George Dillwyn, and William Savery. They were collectively anxious to reaffirm the "peaceable breathings" of Friends and generally to refuse war taxes, to treat the American Indians and Blacks with respect, to tighten the discipline of the Meeting, to cleanse the church of worldly "snares," to educate the youth "in Truth," and to simplify if possible the lifestyle of prosperous Quakers who "luxuriated" in "superfluities."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In an influential thesis, Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1783* (New York, 1948), has argued that provincial Pennsylvania as a religious community had been founded on the concept of a "dual plantation," the outward or worldly plantation consisting of political responsibility by Quakers for the governance of a major British colony, the inward plantation constituting the Quaker commitment to an interior life of prayer, contemplation, and religious purity. Encumbrance with the spirit of the world, growing materialism within the Society of Friends, the seduction of worldly power, compromises with the peace "testimony" of the Society for the sake of practicality, had weakened the religious dedication of Friends. According to Samuel Fothergill, compromises with the world's spirit had caused Friends to be "as Salt which hath lost its savour." Thus after 1756, numerous "weighty" Friends had withdrawn from involvement with "the outward plantation" and had concentrated instead on a renewal of internal resources within their religious community. J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*, dates the effective Quaker retreat from worldly power somewhat later, in the period, 1770-1790. However one may wish to chronicle the Quaker withdrawal, the retirement from authority was genuine in the second half of the eighteenth century and provided an appropriate backdrop for a "detached" Quaker reappraisal of man's proper place in the divine scheme of things. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 242; see also, 3-28, 230-243; Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*, 213. For a look at the humanitarian endeavors of eighteenth-century Friends in Philadelphia and elsewhere, see Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963).

Anthony Benezet, 1713-1784, a French Huguenot emigré to colonial Philadelphia by way of London, a convert to the Society of Friends, a humanitarian, educator, pacifist, and abolitionist, both exemplified and influenced this movement toward religious reform. He personified in many ways the quest for Quaker purity. His interests were overwhelmingly spiritual but like John Woolman, John Churchman, and other "tender" Quakers, he was "moved" by the "leadings" of Quaker theology to a new vision of man's proper relationship to the world of nature. In his scattered but voluminous writings, in books, tracts, pamphlets, petitions, and personal letters, in official essays endorsed by the Overseers of the Press, Benezet condemned racial and social discrimination within the human family, and castigated men for their tendency to misuse or abuse the creatures of God within the animal creation. In a fashion similar to that of Woolman, he yearned for the judicious conservation of the earth's natural resources as legacies from God. The Philadelphia Quaker utilized his penmanship to confront that "evil" and "sinfulness" within man that dehumanized or destroyed people or "wasted" the Lord's abundant bounty. Benezet fashioned a comprehensive overview of man's place in the universe and perhaps the most detailed ecological theory enunciated in eighteenth-century America.

Central to Benezet's cosmology was the conviction that the universe and its inhabitants had been the special creation of God and so deserved reverence and respect. Benezet was sufficiently knowledgeable of astronomy to marvel at "this wide and large Firmament over our heads, where the Sun and Moon and all the Stars appear in their turns." The microscope, by contrast, uncovered descending orders of life in teeming profusion<sup>5</sup> so that one might well speak of "height without any top

<sup>5</sup> Benezet recommended the use of microscopes in the scientific training of his more-advanced "scholars." Astronomy was part of his prescribed curriculum for older students. In his communications with the Abbé Raynal and with Benjamin Franklin, Benezet sometimes aped the language and style of the Enlightenment philosophes but his philosophical inclinations did not run toward either Deism or toward the rationalistic assumptions of the Age of Reason. Benezet had, on occasion, been visibly "emptied" of self amid the group mysticism of the Meeting, and with this profound human experience as standard, he naturally distrusted "creaturely" dependence on "mere reason." The underpinnings of Benezet's thought lay firmly in the tradition of Reformed Christianity. He found it impossible to imagine any conflict between true religion and true science. Benezet to John Pemberton, 29th Day, 5th Month, 1783, Etting Collection, Pemberton Papers, Book 2, 92, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, hereafter cited, HSP. See also, Nancy Slocum Hornick, "Anthony Benezet: Eighteenth Century Social Critic, Educator and Abolitionist," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1974, 121.

and. . .depth without any bottom." God infused coherence into the diversity of an otherwise incomprehensible Universe by placing mankind strategically at the heart of the divine scheme of things as pilgrims in the terrestrial realm but destined for eternal salvation. "My child, you belong to a greater Family than mine," Benezet had "Paternus" inform his mythical son, "you are a younger member of the Family of [the] Almighty Father of all nations, who has created infinite orders of angels, and numberless generations of men, to be fellow members of one and the same society in Heaven."<sup>6</sup>

In his *Short Account of the People called Quakers* (1780), Benezet further noted that "a gift of saving Light and Grace hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world. . . This law of truth, this test of virtue and vice is not hid from any part of mankind but. . . every man born into the world is enlightened by it." Quakers should strive, therefore, to dampen and diminish "unhappy prejudices and narrowness of Spirit" among the various Christian sects and to expand their appreciation of "that of God" in those peoples seemingly foreign and alien. Benezet's universalism flew in the face of emerging eighteenth-century American nationalism.<sup>7</sup> He saluted his fellow countryman, the Abbé Raynal, "on the principles of reason and humanity which constitute that grand circle of love and charity unconfined by our parentage or country, but which with affectionate cordiality embrace the whole creation." In his personal copy of Soame Jenyns, *A View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* (1780), Benezet apparently marked the following passage: "A christian is of no country,

<sup>6</sup> [Benezet, attributed author], *A Patern of Christian Education, Agreeable to the Precepts and Practice of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Germantown, 1756), 4-5 [1783 edition published in Dublin by Robert Jackson has the name of Anthony Benezet written in as author], Haverford Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania, hereafter cited, HQC.

<sup>7</sup> Benezet was cool to the passions of American nationalism in the revolutionary struggle against Great Britain. He probably felt most at home in the broader Atlantic world that had traditionally encapsulated the Society of Friends. In any case, Benezet certainly followed Quaker custom in ordinarily according deference to King and councillors. Most important, however, he called attention unrelentingly to American hypocrisy in deploring alleged British "slavery" of American whites even as so-called "patriots" themselves exploited slaves and maintained their own fellow creatures in a state of "agonizing bondage." [Benezet], *Short Observations on Slavery, Introductory to some Extracts from the Writing of the Abbé Raynal, on that Important Subject* (n.p., n.d.), 1-3 [Inscribed, John Pemberton, 1780, HQC].

he is a citizen of the world, and his neighbours and countrymen are the inhabitants of the remotest regions, whenever their distresses demand his friendly assistance."<sup>8</sup>

Benezet seems to have possessed a special fondness for the poor and distressed peoples of his own era. He quoted with approval John Woolman's *Considerations of the Keeping of Negroes* (1754) to the effect that "the parent of mankind" kept affectionate watch over even "his smallest creatures" and took "notice" of those "trodden down" and "despised." The visible and invisible poor of Philadelphia and beyond—whites, Blacks, and Indians—were special candidates for Christian love. Benezet appealed to the opulent to aid the destitute but in general he perceived the honest poor as "fortunate inasmuch as they had not lay[ed] up treasures on earth" that might prove "as wings to their children to fly above truth." The Philadelphia Quaker worked assiduously to ease the material suffering of the impoverished but he observed that the poor and despised, with their enforced "leanness" of lifestyle and their minds not "puffed up" and "crammed with learning," might best approach the simplicity of the Gospel. For Benezet it was important that "Indians, Negroes, and others, even those esteemed of the lowest order [were] capable of receiving salvation." Equality of mankind and conservation and protection of all human beings rested ultimately on moral principle.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Benezet, *A Short Account of the People called Quakers; Their Rise, Religious Principles and Settlement in America*. . . (Philadelphia, 1780), 9-10; Benezet to John Smith, 8th Day, 2nd Month, 1760, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; Benezet to Abbé Raynal, as quoted in *Pennsylvania Evening Post and Public Advertiser*, 17th June, 1782: copy in Allinson Papers, 968, Box 6, Number 41, HQC; Soame Jenyns, *A View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia, 1780; The Eighth Edition, corrected), 25 [Ex libris Anthony Benezet, marked with his inscription and quoted passage in text lined in margin of original book for emphasis, HQC]. See also, Philaletes [Anthony Benezet], *Christian Piety, Freed from the Delusions of Modern Enthusiasts of all Dominations* (London, 1756; The Second Edition), 13; Benezet to Samuel Fothergill, 27th Day, 11th Month, 1758, as quoted in *Friends' Library*, 9 (1845), 220.

<sup>9</sup> John Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes, Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* (Philadelphia, 1754), II, 50 as quoted in Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea, Its Situation, Produce, and the General Disposition of Its Inhabitants* (Philadelphia, 1771; London: Reprinted, W. Owen and E. and C. Dilly, 1772), 75f; Benezet to Mary Robinson, 10th Day, 12th Month, 1783, as quoted in *The Friend*, 59 (13th Day, 2nd Month, 1886), 218-219; Benezet to George Dillwyn, 30th Day, 8th Month, 1767, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; [Benezet, translator], *Daily Conversations with God: Exemplify'd in the Holy Life of Armelle Nicolas, A Poor Ignorant Country Maid in France, Commonly Known by the Name of Good Armelle*. . . Translated from the French (Wilmington, 1762), *passim*, bound with John Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (Philadelphia, 1754), HQC: [Benezet's handwriting indicates that this is his own translation], [Benezet], *The Plainness and Innocent Simplicity of the Christian Religion, with Its Salutary Effects, Compared to the Corrupting Nature and Dreadful Effects of War*. . . (Philadelphia, 1782), 5. See also, Benezet, *Some Observations on the Situation, Disposition, and Character of the Indian Natives of this Continent* (Philadelphia, 1784), 36; and especially, Benezet to George Dillwyn, 7th Month, 1783, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC.

Indians and Africans, the outcasts of eighteenth-century American society, were thus, in the nature of things, much beloved by Benezet, Woolman, and a few other Friends.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the American Revolution, with Indian raids on the frontier still fresh in memory, Benezet penned his *Observations on the Situation, Disposition, and Character of the Indian Natives of this Continent* (1784) to proclaim the indigenous peoples of North America as "rational being[s] as well as ourselves," possessing "mental powers. . . equally with our own capable of improvement." Indians in general had been driven to warfare by the avarice and duplicity of encroaching white men. Benezet thought the original intent of the natives had been to "shew kindness to the Europeans". They had acted "rather as nursing fathers" to the pioneers and would be "forthcoming" again if peace and justice were restored. Benezet was in effect an environmentalist who perceived that the "accidental" discrepancies that existed between whites and other races were peripheral, the products of circumstance. "The apparent difference in them [the Indians], as well as in the Black People and us, arises principally from the advantages of [white] education and manner of life."<sup>11</sup>

Benezet then drew on nearly thirty years of experience as mentor to black pupils and as master of the "African School" of Philadelphia to brand as a "vulgar prejudice founded on. . . Pride and Ignorance" the notion that blacks were "inferior to the Whites in their capacities."

<sup>10</sup> Roderick Nash, "The American Wilderness in Historical Perspective," notes that the early Romantic movement in America was characterized in part by a turn toward Primitivism. One finds in Primitivism an enthusiasm for "natural man," that is, a shift of aesthetic sensibilities that valued the alleged simplicity of "savagery," trusting that contact with "primitive man" might unleash the "spontaneity" and "sensuousness" imprisoned in society. Benezet was little affected by the early Romantic movement and would have abjured "Primitivism" had he been conversant with it. He distrusted the "enthusiasm" and "emotional sentimentality" of "creaturely man" and would certainly never have wished to unleash the "spontaneity" and "sensuousness" already corrupting and certain further to corrupt "the world's people." Benezet's qualified admiration for blacks and Indians rested on a nicely balanced calculus of their collective strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, he found Africans and American natives simply children of God who had once been in reasonable harmony with nature and their natural environment before their "oppression." See Nash, "The American Wilderness in Historical Perspective," in Pursell, ed., *From Conservation to Ecology*, 11; and Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven and London, 1967; Revised Edition, 1973), 48.

<sup>11</sup> Benezet, *Some Observations on. . . the Indian Natives*, iv, 7-8, 40, 8. For additional remarks on the nature of the American Indians, see the letter of Benezet to Sir Jeffrey Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in North America, pleading for peace during the French and Indian War: Benezet to Sir Jeffrey Amherst, 7th Month, 1763, as quoted in Vaux, *Memoirs of. . . Anthony Benezet*, 83-84.

Negroes had been a "sensible humane and sociable People" in their native land before the slave trade had devastated Africa; their "Capacity" was "as good and as capable of Improvement as that of the WHITES." To fulfill their human potential, black slaves wanted only natural liberty, "the right of every human creature as soon as he breathes the vital air." Then whites, blacks, and red men might "close the circle of humanity" to the mutual cultivation and benefit of the bounty that God had bequeathed to man.<sup>12</sup>

Benezet's love for living things extended beyond the scope of "lesser peoples" within the human family to a compassion for all vulnerable creatures within the realm of nature. As he expressed it, he had early on formed "a kind of a League of Amity and Peace with the animal Creation, looking upon them as the most grateful, as well as the most reasonable Part of God's Creatures. . . ."<sup>13</sup> Benezet could not bring himself to harm or injure animals that God had created. "If the Geese must be slain [preparatory to their presentation as gifts]," Benezet informed his friend, John Smith of Burlington, New Jersey, "I shall chuse to be excused from being the Executioner. . . . I shall scarce ever imbrue my Hands in the Blood of any Creature,"<sup>14</sup> having in a measure left off eating Meat, as it conduces to my Health."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [Benezet], *Short Observations on Slavery*, 12; Benezet, *A Short Account of that Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes*, 7; Benezet, *Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects: viz. On War and Its Inconsistency with the Gospel: Observations on Slavery. And Remarks on the Nature and Bad Effects of Spirituous Liquors* (Philadelphia, 1778), 40.

<sup>13</sup> As Quaker naturalist of sorts, Benezet was of necessity pre-Darwinian in his thinking and failed to see the lower primates or lesser animals as biologically inferior or ancillary to man in the chain of evolutionary development. The Quaker schoolmaster chose not to emphasize the viciousness of unruly animals in their undomesticated habitat but would likely have found himself better attuned to a portrait of the animal world later sketched by the Quaker artist, Edward Hicks (1784-1849), under the rubric of "The Peaceable Kingdom." For Benezet, it seems, savage beasts were only so in a strictly metaphorical sense. Indeed animals in their natural state may have appeared to Benezet in some ways ontologically superior to man, for animals in their ordinary skins and colors were simply a reflection of God's glory whereas man in his natural state stood unalterably condemned by God through the "seed" of disobedient parents. Thus, Benezet remained virtually untouched by early Romanticism and the drift toward Primitivism, but his attitude toward animals still reflected "tenderness" and sentimentality.

<sup>14</sup> In Benezet's "tenderness toward animals," he probably drew upon minority tradition within the Society of Friends and may have found some support elsewhere. As early as 1684, Thomas Tryon in "The Planter's Speech" had warned Quakers that the killing of animals tended to enlarge the cruelty of the killer. Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples*, notes that "tendencies toward vegetarianism or quirkish acceticism in regard to clothing were often present in the notable spiritual leaders [of the Society of Friends]. . . . Other Friends, including many respected ministers, did not share these traits." See James, 153, 154.

<sup>15</sup> Benezet to John Smith, 9th Day, 12th Month, 1757, Roberts Vaux Papers, Box 1, HSP.



"Compassion and tenderness" to "the brute creation" was central to Benezet's thinking and the Philadelphia schoolmaster stressed this point to David Barclay of London in justifying a lifetime of teaching moral values to Quaker youth and others. In *A First Book for Children* (1778), Benezet caused tiny Friends to be questioned rhetorically: "Dost thou not hear the young birds when out of their small nests they call upon God for food[?] [H]urt them not my son, for he who made them hears their cry." Slightly older pupils were reminded that "He who made us, made the bird and the fish[;] He who made them loves to do them good. Bird and fish can feel pain, even as we do: So be sure that thou hurt them not in thy play."<sup>16</sup>

Benezet was so scrupulous in "sheltering" "lowly beasts" that he found it virtually impossible to kill mice or even insects. He warned his tiny "scholars" against the "murder" of "yonder harmless fly" simply on the contention that "'tis good for nothing." If superior beings might arbitrarily destroy the life of an inferior, might not Almighty God in justice blot out the life of a insubordinate child, "good for nothing"? "And yet thou liv'st to form this impious thought [of killing flies capriciously], And set thy Maker's handy work at nought."<sup>17</sup>

Tradition has it that Benezet once faced a restless class of "scholars" who had taken advantage of his absence to attach a mouse to a make-shift pillory under the inscription: "I stand here, my honest friends, For stealing cheese and candle-ends." Benezet upon his arrival discovered the culprits who had perpetrated the prank and made them stand at attention. He then released the rodent to its freedom, noting that the ringleaders who had "punished" the mouse for "stealing" had only imprisoned the helpless creature while others, more hardhearted, might have killed it. In consideration of their "compassion," the young tricksters were granted permission to leave class early. Such attitudes may have inclined Dr. Benjamin Rush to characterize Benezet's benevolence as a "species of Quixotism." In this respect, however, Benezet stood close to John Woolman who had refused on occasion to employ stagecoaches in England or to patronize the public mails because of the harm done in the process to horses "pushed forward" in

<sup>16</sup> Benezet to David Barclay, 1782, as quoted in Vaux, *Memoirs of . . . Anthony Benezet*, 19; Benezet, *A First Book for Children* (Philadelphia, 1778), 18; Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book* (Providence, Rhode Island, 1782; Third Edition Improved and Enlarged), 16.

<sup>17</sup> Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, 103.

suffering. To shield the "brutile creation" from pain was to demonstrate respect for the value and mystery of all living things.<sup>18</sup>

Harmony with fruit-bearing trees and "benevolent" plants led Benezet inevitably into the vegetable patch and the vineyard. "To follow after gardening" as an "innocent Divertisement" had been historically a favorite pastime of Quakers. Benezet, hoe in hand, upheld that tradition.<sup>19</sup> Circumstances of Philadelphia life, however, did not necessarily conduce to a rustic mode of living. Benezet apparently found himself cramped for space near his own dwelling at the foot of Chestnut Street and so he dipped his spade into the "pasture lot" of Charles and Mary Norris on Chestnut between Fourth and Fifth where later stood the Second Bank of the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, whether at home or nearby, Benezet remained in "awful [awe-full] fascination" before the mysteries of nature. He sent to his young friend, George Dillwyn, in Burlington a "species of Indian Corn" which had the "peculiar quality. . . when held a few Minutes over the flame, in a warm shovel [of] open[ing] its contents as thou mayst see by the Specimens I now send [thee.]" He recommended that this newly-discovered eighteenth-century popcorn might be "readily boil[ed] in milk. . . as [an] agreeable food." Benezet was conversant with the texture and the smell of dung heaps and "tann beds [a hot bed of spent tan or bark from trees]." He cultivated "vines" and sent "several

<sup>18</sup> "P.," Bucks County, 16th Day, 3rd Month, 1831 to *The Friend*, 4 (26th Day, 3rd Month, 1831), 187; Benjamin Rush to Granville Sharp, 27 April, 1784, Benjamin Rush Manuscripts, Notebooks, Book 1, Library Company of Philadelphia, hereafter cited, LCP; Phillips P. Moulton, ed., *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman* (New York, 1971), 183. See also, Benezet, *A First Book for Children*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> William Penn and Robert Barclay displayed an affinity for gardening and Dr. John Fothergill, a frequent Quaker correspondent with Benezet, is said to have introduced some ninety-six new species of horticulture into the England of his day. See William Penn, *Fruits of a Father's Love: Being the Advice of William Penn to his Children, Relating to their Civil and Religious Conduct* (London, 1760; The Third Edition), 19 [Ex libris Anthony Benezet: passage has been reclassified as Ch. II, No. 22 probably in Benezet's hand], bound with Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*, HQC; Robert Barclay, *Apology*, Prop. XV, sec. ix, *Writings*, II, 540-541, as quoted in Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 135; Robert Elman, *First in the Field: America's Pioneering Naturalists* (New York, 1977), 34. For a brief discussion of the importance of gardening in the lives of many of the Philadelphia Quakers, see Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 135-139.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, As the same is held Forth, and Preached by the People, Called, in Scorn, Quakers.* . . (n.p., 1678), 388; Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, About the year 1825, as quoted in Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 468.

score willows" "fit to plant" to his Burlington friend, John Smith. He chatted with the Quaker botanist, John Bartram, regarding horticulture, and experimented somewhat by "seeding" for sheltered cultivation lemon trees and "Carolina Civil Oranges," "each in [a] separate Pott." His pupil, Deborah Logan, tells us that Benezet appeared most happy when linked in gentle harmony to nature, nurturing "those vegetables which formed so large a portion of his diet."<sup>21</sup>

Benezet came to form over the course of a lifetime strong opinions as to how man ought to relate ideally to his natural environment. Here his agrarian biases came into play. From the vantage point of his garden, Benezet embraced existentially the assessment of his religious mentor, William Penn, that "the Gardener," "the Plowman," and "the Shepherd" had the "least of Snare and the most of Use." He did not absolutely condemn commerce and trade, still less, emerging technology. He was nonetheless ill at ease for there were clear "difficult[ies] and danger[s]" for the religiously-inclined individual in "Hucksturing & Merchandising," in succumbing to the so-called "necessities of Trade." This Quaker schoolteacher had earlier in life pursued a commercial career but at the age of forty-three he had confessed to a friend that "I find being much amongst the buyer and seller rather a snare to me. . . ."<sup>22</sup>

To renounce the "necessities of Trade," however, did not signify for Benezet a flight into unspoilt nature or wilderness. The Philadelphia Quaker seems to have harbored little aesthetic appreciation of the beauties of "wildness" in the near-wilderness environment of eight-

<sup>21</sup> Benezet to George Dillwyn, 4th Month, 1780, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; Benezet to John Smith, 20th Day, 2nd Month, 1759, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; Benezet to John Smith, 6th Day, 3rd Month, 1765, Smith Manuscripts, Book 6, 216, LCP; Benezet to Edward Cathrall, 25th Day, 11th Month, 1764, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; Benezet to John Smith, 20th Day, 2nd Month, 1759, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; Benezet to John Smith, 5th Day Morning [1767], Smith Manuscripts, Book 7, 55, LCP; Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, About the year 1825, as quoted in Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 468.

<sup>22</sup> William Penn, *Fruits of a Father's Love: Being the Advice of William Penn to his Children, Relating to their Civil and Religious Conduct* (London, 1760; The Third Edition), 20 [Ex libris Anthony Benezet: passage has been reclassified as Ch. II, nos. 22 and 23, probably in Benezet's hand, HQC]; Benezet to John Smith, 8th Day, 5th Month, 1765, Smith Manuscripts, Book 6, 199, LCP; Benezet to Sarah Barney, 1756, as quoted in *Friends' Miscellany*, 3 (10th Month, 1832), 103.

eenth-century America.<sup>23</sup> He was, in consequence, no preservationist as there seemed little need for it; he was instead a conservationist who early on emphasized the efficient and non-wasteful utilization of "cultivated" land. To employ the terminology of Leo Marx in regard to the environmentalists of the nineteenth century, Benezet yearned for "the Pastoral ideal," a kind of "middle landscape" suspended in a perpetual equipoise between the savage primitivism of a vast and "dangerous" wilderness and the emerging corruptions, affectations, and inequities of cities, "hucksturing," and trade. Thus Benezet desired harmony with a garden landscape but he envisioned man as simply a steward of God's natural bounty as a largesse to be sheltered and conserved. A sea change of jumbled essentials and nuances seems to have separated the world of Benezet from that of the Puritans with their aggressive inclinations to "re-form" the American environment, or as Cecelia Tichi so aptly put it, to make "a mark upon America in the name of terrestrial enhancement."<sup>24</sup>

How should the land be utilized? During the "crisis" of the French and Indian War, Benezet petitioned "Authority" not to suffer "the lands to the westward of the Allegheny to be settled without the consent of the Indians." If peace were reestablished and suitable trade resumed, then "our people might securely settle, though perhaps in a more compact manner, upon. . .lands already purchased." In 1756 Benezet recommended to the beleaguered settlers of the Bethlehem area on the Pennsylvania frontier that they resettle "as they do in New England, in a Square with the Town in the middle, by which the Inhabitants living together might support & assist one another" to their mutual "security" and "advantage." It seemed clear to Benezet that whites ought to imitate in some respects their Indian enemies, for the Indians cultivated "no

<sup>23</sup> According to Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, "the ideal focus for any Christian in the Middle Ages was the attainment of heavenly beatitudes, not enjoyment of his present situation. Such a point of view tended to check any appreciation of natural beauty." Benezet, of course, drew heavily on the medieval Christian tradition, abhorred sensuality in any form, and found it difficult to appreciate the aesthetic beauty of nature as an end in itself. He seems to have travelled little and in his travels to have commented even less as to "the inspirations of nature." See Nash, 19.

<sup>24</sup> See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York, 1964); Tichi, *New World, New Earth*, 3, 10.

more land than [was] necessary for their plentiful subsistence and hospitality to strangers."<sup>25</sup>

America's first natives lived leanly and in close harmony with nature. Benezet appeared especially fascinated with the conversion experiences of John Papunahung or "Minsi John," a Christian Indian of the Delaware tribe, who succumbed to a mystical, Quaker-like, "convincement experience" in 1761 or thereabout, from which "a sense was given him" of man's relation to God and of "the Virtues and Nature of Several Herbs, Roots, Plants & Trees and the different Relation they had one to another." Thus whites might learn from red men and the two races might live more sensibly on the land. Surely there existed sufficient territory on this vast continent for the use of all peoples.<sup>26</sup>

Benezet noted that Africans had themselves cultivated their own country to good purpose before the European slave trade had ruined it. He maintained that blacks ought to be now given their liberty, "mixed amongst the whites" under supervision and possibly resettled on "the uncultivated [wastelands] of our Southern Colonies." "Five and twenty acres," he thought, would serve the needs of each freedman's family. By 1784 Benezet was recommending to "our straitened & oppressed fellow-men in Britain & Ireland" that they emigrate to our "back unsettled country" in a spirit of love and respect for the American Indians. Thus, Benezet had sketched, by the end of his life, his own version of "The Peaceable Kingdom" in which the peoples of all colors might nurture the land to good purpose and then "rest with one another" in "tenderness" and care.<sup>27</sup>

Benezet not only favored the protection and efficient cultivation of the natural environment but wished persons additionally to be in per-

<sup>25</sup> Benezet to Sir Jeffrey Amherst, 7th Month, 1763, as quoted in Vaux, *Memoirs of. . . Anthony Benezet*, 78, 82; Benezet to Joseph Spangenberg, 24th Day, 1st Month, 1756 [manuscript copy], Holland Collection of Benezetiana, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, hereafter cited, HSWP; Benezet, *Some Observations on. . . the Indian Natives*, 20f.

<sup>26</sup> [Benezet], *An Account of the Behaviour & Sentiments of a Number of Well-Disposed Indians Mostly of the Minsing Tribe*, as quoted in Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 484.

<sup>27</sup> Benezet, *A Caution to Great Britain and her Colonies, in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions* (Philadelphia, printed, London reprinted, 1767), 15-16; Benezet, *A Short Account of the Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes*, 71; Benezet to "My dear Gaspar" [Caspar Wistar], 25th Day, 4th Month, 1784, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC. See also, Benezet to Joseph Phipps, 28th Day, 5th Month, 1763 [manuscript copy], Benezet Papers, 852, HQC.

sonal harmony with themselves and with their natures. For this, they needed a deeper appreciation of the marvel of their own physical "frame[s]" and a renewed respect for "the laws of nature" that governed their bodies. As he approached his seventieth year, Benezet thought it "wonderful" "that the [bodily] Machine keeps so long and well together." "Surely," he mused, "its Divine Architeck has constructed and supports it for some deep purpose." He recommended to John Pemberton that "lads of bright genius" be taught "some plain Lectures upon Anatomy, . . . deducing therefrom the advantage of a plain simple way of life" so as to appreciate "the kind efforts of nature to maintain. . . health with little physicial help but what abstinence & exercise will afford." The Quaker schoolmaster provided his students with occasional opportunities for class relaxation, recreation, and physical exercise, a regimen that was atypical among Quaker schoolchildren of the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

For the maintenance of health—equilibrium within self and with environment—Benezet recommended moderate exercise, regimented rest, a "lowly diet," abstinence from spirituous liquors, regular "excavations" of the bodily wastes, and—in emergencies—"gentle Vomits." He seems to have agreed with the English physician, George Cheyne, that human beings were almost unique among the animals in their "Danger of over-cramming, by the Flavour of their Food." The Quaker vegetarian<sup>29</sup> seems to have favored "the lightest and the least Food," a "milk and seed" diet consisting of "Vegetables of the soft, juicy, mild Kind, such as Turneps, Potatoes, young Seeds and Plants

<sup>28</sup> Benezet to George Dillwyn, 6th Day, 8th Month, 1780, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; Benezet to John Pemberton, 29th Day, 5th Month, 1783, Etting Collection, Pemberton Papers, Book 2, 92, HSP; Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, 1825, as quoted in Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 467; Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*, 81. See also, George Cheyne, *The Natural Method of Curing the Diseases of the Body and the Disorders of the Mind Depending on the Body* (London, 1753; The Fifth Edition), 257-258 [Ex libris Anthony Benezet: marginal notation probably in Benezet's hand, HQC].

<sup>29</sup> In a passage taken from his personal copy of Cheyne, *The Natural Method of Curing the Diseases of the Body*, Benezet himself probably marked the following: "One great Advantage a vegetable Diet has over an animal one is that in the weakest Digestions and the most dangerous and obstinate Distempers, the Patient may always fill his Belly and satisfy his Hunger without Fear, Remorse or Suffering, at least, he may do it to a great Degree, till he comes to be far advanced in Years: and if he should happen at any time to exceed, he feels none of those pungent and acute Symptoms, nor those durable Effects and profound Sinkings he would feel from a full Meal of high meats and strong Drinks." Cheyne, *The Natural Method of Curing Diseases of the Body*, 68.

and all much dress'd Garden-things."<sup>30</sup> These soft foods ought to be washed down with cow's milk, goat's whey, or water, the natural beverage of mankind. In this respect Benezet seems to have duplicated more or less the dietary habits of Woolman, Churchman, and other occasional vegetarians in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World.<sup>31</sup>

As temperance advocate, Benezet naturally attacked ciders, malts, punch, light wines, and especially the horrors of Pennsylvania rye whiskey. In 1774 he published *The Mighty Destroyer Displayed* to lament the destruction of many thousands of human beings "rendered senseless" by their addiction to hard drink. He noted that liquor had been utilized in the corruption of African potentates, and had served on occasion as "currency" in the bartering of the slave trade. Rum had also been misused in the debauching of innocent and otherwise inoffensive Indians. A solution was to tax "spirits" and abolish the pernicious liquor traffic. For those addicted to alcoholic drink, Benezet recommended a gradual shift to mineral water to replace the "fiery liquid" that rotted the entrails and, according to medical authorities, produced "hectic fevers, jaundices, [and] dropsies." Benezet seems to have believed, in an odd misreading of the laws of chemistry, that whatever had been contained in hard drink including the intoxicating element had been originally present but suppressed in the raw material, while distillation merely shattered a benign combination. Thus the products of nature from the hands of God were salutary but man's unnatural tampering with God's handiwork led to intoxication and misery.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The Philadelphia Quaker probably agreed with the physician, George Cheyne, in a written observation that Benezet may possibly have underscored in his library text: "All kinds of Food that are insipid, mild, cool, and watery, whether of Meats or Drinks, are salutary and curative, prolific and lengthen Life: and on the contrary, every thing in Food that is much tasty, poignant, hot, salt, sharp or stimulating is pernicious, deleterious and morbid and destructive of Life and Spirits." Cheyne, *The Natural Methods of Curing the Diseases of the Body*, 87 [passage noted in Benezet text].

<sup>31</sup> [John Wesley], *Primitive Physick: or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* (Bristol, England, [1747]; The Second Edition Enlarged), 27 [Ex libris Anthony Benezet: Benezet marked this book with his signature on page 100, usually an indication that he had read the book carefully, HQC]; Cheyne, *The Natural Method of Curing the Diseases of the Body*, 39, 37, 178 [passages lined in margins probably by Benezet]; Amelia Mott Gummere, ed., *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman* (London, 1922), 318; *An Account of the Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of a Faithful Minister of Christ, John Churchman, Late of Nottingham in Pennsylvania, deceased*. . . (Philadelphia, Printed. London, Reprinted, 1781), 223.

<sup>32</sup> Benezet, *The Mighty Destroyer Displayed, in Some Account of the Dreadful Havock made by the Mistaken Use as Well as Abuse of Distilled Spirituous Liquors* (Philadelphia, 1774), 39-40; Benezet, *Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects: viz. On War and Its Inconsistency with the Gospel; Observations on Slavery. And Remarks on the Nature and Bad Effects of Spirituous Liquors*, 46; Benezet, *The Mighty Destroyer Displayed*, 4-5; James, *A People Among Peoples*, 255-256.

Benezet knew that the world was not as it should be. Human greed had disrupted the balance between man and nature, causing the rich to "sit down easy in their affluence," even if they had grown comfortable in the distillation of rum, in the sweat of slaves, or in the spoils of war. Benezet's well-known lifelong campaigns against greed and materialism, against the liquor traffic, in opposition to human bondage, and in contradistinction to the pride of war, ought best to be seen against the backdrop of his love of God and his ecological vision. As the aging Philadelphian informed his younger friend, George Dillwyn, in 1780, there was "a certain [limited] degree of Wealth in the World for the common use of Mankind." Was it right, he mused, that one "should engross so much & employ it to feed the corruptions of his offspring whilst others are under such manifest disadvantage for want of help?" Was it right that slavemasters should grow rich on the labor of their slaves, in the exploitation of other human beings, in the misuse of human potential? In his *Observations on Slavery* (1778), Benezet indicated that "the Slavery which now so largely subsists in the American Colonies is another mighty evil, which preceeds [proceeds] from the same corrupt root as War, for. . . in the generality it sprang from the unwarrantable desire of gain [and] a lust for amassing wealth. . . ." Men could never be in harmony with God or nature if the rich hoarded wealth to the manifest disadvantage of the poor or if the mighty enslaved the weak so as to compel, in effect, the human species against itself.<sup>33</sup>

For Benezet, who loved all mankind and treasured the natural environment, warfare and violence constituted perhaps the ultimate horror, a self-induced disruption of balance in the universe presaging ecological suicide. In 1778, Benezet penned a jeremiad to his friends, Israel, John, and James Pemberton, then imprisoned for pacifism and alleged anti-Americanism during the American Revolution. He lamented the sight of men "overwhelmed with their own misery and mortality & yet farther labor[ing] to increase the wounds of nature and invent new ways of destroying one another." War was a "teeming womb

<sup>33</sup> Benezet to John Smith, 1st Day, 8th Month, 1760, as quoted in *The Friend*, 20 (14th Day, 11th Month, 1846), 63; Benezet to George Dillwyn, 4th Month, 1780, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC; Benezet to John Pemberton, 29th Day, 5th Month, 1783, Etting Collection, Pemberton Papers, Book 2, 92, HSP; Benezet, *Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects: viz. On War and Its Inconsistency with the Gospel; Observations on Slavery. And Remarks on the Nature and Bad Effects of Spirituous Liquors*, 27.



of mischief," in which "property [was] confounded, scattered, and destroyed. . . laws. . . trampled under foot, government despised, and ties of all civil and domestic order broken into pieces. . . fruitful countries. . . made desarts, and stately cities a heap of ruins." Benezet may have believed that while adherents of no particular ecological vision might join him in opposition to warfare, no ecologist or environmentalist, could consistently support warfare and deepen thereby "the wounds of nature."<sup>34</sup>

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What can one say of Benezet's ecology in retrospect? One is struck by the relative consistency of his vision of man in harmony with nature, and by the tirelessness of his endeavors to confront any contravening evil or injustice. One also notes the obscurity into which his ecological vision has fallen in historical perspective. The latter point deserves attention. Benezet's ecological paradigm lacked for the eighteenth, the nineteenth, and the early twentieth centuries the driving power of its own strength because it had emerged piecemeal in scattered writings, and never in a codified or systematic presentation. Of course, environmental studies were not fashionable in Revolutionary America. Beyond that, however, the religious underpinnings underlying Benezet's extensive ecological observations perhaps prevented their codification.

Benezet wished to foster virtue and condemn sin. His voluminous tracts on religion, and his vigorous writings against greed, liquor, slavery, and warfare, clearly indicated that. His overriding interests were devotional, not environmental. For Benezet, the terrestrial world—even a harmonious one—was secondary in significance to the attainment of a heavenly kingdom. "What have Pilgrims and Strangers when travelling thro' an enemys country to desire more than a frugal support in it [?] The comfortable necessities of life we shall sufficiently enjoy, if industry and the reason of things is kept to, but probably with

<sup>34</sup> Benezet to Israel, John, and James Pemberton, 28th Day, 1st Month, 1778, Etting Collection, Pemberton Papers, Book 2, 85, HSP; Benezet, *Serious Considerations on Several Important Subjects: viz. On War and Its Inconsistency with the Gospel; Observations on Slavery. And Remarks on the Nature and Bad Effects of Spirituous Liquors*, 8.

[religious] persecution.”<sup>35</sup> Benezet knew himself to be “a pilgrim” in the world of living things and so his observations on ecology were scattered somewhat indiscriminately through his papers as something of an afterthought.<sup>36</sup>

Beyond that, Benezet’s ecological construct may have lacked apparent relevance to the felt needs of emerging urban, industrial America. His religious attitudes were otherworldly in an era of growing secularism. His prejudices were physiocratic and agrarian in an epoch of expanding commerce and industry. His solutions to ecological abuse centered on reformation of the individual—individual self-restraint—but reformers in later eras came to perceive class and institutional exploitation of man and nature as something of a secular sin that government, if only sporadically, must confront.<sup>37</sup> Essentially Benezet accepted the power structure of the eighteenth century, appealing to “Authority” in hierarchical fashion for “justice,” “virtue,” and “compassion.” This approach to authority was ultimately utopian, pre-Marxist,<sup>38</sup> and lacking,

<sup>35</sup> It was Benezet’s denigration of the commanding power of man to “engineer” and “reorder” his world that separated this other-worldly Quaker from the rational millennialists of his own era. According to Cecelia Tichi, children of the American Enlightenment, intoxicated by the seeming millennial implications of the American Revolution, moved to affirm human progress by constituting themselves as virtual geologic agents of a new world order. Benezet could never bring himself to be so presumptuous. He envisioned sinful man as a simple steward of his world until the Divine Master returned. Tichi, *New World, New Earth*, 70, 71, 80–81.

<sup>36</sup> Benezet to George Dillwyn, 4th Month, 1780, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC.

<sup>37</sup> For a Marxist view of modern ecological problems, see Howard Parsons, ed. and comp., *Marx and Engels on Ecology* (Westport, Connecticut, 1977), esp. Introduction. One need not embrace a Marxist view of environmental problems to realize that Benezet’s technique of “re-forming” the individual was inadequate to modern ecological crises.

<sup>38</sup> In Benezet’s extensive private and public writings, I have discovered only two suggestions, both made late in life and in private correspondence, that the Philadelphia Quaker may have had some comprehension of class and private property interests as destructive of human rights and environmental protection. In a letter to the Abbé Raynal, Benezet asked the Enlightenment thinker to “strenuously combat that false principle of honor, or rather intolerable pride and folly, which so strongly prevails in our nation [France], where the most indolent and the least useful fancy themselves and are reputed the most noble. . . . The happiness which is to be found in virtue alone is sought for by men through the titles acquired by their fathers, for their activity in those wars which have desolated the world, or in the wealth accumulated by their ancestors [through] means generally unjust and oppressive and consequently rather the source of shame and humiliation.” To his friend, George Dillwyn, Benezet confided: “Our Ancestors the ancient Goths were wiser than we. I have read that in some Parts there was no property but every spring an equal division of the Lands of the District where they resided [were] made between the Inhabitants in proportion to their wants. . . . The advantage & justice of such a wise regulation was obvious, it prevented the power of engrocing.” Despite these somewhat radical observations—which after all were isolated ones—it is still appropriate to describe Benezet as pre-Marxist in his techniques and in his thinking. Benezet to Abbé Raynal, 16th Day, 7th Month, 1781, as quoted in *The Pennsylvania Evening Post and Public Advertiser*, 17 June, 1782, copy in Allinson Papers, 968, Box 6, Number 41, HQC; Benezet to George Dillwyn, 4th Month, 1780, Benezet Papers, 852, HQC.

understandably, in the sophistication necessary to comprehend the emerging role of special interest groups and corporations in the later destruction, or preservation, of America's natural environment.

In short, Benezet's ecological system ought not to be asked to carry more weight than befits its capacity. Nevertheless, this eighteenth-century Quaker ecology, especially in historical perspective, stands as impressive enough. Benezet shared with Woolman, Churchman and other Friends of the eighteenth century, a commitment to "the value and mystery of all living things," a requisite love for animals and for vineyards, indeed a reverence for all life sheltered in essential unity in the hands of a loving God. Benezet proclaimed God's primacy over "the family of man" and invoked divinity to affirm that Indians, blacks, and the destitute be "dealt with" tenderly as common offspring of a common Father. Man's love for his own species thus precluded racial bigotry and forbade the murder of other creatures in anger or institutional carnage. When man reflected upon himself, his respect for his own person—emergent in the mystery of God and sustained in the marvelous workings of physiology—he would avoid abuse of his own body through excessive consumption of food or alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, Benezet assumed the social dimension of ecology in the conservation of "a certain degree of wealth for the common use of mankind." He condemned waste or disrespect to life, be it to person, to beast or to pasture. For him, a divinely orchestrated harmony should ideally unite a human with God, with himself, with other persons, and with his natural environment.

We need to study Benezet and others in his circle to begin a reassessment of the powerful role of religious values in the formation of America's environmental concern. We need especially to reassess the influence of religion on ecology and on attitudes regarding the relationship of living things one to another. We may discover that the Quaker love for "God and his Creatures" in the eighteenth century ran deeper and contained more durability of purpose and more breadth of implication than did the better known Puritan or Transcendentalist visions of an earlier or later era. In any case, Benezet's "tender regard to the whole creation"<sup>39</sup> did embrace equality and love for all mankind,

<sup>39</sup> Benezet to John Pemberton, 29th Day, 5th Month, 1783, Etting Collection, Pemberton Papers, Book 2, 92, HSP.

did oppose greed and rapacity as productive of war and slavery, and did evoke compassion for animal life, vegetable life, and all forms of living things even those deemed the most lowly or seemingly "useless."

Ultimately, we may discern that the evolution of American environmental and ecological thought rests on a multiplicity of clashing and sometimes complementary idea systems embedded in our colonial past, most of them derived from divergent religious values. Future historical investigation aside, we may safely conclude that Anthony Benezet did fashion from the profound "leadings" of his Quaker faith, a "moral ecology" of considerable magnitude that appears to have reemerged in sometimes curious and circuitous fashion in the humanitarian and environmental preoccupations of our own age.

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