of many, very many, well-minded people of all countries & religious denominations. With love I remain thy affectionate friend

ANTHONY BENEZET

Excuse interlineations &c as time will not permit to write over my letter.

(FREE)

For

Benjn. Franklin Esqr.
Agent for the Provee. of Pennsylvania in London.

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TO: GRANVILLE SHARP

Memoirs of Anthony Benezet
Wilson Armistead

Philadelphia, 5th Month 14th, 1772.

Esteemed Friend
Granville Sharp:

I have long been desirous to advise with such well-disposed persons in England, as have a prospect of the iniquity of the slave trade, and are concerned to prevent its continuance. And I should have wrote thereon, had I known how to direct; particularly as I had taken the freedom to republish a part of thy acceptable, and I trust serviceable, treatise. But now, having a good opportunity, I make free affectionately to salute thee, and to send thee some copies of a treatise lately published here on that iniquitous traffic, giving the best account of its origin, progress, &c., we have been able to procure. 1 I doubt not but it may be amended by some more able hand on your side of the water. We esteem the whole of thy treatise to be very instructive, and much to the point; 2 nevertheless, it was thought, from the general disposition of the people here, that their attention was most likely to be drawn to it if limited to that part which immediately concerns us. I trust thou wilt excuse the

1. Anthony Benezet’s Some Historical Account of Guinea, 1772.

freedom we have taken in abridging it, even tho’ thou should not quite approve our reasons for so doing. It is certainly incumbent on every lover of God and man to use their best endeavours to stop this unnatural and barbarous traffic, as well on account of its dreadful effects on the poor negroes, the devastation it occasions in their country, the destruction and intolerable sufferings it entails on those who remain in bondage, and their offspring; but yet much more so in the case of their lordly oppressors, the people of the West India and southern Colonies, to whom this dreadful evil will, in its consequences, extend beyond time, even in the regions of eternity, by hardening their hearts, so that they and their offspring become alienated from God, and are hastening to a state of greater and more deeply corrupt barbarity than that from whence our progenitors sprung before their acquaintance with Christianity.

My friend John Westley 3 promises he will consult with thee about the expediency of some weekly publication, in the newspapers, on the origin, nature, and dreadful effects of the slave trade. This appears absolutely necessary, as many well-minded people, who may have some influence, are ignorant of the case; and also because way may hereby be made for a further attempt towards the removal of this potent evil; to which, we think, nothing will so effectually conduce as a representation to the King and both Houses of Parliament. This is what we have a right to do, and what will at least be a testimony on behalf of truth. Indeed, we cannot be at the same time silent and innocent spectators of the most horrid scene (if rightly considered in itself and in its consequences) that was, perhaps, ever acted upon the face of the earth. I have wrote to several leading persons amongst our Friends, the Quakers, on this head; earnestly requesting they would consider whether, being better acquainted with the prodigious iniquity and dreadful consequences attendant on this practice, and having so publicly, in their general Yearly Epistle to their churches, everywhere declared their abhorrence of it, it was not their duty, either as a people, or by their principal members, to endeavour for its removal by such a representation. I have also mentioned the matter, and sent some of the last and former treatises, to our agent, Benjamin Franklin, who I know has a due sense of its iniquity and evil consequences, and would, I am persuaded, use his influence that an end should be put to the trade. I have the more hope of the good effects which may attend an immediate application to the King, from a para-

Influence on the Government to prohibit any further import, it may not be amiss to observe that, by a late computation, there are about 850,000 negroes in the English colonies and islands. In Jamaica alone, by the poll-tax in that island for the year 1768, it appears that there were then 166,914 taxable negroes; doubtless there were more, who either eluded the tax, or were not taxable, to make up two hundred thousand; and, by the best account I can obtain, not many more, if any, than fifteen thousand whites. And the trade for slaves is carried on with such vigour that we have reason to conclude there are yearly at least an hundred thousand violently brought from Africa by the English alone. These are employed to make some new settlement, as in the islands of Tobago, St. Vincent, &c.; also to make up deficiencies, and to sell to the Spaniards. I remain thy friend,

ANTHONY BENEZET

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TO: RICHARD SHACKLETON

Ballitore, Ireland

Memoirs of Anthony Benezet

Wilson Armistead

Philadelphia 6 mo. 6th 1772.

Esteemed Friend:

Having a good opportunity by our dear friend Samuel Neale, I make free hereby affectionately to salute thee, and request thy attention to a subject which has long been a deep concern to many in these parts, viz., the Negro trade; the purchasing and bringing of those unhappy Africans from their native land, and subjecting them to a state of perpetual bondage, often the most cruel and afflicting, in which our nation is deeply engaged.

1. Richard Shackleton, 1726-1792, of Ballitore, Ireland, had a natural inclination for learning, and his father, who kept a boarding school, gave him the necessary education to fit him to assist and succeed himself in this work. He married first Elizabeth Fuller, and after her death Elizabeth Carlton. He had a large circle of correspondents including Edmund Burke. He was a man of great benevolence, and the welfare of his fellow creatures was very near his heart. Leadbeater, Memoirs and Letters of R. and E. Shackleton.

2. Samuel Neale, 1729-1792, was born in Dublin, where he acquired a knowledge of commercial affairs, and at the same time began to make religious visits. In 1757 he married Mary Peisley, a Friend who had visited America. After her death he married in 1760 Sarah Pike. Ten years later, he came to America with Joseph Oxley, and remained two years. Leadbeater, Biographical Notices of Friends in Ireland.
Christianity; & that the poor Creatures themselves, if they come to look on this doctrine, will be so strongly tempted by it to rebel against their Masters, that the most dreadful consequences to both will be likely to follow; And therefore tho' the Society is fully satisfied that your intention in this matter is perfectly good, yet they most earnestly beg you not to go further in publishing your Notions, but rather to retract them, if you shall see cause, which they hope you may on further consideration.

I am, with great regard & esteem Your affectionate humble servt.

D. BURTON

Abington Street, Westminster
Febry. 3d, 1768

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FROM: NATHANIEL GILBERT
Antigua.

Memoirs of Anthony Benezet
Wilson Armistead

October 29th, 1768.

I desire to embrace as my brethren all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. I cannot but think that all true Christians agree in fundamentals. Your tracts concerning slavery are very just, and it is a matter I have often thought of, even before I became acquainted with the truth. Your arguments are forcible against purchasing slaves, or being any way concerned in that trade.

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FROM: GRANVILLE SHARP

Memoirs of Anthony Benezet
Wilson Armistead

Old Jewry, London, August 21, 1772.

Dear Sir,

You need not have made an apology for having abridged my book.

1. Dr. Daniel Burton was secretary of this society from 1761 to 1773. He had been previously elected a member of the society in 1758, when he was Chancellor of the Diocese of Oxford and Rector of 'St. Peter's Poor.' Information from the society, which is still carrying on its work at Westminster.

LETTERS

It is a sufficient satisfaction to me to find that you thought it capable of doing some service in a cause which we have both of us much at heart.

I not only approve, sir, of the abridgment you have made of my arguments in particular, but of your whole performance. Some copies of it arrived here very opportunely, just before the case of James Somerset came to a hearing in the Court of King's Bench; and, by Dr. Fothergill's kindness, I was enabled immediately to dispose of six: one to Lord Mansfield, the Chief Justice, one to Lord North, first Lord Commissioner of the Treasury; and four to the learned Counsel who had generously undertaken to plead gratis for Somerset. I had thought indeed of reprinting it, as I did your former tract in 1768, but Mr. Clark, the printer, was luckily beforehand with me; so that I had an opportunity of purchasing more copies to distribute.

I send you a copy of your own book as reprinted here, and some other pamphlets lately published on the subject; with a few little tracts of my own, of which I beg your acceptance, as a token of my esteem. I have likewise sent a copy of the judgement given by Lord Mansfield in the case of Somerset. This judgment would have done Lord Mansfield honour, had he not all along seemed inclined to the other side of the question. After the second day's argument, before any judicial determination was given, he advised the West-India merchants to apply to Parliament while it continued to sit, and Mr. . . . . . . . accordingly made a motion in the House for securing property in negroes and other slaves in this kingdom. However, he did not succeed; but it is apprehended that he and the other West-India merchants will use their utmost endeavours to carry their point next session. It is on this account that I have now undertaken to write once more upon the subject, in order to apprise disinterested people of the dangerous tendency of such a measure; and I shall endeavour to prepare what few friends I have in Parliament, for an opposition to such a destructive proposal, in case it should be renewed. My former tracts were built chiefly on the laws of England; but my present work is for the most part founded on Scripture, to obviate the doctrines of some late writers and disputers, who have ventured to assert that slavery is not inconsistent with the Word of God.

3. Sharp wrote A Representation of the Injustice of Tolerating Slavery in 1769; then in 1772 he wrote An Appendix to the Representation against Slavery.
I had thoughts once of addressing myself to the bishops and clergy, in order to show them the necessity of uniting their influence and interest on this occasion; but I have since had an opportunity of throwing this business upon the Archbishop of York, Dr. Drummond, whose application to his brethren (the clergy) would certainly be effectual, if he should think such a measure likely to be attended with success. I have the satisfaction to be informed that he is become a zealous advocate for the freedom of the negroes, and is desirous of doing every service to the cause that he can.

Your proposal of petitioning Parliament is certainly very proper, if the subject of the petition be confined to the African slave trade (which is protected and encouraged by Parliament); but with respect to the toleration of slavery in the colonies, I apprehend the British Parliament has no right to interfere; and that your petition on this head should be addressed only to the King, or to the King in Council. My reason for this opinion I wrote at large in a letter to Lord North; a copy of which I enclose, because I think our brethren of the colonies cannot be too much upon their guard with respect to the dignity and independence of their own Assemblies on this point. My letter was indeed a private one, and, therefore, if you should think proper to communicate it, it will be right to suppress the name of the nobleman to whom it was addressed.

You mention the information you have received from Maryland and Virginia, that ten or twenty thousand people would freely join in petition to Parliament against the further importation of Negroes. Such a petition would retrieve, in some respects, the honour of those colonies and be a glorious proof that they are not destitute of Christian and social principles; and it would probably lay the foundation for a total prohibition of that most abominable branch of the African trade, the buying and selling of men. Yet, as I have mentioned above, respect must be had to the rights of the Colonies; and a petition from thence if addressed to Parliament, ought to relate to the slave trade (with its bad effects and consequences) in general, and not merely to the importation of slaves into the colonies, because the colonies have a right themselves to prohibit such importation respectively in their own Assemblies, with the King's concurrence; which they will be sure to obtain in this matter, if asked for by a majority.

With respect to a petition to Parliament against the slave trade in general, if you could procure even less than a tenth part of the lowest number of petitioners mentioned in your letter, I should think it a very considerable point gained; as it would afford an excellent argument against the pretended necessity of holding slaves in the colonies, which is always alleged as a reason for the encouragement given by Parliament to the African trade. A petition also to the King from a small number (if a larger number, or a majority, cannot be obtained), against the toleration of slavery in the colonies, might have very good effects; for though it would not be likely to succeed in the whole, yet it might at least occasion the setting on foot some wholesome regulations by way of restraint on the masters.

I am told of some regulations that have taken place in the Spanish colonies, which do the Spaniards much honour, and are certainly worthy of our imitation, in case we should not be so happy as to obtain an entire abolition of slavery; and probably you will find many American subjects willing to promote such regulations, though the same people would strenuously oppose the scheme of a total abolition of slavery.

Be pleased to inform me, whether you shall be likely to procure any such petitions or memorials as are mentioned above; because I would endeavour to prevail on some of the bishops to present the memorials that are for the King; as also on Sir George Savile, or some other respectable member of the Lower House, to present the petitions to Parliament. Yet this matter will require good consideration, because the business is certainly in the regular channel when conducted by your own agent.

Lord Dartmouth, who is lately appointed Secretary for the colonies, is esteemed a humane and religious man, and his mediation with the King and Council might probably be very efficacious, were he applied to from your side of the water, by way of memorial accompanying the petition, &c., if signed by any respectable number of American subjects; and then the business would be in a regular track.

I need not assure you, sir, how much you have my good wishes for prosperity and success in your benevolent undertakings, and that I shall

5. Sir George Savile, 1726–1784, politician, was born at Savile House. He was educated at home, then at Cambridge. In 1774 he protested against the bill for regulating the government of Massachusetts Bay. On January 26, 1775, he asked that Franklin be heard at the bar in support of an address from the American colonists to the King, but the House refused his petition. He supported Burke's bill for composing the troubles in America, November 16, 1775. See Dictionary of National Biography.
always think myself happy in lending what little assistance may happen to be in my power.

With great esteem

GRANVILLE SHARP

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FROM: BENJAMIN FRANKLIN The Writings of Benjamin Franklin Albert Henry Smyth, New York, 1907


Dear Friend,

I made a little extract from yours of April 27, of the number of slaves imported and perishing, with 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. This was inserted in the London Chronicle, of the 20th of June last.

I thank you for the Virginia address,1 which I shall also publish with some remarks. I am glad to hear that the disposition against keeping negroes grows more general in North America. Several pieces have been lately printed here against the practice, and I hope in time it will be taken into consideration and suppressed by the legislature. Your labours have already been attended with great effects. I hope, therefore, you and your friends will be encouraged to proceed. My hearty wishes of success attend you, being ever, my dear friend, yours affectionately

B. FRANKLIN

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FROM: SAMUEL ALLINSON In possession of Caroline Allison Yardville, New Jersey

Esteemed Friend

Burlington 19th 11th mo. 1772.

Enclosed I now send thee two more petitions, perhaps some might call them remonstrances They are partly so or rather argumentative

1. Dr. Lee's Address to the members of the Assembly of Virginia on the subject of slavery, 1771. R. H. Lee's brother, Arthur Lee, received the degree of M.D. from the University of Edinburgh and is addressed as Dr. Lee.

LETTERS

Petns. but I choose to call them briefly petns—they have been conceived I may truly say in much weakness as their contents may show, indeed I almost despaired finishing letter, though they are rather too hastily formed and as I said respecting them if they contain anything deserving of a little trouble they may be improved. If they are signed it will be as easy almost to get three as one—they should be engrossed on skin of parchment for siging with columns for the names—the one to the House of Lords I seem to have as much hopes from as any, and a line or two of B. Franklin's letter as well as G. Sharp's gives my drooping spirits some encouragement that perhaps one of the three may do some little good, if its only in preventing harm they are . . . [two inserted lines illegible] . . . if others besides Srs in Maryland and Virginia could be spirited up to sign the petition the style may be allowed for them if they chose or they may draw a better form themselves perhaps it may be thought some parts of them are too plain and striking I am apt to write in that way and under a belief that too much complaisance is rather superficial in serious important matters, and that truth never suffers in a plain honest dress, if the spirit of love is her attendant I sent the one to meeting and A. James' last First day a little before I read thy letter such as they are I submit them to thy order as thou art their father and am easy that I have at least by this attempt tho a feeble one showed my willingness to serve the cause. Hope I shall hear from thee in answer to my last as well as this when leisure permits. My love to thy good wife I am thy aff'd S.A.

Copies of both and with B.F.'s piece published in the London Chron I would have sent with the petition.

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FROM: BENJAMIN FRANKLIN The Writings of Benjamin Franklin Albert Henry Smyth


Dear Friend—

I received with Pleasure yours of Sept. 13, as it informed me of

1. Abel James, a partner in the importing business with Henry Drinker. James and Drinker owned the ship Polly, and sent back their tea-ship from Philadelphia without "breaking bulk," before the Boston tea-party. Both were Quakers. When Joyce Benezet died, Abel James wrote James Thornton: "I was requested to acquaint thee therewith, & let thee know that thou, thy Son in law, & John Townsend & your families are particularly Invited and such others as may Occur to thee."