

The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling, 1790-1820

THE PERIOD FROM 1790 TO 1820 MARKED a watershed in the history of Philadelphia Quakerism. After officially withdrawing from the Pennsylvania Assembly during the French-Indian War, Friends entered a period of internal spiritual reform that eventually led to a more tribalistic relationship to the larger society. Although they were largely excluded from political power and social acceptance, Philadelphia Quakers continued to thrive in business, forming a prosperous segment of the population. After the Revolutionary War, Friends devoted themselves to a broad array of humanitarian reforms in order to pledge their support to the new nation and to contribute freely to the exigencies of the poor.¹ These reforms included abolitionism, a concern for the mentally ill, and, most pertinent here, charity schooling.²

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¹ Sydney V. James in his work, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963) promoted the traditional view that mid-eighteenth-century Philadelphia Quakers traded their positions of political authority in state government for a leadership role in benevolent activity. He argues that the coming of the French-Indian war in 1756 created for these Friends a conflict of conviction between the pacifist position held by their religious society and their responsibility as public officials to provide for the defense of the commonwealth. Their answer was to resign, en masse, from Pennsylvania government. Confronted with the dilemma of how to retain their influence as a distinctive group in civil society and how to purge their own religious society of the worldliness that had already taken over, Friends embarked on a wide-scale movement of humanitarian reform. In so doing, they had found a way to "win a place for themselves in American society, support the government, and contribute to the national welfare that would preserve and express their distinctive views."

² Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York, 1988), 164-66. Quakers gained national recognition during this era for their work with the mentally ill. In 1796, Philadelphia Friends made accommodations to house one hundred insane patients at the Pennsylvania Hospital, the first recognition in America that the mentally ill required a special medical institution. The establishment of Friends Hospital by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, in 1817, represents the first private asylum in the United States. This institution operated on the Quaker belief that the

In 1807 Thomas Scattergood, a Quaker minister and leading quietist who had traveled extensively throughout the United States and the British Isles, formed the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children. The following year the association—all of whom were members of the Society of Friends—established the Adelphi School for the poor and black children of Philadelphia. By employing the cost-effective Lancasterian method that used older children to teach younger ones, the school captured the interest of other Quaker reformers. One of these, Roberts Vaux, an evangelically oriented Friend, was so inspired by his work for this institution that he later spearheaded the movement to create a system of free public education in Philadelphia.

The backgrounds and reform activities of these two Philadelphia Quakers provide an opportunity to explore the origins of humanitarianism and, ultimately, the common school reform movement in Pennsylvania. In particular, this article will focus on the claim that the reform activities of early nineteenth-century Friends were limited to those Quakers who espoused evangelical doctrine and were engaged in interdenominational benevolent associations. The difficulty is that while Scattergood was a leading Quaker quietist, Vaux was an evangelical Quaker.

Of all the studies of the origins of nineteenth-century humanitarianism, David Brion Davis's *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (1975) is easily the most influential. Davis traced humanitarianism to the development of modern capitalism by suggesting that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British Quaker entrepreneurs adopted abolitionism to preserve their own hegemony. Inspired by the doctrines of Protestant evangelicalism and confronted with both pro-slavery and radical indictments of the wage-labor system, these Friends adopted the cause of abolitionism, as it would allow them to demonstrate a Christian concern for human suffering and injustice while also providing a degree of moral insulation to such Quaker economic activities as wage slavery.³ For Davis then, humanitarian sensibility was the result of self-deception among the

insane should be treated with compassion, having lost neither their humanity nor their capacity to communicate with the Inner Light of Christ in all people. Accordingly, patients and staff ate together and lived in the same buildings. While doctors administered strong medicines, no chains were used to confine the patients. Nearly half of the sixty-six patients in the first three years were discharged as cured or much improved, in an era when insanity was considered incurable.

³ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, 1975), 242-51.

members of a new, entrepreneurial class as they responded to the needs and tensions of an emergent capitalist society.

Davis's hegemonic argument is challenged by Thomas Haskell who claims that the new humanitarian sensibility was not the result of the ascendancy of a new class; rather it was a response to a change in the conventions of moral responsibility induced by the "expansion of the market, the intensification of market discipline, and the penetration of that discipline into spheres of life previously untouched by it."⁴ These changes compelled Friends to reevaluate their moral responsibilities in a capitalist society. They came to view the market place not only as a scene of perpetual struggle where cost-effectiveness and profits permeated every sphere of life, but also as an "agency of social discipline and character modification." The market place encouraged a higher level of scrupulous behavior by teaching social and contractual obligations between employer and employee.⁵ This understanding of capitalism pushed the conventional limits of moral responsibility past those that had previously legitimized slavery and compelled Friends to launch their attack against that institution. Class-induced self-deception was *not* part of this process.⁶

More recently the Haskell-Davis debate encouraged historians of education to look more carefully at the relationship between theology and capitalism in the emergence of the common school reform movement. Carl F. Kaestle suggests that the Quakers, who were "successful in commerce and newly dedicated to proving themselves part of the larger community," were major actors in the common school movement. Their success in charity schooling was more widespread than any other denominational group of the time and was directed by a strong desire to provide a moral education to black and poor youths.⁷ Furthermore, the Quaker

⁴ Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part I," *American Historical Review* 90 (April 1985), 342

⁵ Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part II," *American Historical Review* 90 (June 1985), 550-63

⁶ For Davis's response to Haskell's critique, see David B. Davis, "Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony," *American Historical Review* 92 (Oct 1987), 797-812. For Haskell's rebuttal, see Thomas L. Haskell, "Conventions and Hegemonic Interest in the Debate over Anti-Slavery," *ibid.*, 829-78

⁷ Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic, Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York, 1983), 39

desire to reduce crime, vice, and cultural differences inspired them to join with other evangelical Protestants who envisioned an "integrated economy, more centralized public direction and a common moral and political culture based on evangelical Protestantism, republicanism and capitalism."⁸ David Hogan agrees with Kaestle's assessment of evangelical Protestantism as the motivating theological force underlying the Quaker decision to enter into common school reform, but he links humanitarianism to evangelicalism and the market revolution in a very different way.

Hogan believes that many of the Quaker reformers were middle-class businessmen who were very active in the market economy. Their espousal of evangelical Protestantism, with its emphasis on the doctrine of Christian benevolence, complemented their interest in the market revolution. He explains that both movements were "exercises in moral uplift" that enabled individuals to "combat sin and provide the moral resources necessary to participate in and benefit from the market revolution."⁹ Accordingly, the organizations they formed—like the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children—expressed beliefs that were "at once deeply religious and increasingly bourgeois." In the long run, charity schooling was "less an attempt to impose political or economic subordination than an attempt to equip the poor with the kind of moral culture, the industry and the discipline, that would enable them to participate in and benefit from a burgeoning market society."¹⁰

While these interpretations relate the origins of humanitarian sensibility among Quakers to that groups' social and economic circumstances during the period from 1750 to 1820, they fail to appreciate the importance of theological orientation. The historiography presents two major problems in its characterization of the nature of Quaker theology and the implications of that theology for Quaker involvement in humanitarian reform.

First, Quaker humanitarianism did not originate with the emergence of the market revolution and evangelical doctrine in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, the humanitarian impulse was an inherent part of the eighteenth-century quietist emphasis on the doctrine

⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹ David Hogan, "Joseph Lancaster and the Organization of Modern Schooling, Part II: Lancasterian Education and Common Schooling in Philadelphia, 1808-1838," unpublished, 1986, 30-31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

of the Inner Light. Thus, evangelicalism was not the exclusive motivation among those turn-of-the-century Quakers who became involved in benevolent reform. Rather it was one of *many* theological orientations held within the Society of Friends at that time. Second, those Friends who did adopt evangelicalism maintained a distinctly different understanding of that doctrine than other nineteenth-century evangelical groups. "Quaker evangelicalism" had a social orientation rooted in the attempt to reconcile Quaker piety with a worldly lifestyle. Apart from placing greater emphasis on the religious authority of Scripture, these Quaker evangelicals did not differ much in their theology from their quietist brethren and had very little difficulty working with them in the common cause of benevolent reform. Both of these issues will be examined through the lives of Thomas Scattergood and Roberts Vaux and the charity school organizations they founded.

Scattergood, a well-respected Quaker minister, was a product of eighteenth-century Quaker quietism. His reform activities were inspired by an inner spiritual struggle to discover his unique mission on earth. Scattergood's understanding of the Inner Light doctrine, as well as his vocabulary and his activities prior to and during the founding of the Philadelphia Association for the Instruction of Poor Children, 1781-1814, reflect the mystical or quietist tendency in his theology. The doctrine of the Inner Light is the fundamental religious principle upon which George Fox established the Society of Friends. For the early Quakers, the Inner Light was not an intellectual or a theological concept but rather a living experience within each person. Fox preached that "all people must first come to the spirit of God in themselves, by which they might know God and Christ . . . and by the same spirit they might know the holy scriptures and the spirit in them that gave them forth."¹¹ Similarly, Robert Barclay, the early Quaker theologian, described the Light as the "grace and word of God, an invisible principle in which God as Father, Son, and Spirit dwells in all men as a seed which of its own nature draws, invites and inclines to God."¹² This mystical belief inspired among Friends

¹¹ George Fox, *Journal* (1694), ed. John Nickalls (Philadelphia, 1985), 136.

¹² Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity, Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People Called Quakers* (1676) ed. Dean Freiday (Elberon, N.J., 1967), 90-103.

a spiritual search for an inward, immediate experience of the divine within themselves.

Scattergood had this same understanding of the Inner Light. An itinerant minister who kept a meticulous record of his travels to New England, the American South, and to Great Britain, this Philadelphia Quaker involved himself in a constant search for his divine mission in life. His journal entries reveal that he, like the early Friends, saw the Inner Light as a manifestation of the indwelling spirit of Christ. The frequent use of "light" as a metaphor for God underlies Scattergood's commitment to the mystical element in Quakerism. His often expressed hope that the "Shepherd's voice will be understood and heeded" when there is a "danger of having darkness overtake" him in a "bewildered state" displays his commitment to "put the light before darkness and right before wrong."¹³ Like the early Quaker mystics, Scattergood viewed the Inner Light as a *living experience* that could be tapped in the silent fellowship of the meeting for worship. "I have found it good to wait and quietly hope for God's salvation," he once wrote, "especially in a time of darkness."¹⁴

Nowhere is this tendency to retreat inwardly (in order to act outwardly) as strong as it was in Scattergood's attempt to discover his mission in life. His journal entries provide the reader with an intimate view of his inner states of mind and the spiritual pain he experienced in his "waiting upon the Lord for divine guidance." Together with an incessant self-doubt over his worthiness "to ask for the Lord's blessing," Scattergood's journal illustrates the quietist attempt to defer wholly to the Inner Light and to interpret daily events as a test of spiritual fortitude:¹⁵

¹³ Thomas Scattergood (hereafter, T.S.), *Journal of the Life and Religious Labors of Thomas Scattergood [1781-1796]* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 43.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25-27. When the recipient of a leading from Christ to minister to other Friends made this calling known in a meeting for worship, his own monthly meeting acknowledged this call by recommending that the individual be recorded as a minister. The quarterly meeting would then give its approval, and the final decision would be made by the yearly meeting. If dissent arose at any stage, the individual would not be allowed to enter the ministry. The cause of Scattergood's spiritual anxiety as recorded here in his journal was due to the fact that some of the elders of his monthly meeting questioned the sincerity of his leading. After nearly two months of consideration, Scattergood, in their presence, rose in a meeting for worship and "proceeded to labour in gospel power and authority so remarkably that when the subject of recommending him was revived, not a dissenting voice was heard." See Nathan Kite, "Thomas Scattergood and His Times," *The Friend* 23 (1848), 56.

12 mo./21/1782: On looking back this past week I find the hand of mercy has been near, but truly I have nothing to boast of. It is admirable to me that such an one as I should be so bold as to venture to instruct others, while I get along so heavily myself. Lord animate me to press forward.

1 mo./17/1783: What wouldst Thou have me to do Lord? When wilt Thou be graciously pleased to favor me with the lifting up of the light of Thy heavenly countenance, and destroy my enemies? Be pleased to preserve me through the close exercise of my soul; manifest Thy will clearly to Thy servant and uphold me in it; enable me to bear, and spare not. O Lord, that I may experience Thy goodness. O that I may be enabled more and more clearly to know and understand wisdom's voice and to follow it even again and again into suffering.

11 mo./29/1791: There is a pang of conflict to be passed through, previous to going forth in a fresh field of labor. The vision may be for an appointed time and this must be waited for: some, by over-anxiety have, it is to be feared, even dared to hasten, or strive to hasten.

5 mo./9/1804: I think I can say that the desire of my soul has been preserved from being a light, windy, or frothy minister; but be favored to wait for a commission sealed; though I know there are times when we must move from very small impressions. It is waiting for and renewedly feeling the touches of the living Light that makes words reach the captive seeds in others.

Scattergood's attempts to reaffirm the leading of the Inner Light in his ministry characterized the quietist approach of waiting in silence for divine inspiration. On one religious journey through western Pennsylvania, in 1787, Scattergood claimed to have visited seven successive meetings. Although proper etiquette requires an itinerant minister to stand and speak at these meetings, offering at least the good wishes of his home meeting, Scattergood records that he had "no message divinely given" to him, and so he sat through all of these meetings in "absolute silence."¹⁶ Often this quietness raised further questions within Scattergood over his worthiness to minister to other Friends. And yet his desperation only compelled the Philadelphia Quaker to a more intense, inward search for his divine purpose in life. He discloses these feelings in a letter to his wife in the mid-1780s:

When I look back and remember what I have read of the ancient worship [of the early Quakers] what clearness and demonstrations they witnessed,

¹⁶ T S, *Journal*, 2 mo /12/1787

how they were favored in meeting to stand forth and preach the Word of Life and Salvation to their own comfort and the comfort of others, how am I alarmed with the fear that I am not rightly called forth. I feel so poor, needy and strip'd from day to day, yea day and night which has led me to examine my commission . . . I have some times to summon up all the united force I am capable of, to believe in hope even against my hope that my gracious master intends to bring forth something in His praise and my furtherance in the way of life.

I hope I did hear His language in my own land: "Go in this thy Might!" Tho small it appeared to be then and still remains to be now, I am strengthened to believe that the Lord whom I desire to serve in the Gospel of His Dear Love is able to change the dispensation if consistent with His Will; even change from a state of [spiritual] poverty to a state of true [spiritual] Richness.¹⁷

Throughout his religious travels Scattergood continued to question his mission in life and to interpret his daily spiritual experiences as divine guidance in his quest. In 1794 when he set sail for a spiritual journey to visit Friends in the British Isles, Scattergood believed he had discovered that divine mission. He did not know what role he would play in the lives of these British Quakers, nor did he question the leading of the Inner Light; rather he simply "enter[ed] with cheerfulness and dedication into the Lord's service."¹⁸

Scattergood's travels eventually took him to Ackworth, a Quaker boarding school in England. The experience left him with "several tendering opportunities among children" and a divine inspiration "to establish a similar school" upon his return to Pennsylvania.¹⁹ Indeed the Quaker minister was instrumental in establishing the Westtown School on the Ackworth model: a coeducational boarding school, set in a rural environment and exclusively for Quaker youth.²⁰ He also spent two years teaching at Westtown, a decision he claimed was made out of "an apprehension of religious duty and because of my commitment to the religiously guarded

¹⁷ T S to wife, Sarah, 8 mo /2/1785, "Letters of Thomas Scattergood, 1781-1795," typescript, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library

¹⁸ T S to mother, Rebecca, 6 mo /5/1794, "Letters of T S "

¹⁹ T S to son, Joseph, 8 mo /1/1799, T S to wife, Sarah, 8 mo /21/1799, T S to wife, Sarah, 9 mo /2/1799, "Letters of T S "

²⁰ J William Frost, "Years of Crisis and Separation Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1790-1860" in John M Moore, ed , *Friends in the Delaware Valley Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, 1681-1981* (Haverford, Pa , 1981), 86-89

education for the youth of our religious Society.”²¹ Three years later, in 1809, Scattergood strengthened this commitment by becoming an overseer of the Friends Public Schools, a position that would enable him to supervise the proceedings of all the Quaker schools in Philadelphia.²² After searching a lifetime for his particular ministry, Thomas Scattergood, at almost sixty years of age, discovered his divinely inspired mission in educational reform, a mission that began with his involvement in the religiously guarded Friends’ schools but which eventually extended to non-Quaker charity schooling.

The Quaker-founded schools of the city had advocated a religiously guarded education from their beginnings in the seventeenth century. This education aimed to shield Quaker youth from influences contrary to the practices of Friends, such as music, drama, the fine arts, and texts that might challenge Quaker doctrine. Implicit in this system was the attempt to isolate the children of Friends from those non-Quaker youths who were also educated by the Society, most notably the poor and blacks. Accordingly, a “religiously guarded” education meant an “exclusively Quaker” education for turn-of-the-century Friends, who believed it necessary if the Society was to propagate itself as a religious body. Although this system had proved successful at the primary school level, increasing concern arose among early nineteenth-century Philadelphia Quakers that such a religiously guarded education could not be sustained through secondary school. Friends considered the oversight of, or teaching in, a religiously guarded secondary school to be a ministry they were called to by the leading of the Inner Light—and one dearly needed in turn-of-the-century Philadelphia. Involvement in charity schooling came from the same inspiration.

Many turn-of-the-century Friends participated in urban charity schooling because they viewed it as an expression of practical piety inspired by the Inner Light, an expression that reflected the Society’s assumption that God’s love was universal, that it united all individuals of the human race. This Quaker belief in the universality of the doctrine of Light was confirmed for Quaker quietists by the Scripture in John 1:9: “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

²¹ T S, *Journal*, 459-61

²² Grace Wheeler, “Overseers, 1800-1827,” in William Penn Charter School, *Better Than Riches A Tricentennial History of the William Penn Charter School* (Philadelphia, 1987), 106-8

This passage had been quoted so often by the early Friends that it was called the "Quaker Text" of the bible. Acting on this principle, eighteenth-century Friends believed they could appeal to that Inner Light in each person, reach it, and set in motion a process of transformation from within, regardless of age, sex, or race. But this could only happen if they retreated inwardly for divine guidance.

Quaker humanitarianism was better known as "answering that of God in everyone," a phrase adopted by the quietists from the founder of Quakerism himself, George Fox.²³ It compelled Friends to retreat inwardly to appeal for divine inspiration, only to return to the world so that they could improve the society in which they lived. The Quaker reformers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were inspired by their belief in this personal experience of the Inner Light of Christ, their benevolent activities being done in God's will and not in their own will. And this would have been true of individual Friends, like Scattergood, as well as for groups like the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children, which, in 1808, founded the Adelphi School for the poor and black children of Philadelphia. Under these circumstances, the Quaker benevolence of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be viewed as the reemergence of a humanitarian impulse that had existed in the theology of Friends from their establishment. This impulse simply resurfaced as the need for reform arose in the nineteenth century. For early nineteenth-century quietists who lived in urban Philadelphia, like Thomas Scattergood, charity school reform became an expression of this humanitarian impulse.

Journal entries and correspondence dating back to the 1780s indicate that Scattergood had a concern for the welfare of the poor and for blacks, as well as for youth in general. His concern for the poor stemmed from the "demoralizing influences attending the situation of that class."²⁴ Since he owned a lot on Peg Street in the Northern Liberties, a working class district of Philadelphia, Scattergood was "especially qualified to feel for

²³ See George Fox, *Journal*, 263. Fox encouraged his fellow Quaker ministers to act as models for others: "this is the word of the Lord God to you all and a charge to you all in the presence of the living God: be Patterns; be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone."

²⁴ T.S., *Journal*, 459.

and sympathize with the poor, among whom he was a frequent visitor." These visits afforded him a good opportunity to observe the "idle habits and neglected education of their children, which he saw led them into many immoral practices."²⁵ However, Scattergood's concern for blacks was especially great. He viewed the city's blacks as his "beloved friends" and those who were most intimately connected with his household as "the Black people in the family." His "religious experiences with some of the poor negroes" motivated Scattergood's belief that "the visitation of God's love was towards them" and that as a Quaker minister it was his responsibility to "preach the universal gospel of Jesus Christ, their suffering Lord and Saviour" among them.²⁶ Accordingly, Scattergood often spoke of his concern for the education of negro children at his own monthly meeting, the closest Quaker meeting geographically to the Northern Liberties. This humanitarian sentiment, along with Scattergood's efforts, appeared to have won over the sympathies of some Friends, many of whom gave the Quaker minister money to be appropriated for the education of the poor at his discretion.²⁷ Moreover, the Quaker minister was sensitive to the "temptations which [all] youth are liable unto." He understood that the "lust of the flesh and the pride of life" were vulnerabilities that tempted all young people, regardless of

²⁵ Ibid., 460

²⁶ Ibid., 83-84, see also T S to wife, Sarah, 7 mo/20/1784, "Letters of T S", and T S to Martha Allinson, 10 mo/21/1793, "Letters of Martha Allinson, 1792-1804," typescript, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library

²⁷ See William Evans and Thomas Evans, *Memoirs of Thomas Scattergood* (London, 1845), 440. To be certain, Scattergood was a product of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although he may have been sympathetic to the plight of the poor and of the blacks he, like other Quakers of the period, believed in segregation. Friends did not invite the poor or the blacks to join their religiously guarded schools, nor did they encourage them to join their monthly meetings. In part this segregationist attitude can be attributed to the Quaker desire to separate themselves from non-Quaker influences, but there are those Quaker historians, like Edwin Bronner, who maintain that an elitist attitude combined with a fear of miscegenation also motivated their behavior towards these groups. Accordingly, Scattergood viewed his work for the poor and the blacks as a form of social outreach, inspired by the leading of the Inner Light. This is why he could, with a clear conscience, support both the religiously guarded education of Quaker youth and the education of the poor and the blacks. He was not bearing a testimony for the unconditional equality of the human race. Society had not yet become that progressive, nor had the Religious Society of Friends. Still, his bias can be considered an unconscious "prejudice" that evolved from the social conventions of the time. Regardless of his motivation for supporting two distinctly different school systems, one thing is clear. Thomas Scattergood possessed a strong concern for the welfare of youth in general, rich or poor, black or white, Quaker or non-Quaker.

their backgrounds, and the “licentiousness of manners so sorrowfully prevalent” in early-nineteenth-century Philadelphia intensified his concern for the youth of the city.²⁸

Scattergood’s concern for youth in general and for the black and poor youth of Philadelphia in particular inspired him to address their plight by directing his energies into the founding of a school for their betterment. Accordingly, in September 1807 the quietist minister called a meeting among Philadelphia Quakers to “consider the propriety of forming an association to carry out [this] benevolent project.” One month later, in October, twenty-four of these Quakers formed a corporation known as the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children, which, in 1808, established the Adelphi School.²⁹ Enlarged one year later to accommodate the increasing enrollment, the school was relocated in the Northern Liberties on a block of land donated by Thomas Scattergood himself.³⁰ The aim of this school is explicitly stated in its constitution:

The Idle habits and neglected education of a numerous class of poor children within the City of Philadelphia and its vicinity, suffered as they have been to range at will the streets and wharves, exciting one another to every species of vice and immorality have been long a cause of painful regret to the well disposed and benevolent mind, more especially as it seemed to be an evil which did not readily admit of a remedy . . . [since] the evils that are daily exhibited in the city and suburbs of Philadelphia

²⁸ T S to son, Joseph, 11 mo/24/1788, “Letters of T S”, see also *Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting* (Northern District), 7 mo/22/1784, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College

²⁹ T S, *Journal*, 460–61

³⁰ Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children, *A Sketch of the Origins and Progress of the Adelphi School* (Philadelphia, 1810), 12 The original location of the Adelphi School was the north side of Winslow Street, below Jacoby and 13th Street The school was relocated in 1809 in the Northern Liberties on Peg Street and was conducted in a two-story plain brick house containing two large rooms, one on each floor This school could hold 300 students When it was first opened there were only 90 students in attendance By January 1809, after it moved to Peg Street, enrollment had climbed to 200 Attendance figures reveal that the Adelphi School achieved its greatest enrollment of 582 students in 1814—two years after it began to admit girls Enrollment dropped to 400 a year later and remained at that level until it closed in 1818 By that time, state law adequately provided for the instruction of the poor For enrollment figures, see Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children, *The Origins and Proceedings of the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children* (Philadelphia, 1839), 4–5

result from a want of suitable instruction among the children of the poor and, believing that great advantages would arise to them and to the community from a better education, we have associated for the purpose of accomplishing that important end—by instituting and supporting a school upon a plan nearly similar to that so successfully employed by Joseph Lancaster in London.³¹

The Adelphi School would provide the poor and the black children of Philadelphia with a means of social betterment by providing a fundamental education that would enable them to sustain themselves, free of crime, in an urban environment. This form of benevolence was rooted in the eighteenth-century Quaker tradition of “helping others to help themselves.” In so doing, Friends carried out their moral responsibility to the larger society. One point must be made clear: turn-of-the-century quietists, like Thomas Scattergood, acted on their own leading and on their own terms. Despite the fact that the proposed charity school would benefit non-Quakers, it would be supervised and administered exclusively by Friends. This point is illustrated by the association’s selection of Lancastrian pedagogy to govern the school and by the composition of the association itself, which was exclusively Quaker.

During his spiritual journey to Great Britain, Thomas Scattergood learned from English Friends about Joseph Lancaster’s monitorial school for poor children.³² The son of a London sieve-maker who lived in a working-class section of London, Lancaster opened a school for the poor children of Southwark in 1798. Although his school became very popular, he lacked the financial resources to accommodate more students. Consequently, he adopted the idea of having the older pupils tutor the younger ones in order to defray teaching costs, and he turned to the philanthropic Quakers of London in order to meet his operating expenses. In 1803, with the publication of his *Improvements in Education as it Relates to the Industrious Classes of the Community*, Lancaster experienced immediate fame and began lecturing throughout the British Isles.³³

³¹ Ibid., 3-4

³² Margaret H. Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels, the Story of the Quakers in America* (New York, 1969), 141

³³ See Carl F. Kaestle, ed., *Joseph Lancaster and the Monitorial School Movement: A Documentary History* (New York, 1973), 3; David Hogan, “The Market Revolution and Disciplinary Power: Joseph Lancaster and the Psychology of the Early Classroom System,” *History of Education Quarterly* 29 (Fall 1989), 385

Not only did the success of this pedagogy impress Scattergood, but the fact that Lancaster was a member of the Society of Friends endeared the Englishman to him. Lancaster, like Scattergood, exemplified the socially responsible Friend who was "reaching out beyond his own [religious] membership and demonstrating that he was an integrated part of the society in which he lived."³⁴ The fact that Lancaster advocated a nondenominational approach to religious instruction in his schools was appropriate. After all, Scattergood and his association were not concerned with winning converts to the Quaker religion; rather they were attempting to fulfill what they believed to be a divinely inspired moral obligation to eliminate a social ill: the ignorance of poor and black children.³⁵ Although Quaker doctrine would be encouraged in Friends' schools in order to propagate the membership of the Society of Friends, nothing more than the "scriptural instruction" of the Lancasterian system would be encouraged for the poor and black youth of the Adelphi school. To teach anything more than the "laws of morality, the obligations of virtue and the more obvious truths according to the Bible . . . [would] not be doing justice to the motives and views of this association."³⁶

Additionally, the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children (hereafter referred to as the Adelphi Society) was an exclusively Quaker organization that governed by Quaker business practices and maintained strong ties to the schools operated exclusively by and for the children of Friends. This fact is crucial in understanding the distinction that other historians have failed to make between early nineteenth-century and mid-nineteenth-century Quaker humanitarianism. Those previous interpretations have been based on the assumption

³⁴ Lancaster joined the Society of Friends in the 1790s, and though he was disowned in 1814 for his fiscal irresponsibility he continued to circulate among Friends

³⁵ Hogan, "Lancaster and the Organization of Schooling," 13-14

³⁶ Philadelphia Association of Friends, *A Sketch of the Adelphi School*, 14, Kaestle, *Lancaster: A Documentary History*, 18. It is interesting to note that Lancaster reprinted a catechism by an eighteenth-century Quaker by the name of Freame for use in his school in Southwark, London. This catechism was entitled *Freame's Scripture Instruction* and contained only the language of the Bible. However, in his work *Improvements in Education as it Relates to the Industrious Classes of the Community*, Lancaster denies the teaching of any Quaker influence whatsoever at the school, stating that his aim was "not to promote the religious principles of any particular sect" but rather to "instruct youth in useful learning, in the leading and uncontroverted principles of Christianity and to train them in the practice of moral habits, conducive to their future welfare, as virtuous men and useful members of society."

that Quaker benevolence was a phenomenon limited to those evangelical members of the Society who favored close cooperation with other religious groups in their reform efforts. This is clearly not the case with Scattergood or the charity school organization he founded.

According to the bylaws of the Adelphi Society, the "corporation shall consist of no more than forty-five persons who shall all of them be members of the Religious Society of Friends." The reasons for this limitation included the desire to "ensure harmony and concert of action upon which all successful organizations are based," to avoid "inconveniences often resulting from too large a body," and, finally, because "fewer people, judiciously chosen, would be more genuinely committed to the objectives of the organization."³⁷ In other words, the founding members of the association, like their Quaker forefathers, realized the efficiency and value of a tribalistic network. Their goal could be best achieved when the membership had a familiarity with, and appreciation for, the religious mission directing their actions. This does not mean that the membership of the Adelphi Society was exclusively quietist. Quakers from both religious orientations composed the group: evangelical and quietist, as well as those with a rationalist predisposition in their theology. The theological differences that would eventually divide them would not prevail for over a decade.

Quaker historians agree that the period following the American Revolution was a time of increasing tension within the Society of Friends. The delicate balance of mysticism and evangelicalism that had been achieved by the early Friends came to be threatened by three tendencies of thought that emerged within Quakerism: (1) increasing evangelical stress on the leading of Scripture as the primary religious authority; (2) a counter emphasis on the Inner Light as the sole basis of religious authority, in an attempt to reaffirm the leading of the Light before acting on it; and (3) increasing influence of rationalist religious thought inspired by the American and French revolutions.³⁸ These tendencies remained implicit,

³⁷ Philadelphia Association of Friends, *A Sketch of the Adelphi School*, 4-5

³⁸ Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (London, 1921), 275, Barbour & Frost, *The Quakers*, 169-79. The term "mysticism" is used here to denote a "conscious effort to follow divine guidance." Since this thought stressed the practice of waiting upon the Lord in silence, its practitioners were called "quietists." Evangelicalism, on the other hand, is used here to denote a more outwardly emotional faith, stressing the greater importance of revelation through the leading of the Scriptures rather than simply the Inner Light.

though, because the tensions between mysticism and the evangelical movement were contained by their common emphasis on basic Quaker beliefs.

Whether more mystical or evangelical in their emphasis, all Friends in the late eighteenth century could agree on the immediate and divine inspiration of the human soul, the depravity of the unregenerate natural man, the freedom of the individual will, the universality of Christ's atonement, and the possibility of perfection. They could also agree on certain practical consequences stemming from these beliefs. These included the disparagement of reason and theological education, a prophetic tone in their preaching, a strict moral code, and, most important, a strong emphasis on a humanitarian impulse.³⁹ Consequently, the tensions that existed between the evangelical and quietist approaches did not pose a serious threat to the society until the 1820s when Friends actually began to define in theological terms the points of contention. When this occurred the deepening differences eventually resulted in the Separation of 1827-28 that centered on the question of whether the primary religious authority among Friends should be Scripture, as the evangelicals advocated, or the leading of the Inner Light, as the quietists contended.⁴⁰ At the same time, humanitarian reform impelled many Friends, regardless of their persuasion, to rise above the tensions. All Quaker reformers agreed that the world was an evil place and in need of redemption and that reformation could only originate with the individual, not with society itself.⁴¹ These facts have been overlooked by many historians who have assumed that those nineteenth-century Friends who became involved in benevolence were exclusively evangelical in their theological orientation.

To be sure, it is difficult to identify the evangelicals and quietists, as well as the "rationalist-quietists" (i.e., those Friends who shared the quietist preference for spiritual dependency on the Inner Light, but who also placed a much greater emphasis on reason and scientific observation) who belonged to the Society of Friends in the period from 1790 to 1820. It is not until 1827 with the Hicksite Separation that we can more clearly

³⁹ Frederick B Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York, 1980), 105-9

⁴⁰ Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 274-76

⁴¹ See Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 164-67, John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey A Short History of the Quakers* (London, 1986), 163-71, Jack Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia, 1984), 272-79

distinguish the evangelicals (many of whom become Orthodox) from their quietist (many of whom become Hicksite) counterparts. However, an examination of the journals, writings, and correspondence of the thirty-four members of the Adelphi Society provides some insight into the theological preferences of this group of Friends.

It is clear that there was, indeed, a mixture of theological orientations in the membership of the Adelphi Society⁴² and that the members were able to place their benevolent activities above whatever theological differences may have existed between them (Table 1). A number of these Quakers maintained membership in a variety of other exclusively Quaker reforms, as well as in the five major secular reforms of the period, three of which were originally established by Friends: abolitionism, prison reform, and the Pennsylvania Hospital.⁴³ Out of the thirty-four managers who sat on the Adelphi Society from 1808 to 1818, only three—Charles Allen, Benjamin Kite, and Robert Pitfield—were not involved in any reform beyond charity schooling. Conversely, 65 percent of the managers were involved in at least one of the major Quaker reforms (i.e., Friends Asylum for the Mentally Ill, Friendly Association, Overseers of the Friends Public School, Friends Tract Association, and Westtown Trustees), while 26 percent were involved in two or more Quaker reforms. Similarly, 68 percent of the managers were involved in at least one secular reform and 30 percent were involved in two or more secular reforms. With the exception of Clement Biddle, the quietists appeared to have a clear preference for Quaker reforms and the evangelicals for secular reforms.

Table 1 shows that the early-nineteenth-century Friends who belonged to the Adelphi Society had joined together in a close-knit network of support that was reinforced by common categories of residence, kinship, age, and wealth. Such a tribalistic network was also characteristic of

⁴² Data on life dates and monthly meeting affiliation is taken from the "Dictionary of Quaker Biography," typescript, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library. Data on residence and occupation is taken from *Annual Philadelphia Directory and Register* for the years, 1808-1810. Theological orientation has been determined through the views expressed by the reformers in existing personal correspondence, writings, and journals.

⁴³ Reform involvements taken from the "Dictionary of Quaker Biography" and Peter and Elizabeth Jonitis, "Biographical Vignettes of the Members of the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, 1787-1830," 2-vol. typescript, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library.

Table 1
Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children
(Adelphi Board of Managers), 1808 - 1818

<u>Name</u>	<u>Life Dates</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Theology</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Wealth</u> (\$)	<u>Reform</u>	
							<u>Quaker</u>	<u>Secular</u>
Allen, Charles	1776-1843	33	?	Chestnut	Druggist	5,400	2	0
Biddle, Clement	1778-1856	30	quietist	Middle	Sugar refiner	3,400	2	4
Biddle, John	1763-1815	45	?	Middle	Druggist	2,050	2	0
Conrad, Solomon	1779-1831	29	?	High	Printer	5,000	3	0
Cook, John	1766-1828	42	?	Chestnut	Paper hanger	6,000	3	0
Davis, Isaac R	1783-1849	25	?	U Delaware	Merchant	4,400	2	0
Donaldson, Isaac	?	?	?	L Delaware	China merchant	?	1	1
Elhot, Daniel	1783-1823	28	?	Walnut	Druggist	?	4	2
Evans, John C	1769-1850	39	?	Mulberry	Carpenter	735	2	0
Ferns, Benjamin	1780-1867	28	ration / quiet	High	Clockmaker	2, 275	3	1
Haines, Reuben	1786-1831	22	evangelical	High	Gentleman	4,344	1	6
Haydock, Eden	1779-1818	29	?	?	Painter	?	2	1
Haydock, Samuel	?	?	quietist	Chestnut	Plumber	2,700	3	2
Kimber, Emmor	1774-1850	34	ration / quiet	High	Teacher	?	2	0
Kite, Benjamin	1754-1838	54	?	High	Bookseller	6,550	1	0
Maule, Israel W	1779-1828	29	evangelical	?	Lumber merchant	?	1	4
Morris, Isaac W	1770-1831	38	?	No Libert	Cordwainer	475	2	0
Morris, Israel W	1778-1870	30	?	Dock	Merchant	3,400	2	2
Morton, John Jr	1776-1812	32	?	Dock	Merchant	10,241	2	1
Parke, James P	1783-1836	25	?	Chestnut	Gentleman	5,400	3	2
Parnish, Joseph	1779-1840	29	ration / quiet	L Delaware	Physician	5,700	4	5
Paul, John	1772-1844	36	?	High	Shopkeeper	?	4	4
Paul, Joseph M	1779-1829	29	?	Mulberry	Merchant	1,300	3	4
Penrose, William	?	?	?	Southwark	Merchant	105	2	3
Pickering, Elihu	1776-1849	32	?	?	Teacher	?	1	1
Pitfield, Robert	1788-1866	20	?	?	Merchant	?	1	0
Roberts, Charles	1783- ?	25	?	North	Gentleman	3,100	2	3
Scattergood, Jos	1788-1856	20	quietist	No Libert	Druggist	500	2	0
Scattergood, Tho	1748-1814	60	quietist	No Libert	Minister	?	3	1
Sharpless, Joshua	?	?	?	High	Bookbinder	200	1	2
Shreve, Caleb	?	?	?	High	Merchant	?	1	1
Townsend, Charles	?	?	?	Chestnut	Clockmaker	4,100	2	2
Vaux, Roberts	1786-1838	22	evangelical	L Delaware	Gentleman	12,800	3	46
Waln, Nich Jr	1778-1849	31	?	?	?	?	1	1

NOTE: The "Age" category denotes age of a manager at the time of his appointment to the Adelphi Society and was calculated using the life dates found in William W Hinshaw, Index to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Bros. Inc., 1938). "Theology" represents the theological orientation of the individual determined in part by those who became Hicksite (quietist) and those who became Orthodox (evangelical) after the 1827-28 Separation as indicated in Hinshaw. Theological orientation was also determined by the views expressed in existing personal correspondence, writings and journals. Information concerning occupation and residence came from Annual [Philadelphia] City Directories for the years 1808 to 1820. The "Wealth" category denotes the tax rating of the manager according to the existing tax lists for various city wards in the period 1808 to 1818, Philadelphia City Archives. Although wills and probate inventories are the best records for determining the wealth an individual has accumulated over the course of a lifetime, they fail to provide a determination of an individual's wealth at a specific point in time which is critical to the purposes of this study. Instead, tax assessments are a more reliable indicator for the wealth variable and are used above to indicate the worth of all properties, lots buildings (i.e., ranging from dwellings to furnaces to forges), personal belongings of value (i.e., ranging from tools to dogs), ground rents and quit rents. While these tax lists also assess annual income, the percentage of assessments which they represent is so small that the list cannot be considered to measure income precisely. Many of the managers owned more than one lot and had more than one tax rating. Often they owned property outside of the city, which was extremely difficult to compute due to errors by the assessors or tax evasion by the subject. Additionally, existing tax records for the City of Philadelphia, in the period 1810 to 1820 are limited to only eight of the city's fifteen wards. Thus, only the largest assessment, the bulk of which usually represents the value of the taxable residence was used to measure wealth. The "Reform" category indicates the total number of Quaker reforms and secular reforms in which each manager was involved.

eighteenth-century quietists, who sought to limit their contact with the larger, non-Quaker society.⁴⁴ For example, at least 60 percent of the Adelphi members lived in the eastern wards of the city: Upper and Lower Delaware, High, Chestnut, and Walnut. This eastern end of the city bounded the waterfront and the Northern Liberties, the poor and working-class districts where the need for reform was greatest. There is also strong evidence of family kinship among the Adelphi managers. In addition to the father-son relationship of Thomas and Joseph Scattergood, there were four pairs of brothers serving the society: Clement and John Biddle, Eden and Samuel Haydock, Isaac and Israel Morris, and Joseph and John Paul.⁴⁵ Youth was another common characteristic among these reformers.

Although Thomas Scattergood was clearly the eldest member of the Adelphi Society (he was sixty years old at the time he founded the association), the overwhelming majority of members were under forty and the mean age was thirty-two. This was a relatively young group of reformers whose energy and enthusiasm for benevolence represented the idealism of their age. Finally, the Adelphi Society was a largely middle-class association, with incomes of \$6,000 or less each year. However, the association was also comprised of reformers with more modest incomes as well as very wealthy individuals.⁴⁶ This diversity of wealth challenges the social-control theory which assumes that all Quaker reformers were upwardly mobile members of the middle class.

From the standpoint of its exclusively Quaker composition and tribalistic nature, as well as the considerable numbers of exclusively Quaker or Quaker-initiated reforms in which its members were involved, the Adelphi Society can be considered a continuation of the stream of philanthropy that characterized eighteenth-century Quaker benevolence; it is not the interdenominational humanitarianism for which Quaker evangelicals

⁴⁴ See Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (New York, 1963), 63-108.

⁴⁵ Names of parents, siblings, and other relatives found in William W. Hinshaw, *Index to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting* (Ann Arbor, 1939).

⁴⁶ To gain a better understanding of the wealth of these reformers, sextiles have been established using the assessment values determined by Robert J. Gough, "Towards a Theory of Class and Social Conflict: A Social History of Wealthy Philadelphians, 1775 and 1800," Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977, 116-18. 1st sextile, \$11,600 and up, 2d, \$7,600 to \$11,599, 3d, \$5,400 to \$7,599, 4th, \$4,200 to \$5,399, 5th, \$3,000 to \$4,199, 6th, 0 to \$2,999.

came to be known in the mid-nineteenth century. Moreover, the background and benevolent activities of the Adelphi Society's founder, Thomas Scattergood, illustrate that there were those Philadelphia Quaker reformers who were not influenced by the evangelical thought associated with nineteenth-century Quaker benevolence. Scattergood's example as well as his founding of the Adelphi School reflects a longstanding tradition of Friends who followed the leading of the Inner Light.

The activities of Roberts Vaux also demonstrate that there were evangelical Quaker reformers who acted on the traditional humanitarian impulse inspired by the Inner Light. What separated these evangelicals from their quietist brethren, by 1820, was not theology as much as it was a desire to live in the world and help to reform it in concert with non-Quakers. Often this desire was associated with those Friends who were upwardly mobile in the society.

Quaker historians agree that by the 1820s there was a strong connection between evangelical emphasis, ownership of stock, upward mobility, and participation in commercial enterprises. Indeed, many Quaker evangelicals did possess wealth and the influence that almost always accompanied it.⁴⁷ But it is important to note that Quaker evangelicalism in Philadelphia grew as the result of a concerted effort by these urban elites; it was not the same as the popular movement that infiltrated the better known evangelical denominations like the Baptists and Methodists. Those groups relied heavily on spreading the good word, making converts, and the imposition of a rigid morality across the social order in their attempt to remake the world.⁴⁸ On the other hand, those Philadelphia Quakers who espoused evangelicalism did so because their social and psychological needs were not being met by Quaker quietism which, by the 1820s, had

⁴⁷ According to Frederick B Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, many urban Quaker merchants on both sides of the Atlantic espoused evangelicalism as it emphasized close cooperation with other religious denominations in a common effort to make the nation a Christian civilization. This tendency has prompted historians like Davis, Kaestle, and Hogan to maintain that Quaker involvement in benevolent concerns was inspired by those wealthy Friends who adopted the evangelical doctrine. This is an easy assumption to make since the historiography that predated their interpretations supports this point.

⁴⁸ See William G McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, 1978), 98-140. McLoughlin suggests that groups such as the Wesleyan Methodists, the New England Congregationalists, and the Middle Atlantic states Presbyterians reached such an evangelical consensus by the 1820s.

become spiritually lethargic.⁴⁹ They wanted to circulate in the larger society and accept some of its values, and yet they belonged to a religion that emphasized the rejection of that society and its values. While they wanted to revitalize their religion, the only real theological difference between these Friends and their quietist brethren was the greater emphasis that the evangelicals placed on Scripture, an emphasis they shared with other non-Quaker denominations and one that would allow Quaker evangelicals to unite in humanitarian reform with other Christian groups.⁵⁰

Although a common belief in the infallibility of Scripture as a source for revealing God's intentions for human beings inspired evangelicals of all denominations to undertake reform, Quaker evangelicals interpreted the methods of reform quite differently than other Protestant groups. Where the latter group sought to encourage Christian morality by imposing rigid rules (temperance, education by rote, Bible reading, and sexual restraint) across the social order, Quaker evangelicals stressed that morality could only grow out of an experience with the divine spirit. This was quite a different matter from imposing rules on fallen people who had no such experience.⁵¹ After all, Quaker evangelicals did not entirely reject the Inner Light, they simply placed less emphasis on it than did the quietists. This was the case with Roberts Vaux. Best remembered for his work in creating the free public school system in Philadelphia, he was "evangelical" insofar as he claimed that an "understanding of scripture was the wellspring of life unto him that hath it."⁵² He also moved within a circle of evangelically oriented Friends who upheld as fundamental doctrines the "divinity and mediatorial sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour

⁴⁹ Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 165-66

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 158-59 Prior to the 1820s all Friends were content to accept Quaker theologian Robert Barclay's view of Scripture as a "secondary authority" to direct inward inspiration in the soul. Still, Barclay noted that Scripture was written under the inspiration of the divine spirit and, hence, the essential truths contained in the Old and New Testaments are infallible to the Christian faith. Thus, for Friends, the Scriptures were the only suitable outward standard by which controversies among Christians could be settled. They were willing for all their doctrines and practices to be tested against it until the 1820s when the quietists began to place a greater emphasis on the Inner Light and the evangelicals on Scripture.

⁵¹ H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville, 1986), 13

⁵² Roberts Vaux quoted in Thomas Pettit, "Memoirs of Roberts Vaux" in *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 4 (1840), 126-27

Jesus Christ and the value of the Holy Scripture.”⁵³ But this was the extent of his evangelicalism.

Vaux’s biographer, Thomas Petit, suggests that Vaux did indeed appeal to the Inner Light for inspiration in his benevolent activities. Writing shortly after the Quaker philanthropist’s death in 1836, Petit maintains that “in all endeavors to advance the welfare of his fellow men, Roberts Vaux was sincerely affected by the awful consciousness of responsibility to the Almighty; and it was to His Holy Spirit that he constantly applied for aid and encouragement in his active charity. His reverence for the Giver of all good was so deeply seated in his heart that it evidently influenced his ordinary habits and deportment.”⁵⁴ Indeed, Vaux’s admiration for the early Quakers rested on his respect for those “alienated, non-conforming individuals” who were, by his own admission, “divinely-inspired by the Inner Light of Christ in their drive for moral reform.” For Vaux, Quakers such as the eccentric abolitionist Benjamin Lay, the educational and spiritual reformer Anthony Benezet, and the founder of the Holy Experiment, William Penn, were the “true carriers of morality.”⁵⁵ These Quaker forefathers and their humanitarian activities served as role models for Vaux, who entered benevolent reform for the purpose of “placing the institutions of society upon the broad and sure foundation of the Christian religion.”⁵⁶

⁵³ See *Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes (Western District)*, 12 mo/19/1827, 9 mo/15/1830, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library. Roberts Vaux (hereafter, R V) transferred his membership from the Northern District Monthly Meeting to the Western District in 1814. Here, at Twelfth Street meeting, he became associated with some of the most reform-minded and evangelically oriented Friends. Vaux’s connection with this meeting would inevitably lead him into the cross currents of the Hicksite Schism of 1827–28. See Thomas McClintock to William Poole, Feb. 1827, quoted in its entirety in H. Larry Ingle, “The Hicksite Die is Cast: A Letter of Thomas McClintock, February 1827,” *Quaker History* 75 (Fall 1986), 119.

⁵⁴ Petit, “Memoirs,” 127–28.

⁵⁵ R V to James P. Parke, Aug. 31, 1812, Vaux Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter, HSP). R V used history to remind nineteenth-century Quaker reformers of the legacy of humanitarianism bestowed on them by their Quaker ancestors. To this end, he wrote two essays on William Penn, “A Discourse on the Founder” (1827) and “A Memoir on the locality of the Great Treaty between Penn and the Indian Natives in 1682” (1826) that he delivered at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. R V also wrote two books—*Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandysford* (Philadelphia, 1815) and *Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet* (Philadelphia, 1817)—lauding these reform-minded Quakers for their humanitarian activities in abolitionism and education.

⁵⁶ R V, *Notices of the Original and Successive Efforts to Improve the Discipline of the Prison at Philadelphia and to Reform the Criminal Code of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1826), 5.

Vaux's own belief in the Inner Light doctrine also served to strengthen a humanitarian impulse triggered by the death of his sister Susannah, his only sibling, in 1812. His grieving lasted for nearly two years, a period in which he "turned inward" in search of a divinely guided purpose in life.⁵⁷ In 1815 Vaux emerged from his depression resolved to retire from active business and devote his life to helping others.⁵⁸

Although Roberts Vaux was the most noted evangelical Quaker reformer in early nineteenth-century Philadelphia, he had "no taste for theological controversy" and did "very little writing on the subject."⁵⁹ What does distinguish him as an evangelical Quaker reformer is his elite social position and the interdenominational reform societies with which he became associated.

After completing a formal, classical education at the Friends Academy in 1804, Vaux entered the counting house of John Cooke, a leading Quaker merchant of Philadelphia and later a fellow member of the Adelphi Society. Under Cooke's tutelage, Vaux acquired a facility for commercial enterprise. After devoting his energies to trade and finance over the next decade, Vaux retired from a lucrative business career in order to immerse himself in benevolent reform. The young Quaker's mercantile interests and personal wealth would easily support him in this avocation. By 1820 he had accumulated real estate worth \$2,800, and the total value of his estate at his death in 1838 amounted to \$75,000.⁶⁰ As a member of Philadelphia's economic and social elite, Vaux believed that civic institutions must be administered by the more enlightened members of society—regardless of religious denomination—in order to promote the general welfare.

Benevolence for Vaux was the responsibility of the affluent, the educated, and the younger members of society, those "suitable persons of

⁵⁷ See letters of James P. Parke to R. V., May to Sept. 1813, Vaux Papers, HSP. This correspondence reveals the deep depression Vaux experienced after his sister's death. Despite Parke's attempts to cheer him up and encourage him into "useful activity," Vaux evidently fell into poor health. Parke's frequent suggestion to "turn inward" for a solution suggests their common belief in the Inner Light.

⁵⁸ See Joseph J. McCadden, *Education in Pennsylvania and Its Debt to Roberts Vaux, 1801-1835* (Philadelphia, 1937), 124-26, and Pettit, "Memoirs," 4, 24-25.

⁵⁹ Pettit, "Memoirs," 127.

⁶⁰ For Vaux's wealth see Robert Doherty, *The Hicksite Separation: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Schisms in Early Nineteenth Century America* (New Brunswick, 1967), 119, *Memoirs and Autobiographies of Some of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1846), 64.

means in the vigor of life and intellect who will yield some portion of their time to needful details.”⁶¹ By virtue of their social privilege, in particular their education and wealth, this elite should feel compelled to accept the responsibility for benevolent reform, as they were the *natural leaders* of society. They were more capable of operating within the “domain of reason and humanity” in their activities than the common person or the disadvantaged who should be the beneficiaries of the reform efforts. This secular view of social justice freed Vaux from the religiously guarded bias that restrained his quietist brethren in their reform associations and inspired his hope that he not be “altogether insensible to the privileges which [he] enjoy[ed].” Instead, by adopting the cause of benevolent reform Roberts Vaux believed that he would be able “to prove [his] privileges.”⁶²

Few individuals, Quaker or non-Quaker, involved themselves in benevolent reform to the extent that Vaux did, particularly during the period from 1809 to 1836. As secretary of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, Vaux campaigned against the extension of that institution to Illinois and Missouri as well as against continuation of the international slave trade. Impressed by his efforts, the American Anti-Slavery Society invited the Philadelphia Quaker to preside over its first convention in 1833.⁶³ Acting as the secretary of the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, Vaux supervised the construction of Eastern State Penitentiary and implemented a progressive system of penal discipline based on solitary confinement.⁶⁴ Between 1813 and 1834 he served as president of the Pennsylvania Society for Discouraging the Use of Ardent Spirits, manager of the Friends’ Asylum for the Mentally Ill, and as a lobbyist at both the state and national levels for the Philadelphia Committee on Indian Affairs. In fact, Vaux’s reform

⁶¹ R V to J Francis Fisher, June 24, 1829, in Alan M Zachary, “Social Disorder and the Philadelphia Elite Before Jackson,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter, *PMHB*) 99 (1975), 307

⁶² R V to James P Parke, Aug 7, 1806, Vaux Papers, HSP

⁶³ R V to Frederick Tuckett, April 26, 1835, *ibid*

⁶⁴ See R V, *Notices of the Original and Successive Efforts to Improve the Discipline of the Prison at Philadelphia and to Reform the Criminal Code of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1826), *Letter on the Penitentiary System of Pennsylvania Addressed to William Roscoe, Esquire* (Philadelphia, 1827), *Reply to Two Letters of William Roscoe, Esquire of Liverpool, on the Penitentiary System of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1827)

activities totalled forty-nine involvements, most of which were headed by interdenominational benevolent associations comprised of urban elites.⁶⁵

Vaux's founding of the Board of Controllers and Directors of Philadelphia's Public Schools was inspired by his larger humanitarian concern for the urban poor. The migration of rural Pennsylvanians to Philadelphia in search of employment combined with increased foreign immigration swelled the city's work force and, inevitably, led to high unemployment. By the 1820s 1,500 of Philadelphia's 161,410 inhabitants required public assistance.⁶⁶ Idleness, unemployment, and poverty gave rise to a growing incidence of crime among adults as well as juveniles. Vaux mourned the negative social effects of industrial growth. He believed that great cities like Philadelphia were becoming "sores on the body politic, causing the problems of illiteracy, crime, poverty and rioting."⁶⁷ He bemoaned the fact that institutions that might prevent these ills were not being supported or, worse, were mismanaged. Public schooling was not compulsory, and indigent children were allowed to "wander about the streets and wharves, becoming adept in the arts of begging, skillful in petty thefts and familiar with obscene and profane language." Under these circumstances, their adult lives would be characterized by the "perpetuation of the highest grades of crime or to abuse society by becoming the most worthless paupers."⁶⁸

Vaux's decision to enter charity schooling was conditioned by his belief in the Inner Light. He saw the Light as a universal "moral principle" in all people, regardless of their age, one that was malleable, being sensitive to good as well as evil influences. Accordingly, Vaux argued that it was imperative to "commence the business of moral and intellectual instruction at the earliest practicable moment" in order to "excite, foster and guide the moral principle before evil example, pernicious habits or corrupt practices shall have polluted it."⁶⁹ If cultivated properly, through a "diffu-

⁶⁵ For a complete list of all Vaux's reform activities, see Peter and Elizabeth Jonitis, "Biographical Vignettes," 2 165-69

⁶⁶ William A. Sullivan, *The Industrial Worker in Pennsylvania, 1800-1840* (Harrisburg, 1955), 51; Benjamin J. Klebaner, "The Home Relief Controversy in Philadelphia," *PMHB* 78 (1954), 415, 417

⁶⁷ R V to Gov George Wolf, Oct 9, 1832, Wolf Papers, HSP

⁶⁸ R V, *Fifth Annual Report of the Controllers of the First School District of Pennsylvania*, Feb 21, 1823, 8-9

⁶⁹ R V, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, Feb 15, 1831, 7

sion of knowledge and correct habits," this moral principle would "elevate the character of the individual" enabling him to contribute the "most efficient auxiliaries to the general security and prosperity of society."⁷⁰ If, however, this moral principle was ignored the individual could easily tend toward "idleness, [being] liable to the temptation of crime."⁷¹

Inspired by his faith in the universality of the Inner Light, Roberts Vaux, on February 17, 1817, and eleven others met as a committee to draft a report on the causes and cures of the miseries of the city's poor. Three months later, on May 6, 1817, as a result of this committee's report, the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of the Public Economy (PSPPE) was organized. Three counselors and nine standing committees were elected to complete the business of this society. The largest of these committees was the twelve-member committee on public schools headed by Vaux. It was, by far, the most effective group of PSPPE committees, for it proposed and worked to bring about the passage of the School Law of 1818. Under this law a central Board of Controllers and Directors representing the political wards and boroughs of Philadelphia city and county was established along with a free model school governed by the Lancasterian system of instruction. While this board retained the traditional charity orientation that had characterized eighteenth-century Philadelphia's schooling, it also treated education as a broader social reform.⁷²

The ninety-four men who composed the first Board of Controllers and Directors, from 1818 to 1820, were a fairly heterogeneous group. They differed in occupation, creed, and partisan affiliation, but all of them were bound by a common tradition of active, disinterested philanthropy. Over the next eighteen years they worked to make "public" schooling more widely accessible to the city's poor children.⁷³ If we examine the fourteen Quaker controllers/directors during the same period, more distinct patterns emerge. Most of them tended to mirror Vaux's background (Table 2). Of the six controllers whose theological orientation can be identified, five were evangelicals. Clement Biddle was the only

⁷⁰ R V, *Third Annual Report*, Feb 15, 1821, 5, *Sixth Annual Report*, Feb 13, 1824, 5

⁷¹ R V, *Fourth Annual Report*, Feb 16, 1822, 5

⁷² McCadden, *Education in Pennsylvania*, 233

⁷³ See John Grace and William C Kashatus, "Constructing a Multivariate Analysis of the Controllers and Directors of the Public Schools of Philadelphia, 1818-1820 and 1838-1840," unpublished, 1991

Table 2
Quaker Members of the Board of Controllers and Directors of
Philadelphia's Public Schools, 1818-1820

<u>Name</u>	<u>Life Dates</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Theology</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Wealth</u> (\$)	<u>Reform</u> Quaker / Sec
Ashbridge Wm	1773 1819	45	?	L. Delaware	Merchant	?	0 1
Biddle Clement	1778 1856	40	quietist	I Delaware	Sugar refiner	45 000	2 4
Cleaver Jesse	1759 1819	60	?	No Liberties	Merchant	?	0 1
Cloud Joseph	?	?	?	I Delaware	Sugar refiner	?	1 3
Fell Jonathan	1771 1829	47	?	Walnut	Choc. manufac	?	0 1
Haines, Reuben	1786 1831	32	evangelical	South	Gentleman	55 824	1 6
Paul James	?	?	?	I Delaware	Merchant	?	0 1
Paul Joseph M	1779 1829	39	?	I Delaware	Merchant	?	3 3
Robbins, Samuel	?	?	evangelical	L. Delaware	Merchant	?	0 4
Smith Daniel B	1792 1883	26	evangelical	High	Gentleman	?	2 6
Stewardson Thos	1761 1841	57	evangelical	High	Gentleman	70 000	2 5
Thompson Jonah	1786	32	?	Chestnut	Merchant	?	0 2
Vaux Roberts	1786 1838	32	evangelical	I Delaware	Gentleman	75,000	3 46
Warner William	1779 1829	39	Free Quaker	Walnut	Merchant	?	0 1

NOTE: The Age category denotes age of a Controller at the time of his appointment to the Board and was calculated using the life dates found in William W. Hinshaw, *Index to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting* (Ann Arbor: MI. Edwards Bros. Inc., 1938). Theology represents the theological orientation of the Controller determined in part by those who became Hicksite (quietist) and those who became Orthodox (evangelical) after the 1827-28 Separation as indicated in Hinshaw, *Index to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting*. The theological orientation of the controllers has also been determined through the views expressed by the individual in existing personal correspondence, writings, and journals. Information concerning occupation and residence came from *Annual [Philadelphia] City Directories* for the years 1818 to 1820. Since complete tax assessment records for the various Philadelphia wards do not exist for the 1818 to 1820 period, the wealth category denotes the total estate of the controller according to wills and probate inventories found in the Register of Wills, City of Philadelphia. The Reform category indicates the total number of Quaker reforms and secular reforms in which each Controller was involved.

known quietist. William Warner was a Free Quaker, a group of eighteenth-century Friends disowned by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for their support of the American Revolution in defiance of the Quaker Peace Testimony. Although the Free Quakers shared the quietist preference for inward revelation, they considered themselves to be "free from every design and discipline" of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, their aim being to "pay due regard to the principles of the early Quakers" as they interpreted them.⁷⁴

Also like Vaux, the controllers were moderately affluent. Although tax assessment records are not available for the period 1818 to 1820, the

⁷⁴ See "Free Quaker Address" (1781) quoted in Charles Wetherill, *History of the Free Quakers* (Philadelphia, 1894), 47-49.

wills and probate inventories for three of the controllers indicate that they had accumulated significant wealth: Clement Biddle, \$45,000; Reuben Haines, \$55,824; and Thomas Stewardson, \$70,000. Additionally, nearly all the controllers lived in wards considered to be upper or middle income, with the highest concentration, seven, being located in the Lower Delaware ward.⁷⁵ Although not among the wealthiest wards, it was the home of Roberts Vaux, suggesting that the founder of Philadelphia's public schools recruited the board from his intimates. To be sure, Vaux did associate with many of his neighbors in his other extensive reform involvements. In fact, four of the controllers also belonged to the Adelphi Society—Clement Biddle, Reuben Haines, Joseph M. Paul and Vaux—indicating a traditional commitment to charity school reform and perhaps the reason the controllers adopted the Lancasterian pedagogy for the public schools under their supervision.⁷⁶ And while half of them were involved in at least one Quaker reform effort, all but three—Jesse Cleaver, James Paul, and William Warner—were also involved in secular reforms. Like their evangelical counterparts on the Adelphi Society, those controllers holding an evangelical position expressed a preference for interdenominational reform involvements. Finally, their advanced age (mean of forty-one years) indicates that these Quakers were more established socially and economically than their counterparts on the Adelphi Society.

⁷⁵ See Tom W. Smith, "The Dawn of the Urban Industrial Age: The Social Structure of Philadelphia, 1790-1830," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1980. Smith determines the distribution of the elites' wealth by ward income level, categorizing them into "high," "middle," and "low" income bands. These bands are based on the mean value of residential dwellings in each ward per white male taxable to the city's mean value. This measure takes into account both the values of the real property and the proportion of taxables who were assessed for dwelling units in the period 1770 to 1830. The higher the ratio, the higher the mean real wealth per taxable. Wards with high income ratios were North (2,562), Chestnut (2,331), Walnut (2,303), High (2,004), Middle (1,868), and South (1,321). Wards with middle income ratios were Dock (902), Cedar (862), Upper Delaware (833), No. Liberties (801), Lower Delaware (770), and So. Mulberry (700). Wards with low income ratios were Locust (651), Pine (511), New Market (509), No. Mulberry (368), and Southwark (354).

The difficulty with using residence as an indicator of wealth is that it cannot be considered the most accurate measurement. For example, two reformers living in wards of different concentrations of wealth could conceivably live in houses with the same tax value. Conversely, two reformers living in the same ward might live in homes assessed at either end of the assessment scale. And since many of these reformers owned property in many wards, and outside the city, there could be major distortions when applying this measurement to the wealth of the reformers in this study.

⁷⁶ McCadden, *Education in Pennsylvania*, 233.

The data suggests that the Quaker controllers were among the wealthy merchants and gentlemen-elite of the city. The pattern that emerges here is much more representative of the evangelical reformer who is attuned to the influence of the market revolution and, in this sense, the Board of Controllers can be considered a secular reform for which the mid-nineteenth-century evangelical Friends were better known.

Although historians have suggested that the evangelical movement of the nineteenth century had a strong impact among urban Quakers, they have not been careful to distinguish between the early nineteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. There were those early nineteenth-century Friends, like Thomas Scattergood, who were not evangelical but quietist in their theology. And still others who can be identified as "rationalist/quietists." Their tendency to work exclusively with Friends in charity school reform resembles the traditional Quaker strain of philanthropy that characterized the eighteenth century, not the interdenominational reform organizations of the mid-nineteenth century, for which Quaker evangelicals were better known.

The increasing evangelical emphasis among urban Friends led to divided opinions within Philadelphia Meeting over Quaker involvement in non-Quaker reforms, including charity schooling. In fact, the majority of the Yearly Meeting's membership refused to involve itself in any type of educational reform, as it would detract from the Society's emphasis on a religiously guarded education for its own youth. However, there were those members of the Yearly Meeting, like Roberts Vaux, who did engage in charity school reform. A considerable number of these Friends tended to be evangelical in their theological orientation, but what really distinguished their benevolent activity was a desire to reconcile their piety with their upwardly mobile status, or, as Vaux would say, the desire to "prove one's privileges." Nevertheless, while Vaux might have espoused the evangelical emphasis on Scripture as an important vehicle for revelation, he appears to have been inspired by the same humanitarian impulse that influenced the quietists—the Inner Light of Christ.

The charity school activities of Thomas Scattergood and Roberts Vaux compel historians of education to reconsider the nature of the relationship between Quakers and the common school movement itself. The presence of both Quaker quietists and evangelicals, as well as rationalist/quietists and Free Quakers, on the educational reform societies of the nineteenth century, challenges the contention that common schooling was an exclusively evangelical reform movement that attempted to impose some type

of social control on the children of the urban poor. Instead, the activities and backgrounds of Philadelphia's most prominent Quaker educational reformers reveal that the Inner Light was the inspiration for popular enlightenment.

William Penn Charter School

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