

examination as well as monitoring our achievements; racism is an erosive process negatively affecting black and white. We can no longer pretend it does not exist in psychiatry; we must counter our earlier denial with a hyperawareness that we hope will be temporary during a period of transition. Our own openness and effort can encourage other professional groups to also bring the efforts to combat white racism out of the shadows to the center stage of everyday life where this struggle belongs—if racism is to be eradicated.

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Benjamin Rush and the Negro

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The author describes Rush's interest in the social problems of his day, particularly his concern with relations between blacks and whites. Rush was active in the abolition movement; his tracts and extensive correspondence especially emphasized the detrimental effects of slavery on the mind. He was also frequently involved in such activities of Philadelphia's black community as the securing of funds for the construction of churches.

BENJAMIN RUSH (1745-1813) is best known as a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a prominent Philadelphia

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physician who, due to his early interest in the care and treatment of the mentally ill, has been called the father of American psychiatry. Rush's interests, however, were not confined to medicine and the securing of American independence. He was a true humanitarian, in the broadest sense of the word, who advocated reform in the penal institutions and the educational system of his day, especially in regard to the equal education of women. Moreover, he was an ardent supporter of the crusade against Negro slavery.

The earliest evidence of his antislavery convictions is found in the two antislavery pamphlets he wrote in 1773 (at age 28) in which he voiced strong opposition to the system of slavery (1, 2). Rush's correspondence relating to abolition is voluminous, even though there is reason to believe that many of his letters have been lost. His participation in abolitionist activities is also noteworthy. In 1787 he participated in the reorganization of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. In 1795 he served as National President of the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the African Race.

Rush's concern with the Negro was not confined to abolitionist writings and activities. He was also involved with Philadelphia's free black community. From 1791 to 1793 he was active in the movement to establish African churches in the city of Philadelphia. Moreover, Rush's correspondence provides evidence that he assisted free blacks in a variety of other situations.

Many of the arguments that Rush used in his first antislavery pamphlet (1) were certainly familiar to readers of abolitionist literature. However, his interest in medicine, particularly psychiatry, enabled him to emphasize the detrimental effects of slavery on the mind or mental health of the Negro. For example, in refuting the common proslavery argument that the mental capacity of the African was inferior to that of the European, Rush emphasized the necessity of differentiating between an enslaved African and a free African. He maintained that one could not accurately evaluate the mental capacity of a slave. Slavery, he argued, was so foreign to the human mind that the moral faculties, as well as those of understanding,

were rendered torpid by it (1, p.2).

In this same pamphlet Rush attempted to arouse additional antislavery sentiment in his readers by describing the traumatic experiences of the African en route to the New World. He suggested that his readers attempt to visualize the numerous Africans who perished because of extreme melancholy (reactive depression) or grief, as well as the many others who committed suicide rather than accept the slavery that awaited them.

The primary purpose of his second antislavery pamphlet (2) was to defend and reemphasize several of the antislavery arguments that he had voiced in the first. Moreover, he presented additional proof of the ill effects of slavery on the Negro's mental health. Certain proslavery advocates had maintained that the African's apathy toward his family and friends was additional proof of his mental inferiority. Rush strongly argued that this observation was fallacious. Travelers' accounts clearly showed that the African did experience separation anxiety on being removed from his family and friends as the cargoes were being sold for shipment to the New World.

Medical Articles on Blacks

Besides his works devoted specifically to abolition, Rush wrote articles and medical treatises dealing with blacks, as well as medical texts in which he referred to blacks when describing a particular malady. In one article relating specifically to the Negro (3), he was concerned with both the mental and physical effects of slavery.

Among the ailments cited was hypochondriasis or *mal d'estomac*, as it is called in the French islands. This disease, which was one of the most common ailments among the slaves, was described by Rush as being quite painful; moreover, it was undoubtedly psychosomatic. It usually occurred quite early during the period in which the African was becoming acclimated (acculturated) to the vicious and brutalizing system of slavery. (Today this would be termed culture shock.) Hypochondriasis, which was usually fatal, had been erroneously attributed to the slaves' administering a slow poison to each other. In reality, Rush maintained, "the disease was wholly occasioned by grief and consequently justly attributed to slavery"

(3, p. 82). Actually, they are examples of acting out.

Another manifestation of the ill effects of slavery on the black mind was to be found in the Negro's songs and dances. Contrary to what many slave masters believed, these songs and dances were not outward expressions of contentment and joy. Rush was of the opinion that these songs and dances were "physical symptoms" of the slave's melancholy and madness, and therefore were certain proofs of his misery (3, p. 82). Actually, they are examples of acting out.

One of the many subjects that Rush discussed in *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind* (4), the first textbook in American psychiatry, was madness or insanity induced by grief. He discovered that this variety of insanity had been observed among the slaves in the Caribbean. It appeared that some Africans became insane soon after they entered into perpetual slavery in the West Indies (4, p. 41).

References to blacks also occur in Rush's lectures to his medical students at the University of Pennsylvania (5). For example, in discussing the pleasures of the mind and the forces that affect mental pleasure, he used the experiences of two Negroes as cases in point.

In the first example he maintained that a certain pleasure was derived from the mind's association of pleasant experiences, such as those of childhood. Rush related the story of an old African who had obtained permission from his master to go to see a lion that was being conducted through the state of New Jersey as an exhibit. The moment the old man saw the animal, "in spite of the torpid habits of mind and body contracted by fifty years of slavery," he was moved with great joy (5, p. 448). Rush maintained that he had been familiar with the lion as a child in Africa. Consequently, the sight of the animal brought back memories of the liberty, freedom, and pleasure that he had once known in childhood.

The second example dealt with the mental pleasures that are derived from exploits of memory. Thomas Fuller, a slave from Virginia, had experienced this type of pleasure. Moreover, he had received frequent rewards for amusing strangers and travelers by ex-

hibiting his ability to perform mental computations (5, p. 450).

By using blacks as well as whites as examples of individuals affected by certain medical conditions, Rush provided additional clinical evidence of the lack of inherent racial differences.

In a brief paper written in 1799 (6), Rush was concerned with uncovering the cause or causes of the Negro's blackness. His conclusion was that the black complexion of the Negro stemmed from a leprosy-type disease. He maintained that by seeking a cure for this condition and subsequently removing the Negro's blackness, a great service would be rendered to mankind. The idea of the oneness of the human race would be strengthened and many advocates of white supremacy would lose one of their basic premises if the blackness were removed.

Moreover, Rush was cognizant of the fact that the reactions of whites to the Negro's blackness had caused a psychological problem for some blacks. He therefore maintained that the removal of the Negro's blackness would render him a certain amount of happiness since it was obvious that some Negroes had difficulty accepting their blackness: "Forever how well they appear to be satisfied with their color, there were many proofs of their preferring that of the white people" (6, p. 297). Thus we see that almost two centuries ago the Negro lost the identity that he is now desperately trying to recapture with the slogan "Black is beautiful."

Rush's understanding of early American race relations, particularly the acceptance of blacks by whites, is rather obvious in his leprosy paper. He seemed to believe that racial harmony would be more easily achieved by turning black men white than by expecting white men to accept black men. In essence, he understood well the impact of physical differences on mental attitudes that is a vital factor in racial prejudice and that has persisted into our time.

Correspondence with Abolitionists

For many years Benjamin Rush corresponded with abolitionists in the United States and in England. The majority of the people he wrote to were statesmen, physi-

cians, clergymen, and scholars, and most of them were actively engaged in the abolitionist movement. There were a few who might have been lukewarm in their anti-slavery convictions, but they were influential persons who could exert a favorable influence for the cause if they so desired. None appeared to be firmly opposed to abolition.

In the majority of his letters Rush was concerned with the progress being made by abolitionists and abolition societies in the colonies. In others he was primarily concerned with plans and proposals that he felt would facilitate the process of emancipation. In some letters he showed an interest in the mental achievements of blacks in an effort to gain support for the cause of abolition.

The extensive correspondence of Benjamin Rush and British abolitionist Granville Sharp (1735-1831) dealt with many aspects of the movement, particularly the progress of abolition in the colonies (7). In a letter to Sharp dated November 1, 1774, Rush stated his belief that the success then being experienced by abolitionists was an indication that slavery would soon be extinct in the colonies. He expressed doubt that there would be a Negro slave in America in 40 years (7, p. 13).

In a later letter to Sharp, dated November 28, 1783, Rush wrote that some progress was still being made by the abolitionists in the colonies. In the middle colonies, he observed, the abolitionists were being looked upon as the benefactors of mankind. In the South, however, he noted a very different trend; in South Carolina, for example, the "negromania" (for certainly it is a species of madness) still prevailed (7, p. 20). Hence Rush considered racism, i.e., racial prejudice, a form of mental illness.

Significant evidence of Rush's attempts to find measures to aid recently emancipated blacks is found in an undated letter that he wrote to the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery and the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage (8). This letter contained a proposal for the society to establish a black agricultural community in Bedford County, Pennsylvania. Rush believed that such a community would enable these blacks to engage in independent agricultural pursuits rather than be forced

to accept menial jobs in the city of Philadelphia. Provisions were made for the distribution of land as well as for the establishment of churches and schools in the proposed community. If the plan could be executed successfully, the benefits derived from it would be numerous. Moreover, it might lead to similar enterprises in the southern states.

Another significant letter was written by Benjamin Rush on behalf of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery. A group of London abolitionists had requested that the Pennsylvania society send them accounts of mental achievement that they had observed in blacks with whom they had come into contact. In a letter written November 14, 1788, Rush described the achievements of James Durham, a former slave, who was practicing medicine in New Orleans. Rush questioned him regarding diseases that were prevalent in the Louisiana territory. He found that Durham was perfectly acquainted with modern practices. He added, "I expected to have suggested some new medicines to him, but he suggested many more to me" (9, p. 497).

Involvement in the Black Community

Rush's interest in the Negro was not confined to the abolitionist movement. He was involved in the activities of Philadelphia's free black community, particularly those of the Free African Society. Consequently, when an effort was being made to establish churches for blacks, Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Absalom Jones, first director of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, sought the aid of Benjamin Rush.

This same Richard Allen responded to Rush's appeal for help during a yellow fever epidemic in 1793. Allen organized a group of blacks to assist in providing nursing care, spiritual solace, blood letting, and purging for the stricken whites. Rush had incorrectly believed Negroes were immune to yellow fever because of their blackness; he could not detect the yellow tint in their skin. Jaundice, a late symptom of yellow fever, only became clinically evident in the sclera or the whites of their eyes four to six weeks after the onset of the illness. The above example shows Rush's use of the paramedical

concept that we now think of as innovative, i.e., the use of nonmedical personnel in the care of the ill.

In an effort to provide the financial assistance that was needed to establish black churches, Rush solicited funds from several individuals in England and the United States. In the case of Absalom Jones's church, he persuaded the comptroller general of Pennsylvania, John Nicholson, to negotiate a loan with the blacks for completing the construction of their church. It should also be noted that the free blacks sought Rush's assistance when they were drafting their plans for church government.

Rush's correspondence regarding the free black community is particularly significant. One easily senses that in many of these letters he was actually making an effort to acquaint whites with the black community. Moreover, it appears that he was attempting to disprove certain stereotypes about Negroes that were commonly accepted by 18th century whites. For example, when writing to John Nicholson in an effort to negotiate the loan for the free blacks, he felt it necessary to state that he had found the members of the African Society to be "affectionate and grateful," and he attempted to reassure the comptroller general that the loan would be repaid, stating that "from their numbers, their increasing prosperity, and the punctuality in all their engagements" he had no doubt that the interest "will be paid to a day every quarter" (9, p. 624).

The apparent need to acquaint whites with black people is also seen in a letter Rush wrote to his wife, Julia, in the summer of 1793. In this particular instance, he was relating the incidents surrounding the roof-raising ceremony at the African church. He noted that the "company broke up in good order, few or perhaps any of them having drunk more than three or four glasses of wine" (9, p. 639).

Perhaps Rush's most significant relationship with a black was that with James Durham. Their correspondence, covering many years, reveals that theirs was both a professional and a friendly relationship. There is evidence that the two men exchanged medical information. In 1789 Rush read Durham's paper "An Account of the Putrid Sore Throat at New Orleans" before the

College of Physicians of Philadelphia.¹

Conclusions

In evaluating Rush's involvement with blacks, one must first consider him as an 18th century abolitionist. He falls into the group of moderates who lacked the proselytizing spirit that was typical of certain 19th century abolitionists. He was primarily a writer of tracts and related literature. It is difficult to actually measure the effectiveness of his writings since he exchanged ideas, for the most part, with individuals who were already committed to the cause. It would appear that Rush's most significant contribution to the movement was his emphasis on the ill effects of slavery on the black *mind*. Perhaps the circle of abolitionists with whom he corresponded made use of these ideas; it is only today that some are beginning to see the brutalizing effects of slavery and racism.

In regard to Rush's personal involvement with Negroes, it appears that his attitude toward the Negro was not paternalistic. The correspondence of the members of the Free African Society clearly indicates that they sought Rush's aid. In fact, he noted in his *Commonplace Book* that he had read a plan for church government to the blacks and they had agreed to deliberate upon it before it was laid before the public (11).

Rush's understanding of race relations in early America certainly poses some questions. At times, he appeared overly optimistic. For example, in 1774 he believed that slavery would soon be extinct in the colonies. At other times, he appeared quite pessimistic. For example, in 1783 he considered the spread of slavery and racism in South Carolina to be indicative of what he called "negromania" or an actual form of mental illness.

In his dealings with the free black community Rush seemed quite realistic. For ex-

¹ In a manuscript volume of the proceedings of the meetings of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, it is noted that on July 7, 1789, Dr. Benjamin Rush presented "An Account of the Putrid Sore Throat at New Orleans," by James Durham, Practitioner of Physic at that place, but for want of time the reading was postponed until the next meeting. An entry for August 4, 1789, states that the communication from Dr. James Durham, presented at the last meeting, was now read (10).

ample, he thought that the establishment of African churches was necessary. He also advocated the establishment of black agricultural communities. Rush's suggestion was in line with some of today's proposals for separation on the part of blacks. Rush wanted integration but obviously became disillusioned and compromised for separatism, much as some blacks have currently done. Consequently it appears that he was more a realist than an idealist in his dealings with free blacks, i.e., Rush's ideal society would have been completely integrated but he knew that for all practical purposes separatism was necessary to some extent in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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Problems of Black Psychiatric Residents in White Training Institutes

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The authors, who recently completed residencies in three predominantly white psychoanalytically oriented training programs, believe that such programs are failing to produce psychiatrists—black or white—who are prepared to address themselves to the mental health needs of the black community. They offer a number of recommendations for correcting this situation.

THIS PAPER is an outgrowth of the training experiences of five black psychiatrists, four of whom completed their training at the end of June 1969 and one in October 1967. The paper presents conclusions we have reached on the basis of our experiences

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