

THE
PENNSYLVANIA
MAGAZINE
OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

VOLUME CXXXV

January 2011

NO. 1

THIS “RENDS IN PIECES ALL THE BARRIERS BETWEEN VIRTUE AND
VICE”: TENNENTISTS, MORAVIANS, AND THE ANTINOMIAN THREAT
IN THE DELAWARE VALLEY

Jared S. Burkholder 5

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE FRIENDS: THE QUAKER AND
TACTICAL CONTEXTS OF ANTHONY BENEZET’S ABOLITIONIST
PUBLISHING

Jonathan D. Sassi 33

PHILADELPHIA NOT PHILANTHROPOLIS: THE LIMITS OF
PENNSYLVANIAN ANTISLAVERY IN THE ERA OF THE HAITIAN
REVOLUTION

James Alexander Dun 73

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS:

*NEWLY AVAILABLE AND PROCESSED COLLECTIONS AT
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA*

Christopher Munden and HSP Archives Staff 103

BOOK REVIEWS

109

BOOK REVIEWS

PENCAK, <i>Pennsylvania's Revolution</i> , by David Waldstreicher	109
VITIELLO, with THOMAS, <i>The Philadelphia Stock Exchange and the City It Made</i> , by Richard Sylla	110
EASTMAN, <i>A Nation of Speechifiers: Making an American Public after the Revolution</i> , by Joseph Rezek	112
OTTER, <i>Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom</i> , by Edward Larkin	113
ROYDHOUSE, <i>Women of Industry and Reform: Shaping the History of Pennsylvania, 1865–1940</i> , by Loretta Sullivan Lobes	114
HARRIS, ed., <i>Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania</i> , by Peter Siskind	115
LONGHURST, <i>Citizen Environmentalists</i> , by Sherie R. Mershon	117

COVER ILLUSTRATION: Title page of Anthony Benezet's pamphlet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, reprinted in London in 1788, four years after Benezet's death. Two articles in this issue the transatlantic networks of the abolition movement: Jonathan Sassi's article on Anthony Benezet's publishing efforts and James Alexander Dun's article on the Pennsylvania Abolition Society during the era of the Haitian Revolution.

Editorial Advisory Committee

BETH BAILEY
Temple University

SETH BRUGGEMAN
Temple University

STEVEN CONN
Ohio State University

ERICA ARMSTRONG DUNBAR
University of Delaware

JOHN FEA
Messiah College

JUDITH GIESBERG
Villanova University

LORI GINZBERG
Pennsylvania State University

ANN N. GREENE
University of Pennsylvania

JOHN HEPP
Wilkes University

RICHARD N. JULIANI
Villanova University

WALTER LICHT
University of Pennsylvania

GUIAN A. MCKEE
University of Virginia

CARLA MULFORD
Pennsylvania State University

MARK E. NEELY JR.
Pennsylvania State University

LESLIE PATRICK
Bucknell University

JUDITH RIDNER
Muhlenberg College

DAVID SCHUYLER
Franklin & Marshall College

ANDREW SHANKMAN
Rutgers University, Camden

Editor

TAMARA GASKELL

Editorial Intern

CHRISTOPHER MUNDEN

THE PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY (ISSN 0031-4587) is published each quarter in January, April, July, and October by THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5699. Periodicals postage paid at Philadelphia, PA and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** send address changes to PMHB, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5699. **Authorization for academic photocopying:** For permission to reuse material, please access www.copyright.com or contact the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400. CCC is a nonprofit organization that provides licenses and registration for a variety of uses. **Submissions:** All communications should be addressed to the editor. E-mail may be sent to pmhb@hsp.org. Manuscripts should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Electronic submissions are welcome. For submission guidelines, visit the *PMHB* web page (<http://www.hsp.org>). The editor does not assume responsibility for statements of fact or of opinion made by the contributors.

Contributors

JARED S. BURKHOLDER is assistant professor of history in the Department of History and Political Science at Grace College (Winona Lake, IN). He specializes in American religious history with a focus on pietist groups, such as the Moravians, the evangelical tradition, and various forms of Anabaptism. Burkholder is co-editor of the forthcoming book, *The Activist Impulse: Exploring the Intersection of Anabaptism and American Evangelicalism* (Wipf and Stock).

JAMES ALEXANDER DUN is a lecturer and departmental representative in the history department at Princeton University. His current book project is *Dangerous Intelligence: Slavery, Saint-Domingue, and the Haitian Revolution in the Early American Republic*.

JOHNATHAN D. SASSI is associate professor of history at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, and a member of the faculty of the PhD program in history at the CUNY Graduate Center. Previous articles of his on revolutionary-era antislavery have been published in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* and the *Journal of Early Modern History*.

The full run of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* is available in electronic format on JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>). Information on both print and electronic subscriptions can be found at <http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=132>. In addition, issues from 1907 through 2005 are available on the Penn State University Libraries' website at <http://publications.libraries.psu.edu/eresources/pmhb>. Both sites can also be accessed from the Historical Society's website, at <http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=68>. Selected issues and annual bound volumes are available. Query editor for availability and price.



*This “rends in Pieces all the
Barriers between Virtue and Vice”:
Tennentists, Moravians, and the
Antinomian Threat in the
Delaware Valley*

IN THE SUMMER OF 1745, Gilbert Tennent, one of the middle colonies' leading revivalist preachers, was preparing a sermon in his Philadelphia study during a fierce thunderstorm, when a bolt of lightning struck the house and sent a surge of electricity through his body, blowing out the soles of his shoes and melting the buckles.¹ Although Tennent would later explain this frightening experience as a random act

I would like to thank the Pietism Studies Group, which meets each year in conjunction with the American Historical Association, for inviting me to present a paper on this material for the 2008 annual meeting in Washington, DC. This article is a revised version of that presentation delivered as “Anglo-Moravians and Tennentist Propaganda: The Nature of Moravian–New Light Relations in the Delaware Valley, 1741–1748.” I am also indebted to Paul Peucker and Lanie Graf for their assistance at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Lisa Jacobson at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, as well as several people who have reviewed and offered comments on this piece. Among them are Craig Atwood, Ned Landsman, and Mark Norris. This article is much improved because of comments I received from these individuals and those of an anonymous reviewer. I am, however, solely responsible for those deficiencies that remain.

¹ Gilbert Tennent (1703–1764) was arguably the most significant revivalist in the mid-Atlantic colonies. He was instrumental in creating a temporary split with “Old Side” Presbyterians in 1741 and best known for his controversial 1739 sermon, “The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry.”

THE PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY
Vol. CXXXV, No. 1 (January 2011)

of God, Moravians in Philadelphia interpreted the lightning bolt as a specific demonstration of divine “warning” thrown down on one of their most vocal “enemies.”² In fact, according to a Reformed opponent of the Moravians, the leader of the whole Moravian enterprise, Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, had predicted as much three years earlier.³ Although coming after the fires of the Great Awakening had cooled, the Moravian interpretation of Tennent’s encounter with a bolt of lightning is testament to debates that surged to the fore during the Great Awakening and that revolved around Moravian activity in the Delaware Valley.⁴

The Moravians of the eighteenth century were the theological descendants of the *Unitas Fratrum* or “United Brethren.” As a remnant of the followers of Jan Hus, the “Unity” faced legal prosecution under Catholic authority and fled north from the region of Moravia. Finding safety in Saxony on the estate of Zinzendorf, a nobleman with a pietist orientation, the tradition was revived there in 1727 in a community they called “Herrnhut.” Moravians began visiting Pennsylvania in 1736 and established the administrative center of Bethlehem, along the Lehigh River, in 1742. These pietists, most of whom were German speaking, faced opposition on a number of fronts. This essay focuses on the Moravians’ contentious interaction with Presbyterian evangelicals who, during the Great

² On the lightning strike incident, see the entry for July 14, 1745, in the congregational diary of First Moravian Church, Philadelphia, PA, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA. Also consult Milton J. Coalter, *Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder: A Case Study of Continental Pietism’s Impact on the First Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (New York, 1986), 126.

³ According to Johann Philip Böhm, Zinzendorf once claimed in a sermon, “Thunder and lightning will strike all ministers who hinder souls from following the Lamb.” William J. Hinke, ed., *Life and Letters of the Rev. John Philip Boehm: Founder of the Reformed Church in Pennsylvania 1683–1749* (Philadelphia, 1916), 381. Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) was the patron nobleman of the “renewed” Moravian Brethren or “Brüdergemeine” as it became known in Europe. Zinzendorf was heavily influenced by German pietism and, although he did not work from a systemized theological framework, was responsible for much of Moravian teachings during this period.

⁴ The definitive work, thus far, on the Great Awakening is Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT, 2007). On the Great Awakening in the mid-Atlantic colonies specifically, see Coalter, *Gilbert Tennent*; Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, eds., *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis, IN, 1967); Charles Hartshorn Maxson, *The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Chicago, 1920); Sally Schwartz, “A Mixed Multitude”: *The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York, 1987); John B. Frantz, “The Awakening of Religion among the German Settlers in the Middle Colonies,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976): 266–88; and John Fea, “Rural Religion: Protestant Community and the Moral Improvement of the South Jersey Countryside, 1676–1800” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1999).

Awakening, were sometimes labeled “Tennentists” after Gilbert Tennent, their leading spokesman.⁵

Although traditionally studies of the Great Awakening have focused heavily on manifestations of evangelical piety in New England and therefore neglected important transatlantic currents, in recent decades, historians have become more attuned to the convergence of Continental and Anglo streams within what W. R. Ward has called the “Protestant Evangelical Awakening.”⁶ This essay seeks to contribute to these ongoing historiographical trends. First, the controversy between Moravians and Tennentists enhances our understanding of the extent of Moravian influence as it moved beyond circles of German-speaking pietists and engaged the broader Anglo-American world. Second, this controversy demonstrates the significance of competing interpretations of sin, salvation, and the moral law for colonial awakeners. Specifically, Anglo-evangelicals believed that Moravians promoted an alternative conception of revival piety and conversion that included a virulent strain of antinomianism, which consisted in a tendency to deemphasize the role of God’s moral law in convincing the unconverted of their need for salvation as well as its importance for prodding the converted toward a holy life. While this controversy was rooted in theology, it also points to larger issues regarding religion and its place in colonial society. More than theological error, antinomianism was often associated with the breakdown of order, and

⁵ The pietist tradition was diverse and debates continue regarding definitions. In general, pietism, which originated in German and English Protestant circles in the seventeenth century, emphasized experiential “heart-religion” as opposed to the formal religiosity of more orthodox Protestants. Always composed of a loose network of like-minded individuals and societies, pietism had moderate manifestations, which resisted separatist tendencies as well as radical manifestations that challenged the theology and practice of the established churches. Pietism and evangelicalism had many of the same characteristics and in a generic sense, were synonymous (as per W. R. Ward). But where pietism is usually understood as having a distinctly European origin, evangelicalism can be understood as an Anglo-American movement that shares its roots with the pietist tradition. The Great Awakening in North America was composed of various streams, both pietist and evangelical, and represented Anglo and Continental influences. Those who promoted the Great Awakening were known as “New Lights,” and the Moravians used this term as others did during the eighteenth century. However, in order to avoid the oversimplification that often accompanies the labels of “New Lights” and “Old Lights,” I follow the lead of Thomas Kidd, Douglas Winiarski, and others in using “evangelicals” to refer to those who supported the revivals, both in their moderate and more radical manifestations. Evangelicals, as defined by David Bebbington, emphasized conversion, or the “New Birth”; were Biblicists; promoted a “crucicentrist” theology; and were committed to living out their gospel convictions in society. For more on defining evangelicalism in the context of the Great Awakening, see Kidd, *Great Awakening*, xiii–xix, and David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and Boston, 1989), 1–19.

⁶ See W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992), and W. R. Ward, *Faith and Faction* (London, 2003).

this essay suggests that the Tennentist defense of the “Barriers between Virtue and Vice” included concerns for both theological orthodoxy and the preservation of social and public order. Such concerns even prompted Gilbert Tennent to declare that he would rather “part with the last drop of blood out of his veins” than compromise his views on the necessity of the moral law.⁷

*Moravians at the Intersection of Anglo and Continental Efforts
for Awakening*

Within the transatlantic context of the Great Awakening, Anglo and Continental streams of pietism converged within various religious movements such as among the Philadelphian Society in England and at Moravian centers in Germany including those in Marienborn and Herrnhut.⁸ Personal interaction also reflected this intersection as New England minister Cotton Mather, for example, corresponded with the moderate Halle pietist August Hermann Francke, and William Penn exchanged letters with the radical pietist Johanna Eleonora Merlau (Petersen). In North America, the middle colonies were especially representative of this broader religious context, bearing the marks of both Anglo and Continental pietism. In the Raritan Valley, Dutch pietist Theodorus Frelinghuysen served as a significant influence on English-speaking Presbyterians, including Gilbert Tennent. Radical pietists founded new settlements, mingling with the larger English-speaking population, and Swedish pietists traveled the same itinerant paths as other awakeners. George Whitefield even joined with prominent Moravian Peter Böhler to conduct a bilingual revival outside of Philadelphia.⁹

⁷ These lines are taken from Gilbert Tennent’s published sermon against the Moravians, *The Necessity of Holding Fast the Truth Represented in Three Sermons . . .* (Boston, 1743), 6, 19. The entire sentence on virtue and vice is, “This, this, oversets the very Foundations of Religion, and rends in Pieces all the Barriers between Virtue and Vice, this leaves us without a Rule of Action, and so exposes us as an easy Prey to the Wiles of enthusiastical Delusion.”

⁸ The Philadelphian Society for the Advancement of Piety and Diving Philosophy was a group of English mystics that emerged in the second half of the seventeenth century. This small band of pietists, who also had strong millenarian views, took its name from the biblical church of Philadelphia in the book of Revelation. The visions of Jane Leade, a well-known leader of the society, became important sources of revelation and influenced other pietists, including Zinzendorf.

⁹ The best discussion of this convergence remains Ward, *Evangelical Awakening*, throughout. For a general discussion, see also Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 24–31. A more extensive examination can be found as well in the insightful essays in F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1976). On the Penn-Merlau exchange, which is not mentioned in those works cited above, see Lucinda Martin, “Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of

The Moravians were among the most significant groups within these transatlantic currents, establishing centers of awakened piety throughout the Atlantic world from Greenland to the Caribbean. As such, their influence extended far beyond circles of German pietism. However, this fact has at times been muted by denominational historians whose work has marginalized the Moravians. Most notable was the Reformed historian William Hinke, who, writing in the 1920s, was one of the earliest non-Moravians to look seriously at itinerant diaries in Moravian archives and to examine the response of Reformed leaders, such as Johann Philip Böhm, to Moravian activity.¹⁰ More recently, Charles Glatfelter has written on Moravian itinerants and their work among both German Reformed and German Lutheran congregations.¹¹

In explaining the controversies that erupted between Moravian itinerants and other German-speaking Protestants, Hinke and Glatfelter have emphasized the interconfessional nature of the Moravian enterprise, that is, the Moravian penchant to work among churches of various confessions besides their own. This work, the interpretation goes, was perceived particularly as a “threat” to German Reformed and Lutheran pastors who were attempting to construct strong confessional boundaries in the face of Pennsylvania’s religious “babble.” For Hinke, the Moravians represented a “union movement” for which Pennsylvania’s colonial Germans were unprepared.¹² Similarly, Glatfelter has emphasized that, like George Whitefield’s efforts among English speakers, Zinzendorf’s activities among Pennsylvania Germans were designed to reach across confessional lines. Although Zinzendorf’s experiment failed, Moravian ecumenism, according to Glatfelter, remained a significant source for much of the religious tensions in the region.¹³

Pietism: The Example of Johanna Eleonora Merlau and William Penn,” *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur* 95 (2003): 33–58. Other general studies include the chapters in Mark Noll, David Bebbington, and George Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700–1990* (New York, 1994), and Stephen O’Malley, ed., *Early German-American Evangelicalism: Pietist Sources on Discipleship and Sanctification* (Lanham, MD, 1994).

¹⁰ William J. Hinke, ed., *Life and Letters*, and Hinke, *Diaries of Missionary Travels among the German Settlers in the American Colonies, 1743–1748* ([Norristown, PA], 1929).

¹¹ Charles H. Glatfelter, *Pastors and People: German Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Pennsylvania Field, 1717–1793*, vol. 1, *Pastors and Congregations*, and vol. 2, *The History* (Breinigsville, PA, 1980, 1981).

¹² Hinke, *Life and Letters*, 82–83.

¹³ Glatfelter, *Pastors and People*, 2:81.

More recent studies have given the Moravians a more central emphasis while placing their role in the Great Awakening within a much broader and transatlantic context. Aaron Fogleman, for example, argues that the controversies between the Moravians and their opponents, which included episodes of violence, were not only a result of confessional issues and struggles over ecclesiastical authority, but were rooted more directly in a radical threat to traditional gender and sex norms.¹⁴ More than simply challenging the rigid confessional boundaries of those around them, Moravians, he argues, feminized the members of the Trinity, created space for female participation and leadership in the community, eroticized worship through a “blood and wounds” theology, and fostered a culture of sacred sex among married members. To make the situation even more volatile, popular rumor, a multitude of anti-Moravian polemical literature, and fears that Moravian practice constituted a slippery slope to the most bizarre behavior added fuel to the fire. “This was pietism, Moravian style, and it both attracted and frightened the transatlantic community,” Fogleman argues, and the Moravians’ “strange views about gender” were a particular threat in colonial North America, where institutional authority was weak.¹⁵

Working from a different but not contradictory approach, Katherine Carté Engel, in her recent monograph, has also emphasized the way the Moravian enterprise was integrated within broad circles of transatlantic commerce. By defining Christian ideals as compatible with a free-market economy, the Moravians contributed to what historians have called a consumer “revolution” in early America and were engaged in a network of commerce that extended beyond colonial concentrations of German speakers to include several prominent Anglo-American merchants and businessmen.¹⁶

Within the diversity of Pennsylvania religion, Moravians were key players in the Great Awakening. During the 1740s and later, they established important centers in places such as Bethlehem, Nazareth, Philadelphia, and Lititz, as well as a host of smaller outposts throughout

¹⁴ Aaron Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2007). Fogleman's work is based on the most thorough examination to date of the numerous itinerant diaries among the materials in the archives at Bethlehem, Herrnhut, and various regional archives, going beyond the work of Hinke and Glatfelter. See also a related piece, Craig Atwood, “Little Side Holes: Moravian Devotional Cards of the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Moravian History* 6 (2009): 61–76.

¹⁵ Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, 6.

¹⁶ Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2009).

the Delaware Valley. Due to their views of Christian mission and a thriving network of itinerants, Moravians embodied the transient and multicultural ethos of the Atlantic world, serving as figurative, and in some cases literal, “negotiators” among disparate groups in a variety of geographic contexts.¹⁷

The nerve center of the Moravian enterprise was Bethlehem, established along the Lehigh River in July 1742 when a group known to insiders as the first “Sea Congregation” made its way across the Atlantic and settled on a tract strategically located between New York and Philadelphia.¹⁸ Zinzendorf, the primary architect of the “renewed” Moravian Church, or *Brüdergemeine*, had arrived six months earlier, and under his leadership the first of many Moravian itinerants fanned outward from Bethlehem, establishing preaching stations, filling pulpits, forming congregations, and starting schools.¹⁹

While the Moravians defined their efforts as primarily intended for other German speakers, their communities reflected the multicultural flavor of their work, which quickly came to include significant points of convergence between the Moravians and the Anglo-American world in which they were now situated. This convergence was enhanced by the fact that the Sea Congregation included a group of sixteen English Moravians for whom Zinzendorf had made plans to establish an *Englische Stadt* (English Town) even before their arrival.²⁰

¹⁷ On Moravians as figurative and literal negotiators, see James Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 2000). On the sense of colonial transience and mobility, consult Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World* (Durham, NC, 1994). For a wonderful discussion of the way Moravians embodied the multicultural ethos of the Atlantic world, see Jon Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

¹⁸ For background on the first Sea Congregation see Levin Reichel, *The Early History of the Church of the United Brethren (Unitas Fratrum), Commonly Called Moravians, in North America, A.D. 1734–1748* (Nazareth, PA, 1888), 109–10; Paul Peucker, “Heerendijk—Link in the Moravian Network: Moravian Colonists Destined for Pennsylvania,” *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 30 (1998): 9–21; William N. Schwarze and Samuel H. Gapp, trans., *A History of the Beginnings of the Moravian Work in America, being a translation of Georg Neisser's Manuscript* (Bethlehem, PA, 1955), 57–59.

¹⁹ On Moravian itinerancy, see Harry Emilius Stocker, *A Home Mission History of the Moravian Church in the United States and Canada* (Bethlehem, PA, 1924); Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*; and Mabel Haller, *Early Moravian Education in Pennsylvania* (Nazareth, PA, 1953).

²⁰ Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, “Brief von Zinzendorf an ‘innig geliebtes Geschwister’ betr. Siene Reise nach Amerika, Philadelphia 31. Dez. 1741 (n.s.),” R.14.A13.6, Unity Archives, Herrnhut, Germany. By 1742, the Moravians had established several thriving societies and congregations in England, including the vibrant congregations at Fetter Lane in London and in Bedfordshire. Most of the Anglo-Moravians who traveled to North America were sent from these

While the majority of Moravian itinerants preached and conversed in German, representatives from among the English Moravians began visiting their English-speaking neighbors within a few months of the founding of Bethlehem. David Bruce was the first Anglo-Moravian to carry out such efforts, working among the Irish settlers who lived on the other side of the Lehigh River from Bethlehem. Bruce would later work among Scots-Irish Presbyterians whose settlements were located around Donegal, Pennsylvania, just west of Lancaster. For the next decade or so, other Anglo-Moravians would join Bruce in working to promote spiritual awakening among the English settlers in the middle colonies.²¹

Within a year of the founding of Bethlehem, the first “English Congregation” was created from the initial group of English Moravians and was settled in Nazareth and later in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia congregation maintained both German and English services for many years. Some Moravian preachers, such as the prominent Peter Böhler, were fluent in both German and English when they arrived. Other German speakers had to improvise their English once they got to North America. Johann Christoph Pylaeus, for example, carried a personal notebook with a variety of bits of information, including bilingual notes that seem to indicate he was working on his English language skills. It includes numerous line-by-line translations, from English to German, of biographical information about George Whitefield, probably taken from his published journals.²²

In New York, the Moravian congregation catered to New Yorkers of English and Dutch descent under the supervision of Anglo-Moravian preachers Jacob Rogers, Thomas Yarrell, and James Greening.²³ Rogers,

congregations. See Jared S. Burkholder, “Disenfranchised Awakeners: Anglo-Moravians, Religious Competition, and Evangelical Identity in the Mid-Atlantic Colonies” (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2007), 103–5, 122–59. While no history of English-speaking Moravians in North America exists, much has been written about Moravians in Britain. The standard text is Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728–1760* (Oxford, 1998). See also Edward Langton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Story of the First International Protestant Church* (London, 1956), and Geoffrey Stead and Margaret Stead, *The Exotic Plant: A History of the Moravian Church in Great Britain 1742–2000* (Werrington, UK, 2003). Additionally, consult Clifford W. Towlson, *Moravian and Methodist: Relationships and Influences in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1957). The names of the original English members of the Sea Congregation are: Owen and Elizabeth Rice, Thomas and Anna Yarrell, Robert and Martha Hussey, John and Elisabeth Turner, Samuel and Martha Powell, Joseph and Martha Powell, Joseph Shaw, Hector Gambold, John Okely, and William Okely.

²¹ Burkholder, “Disenfranchised Awakeners,” 122–59.

²² Pylaeus’s notebook can be found in the Unity Archives, R.27.375.

²³ See the congregational diary for First Moravian Church, New York, NY, which is at times in English and at other times in German, Moravian Archives.

who was one of the most prominent Moravian preachers in England before his arrival in North America, itinerated through the Pennsylvania backcountry as late as the 1760s before traveling to North Carolina where another English Moravian, Joseph Powell, had been instrumental in establishing Hope Moravian Church—another Anglo-German experiment.²⁴ Surviving Moravian records in both Bethlehem and Herrnhut also reflect the multilingual nature of the Moravian enterprise. Congregational diaries, itinerant journals, official reports, and correspondence with colonial authorities were often translated and circulated in both German and English.

The reach of the Moravian presence, therefore, extended beyond the German subculture in the Delaware Valley. Moravians preached to the same audiences as other awakeners and Moravian itinerants crisscrossed the same paths that Baptist and Presbyterian “New Lights” used. Moravian literature was sold in the same bookstores as other religious materials, and several Moravian tracts and books were translated for English readers. News of Moravian activity, and controversy, also played out in local newspapers, entering the public sphere for both English and German speakers.

The Tennentist-Moravian Encounter

Most colonists did not know what to make of this band of pietist communitarians. In New England, some heard impressive reports from those in Europe that the Moravians seemed to embody a “revival of PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.”²⁵ Other reports were more sinister. One popular rumor purported that the Moravians were in league with Spanish Catholics, waiting to commit crimes of treachery against the English empire.²⁶ Others believed the Moravians brainwashed naive youths and held them against the will of their parents.²⁷ The response among Anglo-

²⁴ On Rogers in North Carolina, see C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future: The Story of the Moravian Church, Southern Province* (Winston-Salem, NC, 2002). On Powell and the Hope congregation, consult S. Scott Rohrer, *Hope's Promise: Religion and Acculturation in the Southern Backcountry* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2005).

²⁵ “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Scotland to his friend in New England, dated Edinburgh, March 31, 1740,” *Boston Newsletter*, Sept. 18–25, 1740.

²⁶ See Lindford D. Fisher, “‘I Believe They Are Papists!’ Natives, Moravians, and the Politics of Conversion in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut,” *New England Quarterly* 81 (2008): 410–37.

²⁷ Abraham Ritter, *History of the Moravian Church in Philadelphia, from Its Foundation in 1742 to the Present Time* (Philadelphia, 1857), 22–24.

evangelicals was mixed. In Philadelphia, for example, where Whitefield's supporters had constructed an auditorium for revival preachers, leading evangelicals were divided in their estimation of the Moravians. While some welcomed Moravian preachers into the pulpit, others sought to bar them from the platform.²⁸

Among the Moravians' greatest opponents were prorevivalist Presbyterians whose evangelical zeal began well before the awakening of the 1740s and can largely be attributed to the Tennent family. Born to a family of Scots-Irish Presbyterians in 1703, Gilbert Tennent's early life was shaped by his religious upbringing. As a teenager, he experienced a period of spiritual angst, which began in 1717, the same year his family immigrated to North America. Tennent struggled to find conversion during what he would later call his period of "law work," a chapter in his life that was no doubt significant for his later views on the moral law.²⁹ Living in this state of anxiety for several years, Tennent finally experienced conversion in 1723 and soon after enrolled in the divinity program at Yale College. Finishing in 1725, Tennent took up his first preaching appointment in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the following year. As mentioned above, Tennent was heavily influenced by Theodorus Frelinghuysen, a pietist of Dutch descent who had been preaching in the Raritan River Valley since 1720. Frelinghuysen's theology reflected the pietism of other moderate pietists on the European continent and included a strong emphasis on a period of spiritual distress during which an individual would struggle under the weight of the moral law. Known as *Bußkampf* among many continental pietists, this period was viewed as a preparatory time, after which the repentant individual would experience the release of new birth.³⁰

Tennent's father, William, was also a prominent minister in the region and had established a Presbyterian congregation along the Neshaminy Creek in 1726. The following year William began a school in which he

²⁸ See Adele Cecelia Moore, "Franklin's Academy: The University's Foundation," in *A Pennsylvania Album: Undergraduate Essays on the 250th Anniversary of the University of Pennsylvania*, ed. Richard Slator Dunn and Mark Frazier Lloyd (Philadelphia, 1990), 1–4. On the divisions among the building's trustees regarding the Moravians, consult Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 108–12.

²⁹ Presbyterians, as well as others in the Reformed tradition, spoke frequently of "law." Within the context of Christianity, the moral law referred to God's expectations for humans to live lives in conformity with the moral standards of the Bible and the ecclesiastical community. The moral law was defined in distinction from the ceremonial law of the Torah and the civil law which governed society. On Tennent's early life, see Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 9–10.

³⁰ See Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 12–22.

educated Gilbert's younger brothers along with a handful of local boys. William Tennent's congregation and the accompanying school became one of the most important centers of evangelical Presbyterianism outside of Philadelphia. Centrally located along the primary road between Philadelphia and New York, the school was responsible for training a small army of evangelical preachers who subscribed to the revivalist evangelicalism of its founder. Their opponents sarcastically dubbed the crudely constructed one-room school at Neshaminy "The College." But despite its rustic nature, preachers fanned out from the college, itinerating throughout the Delaware Valley and filling pulpits in the surrounding regions.

George Whitefield gave the school greater visibility by preaching to nearly three thousand people on its grounds in 1739 and 1740 and endorsing its graduates in his published journals. This training ground for evangelically minded Presbyterians became the stuff of legend in the nineteenth century when the well-known Princetonian Archibald Alexander published a history of what by then had become known as the "Log College" along with biographical sketches of its most notable students.³¹ As a result of the college, all three of Gilbert Tennent's brothers entered the ministry along with other prominent preachers—among them Samuel Finley as well as Samuel Blair and his brother John. Finley and Samuel Blair both established their own schools for training evangelical preachers.³²

By 1741, when colonial Presbyterians split into factions over the legitimacy of the Great Awakening, Gilbert Tennent had already become a vocal proponent of the revivals and solidified a working alliance with George Whitefield. In 1739, in Nottingham, Pennsylvania, he condemned the "carnal" ministers who opposed the Great Awakening, in what would become perhaps his best known sermon: "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry." Those trained at the Log College also sided with the prorevival faction and joined with Tennent in a battle against their more orthodox opponents.³³

³¹ On the Tennent family's involvement in the Great Awakening, consult Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 55–67, and Archibald Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College, Together with an Account of the Revivals of Religion under Their Ministry* (Princeton, NJ, 1845).

³² For biographical vignettes on prominent Tennentists along with a selection of sermons, see Archibald Alexander, *Sermons and Essays by the Tennents and Their Contemporaries* (Philadelphia, 1855).

³³ For a discussion of the Presbyterian split and Gilbert Tennent's role in this, see Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 55–89.

Regarding the Moravians, Tennentists were certainly worried about Moravian influence among the German and Dutch Reformed. But what concerned them more specifically was the growing activity of English-speaking Moravians who, working among English colonists, competed with them most directly for awakening the hearts and minds of individuals in the region. They kept the Moravians on the defensive with the debates that ensued, and Zinzendorf was right when he declared in 1742 that it was not the Moravians who had instigated the controversy—rather, Tennentists represented the primary aggressor.³⁴ The controversy played out both in the public arena and in the local parish. Newspapers carried news of the controversy, as did pamphlets in Philadelphia.³⁵ Tennentists preached against the Moravians in their pulpits and afterward published the sermons at local print shops along with other popular religious materials.³⁶ Indeed, Peter Böhler complained that Tennent himself preached “daily” against the Moravians and wrote to Zinzendorf for advice on what to do about it.³⁷ There is also evidence that the debates were felt even in rural parishes and households. Moravian itinerant diaries, for example, frequently described the way ordinary people were affected by the debates—itinerants claimed that people were, more often than not, swayed against them by such anti-Moravian propaganda.³⁸ Tennentist propaganda directed at the Moravians illustrates several ways Moravian theology conflicted with evangelical doctrine.

³⁴ Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, *Anmerkungen*; the English edition is titled: *The Remarks, Which the Author of the Compendious Extract, &c. in the Preface to His Book, Has Friendly Desired of the Rev. of Thurenstein, for the Time Pastor of the Lutheran Congregation of J.C. in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1742), 8.

³⁵ See, for example, the account of the personal disagreement between Zinzendorf and Gilbert Tennent in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* during May and June 1743: “Answers of the Illustrious Count of Zinzendorff . . .,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 19, 1743, and Gilbert Tennent to “Mr. Franklin,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 30, 1743. See also Joseph Crellius, *Compendious Extract Containing the Chiefest Articles of Doctrine and Most Remarkable Transactions of Count Lewis of Zinzendorff and the Moravians. Together with the Most Material Objections of Some of Their Antagonists. Collected from the German. Intended for a Summary of That Controversy, which at Present is a matter of Universal Speculation, in This Part of America* (Philadelphia, 1742).

³⁶ Tennent, *Necessity*, and Samuel Finley, *Satan Strip'd of His Angelick Robe, Being the Substance of Several Sermons Preach'd at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1743). Finley's sermons were largely analogous to those of Tennent.

³⁷ Peter Böhler to Zinzendorf, Philadelphia, June 13/24, 1742, Personal Papers of Albert F. Jordan, box 1. See also “N. Lewis's Letter to Br. Boehler in Philadelphia, when Mr. Gilbert Tennent was preaching very severely against the Brethren, A. 1742,” Personal Papers of Zinzendorf, box A (NZ IV 6), both Moravian Archives.

³⁸ For a good example, consult the diaries of John Okely, Aug. 1742 (JD II 1) and May–June 1743 (JD II 1b), Moravian Archives.

In general, Tennentists failed to appreciate the sense of paradox, mystery, and emotion that Moravians maintained within their Christocentric heart-religion. Indeed, they routinely complained that the Moravians were deliberately evasive and when challenged with reasonable arguments, appealed to sentimental piety and clever “shifts.” Tennentists also argued that the Moravian emphasis on Christ inordinately elevated the second person of the Trinity, overshadowing the role of the Father. The Moravian catechism, Tennentists argued, disseminated this skewed version of Trinitarian doctrine.³⁹

The overarching source of contention, however, was an antinomian threat that Tennent believed he perceived after his first interaction with Moravian representatives. Sometime prior to 1741, Tennent conversed with August Spangenberg, which was probably his first encounter with a representative of the Moravians.⁴⁰ Spangenberg had arrived in Pennsylvania in April 1736 after the failed Moravian experiment in Georgia.⁴¹ Tennent reported that he debated theology with Spangenberg, and his suspicions about the Moravians were raised when Spangenberg apparently denied the doctrine of original sin and eternal punishment of the nonelect.⁴² Tennent remained suspicious as Zinzendorf arrived in New York in late November 1741. Crossing the Atlantic from Europe, Zinzendorf traveled with a small entourage through New Brunswick on his way to Philadelphia, stopping at the home of Derick Schuyler, where Tennent and his assistant, Heinrich Visser, paid him a visit.⁴³

The meeting did not go well. Zinzendorf was hesitant to hold a formal discussion with the two revivalists, “being convinced by long experience, that he must not discourse with any Presbyterian Reprobant [*sic*]” unless it was in favorable circumstances.⁴⁴ Zinzendorf agreed to the meeting,

³⁹ See Burkholder, “Disenfranchised Awakeners,” 170–71.

⁴⁰ August Spangenberg (1704–1792) was, next to Zinzendorf, probably the most important leader for the Moravians during the eighteenth century. He was largely responsible for facilitating the Moravian presence in America and creating the culture of Bethlehem. On Spangenberg, consult Craig D. Atwood, “Spangenberg: A Radical Pietist in Colonial America” *Journal of Moravian History* 4 (2008): 7–27.

⁴¹ Reichel, *Early History*, 86.

⁴² Tennent, *Necessity*, 98–99.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 98; Reichel, *Early History*, 95–96.

⁴⁴ Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, “Büdingische Sammlung,” in *Ergänzungsbände zu den Hauptschriften*, ed. Erich Beyreuther and Gerhard Meyer (Hildesheim, Ger., 1966), 3:308–09. Zinzendorf’s usage of “Reprobant” is not a means of condemning Tennent as a “reprobate.” It is more likely that Zinzendorf is using the term to refer to Tennent as an adherent of the ultra-Calvinist doctrine of “double predestination,” which, on another occasion, Zinzendorf referred to as the “reprobation scheme.” See Burkholder, “Disenfranchised Awakeners,” 68.

however, but there is some indication he may have imposed the condition that he speak with Tennent and Visser separately.⁴⁵ Even after the meetings were arranged, the language barrier proved a problem. Tennent did not know German and Zinzendorf's English was not adequate, making Latin the only possible language in which the two could converse.⁴⁶

What is more, Tennent quickly turned the conversation into an interrogation of sorts. Suspecting antinomianism, he proceeded to drill the German nobleman about his positions on law and grace, asking Zinzendorf if the law is "a rule of life to a believer" and if it was necessary "to preach the law under the gospel dispensation?" Tennent continued the barrage asking if the "unconverted" were "under the law" and if the law belonged "only to the Jews?" Further details of the debate have not survived, but shortly thereafter, Zinzendorf met with Tennent's colleague New Side Presbyterian Samuel Finley in Philadelphia.⁴⁷ This time, Zinzendorf refused to hold the discussion in Latin and the two communicated through an interpreter. Like Tennent, Finley grilled Zinzendorf on theological matters and the discussion continued late into the evening.⁴⁸

In remembering their meeting, Tennent and Zinzendorf had very different opinions about how it went. Zinzendorf was frustrated, remembering mostly that the two had difficulty understanding each other's Latin. He therefore refused to recognize the meeting as a formal conference.⁴⁹ He was, however, struck by Tennent's tone, declaring that he felt like

⁴⁵ Tennent, *Necessity*, 73.

⁴⁶ It is difficult to assess Zinzendorf's abilities in English. Coalter states that Zinzendorf knew no English due to his disregard for Peter Böhler's advice, in the months preceding his voyage to the colonies, to "learn English." See Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 101; see also Peter Böhler in Herrndyck to Zinzendorf, Mar. 25, 1741, Personal Papers of Albert F. Jordan, box 1, Moravian Archives. It is likely, however, that Zinzendorf did in fact take Böhler's advice to heart. While Zinzendorf may not have been fluent by the time he arrived in America, he had made several visits to London by this time and was probably in the process of learning the language. This likelihood is further evidenced by a number of English-language documents in the Unity Archives in Herrnhut, dating between 1744 and 1747 that bear Zinzendorf's signature and seem to have been written in his hand. Zinzendorf's English would have improved further during several years in which he lived in London between 1748 and 1750 and then again between 1751 and 1755. On this, consult Podmore, *Moravian Church in England*, 24–28, 52–54, 230–33, 265–83. Examples of English documents at Herrnhut and attributed to Zinzendorf include R.14.11.18, R.14.11.48, and R.14.11.50.

⁴⁷ Samuel Finley (1715–1766) was a graduate of William Tennent's "Log College" and a revivalist preacher. In 1744, he established his own log school, modeled after the Tennent model, in West Nottingham, Maryland.

⁴⁸ Tennent, *Necessity*, 76–77.

⁴⁹ Zinzendorf, "Budingische Sammlung," 3:308–9.

Tennent was trying to trip him up just as the Pharisees had tried to trap Jesus in his own words.⁵⁰ Tennent, on the other hand, believed the two had communicated quite effectively and that Zinzendorf had also been satisfied. And most importantly for him, Tennent believed his suspicions about Moravian antinomianism were confirmed. The law did not play a role in Moravian sanctification, Tennent declared; neither did it play a role in convicting the unconverted nor was it to be used to incite “terrors” as a part of evangelical preaching.⁵¹

After their private meetings with Zinzendorf, Tennent and Finley prepared ammunition for a public attack. Tennent was first, using a series of sermons, preached in New York in April 1742, to denounce Moravian teachings and their ongoing activity. Nine months later, Finley preached a similar series from his Maryland pulpit. With public endorsement from leading evangelicals in New England, both sets of sermons were printed in 1743.

Predictably, Tennent declared early in his printed sermons that the role of the law was absolutely necessary. The “Doctrine of Conviction by the Law of God” was the means by which “the Sinner is made sensible of his Sin and Misery” and this was the only way to “obtain converting Grace.” He continued, “if we let this precious Truth go with the Moravians; or in Compliance to a noted Person among them [Zinzendorf], (who asserted in New Brunswick, that Conviction is not necessary to Conversion, but hurtful; and that the Presbyterian Doctrine, respecting preaching of the Law is false) . . . I see no Ground of Hope, that ever a secure World will be alarm’d.”⁵²

Antinomianism as a Threat to Orthodoxy

The debates between eighteenth-century Tennentists and Moravians concerning the role and importance of the moral law took place within the broader context of the Great Awakening as well as ongoing and significant debates over law and grace that existed on both sides of the Atlantic. These controversies began well before Tennent and his coreligionists set up their defenses against Moravian encroachment. Indeed, Calvinist and Lutheran attempts to define this theological relationship

⁵⁰ Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, “Answers of the Illustrious Count of Zinzendorff . . .,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 19, 1743.

⁵¹ Gilbert Tennent to “Mr. Franklin,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 30, 1743.

⁵² Tennent, *Necessity*, 4.

and the ensuing debates between their respective theological camps date to the end of the sixteenth century.⁵³ In England, fissures erupted among Puritans between “precisianists” and antinomians.⁵⁴ In New England, these fissures persisted and culminated, in 1638, with the trial of Anne Hutchinson, one of New England’s most famous heretics, who, her opponents charged, had fallen deeply into antinomianism.⁵⁵ Moravians themselves were all too familiar with such theological controversy. They encountered strong opposition in Europe, especially from Dutch Calvinists, who printed polemics against the Moravians. Even in their own communities Moravians sometimes attempted to head off disputes between their Lutheran and Calvinist constituents.⁵⁶

In the context of the mid-Atlantic colonies, Tennentists and Moravians approached the issue of the moral law from significantly different starting points. For Calvinist awakeners such as the Tennentists, the whole evangelical program for religious awakening hinged on the role of the law. The moral law, conceived as divine expectations for holiness, was not rendered obsolete by the New Covenant. Rather it continued to serve two vital purposes. First, feeling the weight of responsibility to the law prepared sinners through a period of struggle and brought them to a necessary awareness of their damned estate. As mentioned above, Tennent himself had experienced just such an episode in his childhood. And second, the law served to prod the converted to strive toward greater degrees of holiness. Those in the English Protestant tradition, especially evangelicals, believed it was necessary to consistently emphasize the law as a safeguard to moral license and the disintegration of orderly society. Feeling the weight of the law convicted the unconverted and converted alike of their sin. Revivalist preachers crafted their sermons around the requirements of the law and the “terrors” it was meant to incite in their listeners. The law “represents the State of Sinners” and “opens the Aggravations of Sin,” which in consequence turns “our indignation against it.”⁵⁷ As Tennent’s biographer has stated, “The harsh reality of sin’s consequences had to alarm the sinner before the soothing balsam of

⁵³ Consult Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, CT, 1980), 279, 367, 377.

⁵⁴ See especially Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 221–305.

⁵⁶ On anti-Moravian polemics circulating in Europe, see Dietrich Meyer, ed., *Bibliographisches Handbuch zur Zinzendorf-Forschung* (Düsseldorf, Ger., 1987), 267–79, and Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, 136–55.

gospel promises could properly be applied to calm the convicted and to strengthen the unconverted.”⁵⁸

Moravians, whose theology was guided by the teachings of Zinzendorf, viewed the role of the law differently. In 1738, Zinzendorf had addressed many of the primary issues regarding the law, atonement and conversion in his *Berlinische Reden*—a series of sixteen sermons on the second half of the Apostles’ Creed.⁵⁹ Translated into English in 1740 and published in London as *Sixteen Discourses on Jesus Christ Our Lord*, this text became a central source for much of Tennent’s understanding of Moravian theology. In the *Berlinische Reden*, Zinzendorf taught that the law had been appropriate under the Old Covenant, during which it was necessary to impose morality on people’s hearts with “force” (*Gewalt*). Under the New Covenant, however, in the wake of Christ’s universal atonement, the suffering and blood of Christ served as a more effective source of conviction, which “melted” (*zerschmelzt*) the heart, providing a keen sense of the “wounded redeemer” (*verwundeten Erlöser*).⁶⁰ Thus it was counterproductive to attempt, as Tennentists did, to convince people through the preaching of terrors and constant reminders of the law that they were condemned to hell. Rather than paint graphic word pictures of hell and encourage their listeners to struggle for salvation, preachers should try to evince mental images of Christ’s suffering, which might immediately make people realize the sweetness of their redeemed state and bring them quietly into the fold. People need not strive after salvation—only look in faith to Christ’s suffering.⁶¹

This passivity flew in the face of Tennentist notions of conversion. It also ran counter to their notions of the Christian life. For Tennentists, the law was also emphasized in order to provide motivation for holy living. Yet Moravians taught that people were not to strive against sin, rather to grow better acquainted with Jesus who could provide “counsel and help, where neither human counsel nor help would be sufficient” (*raten und helfen, wo sonst kein menschlicher rat noch kraft hinlanget*).⁶² Moravians

⁵⁷ Tennent, *Necessity*, 19.

⁵⁸ Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 43.

⁵⁹ Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, *Des Ordinarii Fratrum Berlinische Reden, nach dem vollständigen und von ihm selbst eigenhändig revidirten Exemplar . . .*, in *Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf: Hauptschriften*, vol. 1, *Schriften des Jüngeren Zinzendorf*, ed. Erich Beyreuther and Gerhard Meyer (Hildesheim, Ger., 1962), esp. 12–13, 21–32, 41–44, 58–62, 82–84, 90–103.

⁶⁰ Zinzendorf, *Berlinische Reden*, 93–94.

⁶¹ See Burkholder, “Disenfranchised Awakeners,” 79–81, and consult Zinzendorf, *Berlinische Reden*, 58, 74–77, 82.

were pietists, after all, and the core of their relationship with the divine was an emotional attachment to Jesus that was thought to transcend their desire for sin and lead to a passive dependence on the power of Jesus. Such “quietism” was prominent in some Moravian circles and was in fact one of the primary reasons for the schism between English Moravians at Fetter Lane in London and John Wesley. It proved to be controversial in North America as well, where Tennentists attributed Moravian quietism to antinomian views of sin.

Zinzendorf’s view of the law was also framed by his teachings on atonement and, by extension, conversion. A proponent of the “ransom theory” of atonement, Zinzendorf believed that the “ransom” (*Lösegeld*) of Christ was applied universally to all people and liberated humans from original sin (*Erb-Sünde*) by, according to Arthur Freeman, “restoring the world to its potential.”⁶³ Zinzendorf declared that the effects of the fall were entirely “erased from the record” (*ausgestrichen*). It is important to note, however, that this did not mean that experiencing the psychological weight of sin had no importance for Zinzendorf’s theology, as some have maintained.⁶⁴ Zinzendorf taught that people would continue to be plagued with “actual sin” (*wirkliche Sünde*), for which they would be condemned to hell and, although Zinzendorf rejected the more mainstream pietist notion of *Bußkampf*, he maintained that people must admit they are “lost and damned” (*verloren und verdammt*) and that “sorrow and anxiety” (*Kummer und Sorge*) are the “first thoughts” (*erste gedanke*) of a repentant soul.⁶⁵ In this regard, the differences were not as stark as it may have seemed. Though he was careful not to advocate a prescribed pattern of struggle, Zinzendorf’s language could at times be remarkably similar to that of the Tennentists.⁶⁶

⁶² Zinzendorf, *Berlinische Reden*, 13.

⁶³ Zinzendorf, *Berlinische Reden*, 44, 103. See also Arthur J. Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf* (Bethlehem, PA, 1998), 45.

⁶⁴ Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, *Neun Öffentliche Reden über wichtige in die Religion einschlagende Materien, Gehalten zu London in Fetterlane—Capelle, Anno 1746*, in *Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf: Hauptschriften*, vol. 6, *Verschiedene Schriften*, ed. Erich Beyreuther and Gerhard Meyer (Hildesheim, Ger., 1962), 121.

⁶⁵ Zinzendorf, *Berlinische Reden*, 91.

⁶⁶ See Zinzenforf, *Neun Öffentliche Reden*, 63. Compare Zinzendorf’s use of the German phrase *Seelen-Not* (Soul-Distress) with the language of “soul-concern” and “distress of the soul” that can be found in Tennentist sermons such as those of Samuel Blair. Consult Blair, *A Short and Faithful Narrative, Of the late Remarakable [sic] Revival of Religion In the Congregation of New-Londonderry, and other Parts of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1744), 16.

Zinzendorf also taught that the atonement was universal in scope—that Christ’s atonement was applied indiscriminately to all people.⁶⁷ The Tennentists were especially critical of this notion—an idea that Tennent labeled “eternal Justification” or “universal Redemption.” This Moravian teaching flew in the face of what Presbyterian Calvinists called “particular atonement.” Tennent declared that “eternal Justification” was the “*proton pseudo*, the first and fertile Falsehood of all the Antinomian Abominations, the fatal Fountain from which those poisonous streams do flow” and that it subverted the foundations of God’s “grand Design” of holiness.⁶⁸ What is more, it also smacked of apocatastasis, an eschatological belief among several radical pietists and members of the Philadelphian Society that the world would be restored to a state of original purity and all its inhabitants would eventually be granted salvation.⁶⁹ Such “Papist” notions were a “Fancy” that was “turning Hell into a Purgatory.”⁷⁰ But while Zinzendorf believed the atonement was universal, he seems to have stopped short of apocatastasis. According to Arthur Freeman, rather than theorize about eschatology, Zinzendorf chose to focus “on the present realization of the relationship with the Savior and heaven, while trusting the future to Christ and refusing to speculate on it.”⁷¹ There is, however, evidence that some Moravians did endorse the belief in apocatastasis. Peter Böhler, for example, argued for a final restoration of all things in correspondence with George Whitefield.⁷² Tennent and Finley also claimed that certain Moravian preachers taught the doctrine and asserted that even Spangenberg had once declared that hell was temporary and that eventually even the unconverted would be allowed to escape into heaven.⁷³

⁶⁷ Zinzendorf, *Berlinische Reden*, 41, 103. See also Burkholder, “Disenfranchised Awakeners,” 64–67.

⁶⁸ Tennent, *Necessity*, 10.

⁶⁹ The English mystic Jane Leade, as well as a number of pietists, including Ernst Christoph Hochmann von Hochenau, Johann Wilhelm Petersen, and Johanna Eleonora Petersen, held to the doctrine of universal restoration as well. See Ruth Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Peteren: Theologische Schriftstellerin des frühen Pietismus* (Göttingen, Ger., 2005), 271–301. Alexander Mack, the founder of the Schwarzenau Brethren also adhered to this doctrine for a time. Most agree that Zinzendorf was influenced by Leade at least and may also have been influenced by Johanna Eleonora Petersen. For a treatment of this doctrine among pietists and Brethren, consult Marcus Meier, “Early Brethren Eschatology: A Contribution to Brethren Beginnings,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 46 (2001): 17–28.

⁷⁰ Tennent, *Necessity*, 12.

⁷¹ Freeman, *Theology of the Heart*, 50–51.

⁷² Peter Böhler to George Whitefield, Forks, July 1740, in box “Peter Böhler,” folder “Controversies on Religious Questions,” shelf 252D, Moravian Archives.

⁷³ Tennent, *Necessity*, 99.

Tennentists believed that Zinzendorf's notion of universal atonement was tied directly to Moravian antinomianism. If redemption was secure, then sin no longer remained a real threat. Moravians, Tennent claimed, therefore "presumed" to have absolute certainty that their sins were forgiven—a notion that minimized the necessity for the law. It might also lead to claims of moral perfection, which also undercut the role of the law. Indeed, Tennent claimed that in New Brunswick two of Zinzendorf's companions, namely Benigna (Zinzendorf's daughter) and Rosina Nitschmann, claimed to have gone without sin for several years.⁷⁴

Beyond the theological controversies described above, the geographical breadth of Moravian itinerant activity proved alarming to Tennentist leaders as well. Conversing with Moravian preachers, Tennent and Samuel Finley concluded that Zinzendorf's antinomian teachings were indeed being disseminated among English speakers throughout the region. According to Finley, Moravian itinerants were teaching that once they had "given their Hearts to their Saviour," they were "not much concern'd with whether they sinned or not."⁷⁵ Finley also reported hearing statements from members of the English congregation, such as Thomas Yarrell, that smacked of quietism.⁷⁶ People should not struggle with sin, Yarrell taught, or keep themselves "under [the] Trouble" of condemnation since this would obstruct divine assistances. Rather, they needed to realize that "the Saviour" would never "leave them" to sin, or fail to "comfort his People."⁷⁷

Moravian itinerants themselves confirmed that matters of the law were important sticking points wherever they went. Their listeners, even lay people, whom they encountered in churches, fields, and homes, repeatedly challenged them on the issue. English-speaking Moravian itinerants, fully aware of their evangelical detractors, consistently complained to their superiors about the detrimental effects of Tennentist efforts.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ But, according to Arthur Freeman, Zinzendorf did not advocate perfectionism. One need only reference Zinzendorf's disagreement with John Wesley to realize this point. A transcript of this encounter can be found in Freeman, *Theology of the Heart*, 188–89.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

⁷⁶ Quietism referred to an approach to sanctification in which the believer adopted a purely passive attitude about personal holiness. To those who favored this approach, it expressed a deep faith in divine power and assistance, but to those who rejected it, quietism represented an apathetic attitude to the importance of moral living.

⁷⁷ Finley, *Satan Strip'd*, 33.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the diaries of John Okely, Aug. 1742 (JD II 1) and May–June 1743 (JD II 1b), Moravian Archives.

Antinomianism as a Threat to Public Order

When the Moravians began their efforts in the Delaware Valley, the Great Awakening was, by 1741, already a scene of public division and competition that directly influenced the way evangelicals responded to Moravian activity. These divisions are well documented.⁷⁹ In New England, for example, some radicals vocally condemned established congregations and created separatist gatherings. Others endorsed controversial manifestations of the divine spirit, including visions, trances, and ecstatic bodily reactions. They marched in protest to traditional New England religion and even disrupted the religious gathering of their opponents. As radical evangelicals such as James Davenport began espousing a more subversive brand of revivalism, traditionalists seized the opportunity to discredit the whole awakening, especially the use of itinerancy, which they believed threatened to upset social structure and public order.

In defending themselves, most evangelicals repudiated the likes of Davenport and embarked on a campaign to distance themselves from anything that smacked of radicalism and define themselves in a moderate light, even resorting to rhetoric that resembled that of their detractors. In distancing themselves from the radicals in their midst, evangelicals codified a narrow and standardized definition of authentic revival that was skeptical of such disorder. It had a specific order of experience at the individual level, specific methods, predictable patterns at the corporate level, and was perpetuated through revival narratives and a network of communications. They effectively “invented,” to use Frank Lambert’s word, a moderate construction of revival piety.⁸⁰ Such patterns existed not only in New England, but in the middle colonies as well. On a very foundational level, as described above, these divisions continued to be theological in nature and revolved around the strong desire to stamp out heresy, preserve

⁷⁹ See especially Kidd, *Great Awakening*, as well as Frank Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening”* (Princeton, NJ, 1999); Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England’s Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (Oxford, 1991); Hall, *Contested Boundaries*; and Ned C. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680–1760* (New York, 1997), 92–122.

⁸⁰ On radical evangelicals specifically, see Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening,”* as well as Hall, *Contested Boundaries*. On Davenport and the situation in New London specifically, consult Peter Onuf, “New Lights in New London: A Group Portrait of the Separatists,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 37 (1980): 627–43, as well as Harry Stout and Peter Onuf, “James Davenport and the Great Awakening in New London,” *Journal of American History* 70 (1983): 556–78.

ecclesiastical order, promote moral living, and engender correct doctrine among the faithful.

On another level, however, the controversies also involved a fear of public and social disorder. For Tennentists, efforts to preserve a strong emphasis on the law as a safeguard against social disorder seems not to have focused on issues of gender and sexuality to the degree that Fogleman argues it did within the Lutheran and Reformed context. And Tennentist criticism stopped short of the excessive slander that characterized the polemics that were circulating throughout Europe. However, there is evidence that Tennent's concerns were likely linked to similar fears that disregarding the law would result not only in private sin, but begin to unravel society as a whole.

Antinomianism was no routine heresy. According to Tennent, "the moral Law is grounded upon the unalterable Natures, Relations, and the Reason of Things." In short, it was part and parcel of the divine order. Emphatic about antinomianism's danger for the human sphere, Tennent declared, "if there is no Law, there is no Transgression," making "the vilest Wickedness" no sin at all. To give up the necessity of the law would upset the "very foundations of Religion" and, as noted previously, "rend in pieces all the Barriers between Virtue and Vice."⁸¹

Tennent was well aware of the kind of public chaos that could result if the divide between "Virtue and Vice" was compromised. Radicals like James Davenport created such disorder when they marched through New England streets or when he and his supporters threw all manner of "vanities" into their protest fires. New England separatists were known to disrupt the Sunday services of their opponents and attracted people away from established congregations by appealing to personal revelations, visions, and trances.⁸²

As mentioned above, antinomianism had, by the eighteenth century, a devilish reputation for producing dangerous heresy, immorality, and grave disorder. It is difficult to know exactly how much of this disorder Tennent had in mind when lambasting the Moravians, but he clearly lumped the Moravians in the same category of dangerous sects who subverted the public order in secret. Tennent compared the "enthusiastical talk" of the Moravians to that of the Labadists, the seventeenth-century communarians who followed the teachings of Jean de Labadie. The Labadists,

⁸¹ Tennent, *Necessity*, 18–19.

⁸² On Davenport, consult Stout and Onuf, "James Davenport."

Tennent claimed, spoke with “bewitching Charms” and “few who conversed much with them escaped the Infection.” By convincing their listeners to “drink in” the “damnable Errors,” the Labadists enticed others to become “Partakers with them in their Wickedness.” Tennent implied that the Moravians had similar powers over the “affections” and counseled his listeners to steer clear of such “seducers” and “erroneous Strangers.”⁸³

Tennent, like many of his associates, seems especially to have had a fear of such exotic heresies—those personified corporately, by one essayist, as a “Wandering Spirit,” which roamed the countryside spreading antinomian, Anabaptist, and enthusiastical errors. This ghostly figure, it was said, “hates Rules and good Order” and encouraged “Contortions of the Body and vocal Energy, Faintings and Crying, delusive Voices and frantic Visions.” This spirit of disorder was linked with the radical pietist Jakob Böhme, and according to the essayist, “does now haunt Moravia.”⁸⁴ Tennent no doubt was aware of radical strains of pietism in Europe and would also have been familiar with pietist sects in the Philadelphia region, such as the Rosicrucian community along the Wissahickon Creek and the German Baptist Brethren at Ephrata.⁸⁵

Tennent, along with Samuel Finley, also complained about Moravian methods of itinerant preaching and visitation, which added to public disorder. Ironically, the Tennentists themselves endorsed and practiced itinerancy quite frequently—something for which they themselves were condemned by antirevivalists.⁸⁶ Tennent, however, attempted to distance himself from the Moravians by charging that the Moravians, unlike him,

⁸³ Tennent, *Necessity*, 52, 54.

⁸⁴ “A True and Genuine Account of a Wonderful Wandering Spirit . . .,” *General Magazine and Historical Chronicle for All the British Plantations in America*, Feb. 1741, 120–22.

⁸⁵ While Tennentists seem to have had a general knowledge of such radicalism, they gave little evidence that they were familiar with the details of some of the more controversial components of Moravian spirituality, including the veneration of the wounds of Christ, erotic devotional language, and the glorification of sexuality among married members. On these elements of Moravian spirituality, consult Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, 73–104, as well as Craig Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park, PA, 2004), 173–222. While this has been traditionally understood as part of the “Sifting Time,” Atwood has demonstrated that much of it, especially the Blood and Wounds theology, was quite normative. This squares with Paul Peucker, who has argued that the Sifting Time likely referred to other religious expression and practices, which may have included homoeroticism, that were of a more localized nature and centered around the Moravian settlement at Herrnhut. See Peucker, “Blut auf unsre grünen Bändchen: Die Sichtszeit in der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine,” *Unitas Fratrum* 49–50 (2002): 41–94, and Peucker, “Inspired by Flames of Love: Homosexuality, Mysticism, and the Moravian Brothers around 1750,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15 (2006): 30–64.

⁸⁶ On Tennent and itinerancy, see Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 47–48.

wandered the countryside without permission from local clergy or civil authorities. While in New England, Tennent prided himself on having the endorsement of local pastors. But the Moravians, he charged, were subversive and looked to take advantage of the unsuspecting. They were sneaking about, entering the homes of the unwary, and spreading heresy to “young Persons, Females, and ignorant People.”⁸⁷ Tennent even went so far as to describe the proliferation of error and enthusiasm as a “publick” disease of “epidemical” proportions.

Forasmuch as the Church of Christ is begirt with numerous Enemies, of various Forms; Enemies open and secret, who Labour almost incessantly, either by Force or Fraud, to corrupt her in her principles, it is of the last Necessity, to be constantly upon our Guard, and especially in a Time of publick and epidemical Infection; lest we be betrayed into the Labyrinths of Error and mistake, by the plausible Pretences of Seducers.⁸⁸

In all of this, an emphasis on the moral law was of utmost importance in preserving pure and orderly religion. Moravian antinomianism, with its accompanying notion of universal redemption, Tennent believed, removed a strong sense of personal sinfulness and the fear of judgment that served as “one of the principle Barriers against Vice and Incentives to Religion and Virtue.” Indeed, such doctrines even threatened to “disband the World, and open the Flood-Gates to all Immorality and Anarchy.”⁸⁹

The fear of such radical and disorderly trends created an environment in which it was inevitably difficult for a movement such as the Moravians whose teachings clearly offered an alternative version of awakening piety, to come onto the scene and fit into the mold defined by mainstream evangelicals. Moravians were, by default, being “defined out” of the evangelical camp even as they arrived.

Anti-Moravian polemics, such as those by the Tennentists, therefore, should be understood as efforts not only to defend the polemicists’ version of orthodoxy, but to legitimize their own revival measures by discrediting those of others. Opponents of evangelical activity recognized this immediately. Orthodox Presbyterian John Hancock, for example, attacked Tennent after his anti-Moravian sermons, claiming convincingly that Tennent was guilty of exactly the same subversive and disorderly methods

⁸⁷ Tennent, *Necessity*, 65–68, 106.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

and doctrines for which Tennent had accused the Moravians.⁹⁰ Peter Böhler was right when he told Zinzendorf that Hancock had taken Tennent's arrows, which were intended for the Moravians, and turned them back on Tennent himself.⁹¹ Tennent was thus forced to defend himself and clarify even more starkly the differences between his own identity, as a moderate, and the Moravians, whom Tennent branded as enthusiasts who stood outside the circle of authentic revival.⁹² Similarly, Samuel Finley explicitly acknowledged that Tennentists advocated a centrist position between Old Lights on one hand and the Moravians on the other. Authentic revival existed only in this narrowly defined center, and the Moravians, Tennentists made sure, would remain on the outside.⁹³

But like all polemical literature, Tennentist propaganda against the Moravians exaggerated the case. The Moravians were just as concerned about moral living as were other proponents of awakening, and Moravians' views did not lead them to discard virtue in favor of licentiousness. On the contrary, rather than loosening the boundaries of vice, Moravians actually fostered a strict culture of moral regulation within their highly structured religious communities.⁹⁴ And while Tennentists worried about the breakdown of public order, Moravian itinerants usually reported that they avoided theological disputes, sought to obtain the necessary permission for their activity, and preferred to announce their coming to local residents (rather than operate clandestinely as they were accused of doing).⁹⁵

What is more, Moravians did not endorse revivalist "enthusiasm" any more than moderate evangelicals did. In fact, when they encountered it, they spoke against it. In the New London region of Connecticut, for example, Anglo-Moravian itinerants Owen Rice and James Burnside visited with several prominent separatists in 1745 and a radical Baptist who advocated bodily "fitts" and enthusiasm. Rice and Burnside could not endorse the radicalism in New London, even though it meant parting on

⁹⁰ John Hancock, *The Examiner; or, Gilbert against Tennent* (Boston, 1743).

⁹¹ Coalter, *Son of Thunder*, 113–36.

⁹² Tennent did this in his pamphlet *The Examiner Examined, or Gilbert Tennent, Harmonious* (Philadelphia, 1743).

⁹³ See Finley, *Satan Strip'd*, iv–vi.

⁹⁴ On the regulatory component within Moravian Bethlehem, see Atwood, *Community of the Cross*, 174–200.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Jasper Payne and Christoph Fröhlich's itinerant journal, "Br. Jasp. Paynes u. Christ. Fröhlichs Nachricht von ihrer Reise nach Maryland, 28 Oct–27 Nov, 1747" (JD III 1), Moravian Archives.

unfriendly terms and being condemned as “opposers” to genuine evangelical faith.⁹⁶

Likewise, Moravian itinerant Richard Utley encountered radicalism among the Narragansett Indians near Charlestown, Rhode Island. The Narragansett “carried on in a very strange, confused and extravagant manner,” Utley reported, and the meeting was filled with loud wails. Sam Niles, the Narragansett minister and a well-known radical, proceeded to preach about his ecstatic experiences and transports into the “third heaven.” When given a chance to address the crowd, Utley, who had confided in his report to Spangenberg that the Narragansett were like the “prophets of Baal,” used the opportunity to condemn the enthusiasm he witnessed and urged his audience to embrace the wounds of the Savior, which would “preserve us from running into extravagancies.”⁹⁷

* * *

As the Great Awakening diminished in the 1750s and political issues came increasingly to the fore, the Tennentists mended the divisions within the Presbyterian ranks and rejoined their “Old Side” opponents.⁹⁸ So too did their tirades against the Moravians cool, becoming less frequent and less intense. To be sure, the emotional intensity remained intact for years, as is evidenced by the Moravians’ harsh interpretation of Tennent’s harrowing encounter with lightning described in the opening of this essay. Similarly, evangelical Presbyterians remained resentful of the Moravians as well. Charles Beatty, who succeeded William Tennent at Neshaminy, appealed to the Moravian threat as late as 1760 as he raised financial support for colonial Presbyterians while on a tour of England.⁹⁹ But in the aftermath of the Great Awakening, Tennentists no longer felt the need to make strong renunciations of their radical opponents.

Perhaps the relatively short duration of the Tennentist-Moravian controversy partly explains why it has not received more attention by historians of colonial religion. Yet this skirmish remains important for the way it furthers our understanding of the diverse nature, especially in the

⁹⁶ See the Burnside/Rice diary, Sept. 24–Nov. 4, 1745 (JA I 11) Moravian Archives.

⁹⁷ See “Von Utley an Spangenberg: An Account of his Visit at New London and among the Narragansett Indians, März 12. 1759–Jan 10 1760” (JF II 1a), Moravian Archives.

⁹⁸ “New Side” Presbyterians rejoined their “Old Side” coreligionists in 1758.

⁹⁹ See Helen H. Gemmill, *History of Neshaminy-Warwick Presbyterian Church, 1726–1976* (Philadelphia, 1976), 14.

TENNENTISTS, MORAVIANS, AND THE ANTINOMNIAN THREAT

middle colonies, of the Great Awakening, which reflected the broad and transatlantic currents of the period. It demonstrates the fact that within the rough-and-tumble atmosphere of the Great Awakening, the spirit of competition was not limited to Anglo currents of religious awakening, but included groups like the Moravians whose sphere of influence extended beyond the German subculture and reached into Anglo-American circles. The Tennentist-Moravian controversy also highlights the theological diversity that existed among those who promoted religious awakening and the fact that they sometimes brought divergent theological assumptions to the evangelical enterprise. In this case, amid numerous theological differences, Tennentist awakeners fixated most acutely on the role and function of the moral law and concluded that Moravians were dangerous antinomians. More than a theological controversy, however, this conflict also highlights the way antinomianism was perceived as a threat not only to orthodoxy but to the order and decency of colonial society.

Grace College

JARED S. BURKHOLDER

With a Little Help from the Friends: The Quaker and Tactical Contexts of Anthony Benezet's Abolitionist Publishing

ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 14, 1766, some Philadelphia Quakers hastened to prepare a parcel to put in the hands of John Griffith, a traveling minister who was about to board a ship that day and return to England. Griffith had arrived in Philadelphia in September 1765, and over the next year he visited Quaker meetings up and down the Atlantic seaboard from North Carolina to New Hampshire, taking their spiritual pulse, preaching the gospel, and calling for a revival of vital piety among Friends. By September 1766 he felt that his work was finished, and so he informed the ministers and elders of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on the twenty-seventh of that month of his desire to return home. Three men were duly appointed to write a certificate for Griffith "Expressive of Our Unity with his Gospel Labours among us," one of whom was Anthony Benezet, the schoolmaster, reformer, and pamphleteer.¹ Benezet was attending the Yearly Meeting as a representative of the Burlington (New Jersey) Quarterly Meeting along with his friends John Smith, a councilor in New Jersey's royal government,

This work was supported (in part) by a grant from The City University of New York PSC-CUNY Research Award Program. Earlier versions were presented at the 2008 Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists, the 2008 annual meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, and the 2010 conference on Quakers and Slavery. I am grateful for the feedback received at those forums, especially Karin Wulf's comments and Tamara Gaskell's encouragement. I also thank J. William Frost, Geoffrey Plank, and Liam Riordan for their expert reviews and Christopher Densmore of the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, for guidance at several points.

¹ John Griffith, *A Journal of the Life, Travels, and Labours in the Work of the Ministry, of John Griffith, Late of Chelmsford in Essex, in Great Britain, Formerly of Darby, in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1780), 358–419; Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Arch Street), Ministers & Elders Minutes, 1734/5–1774 (hereafter Ministers & Elders Minutes), Sept. 27, 1766, p. 469. All references to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting minutes are from the microfilms at the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

and John Woolman, the pioneering antislavery reformer, among others.² Certificate in hand, Griffith learned that the ship *Phoebe* would shortly be departing for London, and so he booked passage aboard her and arrived at Dartmouth, England, on Christmas Day after a six-week voyage.³

The package that Griffith carried with him on behalf of the Meeting for Sufferings of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting was addressed to the same committee of the London Yearly Meeting. It contained “about Four Dozen” copies of Anthony Benezet’s latest antislavery tract, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies, in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions*. Benezet’s pamphlet had been reviewed by the Overseers of the Press, the committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting charged with making sure that publications by Friends were in line with Quaker testimonies. The Meeting for Sufferings had decided on October 17, 1766, to publish Benezet’s work at its own expense, including a London reprinting. It authorized a small subcommittee to seize the opportunity of writing to English Friends if a ship were to leave Philadelphia prior to its regular November meeting. Hence when John Griffith boarded the *Phoebe* that month, he was handed copies of *A Caution and Warning* that were hot off the press of Philadelphia printer Henry Miller.⁴

This seemingly unremarkable series of events offers a glimpse into some of the inner workings of the first abolitionist campaign and why Quakers occupied its vanguard. Specifically, it reveals some of the practical ways in which Anthony Benezet harnessed the transatlantic Quaker network in support of his antislavery activism at both individual and institutional levels. For three decades prior to his death in 1784, Benezet was a pivotal figure, intellectually as well as organizationally, in the first abolition movement. Over the years he aimed his publications at different target audiences—in *A Caution and Warning*, for example, he addressed “those in Power” in the British Empire in the years preceding the Revolution—but always by tapping Quaker contacts among his personal friends, traveling ministers, and the appropriate committees. This essay

² Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Minutes, 1747–1779, Sept. 27 to Oct. 3, 1766, p. 223; Craig W. Horle et al., eds., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 2, 1710–1756 (Philadelphia, 1997), 917.

³ Griffith, *Journal*, 421–24.

⁴ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Arch St.), Meeting for Sufferings, Minutes (hereafter Sufferings, Minutes), 1756–1775, Oct. 17 and Nov. 20, 1766, pp. 266–67.

restores Benezet to the Quaker and tactical contexts in which he lived and worked, something that has been lacking in recent biographies of Quaker “saints” that have focused more on individual inspirations and accomplishments.⁵ It thereby helps to explain how Benezet achieved such broad influence and emerged, in the estimation of historian Christopher Leslie Brown, “as the leading propagandist for slave trade abolition and its chief instigator.”⁶

This essay examines how Benezet got his works published and how print culture figured in his long-running campaign against slavery. It began with reading the dozens of Benezet’s letters that are reprinted in George S. Brookes’s 1937 biography, *Friend Anthony Benezet*.⁷ In Benezet’s correspondence, print seems ubiquitous. But the answers to these questions require consultation of sources beyond his letters and published works that most scholars have relied on in studying Benezet. Records such as those of eighteenth-century Quaker meetings and committees, along with the manuscripts and memoirs of other key individuals, reveal the complex relationships of Benezet’s life and his embedment in the Society of Friends.

Anthony Benezet’s antislavery publishing efforts grew out of a dense web of interpersonal relationships that were grounded in his affiliation with the Society of Friends. These intertwined relationships included his friendships, especially with a series of collaborators; the far-flung connections made possible by correspondence and traveling Quaker ministers; and his involvement in various institutions, most importantly committees of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Benezet cultivated relationships and harnessed institutions to the work of abolitionism, deriving support and resources from them, including knowledge of how to get his work published and distributed. Moreover, his publications were highly contingent on circumstances and tactically designed to strike where he thought they might have most effect. Current events presented him with ever-shifting opportunities during the turbulent years between the 1750s and early 1780s, and so his target audiences changed over time as well, from Delaware Valley Quakers and fellow Pennsylvanians, to authorities in the

⁵ Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia, 2009); Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition* (New York, 2008).

⁶ Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 397.

⁷ George S. Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet* (Philadelphia, 1937).

British Empire, and finally to decision makers in the independent United States at both state and national levels. Accordingly, he engaged in a burst of outreach and correspondence to coincide with each of his publications. Benezet's long-running campaign against slavery calls into question Richard S. Newman's claim that "Quaker activists lacked a coherent plan to systematically attack slavery throughout American society." To the contrary, Anthony Benezet engaged the problem of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic, and his decades-long activism also challenges the chronology of accounts that only take up the story of antislavery in the postrevolutionary era.⁸

Speaking to Friends and Pennsylvanians (1740s to 1762)

"make as publick as possible for ye sake of ye youth"

In his 1808 history of the British Parliament's abolition of the African slave trade, Thomas Clarkson commented that Anthony Benezet's 1771 book, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, was "instrumental, beyond any other book ever before published, in disseminating a proper knowledge and detestation of this trade."⁹ However, before his work could achieve such renown, Benezet had first to establish himself within the Society of Friends. In other words, his status as a Philadelphia Yearly Meeting insider positioned him for his later publishing and influence. Benezet first addressed his antislavery synthesis to Quakers and then to fellow Pennsylvanians beginning in the late 1750s.

Comparatively less is known of Anthony Benezet's life prior to the 1750s than for subsequent years, but the evidence reveals that he was an upstanding and active member of the Society of Friends. Benezet was born in France in 1713, but his Huguenot family fled religious persecution there two years later. After a six-month stay in the Netherlands, the family settled in England, where they remained until relocating to Philadelphia in 1731. When exactly Anthony Benezet joined the Society of Friends is unknown, but five years later he married, with the approbation of the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Joyce Marriott of Burlington,

⁸ Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), 17. Kirsten Sword's recent article, "Remembering Dinah Nevil: Strategic Deceptions in Eighteenth-Century Antislavery," *Journal of American History* 97 (2010): 315–43, explains how abolitionists aligned the history of antislavery with the new nation, which tended to efface the Quakers' prerevolutionary activism.

⁹ Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols. (London, 1808), 1:169.

New Jersey, a Quaker minister. He chose not to follow in the path of the family trading business and instead took up teaching school, first in Germantown in 1739 and then in Philadelphia three years later.¹⁰ In 1743 Anthony and Joyce Benezet transferred their membership back to the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, and they soon became deeply involved in its work. Anthony's name appears regularly in the minutes from the mid-1740s as he engaged in the variety of the meeting's business and discipline, and he quickly moved up the ladder of responsibilities. The Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, for example, appointed him as one of its representatives to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for the first of many times in 1747. In all of these activities he worked closely with other leaders of the Society of Friends in the Delaware Valley.¹¹

The young couple also socialized in a rarefied circle. To cite just one example, John Smith recorded in his diary on June 11, 1748, "Supped at I. Pemberton, Junior's, with H. Logan, A. Benezet and wife, etc." Smith was a Philadelphia merchant, born in Burlington in 1723 to a Quaker family that had profited handsomely in trade with the West Indies. In 1750 he would be elected to represent Philadelphia County in the Pennsylvania Assembly, and the following year he was "named an elder by Philadelphia Monthly Meeting . . . [and] appointed clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders."¹² Israel Pemberton Jr. was a son of one of Philadelphia's wealthiest families. Following in his father's footsteps, he, too, became a rich merchant and pillar of Philadelphia's Quaker community. With John Smith, he was also elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1750 and served as clerk of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting throughout the 1750s.¹³ Hannah Logan, who would marry John Smith later in 1748, was the daughter of Pennsylvania's "former proprietary secretary," James Logan, and a devout Quaker. When John Smith and Hannah Logan wed, Joyce Benezet delivered the prayer. In short, Joyce

¹⁰ Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 13–18, 23–30; Nancy Slocum Hornick, "Anthony Benezet: Eighteenth-Century Social Critic, Educator and Abolitionist" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1974), 8–59.

¹¹ Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, Minutes, 1723–1772, Aug. 3, 1747, p. 125. In the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (Arch St.), Minutes, 1745–1755, Anthony Benezet's name appears over one hundred times.

¹² John Smith diary quoted in R. Morris Smith, *The Burlington Smiths: A Family History* (Philadelphia, 1877), 146; Horle et al., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania*, 917–18, quote on 918.

¹³ Horle et al., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania*, 921; John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography*, 24 vols. (New York, 1999), 17:268.

and Anthony Benezet were on close personal terms with some of their most socially prominent and religiously influential peers.¹⁴

Anthony Benezet and John Smith might seem at first glance like unlikely friends. John Woolman, for example, had a conflicted relationship with the Quaker mercantile class, and the Smith family in particular, because he felt that they had abandoned Quaker simplicity for a lifestyle of worldly grandeur.¹⁵ Benezet, however, did not share his fellow abolitionist's distaste for the Smiths; rather, he and John Smith would become the closest of collaborators in an array of endeavors. Starting in 1747, the two men visited with Quaker families and wayward Friends as part of a reform movement within the Society of Friends led by a younger generation that viewed Pennsylvania's nominally Quaker leadership as too conformed to the world and spiritually asleep.¹⁶ Benezet captured this reformist outlook in a 1760 letter to Smith, when he wrote,

It is much to be wished, that a greater concern prevailed in the Society for the promotion of practical Christianity. . . . I mean true charity, i.e., the love which was in Christ, which is the root of everything that is good. If this love prevailed, it would certainly manifest itself by fruits as well as words. Selfdenial, mortification, sympathy and benevolence, to do good and to communicate, to seek judgment and relieve the oppressed, and to the utmost of our power to bind up the broken-hearted would naturally flow as water from the fountain. I apprehend a shortness here is in a great measure the cause of the declension which prevails. Doctrines of this kind, though sometimes declared in the gallery, are too much contradicted in practice, and but little the topic of discourse, when indeed they ought to be the things chiefly and most frequently remembered and enforced, more especially upon the youth.¹⁷

Although the specific occasion of these remarks was the plight of Acadian refugees in Pennsylvania during the Seven Years' War, the desires "to do good and to communicate, to seek judgment and relieve the oppressed"

¹⁴ Horle et al., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania*, 920; Smith, *Burlington Smiths*, 154.

¹⁵ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul of John Woolman*, 80–88, 287–88, 297–305, 319–21.

¹⁶ Albert Cook Myers, ed., *Hannah Logan's Courtship: A True Narrative; the Wooing of the Daughter of James Logan, Colonial Governor of Pennsylvania, and Divers Other Matters, as Related in the Diary of Her Lover, the Honorable John Smith, Assemblyman of Pennsylvania and King's Councillor of New Jersey, 1736–1752* (Philadelphia, 1904), 176–77, 288, 291; Jack D. Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783* (Philadelphia, 1984), 73–77.

¹⁷ Anthony Benezet (hereafter AB) to John Smith, Aug. 1, 1760, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 241.

and to influence the rising generation would also fuel Benezet's first forays into abolitionism. For his abolitionist activism of the 1750s and 1760s, he had no closer assistant than John Smith.¹⁸

In 1752, in a development pregnant with future import, both Smith and Benezet were appointed to the Overseers of the Press.¹⁹ The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had established the Overseers in 1691 with the goal of trying to ensure that what Friends published was in accord with the testimony of the society. As the Discipline and Advices, the compilation of guidelines issued by the Yearly Meeting, phrased matters in a 1709 entry, "The Care of the Press being recommended to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, a Committee of Eight Friends, any five of whom are desired to take Care to Peruse all Writings or Manuscripts that are intended to be printed, before they go to the Press, with Power to correct what may not be for the Service of Truth, otherwise not to Suffer any to be printed."²⁰ In setting up the Overseers, Philadelphia followed a pattern set in London, as often was the case in Quaker affairs. The corresponding English committee, "the Second Day's Morning Meeting," had been founded in 1673 and was authorized "to consider works submitted for publication" as well as "to answer adverse publications."²¹ During the latter half of the 1740s, John Smith had gained experience with the Overseers of the Press, both in getting approval for a pamphlet of his own and assisting in the preparation of others' writings for publication, and these were experiences that he could share with his

¹⁸ Smith was Benezet's most frequent correspondent between 1757 and 1767 to judge from the extant letters in *Friend Anthony Benezet*. Smith's move back to Burlington in 1756 necessitated that their friendship continue in an epistolary mode, which preserved a record of it. On Smith's return to Burlington, see Horle et al., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania*, 924.

¹⁹ The others appointed at the same time were Mordecai Yarnall, Samuel Smith, Samuel Preston Moore, and Owen Jones; Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Minutes, 1747–1779, Sept. 23–27, 1752, pp. 32–33.

²⁰ J. William Frost, "Quaker Books in Colonial Pennsylvania," *Quaker History* 80 (1991): 6; "A Collection of Christian & Brotherly Advices Given forth from time to time By the Yearly-Meetings of Friends, for New-Jersey & Pennsylvania, Held alternately At Burlington & Philadelphia. Alphabetically digested, under proper Heads," Manuscripts, Disciplines & Advices, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1762, box 4, Friends Historical Library. This particular volume was "Copied for The Monthly-Meeting of Greenwich [N.J.]." See p. 9, s.v. "Books."

²¹ David J. Hall, "'The fiery Tryal of their Infallible Examination': Self-Control in the Regulation of Quaker Publishing in England from the 1670s to the Mid 19th Century," in *Censorship and the Control of Print in England and France 1600–1910*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester, UK, 1992), 61. See also Ian Green and Kate Peters, "Religious Publishing in England 1640–1695," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4, 1557–1695, ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (New York, 2002), 75.

close friend Benezet.²² Appointment to the Overseers of the Press would position Benezet and Smith to influence what was published by authority of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

The significance of their appointment quickly became apparent. As John Woolman noted in his journal, in 1754 he presented a manuscript to the Overseers of the Press, “who, having examined and made some small alterations in it, ordered a number of copies thereof to be published by the Yearly Meeting stock and dispersed amongst Friends.” The publication of Woolman’s *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* represented “a major breakthrough,” as historian J. William Frost has written, because in the past the Overseers had disallowed the antislavery writings of such men as Ralph Sandiford and Benjamin Lay, both of whom had published regardless and suffered disownment.²³ Also in 1754 the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting issued *An Epistle of Caution and Advice, concerning the Buying and Keeping of Slaves*, and Anthony Benezet was involved at every stage in bringing it forward. It was Benezet who in January 1754 “laid before” the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting the initial “proposal of making that Rule of our Discipline respecting the Importation of Negroes or the purchasing of them after imported more Publick, together with some reasons to discourage that Practice.” That meeting directed Benezet, John Smith, and six other men to work up the proposal for publication. In August the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting commended the manuscript to the Yearly Meeting that would take place at Burlington the following month, and Benezet was appointed as one of the representatives to the Yearly Meeting. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting approved the text and directed the Overseers of the Press to have the epistle “printed and distributed among

²² Smith had assisted in the editing of the journal of Thomas Chalkley (Philadelphia, 1749) and in reading Sophia Hume’s *An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the Province of South-Carolina . . .* (Philadelphia, 1748). He also received the approval of the Overseers of the Press to publish *The Doctrine of Christianity, As held by the People called Quakers, Vindicated: In Answer to Gilbert Tennent’s Sermon on the Lawfulness of War* (Philadelphia, 1748). For details, see Myers, *Hannah Logan’s Courtship*, 139–42, 220, 222; Horle et al., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania*, 919; Frost, “Quaker Books in Colonial Pennsylvania,” 6–7; and George J. Willauer Jr., “Editorial Practices in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia: The Journal of Thomas Chalkley in Manuscript and Print,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (1983): 224, 233.

²³ Phillips P. Moulton, ed., *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman* (New York, 1971), 47; Frost, “Quaker Books in Colonial Pennsylvania,” 16; Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (1950; repr., Gloucester, MA, 1965), 41–43, 46.

the several Quarterly and Monthly Meetings.”²⁴ As one of the Overseers of the Press, Benezet played a key role in approving and distributing these landmark abolitionist works. No doubt he was also learning firsthand how to marshal Quaker support and resources for his own future publications.

By the mid-1750s, Benezet had also become thoroughly enmeshed in a Quaker communications circuit of transatlantic scope, which would serve him well in his future antislavery work. Three examples make this point in different ways. In 1749 Benezet and another man were assigned to “draw an Epistle” from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to the corresponding body in Maryland. Such epistles were the formal, annual communication between yearly meetings. In subsequent years Benezet often received this assignment of writing to one of the other yearly meetings of Friends, and by performing the task he gained experience in communicating with Quakers in distant colonies and came to know key individuals there. Second, in March 1755, Benezet sent a brief letter to Benjamin Coffin, a Nantucket Quaker and fellow schoolmaster, at the suggestion of Israel Pemberton Jr., who had recently visited the island. Benezet’s hope in writing to Coffin was to establish “a kind of religious fellowship, with a desire of acquaintance and correspondence.” The letter demonstrates how traveling Friends connected otherwise disparate individuals and how a mutual acquaintance could form the basis for writing to a stranger. Another letter that Benezet wrote the following year to English Friend Jonah Thompson further reveals how the traveling ministry linked Quakers from around the Atlantic. Benezet entrusted his letter to Joshua Dixon, another English Friend who was about to return home; this was a means of delivery that Benezet would frequently utilize in subsequent years.²⁵ In short, well before he engaged in antislavery lobbying, Anthony Benezet had become acquainted with techniques for communicating through personal and institutional channels with other Friends throughout North America and the British Isles.

Benezet’s appointment to the newly created Meeting for Sufferings in 1756 provided him with yet more direct experience in transatlantic

²⁴ Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (Arch. St.), Minutes, 1745–1755, Jan. 25, 1754, p. 291; Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, Minutes, 1723–1772, Aug. 5, 1754, pp. 179–80; Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Minutes, 1747–1779, Sept. 14–19, 1754, p. 46. The 1754 *Epistle* is also reprinted as document 18 in *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery*, ed. J. William Frost (Norwood, PA, 1980), 167–69.

²⁵ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Minutes, 1747–1779, Sept. 16–20, 1749, p. 11; AB to Benjamin Coffin, Mar. 9, 1755, and AB to Jonah Thompson, Apr. 24, 1756, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 211, 220–21.

correspondence and the practical details of publishing. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting organized the Meeting for Sufferings in response to the dilemmas that Friends confronted with the French and Indian War. Here again they were borrowing an institutional form developed in London, which had founded its own Meeting for Sufferings to deal with religious persecutions eighty years before.²⁶ Pacifist Quakers balked at paying taxes and otherwise assisting the war effort; most famously, they withdrew from the Pennsylvania Assembly so as not to be complicit in the fighting. The crisis of the war annealed the reformist spirit among many Friends and contributed directly to Anthony Benezet's first antislavery writing.²⁷ Most of the work of the Meeting for Sufferings at this stage dealt directly with wartime problems, but sometimes it involved Benezet in writing and publishing as well. In 1759, for example, he and merchant John Reynell were "desir'd to agree with a Printer on as reasonable Terms as they can" about getting two theological pamphlets printed in Philadelphia.²⁸ The Meeting for Sufferings would become in subsequent years an important venue for the prosecution of Benezet's abolitionism.

By the late 1750s, therefore, Benezet had established many of the personal and institutional contacts that he would draw upon in support of his abolitionism. He knew how to tap friends like Smith and Pemberton for advice or financial support, network with traveling Friends to reach distant colonies or the United Kingdom, and mobilize the resources of entities such as the Overseers of the Press or the Meeting for Sufferings. At the same time, a confluence of events prompted Benezet to write his first antislavery tract. Not only was the French and Indian War raging, but Friends were also laboring to rekindle the zeal that an earlier generation of Quakers was believed to have manifested and to convince other Friends of the necessity of emancipating their slaves. Benezet wrote each of his antislavery publications with a particular audience in mind, and 1759's *Observations On the Inslaving, importing and purchasing of Negroes* was no exception. He addressed his fellow Quakers, imploring them to disassociate themselves from the slave trade and slavery.

²⁶ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Minutes, 1747–1779, Sept. 24, 1756, pp. 90–91; Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York, 1960), 12, 29.

²⁷ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 113–14, 152–58.

²⁸ Sufferings, Minutes, 1756–1775, Nov. 15, 1759, p. 163, The pamphlets were John Rutt's *The Liberty of the Spirit and of the Flesh Distinguished* and William Dell's *The Doctrine of Baptisms*.

Observations amplified the message of previous Quaker antislavery publications, for example by echoing the 1754 *Epistle of Caution and Advice* in pointing out the contradiction between the buying of slaves and the Golden Rule. Benezet compared enslavement in Africa to Indian captivity on their western frontier, so that his Pennsylvania readers could imagine the same feelings of terror and grief that the Atlantic slave trade inflicted on African villagers. Moreover, he depicted the war as a manifestation of divine displeasure on account of the British nation's involvement in the slave trade. Where Benezet broke new ground was in citing evidence from the published accounts of traders who had been to West Africa and witnessed how the slave trade fomented devastating and illegitimate wars. He concluded with the hope that "any considerate Christian" who read his pamphlet would seek to avoid being "defiled with a Gain so full of Horrors, and so palpably inconsistent with the Gospel of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which breaths nothing but Love and Good will to all Men of every Nation, Kindred, Tongue and People."²⁹

Benezet identified the audience for *Observations* as those who might be persuaded to adopt "a Conduct consistent with their Christian Profession." At the end of his essay was a brief extract from the London Yearly Meeting's 1758 epistle, which warned Quakers everywhere to "be careful to avoid being any Way concerned in reaping the unrighteous Profit arising from the iniquitous Practice of Dealing in Negroes and other Slaves." That was followed by a fictional narrative, "The Uncertainty of a Death-Bed Repentance, Illustrated under the Character of Penitens." "Penitens" was the name of "a busy notable tradesman," who confronting death at age thirty-five was filled with regret at having wasted his life in pursuit of "vain and empty things" instead of the piety and good works that would endure forever. "Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven, before I had made a few more *bargains*, or stood a little longer behind a *counter*?" Penitens asked.³⁰ It was a question that must have resonated with many of Benezet's Philadelphia neighbors, including his own brothers in the family trading business. He especially hoped to prevent young

²⁹ [Anthony Benezet], *Observations On the Inslaving, importing and purchasing of Negroes; With some Advice thereon, extracted from the Epistle of the Yearly-Meeting of the People called Quakers, held at London in the Year 1748*, 2nd ed. (Germantown, PA, 1760), reprinted in *Early American Abolitionists: A Collection of Anti-Slavery Writings, 1760–1820*, ed. James G. Basker (New York, 2005), 7–23, quote on 15. See also Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 62.

³⁰ *Observations On the Inslaving, importing and purchasing of Negroes*, in *Early American Abolitionists*, 7, 15–17.

people from becoming entangled in slavery as they set out on life's journey. As he wrote to John Smith, his "Piece on the Negro Trade" he wanted to "make as publick as possible for ye sake of ye youth, who have kept themselves hitherto clear of those People."³¹ In short, what this volume demonstrates is that Benezet's first foray into antislavery was of a piece with a much broader campaign aimed at revitalizing Quaker spirituality, especially among the younger generation. Only the year before, in 1758, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had decided to dispatch elders "to visit and treat with all such Friends who have any Slaves." Benezet's writing, in other words, dovetailed with the household visits that John Woolman and others were then making in order to persuade their brethren to emancipate their slaves.³²

To get his planned volume of tracts published, Benezet had to rely on the resources of friends with deeper pockets than his own. Letters he wrote to John Smith in February 1760 show how he tugged at Smith's conscience for financial aid. In his letter of February 8, Benezet complained that he was "tired of begging, even of those [like Smith] who could spare a Thousand Pound without having one Tear the less dropt on that account by their Heirs." He railed against "foolish and blind" men who hoarded their wealth so as to build a family fortune that only served to spoil their children; in the meantime, such shortsighted misers ignored their Christian obligation to charity. He concluded his rant by telling Smith that "thy Letter brought to my remembrance a kind proposal thou once made of joining with me in works of this Nature, and as some friends used to say, I found more than freedom to mention it to thee." Rather than offending his friend with such blunt language, Benezet must have tweaked a vulnerable spot in Smith's conscience, because he got the money he needed. Less than two weeks later he wrote to Smith, "I am obliged to thee for thy kind assistance towards the Book."³³

Benezet elaborated upon his previous arguments in a second work, *A Short Account Of that Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes*, which he published in 1762. It had the same overarching goal as *Observations* of delegitimizing slavery's customary, taken-for-granted quality, and it vastly expanded the amount of material excerpted from the African

³¹ AB to John Smith, Feb. 8, 1760, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 237.

³² Minutes of the 1758 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, extracted in Frost, *Quaker Origins of Antislavery*, 170; Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 61–62.

³³ AB to John Smith, Feb. 8, 1760, and AB to John Smith, Feb. 20, 1760, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 237–38.

travel literature. New to this second pamphlet were long quotations from Scottish Enlightenment authors George Wallace, Francis Hutcheson, and James Foster, all of whom attacked slavery as a violation of natural rights, and a twenty-six-page extract from a pamphlet published in London in 1760, *Two Dialogues on the Man-Trade*, that likewise detailed slavery's inhumanity.³⁴ He also enlarged his intended audience for *A Short Account* beyond Quakers to the colony as a whole as when he wrote, "May the Almighty preserve the Inhabitants of *Pennsylvania* from being further defiled by a Trade, which is entered upon from such sensual Motives, and carried on by such devilish Means." In recent years, the colony had experienced a growing slave population, as employers looked to replace their conventional supply of indentured servants, which the French and Indian War had disrupted.³⁵ Benezet argued that even the owners of slaves, seemingly reaping advantage, would find themselves and their children morally corrupted. He concluded with a call to end the slave trade immediately and to institute gradual emancipation.³⁶

A Short Account shows that by 1762 Benezet's abolitionism had quickly reached intellectual maturity. He would recycle many of these same arguments for the rest of his remaining twenty-two years, but he continually sought to adapt them to new circumstances and to reach new audiences. In so doing, he would continue to draw on the support of his Quaker connections in new and increasing ways.

Addressing the British Empire (1763–1769)

*"submitted to the Serious Consideration of All, more especially of
Those in Power"*

In May 1763 Anthony Benezet wrote a letter to an English Quaker, the London coal merchant Joseph Phipps, that forecast some of his pre-occupations over the next five years.³⁷ Phipps was "personally unknown"

³⁴ [Anthony Benezet], *A Short Account Of that Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1762). Regarding Benezet's combination of Quaker principles with the writings of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers and the African travel literature, see Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 57–61.

³⁵ Benezet, *A Short Account Of that Part of Africa*, 6; Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1991), 16, 55.

³⁶ Benezet, *A Short Account Of that Part of Africa*, 80, 70–71. See also Hornick, "Anthony Benezet," 343–56, for a thorough discussion of the arguments presented in *A Short Account*.

³⁷ For biographical information about Phipps, see "The Conversion of Joseph Phipps," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 10 (1913): 138–39. The fact that this letter dates from 1763 suggests

to Benezet, but a mutual friend, William Logan, a brother of Hannah Logan Smith, had suggested he write. The end of the Seven Years' War that year had altered the world map, and Benezet was beginning to grapple with how to adapt his abolitionism to the new global realities. As he told Phipps, slave importations had been "greatly encreasing in these Northern Colonies" and were "likely still more to encrease, by the New Acquisitions the English have lately made of the Factories on the great River Senegal." Indeed, the capture of several of France's West African trading posts and Caribbean possessions opened new vistas for the British slave trade and plantation investment.³⁸ In this imperial context, Benezet came to the realization that "if ever [the Negro Trade] receives a proper Check [that] must come from amongst you" in Britain. He enclosed with his letter a few copies of *A Short Account* and suggested that it be reprinted in England and "dispersed amongst those in whose power it is to put a restraint upon the Trade." He specified that he had in mind "our gracious King, his Councelors, and each member of both Houses of Parliament." Benezet expressed a hope that were these men acquainted with the horrible realities of the slave trade, they would be moved to stop it. Two additional circumstances of 1763 prompted Benezet to action. He had learned from "a pious man, who is returned from a religious visit to Barbie, a Dutch Settlem[en]t near Surinam," of a mass slave uprising in which thousands of slaves had escaped and established a maroon settlement in the interior. Benezet feared that the colonies of Georgia and South Carolina were similarly vulnerable and ripe for bloodshed. However, the thought also occurred to him that Britain's acquisition of the trans-Appalachian West afforded an opportunity for putting his emancipation ideas into practice by settling freed blacks there.³⁹ Phipps's response to Benezet's letter is unknown; he did not arrange for an English reprinting of *A Short Account*. Nevertheless, Benezet would soon turn his attention to getting another pamphlet distributed to people in authority in Britain, and he would work through acquaintances to reach strategically placed individuals, as he had done in writing to Joseph Phipps.

that the statement, "[b]efore 1766, before the Stamp Act crisis, Benezet had shown little interest in British attitudes toward slavery," needs to be revised (Brown, *Moral Capital*, 400).

³⁸ AB to Joseph Phipps, May 28, 1763, in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade of Revolutionary America, 1688–1788*, ed. Roger Bruns (New York, 1977), 97; David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 26–27, 216.

³⁹ AB to Joseph Phipps, May 28, 1763, in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*, 97–99. For further discussion of Benezet's comments regarding slave uprisings, see Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 66–69.

Benezet's desire to address political power brokers in the British Empire led him to write his third antislavery pamphlet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies, in A Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions. Collected from various Authors, and submitted to the Serious Consideration of All, more especially of Those in Power*, which came off the press of Philadelphia's Henry Miller in 1766. It repeated some of the same quotations about West Africa and the slave trade and from Enlightenment writers that he had included in *A Short Account*, but it also featured two new themes. In the first place, Benezet widened his scope to take in a fuller imperial perspective as befitted his intended audience. For example, he quoted from various authors who described how slaves in the West Indies, by far the most significant locus of British slavery, suffered from excessive labor, savage punishments, and deprivations of life's basic necessities of food, clothing, and sleep. Second, he turned the political controversies of the mid-1760s to his advantage by linking the abolitionist cause to the libertarian language of the Stamp Act crisis that was then in the air. He concluded with a familiar theme, how Britain was storing up divine wrath due to its involvement in slavery and the slave trade. He hoped that his intended readers, namely "Those in Power," would put a halt to slavery now that they had been served notice "that it is inconsistent with the plainest precepts of the gospel, the dictates of reason, and every common sentiment of humanity."⁴⁰

From its conception, Benezet wanted his pamphlet to reach people with the political power to take action against slavery, and to realize that goal he drew upon all the Quaker resources he could muster. In the summer of 1766, he presented his manuscript to the Meeting for Sufferings, which "apprehended the Publication thereof may be of use." That committee forwarded it to the Overseers of the Press, "carefully to revise & examine whether the Quotations are exactly copied, & what else relating thereto as they may deem necessary."⁴¹ In October the Meeting for Sufferings approved a printing of 2,000 copies "at the Expence of the Yearly Meeting" and also agreed to contact the London Meeting for Sufferings about a reprinting there at Philadelphia's expense. This led to

⁴⁰ Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies, in A Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions. Collected from various Authors, and submitted to the Serious Consideration of All, more especially of Those in Power* (Philadelphia, 1766), quote on 5.

⁴¹ Sufferings, Minutes, 1756–1775, Sept. 18, 1766, p. 265.

the plan mentioned at the outset of this essay to have John Griffith carry some copies with him back to England. After Griffith's departure, the Meeting for Sufferings determined at its November meeting how to allocate its copies of Benezet's pamphlet. They decided to "distribute about 1500 of them to the Several Quarterly Meetings [of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting], & to send 500 to Friends in New York Government, New England, & the Southern Provinces &c."⁴² In other words, they employed the structure of Quaker meetings to distribute *A Caution and Warning* up and down the North American coast and to England. A receipt in the miscellaneous papers of the Meeting for Sufferings confirms that the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting paid the London Quaker printer Mary Hinde a total of £23 7s 6d to print another 1,500 copies and have them delivered "at the dwellings of the Members of both houses of Parliament in & about London & Westminster."⁴³ Thus, with the assistance and resources of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Benezet fulfilled his desire to communicate with "Those in Power" about the evils of slavery. It was a rare achievement for the writings of an American Quaker to be published in England, but Benezet succeeded on account of the contacts and know-how that he had been accumulating for two decades.⁴⁴

Benezet did not rest content with these official channels of distribution but also engaged in his own letter-writing campaign. He wrote to the Church of England's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in April 1767, because it was obviously one of those powerful institutions of the empire that he wanted to enlighten about slavery. He enclosed copies of *A Caution and Warning* and asked, "respectfully, & yet earnestly[,] . . . that you would seriously consider whether the necessity of at least endeavouring to put a stop to this infamous Traffick is not an Object peculiarly worthy the attention & labour of a Society appointed for the Propagation of the Gospel." Just prior to sending his letter to the SPG, he wrote to George Dillwyn, a Quaker minister from Burlington, New Jersey, and asked for Dillwyn's help in articulating his thoughts

⁴² Sufferings, Minutes, 1756–1775, Oct. 17 and Nov. 20, 1766, pp. 266–67.

⁴³ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings, Miscellaneous Papers, Bound Index, 1755–1877, Papers 1755–1770 (hereafter Sufferings, Misc.), "Account of the charge of reprinting and distributing the caution against enslaving the Africans &c. 12 Mo. 1768." For information about Mary Hinde, see Russell S. Mortimer, "Quaker Printers, 1750–1850," *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* 50 (1963): 103–5.

⁴⁴ Frost, "Quaker Books in Colonial Pennsylvania," 4–5.

more clearly.⁴⁵ Benezet's request for Dillwyn's editorial assistance represents another manifestation of how he could enlist his friends in antislavery work. He took advantage of a further Quaker connection to have his letter to the SPG and one to the English Quaker David Barclay carried across the Atlantic "by my old Pupil Samuel Fisher, who is now embarking for London."⁴⁶

His letter to Barclay likewise came with copies of his pamphlet enclosed, and he made clear what he was trying to accomplish. "The principal intent in the publishing this Piece," he informed Barclay, "is, that it may be put in the Hands of Persons of Interest & Power on your side of the Water, if possible, to stir up their attention, & inform their Judgment from an apprehension that many are unacquainted with the corrupt Motives, & most wicked Methods by which so many thousands, yea tens of thousands of our Fellow Creatures, as free as ourselves by nature, & equally with us the Objects of redeeming Grace, are yearly brought to a miserable & untimely end." The letter is also especially noteworthy, because Benezet revealed to Barclay that the specter of slave uprising lent urgency to his work. He repeated the news that he had shared with Joseph Phipps four years earlier about the maroon community of Surinam, adding that the colony was "in imminent Danger" according to "this Week's News Paper." In addition, Benezet commented to Barclay that *A Caution and Warning* might have said much more about the danger of a slave insurrection in the Deep South due to the high proportion of slaves in the population there, but he censored himself. That was "a Subject of too tender a nature to be exposed to view, in places where it might fall into the Hands of the Negroes."⁴⁷

Two additional letters from 1767 shed further light on Benezet's efforts to distribute his pamphlet and the complications of broaching the subject of abolition to slave societies. In June of that year, he took advantage once more of a traveling Quaker to renew correspondence with a North Carolina Friend, Permeanus Hauton. Benezet enclosed *A Caution and Warning*, not singly but as part of "a collection of tracts

⁴⁵ AB to SPG, Apr. 26, 1767, and AB to George Dillwyn, Apr. 1767, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 272, 268–69. For Dillwyn, see [William Kite, comp.], *Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of Members of the Religious Society of Friends* (Philadelphia, 1870), 182–226.

⁴⁶ AB to David Barclay, Apr. 29, 1767, in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*, 139. In his letter to George Dillwyn, he also noted that he was going to take advantage of the opportunity of Samuel Fisher's voyage to send his letter to the SPG.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 140. Benezet's reference to that week's newspaper was probably a reference to the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, and *Universal Advertiser* of Apr. 27, 1767.

likely to promote true piety in the well-minded of every religious denomination.” He also noted that the antislavery pamphlet “was printed by direction of Friends, with the approbation of our last Yearly Meeting.”⁴⁸ Recognizing the sensitive nature of the topic, in other words, Benezet placed his pamphlet amid other, unobjectionably religious ones and stressed that he had the authorization of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting behind him. He emphasized the same two points the following month when he sent bound collections of religious tracts that included *A Caution and Warning* to Sophia Hume, a Quaker minister who had been residing in London for over two decades and was then visiting her native South Carolina. Hume, however, encountered strong resistance from Carolinians who refused to accept Benezet’s antislavery literature. “I am concerned to hear thou cannot venture to disperse the Pamphlet on the Negro Trade,” Benezet wrote her in October 1767. “[G]rievous, very grievous, indeed, & often near to a period is the State of that Body which cannot bear to be acquainted with its dangerous situation.”⁴⁹

The secretary of the SPG, Dr. Daniel Burton, responded to Benezet in a February 1768 letter, and after assuring Benezet that the society shared his concerns that the slaves on its Barbados plantation be well treated and instructed in Christianity, he too flatly rebuffed Benezet’s efforts. The SPG, he informed Benezet, “cannot condemn the Practice of keeping Slaves as unlawful, finding the contrary very plainly implied in the precepts given by the Apostles, both to Masters & Servants, which last were for the most part Slaves.” Burton also told Benezet that if the idea gained currency that slavery contradicted Christianity it would have two pernicious consequences: masters would clamp down on efforts to evangelize the slaves, and the slaves would become rebellious. “[T]herefore,” he concluded his letter, “tho’ the Society is fully satisfied that your intention in this matter is perfectly good, yet they most earnestly beg you not to go further in publishing your Notions, but rather to retract them, if you shall see cause, which they hope you may on further consideration.”⁵⁰

After such rejections, Anthony Benezet must have realized that slavery would not come tumbling down just because he had blown his trumpet, if indeed he had ever been so naively optimistic. Yet he would not be deterred by a few rebukes, and he continued to search for new strategies

⁴⁸ AB to Permeanus Hauton, Apr. 12, 1767, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 274–75.

⁴⁹ AB to Sophia Hume, July 25, 1767, and Oct. 15, 1767, MS vol. 163, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London; *Friend* (Philadelphia), July 1, 1909, p. 412.

⁵⁰ Daniel Burton to AB, Feb. 3, 1768, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 417–18.

to make his abolitionist message more pungent and better known. By the end of the 1760s, he was on the verge of his most ambitious and consequential period yet.

Lobbying on both sides of the British Atlantic (1770–1775)
“the best endeavours in our power, to draw the notice of governments”

The “further consideration” that Benezet gave to the subject of slavery led him to write his magnum opus, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, a book of just over two hundred pages published in 1771.⁵¹ As he told an English correspondent, his previous abolitionist works were “becoming scarce,” yet he still hoped to influence the “rising generation” against slavery. He had also continued to gain “a farther insight” into the subject, which he was eager to publicize so as to “set this weighty matter in a true point of view.”⁵² A persistent man, Benezet initially repeated his previous tactic of writing to Friends in England and calling for an appeal to king and Parliament. However, he also displayed his versatility when he embraced the suggestion that he organize petition campaigns throughout the colonies, which he supported with well-chosen printed materials. By the eve of the American Revolution, Benezet could count significant progress toward his abolitionist goals.

In *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, Benezet sounded many of the same themes that he had advanced in prior works. He held avaricious Europeans responsible for instituting the Atlantic slave trade, which had lit fires of greed, drunkenness, and war in Africa and corrupted what had been a plentiful land of decent, well-governed people. He made his most extensive use of the narratives of European travelers to the Guinea coast and the West Indies in order to document fully the natural abundance and formerly well-functioning societies of West Africa as well as the deleterious effects of the slave trade.⁵³ Benezet vividly sketched the trade from the grievous separations and violence of capture in Africa, through the

⁵¹ Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea, Its Situation, Produce and the general Disposition of its Inhabitants. With An inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave-Trade, its Nature and lamentable Effects. Also A Re-publication of the Sentiments of several Authors of Note, on this interesting Subject; particularly an Extract of a Treatise, by Granville Sharp* (Philadelphia, 1771).

⁵² AB to Samuel Fothergill, Oct. 24, 1771, and AB to John and Henry Gurney, Jan. 10, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 280–81, 284 (“true point of view”).

⁵³ Jonathan D. Sassi, “Africans in the Quaker Image: Anthony Benezet, African Travel Narratives, and Revolutionary-Era Antislavery,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 10 (2006): 95–130.

shipboard filth and high mortality of the middle passage, and on to New World plantations where slaves were worked to death and laws justified the sadistic punishments inflicted on them. He included lengthy quotations from the same Scottish Enlightenment critics of slavery as he had in *A Short Account*. One new element was an extract of a pamphlet by the English abolitionist Granville Sharp, which set forth slavery's incompatibility with the laws of England.⁵⁴ In making his case, Benezet sought both to rebut specious justifications for the slave trade, such as the argument that war captives sold into slavery were being rescued from execution, and to answer his critics. For instance, he probably included an extract of an antislavery sermon by the Bishop of Gloucester as a rejoinder to the SPG's rejection of his earlier appeal to that organization. He closed the volume with a renewed call to halt immediately any further slave imports and to emancipate gradually those already enslaved and provide them with education and land.

Prior to its publication, Benezet sent a copy of the manuscript in late 1770 to his friend Samuel Allinson for editorial feedback, leaving a blank page opposite each one with writing on it so that Allinson would have room to suggest changes. Allinson was a Quaker lawyer from Burlington, New Jersey, and clerk of the Burlington Monthly Meeting, who became Benezet's most frequent correspondent during the first half of the 1770s. Presumably the two had become close during the nine-month period in 1766 and early 1767 when Anthony and Joyce Benezet resided in Burlington. Allinson took the place of Benezet's old friend John Smith, who had grown ill in the late 1760s and died in March 1771. A letter addressed to "Dear Sammy" hints at the depth of friendship between the two men. Allinson served as Benezet's closest collaborator during his most important period of activism on the eve of the American Revolution. It was Allinson, for example, who had originally sent Benezet a copy of Sharp's pamphlet, *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery*. He also provided Benezet with advice, editing, and a key ally in the campaign to advance abolition in New Jersey.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The extract from Sharp's pamphlet was bound with *Some Historical Account of Guinea* but had its own title page and pagination: Granville Sharp, *Extract from a Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery, or Admitting the least Claim of private Property in the Persons of Men in England* (Philadelphia, 1771).

⁵⁵ AB to Samuel Allinson, Nov. 5, 1770, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 280; *ibid.*, 44 (the Benezet's Burlington residence); Horle et al., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania*, 927 (Smith's decline and death); AB to Samuel Allinson, Mar. 30, 1774 ("Dear Sammy"), Allinson Family Papers

Benezet's efforts during these years further benefited from the emergence of two Quaker printers in the Delaware Valley, Joseph Crukshank and Isaac Collins. The two men were briefly partners in Philadelphia during 1770 before Collins moved up the river to Burlington and set up shop on his own. Their work led to a boom in Quaker print, whereas the lack of a "Friends' Printer" for most of the years between 1712 and 1769 had depressed the availability of Quaker books and pamphlets.⁵⁶ Through his involvement in the Meeting for Sufferings, Benezet became accustomed to working closely with Crukshank. In September 1769, for example, that meeting directed Benezet along with James and John Pemberton to have two thousand copies printed of an epistle that urged Friends to maintain their peaceable testimony amid the protests of the revolutionary era, and they not surprisingly chose Crukshank for the job.⁵⁷ Collins and Crukshank worked with the system of Quaker meetings both to distribute their publications and to solicit subscriptions to larger-scale productions. For example, the Meeting for Sufferings in January 1775 "recommended to Friends in their Several Meetings to promote Subscriptions" for an edition of Barclay's *Apology* that Crukshank planned to produce. Quakers neither invented the system of publishing by subscription nor did they alone make use of it, but it dovetailed perfectly with their organizational structure.⁵⁸ In short, the printing offices of Crukshank and Collins effectively functioned as auxiliaries of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and provide another example of a Quaker institutional resource at Benezet's disposal. The presence of these two Quaker printers certainly facilitated Benezet's abolitionist campaign, especially because, as Collins's biographer has pointed out, "Not all colonial printers are known to have accepted manuscripts from Quaker reformers."⁵⁹ Crukshank would publish *Some Historical Account of Guinea* and all of Benezet's subsequent works, and several important New Jersey imprints by Benezet's collaborators came off Collins's press.

(1710–1939), box 6, folder 41, Haverford College Special Collections, Haverford, PA. Benezet also sent his manuscript to George Dillwyn for prepublication critique; see AB to George Dillwyn, May 2, 1771, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 279.

⁵⁶ Richard F. Hixson, *Isaac Collins: A Quaker Printer in 18th Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1968), 18; Frost, "Quaker Books in Colonial Pennsylvania," 8–9. Crukshank was identified as "Friends' Printer" in Sufferings, Minutes, 1775–1785, July 20, 1780, p. 275.

⁵⁷ Sufferings, Minutes, 1756–1775, Sept. 1 and Oct. 19, 1769, pp. 296–99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1775, p. 438A; Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity: being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines Of the People called Quakers*, 9th ed. (Philadelphia, 1775). On publishing by subscription generally, see Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia, 1996), 18–19.

⁵⁹ Hixson, *Isaac Collins*, 42.

The text of *Some Historical Account of Guinea* makes clear that its intended audience was once again “those in whose power it may be, to put a stop to any further progress” of slavery.⁶⁰ In particular, Benezet wanted to put the British Crown and Parliament on notice that laws they passed to regulate the slave trade made them responsible for it, although he exculpated the monarchy to some extent by writing that Queen Elizabeth had been deceived about the slave trade’s grim realities, and he again highlighted the contradictions between slavery and British liberalism.⁶¹ To reach his ultimate audience of king and Parliament, Benezet during late 1771 and the first half of 1772 reprised his strategy from the 1760s of writing to contacts in the United Kingdom and enclosing copies of his work. He began with “some of the most weighty of our Friends in London”; his Philadelphia friend Benjamin Franklin, who was then also in London as Pennsylvania’s colonial agent; and Granville Sharp, who at this point he only knew through his publications.⁶² These several letters all expressed the same two tactical aims. He suggested that excerpts of his book might be printed in British newspapers so as to foster debate there over slavery. He also hoped for a direct appeal to King George III and Parliament, and he particularly urged English and Irish Quakers to take the lead. As he wrote to the English Quaker capitalists John and Henry Gurney, “we, as a people, have not been backward in applying to Parliament, in cases where our sufferings have been by no means comparable to the present case.” And he raised the stakes with them by invoking the biblical example of Mordecai’s challenging words to Queen Esther. “May we altogether hold our peace?” he implored the Gurneys. “Who knoweth if we are not intended for such a service as this? And what judgments may fall on us (on account of our unfeeling and unbelieving hearts) when deliverance ariseth another way?” As in his dealings with the “Quaker grandees” of Philadelphia and Burlington, Benezet knew how to cast a powerful appeal for support by striking at Friends’ consciences.⁶³

⁶⁰ Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, i–ii.

⁶¹ Ibid., 126–27, 58, 92.

⁶² Benezet specified that those “weighty” London Friends to whom he wrote included “Doct. Fothergill, Thos. Corbin, John Elliott, Mark Beaufoy &c. & now to David Barclay, Thomas Wagstaff &c.” AB to Benjamin Franklin, Apr. 27, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 287–88. Hornick, “Anthony Benezet,” 380–410, similarly surveys Benezet’s distribution of *Some Historical Account of Guinea* from 1771 to 1774.

⁶³ AB to John and Henry Gurney, Jan. 10, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 286. His biblical reference was to Esther 4:14. The phrase “Quaker grandees” comes from Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682–1763* (New York, 1963), chap. 6.

The recent visit of two traveling ministers, Samuel Neale and Joseph Oxley, enabled Benezet's outreach to prominent Friends in the British Isles. The two men, Oxley from Norwich, England, and Neale from Cork, Ireland, felt moved by the Spirit in the summer of 1769 to make a religious visit to North America, which they commenced the following year. Like John Griffith in the previous decade, Oxley and Neale ministered and preached for a year and a half at Friends' meetings from the Carolinas to New England.⁶⁴ Philadelphia served as the home base for their visit and is where they met Anthony Benezet.⁶⁵ Oxley encouraged Benezet to write to his fellow Norwich residents, the Gurneys, and Neale provided an entrée to the close-knit community of Irish Quakers. Benezet used his acquaintance with Neale to send a letter to Richard Shackelton, who was, in turn, a close friend of Edmund Burke, member of Parliament. Both Burke and Shackelton had as boys attended the school at Ballitore, Ireland, that had been founded by Richard's father, Abraham Shackelton. It was Benezet's aim in writing to Richard Shackelton, who then headed the school, that his message would reach Burke, whom he thought "may be a good instrument in forwarding an inquiry into this potent evil" of slavery.⁶⁶ Benezet's dealings with Oxley and Neale confirm Frederick B. Tolles's observation that "public Friends,' constantly circulating from meeting to meeting, provided the cement which made the larger community of the Society of Friends a reality."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Richard S. Harrison, *A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Quakers* (Dublin, Ire., 1997), 75–76; [Joseph Pike and Joseph Oxley], *Some Account of the Life of Joseph Pike of Cork, in Ireland, who Died in the Year 1729, written by himself: also, a Journal of the Life and Gospel Labours of Joseph Oxley of Norwich, who Died in the Year 1775; Together with Letters Addressed to their Friends. Now first published from the original MSS. With Preliminary Observations, by John Barclay* (London, 1837), 294–389.

⁶⁵ It is probably safe to assume that Oxley and Neale first met Benezet during October 1770 as they made the rounds of Friends' meetings in Philadelphia; see [Pike and Oxley], *Some Account of the Life of Joseph Pike . . . also, a Journal of the Life and Gospel Labours of Joseph Oxley*, 325. Moreover, it can be documented that all three were in the city for the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in September 1771; see *ibid.*, 372, and Samuel Neale, *Some Account of the Lives and Religious Labours of Samuel Neale, and Mary Neale, Formerly Mary Peisley, Both of Ireland* (1805; Philadelphia, [1845]), 202–3. Neale presented the certificates from Irish Friends that authorized his "Religious visit" at the meeting of Ministers and Elders, which Benezet attended as a representative for Philadelphia; see *Ministers & Elders Minutes*, Sept. 21–26, 1771, pp. 508, 511.

⁶⁶ AB to John and Henry Gurney, Jan. 10, 1772, and AB to Richard Shackelton, June 6, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 283–84, 293–96, quote on 296; Harrison, *Biographical Dictionary of Irish Quakers*, 91–93; Mary Leadbeater, ed., *Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, late of Ballitore, Ireland; compiled by their daughter Mary Leadbeater. Including a Concise Biographical Sketch, and Some Letters, of Her Grandfather, Abraham Shackleton* (London, 1822), 3–8.

⁶⁷ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 89–90.

And Benezet's antislavery campaign benefited from his access to the traveling ministry, which extended his outreach across the Atlantic.

Benezet's initial spate of letter writing in 1771–1772 yielded mixed results. Benjamin Franklin replied that he had published a short piece in the *London Chronicle* that cited Benezet's data regarding the volume of the slave trade and made "some close remarks on the hypocrisy of this country, which encourages such a detestable commerce by laws for promoting the Guinea trade; while it piqued itself on its virtue, love of liberty, and the equity of its courts, in setting free a single negro." (The last was a reference to Lord Mansfield's decision in the case of James Somersett.) However, the Irish Quaker James Gough, perhaps responding to Benezet's communication with Richard Shackelton, gave a discouraging report. "I handed the books about to Fr[ien]ds here of the upper Rank," he wrote from Bristol in late 1772. "And were rich Fr[ien]ds Spirited like thee they would print a large Number of them in order to distribute & present them to every Member of both Houses of Parliament: But few lay duely to heart the deep & grievous Sufferings of their enslaved Fellow mortals." Apparently Benezet's hope for a Quaker address to Parliament was going nowhere.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the payoff from his letter to Granville Sharp probably exceeded Benezet's expectations. In Sharp he found an English collaborator whose advice he valued and who actively promoted the cause of abolition on his own.

Benezet must have been electrified when he received Sharp's reply in late October 1772.⁶⁹ In the first place, Sharp had distributed copies of the extract of his pamphlet that Benezet had sent him to Lord Mansfield and the lawyers for James Somersett in the midst of that trial. In addition, Sharp noted that he had been in conversation with the Archbishop of York, who was favorably disposed toward antislavery. Most important, Sharp encouraged Benezet that petitions from the colonies could make a noticeable contribution toward suppressing the slave trade and advised him on the proper constitutional distinction between directing petitions to Parliament or the king. Sharp asked Benezet to let him know if peti-

⁶⁸ Benjamin Franklin to AB, Aug. 22, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 422; James Gough to AB, Nov. 1, 1772, Vaux Family Papers, 1739–1923, series 1d: miscellaneous 1794–1835, box 5, folder 26, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Regarding English Quakers' reluctance to take action, see Brown, *Moral Capital*, 404–12.

⁶⁹ Benezet noted receipt of Sharp's "long intelligent letter" in AB to Samuel Allinson, Oct. 30, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 296. Regarding the Sharp-Benezet correspondence, see also Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 144–53.

tions would be forthcoming, “because I would endeavour to prevail on some of the bishops to present the memorials that are for the King; and also on Sir George Saville, or some other respectable member of the Lower House, to present the petitions to Parliament.” Granville Sharp, in other words, gave Benezet access to exactly the powerful people in the British Empire whom he had been trying to reach.⁷⁰

Following the receipt of Sharp’s letter, Benezet swung into action to organize the petitions that Sharp had recommended. He communicated with Friends in several colonies, sending them copies of both *Some Historical Account of Guinea* and extracts of Sharp’s letter. He also asked Samuel Allinson to put his skills as an attorney to work and draft suitable language for a petition.⁷¹ By March 1773, Benezet had fine-tuned his strategy after “consulting with some thoughtful people.” Instead of just circulating petitions that would be forwarded directly to London, his plan changed to petitioning the several colonial legislatures, who would then make appeals to the king and Parliament to curtail the slave trade. This strategy paid deference to the sovereignty of American legislatures, a topic much in the air at that time. In adopting this strategy, Benezet applied lessons learned from a recent, successful campaign in Pennsylvania, where petitions to the assembly from an interdenominational coalition of signers had succeeded in getting a law passed that doubled the import duty on slaves, which, he wrote to Sharp, “is thought will amount to a tacit prohibition of the trade.”⁷² To support this legislative push in Pennsylvania, Benezet had solicited his fellow Philadelphian Benjamin Rush to publish an abolitionist pamphlet entitled *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements, on the Slavery of the Negroes in America*. Rush’s pamphlet was intended “to lay the weight of the matter briefly before the members of the session, and other active members of the government.”⁷³ Benezet’s abolitionist print strategy here widened to deploy works written by others, which he was happy to use when appropriate and would recur to in the years ahead.

⁷⁰ Granville Sharp to AB, Aug. 21, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 418–22, quote on 421; Brown, *Moral Capital*, 162–70.

⁷¹ Prince Hoare, ed., *Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq. Composed from His Own Manuscripts, and Other Authentic Documents in the Possession of His Family and of the African Institution*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1828), 1:168–69; Samuel Allinson to AB, Nov. 19, 1772, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 422–23.

⁷² AB to Granville Sharp, Mar. 29, 1773, in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*, 263–67, quotes on 266 and 263; Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 86.

⁷³ AB to Dr. John Fothergill, Apr. 28, 1773, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 303.

Throughout 1773 and into 1774, Benezet worked to promote abolitionist activity and legislative action in British colonies from New England to the West Indies. As he told the London Friend Dr. John Fothergill, “the best endeavours in our power, to draw the notice of governments, upon the grievous iniquity and great danger attendant on a further prosecution of the slave trade, is what every truly sympathising mind cannot but earnestly desire, and under Divine direction promote to the utmost of their power.”⁷⁴ While it would be beyond the scope of this essay to trace Benezet’s antislavery campaigns through every colonial capital and on to London, his efforts in New Jersey, to take just one example, reveal his *modus operandi*. He collaborated with Friends there to mount a major campaign to pass legislation that would cut off further slave imports and make manumissions less burdensome.

Benezet’s allies arranged with Isaac Collins for the publication in 1773 of three pamphlets. One was *An Essay on Slavery, Proving from Scripture its Inconsistency with Humanity and Religion* by Granville Sharp, which was a rebuttal of an earlier pamphlet by the Anglican clergyman Thomas Thompson, whom some New Jersey readers may have remembered from his stint as an SPG missionary there from 1745 to 1750.⁷⁵ Sharp had originally sent his essay in manuscript form to Benezet, who then passed it on to Samuel Allinson. Allinson penned the long preface to the pamphlet and had it published, only later asking Sharp’s permission. “I hope thou wilt not be displeased at the Liberty I took with this piece,” he wrote to Sharp in May 1774, “as my sole Motive was to advance the benevolent intention of its author, and I had A. Benezet[']s permission for my Justification.”⁷⁶ A former student of Benezet’s, the Burlington Quaker William Dillwyn, wrote a second pamphlet, *Brief Considerations on Slavery, and the Expediency of its Abolition*, that addressed New Jersey’s legislators. The sixteen-page pamphlet concisely made the case that slavery violated the Golden Rule,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 302–3.

⁷⁵ Granville Sharp, *An Essay on Slavery, Proving from Scripture its Inconsistency with Humanity and Religion; In Answer to a late Publication, entitled, “The African Trade for Negro Slaves shewn to be consistent with Principles of Humanity, and with the Laws of Revealed Religion”* (Burlington, NJ, 1773); Thomas Thompson, *The African Trade for Negro Slaves, shewn to be Consistent with Principles of Humanity, and with the Laws of Revealed Religion* (Canterbury, Eng., [1772]); Thompson, *An Account of Two Missionary Voyages By the Appointment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The one to New Jersey in North America, the other from America to the Coast of Guiney* (1758; repr., London, 1937).

⁷⁶ Samuel Allinson to Granville Sharp, May 10, 1774, Allinson Family Papers, box 3, folder 30A.

inflicted injustice and misery on the enslaved, and corrupted the morals of everyone who came into contact with it, and then called for a prohibition on slave imports. Dillwyn also offered a proposal for a gradual emancipation act that included an extended payment plan whereby owners could pay an affordable sum that would protect society from the liability of any manumitted slaves becoming burdens on the public welfare. That gradual emancipation plan led directly to a third Burlington imprint of just eight pages that provided some calculations that further demonstrated the plan's fiscal soundness and affordability.⁷⁷ All three pamphlets were published, Allinson informed Sharp, to "give to our assemblymen with design to recommend the above mentioned bill ['for the more equitable manumission of Slaves'], and secure its passing into a Law."⁷⁸

A letter that Allinson received from Assemblyman Elias Boudinot testified to the headway that the lobbying campaign made. Boudinot, a Presbyterian from Elizabethtown, enclosed a petition that he had circulated at Allinson's request and updated Allinson on the legislative maneuvering that he was undertaking on the bill's behalf. Ultimately the bill did not become law as the American Revolution swept away the colonial legislature and intruded more pressing business.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the New Jersey experience provides detailed evidence that Anthony Benezet had learned by 1773 how to influence colonial legislation through collaboration with leading Friends and through orchestrating petitions drives that were supported closely by pamphlets aimed at the specific situation.

Benezet's optimism blossomed along with the flowers of spring 1774 as he took stock of developments in Europe and America. In late March he received an update from Granville Sharp, who had been busy in bringing the colonial abolitionist petitions to the attention of Lord Dartmouth, the American secretary. Sharp assured Benezet that he would assail any opposition from the African merchants or West Indian interests so vehemently "as, I trust, will make their 'Ears tingle.'" He also

⁷⁷ [William Dillwyn], *Brief Considerations on Slavery, and the Expediency of its Abolition. With Some Hints on the Means whereby it may be gradually effected. Recommended to the serious Attention of All, and especially of those entrusted with the Powers of Legislation* (Burlington, NJ, 1773), 3, 10; *An Account stated on the Manumission of Slaves, Shewing, that in Lieu of the usual Security required, certain Sums paid at several Periods of Manumission, will amply secure the Publick, as well as their Owners from any future Burden* ([Burlington, NJ, 1773]). Benezet identified William Dillwyn as "my friend and old pupil" in AB to John Wesley, May 23, 1774, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 318.

⁷⁸ Samuel Allinson to Granville Sharp, May 10, 1774, Allinson Family Papers, box 3, folder 30A.

⁷⁹ Elias Boudinot to Samuel Allinson, Jan. 29, 1774, Allinson Family Papers, box 6, folder 47.

informed Benezet that he had recently read a manuscript essay from John Wesley that drew heavily on *Some Historical Account of Guinea*; this would soon be published with the title of *Thoughts upon Slavery*.⁸⁰ Thus, the antislavery cause was being heard in England among influential leaders. As for America, Benezet noted to the Virginia Quaker Robert Pleasants that all of the colonies from Maryland northward “have more or less instructed their representatives to endeavour that an end may be put to any further import.” Surveying all these hopeful portents, Benezet believed that the apocalypse of slavery was drawing nigh. He invoked the imagery of Daniel 2:31–45 when he wrote, “I am not discouraged having to hope & believe that which is as y[e] little stone cut out of y[e] mountain wilt strike at y[e] feet of this great image & bring it down in God’s name.”⁸¹

At the same time, Benezet did not let himself get carried away, but kept up his guard against any inaccuracies making their way into antislavery publications. He informed John Wesley, for example, of an error he had found in *Thoughts upon Slavery*, which troubled him because “it might give an advantage, to the advocate for the trade, to lessen the strength of what is strictly true.” Benezet’s concern for accuracy, reflecting his experience reviewing manuscripts with the Overseers of the Press, was now given added urgency from the sniping of proslavery writers. He noted, for instance, that *Some Historical Account of Guinea* had been criticized, “though without real ground” he told Wesley, for painting a rose-colored picture of West African societies. During the summer of 1774, as Benezet prepared an annotated edition of *Thoughts upon Slavery* for a Philadelphia reprinting, he wished that Samuel Allinson were available to review his work, since that “might preserve me from inadvertently publishing something w[hi]ch might rather weaken the cause we have both at heart.”⁸²

By autumn 1774 the pounding waves of revolutionary events were threatening to swamp Benezet’s lobbying efforts, but he marked two major advances. First, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting “made disownment the

⁸⁰ Granville Sharp to AB, Jan. 7, 1774, in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*, 302–6, quote on 304. He noted receipt of the letter in AB to Samuel Allinson, Mar. 30, 1774, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 311. John Wesley’s *Thoughts upon Slavery* was published in London, and reprinted in Philadelphia, in 1774.

⁸¹ AB to Robert Pleasants, May 5, 1774, Anthony Benezet Letters, 1750–1936, Haverford College Special Collections; AB to Moses Brown, May 9, 1774, in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*, 310.

⁸² AB to John Wesley, May 23, 1774, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 318–19; AB to Samuel Allinson, July 7, 1774, Allinson Family Papers, box 6, folder 41.

penalty for selling or transferring slaves for any reason but to set them free.” Second, when the First Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia in September, Benezet set about “endeavouring to lay before all the delegates I have conversed with, the dreadful situation of the people in the most southern province, and the absolute necessity they are under of ceasing at least from any further import of negroes.” Indeed, the Congress did ban any further slave imports, which fulfilled one of Benezet’s major goals.⁸³ In future years, he would again look to the Continental Congress as a center of power that might take further action against the slave trade.

Just over a month before shots were fired at Lexington and Concord, Benezet continued to push for further gains. He wrote to the Countess of Huntingdon, urging her to reconsider the use of enslaved labor at the Georgia orphanage founded by George Whitefield that she patronized. In his typical manner, he enclosed copies of his Philadelphia edition of Wesley’s *Thoughts upon Slavery* and John Woolman’s *Journal*. He concluded his letter with the following statement, which epitomized the motivation behind his abolitionist activities: “where the lives & natural as well as religious welfare of so vast a number of our Fellow Creatures is concerned, to be Silent, where we apprehend is a duty to speak our sense of that which causes us to go mourning on our way, would be criminal.”⁸⁴ It is a profound irony that the American Revolution—justified on the grounds of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—would cut short Benezet’s transatlantic lobbying campaign and temporarily stall further progress against human bondage.

Campaigning in Revolutionary Times (1776–1784)

“there is an apprehension that ye slave trade may be again opened”

The American Revolution’s outbreak sidetracked Benezet’s antislavery efforts as other pressing problems demanded his attention, but as circumstances allowed he continued to lobby for abolition during the war years. When the fighting subsided and the end of the war appeared on

⁸³ Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 71; AB to Samuel Allinson, Oct. 23, 1774, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 321; Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago, 1967), 98.

⁸⁴ AB to Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, Mar. 10, 1775, in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*, 379–84, quote on 384. Woolman’s journal was published as *An Extract from John Woolman’s Journal in Manuscript, concerning the Ministry* ([Philadelphia, 1770]).

the horizon by 1782, he launched one more effort to halt the slave trade and published his final abolitionist tract. In this he was aided by a younger cohort of Friends who gathered around the old man and would carry the torch after his death even as the Meeting for Sufferings hesitated to get behind his latest publications. In the year before his death in May 1784, Benezet succeeded in reestablishing contact with antislavery British Quakers and even managed to get a letter delivered to the queen, while in the United States he personally trekked to Princeton, New Jersey, and presented an address to the Continental Congress meeting there. As had been his pattern since the 1750s, he wrote as a tactical response to perceived opportunities for effective action and tapped into the transatlantic Quaker network for assistance.

The Revolutionary War was a severe trial for American Friends, and Anthony Benezet labored alongside other leaders to defend the society's peace testimony and those who suffered on account of it. Patriots scorned and harassed neutral Quakers for their refusal to perform military service or swear allegiance to the new government. As General Howe's troops advanced on the Pennsylvania capital, patriots exiled to Winchester, Virginia, seventeen leading Quakers whom they suspected of loyalist sympathies, including Anthony Benezet's good friends the Pemberton brothers, Israel, James, and John. Benezet was one of ten men appointed by the Meeting for Sufferings in September 1777 to formulate a response to the banishments and the "several False Charges and Calumnies which have been published against us in the public newspapers by order of the Congress."⁸⁵ He was still trying to deal with the fallout of the occupation and exiles in February 1779 when he wrote to the president of the Continental Congress, John Jay, and expressed the hope that Jay would not take offense at "Friends' refusal to take part in matters of a military nature" but that Jay could "distinguish between such who are active in opposition [to the patriot cause], and those who have been restrained [from participating] from an apprehension of [religious] duty."⁸⁶ Amid

⁸⁵ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 222–42; Robert F. Oaks, "Philadelphians in Exile: The Problem of Loyalty during the American Revolution," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 96 (1972): 298–325; Sufferings, Minutes, 1775–1785, Sept. 18, 1777, pp. 129–131, quote on 130.

⁸⁶ AB to John Jay, Feb. 7, 1779, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 330. See also Sufferings, Minutes, 1775–1785, Aug. 5, 1778, pp. 161–62, where Benezet is part of a committee appointed to present a protest to the Pennsylvania Assembly regarding Quakers being jailed "for refusing to pay the Fines imposed in lieu of personal Services in the present War and others for refusing to take the Test prescribed by some Laws lately made."

the turmoil of the war, antislavery largely disappeared as a topic from Benezet's correspondence for the five years from 1777 to 1781 as he focused instead on other issues.

Despite the war's challenges, Benezet did publish *Serious Considerations On several Important Subjects* in 1778, a portion of which dealt with slavery and abolition. The first and longest section of the work articulated the Quaker view that the war that was then raging was destructive, sinful, and contrary to numerous passages of scripture.⁸⁷ In part two, he argued that slavery arose from the same motives of pride and avarice that fueled war. He quoted from both the Declaration of Independence and the first article of the Virginia Declaration of Rights in order to contrast with slavery their statements about mankind's natural rights to liberty. Such crystalline expressions of natural liberty turned slaveholding Americans into "a witness against themselves," Benezet wrote in an echo of Joshua 24:22. The new United States of America he portrayed as a guilty nation that was already feeling the sting of divine judgments.⁸⁸ In this Benezet once again displayed his tactical shrewdness for turning current events to the abolitionist cause.⁸⁹

Benezet sought to distribute *Serious Considerations* as he had his previous works and as wartime circumstances would permit. He enclosed a copy in his aforementioned letter to John Jay, for example, and he directed Samuel Allinson to deliver one to New Jersey governor William Livingston.⁹⁰ In Philadelphia, Benezet could distribute his work in person and so did not leave behind a trail of letters to document his activities. Nevertheless, he doggedly lobbied Pennsylvania legislators and witnessed abolitionists' greatest victory to date, the passage of the state's landmark gradual emancipation act of 1780. He may have provided input to those who drafted the bill's preamble, but he was disappointed in the

⁸⁷ [Anthony 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), 2–26.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 27–31, quote on 31. The text of the Virginia Declaration of Rights is available online via the Yale Law School's Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/virginia.asp.

⁸⁹ As Christopher Leslie Brown has likewise written, Benezet was "an opportunist," who "seized on and attempted to exploit those situations that promised to expand the constituency for antislavery measures." Brown, *Moral Capital*, 400.

⁹⁰ Samuel Allinson to William Livingston, July 13, 1778, in *The Papers of William Livingston*, ed. Carl E. Prince et al., 5 vols. (vol. 1–2, Trenton, NJ, 1979–1980; vol. 3–5, New Brunswick, NJ, 1986–1988): 2:388. Livingston replied to Allinson that, in his opinion, "[t]he piece on Slave keeping is excellent—but the arguments against the lawfulness of War have been answered a thousand times." William Livingston to Samuel Allinson, July 25, 1778, in *ibid.*, 2:403–4.

final legislation that extended until age twenty-eight the point at which children born to slave mothers would be freed.⁹¹

By 1782, as the end of the Revolutionary War loomed, Benezet recognized that the time had arrived for him to renew his abolitionist correspondence based on what he had learned of circumstances in both Britain and America. His thoughts are revealed in an undated letter he wrote to George Dillwyn in late 1782 or early 1783.⁹² Dillwyn was a former student of Benezet's who had become a close friend despite being twenty-five years his junior; during the war years he was Benezet's most frequent correspondent.⁹³ Benezet wrote to Dillwyn that he had sent letters to half a dozen men in England, including George's brother William who was then residing there, "on the necessity of Friends, by themselves, or in conjunction with others[,] laying before Parliament that if they expect the Divine Blessing on their labour, they must endeavour to put an end to the Slave Trade." Benezet admitted to Dillwyn that his attempt twenty years earlier to prompt English Friends to lobby Parliament had fallen on deaf ears. Now, however, he sensed a different mood and the possibility for a renewed push. He observed that there "now appears a favorable Crissis; the minds of people generally appearing in some degree of softness." Indeed, recent scholarship has confirmed that Britain's defeat in the American War for Independence touched off a national soul-searching that played a key role in jump-starting the abolitionist movement.⁹⁴ As for the American scene, Benezet mentioned to Dillwyn that he had drafted the pamphlet that would be published in 1783 as *Short Observations on*

⁹¹ Zilvermit, *First Emancipation*, 131; Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 102–4, 223n23.

⁹² AB to George Dillwyn, n.d., in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 372–75. My dating of the letter is based upon Benezet's reference to his manuscript that would be published as *Short Observations on Slavery, Introductory to some Extracts from the writing of the Abbe Raynal, on that important Subject* ([Philadelphia, 1783]). In March 1783, Benezet wrote to Benjamin Franklin that "I am at the point of publishing a small representation . . . introductory to some deep remark of the Abbe Raynall on that important subject [of slavery]," which suggests that the pamphlet appeared that year; see AB to Benjamin Franklin, Mar. 5, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 387. I therefore conclude that Benezet's letter to Dillwyn was written sometime in the months prior to March 1783, in either late 1782 or early 1783.

⁹³ For Dillwyn's age, see [Kite, comp.], *Biographical Sketches*, 182. The claim for "most frequent correspondent" is based on the letters reprinted in Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*. On Benezet's relationship with Dillwyn, see also Ann Dillwyn Alexander, *Gathered Fragments: Briefly Illustrative of the Life of George Dillwyn, of Burlington, West New Jersey, North America* (London, 1858), 10.

⁹⁴ AB to George Dillwyn, n.d., in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 373–74; Brown, *Moral Capital*. The six men Benezet mentioned were William Dillwyn, Morris Birkbeck, Granville Sharp, Jacob Duché, David Barclay, and Thomas Wagstaffe.

Slavery, Introductory to some Extracts from the writing of the Abbe Raynal, on that important Subject and submitted it to the Meeting for Sufferings for review. (The Meeting for Sufferings had subsumed the role of the Overseers of the Press in 1771.) This pamphlet, he wrote, “we intend to put in ye hands of all the men [in] power on the continent particularly to ye southward where there is an apprehension that ye slave trade may be again opened.”⁹⁵ In sum, with the Revolutionary War drawing to a close and “when others rested content with the progress already made,” Benezet looked to resume his prewar lobbying activities on both sides of the Atlantic.⁹⁶ Once again he planned to deploy a new publication written for that particular situation.

The Meeting for Sufferings, however, hesitated to approve Benezet’s text. As he wrote to George Dillwyn, the committee had had his work “for I think more than six months” and not yet authorized its publication. In frustration Benezet had “several times intended to lay aside ye design,” he told Dillwyn, “but cannot with ease of mind.” There was, apparently, a division among the Quaker leadership over whether or not to authorize his latest work. In Benezet’s analysis, his text met with “a kind of a damp cast upon it by some friends, I think arising from a contraction of Ideas tho’ approved by others.”⁹⁷ Probably some members of the Meeting for Sufferings hesitated to publish anything that might stir even more antagonism toward the Society of Friends. While Benezet did not reveal the names of those who were casting “a kind of damp” upon his work, he identified a few younger men such as Warner Mifflin (b. 1745), John Parrish Jr. (b. 1729), and Nicholas Waln (b. 1742), who “thought it might be of service.”⁹⁸ In his last years, Benezet would rely on the assistance of these younger protégés.

⁹⁵ AB to George Dillwyn, n.d., in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 374–75. For the Meeting of Sufferings taking over the role of the Overseers of the Press, see Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Minutes, 1747–1779, Sept. 21–26, 1771, p. 280.

⁹⁶ Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 113.

⁹⁷ AB to George Dillwyn, n.d., in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 374–75.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 374; AB to John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 394 (quote). For the birth dates of Mifflin, Parrish, and Waln, respectively, see Hilda Justice, comp., *Life and Ancestry of Warner Mifflin: Friend, Philanthropist, Patriot* (Philadelphia, 1905), 16; Susanna Parrish Wharton, comp., *The Parrish Family (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Including the related families of Cox, Dillwyn, Roberts, Chandler, Mitchell, Painter, [and] Pusey, by Dillwyn Parrish, 1809–1886, With special reference to Joseph Parrish, M.D., 1779–1840, With sketches of his children, by members of the family and others* (Philadelphia, 1925), 62; Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 11 vols. (New York, 1958–1964), 10:386.

This was not the first time that Benezet had run into a problem with obtaining Friends' authorization to publish during the war years, nor was he the only author who had to confront that difficulty. He noted that only "with very great difficulty" had he "prevailed upon friends to print" *A letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm, with his Answer* in 1781.⁹⁹ Whereas Benezet perseveringly won approval in that case, David Cooper, by contrast, decided to circumvent the oversight process altogether when in both 1772 and 1783 he published his antislavery pamphlets anonymously. He rationalized the decision in his own mind when he wrote in his diary that he considered the requirement that Quakers must submit their proposed publications to advance scrutiny as designed "to guard the reputation of the Society, and that any performance for which the Society was not answerable, nor its reputation thereby in any way affected, said rule could not be supposed to reach."¹⁰⁰ Whether or not Benezet followed the same reasoning is unknown. *Short Observations on Slavery* did not carry his name on its first page, and that led Cooper to conclude that "he [Benezet] has not consulted the overseers of the press, which I suppose has been the case, as he tells me the difficulties arising there have occasioned him to lay aside the essay upon which he had bestowed so much care." Then again, the pamphlet's next to last page identified "A. Benezet" as "[t]he writer of the foregoing introductory observations," so it was not published anonymously, strictly speaking.¹⁰¹ Probably Benezet and his friends convinced the publication committee to relent, and *Short Observations on Slavery* came off the press of Joseph Crukshank in early 1783.

In *Short Observations on Slavery* Benezet put forth his by-then familiar blend of the natural-rights language of the Continental Congress, Enlightenment humanitarianism, sentimental appeals to sympathy, and biblical texts about justice for the oppressed and divine vengeance to the oppressors, which he contrasted with American slavery, "a bondage often rigorous and cruel . . . without condition, without end, and without appeal." He repeated his call for gradual emancipation, noting that "[i]t will be when measures of this kind takes place in America, and when a final end is put to a horrible Slave Trade in England, that both countries

⁹⁹ AB to George Dillwyn, n.d., in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 375.

¹⁰⁰ *Friends' Review*, July 19, 1862, pp. 722–23, quote on 722; Henry J. Cadbury, "Quaker Bibliographical Notes," *Bulletin of the Friends' Historical Association* 26 (1937): 39–53.

¹⁰¹ David Cooper to Samuel Allinson, June 15, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 457; Benezet, *Short Observations on Slavery*, 11.

may expect to flourish, under the blessing of Him who delights in Justice and Mercy.”¹⁰² That remark confirms that the audience Benezet sought for this, his final pamphlet, included readers on both sides of the Atlantic. About one-third of the twelve-page pamphlet consisted of an extract from the Abbé Raynal’s *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, the purpose of which, Benezet wrote, was to “assist in eradicating the deep rooted prejudice which an education amongst Slaves has planted in many minds.” Benezet quoted Raynal’s statements that slavery was contrary to “universal justice,” that slave traders were worse than highway robbers, and that no religion could legitimately justify slavery.¹⁰³

In addition to the extract from the Abbé Raynal, what was new in *Short Observations* was Benezet’s use of examples drawn from his own local experience. In this pamphlet there was no reference to the testimony of travel writers upon whom he had drawn so fruitfully and frequently in his past writings. Instead, Benezet cited the case of “a Negroe, residing near Philadelphia” who wept over his master’s children, because they reminded him of his own family who had been left behind in Africa when he was kidnapped and whom he would never see again.¹⁰⁴ Living in Philadelphia, he had seen southern congressmen come to town with their chattels in tow and had witnessed slaves commit suicide so as to release themselves once and for all from bondage.¹⁰⁵ Benezet also referred to his experience teaching Philadelphia’s African Americans, which showed him that his black students were equal to whites. The idea of black intellectual inferiority he dismissed as “a vulgar prejudice.”¹⁰⁶ In the scope of a dozen pages, *Short Observations on Slavery* dispatched the most common justifications for slavery and built a straightforward case for abolition.

With *Short Observations on Slavery* finally in print, Benezet kicked off another correspondence and lobbying campaign in May 1783. On the

¹⁰² Benezet, *Short Observations on Slavery*, 1–3, 6–7. The two congressional sources quoted were the Declaration of Independence and the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms, the particular passages of which are reprinted in *Colonies to Nation, 1763–1789: A Documentary History of the American Revolution*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York, 1975), 298, 255.

¹⁰³ Benezet, *Short Observations on Slavery*, 7, 9–10. Benezet took his extracts from [Abbé Raynal], *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlement and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, trans. J. Justamond, 4 vols. (London, 1776), 3:165–68.

¹⁰⁴ Benezet, *Short Observations on Slavery*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ AB to John Pemberton, Aug. 10, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 397.

¹⁰⁶ Benezet, *Short Observations on Slavery*, 11–12. See also Nancy Slocum Hornick, “Anthony Benezet and the Africans’ School: Toward a Theory of Full Equality,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 99 (1975): 399–421.

twenty-ninth of that month he penned letters to both John Gough and John Pemberton, two Friends then in Britain. Both letters were carried overseas by one of Benezet's younger associates, Nicholas Waln, who was on his way to England to minister to Quakers there. Benezet enclosed with each letter a copy of his new pamphlet, explaining that it was intentionally "short & [meant to] set the horrid iniquity of that practice in a striking light." As he also explained to them, he was motivated by the fear that both the British and Americans were about to reopen the Atlantic slave trade. His concerns were justified. As John Pemberton wrote in his diary at Liverpool on July 13, 1783, which was around the time when he must have received Benezet's letter, "It would grieve our dear friend Anthony Benezet, were he here, to see with what earnestness and diligence, numbers of vessels are fitting out for Africa. The great profits made last year, have stimulated many."¹⁰⁷ As he had first tried to do twenty years earlier, Benezet wanted to put British Quakers "upon a weighty Consideration whether it is not high time for them Individually and as a Religious Society, to lay this important Concern before the King & Parliament, the great Senate of the Nation." He again invoked the frightening prospect that "divine Judgment" would come upon the nation that condoned the slave trade, and in this respect he referred to the infamous *Zong* case that had recently been in the newspapers, in which 133 sick slaves had been tossed overboard so as to recoup their insurance value.¹⁰⁸

The response that Benezet received in August 1783 led him to fire off a second round of letters to England along with a packet of printed material. He had learned that William Dillwyn was planning to publish something about the slave trade "to be put in the hands of the active people in [the British] Government," and so he sent Dillwyn a bundle of American antislavery writings that might be of use to him. These included a copy of each of Benezet's own abolitionist works along with pamphlets by John Wesley, Benjamin Rush, and David Cooper.¹⁰⁹ This time Benezet entrusted the delivery of his correspondence to Casper Wistar, a recent

¹⁰⁷ AB to John Gough, May 29, 1783, and AB to John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 375–77, 388–94, quote on 394; Johnson and Malone, *Dictionary of American Biography*, 10:386; William Hodgson Jr., comp., *The Life and Travels of John Pemberton, a Minister of the Gospel of Christ* (London, 1844), 131.

¹⁰⁸ AB to John Gough, May 29, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 375–77; Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Boston, 2005), 79–82.

¹⁰⁹ AB to John Pemberton, Aug. 10, 1783, AB to William Dillwyn, Aug. 20, 1783, and AB to George Dillwyn, Aug. 17, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 396 ("active people in Government"), 381–82 (list of publications being sent), 400.

graduate of the University of Pennsylvania who was heading to Britain for further medical studies.¹¹⁰ Another letter that Wistar carried for Benezet was addressed to Queen Charlotte. Benezet enclosed copies of abolitionist publications with this letter too, and he urged the queen to exert whatever influence she could on behalf of the enslaved.¹¹¹ With this letter to the queen, he acted directly to fulfill the desire to address the monarchy that he had first articulated twenty years earlier. In brief, Anthony Benezet succeeded with the help of such friends as James and John Pemberton, George and William Dillwyn, and Nicholas Waln in finally catalyzing a reaction among English Friends and getting them to take such forthright actions against slavery as petitioning Parliament and distributing abolitionist publications widely.¹¹²

In the United States, Benezet worked to disseminate *Short Observations on Slavery* himself. He correctly read the signs of the times, fearing “the disposition of some of the principal people in the Southern provinces in support of slavery, and even giving some encouragement to a fresh importation of Negroes from Guinea.” (Slave imports to the United States soared after the war.) As he had done during the war years, he took advantage of the proximity of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia to see that his pamphlet was “put in the hands of each member of Congress.”¹¹³ He also must have been pleased when he discovered that Isaac Collins had published another pamphlet at Trenton, *A Serious Address to the Rulers of America: On the Inconsistency of their Conduct Respecting Slavery*. That pamphlet was published pseudonymously by “A farmer,” but Benezet correctly surmised that its author was David Cooper. Cooper noted that Benezet planned to have *Short Observations on Slavery* bound together with *A Serious Address* for distribution. “He has sent one to each member of Congress, and to our Assembly at Burlington, and is about writing to our Governor,” Cooper wrote to his fellow New Jerseyan, Samuel Allinson.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ AB to William Dillwyn, Aug. 20, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 381; James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography*, 6 vols. (New York, 1888–1889), 6:583.

¹¹¹ AB to Charlotte, Queen of Great Britain, Aug. 25, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 402. Benezet thanked Wistar for his “kind endeavours with respect to the presenting my book & letters to the Queen” in AB to Gaspar Wister [Caspar Wistar], Apr. 25, 1784, Anthony Benezet Letters.

¹¹² Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1975), 225–33; Brown, *Moral Capital*, 412–32.

¹¹³ AB to John Pemberton, May 29, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 394.

¹¹⁴ [David Cooper], *A Serious Address to the Rulers of America, On the Inconsistency of their Conduct respecting Slavery* (Trenton, NJ, 1783); David Cooper to Samuel Allinson, June 15, 1783, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 457–58, quote on 458.

Benezet's distribution efforts prepared the way for the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's address to the Continental Congress in October 1783. Taking note of how British Friends had already been actively campaigning "to represent to the Rulers in that Nation the crying Iniquity of the Traffic" in slaves, the Yearly Meeting decided to appoint a committee "to discern the true Line of Duty in this Business," and Benezet headed the list of forty-eight names.¹¹⁵ The committee drafted an address to the Continental Congress, and Benezet was one of the men assigned to present it in person. The address, which was dated October 4, 1783, and signed by 535 of those present at the Yearly Meeting, very briefly aimed to call the Congress's attention to the issue of slavery, especially because of the prospect of a renewal of the transatlantic slave trade.¹¹⁶ Benezet was then one of the four men who journeyed to Princeton, New Jersey, where the Continental Congress was meeting, to deliver the address, and he wrote the subsequent report to the Meeting for Sufferings to explain what transpired. The Friends conferred with Elias Boudinot, who was then the president of the Congress, and received permission to present their address. The Quaker delegation appeared before Congress on October 8 "with our hats on," and James Pemberton read their address aloud. Benezet reported that they were "respectfully received, and have Satisfaction in our Performance of this Service."¹¹⁷

Despite the respectful hearing that Congress gave to the Quaker address, it prompted no action. In December, Benezet was one of a dozen men appointed to seek "the openings & Direction of best Wisdom" as to what to do next. Philadelphia Quakers would eventually learn that southern representatives prevented the Congress from taking any action on their address, or so one of its later presidents, Richard Henry Lee, subsequently informed them.¹¹⁸ Still, this address in person to the Continental Congress in many ways represented a culmination of Benezet's abolitionist career. He had succeeded in speaking directly to those in power, the

¹¹⁵ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Minutes, 1780–1798, Oct. 1, 1783, p. 62.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Oct. 4, 1783, pp. 65–66. The address is reprinted in Frost, *Quaker Origins of Antislavery*, 262.

¹¹⁷ Sufferings, Minutes, 1775–1785, Oct. 16, 1783, p. 408. David Cooper's diary entry revealed the details of "hats on" and James Pemberton's reading. He added, "Some of the committee had opportunity of much conversation with divers of the members,—dining, on invitation, with a number of them; and we were treated through the whole with civility and respect." *Friends' Review*, July 26, 1862, p. 738. See also Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 93–94.

¹¹⁸ Sufferings, Minutes, 1775–1785, Dec. 18, 1783, p. 413; Sufferings, Misc., 1781–1790, "Report of the committee on the African trade. 9 mo. 24. 1785."

same legislators to whom he had previously delivered copies of his latest antislavery tract, and he did so with the support and in the company of his close associates of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, his spiritual and activist home.

* * *

Anthony Benezet died in Philadelphia on May 3, 1784, after a brief illness. He was seventy-one. His death, James Pemberton observed, “necessarily occasions a chasm in many respects not easily supplied, and an additional weight which few will be disposed to bear.” Nevertheless, some of Benezet’s younger collaborators would carry on his work in the early republic.¹¹⁹ While some of Benezet’s efforts, such as the 1783 address to Congress, may not have succeeded in the short run, he had a long-term impact on both sides of the Atlantic due to his ability to tap into the support of the Quaker network for his publications and lobbying. With the help of the Society of Friends, Anthony Benezet had access to collaborators, correspondents, and committees that enabled him to publish a series of works that advanced the abolitionist agenda as never before.

*College of Staten Island and
CUNY Graduate Center*

JONATHAN D. SASSI

¹¹⁹ James Pemberton to John Pemberton, May 14, 1784, in *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 458–60, quote on 460. John Parrish, for example, would publish his own abolitionist tract in 1806, and he, Warner Mifflin, and Nicholas Waln were among representatives of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting who petitioned Congress in 1797–1798 on behalf of African Americans in North Carolina who had been emancipated by their Quaker owners and then re-enslaved. Mifflin especially drew the ire of congressmen from the Deep South during the 1790s for his repeated attempts to petition Congress to take action against slavery and the slave trade. John Parrish, *Remarks on the Slavery of the Black People; Addressed to the Citizens of the United States, particularly to those who are in Legislative or Executive Stations in the General or State Governments; and also to such Individuals as Hold Them in Bondage* (Philadelphia, 1806), 54–57; Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 105–8.

Philadelphia not Philanthropolis: The Limits of Pennsylvanian Antislavery in the Era of the Haitian Revolution

IN THE WINTER OF 1796, Benjamin Giroud visited Philadelphia. Giroud was a Frenchman who had become an owner through marriage of a coffee plantation in Saint-Domingue, the embattled French West Indian colony that within a few years would declare its independence as the republic of Haiti. At the time of Giroud's trip, however, such a development seemed unlikely. Having been the scene of violence and disruption for the previous seven years, in late 1796 the colony was entering a period of relative stability. The white royalists who had leagued with the Spanish and British to separate the colony from France had fled or were in retreat. The free colored population, who had long struggled for civic equality, had been transformed into a reliable source of support by decrees recognizing them as French citizens. Most significantly, the insurgent slaves, who beginning in August 1791 had collectively rejected and dismantled the system of chattel slavery that sustained the colony's plantation economy, had been largely brought into the French fold by the 1794 policy of general emancipation. The decree of February 4, 1794, which ended slavery in all French possessions, had its origins in Saint-Domingue and was a ratification of the series of harried efforts to co-opt the insurgents by the French commissioners, L  ger-F  licit   Sonthonax and   tienne Polverel, as they struggled against various planter, royalist, and British factions. It offered liberty in exchange for armed service in defense of the revolution. Expanded by the National Convention in Paris, French emancipation was immediate, uncompensated, and universal in its

Thanks to Nick Guyatt, Dirk Hartog, Caleb McDaniel, John Murrin, Dael Norwood, Wendy Warren, Doreen Dun, Tamara Gaskell, and the anonymous readers for their comments and criticism on earlier drafts of this essay. Thanks also to John Davies, Charlie Foy, and Ada Ferrer for their participation and fellowship in the AHA panel that was its spark.

PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY
Vol. CXXXV, No. 1 (January 2011)

application. By the time of Giroud's trip, black and colored troops, fighting for France and led by Toussaint Louverture, had defeated the Spaniards and stymied the British.¹ Giroud was an officer in the new commission of metropolitan officials headed by Sonthonax and was sent to take advantage of this success.

Benjamin Giroud was also a member of Les Amis des Noirs, a society of antislavery activists that had sprung up in Paris in 1788, achieved some noisy eminence during the early days of the republic, and then largely disappeared when its membership was purged during the Terror.² Though Les Amis never advocated immediate emancipation, now that French policy had turned in that direction, the group revived. Giroud came to Philadelphia as a French republican and as an abolitionist, identities that overlapped if they were not precisely coterminous. He came to America looking for allies.

The group he turned to was the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS). The "friends of the Blacks at Paris," he wrote, had long recognized these "Philanthropists of Philadelphia" as having taken the "first acts of virtue" in the fight against slavery. For nearly twenty years they had participated in efforts to fundamentally transform American society, and they had gained valuable experience with the mechanics of gradual emancipation, the integration of ex-slaves into the community, and the gathering together of other "Citizens of America who are animated with [the same] principles." This background made the society an ideal partner for France's project in Saint-Domingue. Having abolished slavery, the nation was now bent on "rendering this liberty useful to the new [F]rench citizens." The state had appropriated plantations formerly owned by émigré royalists, and Giroud proposed that the members of the PAS purchase or

¹ Among the best modern accounts of this period are David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793–1798* (New York, 1982); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (New York, 1988), 161–264; Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, TN, 1990); and Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2004). It is noteworthy that the French offer of freedom was accepted only by some of the insurgent slaves, a fact that suggests that the brand of liberty already in their possession carried more weight than that proffered by Sonthonax and France. See Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 157–68, and Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 154–79.

² Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 224. Les Amis des Noirs was most active in advocating for civic equality for free people of color and the end of the French slave trade. For the limits, as well as promise, of French antislavery, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley, CA, 2005).

rent these lands and use them to provide the ex-slaves with “the example of their virtues.” He suggested that to begin the process, a delegate be sent to Saint-Domingue, and he assured the PAS that the “Citizen whom you shall chuse for this Mission” would be welcomed “as a sincere friend of France, and of the principles of humanity, liberty, and equality” that were now the fundaments of its “colonial system.”³ Writing from Saint-Domingue, Sonthonax reiterated the logic behind Giroud’s offer. “The immutable principles . . . which I have reduced to practice at Saint Domingo,” he explained, “are your own.”⁴ Giroud and his compatriots looked to Philadelphia assuming they would find brothers in arms.

That search did not bear fruit. While the PAS discussed the “highly interesting” proposal at its next general meeting and formed a committee to look into it, its only further action, at Giroud’s request, was to publish the correspondence and the text of the French decree of emancipation in one of the city’s newspapers.⁵ Giroud’s offer, it would seem, fell on deaf ears.

We might easily understand this episode as a sign of the limits of American abolition in this period. Scholars treating the American Revolution’s impact on slavery have demonstrated how the promise of revolutionary ideals was compromised in practice. Though championing a struggle for liberty and equality prompted many to question the institution, practical politics and an equally strong ideological commitment to the sanctity of property undercut the effort. The problem that slavery posed American revolutionaries—at least the white ones—could be resolved by positing a republic in which equality was predicated on whiteness. In such a republic, blacks would remain outside the civic body and slavery’s presence would be variegated across the polity according to its

³ Giroud to PAS, Jan. 17, 1797, Committee of Correspondence Letterbook (hereafter CCL), vol. 2, 1794–1809, 42, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (hereafter PAS Papers), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See also Giroud to Doctor Griffiths, Jan. 23, 1797, CCL 2:47. Giroud visited the city in December 1796, at which time he met with PAS president James Pemberton and member Samuel Griffiths and attended a meeting of one of the society’s subcommittees. Upon returning to Saint-Domingue, he reiterated and expanded upon his offer and provided lists naming those *Amis des Noirs* then serving in the colony. See Giroud to PAS, Jan. 17, 1797, Loose Correspondence, incoming, 1796–1819 (hereafter LCI), PAS Papers.

⁴ Léger-Félicité Sonthonax to PAS, 20th Germinal, Year 5 (Apr. 9, 1797), CCL 2:51, PAS Papers.

⁵ James Pemberton to Commissioners of the French Republic at Cape Francois, Jan. 17, 1797, CCL 2:48. General Meeting minutes, Apr. 3, 1797, General Meeting Book (hereafter GMB), vol. 1, 1787–1800, 272, PAS Papers. For the committee, see General Meeting minutes, Apr. 28 and June 5, 1797, GMB 1:280, 281. For the newspaper publication, see *Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), July 12, 1797, reprinted in *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, July 15, 1797.

economic viability.⁶ Pennsylvania, a place where the revolutionary era spurred a decline in slavery, serves as a reminder of the moderateness of white abolitionist ideas. The state's vaunted abolition act of 1780 operated so gradually and partially that some people continued to be held in bondage well into the nineteenth century. Even out of slavery, African Americans were subject to a period of state-sponsored indenture and were the objects of paternalistic social monitoring.⁷ Among its responsibilities, the PAS sought "to qualify [freed blacks] for the exercise and enjoyment of civil liberty" by teaching them values steeped in elite white Protestant sensibilities with regard to work, family, morality, and education.⁸ This didactic approach mirrored the PAS's tactics in its ongoing fight against slavery. The committee work, petitions, and legal battles it conducted reflected a strategy that sought to produce change from within the system.⁹

⁶ The most influential interpretation of this dynamic remains David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY, 1975), esp. 84–212. See also Gary B. Nash, *Race and Revolution* (Madison, WI, 1990), and Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975), esp. 363–87. For an argument for slavery's ongoing divisiveness among the American public, see Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), esp. 1–41. My understanding follows these works, but is also informed by histories that expand revolutionary politics to include black ideas and activism, a conceptualization that often confounds a strictly national narrative. See, for example, Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston, 2006); Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2006); and Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York, 2009). For an interpretation that understands revolutionary ideals as ultimately transcendent, see Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992).

⁷ The abolition act freed children born of slaves after March 1, 1780, after a twenty-eight-year period of service. For accounts of its passage and workings, see Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago, 1967), 124–37; Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1991), 99–113; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 255–60; and Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, "Philanthropy at Bargain Prices: Notes on the Economics of Gradual Emancipation," *Journal of Legal Studies* 3 (1974): 377–401.

⁸ General Meeting minutes, Oct. 19, 1789, GMB 1:93, PAS Papers. For the PAS committees set up to perform these duties and the tenor of their work, see Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 108–9, 158–65. See also Minutes of the Delegates of the Abolition Societies, established in different parts of the United States, Jan. 6, 1796, 1:90–94; and General Meeting minutes, Apr. 11, 1796, GMB 1:257, both PAS Papers. For a typical example of the society's efforts, see an address "to the free Africans and other free people of color in the United States," published in the *Aurora* (Philadelphia), Jan. 18, 1796.

⁹ For a comprehensive account of the PAS's limitations, see Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), chaps. 1 and 2, but esp. 20–34.

Giroud's enthusiastic depiction of the society produced by the new French "colonial system" would certainly have been jarring to Americans of this mold. As he told it, French Saint-Domingue was a republic in which slavery was forever banished and citizens of all colors were equal—he called it "Philanthropolis." Black soldiers maintained order and defended the colony against its enemies, be they slaveholders, counterrevolutionaries, or the British (who supported both). "These soldiers of Philosophy and of the rights of man" were led by "black, yellow, and white" officers, "confounded and mixed without any other distinction but that of their respective grades." Those not fighting worked on plantations, and "large and valuable crops" were being produced, "now that the labour [was] performed by freemen."¹⁰ Race unified, rather than demarcated, Philanthropolis. Giroud touted the prevalence of "marriages which confound and mix the Black and White colour." This was a society transformed by its inclusion of new members. "The ancient prejudices are daily wearing a way [*sic*]," he reported. Blacks and mulattos held public office. Children of all colors attended school together.¹¹ Saint-Domingue's citizens were in the process of liberating "this wonderful island, which the author of nature seem[ed] to have created for the happiness of man."¹²

The PAS membership was not simply being polite in describing Giroud's proposal as "highly interesting." The Frenchman's presentation, his ideas, and indeed his very presence are reminders of the radical possibilities that swirled around the Atlantic towards the end of the eighteenth century. These currents buffeted the PAS as well. Giroud's picture of universal liberty and raceless citizenship in Saint-Domingue formed a stark contrast to Pennsylvanian realities, but PAS activists encountered it in the context of their own efforts. His offer may have fallen flat, but the logic behind it—that activists in different locales were achieving related results towards the same glorious end—was essential to the PAS's sense of its mission. This understanding of transnational connectedness had radical implications that stood in tension with the limited purview and conservative results of the society's efforts. If the PAS declined to join Giroud and Sonthonax in Saint-Domingue, they nevertheless conceived of a struggle against slavery that was singular.

¹⁰ Giroud to PAS, undated (probably Apr. 1797), CCL 2:55, PAS Papers.

¹¹ Giroud to PAS, Jan. 17, 1797, CCL 2:42, PAS Papers.

¹² Giroud to PAS, undated (probably Apr. 1797), CCL 2:55, PAS Papers. Giroud also told that Joshua Barney of Baltimore, then serving as a commodore in the French navy, had rented an estate.

To recognize this understanding is not to contest the reality that Pennsylvanian antislavery was limited. An evaluation of the Atlantic connections felt by Pennsylvanian activists, however, highlights the choices and contingencies behind the declension of white antislavery. Just as the eventual general abolition of slavery in the United States was not a pre-ordained product of the republic's transcendent promise, neither was the decline of the challenge to slavery mounted by the American Revolution endemic to its ideals. By focusing on the PAS's international consciousness, this essay recovers the radical narrative they imagined, one in which their measured and gradual efforts were part of an interrelated whole. As we will see, this feeling of connection was unsustainable over time. When Sonthonax connected the "principles" at work in Philadelphia and Saint-Domingue he was not wrong, or even out of date: he was simply speaking a language that no longer was spoken by the members of the PAS. Giroud's proposal, then, offers an opportunity to bear witness to a particular moment in the diminution of American radicalism.¹³

Dreaming with Eyes Open: The Promise of Pennsylvanian Antislavery

The American Revolution, despite its ideological soft spots and multiplicity of interpretation, did engender a newly powerful critique of slavery, one rooted in the idea that liberty and equality were essential human rights.¹⁴ This liberty was universal; it posited a revolution that was general, one in which "American" was a modifier, not a proper noun.¹⁵ Starting in

¹³ For American reaction to events in Saint-Domingue more generally, albeit with an emphasis on the nineteenth century, see Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1988). More recent scholarship has focused on the multiple and fluid meanings given to events on Saint-Domingue as they unfolded. See, for example, James Sidbury, "Saint-Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790–1800," *Journal of Southern History* 63 (1997): 531–52; Gary B. Nash, "Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Domingans in Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 65, no. 5 (1998): 44–73; Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 258–70; and Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, 2010). See also James Alexander Dun, "Dangerous Intelligence: Slavery, Race, and St. Domingue in the Early American Republic" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2004).

¹⁴ Following David Brion Davis, Susan Buck-Morss notes that "if the American Revolution could not solve the problem of slavery, it at least led to a *perception* of the problem." Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2009), 25n40.

¹⁵ Compare this to the "freedom principle" developed in eighteenth-century France or the sense that British soil was a "unique asylum for liberty," as established by the *Somerset* decision. For the French concept, see Sue Peabody, "There Are No Slaves in France": *The Political Culture of Race*

1787, the PAS opened an ambitious and expansive campaign based on this understanding.¹⁶ Anyone who sought “to extend the blessings of Freedom to every part of the human race” and who sought “to diffuse them, wherever the miseries & vices of Slavery exist” was welcomed to join. Only slave owners were barred. Conceptualized in this way, the PAS was to embody a struggle that superseded the nation; membership was defined by slavery, not locale. After expressly targeting “Foreigners or persons who do not reside in this State” as potential members, the society inducted a number of British and French luminaries. Equally important, it created a “Committee of Correspondence” to conduct an intensive and regular letter-writing campaign with these “corresponding Members.”¹⁷

These efforts reflected a desire to establish a network, but they also conveyed a sense that the community of the “benevolent” the PAS identified was potentially boundless. The very act of communication among the various nodes of antislavery effort placed the PAS’s goals into a wider context. “The present age has been distinguished by a remarkable Revolution,” the society wrote to the Marquis de Lafayette in mid-1788, “mankind begin at last to consider themselves as Members of one family.” Britain too “has felt the same spirit of humanity & justice,” as evidenced by the efforts of the London Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade there.¹⁸ When French abolitionist J. P. Brissot de Warville visited the PAS two months later its minutes recorded his intention to establish a “relation of brotherhood & mutual correspondence” between the PAS and the Les Amis des Noirs.¹⁹ These alliances were practical, but they also expressed

and Slavery in the Ancien Régime (New York, 1996). For Britain as an “asylum for liberty,” see Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 101 and passim. Gary Nash and others have shown that African Americans maintained this conception of the Revolution’s meaning into the nineteenth century. See Nash, *Race and Revolution and Forgotten Fifth*; Egerton, *Death or Liberty*; Julie Winch, *Philadelphia’s Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia, 1988); James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860* (New York, 1997); and Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002).

¹⁶ For the PAS’s development before this period, see Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 80, 115–18, 124–25. The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade will be referred to throughout as the London Society.

¹⁷ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 23, 1787, GMB 1:3, PAS Papers. Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation* (Urbana, IL, 1972), 40–43. See Brown, *Moral Capital*, esp. part 4.

¹⁸ General Meeting minutes, July 7, 1788, GMB 1:39, PAS Papers.

¹⁹ General Meeting minutes, Sept. 3, 1788, GMB 1:44, PAS Papers.

a sense that the labor against slavery was extranational and that it was burgeoning.

If the correspondence between activists were the ligaments of this imagined community, its blood was the printed material that accompanied their letters. Over the 1780s and '90s, a host of antislavery treatises, addresses, epistles, reports, sermons, and essays circulated among the various groups. Nearly every quarterly session of the PAS's general meeting recorded a quantity of incoming materials.²⁰ In addition to spreading and sharing antislavery arguments, this literature reified the international slavery community and the battle it waged. Communications with British and French activists, as well as those with groups in the United States, served both to bolster the sense that antislavery sentiment was spreading and to validate the means by which the PAS worked. The formation of new antislavery societies in "divers Places in America," the PAS wrote to London in early 1789, strongly suggested that "a Time must come when universal liberty shall prevail & slavery be known no more."²¹ For PAS president James Pemberton, each new group was an opportunity to "abundantly strengthen our Hands."²² Within several months, he would write to the London Society to tell of the "daily encouragement to proceed in the good work" that the PAS had received "by the gradual spreading of those principles of true Christian Liberty, which open the way for success to our endeavours in places far distant from the Metropolis."²³ To Les Amis des Noirs in Paris, Pemberton was similarly sanguine, forecasting the "near approach" of "General Emancipation" and noting that "the day is hastening when the United States of America will be able to evince that it is not by mere declarations that they mean to manifest their regard to their Fellow Creatures."²⁴ This optimism spilled over into the PAS's prospects for the "States where the Evil of Slavery exists in full force," where news of antislavery activity gave them "great reason to believe that our cause is

²⁰ See "Pamphlets received from the Society in London for the Abolition of the Slave Trade . . .," May 7, 1788, Misc. papers, PAS Papers. See also Benjamin Franklin to James Pemberton, July 2, 1789, Loose Correspondence, outgoing (hereafter LCo), PAS Papers. Also Brissot de Warville to Benjamin Franklin, Jan. 20, 1790, CCL, vol. 1, 1789–1794, 36; and Brissot to Myers Fisher, June 20, 1790, LCi, both PAS Papers.

²¹ PAS to Elhanan Winchester, Mar. 16, 1789, CCL 1:5, PAS Papers.

²² PAS to Samuel Hopkins, Mar. 9, 1789, CCL 1:4, PAS Papers.

²³ James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , June 24, 1789, CCL 1:4, PAS Papers.

²⁴ James Pemberton to Les Amis des Noirs, Aug. 30, 1790, CCL 1:37; and Pemberton to the President of the Friends of the Blacks, Aug. 29, 1791, CCL 1:68, PAS Papers.

making an effectual tho a silent progress.”²⁵ When an abolition society was founded in New Jersey in February 1793, Pemberton wrote to London that “the chain is now compleat.”²⁶ Within a year, representatives from all of the American antislavery societies met in a single central meeting, beginning a series of annual gatherings that would continue, albeit with interruptions, into the early decades of the nineteenth century. These developments led activists in Philadelphia to believe that they were marching with other groups around the world towards a bright future. Pennsylvania was in the lead, but the labor was shoulder to shoulder.

The essential truth that PAS members understood as being on the march derived from the New Testament passage describing Paul’s lesson to the Athenians, in which the apostle preached that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” This formulation reverberated across a wide array of society writings and was echoed by their correspondents. The 1787 PAS constitution began by noting that “It having pleased the Creator of the World to make of one flesh all the Children of men—it becomes them to consult & promote each others’ happiness, as Members of the same family.”²⁷ An address by a member of Les Amis des Noirs began, “Man, rational Man is one Genus,” and continued “Reason[,] that first, best, greatest of Heaven’s gifts, depends not on the configuration of corporeal particles, nor on the reflection of a solar Beam, but is a part of the essence of him who bestowed it.”²⁸ The same sentiments found their way into private correspondence. Susanna Emlen of Burlington, New Jersey, approvingly described the words of a delegation of Cherokee in Philadelphia, who “expressed in their simple and expressive manner their opinion that all mankind were created by the same hand, for said they ‘tho some are black,

²⁵ James Pemberton to [the London Society?], [Mar. 1791?], CCL 1:59, PAS Papers. Such news included the formation of an antislavery society in Maryland. See *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 24, 1789, reprinted in *American Museum*, vol. 7 (appendix II—1790), no. 6, pp. 6–8. For similar notices, see *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), Feb. 28, 1792, and “Constitution of the Chester-Town society,” *American Museum*, vol. 11 (appendix II—1792), no. 6, p. 90. See also a plea for justice to slaves from Georgia by a writer whose sobriquet was A Friend to the Rights of Man, in *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 26, 1792 (Augusta, Dec. 1).

²⁶ James Pemberton to Committee of the London Society, May 21, 1793, CCL 1:108, PAS Papers.

²⁷ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 23, 1787, GMB 1:3, PAS Papers. For other examples of the same sentiment, see Thomas Scott, president of Washington Society, Feb. 7, 1789, CCL 1:9, PAS Papers. See also David Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy* (Lexington, KY; Philadelphia, 1792), 4.

²⁸ Philip Mallet, *Remarks on a speech, made to the National Assembly of France* (London, [1792?]), 4.

some white, and others red, yet if you stick a fork into their flesh the same red blood flows from all.”²⁹ Similar ideas were expressed in more popular media as well.³⁰

At its heart, whether expressed through a biblically based assertion of man’s single origins or through a more secular emphasis on the universal rights of humanity, the axiom that all men were “of one blood” encapsulated a call for uniform justice across, or indeed beyond, racial lines and therefore held that slavery was wrong. If the Bible professed man’s monogenesis, slavery was contrary to God’s plan. If man’s universal rights were self-evident, slavery was irrational. Rather than suggesting legalistic means and cautious goals, this schema highlighted the injustice of holding a certain class of men as slaves. It also stressed the illogic of assertions of black inferiority. According to the dominant contemporary understanding, the environment produced human differences; climate might darken the skin or straighten the hair, but men, being “of one blood,” were men.³¹ In the absence of differentiating factors, they would naturally coalesce around a common (Anglo-Saxon) form. Emancipation was possible, and necessary, because of mankind’s essential sameness.

Modern understandings of the limits of Pennsylvania abolitionism notwithstanding, for contemporaries at home and abroad the PAS was an exemplar of this precept in action. Brissot, a recipient of one of the one thousand copies of the society’s constitution and the abolition act sent out in 1787, described the PAS as employing “indefatigable zeal.”³² He was not alone in pairing the society and 1780 law to describe Pennsylvania as a paragon for the global campaign. In addition to presiding over a gradual emancipation process, the PAS served as a font of evidence of black capabilities and of the possibilities of molding black communities.³³

²⁹ Susanna Emlen to William Dillwyn, Feb. 14, 1792, Dillwyn Manuscript, vol. 1, box “1770–1793,” folder “1 mo–5 mo 1792,” Library Company of Philadelphia, housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁰ Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 6–10. For an arcane example involving speculation concerning lunar life forms, see *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), June 28, 1792.

³¹ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1968), 287.

³² General Meeting minutes, Apr. 23, 1787, GMB 1:8, PAS Papers; J. P. Brissot de Warville, *New Travels in the United States of America*, trans. Mara Soceanu Vamos and Durand Echeverria, ed. Durand Echeverria (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 228–31. Even as he celebrated the PAS, Brissot was critical of the gradual pace of Pennsylvanian abolition.

³³ See General Meeting minutes, Oct. 20, 1787, GMB 1:17, PAS Papers for Pemberton’s notice of “a number of vouchers and testimonials of the industrious orderly & moral deportment of a great

British activist Richard How noted in mid-1789 that Pennsylvanian anti-slavery was admired the world over. His “ardent wish” was that their “commendable Example” would impact policy everywhere, “till not a single negro remain in Bondage.”³⁴

These plaudits were possible because activists considered themselves members of a global community. The idea that their battles were related allowed for comparisons across space. In the middle of 1789 James Pemberton thanked the London Society for sending a collection of pamphlets, telling of his intention to have one published. Because the British writing focused on the slave trade and “cautiously avoid[ed] the Idea of Emancipation,” however, some changes would be necessary in the American renditions, owing to their “more advanced stage of the Business.”³⁵ If the “Business” that they all were engaged in was the same, Pemberton’s formulation suggested that it was proceeding at different paces in different places. British actions against the slave trade were but a precursor to moves there against the institution of slavery itself—the “advanced stage” already evident in Pennsylvania.³⁶ Later, learning of the passage of a French decree granting a degree of civil rights to people of mixed racial descent, Pemberton expressed the “pleasure” he took in the fact. “We consider every advance of the kind to be of the highest importance,” he wrote *Les Amis des Noirs*, “as it tends to forward the great business of the abolition of slavery, and of a just recognition of the Rights of Man.”³⁷ By the logic of antislavery and human society that practitioners of Pennsylvanian abolition espoused, the developments of the 1780s and early ’90s were linked to an inexorable progression of global

number of black people” who had been manumitted in various states. Also, General Meeting minutes, Jan. 19, 1789, GMB 1:68; [London Society?] to PAS, Mar. 3, 1789, CCL 1:15; Elias Ellicott to James Pemberton, June 10, 1791, and D. Rittenhouse to James Pemberton, Aug. 6, 1791, both LCi; William Goddard to James Pemberton, Sept. 13, 1791, CCL 1:89; Brissot de Warville to Benjamin Franklin, Jan. 20, 1790, CCL 1:36; Granville Sharp to PAS, Feb. 20, 1790, CCL 1:29; James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , Apr. 2, 1790, CCL 1:24; Granville Sharp to PAS, July 20, 1790, CCL 1:41; James Pemberton to Committee of the London Society, May 21, 1793, CCL 1:108; General Meeting minutes, Feb. 10, 1794, GMB 1:206; and Granville Sharp to James Pemberton, Aug. 20, 1794, CCL 2:7, all PAS Papers.

³⁴ Richard How to John Pemberton, Aug. 8, 1789, Pemberton Papers, vol. 52, p. 167, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁵ James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , June 24, 1789, CCL 1:18, PAS Papers. See “Letter on slavery—by a negro,” *American Museum*, July 1789, 77–80.

³⁶ For the tacit notice of this in British debates, see Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 407–11.

³⁷ James Pemberton to President of the Friends of the Blacks, Aug. 29, 1791, CCL 1:68, PAS Papers.

changes in the way whites and blacks lived together, the way blackness was conceived of in white minds, and in the way society itself was constructed. In short, the logic evidenced by the PAS's transnational connections depicted a course of history—a development of places “of liberty”—and gave clues as to the relative position held by particular locales in that trajectory.

In early 1790 the PAS looked to plumb the extent to which the United States as a whole was such a place when it submitted a petition to the first U.S. Congress. Hoping to cut through the Constitution's papering over of the slavery issue, the society's memorial pushed Congress to act “without distinction of Colour” and to “Step to the very verge” of its powers to “promot[e] the Abolition of Slavery.”³⁸ The nation tacitly envisioned by this request was rooted in a universal approach to the (im)morality of slavery. Those PAS members who witnessed the ensuing debates from the gallery, however, were doubly disappointed. For one thing, the representatives ultimately delineated a meager domain of congressional power over slavery and the slave trade. More troubling was the attitude of southern congressmen, who rejected the idea that the memorialists had a monopoly on the meaning of the Revolution for slavery—that they understood “the rights of mankind, and the disposition of Providence, better than others” as James Jackson of Georgia put it.³⁹ Moreover, they contested the core assertion of the memorial, that there was a need for a single national response to the issue. In effect, they made explicit what the Constitution had kept vague: the Union was an amalgamation fused by a common struggle, a shared history, and a patchwork of interests; it was not an expression of a single people. “When we entered into this confederacy, we did it from political, not from moral motives,” William Smith

³⁸ General Meeting minutes, Feb. 3, 1790, GMB 1:11, PAS Papers. See also *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2d sess., 1239–40 (Feb. 12, 1790). The underlined portions of the text are visible on the image shown at http://gwu.edu/~ffcp/exhibit/p11/p11_5text.html, “Memorial of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, 3 February 1790,” at the site Birth of the Nation: The First Federal Congress 1789–1791. For the politics of slavery in the Constitution, see Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 33–35. An important earlier interpretation is Howard A. Ohline, “Slavery, Economics, and Congressional Politics, 1790,” *Journal of Southern History* 46 (1980): 335–60. For contending arguments, see Paul Finkelman, “Slavery and the Constitutional Convention: Making a Covenant with Death,” in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987), 188–225; and Don E. Fehrenbacher (completed and edited by Ward M. McAfee), *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery* (New York, 2001).

³⁹ *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2d sess., 1227, 1229 (Feb. 11, 1790).

of South Carolina argued. The petitioners, he continued later, were not to be allowed to “judge for the whole Continent.”⁴⁰

Stung in the halls of Congress, the PAS shifted tactics, but not the thrust of its bid to move the nation towards an antislavery republic. James Pemberton’s brother John, watching the congressional debate from the gallery, explained that the political response could be summed up as “Scratch me & I will scratch thee.” Even when confronted with their “Inconsistency,” congressmen proved themselves driven by “self ends & party views.”⁴¹ Self-interest and prejudice blinded men to their true interests. This realization concentrated the PAS effort and spurred the PAS leadership in its campaign to connect activists in Britain and France with like-minded laborers in the United States.

Criticism during the same episode made clear the radical implications of the PAS’s logic and effort. Despite the best efforts of southern congressmen to quash all mention of the PAS memorial, several writers opined over the meaning of the debates in Philadelphia newspapers. Of these, “Rusticus” was the PAS’s most ardent and voluminous opponent. Rusticus accepted that slavery would end, but not that man could play a role in the process. Instead, the institution would be abandoned as it ceased to serve American interests. To interfere with this, however, was to flout nature and flirt with disaster. The “sheep-hairy African negroe” and the “spirited, noble, and generous American Freeman” were fundamentally different. No human effort could undo “the immutable order of the universe” or “overthrow the fixed order of nature [to] improve the original.” Given the innate difference between the two “nations” and their “interests,” freed slaves were a liability in the new nation. If the PAS plan were followed, “tranquility would fly from Columbia, and not be re-established until intermarriage had dyed the nation one and the same colour!” He ended the thought with a sigh, “but then the original character of the nation will only stand recorded in the historic page.” For Rusticus, abolition had to be accompanied by black removal.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2d sess., 1244, 1507 (Feb. 12 and Mar. 17, 1790). For historians’ treatments of this debate, some with different emphases than mine, see Donald L. Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765–1820* (New York, 1970), 302–12; Nash, *Race and Revolution*, 40–42; Ohline, “Slavery, Economics, and Congressional Politics”; Richard S. Newman, “Prelude to the Gag Rule: Southern Reaction to Antislavery Petitions in the First Federal Congress,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 16 (1996): 571–99; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 100; and Jordan, *White Over Black*, 325–26.

⁴¹ John Pemberton to James Pemberton, Feb. 23, 1790, LCI, PAS Papers.

⁴² *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Feb. 27, 1790 (“LETTER.—No. III”), and Mar. 5, 1790 (“FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES, LETTER.—No. IV”).

Rusticus's criticism highlights the expansive nature of the PAS's attack on slavery. In imagining an end to bondage coupled with a rejection of the notion that mankind was "of one blood," he posited a white nation. Instead of essentializing man, he essentialized race and racial interests. PAS activists imagined a very different polity. Free blacks and freed people were to be incorporated into society. If many in the PAS assumed that society would be hierarchically arranged, they did not interject an overtly racial logic to its structure.⁴³ Where Rusticus saw slavery as a reasonable binding of the interests of a distinct (and aggrieved) race, the PAS saw slavery as the source of the grievance itself and as a corruption of the naturally congruent interests of a universalized society. Where Rusticus saw blackness as a permanent badge of subhuman difference, the PAS saw a temporary marker, to be erased through freedom and "proper" conduct over time. Where Rusticus found a solution to the problem of slavery that ended at the borders of the United States, the PAS imagined its solution as part of a global end to slavery, whose limits were bounded only by man's ability to hear the logic of mankind being "of one blood."

The largest insurrection in the history of plantation slavery, which took place in Saint-Domingue in the summer of 1791, nestled quite easily into this framework. Since resistance to slavery, like that to all forms of tyranny, was part of man's nature, uprisings stemmed from slavery itself. As PAS member Benjamin Rush explained, events in Saint-Domingue only proved that to deny the truism that man was of one blood was to court disaster. The revolts in "one of the richest Islands in the West Indies" made it clear that it was "inconsistent with sound policy" to continue to allow slavery.⁴⁴ Shortly after news of the revolts broke, the PAS Committee of Correspondence obtained a pamphlet written by British abolitionist William Roscoe that explained the revolts as the predictable result of enslaving one's fellow man. "Is not the love of freedom contagious?" he asked.⁴⁵ Consistent with the print-laden nature of its efforts, the PAS purchased five hundred

⁴³ For Federalist ideals related to antislavery efforts in this period, see Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 136, and Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 17–18.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Delegates of the Abolition Societies, established in different parts of the United States, Jan. 6, 1794, 1:25, PAS Papers.

⁴⁵ [William Roscoe], *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Insurrection of the Negroes in the Island of St. Domingo* (Philadelphia, 1792). For examples of similar ideas about slaves "regaining" their "natural" freedom, see *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), Sept. 1, 1791 (New York, Aug. 29), Sept. 6, 1791 ("A Lesson to the Oppressed"), Feb. 11, 1794 (Providence, Jan. 21), and May 29, 1794 (Rhode Island).

copies of the work and distributed them to other antislavery groups over the following months.⁴⁶

Slave violence might be unfortunate—Rush termed it an “evil”—but it was also proof of the probity of abolitionist conceptions of the world and its workings. Slave societies were inherently unstable: slavery was brutal, slaves were men, and God was watching. This perspective led some to embrace, or at least accept, the insurgents’ actions. “Let us turn our eyes to the West Indies,” PAS correspondent David Rice wrote in 1792, “there you may see the sable . . . brave sons of Africa, engaged in a noble conflict . . . fired with a generous resentment of the greatest injuries, and bravely sacrificing their lives on the altar of liberty.”⁴⁷ The slaves of Saint-Domingue touched PAS member Warner Mifflin’s subconscious. In late fall 1791 while spending the night in a lodging house, he had a vivid dream in which he argued with a figure who was criticizing the slaves for “being so bad as to break out.” Mifflin countered by insisting that God had caused “a kind of itching” to “runn through the blood of their veins so as that they would not be easy but have a craveing for Liberty,” a feeling, he reflected later, that was “a little like the Americans had” in making their own Revolution. That Mifflin processed the slave revolts through a defensive confrontation with a faceless critic was no accident. He had sat in the congressional gallery during the debates over the PAS memorial and had been the focus of personal attacks from the floor. Relating his dream to his fellow lodgers the next morning, some of them needled him “that such a dream from Mifflin might be concluded to be with his Eyes open,” and they may have been right. Like the PAS more generally, he saw in the violence on the island an opportunity to sharpen the call for change at home. This was a moment of crisis and danger. Mifflin wrote of his “fear” of “stoping [sic]” his efforts against slavery and reasoned that “if we can do any thing to save our Country it ought not to be omitted.” Perhaps remembering Congressmen Jackson and Smith, he judged that the “ever lasting Arm of Power” that had operated in Saint-Domingue might soon be at work in the American South.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ General Meeting minutes, July 2, 1792, and Oct. 1, 1792, GMB 1:174, 177; “For David Rice of Kentucky” (list of materials sent), Aug. 28, 1792, Misc. papers, both PAS Papers. For a slightly different emphasis, see Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 26–27.

⁴⁷ Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy*, 9.

⁴⁸ Warner Mifflin to John Parrish, Oct. 10, 1791, Cox-Parrish-Wharton Collection, box 1 (“John Parrish Correspondence, 1794–1799”), folder “Parish, John 1791, 1792,” Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

By imposing their own interpretation of events in Saint-Domingue, the PAS bolstered the sense that its efforts to deal with the institution of slavery were right-minded. Pennsylvania abolished slavery in such a way as to transform, rather than destroy, society. The funeral of the wife of prominent African American leader William Gray in Philadelphia, at which both white and black citizens paid their respects, induced one editor to eulogize the event more than the individual.

This pleasing instance of total indifference to complexion, tho' on a melancholy occasion, must prove a . . . happy presage of the time, fast approaching, when the important declaration of *holy writ* will be fully verified, that "God hath made of one blood, all the nations of the Earth."⁴⁹

Over the first half of the 1790s, local events provided other such "intelligence" and seemed to indicate a widespread acceptance of the PAS's conception of abolition and black incorporation into society. In 1790, delegates to Pennsylvania's constitutional convention voted down a proposal to expressly limit citizenship to whites.⁵⁰ Between December 1790 and the middle of 1791, the PAS successfully beat back an attempt by Governor Thomas Mifflin to amend the abolition act to allow federal officials to keep their slaves in Philadelphia while they served in the national government.⁵¹ When, in late 1792, émigrés from Saint-Domingue petitioned the state legislature for exemptions from the abolition act, the PAS "strenuously exerted" itself "in opposition to this application" and was gratified by its unanimous rejection.⁵² The language of the House committee report on the event presented abolition as originating from principles that were perpetual and permanent and that were derived "from the sacred and immutable obligations of justice and natural

⁴⁹ *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), June 17, 1792; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 172.

⁵⁰ John M. Murrin, "Escaping Perfidious Albion: Federalism, Fear of Aristocracy, and the Democratization of Corruption in Postrevolutionary America," in *Virtue, Corruption, and Self-Interest: Political Values in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Richard K. Matthews (Bethlehem, PA, 1994), 103–47. See James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , Apr. 3, 1790, CCL 1:32, PAS Papers.

⁵¹ See *Journal of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania*, 1st Ass., 1st sess., 45, 120, 132, 150, and 157. For PAS notice of the issue see Acting Committee minutes, Feb. 2–16, 1791, Acting Committee Minute Book (hereafter ACMB), vol. 2, 1789–1797, 142–44, PAS Papers. Also General Meeting minutes, July 4, 1791, and Jan. 2, 1792, GMB 1:157, 166, PAS Papers.

⁵² General Meeting minutes, Jan. 7, 1793, GMB 1:179, PAS Papers. See also *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), Nov. 5, 1792 ("For the FEDERAL GAZETTE"), and Nov. 12, 1792 ("FOR the FEDERAL GAZETTE").

right.” No modification of them could be permitted. Slavery was “contrary . . . to the laws of nature . . . to the dictates of justice . . . and to the constitution of this state.”⁵³

In March 1793 Pennsylvania representative John Shoemaker moved to amend the state abolition act so as to free all blacks over the age of twenty-one. He based his motion on the observation that the abolition act’s imposition of servitude conflicted with the state constitution’s declaration “that all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent and indefeasible rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty.” The committee bringing in Shoemaker’s bill went further, judging “that slavery is inconsistent with every principle of humanity, justice and right, and repugnant to the spirit and express letter of the Constitution of this commonwealth,” and proposed that “slavery be abolished in this commonwealth.” The reception this bill might have met is unknown. Disrupted by the yellow fever epidemic in the summer and fall of 1793, the Pennsylvania legislature failed to act on it, and it was not taken up again thereafter.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the foundational approach of the PAS was seemingly driving Pennsylvania’s intentions towards slavery. In this heady moment, the PAS reached new heights, even seeking to turn away from the gradual mechanism of the 1780 act and instead to end slavery in Pennsylvania all at once.⁵⁵ At nearly the same moment, a similar, if more sweeping, step was taken in France, when the National Convention decreed the abolition of slavery in the French empire on February 4, 1794. The details behind French abolition, and its antecedents in Saint-Domingue, were fuzzy in Philadelphia. While generally depicted as ending slavery, descriptions of the act failed to supply any information regarding the law’s specifics, enforcement, or implications, leaving PAS observers to glean what they could from their

⁵³ *Journal of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania*, 3rd Ass., 1st sess., 39, 42, 45, 55, 60 (Dec. 17, 18, 19, 27, 28, 1792).

⁵⁴ *Journal of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania*, 3rd Ass., 1st sess., 195, 201, 205, 291 (Feb. 21 and Mar. 12, 1793). A similar effort languished after the fever of 1798.

⁵⁵ For the general meeting’s cool response to a proposal for a legal strategy that would use county courts to free individual slaves immediately, see James Pemberton to Alexander Addison, Feb. 12, 1793, CCL 1:103, and General Meeting minutes, Apr. 1 and 8, 1793, GMB 1:188, 191, PAS Papers. For the proposal, see Addison to Pemberton, Jan. 1, 1793, CCL 1:99, PAS Papers. Instead, the society decided at around the same time to appeal to the state supreme court that slavery was unconstitutional in Pennsylvania.

network of correspondents.⁵⁶ What they heard was heartening. Benjamin Rush learned from a British friend that “the French . . . are more rapid in their motions than we.”⁵⁷ James Pemberton wrapped the news into other positive developments, to include British and American actions against the slave trade and the increasing public acceptance of “emancipation.”⁵⁸ PAS leaders cautiously embraced French abolition as yet another in the array of signals that the common struggle was continuing and even cresting.

*Fanatics in Philadelphia: Contractions in the Global
Antislavery Community*

It proved easier, however, to champion rebel slaves than to embrace radical French politicians. The muted tone of the PAS leadership’s response to the French edict was telling. John Pemberton received news of the decree in a letter from a colleague in Britain, who viewed it favorably, “whatever may be the sentiments of men Concerning the Conduct of that Assembly in other respects.”⁵⁹ The advent of Anglo-French war, internal French instability, and continued havoc on Saint-Domingue contributed to a hesitancy on the part of Pennsylvanian activists to fully embrace French developments. This distancing signaled a fraying of the PAS’s sense of its connection to other antislavery struggles, a development that ultimately impacted the society’s conception of Pennsylvania’s place in the world.

The elements of the PAS that did closely follow French emancipation were the exceptions that proved the rule. The society’s Acting Committee—the body that conducted the PAS’s business in between its general meetings—engaged in the daily grind of preserving freedom and expanding antislavery in Pennsylvania. Its efforts to combat kidnappings, to prevent evasions of the 1780 abolition act, and to reverse the illegal or

⁵⁶ See Dun, “Dangerous Intelligence,” chap. 4. Besides the difficulties provided by the frenetic and complex nature of the developments, the details were further muddled by the proclivity of American newspaper editors to latch onto the issue as a way of judging the French Revolution as a whole.

⁵⁷ Anonymous to Benjamin Rush, Mar. 3, 1794, Benjamin Rush Mss Correspondence, Library Company of Philadelphia, housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵⁸ James Pemberton to Committee of the London Society for Promoting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, May 6, 1794, CCL 1:112, PAS Papers.

⁵⁹ William Lindsay to John Pemberton, Mar. 17, 1794, Gratz Collection, box 1, case 14, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

improper binding of black laborers made the details of the French law relevant and vitally important. In addition to continuing efforts to ensure that Pennsylvania law was applied to the people of color brought by émigrés from Saint-Domingue, they now worked to ascertain whether French citizens could treat any people as slaves. This proved a difficult task. Beginning in the autumn of 1794, the Acting Committee pressed the Committee of Correspondence to find out more information about the new French order, an effort that was fruitless until Giroud provided a copy of the French decree in 1797.⁶⁰ Thereafter, the Acting Committee used it as a partner to Pennsylvania's 1780 act as it worked on behalf of black people in jeopardy in Philadelphia and its environs.⁶¹

The utilitarian and pragmatic character of this response to French emancipation registered an important counter to the expansive and universal sense of the society's goals and prospects. The Acting Committee's focus was local: it sought to prevent the "place" of liberty that Pennsylvania represented from being compromised by French West Indians sidestepping French emancipation. This emphasis on local conditions surfaced elsewhere in the PAS's response to the news from France. "We have been informed that many persons . . . notwithstanding the decree in their favor, have been brought from the West India Islands, by emigrants, into the United States, and are now held as slaves," activists wrote to the Georgia legislature in January 1795; "we suggest to you the propriety, as well as necessity . . . of effecting their liberation, so far as may be found consistent with the laws of your state."⁶² A year later the annual convention of abolition societies suggested that they all follow the same course.⁶³

More than simply tepid, this response had innately conservative implications. In understanding French emancipation as essentially relevant to efforts to preserve pockets of American liberty, the PAS had conceded an important point. Places that were not "of liberty" would endure. Local successes need not have cosmopolitan meanings. Georgian laws, for example, not universal truths, would dictate the fate of slavery there. What had been conceived as a global campaign, could now be understood

⁶⁰ Acting Committee minutes, Sept. 3, 1794, ACMB 2:321; and Lawrence Embree to James Pemberton, Jan. 24, 1795, CCL 2:10, PAS Papers.

⁶¹ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 11, 1796, GMB 1:257; and Acting Committee minutes, Apr. 21–22, 1796, ACMB 2:409–10, PAS Papers.

⁶² American Convention minutes, Jan. 14, 1795, PAS Papers.

⁶³ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 11, 1796, GMB 1:257, PAS Papers.

as a collection of local efforts, each intimately related to its particular context. The net effect was to disentangle antislavery from the American Revolution, jettisoning it as a quintessential marker of the change that revolution embodied. Similarly, the transnational connections among radical activities in France, Britain, Saint-Domingue, and the United States were thrown into question. Pennsylvania might be unique and exceptional, even in America, rather than a harbinger for the future. This possibility, and the shift in approach it represented, was a lesson PAS activists learned piecemeal during the 1790s. Events at home and abroad forced them to confront the limits of the expansion of antislavery space, first by calling into question the tactics they considered to be so central to the fight, and then by empowering an alternate vision of the nation's future that was more compelling to the public.

If antislavery societies and the presence of antislavery materials both demonstrated and created community, their absence also indicated places that were not "of liberty." Publications, distributed by local societies, were to awaken men's sentiments, reason away their false understandings, and expose their self-interest. Granville Sharp's assessment that merely "diffusing that information which so many are destitute of" was sufficient to bring "Men of real Principle" to their cause reflected this approach. Furthermore, the logic provided in the publications also swayed those "whose Judgments are influenced by the less rigid Maxims of human Policy."⁶⁴ This might be true, but Sharp's dichotomy revealed an increasingly apparent reality as the 1790s wore on: some men would not be persuaded of the need for antislavery action. Over the second half of the decade the PAS confronted the boundaries of its reach. Curtailed, its idealism would take on a different shape.

Just as activists in correspondence across the Atlantic assumed (and determined) that their efforts were part of a monolithic whole, so too did they understand their enemies as embodying common characteristics. The "Prejudice of some & the interested Views of others" stood against the community of the "benevolent" according to one observer.⁶⁵ Pemberton identified the "powerful opposition" that "self-Interest and prejudice will make to Justice."⁶⁶ The PAS, like its fellow societies elsewhere in the United States, Britain, and France, confronted those who benefited from

⁶⁴ Granville Sharp to James Pemberton, Feb. 18, 1791, CCL 1:56, PAS Papers.

⁶⁵ PAS to Governor Collins, Jan. 19, 1789, CCL 1:6, PAS Papers.

⁶⁶ James Pemberton to Les Amis des Noirs, Aug. 30, 1790, CCL 1:37, PAS Papers.

their ownership of slaves—men motivated by their “Interest and avarice.”⁶⁷ These factors fed a sort of willful blindness and nourished a rejection of reason that, to antislavery activists, was both self-evident and essential. This blindness put the PAS’s opponents outside rational society, making them “domestic enemies,” in Pemberton’s words.⁶⁸

Radical ideas and slave violence caused the PAS to confront the limits of their reasoned approach in budging slaveholder “interests” and showed them ways that their enemies were winning. Charles Nisbet, of Carlisle, Kentucky, wrote in the summer of 1792 to acknowledge the receipt of a collection of pamphlets sent there. Nisbet sent thanks, but explained that the publications had been quickly spirited away to a library, where they would “sleep in Peace.” While he had “a high esteem for the characters of your Society,” he explained (somewhat patiently) the hard realities that confronted antislavery in his area. No one in Carlisle had “a zeal for the Liberty of others” that matched the PAS’s. Furthermore, to “imagine that a Robber & a Tyrant, and every Slave-holder must be both these in conjunction, should be prevailed on by arguments drawn from Reason & Religion to emancipate his Slaves, in Opposition to his Avarice, which is the ruling Principle of his Conduct, argues very little Acquaintance with History or Human Nature.”⁶⁹ Antislavery materials had been sent to Kentucky previously, but this literature seems to have made little impression. “Interest, all powerful Interest,” Kentucky preacher David Rice wrote two years later, “closes the eyes and hardens the heart to a great degree: it gives the least plausible pretence the force of the strongest arguments.” That “pretence” might be a simple rationalization, such as the mechanical difficulty of emancipation, or it might be a more ominous warning about the dangers of a society containing free blacks. In either case, Rice explained, “we stand in more need of something to awaken the conscience than to inform the understanding.”⁷⁰

While it spurred the efforts of men like Warner Mifflin, black violence, made less theoretical by the events in Saint-Domingue, was more likely to serve as a further “pretence” than as a prod to slaveholders’

⁶⁷ Isaac Smith to James Pemberton, Dec. 3, 1790, CCL 1:53, PAS Papers.

⁶⁸ James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , Feb. 28, 1790, CCL 1:27, PAS Papers.

⁶⁹ Charles Nisbet to Rev. William Rogers, Aug. 17, 1792, LCI, PAS Papers.

⁷⁰ David Rice to Rev. Dr. William Rogers, Nov. 4, 1794, CCL 2:19, PAS Papers. See also, James D. Essig, *The Bonds of Wickedness: American Evangelicals against Slavery, 1770–1808* (Philadelphia, 1982).

consciences. Nisbet thought that men under the influence of self-interest could be transformed only by acts of God. "A Negroe war, which may probably break out soon, would go much farther to enlighten the Consciences" of men in Carlisle "than all the Arguments that have been published," he wrote. Nisbet's "History," then, which alternatively might have been expressed as God's will in Rice's mouth, would do what pamphlets could not. This was in line with the PAS's understanding of the natural resistance to slavery common to all men, but Nisbet's counsel to wait for black violence presented a very different conclusion. A second reason he had tucked the PAS pamphlets quietly away was that if they were read by "slave-holders, or ever heard of by Negroes," any "disorders that may arise afterwards will be laid to the charge of your Society." This had been the case, he noted, in France with regard to Saint-Domingue, and he had read accounts from South Carolina telling that PAS members were "execrated there & treated as Madmen, Robbers of their Neighbours Property & Enemies to the Peace of Society."⁷¹ Archibald McClean wrote to the PAS in early 1796 to tell of a similar reception in Alexandria, Virginia. At an early meeting of an antislavery group there, a member had risen to give "a lengthy harangue on the impropriety . . . and dangerous consequences which might result from the establishment of such a Society by infusing into the Slaves a spirit of insurrection and rebellion which might eventually destroy the tranquility of the state." McClean admitted that "very little reply was made" to the charge. "The alarm was soon spread," he explained, and a bill was passed that prevented the society from interceding on behalf of a slave.⁷² Such a law, McClean wrote later, "evinces the predominancy of interest combined with power, over the principles of reason, justice, humanity and every benevolent and sympathetic feeling."⁷³

Correspondence such as this illuminated the crippling effects of the charge of "fanaticism" in locales south and west of Pennsylvania. Critics of antislavery efforts resisted the notion that antislavery activists understood something that planters did not about slavery, slaves, and the workings of God, nature, and history. The harangues against the PAS from the floor of Congress presaged indictments uttered by the opponents of free colored equality in France's National Assembly and by those

⁷¹ Charles Nisbet to Rev. William Rogers, Aug. 17, 1792, CCL 2:19, PAS Papers.

⁷² Archibald McClean to "Reverend Sir," Feb. 15, 1796, CCL 2:31, PAS Papers.

⁷³ Archibald McClean to Rev. William Rogers, June 6, 1796, CCL 2:41, PAS Papers.

against slave-trade reform in Parliament. Where southern representatives railed against misplaced “morality,” others objected to false “philanthropy.” Critics stated that local understandings of the institution should predominate. Antislavery activists were irresponsible at best; at worst they were “fanatics” whose attempts to force their ideals into inappropriate places endangered society. Saint-Domingue made this charge easier to make.⁷⁴

In different ways, the London Society and Les Amis des Noirs also fell victim to this calumny.⁷⁵ By mid-1792, the London Society would write to the PAS to describe the various “checks” it had received at the seats of government.⁷⁶ Paradoxically, by the same period, a number of the “fanatical” members of Les Amis des Noirs had emerged as leaders of the French republic. In that position, however, they found the specifically antislavery content of their doings subsumed by domestic concerns and by the realities of statecraft, diplomacy, and war. With the declaration of emancipation in 1794, France could claim victory in the battle against slavery, but the nation’s attention, and its commitment, were subject to question. Concomitant with these developments, however, both British and French planters could turn to the British state for aid as part of opposition to French political efforts, thereby clothing and incorporating their desire to preserve the slave system within a more general opposition to French “radicalism.”⁷⁷

Antislavery activists in Philadelphia were also labeled “fanatics” by their opponents. When Mifflin submitted another petition to Congress in late 1792, southern representatives took a markedly more aggressive stance than they had in 1790. John Steele of North Carolina labeled Mifflin “a fanatic, who, not content with keeping his own conscience, undertook to become the keeper of consciences of other men” and moved that all record of the episode be expunged. William Smith of South Carolina seconded the motion to be rid of this “mere rant and rhapsody

⁷⁴ Gabriel’s Rebellion in Richmond in 1800 was treated the same way. The reaction it produced destroyed all antislavery momentum in Virginia, a PAS correspondent explained four years later: “We are in fact dead & I may say I have no hope of reanimation.” George Drinker to Joseph Bringhurst, Dec. 10, 1804, LCi 2:12, PAS Papers.

⁷⁵ David Geggus, “British Opinion and the Emergence of Haiti, 1791–1805,” in *Slavery and British Society, 1776–1838*, ed. James Walvin (London, 1982), 123–49. See also, Geggus, “Haiti and the Abolitionists: Opinion Propaganda and International Politics, 1804–1838,” in *Abolition and Its Aftermath: The Historical Context, 1790–1916*, ed. David Richardson (London, 1985), 113–40.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Granville Sharp to James Pemberton, [1792], CCL 1:96, PAS Papers.

⁷⁷ See Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*.

of a meddling fanatic, interlarded with texts of Scripture.”⁷⁸ Steele’s motion was passed.

Portions of the speeches around the topic that were recorded in the *Annals of Congress* differ considerably from the versions printed in contemporary newspapers, which were much less detailed. These alterations suggest the nature of the “real danger” that Smith saw in Mifflin’s effort: southern citizens who read that their new government was allowing such a debate “might be alarmed, and led to believe, that doctrines were countenanced destructive to their interests.” This hearkened back to the threats of “disunion” heard in 1790, but the emphasis now lay elsewhere. Mifflin’s true purpose, Smith surmised, was to “create disunion among the states, and to excite the most horrible insurrections.”⁷⁹ Subsequent anti-slavery petitions, by Quaker meetings, abolition societies, and by the American Convention after 1794, would barely register in the congressional records.⁸⁰

The paucity of official activity, however, should not mask real differences between the American antislavery position and the European. Antislavery rhetoric continued to bear weight in American political discussion.⁸¹ Steele’s and Smith’s phrases echoed those spoken in France by men identified as “counter-revolutionaries” in contemporary newspapers and political dialogue. By 1792 French antislavery activists were a controlling force in government, and, with the advent of emancipation in 1794, they had in effect vanquished the counterrevolution, if only with regard to slavery. American antislavery activists, however, could not brand their opponents as counterrevolutionaries in this way. True, an active battle continued over the issue of slavery in the young republic, and both antislavery and proslavery forces could (and indeed needed to) claim to be “revolutionaries.”⁸² Yet, most of these adversaries agreed on some level that slavery was not a permanent fixture on the American landscape. While planters might prefer to rest their arguments on the right to property, a fluidity existed with regard to slavery’s ultimate fate in the United States. Even Rusticus, for example, entertained an end to slavery,

⁷⁸ *Annals of Congress*, 2d Cong., 2d sess., 730–31 (Nov. 28, 1792).

⁷⁹ *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 5, 1792 (Congress, Nov. 28).

⁸⁰ For the American Convention’s memorial, see *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 1st sess., 39 (Jan. 28, 1794).

⁸¹ Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 9–41.

⁸² Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens, GA, 1987), 190–93.

but such an event was to be exceedingly gradual and entirely under the control those who understood it best. Smith's resistance to Mifflin's petition in 1792, for all of its vitriol, was directed at the inappropriate means of the effort, not its ends. Smith claimed a superior knowledge and a privileged perspective about slavery, noting that, contrary to the hopes of Mifflin and his kind, these attempts were counterproductive. "So far from being calculated to meliorate the condition of the race who were the object of them," he explained, "they had a tendency to alienate their affections from their masters, and by exciting in them a spirit of restlessness, to render greater severity towards them necessary."⁸³ Smith and the PAS differed over the proper route to slavery's end: the congressman through an amelioration of their conditions (probably followed by their removal), the society through gradual freedom and controlled education. As a representative of the American planter class, Smith's reaction typifies a certain vein of the response to the insurrections, violence, and political developments on Saint-Domingue over this period in its suggestion of a heightened security consciousness and strict regard to discipline, order, and local control.⁸⁴ In this framework, Saint-Domingue served to stoke resistance against efforts for quick or immediate changes, the kinds of efforts sought by "fanatics."

To European opponents of antislavery, fanatics were dangerous because their ideas tended to foment slave violence. While their American counterparts made this charge too, they also connected the threat to their emerging opposition to "French" radicalism, and thereby to a greater threat to the nation as a whole. Among the various excoriations conservative British journalist William Cobbett offered to his political opponents in Philadelphia in 1795 was the tale of a dream in which he walked up Market Street with William Penn, who had returned to earth to check up on the progress of his city. Asking the venerable founder for his impressions, Cobbett was happy to convey Penn's "heavy sigh" and to report his displeasure over the emphasis on antislavery and the tumult surrounding "those 'precious hypocrites' (these were his very words)

⁸³ *Annals of Congress*, 2d Cong., 2d sess., 730–31 (Nov. 28, 1792).

⁸⁴ Similarly, see Olwyn M. Blouet, "Bryan Edwards and the Haitian Revolution," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia, SC, 2001), 44N57. See also Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, chap. 4. For a treatment that tends to equate this southern response to Haiti with that of white America as a whole, see Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America*.

Brissot and Warner Mifflin.”⁸⁵ Cobbett, however, celebrated the approach taken by the American government towards slavery. Resisting the zealotry of a Brissot or a Mifflin, the United States “with much more humane views, with a much more sincere desire of seeing all mankind free and happy,” had decided to proceed slowly and cautiously towards emancipation. While Cobbett posited this decision as being made “in spite of clubs and societies,” he nonetheless portrayed a future that included “the abolition of negro slavery,” albeit one in contrast with that of “the mad plan of the National Convention.”⁸⁶ As Cobbett’s use of William Penn suggests, the meaning of “American” foundational elements with regard to slavery was not closed off. Cobbett was no planter. He, like Rusticus, pointed to an American Revolution that produced emancipation. He trusted the planters, however, as participants in that Revolution, to decide when and if that result might occur safely.

American “fanatics,” then, were those who pushed too hard towards an end that ultimately would come anyway. The successes experienced by the PAS to this point, combined with the difficulties of advocating a course that could be identified as “radical” as political tensions heightened towards the middle of the decade, strengthened the premises behind this critique. Taken together, these factors blunted the expansive tendencies of the PAS perspective. By the late 1790s the global community that the PAS had imagined, connected, and in many ways successfully forged, was contracting. Rather than continuing to understand their doings as essentially connected to a wider change moving forward across the globe, the society had come to identify its efforts as discrete—as evolutionary, not revolutionary. At its first meeting, the Convention of Delegates from American Abolition Societies drew representatives from eight societies in six states, including Maryland and Delaware. Two societies in Virginia would send delegates to subsequent meetings, and the convention would conduct correspondence with men in South Carolina. Over the next ten years, its meetings, while active, would have fewer delegates from southern states and, after 1798, would meet less frequently.

⁸⁵ Peter Porcupine [William Cobbett], *A Bone to Gnaw, for the Democrats . . .* (Philadelphia, 1795), 36. See also, Richard Panglos (pseud.) to Peter Porcupine, 1795, Cox-Parrish-Wharton Collection, box 13 (“Miscellaneous Correspondence Alphabetical by Author N-Sarah Parrish”), folder “Panglos, Richard.”

⁸⁶ [William Cobbett], *Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley* (Philadelphia, 1794), 20.

As efforts elsewhere seemed to be dwindling and its connections to other groups weakened, the PAS's self-perception of itself as a vanguard intensified. In missives to the London Society the PAS offered British abolitionists advice and consolation for their reversals. On more than one occasion PAS letters chided their brethren for their lack of correspondence. London Society secretary Samuel Hoare apologized for their inactivity, told of their gloomy results, and applauded American successes. "Indeed if the friends of the Africans in America do but continue to go on in the regular and harmonious manner in which they have begun," he wrote, "We cannot but believe that the dawn of that day is not far off, when Skin shall no longer afford a handle for injury and . . . a seat for prejudice, but that black and white Men shall be seen living together throughout the United States, as Friends and Brethren."⁸⁷ Hoare's ideas about the future set Philadelphia apart from efforts in Britain and contrasted with the signals sent by Nisbet, Rice, and McClean. Rather than embodying the future, Pennsylvania antislavery was increasingly conceived of as an exception. PAS correspondence and activities increasingly focused within, especially looking to efforts to start schools for blacks and to continue efforts towards their moral improvement.⁸⁸ The society's optimism came to be less related to its position in a global revolution against slavery than to its distinctive success in dealing with the ills of slavery in its own area.

* * *

When Benjamin Giroud and his compatriots in Saint-Domingue made contact with the friends of the blacks in Philadelphia, they assumed that the American concept of friendship paralleled their own. Julien Raimond (a man of color), in accepting his membership in the PAS, told the society that "we see the effects of your principles fully realized amongst us." Indeed, Raimond even intimated that Saint-Domingue had surpassed Philadelphia as a "place of liberty," when he expressed his hopes that the PAS would soon be able to convince the United States to follow the French lead in providing general emancipation. In closing, he noted that, just recently, a group of slaves being brought from Africa to Jamaica had been intercepted, and had become "free the moment they touched this part of the Republic."⁸⁹ Both Philadelphia and Saint-Domingue

⁸⁷ Samuel Hoare Jr., treasurer, to James Pemberton, July 10, 1794, CCL 2:1, PAS Papers.

⁸⁸ See Nash, *Forging Freedom*.

⁸⁹ Julien Raimond to PAS, [probably Mar. 1797], CCL 2:52, PAS Papers.

proffered relief from slavery, but Raimond suggested that the latter provided a better freedom and a model for the future.

This distinction would only grow larger with time. Though PAS members imagined themselves as transnational activists, they were unable to escape the national paradigm. While they recognized French and British allies, they were blind to connections between their efforts and the truly revolutionary changes going on in Saint-Domingue. Even at the time of Giroud's contact, which was an intermediate stage of what would eventually be termed the Haitian Revolution, events in the colony represented the furthest extent of the radical implications of the ideals of the revolutionary age. Ideals of universal freedom, expressed variously through the idiom of the emergent French Revolution or in the actions and efforts of insurgent slaves, when mixed with what was perhaps the most intensive slave society the world had known, led to a wholesale destruction of that society. Giroud's visit to Philadelphia came at a point of relative calm, but Napoleon Bonaparte's attempt to reimpose slavery several years later would lead to new heights of violence and would ultimately prompt a full-scale rejection of the European presence. By 1804, Haiti, named in the language of the original Amerindian inhabitants, was deemed by its founders as having "avenged America." Its citizenry was defined by blackness, a fact that connected the nation to efforts against slavery around the world, even as the exigencies of global politics and power acted to sever those connections and efface the new nation's presence. The success of that erasure, described as "silencing" by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, contributed to the limiting of narratives of slavery and revolution to the national, rather than global, level. This is something scholars have only recently sought to redress.⁹⁰ Giroud's radical universalism,

⁹⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995). For connections between the Haitian, American, and French revolutions, see Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (2006): 643–74, and Geggus, *Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Recent scholarship has contested Trouillot's notion that Haiti was "silenced"—that is, that eighteenth-century categories of understanding were incapable of considering black self-assertion and freedom acts as part of the same framework as European revolutions. Not only were events on Saint-Domingue intensively noted, they argue, but they were constitutive to important facets of European modernity. See, for example, Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 821–65; Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC, 2004); Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville, VA, 2008); Ada Ferrer, "Talk about Haiti: The Archive and the Atlantic's Haitian Revolution," in *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. Doris Lorraine Garraway (Charlottesville, VA, 2008), 21–40; and Doris Lorraine

while presented as an expression of the French Revolution, was conditioned, and even determined, by events and circumstances in Haiti, and was driven by ideals that spanned well beyond French borders. If considering its reception in the United States similarly destabilizes a national narrative of American Revolutionary antislavery, it also illuminates the distinctive aspects of the American answer to a transnational problem.

By the late 1790s, the connections that had defined the promise of Pennsylvania's freedom had been severed. The liberty to be found there came from membership in the community, not from merely touching the soil. Yes, Pennsylvania was an asylum from slavery, but it was not a touchstone for freedom. Whereas, in late 1789 a writer in Philadelphia could hope "that the time is rapidly approaching when the citizens of these United States will no longer merit the odious character of *oppressors of their fellow men*; but, by nobly breaking the chains of slavery, justly entitle their country to the name of *THE LAND OF LIBERTY*," by the time of Giroud's visit, that "land" had been circumscribed considerably.⁹¹ At nearly the same time as the PAS considered his offer, the society entertained another vision of postemancipation society. It, too, bore the influence of events on Saint-Domingue. In October 1796 the society took up for consideration a plan for gradual emancipation written by Virginian academic and jurist St. George Tucker. A copy was procured in order to decide whether it "contain[ed] such matter as to render it proper for this Society to undertake to distribute it."⁹² Tucker's provisions were to some extent familiar. Steeped in what were by this point common adages describing the hypocrisy of the American Revolution with regard to slavery, he outlined a mechanism to gradually emancipate his state's slaves not dissimilar to that used in Pennsylvania. The crux of his plan, however, was what was to come after emancipation, and here it veered sharply from Pennsylvania's model. Tucker hoped that by denying freed blacks all rights whatsoever in Virginia they would be spurred to voluntarily separate from white society "to seek those privileges in some other climate." This

Garraway, "Légitime Defense': Universalism and Nationalism in the Discourse of the Haitian Revolution," in *Tree of Liberty*, 63–90. For a masterful demonstration of the appropriation and expansion of French ideals of human equality by colonists of color, see Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

⁹¹ *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 24, 1789 ("CONSTITUTION of the MARYLAND SOCIETY . . .").

⁹² General Meeting minutes, Oct. 3, 1796, GMB 1:265, PAS Papers.

feature was driven not only by the desire to cleanse the American experiment of inconsistency, but also by a concern for white well-being. "At this moment we have the most awful demonstrations" of the dangers slavery posed to white society, he exclaimed, pointing to Saint-Domingue. While the population of American slaves was relatively low now, the recent census showed a trend of rapid growth, especially in the Chesapeake region. It was best for whites to begin to dispense with this problem, getting out while the getting was still good.⁹³

This flew in the face of PAS practices and ideas. Like Rusticus before him, Tucker rooted his approach in the notion that white and black interests were distinct, and that those of the latter could be translated as the destruction of the former. From Saint-Domingue he took the lesson that, without slavery to contain black interests, white safety demanded freed blacks' separation and removal. PAS members disagreed. On February 1 the society resolved that Tucker's pamphlet was not "a publication of such a nature as to be necessary . . . to purchase any thereof."⁹⁴ By that point, the PAS no longer understood its purpose as making the United States into the nation without slaves that its Revolution had once seemed to suggest. Instead, the nation was a conglomerate of "interests," some of which, as the PAS response to Tucker's ideas indicates, remained anathema. For the moment, however, this disjunction was insoluble. The PAS activists would have to remain content, complaisant perhaps, with Philadelphia, if not "Philanthropolis."

Princeton University

JAMES ALEXANDER DUN

⁹³ St. George Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of it, in the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia, 1796), 91–94.

⁹⁴ General Meeting minutes, Feb. 1, 1797, GMB 1:267, PAS Papers.

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Newly Available and Processed Collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE DESCRIPTIONS of some of the collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania that have either been acquired within the past year or more fully processed and therefore more available and accessible to researchers. Full finding aids for these processed collections, and many others, can be found online at <http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=35>.

Recently Processed Collections

Charles Jared Ingersoll Papers, 1801–1891 (bulk 1812–1848)

6 boxes

Collection 1812

Charles Jared Ingersoll (1782–1862) served twice as a U.S. representative from Pennsylvania, first from 1813 to 1815 and again from 1841 to 1847. In between these congressional terms, he was the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, a Pennsylvania state representative, and a delegate to the Pennsylvania state constitutional convention. In addition to his political career, Ingersoll worked as a lawyer in Philadelphia and was an accomplished writer. Beyond his early works, he published the two-volume *History of the War of 1812–15* (1845, 1852). The papers mostly span his career from the 1810s to the 1840s. The bulk of the materials are incoming letters, many from well-known nineteenth-century individuals, including several U.S. presidents; however, there are also drafts of his writings, clippings, a copy of his 1837 nomination to Congress, and other miscellaneous papers. While indirectly highlighting Ingersoll's work, most of the correspondence contains political, legal, or personal discussions.

Jay Cooke Papers, 1831–1906, undated (bulk 1858–1874)

102 boxes, 30 volumes, 12 flat files

Collection 148

Called the “financier of the Civil War,” Jay Cooke (1821–1905) was cofounder of Jay Cooke & Company, which became Philadelphia’s most powerful financial house and a major national company. Cooke’s investments and efforts as a subscription agent for the national loan helped to raise around \$700 million for Union war efforts over the course of the Civil War. Containing correspondence that documents the work of Jay Cooke & Co. and communications with many of the era’s most powerful politicians and businessmen, the papers are a rich source of information about the finances of the Union, Union politics during and after the Civil War, westward expansion and the construction of railroads across the country, and banking and finance during the mid to late nineteenth century. Cooke’s connection with the Department of the Treasury provides a unique inside view of political decisions, and his papers illustrate his influence with many leaders in positions of great authority. The collection also contains a small group of personal papers, offering a perspective on Jay Cooke’s philanthropic, religious, and family orientation.

Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker Diaries, 1758–1807, 1975, undated

4 boxes, 40 volumes

Collection 1760

The diaries of Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker (1734–1807) highlight the life of a Quaker woman living in Philadelphia in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Between 1758 and 1807, Drinker fastidiously wrote in her journals, usually about her family members and their health and well-being. Occasionally, she also detailed medical practices and her own moral standards. She discussed major events insofar as they affected her family, such as the Revolutionary War and the 1793 yellow fever outbreak. As a member of the famous merchant family, the Drinkers, she also came in contact with many other well-known families, including the Shippens, Whartons, and Rawleses, and such encounters are often noted. The collection includes her original diaries, as well as typescripts of excerpts from them and photocopies of the diaries from the years 1797 to 1807.

**Andrew Atkinson Humphreys Papers, 1708–1930, undated
(bulk 1850–1879)**

120 boxes, 76 volumes, 15 flat files
Collection 304

Andrew Atkinson Humphreys (1810–1883) was the son of Samuel Humphreys, chief constructor for the U.S. Navy, and the grandson of Joshua Humphreys, who is often called the “Father of the American Navy.” A West Point graduate, Andrew was trained as an engineer and employed his skills as a surveyor to map the courses of battle and plan strategy for the Union Army in the Civil War. The papers span Humphreys’s career, including his service in the Second Seminole War and his work as chief of staff for General George Meade and as head of the U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers and the Army Corps of Engineers. The collection consists of correspondence, orders, reports, payment vouchers, ephemera, maps, survey data, drafts, and published works. The most significant groups of materials in this collection are documents from the Civil War, which may have been collected when Humphreys served in the Army of the Potomac, and papers related to the survey of the Mississippi River in the 1850s and 1860s. Also of interest are Humphreys’s later reflections on the Civil War in his notes and manuscripts for *Gettysburg to the Rapidan* (1883) and *The Virginia Campaign* (1883).

Pisano and Siciliano Families Papers, 1910–2009, undated

2 boxes
Collection 3135

Salavatore Siciliano (1867–1958) and his wife, Maria (1867–1958), arrived in Philadelphia from Italy in the first decade of the twentieth century. They ran a boarding house in South Philadelphia whose tenants included Anthony Pisano (1894–1979), a poet, playwright, member of the theatrical group the Philadelphia Filodramatic Circle Gasperinese, and later son-in-law of the Sicilianos. This collection highlights the families’ genealogies through vital records, passports, family trees, and images. There are also original photographs and Italian magazines, as well as a sampling of plays and operas handwritten or transcribed in Italian by Pisano.

**Wister and Butler Families Papers, 1700–2004, undated
(bulk 1848–1907)**

46 boxes, 55 volumes, 17 flat files
Collection 1962

The Wister and Butler families were prominent in Philadelphia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and had ties to numerous other prominent families in the Philadelphia region, Georgia, and Great Britain. Major Pierce Butler (1744–1822), the son of an Irish baronet, was a British Army officer in the French and Indian War and later a slaveholding southern planter and South Carolina politician. His daughters Sarah Butler Wister (circa 1772–1831) and Frances Anne Butler Leigh (1774–1836) are also represented, as are Sarah's son Pierce (Mease) Butler (1810–1867) and his wife, Frances Anne Butler (1809–1893)—an esteemed actor known as Fanny Kemble. Various other family members are also represented, including Owen Wister (1860–1938), author of the celebrated western novel *The Virginian* (1902). The bulk of the collection is correspondence and estate papers; it also includes diaries, newspapers and newspaper clippings, business papers, real estate papers, ledgers and other financial documents, photographs, and other miscellaneous papers. The collection provides insights into a wide variety of topics, including women's history, the Civil War, African American history, family history, politics, culture, and the life of actress Fanny Kemble and her daughters. The materials concerning the Butler plantations both before and after the Civil War are particularly interesting.

Stephen H. Noyes Papers, circa 1916–1925, undated

2 boxes
Collection 1472

Captain Stephen H. Noyes (1881–1932) served as an American aviator in France during World War I. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre and the Distinguished Service Cross. This small collection of material that dates from the World War I era consists of several detailed photograph albums, correspondence, reports, orders, maps, and army publications.

**Arthur Colen Collection of Joseph Boggs Beale Papers, 1856–ca. 1973
(bulk 1856–1882)**
1 box, 7 volumes
Collection 2007

Joseph Boggs Beale (1841–1926) was a preeminent nineteenth-century illustrator from a large Philadelphia family. Over the course of his career, he worked for Frank Leslie's *Weekly*, *Harper's*, and the *Daily Graphic*, among other magazines. He also became well-known for his drawings for lantern-slide (or magic-lantern) scenes. This small collection of his papers, compiled by Arthur Colen of Philadelphia's Modern Galleries, consists of diaries Beale kept between 1856 and 1865 (excerpts from which were published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* in October 1973), correspondence, genealogical notes, and family photographs.

**The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection of Civil War Papers,
1830–1923 (bulk 1861–1865)**
8 boxes, 15 volumes, 4 flat files
Collection 1546

Created from several sources, the Civil War Papers include muster rolls, daily reports, order books, official government documents, personal and official correspondence, and other Civil War ephemera. The collection is arranged alphabetically within four series—military, organizations, correspondence, and miscellaneous—with the bulk contained within series 1, a mixture of documents and records generated by several military regiments (including the Matthew Hastings Independent Keystone Battery, two regiments of Pennsylvania volunteers, and one Confederate regiment). The muster lists, clothing account ledgers, and official orders provide a glimpse into the logistical planning and bookkeeping which the business of war required. Other series highlight what civilians and civilian organizations were doing during the war and contain correspondence between such figures as General Robert Patterson, commander of the Army of the Shenandoah, and Winfield Scott, general-in-chief of the Union Army.

**The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection of Academy of Music
Programs, Playbills, and Scrapbooks, 1857–1972, undated**

131 boxes, 17 volumes, 6 flat files

Collection 3150

The Academy of Music materials span from the organization's founding in 1857 as a "grand opera house in Philadelphia" to 1972 and were assembled gradually from materials received from multiple sources. The largest group in the collection contains printed programs and playbills in chronological order. There are no records documenting the operations of the academy itself, but much information can be gleaned about Philadelphia's cultural history from the evidence of the companies that resided at or visited the academy and from the numerous advertisements placed in the programs. Programs dating up to about the 1950s, and especially those from the late nineteenth century, are particularly artistic and show off the fashionable motifs and fonts of the day. There are also scattered programs documenting political rallies, lectures, educational programs, and such national events as the nomination of Ulysses S. Grant for a second presidential term and the Centennial Exhibition of 1876.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

CHRISTOPHER MUNDEN
AND HSP ARCHIVES STAFF

BOOK REVIEWS

Pennsylvania's Revolution. Edited by WILLIAM PENCAK. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 408 pp. Illustrations, appendix, index. \$85.)

Bill Pencak has again brought together a veritable diaspora of early Pennsylvanianists with something to say about the state and the American Revolution. The volume starts with a big bang as Nathan Kozuskanich draws out the neglected links between the ideology of the Paxton Boys and the populist localism at the center of support for the Revolution in 1776. The notion of “safety against all belligerents” secured through participation in militias characterized both movements, much as we prefer to distance ourselves from Paxton while wrapping ourselves in the 1776 version of “Don’t Tread on Me.” Patrick Spero and Phillip Munch argue for the importance of English- and German-language almanacs; their research is thorough but their arguments hardly surprising. John Frantz provides a brief survey of how religion informed the attitudes and actions of Germans during the Revolutionary War. (A translation of some of Henry Miller’s newspaper writings, with commentary by Pencak, appears as an appendix to the volume.) Pencak’s own essay on the loyalist clergy breaks some stereotypes in its fascinating explanation of the pressures on Anglican clergyman to oppose the Revolution and the differences in the ways ten of eleven of them did so.

If there is an overall theme that emerges, it seems to be the familiar but important messiness of the Revolution in Pennsylvania, especially the war. Russell Spinney, writing about Centre County between 1769 and 1778, acknowledges the frontier standoff and polarization but finds intriguing evidence in the archive for the continuance of a “middle ground” of coexistence between Indians and Europeans. Douglas MacGregor writes sensitively and compellingly about some of the most hated loyalists of the “middle frontier,” like John Connolly and Simon Girty. Owen Ireland brings Esther DeBerdt Reed to life, showing how her evolving political independence set the stage for her famous activism as leader of the Ladies Association and author of “Sentiments of an American Woman,” now a classroom standard. A briskly written essay by Meredith H. Lair on the British occupation of Philadelphia focuses on the army’s theatrical productions as an epitome of their failure to win the hearts and minds of most Philadelphians.

The let-a-thousand-flowers-bloom spirit of this collection has especially impressive results in these essays on particular people. We ought to be able to sympathize with all the very human players in this drama. After a time, though,

one wonders whether the contradictions—sympathy for the loyalists in one essay, for the patriots in another—means avoiding the tough issues such as those Kozuskanich raises in the first chapter. This becomes glaring by the time we get to Robert Guy Jr.'s paean to brave "William Thompson and the Pennsylvania Rifleman" and Melissah Pawlokowski's more evenhanded treatment of the social mobility of carpenter and army veteran Isaac Craig. I had had enough of successful and patriotic Pennsylvanians' wisdom by the time I got to Elizabeth Lewis Pardoe's recounting of federalist "imaginative" brilliance against the antifederalists' fearful localism in 1787. With Anthony Joseph's argument that Pennsylvanians only gradually came to hate taxes I found myself wishing for a little less supposed Pennsylvanian tolerance for diversity and effective government and a more rigorous reckoning with common themes. I also found myself musing about why historians with Big Ideas about the Revolution tend to stay away from both the war and Pennsylvania.

The volume's last two essays do help remind us why such an overall reckoning is so difficult. James S. Bailey compares winter conditions at two Continental Army encampments, Jockey Hollow (near Morristown, 1779–1780) and Valley Forge, and finds that wishful thinking encouraged a heroic memory of the latter and an almost utter neglect of the former, which was both harsher and less inspiring as a result of mutinies and military failures. And Karen Guenther catalogs Pennsylvania's Revolution on the silver screen, giving cursory treatment to a remarkable number of films, including *1776*, perhaps most people's favorite evocation of the Revolution in any medium. *Pennsylvania's Revolution* is, in sum, an interesting and somewhat taxing cornucopia. Like the state itself, it resists summation but has grist for many mills.

Temple University

DAVID WALDSTREICHER

The Philadelphia Stock Exchange and the City It Made. By DOMENIC VITIELLO, with GEORGE E. THOMAS. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. 256 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$45.)

"Triumph and Tragedy" could well have been a subtitle of this history of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange. The triumph came in the exchange's first century, beginning in 1790 when merchant-financiers organized the Board of Brokers, the first stock exchange in the United States. New York also traded securities at the time, but its traders would not form a similar securities trading club, the forerunner of the New York Stock Exchange, until 1792.

Until the 1830s, the exchanges of the two cities were peers. Philadelphia's exchange benefited from the city being the capital of the country in the 1790s and the headquarters of the two Banks of the United States, while New York's

exchange thrived as its city became the largest of all U.S. cities and the nation's commercial capital. When the second Bank of the United States lost its federal charter in 1836, and then as a state-chartered bank failed a few years later, New York City and its exchange continued to grow and shot ahead. But Philadelphia became a leading industrial city, and the Philadelphia Stock Exchange (the name adopted in 1875) played an important role in financing the economic infrastructure—banks, insurance companies, roads, railroads, urban transit, and utilities—that made it an industrial center. In the century of triumph a number of America's leading financiers were Philadelphians: Thomas Willing, Robert Morris, Thomas and Nicholas Biddle, Enoch Clark, Jay Cooke, and Anthony Drexel.

Drexel's passing in 1893 marked the end of the century of triumph. New York's financiers successfully transitioned from railroad finance to the financing of large industrial corporations operating in nationwide and world markets. Philadelphia's did not. The problem seemed to be that Philadelphia's industrial firms were smaller ones producing customized products not subject to substantial economies of scale—firms that were content to rely on banks for finance instead of going public by issuing stocks and bonds. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Philadelphia exchange therefore became a regional exchange, mostly trading New York-based securities in Philadelphia, instead of being a market that financed Philadelphia enterprises.

The Philadelphia exchange got a second wind in the second half of the last century by admitting institutional and foreign traders to membership before New York did, and by using computer-based trading technologies to develop innovative option and other derivative products. In 2008, the exchange was purchased by New York's NASDAQ and continues to operate as a part of that organization.

Author Vitiello is an urban historian, not an economic or financial historian. That may be why he appears to consider the second century of the Philadelphia exchange's history to be something of a tragedy, as it ceased to finance Philadelphia's growth and the city itself went into "rust-belt" decline. It may also account for a number of minor errors. For example, Thomas Jefferson did not close the national bank in 1811 (53), and Albert Gallatin was not Andrew Jackson's secretary of the treasury in 1833 (72). Finally, what could be more tragic, at least to a proud Philadelphian, than Vitiello's conclusion that the Quaker City, financially speaking, has become little more than "the sixth borough" of New York City.

New York University

RICHARD SYLLA

A Nation of Speechifiers: Making an American Public after the Revolution. By CAROLYN EASTMAN. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. 304 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$37.50.)

Atlantic history, hemispheric history, global history: recent scholarly shifts in scale have shown that the Revolution, far from creating a distinctive national identity, instead marked a political transition in a society that remained defined by transcultural contacts, exchanges, and affinities. In the context of the ever-expanding geography of our discipline, Carolyn Eastman's account of the early republic is striking because it questions the nationalized mythology of the Revolutionary War from within. *A Nation of Speechifiers* draws entirely on evidence from the United States to demonstrate that a shared national identity did not emerge for decades after independence, much later than the nationalistic rhetoric of the era would suggest. Eastman argues that ordinary Americans "learned to think of themselves as members of a public" before they could inhabit a sense of national belonging (4). The contentious practices that produced such thinking—in the schools, in debating societies, in performance, and in printed matter of all kinds—comprise the center of her analysis, which considers the fractious nature of a society that, as Trish Loughran has suggested, lacked the communication networks to support national consciousness. Indeed, despite the somewhat Whiggish tone of the book's subtitle, Eastman's main goal "is less to argue that a public had been 'made' by the 1830s than to illustrate the impact of lay individuals in debating the nature of the American public—jockeying for position and authority in the public sphere" (6). The focus on debate makes the book a pleasure to read and allows Eastman to tell a compelling new national story.

Eastman's account depends on two arguments that underpin her point about national identity, one about media and another about gender and class. Learning to become a public involved the use of both print and oratory, two mediums Eastman argues were mutually constitutive. In the book's first part, she describes historical shifts in primary schooling to examine how elocutionary practices were communicated through printed manuals and conducted in public performances. She shows that before 1810 boys and girls were taught surprisingly similar practices that shaped their adult engagement with politics. The book's second part contains three case studies that suggest just how vigorously Americans debated the nature of their inchoate public sphere. Eastman discusses urban debating societies, where young men delivered and printed speeches about politics; trade unions of journeyman printers, where members applauded the importance of print in Fourth of July toasts; and newspaper reactions to the radical British orator Frances Wright, who toured the nation in late 1820s. Eastman brings a refreshing amount of attention to gender in her analysis, and she emphasizes the centrality of ordinary people. Her Americans are nonelites: schoolchildren,

Native Americans, working white men in cities, and rural women who performed their elocutionary prowess in speeches during the 1790s. Such individuals and countless others used print and oratory to formulate ideas about what it means to be a public before they thought of themselves as national subjects.

McNeil Center for Early American Studies,
University of Pennsylvania

JOSEPH REZEK

Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom. By SAMUEL OTTER. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 408 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

The central theme of Samuel Otter's *Philadelphia Stories* is the idea that the one-time capital city of the United States was conceptualized from the outset as a social laboratory, the site of a large-scale social experiment. The idea of an experiment, which of course suffused much of the way early Americans thought about their new government and evolving social structure, drives an analysis that repeatedly emphasizes the self-consciousness that informed Philadelphians' willingness to try new approaches to old problems, or, in some cases, their appetite to tackle the new problems that had been created and were emerging out of the new circumstances of race and democracy in the early United States. Although literary history forms the central axis of Otter's analysis, he weaves together a diverse range of materials, including novels, social theory, politics, art and architecture, and social history to offer a fascinating account of the cultural, social, and intellectual history of Philadelphia from the American Revolution through the Civil War.

The book is divided into four substantial chapters, each of which is organized around a different strand in Philadelphia's history, but is also roughly chronological, albeit with significant overlaps in each section. The first section, "Fever," focuses on the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, the second, "Manners," begins in the 1790s but traces a narrative of "conduct and character" that concludes in the 1830s and 1840s. "Riot," the third chapter, is organized around the series of race-, religion-, and ethnic-motivated "disturbances" that shook the city between 1829 and 1844. Finally, in "Freedom" the book focuses on the debates around abolition and slavery that gained momentum in the city in the 1840s and 1850s. The crucial articulations of these themes are found, in Otter's study, in written and visual texts that range the generic gamut from political pamphlets to social theory, histories of the city, and, of course, novels. By tracing thematic continuities across texts from diverse genres and across several decades, Otter is able to find coherence in the cultural and literary life of the city where others have often insisted on an absence of such unifying or temporal continuities in the intellectual narrative of Philadelphia's history.

Throughout the study Otter moves fluidly back and forth across time, showing a knowledge of the city's history (literary, social, cultural, and political) that is both deep and wide. With *Philadelphia Stories* Otter challenges us to rethink both the inner life of the city and its place in the larger narrative of the cultural and social development of the United States over its first one hundred years. *Philadelphia Stories* is indispensable reading for anyone interested in the history of Philadelphia. But that would be faint praise indeed for a book that merits the attention of all students of the early United States and, more broadly, of those attentive to the deep and intricate ways in which literature and social life are intertwined with one another.

University of Delaware

EDWARD LARKIN

Women of Industry and Reform: Shaping the History of Pennsylvania, 1865–1940. By MARION W. ROYDHOUSE. (Mansfield: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 2008. 104 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$12.95.)

Frequently Pennsylvania history is a tale of two cities: Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. In contrast with this limited perspective, in *Women of Industry and Reform* Marion Roydhouse presents a statewide analysis of the recent literature on Pennsylvania women. Examining the public and private lives of Pennsylvania women from 1865 to 1940, she includes the voices of women from rural and urban areas, women who worked in heavy industry and light manufacturing, as well as working-class labor organizers and middle-class reformers. The words and thoughts of individual women illuminate and humanize this study.

Roydhouse argues that between the Civil War and World War II, women actively contributed to the transformation of Pennsylvania's economy from an agricultural to industrial base. Acting as workers and reformers, women helped Pennsylvania develop into an industrial powerhouse. Roydhouse begins with an examination of rural communities in the aftermath of the Civil War, when increased demands for coal radically altered rural life by creating new employment opportunities. Using examples from Carbon, Dauphin, and Lebanon counties, she documents how working-class women facilitated employment of male family members in the mines. In mining towns where women carefully managed family resources, cared for children, cooked, cleaned, and frequently kept boarders, they also supported male workers in their pursuit of better wages and safer working conditions.

Moving from rural coal mines to the industrializing cities of Pennsylvania, Roydhouse turns her attention to the impact of industrialization on women in urban areas. She argues that race, gender, and ethnicity influenced the choices

available to women for employment outside the home. While Philadelphia offered white working-class women a variety of industrial opportunities, familial values and ethnic networks determined which types of employment families deemed to be appropriate for their daughters and wives. Race also limited employment opportunities for women. Although black women worked in greater numbers than native-born or immigrant women, black women had fewer industrial opportunities. As late as 1920, over 80 percent of Pennsylvania's black women worked as either private or public domestics (43). In addition to racial discrimination and ethnic preferences, the composition of local industries also defined female employment opportunities. In Pittsburgh, where heavy industries such as iron, steel, aluminum, glass, and railroads dominated, white women found employment in light industries that manufactured food, stogies, electrical equipment, and textiles. However, due to Pittsburgh's focus on heavy industry, married working-class women worked in lower percentages than women in other comparable cities.

Pennsylvania's middle-class women had a long history of political and social reform. Reacting to industrialization and urbanization middle-class women mounted efforts to increase political rights, reform urban government, and improve industrial working conditions. From the 1860s, Pennsylvania's female reformers pursued equal rights and the vote for African Americans and women. Through the promotion of suffrage, the formation of female reform associations, and the creation of cross-class alliances, women sought to mitigate the effects of urbanization and industrialization. Roydhouse's analysis, which examines the contributions of organizations such as the Woman Suffrage Association, YWCA, Women's Trade Union League, and Bryn Mawr Summer School, demonstrates how women's political activism influenced public actions.

Roydhouse's concise review of women in Pennsylvania is useful for teaching Pennsylvania history, undergraduate course adoption, and the general reader. In addition, this volume includes a bibliography from which to explore a wealth of historical resources on Pennsylvania's women.

University of Pittsburgh

LORETTA SULLIVAN LOBES

Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania. Edited by DIANNE HARRIS. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. 448 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$45.95.)

The word "Levittown" conjures up distinctively strong associations in the minds of scholars and the general public. The image that often emerges first is that of modest, single-family suburban houses clustered together by the thousands on an expanse of flat former farmland, followed by some combination of

different judgments: a successful experiment in making home ownership broadly affordable; a cultural wasteland of conformity and consumption; a child-filled, family-friendly community; a site and symbol of racial exclusion and hostility. One of the important achievements of *Second Suburb* is that such common, partially conflicting assumptions are at once confirmed and complicated. Composed of a relatively brief set of first-person memories of living in Levittown, Pennsylvania, and of seven scholarly essays focusing on such topics as architecture, planning, racial politics, and the environment, this skillfully edited collection is full of creative tension with its exploration of contrasts.

Dianne Harris sets the stage for this thematic focus on contrasts in her useful introduction, where she explains that Levittown “embodied both dream and nightmare,” that it proved “both ordinary and exemplary” (14). The most vivid nightmare on view in *Second Suburb* is the 1957 experience of the Myers family—the first African Americans to move to Levittown, breaking the Levitts’ all-white sales policy. In both Daisy Myers’s recollection of her family’s ordeal, which included a briefly violent riot as well as long-term harassment, and Thomas Sugrue’s historical assessment of Levittown’s race relations, the prevalence of naked bigotry and racial hatred in Levittown is evocatively depicted. But *Second Suburb* does not allow one to reduce Levittown to any simple or single story; also on display in these essays is the outpouring of support for the Myers family in particular and interracial goals in general among other Levittown residents, especially Quaker and Jewish activists living there. Another such contrast is found in Christopher Sellers’s essay on the suburban environment. Sellers examines how the intensive development of lower Bucks County—where Levittown is located—spurred residents in the more affluent central and upper parts of the county to form organizations in the 1950s and early 1960s designed to protect open space and thereby prevent their own communities from resembling Levittown. But then beginning in the late 1960s Levittown residents began responding to their own changing landscapes—air and water pollution from nearby industrial plants, newly plentiful litter—by fashioning a new brand of environmental politics with a broader vision and demographic profile. As Sellers summarizes, “Levittown and similar communities across the nation thereby served as both targets *and* breeding grounds for a new environmentalism” (284).

Other historical essays in *Second Suburb* follow the lead of Sugrue and Sellers in providing a nuanced sense of Levittown’s variation and evolution—a mission on which the recently thriving scholarship on American suburbs has focused. Particularly strong in this regard is Richard Longstreth’s essay on Levittown planning, which carefully traces Levitt & Sons’ pre–World War II and earlier Levittown, New York, projects, showing how the Pennsylvania Levittown represented a culmination of their attempts to adapt other developers’ new practices with their own professional experiences and personal interests (Alfred Levitt was a fan of Frank Lloyd Wright; Abraham Levitt was an avid gardener and stu-

dent of landscape architecture). Similarly, Dianne Harris's chapter on architecture and Curtis Miner's on kitchen design explore how Levittown, Pennsylvania, houses changed over the handful of years they were built during the early and mid-1950s, becoming more conservative and less innovative as consumer tastes and a changing real estate market influenced the Levitts' building plans.

Handsomely produced with an extensive number of photographs, floor plans, cartoons, and advertisements, *Second Suburb* provides a solid, smart contribution to our understanding of postwar suburbs by viewing a single suburban community through multiple historical lenses.

Arcadia University

PETER SISKIND

Citizen Environmentalists. By JAMES LONGHURST. (Medford, MA: Tufts University Press, 2010. 272 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.)

In *Citizen Environmentalists*, James Longhurst demonstrates that historical explanations of the modern environmental movement must take local context and political power into account. The book focuses on the proliferation of small, grassroots environmental advocacy groups in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It features a case study of one such organization in Pittsburgh: GASP (Group Against Smog and Pollution). By stressing local rather than national events, and by integrating a political-science perspective with urban social history, Longhurst provides new insights into the sources and development of environmental activism.

Founded in 1969, GASP was rooted in the particular social geography of middle-class neighborhoods in Pittsburgh's East End, which were proximate to the heavily polluting steel industry of the Monongahela River Valley. Its members believed that transforming the political process of regulating air pollution at the municipal level was necessary to achieve cleaner air in their communities. Allegheny County, which had jurisdiction over air quality in the Pittsburgh area, had long implemented its air-pollution controls through gradual, consensus-seeking negotiations with major polluters. This approach resulted in numerous exemptions and lax enforcement. GASP promoted a contrasting vision of a more transparent, adversarial, and responsive regulatory system.

Longhurst adeptly uses local archival records to chart how GASP acquired and wielded political power. He highlights innovations in federal and Pennsylvania law that mandated public hearings on proposed environmental regulations and that authorized courts to admit "citizen lawsuits" against perpetrators of environmental damage. GASP leveraged these institutional changes to gain a voice in policy making. Linking the group's activities to the recent historiography of participatory democracy, Longhurst argues that GASP exemplified

a mid-twentieth-century “rights revolution” that redefined citizenship in terms of active engagement in governance.

GASP had less formal means of building influence as well. Inspired by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, it was also indebted to traditions of middle-class social reform that dated from the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century. Its members networked with preexisting voluntary associations in Pittsburgh, such as the League of Women Voters, neighborhood garden clubs, and religious congregations. Women predominated in the leadership of these organizations and were prominent in GASP itself. Indeed, Longhurst finds that “much of GASP’s fund-raising, organizing, and educational activities took place in what might be termed women’s social space” (85) and that the group framed its opposition to air pollution in maternalist terms of care for children and families. That rhetoric helped GASP legitimate its claim to represent a broad public in environmental matters.

During its first decade, GASP compiled a mixed record. Its activism contributed to stronger air-quality standards, reductions in air pollution, and additional opportunities for public participation. However, it fared less well when it confronted Pittsburgh’s largest steelmakers, whose refusal to bring several of their plants into compliance with county law created an impasse that ultimately led GASP to seek assistance from the federal government. *Citizen Environmentalists* thus ends on a tempered note in evaluating local citizen involvement in environmental policy, observing that this strategy was fruitful but had limited ability to offset concentrated economic power.

Pittsburgh, PA

SHERIE R. MERSHON

The Library Company of Philadelphia
and
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
*Visiting Research Fellowships in Colonial and U.S. History
and Culture for 2011–2012*

These two independent research libraries will jointly award approximately 25 one-month fellowships for research in residence in either or both collections from June 2011 through May 2012. Named one-month fellowships support research in certain areas:

- Two Barra Foundation International Fellowships (which carry a special stipend of \$2,500 plus a travel allowance) are reserved for citizens of other countries living outside the United States.
- The Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR) sponsors two fellowships that support research in American history in the early national period.
- The William Reese Company supports a fellowship for research in American bibliography and the history of the book in the Americas.
- The William H. Helfand Fellowship for American Medicine, Science, and Society supports research in that subject area to 1900.
- LCP's Visual Culture Program Fellowship supports research focused on pictorial imagery in printed and graphic works from the colonial era to the early 20th century.
- The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) sponsors a fellowship for research on projects related to the American 18th century.
- LCP's Program in Early American Economy and Society (PEAES) offers four short-term fellowships for research in that field.
- LCP's Program in African American History offers several Albert M. Greenfield Foundation Fellowships to support research in that field.

**THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS IS
MARCH 1, 2011,** with a decision to be made by April 15.

To apply please complete the online cover sheet and submit one PDF containing a résumé and a 2–4 page description of the proposed research. One letter of recommendation should arrive under separate cover in PDF format as well. Please email materials to fellowships@librarycompany.org.

To fill out the online coversheet, visit
www.librarycompany.org/fellowships/american.htm

For other fellowships offered by the Library Company, please visit
www.librarycompany.org/fellowships

**The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Balch Institute Fellowships in Ethnic and/or
20th-Century History and
Albert M. Greenfield Fellowship in 20th-Century
History
2011–2012**

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania will award two one-month Balch Institute fellowships to enable research on topics related to the ethnic and immigrant experience in the United States and/or American cultural, social, political, or economic history post-1875 and one Albert M. Greenfield Fellowship for research in 20th-century history. The fellowships support one month of residency in Philadelphia during the 2011–2012 academic year. Past Balch fellows have done research on immigrant children, Italian American fascism, German Americans in the Civil War, Pan-Americanism, African American women's political activism, and much more. The Albert M. Greenfield Fellowship, supported by the Greenfield Foundation, is new this year.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, enriched by the holdings of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, holds more than 19 million personal, organizational, and business manuscripts, as well 560,000 printed items and 312,000 graphic images that richly document the social, cultural, and economic history of a region central to many aspects of the nation's development from colonial times to the 20th century.

The stipend is \$2,000. Fellowships are tenable for any one-month period between June 2011 and May 2012. They support advanced, postdoctoral, and dissertation research. **Deadline for receipt of applications is March 1, 2011**, with a decision to be made by April 15.

For detailed information and application instructions visit <http://www.librarycompany.org/fellowships>. For information on the Balch and Greenfield fellowships, contact Tamara Gaskell, (215) 732-6200 x208, e-mail tgaskell@hsp.org.