



John Newton (1725-1807)

Author of Amazing Grace



John Newton

Service To Liberty (Letter XIII)

John Newton wrote:

‘During the time I was engaged in the slave trade I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness. I was upon the whole satisfied with it as the appointment Providence had marked out for me. Yet it was in many respects far from suitable.

It is indeed accounted a genteel employment (suitable for the upper classes), and is usually very profitable, though to me it did not prove so, the Lord seeing that a large increase of wealth would not be good for me.

However, I considered myself as a sort of jailer or turnkey, and I was sometimes shocked with an employment that was perpetually conversant with chains, bolts, and shackles.’

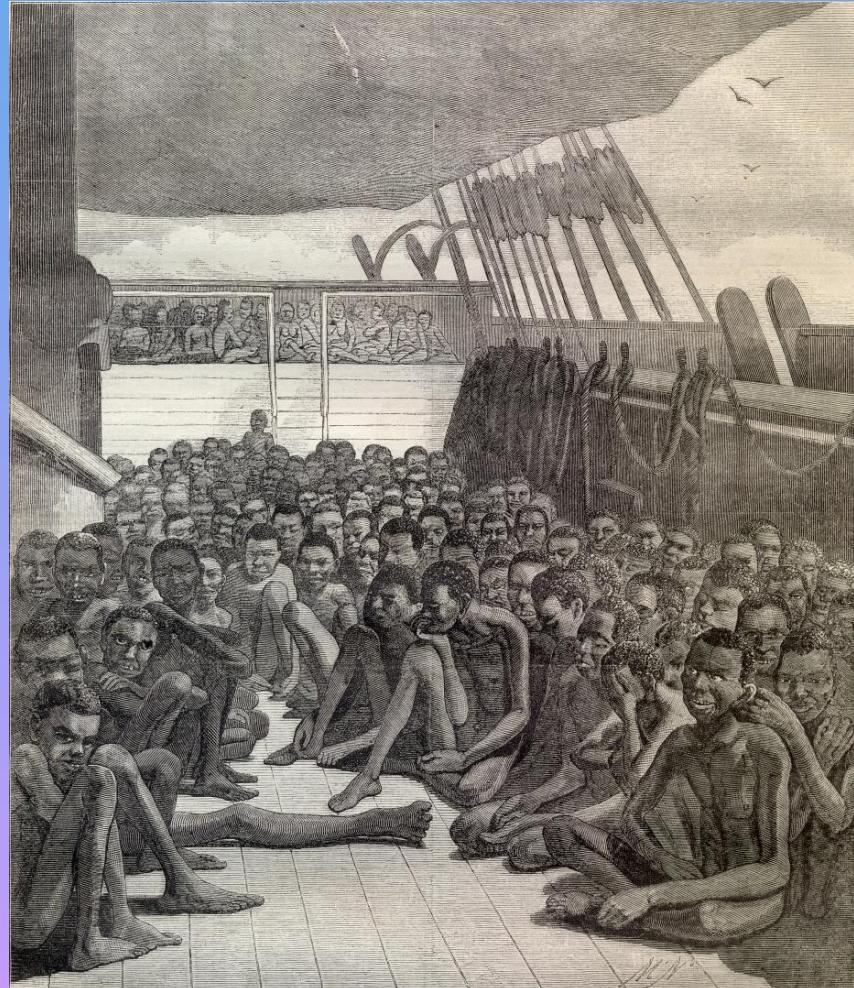
Where did the slaves come from?

The Africans who came to be slaves were often kidnapped but some were criminals or prisoners of war. The rest were those handed over as tribute to a more powerful overlord.

Kidnapped – Gangs captured them as they walked through the forest and took them to the slave ships where they were sold.

Prisoners – those who had committed serious crimes or had been captured in tribal wars were often sold as slaves.

Tribute – A village or community would be threatened with war unless payment in the form of slaves was made.



George Whitefield did not oppose slavery.

He employed slaves in Bethesda orphanage.

The countess of Huntingdon increased the number of slaves after Whitefields death.

Was it right to employ slaves?

The slaves who were bought for work at Bethesda were well treated.

The importation of slaves was evil, immoral but not illegal.

It was the law that needed to be changed – Wilberforce gave his life to that!

Did the purchase of the slaves by Christians increase the slave trade?

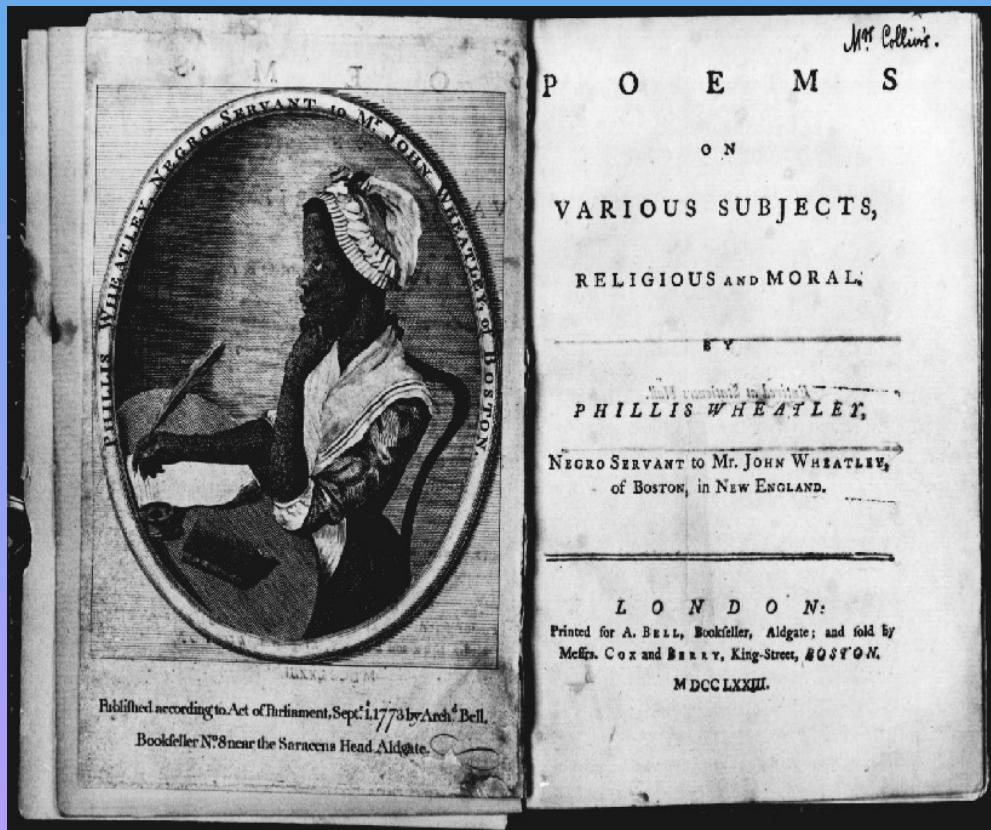
No it didn't. It was advantageous to the slaves as they were well treated.

Slaves were encouraged to accept their position.

Was this wrong? No it wasn't?

On the Death of Rev. Mr. George Whitefield (1770)

by Phillis Wheatley



Phillis Wheatley was brought from Gambia on the slave ship 'Phyllis' at the age of 7. On July 11, 1761, she was sold to John and Susanna Wheatley in Boston who taught her to read and write.

As recognition grew over her gift in writing poetry she was given her freedom but remained with the Wheatley household until the death of John Wheatley.

When George Whitefield died she commemorated his death with a poem.

HAIL, happy saint, on thine immortal throne,
Possest of glory, life, and bliss unknown;
We hear no more the music of thy tongue,
Thy wonted auditories cease to throng.

Thy sermons in unequall'd accents flow'd,
And ev'ry bosom with devotion glow'd;
Thou didst in strains of eloquence refin'd
Inflame the heart, and captivate the mind.

Unhappy we the setting sun deplore,
So glorious once, but ah! it shines no more.
Behold the prophet in his tow'ring flight!
He leaves the earth for heav'n's unmeasur'd height,
And worlds unknown receive him from our sight.

There Whitefield wings with rapid course his way,
And sails to Zion through vast seas of day.



George Whitefield did not oppose the slave trade. It was Wilberforce who gave his life to the abolition of slavery. Whitefield gave his life to preaching and helping orphans. He was admired and respected by the slaves. This can be heard in the poem of Phillis Wheatley's.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

George Whitefield wrote to his friend Benjamin Franklin concerning the wrongful treatment of slaves.

Benjamin Franklin's view of the slave trade changed over time and he became the President of Pennsylvania's Antislavery Society.

A month before he died, Benjamin Franklin used 'irony' to take attack the Slave trade.

He wrote a letter to the Editor of the Federal Gazette March 23, 1790.

It is supposedly a speech made by Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a member of the Divan of Algiers (1687) against the absurdity of a sect which sought to gain the 'Abolition of Piracy and Slavery'.



"Allah Bismillah, &c. God is great, and Mahomet is his Prophet."

"Have these Erika considered the Consequences of granting their Petition? If we cease our Cruises against the Christians, how shall we be furnished with the Commodities their Countries produce, and which are so necessary for us? If we forbear to make Slaves of their People, who in this hot Climate are to cultivate our Lands? Who are to perform the common Labours of our City, and in our Families? Must we not then be our own Slaves?

And is there not more Compassion and more Favour due to us as Mussulmen, than to these Christian Dogs? We have now about 50,000 Slaves in and near Algiers. This Number, if not kept up by fresh Supplies, will soon diminish, and be gradually annihilated. If we then cease taking and plundering the Infidel Ships, and making Slaves of the Seamen and Passengers, our Lands will become of no Value for want of Cultivation; the Rents of Houses in the City will sink one half; and the Revenues of Government arising from its Share of Prizes be totally destroy'd! And for what? To gratify the whims of a whimsical Sect, who would have us, not only forbear making more Slaves, but even to manumit those we have.

Quobna Ottobah Cugoano

Born in the 1750's.

Taken as a slave from his homeland (modern day Ghana) to Granada plantations.

Worked as a slave in Granada

Taken to England where he received his freedom.

1773 Baptized into the Anglican Church

Took name John Stuart.

1787 wrote about slave trade from his personal experience.

Quobna Ottobah Cugoano

After being kidnapped he was taken to the coast to board a vessel that would take him to the slave ship.

‘...But when a vessel arrived to conduct us away to the ship, it was a most horrible scene; there was nothing to be heard but rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of our fellow-men. Some would not stir from the ground, when they were lashed and beat in the most horrible manner...

‘...And when we found ourselves at last taken away, death was more preferable than life, and a plan was concerted amongst us, that we might burn and blow up the ship, and to perish all together in the flames; but we were betrayed by one of our own countrywomen, who slept with some of the head men of the ship, for it was common for the dirty filthy sailors to take African women and lie upon their bodies; but the men were chained and pent up in holes. It was the women and boys which were to burn the ship, with the approbation and groans of the rest; though that was prevented, the discovery was likewise a cruel bloody scene.’

Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Commerce of the Human Species (London:1787)

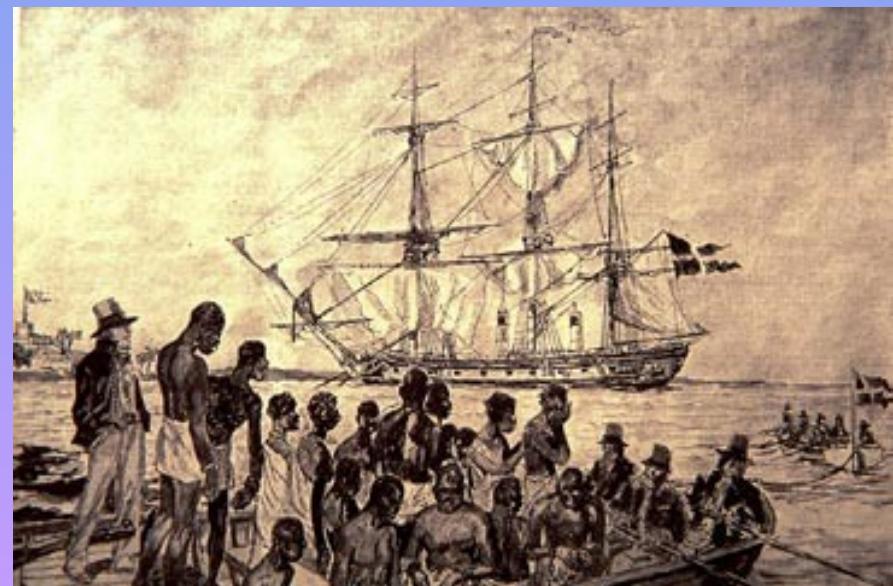
Danish Slave trade



Danish slave ships took slaves from the Gold Coast of West Africa to St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John in the West Indies.

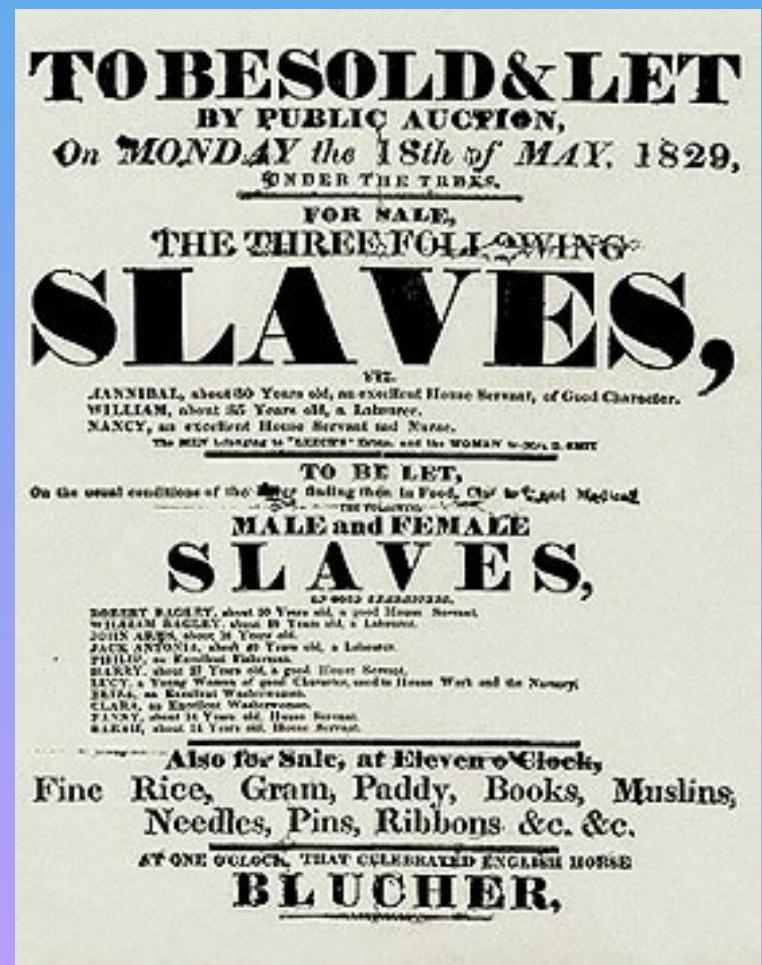
Denmark was the first State to outlaw the slave trade.

Edict issued by Frederik VI in the name of his father King Christian VII on March 16, 1792 making slavery illegal from January 1, 1803.



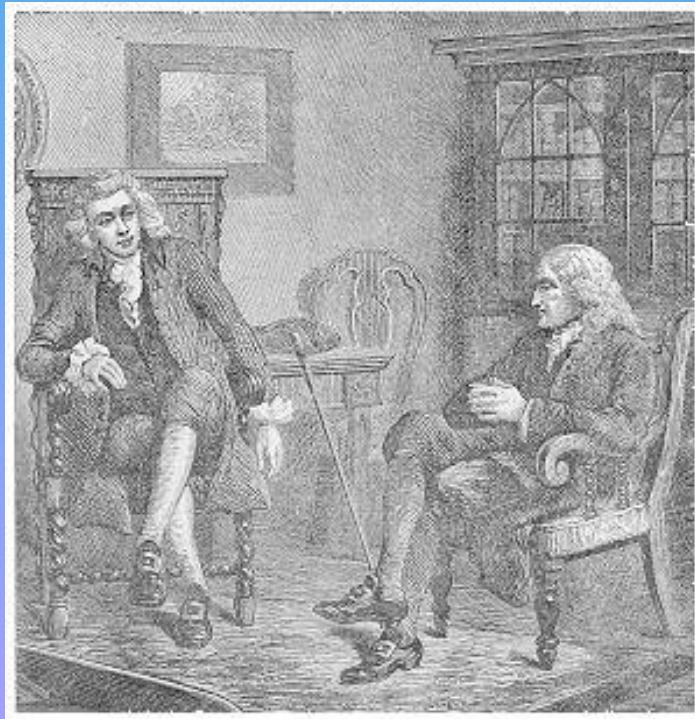
William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

Fighting for the abolition of slavery in Britain.



Wesley's letter of encouragement to William Wilberforce

Balam, February 24, 1791



Wesley tells Wilberforce that only divinely inspired perseverance will achieve the goal of the end of the slave trade.

Dear Sir:

‘...Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as *Athanasius contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature.

‘...Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be fore you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing!’

Wesley's letter of encouragement to William Wilberforce

Balam, February 24, 1791

‘Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

‘Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a "law" in our colonies that the oath of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this?

‘That he who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of,
dear sir,
Your affectionate servant,
John Wesley’

Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire

Slave Trade Act 1807 (25th March)

Prohibited British ships being involved in the Slave Trade

Slave Abolition Act 1833

Slavery abolished throughout the British Empire

The Act came into force on August 1, 1834

William Wilberforce died on July 29, 1833 three days after the slavery abolition act was passed in the House of Commons.