

## Inhuman Traffic

*by*

*John Bassett*

*The actors are positioned in the four corners of the performance area. They start to sing "Amazing Grace"*

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me....  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now, I see.*

*Granville:* Slavery and the slave trade are systems of oppression and injustice, utterly inconsistent with the fundamental principles of English Law. They merit absolutely no legal standing, unless, through the artful testimonies of prejudiced and interested advocates, the terms can acquire a new and opposite meaning.

The House of Lords, the highest court of law is sufficiently exercised in the use and application of the fundamental principles of English Law to prevent any change or perversion of the true meaning of words and terms. This excludes any know system of iniquity especially slavery from becoming a candidate for public favour. And yet those of us who are promoters of the abolition of slavery are not permitted to cross-examine witnesses brought forward by the opposers of abolition.

No branch of slavery, in any shape whatever, can be qualified to exist within the foundation and principles of English Law. Slavery is a system contrary to nature, contrary to the first principles and maxims of right and justice. No branch of oppression can ever be made lawful, unless the foundations of law be destroyed and if this should happen "What can the righteous do?"

Illegal oppression among men, colonial slavery, is falsely represented, not only as necessary, but also as a comfortable and happy state, even preferable to that of the labouring poor in our own free nation. The advocates for violence and oppression can always procure witnesses to favour their wrongs - advocates and witnesses who "call evil good, and good evil", who "put darkness for light and light for darkness", who put "bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter".

In such cases "Truth must stumble in the street and equity cannot enter" and national governments act as if there is no distinction between good and evil, right or wrong.

Who does not favour liberty? Slavery, or compulsion to labour without wages is the most hateful and iniquitous kind of violence that God forbids. The foundations of English law, English lawyers call "common right". But surely it is not the "common right" on Englishmen alone, but equally the right of the oppressed Negroes in foreign bondage - the "common right" of all mankind and therefore the very "Rights of Man" It is our duty as Christians to discriminate rights.

We cannot be said to "love our neighbours as ourselves" or to "do unto others as we would they should do unto us" - whilst we retain them against their will, in a despicable servitude as Slaves, private property or mere chattels.

*Sarah:* My dearest sister Rebecca, It has been some weeks since my arrival here in Jamaica with my dearest husband William and it is almost impossible to describe the beauty of this island. Much is turned over to the cultivation of cotton and now as we approach Christmas the cotton begins to ripen. The pods are in full blossom, the bushes upon which they grow have a very soft and beautiful appearance. The silky whiteness of the stalk, opposed to the lush green verdure of the leaves; appears like snow that is left unmelted. When I survey the many acres which William owes covered with this downy plant, there is a representation not unlike a winter's field back at home in England. It arrests the eye and gives a striking contrast to the scenes around.

The pods are opening in succession and the Negroes are commencing their work to pick, if the weather be favourable the crop. Day after day they collect and carry them home until the whole crop is gathered in.

William tells me that Jamaican cotton will bear but only one or two crops whereas other kinds, in particular the French will continue for many years.

There is a remarked beauty to the contrast of the blackness of the Negro faces as they are contrasted against the beautiful white of these soft and gentle plants. It is not displeasing upon the eye and creates a warm and extensive landscape.

The first ships are expected from England and it is amongst my duty to greet them for we are in need of fresh stores and are in want of provisions. The different wharfs offer up a scene of bustle and confusion. The boats passing to and from the different shipping, the noise of the cartmen and the cracking of their whips, the strings of Negroes that pass and repass upon a variety of employments and last of all the groups of white people, such as myself. We gather together out of curiosity, friendship or trade. For myself I find myself somewhat in awe of the scene. For such a small community the whole scene affords an agreeable air of tumult and variety, to which the hurry and confusion of the attending wagons and carts, with the disorder of the cattle, drivers and boys contribute.

All is noise and reminiscent of the docks at home. One's ears are constantly saluted by noise and uproar. The air resounds with the rumbling of carts, the creaking of wheels and the thunders of the whip. The whole country is alive with the activity and the impatience which have increased as the harvest as approached.

The only discomforts one experiences are the heat which is constant even though we enter the Christmas period and the columns of dust which are thrown up time and again. William I fear is somewhat agitated however for all are needed to bring in the harvest and a number of his Negroes are absent. They have absconded and he has sent the overseer to seek these runaways and return them to the plantation. I fear for them, poor

souls, for the overseer is not a man of short words or deeds. My own slaves, who attend me in the house, have looked in fear as he approaches. The runaways, they inform me, will be beaten. But what is one to do to bring slaves into line to encourage them to realise that we are helping them and providing them with a life of opportunity, which if they undertake it, can provide them with a comfortable state of living.

I hope that you can see that all is not as full of despair as I felt when first I knew I had to travel to this island. The beauty of the landscape in which one lives oft makes up for other hardships. I will write again soon.

Your loving sister,  
Sarah

*Dmitri:* My country is poor country. My people suffer. When we were communist we knew what we were to do, we knew what our place was. But now we are.....confused. We must make trade like you make trade. We must make profit like you make profit. We must live as you live.

As we must make profit, family, community they start to dissolve. All must make search for work, for money, just to live. Many who live in the rural lands, the farmlands left some 10 years ago. The young men migrate to other countries and leave nothing. Others want to leave but have no understanding of how. How to make their way in the world.

Many of my people find they have no work, not enough work or not enough money to feed family. They look for other ways, other places to work even it means leaving beloved country and sending money home. I try to help them. I find them work in foreign country. Of course I must make profit myself.

In our country we are like child taking steps to learn how to walk and it is your countries that try to make us run. And as we try we make mistakes. And each mistake we make

you say to us "No, no, go back try again." Or worse you call us "criminal", "crooked", "evil", for just trying to follow your way.

I do not want to see my country in ruins, a pauper begging in Europe. I want to see my country rich like yours. I want to help my country to hold up its head and not hide in shadows and hold out hand like beggar for help.

Many people come and they offer chance of help from all different countries and I take their offer. It is not concern whether they are Italian, German, French, British, Dutch, or what they are trading in when money is offered I take it. This is way that you have shown and this is way that I must follow. It is my place to do good for country and help people.

*Angela:*       *(folding clothes)* It is important to be tidy. James likes everything to be neat and tidy. He doesn't like things to be out of place. I found that out when we first started going out. We were at University, I met him in the bar. He made some kind of comment about me wanting to drink a pint. "Pints are not for ladies." I think that's how he sees me, his lady and I try and live up to that. I have to live up to that.

Neat and tidy. That's James. Everything in it's place. I remember the first time I went to his flat, it was just so tidy. Nothing out of place. Everything in its place. He was.....is.....a charming man. I think that was what attracted me to him. His charm. I mean most of the men I met at uni they weren't men, really, they were.....kids. But James was different, clever, mature.

He made me smile. He was always so polite. A bit old school I suppose you might say. I mean its not often someone holds a door open for you these days. But he always did. "You're a lady Angela. You deserve to be treated as such."  
When we finished our degrees we moved in together. It was exciting. We both got jobs, goods jobs. He worked in computers. I've never really understood it and I worked for a

business education partnership. We were teaching kids about the world of work although none of us had actually worked.

*Pause - she picks up a dress.*

James bought me this. He buys all my clothes. It's nice. But then since I gave up work I haven't got any money to buy clothes, only the housekeeping, so it all makes sense if he buys them for me. "I like you to look nice." He says "And I know what suits you, what makes you look good, what's right for you." I remember when I was working one of the girl's commented on what I was wearing. When I told her James had picked it out she smiled at me, in a funny kind of way. I asked her what was wrong. "Your husband buys your clothes. Don't you think that's odd?" No. There's nothing wrong with that.

I remember when James proposed to me. He'd just got a promotion at work and he just sort of sprung it on me, out of nowhere. Of course he'd planned it all the ring carefully hidden and the restaurant and everything but it was romantic. I remember he said to me, "I want to be with you for the rest of my life. You make me whole. You are my soulmate."

Our wedding.....One of my friends described it as the perfect wedding, the perfect day. Someone else said it was just too perfect. It couldn't be too perfect. When you're at the centre of attention, you don't notice the things going wrong around you. It was another thing which when I look back, I suppose was odd. James planned the wedding, he booked the church, the cars, the dresses, the cake, the hotel, the caterers, the honeymoon. He planned it all, down to the last piece of confetti. "You don't have to do anything. I'll look after it all." And he did.

I love him. That's the truth, I love him and I wanted to marry him and be with him and have a family with him and I wanted us to live happily ever after.

*Granville:* My first encounters with this cruel and barbaric trade against which I have fought for almost 40 years, came when in 1765, upon leaving my brother William's house I saw a young Negro boy of some 16 or 17 years of age, standing at the door waiting for my brother's advice - my brother of course, being a surgeon of great eminence. The boy appeared in the most absolute distress that I have witnessed. He had been beaten most severely and was in absolute pain and suffering. His master had beaten him with butt of a pistol and thrown him into the street for dead. I immediately returned to my brother asking him to come forthwith that immediate relief might be given to the boy. William sent him directly to St. Bartholomew's Hospital where he was confined for four months.

At the end of this time, he informed me that he had no place to live, no work, no ways of survival. I recommended him as an errand boy to Mr Brown, a surgeon and apothecary of my acquaintance in Fenchurch Street and in this capacity he lived a happy existence. He was paid wages. He was given a livery and he grew to be handsome in both character and person.

However, in September 1767, I received a letter from one Jonathan Strong, imploring protection for he was to be sold as a slave. I knew of no Jonathan Strong, but went next day to the prison, where upon seeing him I recognised him as the same poor wretch who had required the services of the hospital. What had he done to be so imprisoned?

His master, one David Lisle, the very gentleman who had so severely wounded him, had espied him following behind a Hackney carriage and followed him home to Fenchurch Street. Mister Lisle, had sold him to a Jamaica Planter and put him into the prison until a ship for the West Indies was set to sail. I charged the keepers of the prison not to deliver Jonathan Strong up to any person whatsoever until he could be lawfully carried before a magistrate.

I now, with the assistance of my brother James and the Lord Mayor of London sent out a request that all persons who pretended to have a claim on the person of Jonathan

Strong might be summoned before his Lordship. When the appointed time came, two gentlemen William Macbean, representative for one James Kerr, a planter from Jamaica and David Laird, captain of the ship, the Thomas, bound for Jamaica arrived, both carrying bills of sale from on David Lisle.

Upon this demand, poor Jonathan was put into extreme fear and anguish for he knew neither of the gentlemen. Nothing can be more shocking to Human Nature than the case of a man or woman who is delivered into the absolute Power of Strangers to be treated according to the new Masters will and please. What misery might they expect? Jonathan Strong was well acquainted with the extreme horror which the poor victims of inhuman traffic experience.

After much dispute between myself and Mr. Macbean the Lord Mayor discharged Jonathan Strong telling him that he was at liberty to go where he pleased. The Captain, David Laird, seized him by the arm saying "I will secure the property of Mr. Kerr." "I will charge a constable with your arrest for assault sir unless you unhand that man." I cried out and Jonathan Strong departed in full liberty.

James Kerr, was a not a man to rest without "his property" and issued a writ against myself and my brother James stating that we were guilty of trespass and that we were charged with £ 200 in damages.

A judgement from January 1729 confounded our position for is stated that "a slave by coming from the West Indies to Great Britain or Ireland either with or without his master, doth not become free; and that his Master's Property or right in him, is not determined or varied; and that Baptism doth not bestow freedom upon him." The opinion concluded that "a Master may legally compel him to return to the plantations."

I can never believe that the laws of England can be so injurious to natural rights and my brother and myself started a search through all the indexes of the law library for any opposition to this judgement. I had never been before a book of law in my life and must

say that the law when one starts to examine it is surprising and astonishing in its absurdity.

This absurdity I have long fought against in the last 40 years, and it required all my wit and skill to find arguments against those created and presented by Mr. Kerr's attorney who was intent upon bearing false witness against myself and my brother. The commentaries of Dr. Blackstone that "as soon as a negro comes to England, he becomes free." I presented before the court but this judgement no longer appeared in any legal book having been withdrawn on the advice of the Chief Justice. I retained Dr. Blackstone as one of my council and he realised that although it could be considered that the case of Jonathan Strong may be considered in nature of an apprenticeship, there is a contract implied therein. A contract cannot be made without the free consent of both parties. Free consent is impossible in the case of a slave who is held in captivity or prison during the making of a contract and such duress annuls all contracts.

All of this took considerable time, some two years and in that time much greater suffering was happening to those who were living in slavery, being treated worse than horses or dogs by their masters. Not least to Jonathan Strong himself who died and passed into God's care at the age of 25, never truly recovering from the beating he received.

*Sarah:* My dearest sister Rebecca, I can with pride tell you now of our first born, a girl Margaret. She is a beautiful child I must confess and seems to enjoy her life, though being only young cannot yet state her views upon the world. My own Betsy, a Negro who cares for the house also cares for Margaret. I trust her and one must trust one's slaves.

William, however, believes that whilst many are passive and will work, others require correct handling in order that they will do the best for us and for the plantation. He does not ill treat the slaves who work hard, but will punish disobedience and betrayal. Runaways are always to be flogged. Something that I have not witnessed and have no

desire to see, for it is an inhuman treatment but has to be carried out. There is and I find this somewhat strange, a desire amongst certain Negroes to flee more than others. Often they are found by the overseer who brings them home. But nothing will reform them, for after being brought home almost starved to death, as soon as they recover and get a little flesh on their bones, they are gone again. William has disposed of seven such Negroes at 30 pounds each. They will be sent off the island, never to return.

I know that there are those at home who believe that slavery is a cruel form of life but William is not a cruel man. He recognises that kindness breeds gratitude and obedience. Of particular import for this are the Coromantees a particular tribe of slaves who are known to be aggressive. They are taller and stronger than most and it is believed that they may be responsible for the deaths of white masters who have been killed on account of their strength. William has said that they will always be grateful and obedient to himself for he is a kind master and would not seek to ill treat them and raise their revenge, ire and wrath.

Margaret was not the only new arrival here at the buff, as our house is known. We have also had a number of arrivals amongst our Negroes and I have discovered that it is my duty to attend these poor souls in childbirth, a duty which I do not particularly relish but fulfil as part of my position as the Massa's wife. Of ten children born, 2 were mulattos, children of mixed race. I question not how they came to be but when one looks at certain of the overseer's one may see a family resemblance. It is true to say that the lower classes of white people in Jamaica are often unworthy of confidence. Many are idle, worthless and immoral drunks who lead the Negroes in their care into idleness and on some occasions thievery and villainy. It is impossible for a plantation owner, such as William, to hope to improve decency of conduct or the improvement of the minds of the slaves whilst these people offer their influences.

How is dear father? I am sure that he will find of interest something of the costs of running the plantation which are high, William informs me, particularly in terms of the daily staff. For every 30 slaves, William has to employ one white man or two white

women to oversee them. Each of these may be paid up to £ 35 for a year's work. Negroes themselves are not cheap costing some £ 35 to £ 45 each but the difference in cost between a male and female is trifling. We use more women than men in the field and their children will often work on the harvesting along with the more weakly of the slaves.

These must of course be fed. There is little or no point hoping for decent work from hungry or starving slaves. Although corn is grown on some of the plantation for food the fields are often left unweeded for we cannot trust the Negroes not to steal the corn. Instead they are fed on some 25 to 30 pounds of yams per week for each field Negro and when there are no yams then they have American corn or beans out of England in a quantity of eight pints weekly. Yams planted in June yield a crop of 10,000 pounds weight per acre in December. These will keep until July. We also purchase salt and herrings to supplement their diet. We do not starve our slaves, food may be considered plentiful.

45 Negroes can work one acre of land each day, working often with oxen and mules to help in the process. We have a number of each which also come at a premium here, some £ 40 for each ox and £ 25 for a mule.

All adds to an expensive enterprise and William believes in the words that slaves and cotton seldom make a poor man prosperous but may make a comfortable man extremely rich. William I am pleased to say has always been comfortable in his wealth and I suppose that if all continues as it is we will be extremely rich.

It is with great sadness that I hear of father's illness. I hope that he shall recover soon. Please send him all of my love and God speed his full recovery.

Your loving sister  
Sarah

*Dmitri:* Foreign countries are quick to condemn. "It is your fault, you are weak. You must be strong. Be like us." And yet it is your countries who buy and use people. Think for one moment. Look at your shoes and hang your heads. You wear your shoes with brand on; Nike, Adidas. You buy because of the advertising with the sports star who says "These are the best, buy these." And you are seduced, you are lured in by the promise of Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods or David Beckham and you do not think about those shoes. They are only a pair of shoes.

You are rich, you can afford them. You do not think for one moment that whilst you watch the glossy advertisement with sports star that he has been paid the same as entire workforce who make the shoes just for one advertisement campaign. How many of you would work a 65 hour week for \$10?

The world that you live in is all about profit. You want wonderful things and you don't care how much suffering has gone to make them. And you condemn. Me, my people, my country for trying to make profit.

It is not me who wants to pay for shoes with label, for new T.V., computer game.  
It is not me who wants to buy child because I have not one of my own.  
It is not me who pay for sex with girl in hotel room.

I have two children, two boys 4 and 6 years old. I want best for them. I want them to have good life, good education, opportunity. For this we must have money. I know families who have five, six, seven children. They are poor. They cannot feed all the mouths in their houses. They come to me and say "Can you help?" In my work, I meet people from many different places, with many different propositions. I meet people who tell me, "You find child, younger than 4 who is unwanted, unloved and I can find place for them. Family will make money. You will make money." I tell family and the child is paid for, sold to man who ask. I ask no questions of him. I take child to van with others and he is driven away.

(PAUSE)

I believe I do nothing wrong in this. Child has new life with new family, family has money and I have money for my family, all are winning. No?

(PAUSE)

I have conscience. I am not man with no heart. And at times I think what if child has not gone to family? What if he is one street begging as others do or being used for sex? What if he is beaten, starving or die?

(PAUSE)

It is not my concern. Once he has gone he has gone. I am not his parent. I did not create more children than I could cope with. I know where my own limits lie. I know how much I can afford for children. I know that I will have no more to drain against money. No. If family have too many children, why not help those who have no children.

*Angela:*        (*Hanging up the phone*) James. Just checking everything is okay. He does that throughout the day. Checks everything is okay. He wants to make sure that I'm still here.

*Pause*

That's not true. He wants to make sure that I've not gone out. You see I don't go out much, only with James and Laura. Our daughter. She's eight now. She's so special, so bright, so.....I don't know who I love more. Laura or James. I don't ever want to be made to choose.

When I told him, I was pregnant. He didn't react the way I thought he would. I thought he'd be happy, excited like I was. He just looked at me in disbelief. "A baby?" was all he

said. I had to do all the pregnancy things myself. He couldn't get time off. He didn't come to the scans. He wasn't even there at the birth.

Of course I had to give up work. When Laura came along. *(Pause)* Actually I'd given up some time before. James' idea. That promotion led to another promotion and he said I didn't need to work. It was true I didn't need to but I wanted to. "Needs and wants." He said. "Needs and wants."

When I gave up then I also gave up so much else. You don't realise until you stop doing something how much it means to you. Work wasn't just about the money. It was about the people as well and when you're stuck at home all day then you don't see many people. You don't see anyone. My friends all had careers, jobs, families and so few of them came round.

And when Laura came, I ended up trapped in the house. I wanted to go to parent and baby groups but James said there was no point. I knew what to do and that was fine. Don't want the baby or me getting sick from the illnesses of others.

And then he took away my keys.

*Silence.*

It's only when you talk about it that you realise, that you realise how stupid you've been, how you've let something happen which you shouldn't have done and by the time you wake up and see what's happened it's all just too late. You see I couldn't get out. I couldn't escape. I was trapped. I had no money, no keys, no way of getting out and if things weren't right, he went crazy.

I asked him once to change Laura's nappy. I was cooking. He was sitting watching T.V. Laura was crying because of her nappy. "Can you just....."

"How many times do I have to tell you I don't change nappies. That's your job."

(She reacts as if slapped) He hit me that time on the face. And then he looked at me and started to cry, saying how sorry he was, kissing me, holding me, saying over and over "I'm sorry, so sorry, so sorry." And he was. I truly believed he was.

But I still had to change Laura. He didn't do anything like that, nappies, feeding, nothing. It was, he said, my role. He worked and brought in the money and I took care of the baby. End of story.

I had to make sure the house was tidy. When Laura was about three it all started to become too much. It's impossible to stop a toddler from leaving their toys out, from having toys all over the floor but he didn't realise this, he never knew this. I'd left her toys on the floor one day and he came home and saw them. "Tidy them up! Tidy them up!" He was shouting over and over and as I got down on my hands and knees he kicked me. Just once. One hard kick to the stomach.

That was his way. Always hit where the bruises don't show. I didn't know at the time but I was pregnant as well. I miscarried. We could have had a second child but.....

He's not a bad man really. He just gets angry sometimes and he likes things to be right, to be neat and tidy and he loves me. I know that. He loves me.

*Granville:* The kidnapping of slaves to be forcibly put aboard ships bound for the colonies is common practice. Following my legal battles for the poor unfortunate Jonathan Strong, I made it my cause to find these cases and bring them to law. With varying degrees of success I achieved my goal, saving and freeing some five slaves from this despicable action. But still, there was no ruling which was definitive which would make slaves free men in England. It was this realisation that such a ruling must be forced, that the Judges must make a statement which would lead this way, that perhaps we could stop some of these barbaric practices.

There may be those amongst you who consider slavery to be acceptable to be not filled with barbaric practices? Consider then your own situation if you were forcibly removed from your family, placed on a ship and treated as cargo sailing to countries that you have not any choice in visiting. If you arrive alive you will be sold in a market, treated not as a human but as a prize animal, your teeth inspected, your whole body treated as a beast rather than a person. And next you shall be put to work. Beaten if you disobey, beaten or punished in other ways, dependant upon your master's whim.

But what can the righteous do to stop such outrage which rails against God? How can one good man, or one good woman stop such treatment? The rescue of a few does not prevent the shipment of the many. It is necessary to take the cases of individuals to create law to protect the many.

Of the most remarkable was the case of James Somerset. He was claimed as the property of Charles Stewart, a customs officer from Boston in the colony of Massachusetts. Stewart brought him to England in 1769 but in 1771 Somerset escaped. He was recaptured in the November of that year and imprisoned on board a ship bound for the colony of Jamaica. I heard of Somerset's distress and felt it my duty to intervene, demanding that the captain of the ship produce Somerset before the King's Bench.

A hearing was set for January but it was not to be heard until February 1772. It is of great import that any who are leading a campaign to rid the world of vileness receive the support of the newspapers. They offered their opinions on both sides of the case and public donations were offered to both my own campaign and those who support the trade in slaves. Our essential argument was that whilst colonial law might permit slavery, these laws do not apply in England nor could such a law exist in England unless it be specifically enacted by Parliament. No such act exists. It must be recognised that in spite of there being no law "the air of England is too pure for a slave to breathe", words from the time of Queen Elizabeth which sadly have been lost with the distance of time.

Stewart's lawyers argued that property is paramount and that it would be dangerous to free all the Negro slave people in England. His Justice, Lord Mansfield listened with great attentiveness to both sides of our arguments. He retired to make his decision and obviously found it a great difficulty as it took him almost a month. In June 1772 he made his ruling:

"The state of slavery is of such a nature, that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political; but only positive law, which preserves its force long after the reasons, occasion, and time itself from whence it was created, is erased from memory. It is so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law. Whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from a decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the Law of England; and therefore the black must be discharged."

James Somerset was freed. Once again the case of a single man has changed the life of the many. But still slavery and the slave trade exist and it is imperative that these are removed by act of parliament forthwith if we are to call ourselves a civilised and Christian country.

*Sarah:* My dearest sister, what is this news that greets me that there are those in England who wish to abolish the slave trade? They have little or no idea of the truth of the matter. We are not all, as have been depicted, cruel and heartless. If they were to see the scenes that I witness daily of the Negroes happily going about their work they would realise that they have no reason to despair or to try to stop the trade in slaves.

It is as William says, the Negro slave is essential to the production of the goods that we are creating. If we really are engaged in inhuman practices that fly in the face of God then perhaps these people who decry us with such verisimilitude could answer this; do they not want affordable cotton, sugar, rum and tobacco from their trading compatriots in the colonies?

They claim to fear that there is the blood of slaves upon these goods and yet they continue to purchase them. I truly cannot understand why slavery may be considered so abhorrent to some in supposed civilised society. It is of great note to me that those who are advocating abolition are on the whole men. We women are far more sensible than they to call for such a thing, for we truly understand the slave's position for are we, when taken as wives, not also placed into a form of slavery. I am not assuming a radical position here, dear sister, but rather raising the question that if one form of slavery should be denied then so should it all.

The slave it is said is held in involuntary service. So is the wife. Our relations to our husbands are often made for us, as mine was by dear father, and not out of choice. It is true that in many respects we are superior to our husbands, in grace, in refinement of thought, in our passive fortitude and in our enduring love and our hearts, which are filled with the spirit of heaven. Nevertheless it is our duty as we say when taking our vows to honour and obey our husbands. We are under service to him, we are bound to obey him, and whilst it is not true of William it is certainly true of other wives that their husbands rule with a rod of iron. Has it not after all, been decreed by the courts, that a man may beat his wife with a staff no thicker than his thumb? The rule of thumb, I believe it is now known. William has never raised so much as a finger let alone a thumb to my good self but nonetheless I know my place and my position.

But as with the slaves who so often run away, I cannot leave my position if my fancy takes me for William and I are as one and there is an unstated command that I should stay with him.

And in our own way we are bought. Dowries are paid in every society. Not only a Christian society but the Jewish society, the Turkish, the Greek, the Portugese, the barbarian and the savage all buy for themselves wives through these payments. We may not behave as slaves, we have free thought but nonetheless we may be considered as such. What is our society to do if it is to eradicate slavery? Is it to declare all marriage null and void and lead the way to anarchy? We must all know our places and must all

recognise the duties that we undertake in this world, whether we consider them heinous or not.

*Dmitri:* I meet many men, from different countries. They all ask the same - Can I get for them women. We agree price. I place advertisement offering "domestic work". Some will go to do this work, others will find different work through these men.

All need papers I see politician, he can arrange all papers that are needed. For a price. All things have price.

I meet women in café. Each has same story, no money, no chance, no choice. I say I will help if they can find for me money for papers. Of course I need my profit on that transaction as well.

They find money and pay me. They are happy, they are going to better life. They have no future in our country and I can provide future. This is what I believe, that I provide a future they could not have anywhere.

Recently, I meet one of the women. Her name was Maria. First, she came to me to ask for help. She has returned from bad place. She believed she was going to work as domestic, cleaning house. She has seen my advertisement for domestic to clean rich house in Greece. Good money, good pay, nice family.

I arrange for her and 14 others to travel in van to coast. From there they take boat to Greece. I do not know of arrangements. I does not interest me but she tells me of stinking fishing boat to Greece. They sleep near engine. The smell of oil and fish guts make them sick. They arrive but it is not Greece that they have come to but other country, she thinks Italy. There they are taken into house and all papers are taken away.

The house smells as bad as ship she says. It is in bad mess. Some other men meet them. They cannot speak each others language. The men say something and laugh and

take girls into rooms. Maria is taken away. Man she is with speaks some of her language. He ask her for sex. She refuses. He beats her and rapes her. Afterwards he tells her that she will not have papers until she has paid back money that she owes them.

She does not understand because of language and because it makes little sense. Where is house and family to clean up after? He laughs. "Pay back by same way" Each man she have sex with will pay money which will pay towards 5000 euro to have her papers back. 10 euros for each man.

Maria does what she is told. She is scared. If she tries to run away she will be known as prostitute. She sees other girls who cause more trouble than her being given drugs. These will help them, says man. But first one is free, rest come at price. Girls are addicted to drugs and must pay for these as well as papers.

She has been there for three weeks when she and 2 other girls are taken to car. They are driven for many, many miles. They cross border into another country and another, until they come to Holland. They have been sold to others who will "look after them"

*Angela:* I sometimes get pains in my stomach, abdominal pain the doctors called it. They offered me a scan to find out what the problem was. I didn't go. James didn't want me to go. It would be people poking and prying and nosing around he said. There was no need to go.

Laura always looks after me. When it happens. She once got in the way. It was one of those nights when James went crazy over some small thing that I'd done. See I can't even remember what. Laura tried to stop him as he hit me again and again. And he hit her to the floor he was going to punch he again but I stopped him. I don't think you can really understand terror until you see it on your own child's face.

Laura stays out of the way when the rows are going on. She's learnt that. She stays clear and picks up the pieces afterwards. My daughter looks after me. Does that make me a bad mother?

He smashed my head against a shelf one night. I was bleeding, blood all over the place but he just walked out and left me there. Laura phoned the ambulance and I was taken to hospital. I told the nurse that I'd slipped on the kitchen floor banged my head on the worktop. Laura was staring at me all the time. I could feel her asking the same thing "Why don't you tell them mum? Why don't you bring it to an end?" But I couldn't. I couldn't leave him.

The nurse came back as we were leaving and gave me a leaflet. "Are you a victim of domestic violence?" It said. Well I could answer the question but I couldn't keep that leaflet. If James found that he'd go mad, crazy. I threw it away. Keep things tidy. Throw it in the bin.

I can't admit to it because I've failed if I do. I don't understand how I've let it all happen to me. When I was younger, at uni, I was bright, I was clever, I was independent. I read and believed all the words I was told about women being able to be themselves, that we weren't bought and sold as wives any more that we had our own lives. I was sold a lie. I was sold a story that I could have that and it's not true. It's just not true.

There's this idea that you get from films and television and books that the man is always drunk that that's his motivation. That he's had one too many and off he goes. James doesn't like drink. He hardly touches it and when I asked for that pint all those years ago at university, the first time we met, I thought that I had really lost him.

He does it because he can. Pure and simple and because he's right I'm stupid. I've been stupid enough to let him take over my life and I have to do what he says or suffer the consequences.

*Granville:* We are all of us upon a journey through life which we must consider to be guided by God's will. For some their journeys are not safe passage. Slaves have little or no safe passage. Their journeys through life are plagued with ill treatment of the worst kind. Their true journeys, their journeys aboard ship are upon that hideous journey of reality called the "Middle Passage".

Through my dealings with the Somerset case, I first encountered the freed slave Olaudah Equiano, a man of great dignity who commands much respect in society. He has related to me on many occasions the treatment encountered by slaves on the journey known as the "Middle Passage".

The slave, it must be remembered, is at present an object of trade and as such the "Middle Passage" is the middle journey of a triangle of trade. Ships depart from British ports bearing cloth, brandy, firearms or gun powder. They sail to North Africa where these goods are exchanged for the "human cargo".

Consider for one moment the vessels have been little modified to carry the 300 souls to be traded. They are chained hand to foot and left below deck for much of the journey in spaces of no more than 18 inches.

Olaudah describes "countenances expressing dejection and sorrow". It is little wonder that the Negroes view their slave captors as "white devils" who they fear "might eat them"! 300 men, women and children confined in such a small space will with great certainty lead to the contraction of disease and many thousands have perished through the closeness of the space. They are exposed to others upon decks awash with excrement, sickness must be a forgone conclusion. Little wonder that some slaves have thrown themselves overboard to their deaths or refused to eat the meagre food.

This starvation of the self, the crew overcome by the use of tortures of various kinds. Thumbscrews, whippings, beatings or use of the speculum orum, that cruel device which forces open the jaws to permit feeding are common. What man may condone such

tortures? What man may endure such indignity? But then I am considering a slave to be a man and not an animal as those who support the slave trade would have us believe.

Many of you may remember the journey of the slave ship Zong. The ship set sail from the African coast on 6th day of September 1781 under the command of one Luke Collingwood with a crew of 35 and a full complement of 300 slaves aboard. By the 29th day of November seven of the crew and 60 slaves had perished as a result of disease and malnutrition.

Upon that very day, Collingwood decided to protect his crew and the remainder of his valuable human cargo by throwing all sick slaves into the Atlantic Ocean. You must consider at this juncture the meaning of his actions to himself and others implicated in his evil trade. He is to throw objects of great value as he considers them, into the ocean, but he has no fear for he is insured. The underwriters of Lloyds it seems will cover the costs for slavery and murder, for if slaves are thrown into the sea it is deemed a natural death.

133 slaves were thrown over the side in an attempt Mr. Collingwood claimed to conserve fresh water. 133 lives for the sake, primarily, of the lives of the remaining crew and yet within two days the ship was in port taking on full supplies and when the journey was completed in Jamaica there were some 420 gallons to spare.

It is said that the final 10 slaves rose up proudly and leapt into the icy waters of death rather than be manhandled and mistreated by the crew. Nonetheless the weight of their leg irons drew them beneath the waters surface, but they may be considered to have drowned with great courage and fortitude.

In the following year the slave owners and Mr. Collingwood found themselves facing the courts and the law. For murder perchance? For inhuman treatment of other humans? No. For attempting to defraud those who had underwritten the insurance. The water on

board proved of more value than the bodies at the bottom of the ocean. Murder is not relevant in the case of the slave but profit and finance are.

We must lead forward in all Christian spirit to create an act of parliament to cease all these barbarisms and act righteously and correctly towards our fellow humans.

*Sarah:* If the slave trade is abolished Jamaica and the Indies will all be destroyed. Slave holders, like William, are now to be considered sinners, hardly meet to be called Christian. But the scriptures themselves support slavery. Those men who use the scripture to their foul and unjust ends, of allowing us not the good grace to keep slaves, are not as learned or intelligent as I, it seems. For I know from the Bible the story of Noah, whose son Ham was cursed and whose descendants were destined to be slaves. The curse was for not averting his glance from his father's naked form. The curse was that whilst his brothers may be blessed and free men, Ham would forever be a slave. And to where did Ham travel after receiving this curse, to Africa. The home of the very Negroes whom we now employ in our fields. They are the very descendants of Ham and as such are bound to slavery by the ancient word of the scriptures. But it is not just the ancient word but also the word in the New Testament.

Paul in his epistle to Philemon encourages those who harbour runaway slaves to return them to their masters whilst Timothy quite clearly tells us that: "Those who are under the yoke of slavery must regard their masters as worthy of full respect, so that the name of God and our teaching may not suffer abuse." Christianity is no reason for the abolition of the slave trade rather it supports it.

And as Peter says: "Those who speak loud boasts of folly, entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves\_of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. " Slavery is just and those who speak out against it rail against God.

The reverend has taught our slaves in some ways of the church. Most particularly that when they die and go to the sweet by and by, in the sky, God will wipe away the tears from every eye. And so I believe he will. We do not cause suffering by the keeping of slaves but merely maintain the scriptures and the ways of the world. Please my dear sister face up to these abolitionists and prevent them from driving us into poverty and hardship.

It is with great sadness that I receive the news of dear father's death. Would that I could be with you at this most difficult time but as you may realise I too have difficult duties here to fulfil. I bless you and pray for you at this most difficult time and urge you not to weep for dear father for we know that he has gone to a better place.

Your loving sister  
Sarah

*Dmitri:* Maria was now in house in Amsterdam. She sleeps in one room with no light or heat. She is given little food except leftovers from man and woman who run house. The man and woman they have no interest in Maria, except to bring men to her. When there are no customers, the man hits her or burns her with cigarettes. She has to learn to behave and to do what she is there for, She cannot refuse, she has no papers, she is locked in the room. She is prisoner.

Maria is sensible she learns to keep quiet. After six months, woman takes her out shopping. It is first time in six months Maria has left house. She feels the fresh air on face before returning to room with men again.

This was her life for many months until she sees advertisement in paper for charity which can help her, she says. She waits, until another shopping trip and finds phone. She waits until woman is out of the way and calls. She is crying to the people on the phone, crying for her life, for shame of her life and shame of parents if they ever know about her.

Woman from charity says that she will come and rescue her, take her away from problem, save her and help her to get home. She gives address and the next day, woman arrives with police. There is fight and couple are taken into prison. Maria is free, in foreign land with no money but charity will help her, they say.

She works for them for year before thinking about going home. She must, she says, face shame of parents and family, but shame can be behind her now. Perhaps she may even meet nice man but who will marry her if he knows her past? She says it is difficult to smile when this has been life.

*Angela:* I remember once watching This Morning, on T.V. I'm not supposed to have it on but I did. And they had a phone in about domestic abuse. This woman said she couldn't leave her house, her husband phoned every hour, if I don't do what he says then he hits me, I don't know what to do. It was like hearing my own voice. If I could have phoned it was my story. And that stupid woman, the agony aunt one said how the caller had to prepare an escape route and leave and had to get out. "We are all right behind you" she said. I thought you aren't her, you aren't me, you sit there with your stupid self righteous attitude and your perfect marriage and you don't know anything. Because you don't know the fear, the terror that you'll find if you try and leave. You haven't had someone say to you that they will kill themselves if you ever leave them. Or that they will kill your daughter.

There is that question "Why do you stay?" I stay because it's my house as well, I've built my life here, our life here, this is my family home.

"But why did you stay?" Because he said, he said that if I ever tried to leave he'd tell social services and they'd take Laura away. I would be a bad mother. She would go into care and I'd have nothing left.

"But that isn't true so why did you stay?" Because I have no way that I can support myself, no money. I need his money. I've got used to not having money. If you live

without money you get used to it and I'd need it if I wanted to leave. How could I leave if I can't get money?

"But that still doesn't explain why you stay?" Because I love him. I love him. The James I first met, the James who was passionate towards me. I love that man.... and want him back. I want that caring gentle man. I don't want the controlling jealous vicious James. I want the man that I loved back.

How many people understand love eh? What it does to you? And I don't want to be alone. I can't bear to think that as I get older the only man who I had truly loved might leave me as well. I might never find another lover. I would be old and sad and die alone and I don't want that. I want the love that he gave me.

And after all that people still don't understand. Because only when you're there. Only when you come face to face with that devil in your living room and you try and avoid the punches and you try and protect your child can you understand the confusion of it all, in your mind. You love and you hate and you don't want to do either because they equal each other out. You're not a person any more you're so much less than a person because you're so confused about your world.

James says to never tell anyone, what has happened. It's our business. It's family business and you never talk about family business outside the family.

*Dmitri:* Maria tells me this story. She looks into my face. She spits at me. She is disgusted with me. How can I do this to her? To others like her? Have I no idea of human people? Yes. I have. I try and help them. I try and find them better life.

I did not force her to go. She made decision. She had a choice. I did not steal her from the street, she paid to go. She paid for journey. That was my arrangement. To help her to go to work in new place.

And then why should I be blamed. I have never had sex with Maria. I have never had sex with prostitute. I am not Italian, Greek or Dutch man who pays for sex with unknown girl in hotel room. I have a good life in my country. I have good family. I do not need that.

Do not blame me. To blame me is to go against economics. Economics that your countries want us to follow. Supply and demand. Your people demand women, children, I supply. It is simple. If you stop demand, you will stop supply. But what will my people do then? Those of us who are making profit? Where will we find profit then? You cannot judge me when it is you who has made the demand.

*Sarah:* My dearest sister Rebecca, so those who sit in lofty seats of power and government who nothing of trade or working life or the creation of wealth and goods have succeeded in abolishing a trade which has stood throughout history. William upon hearing the news I fear flew into such a temper and rage as I have never seen. "The slave trade is abolished!" he cried out, "what next? The emancipation of the slaves! What do these people in England want? To ruin us who have brought such wealth and riches to our beloved country and have created such established industries. To remove the slaves is to remove the means of production and to damn our industry to an intolerable hell!"

William's temper I fear will not pass with ease, but I fear will rise more as the days and months of the abolition take effect. And what pray am I to do?

I must attempt to maintain normality here, a normality which those who have supported abolition make impossible.

We live in fear now of the emancipation of the slaves moving forward with great haste. For if that happens what will become not only of us but also of the poor slaves. There will be little or no consideration as to how they are to survive. They will be set free, with no money, no home, no food, no clothing and no hope. There are some who say that apprenticeship could be the way forward but this William considers unlikely. The planters

will not support such an action for if the slaves are set directly free with no requirement upon us of any kind then we are relieved of caring for the sick, young and old workers.

And then there is the question of compensation. There are upon Jamaica alone almost 200,000 slaves. Each worth in excess of £ 30, a grand sum of £ 6,000,000. Who will pay us the plantation owners here that amount of money? No-one.

Perhaps the slaves can all find work and remain indebted to us until then can raise the correct payment -a system I understand that some call Manumission. A slave may purchase his freedom but I would warn him in the words of the old proverb to "Be careful for what you wish for it might come true!" They will not survive without us and I do not see immediately any further freedoms or abolitions granted. Think of what will happen in the American colonies. There will be war and bloodshed over the right to maintain possession.

So we must now view our plantations, which we have created and lovingly grown and consider that perhaps if the fools have their way we must depart. I, myself, will not shed too many tears for life here has been difficult, but for my four children they may find life in England difficult to adjust to, if we are forced to return home.

For now I must only pray that the good Lord gives the abolitionists some sense and that emancipation will remain a mere distant idea.

Your loving sister

Sarah

*Granville:* How can we be righteous and follow the gospels whilst slavery still exists? The gospel destroys all national impartiality and makes us citizens of the world. It obliges us to profess universal benevolence. More especially, we are bound, as Christians, to assist to the utmost of our powers all in distress or captivity; whatever the worshipful committee of the company of merchants trading to Africa may think.

Charity indeed begins at home; and we ought most certainly give preference to our own countrymen, whenever we can do so without injustice. But we may not do evil that good may come. We must not for the sake of Old England and its African Trade or imagined necessities of our American colonies lay aside our Christian charity which we owe all the rest of mankind. Whenever we do so, we deserve to be considered in no better light than an overgrown society of robbers, a mere banditti who perhaps may love one another but at the same time are an enemy with all the rest of the world. Is this according to the law of nature?

If we consider the buying and selling of Negroes not as a clandestine or piratical business, but as an open public trade, encouraged and promoted by acts of parliament, it must be considered contrary to religion and therefore a national sin and as such a consequence that would always be dreaded. May God give us grace to repent this abominable national oppression, before it is too late!

*They sing final verse of "Amazing Grace"*

*When we've been here ten thousand years...*

*bright shining as the sun.*

*We've no less days to sing God's praise...*

*then when we've first begun.*

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,*

*That saved a wretch like me....*

*I once was lost but now am found,*

*Was blind, but now, I see.*

*End*