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William Wilberforce

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A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade

William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was a politician, philanthropist and evangelical Christian, now best known for his work to end the slave trade. Elected to Parliament in 1780, he campaigned unsuccessfully for penal and electoral reform. In 1787, at the encouragement of William Pitt, he took up the cause of abolition at Westminster, but humanitarian and ethical arguments were slow to overcome the economic interests of those who had made fortunes from the slave trade or the use of slave labour. It was not until 1807 that the Abolition Bill was finally passed: shortly beforehand, Wilberforce had published this *Letter* to his constituents, justifying his preoccupation with abolition against claims that he was neglecting their local interests at Westminster, and setting out all his arguments against the slave trade. It is followed by his 1814 letter to Talleyrand, calling for a Europe-wide ban of the trade.

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A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade

*Addressed to the Freeholders
and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire*

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE



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Frontmatter

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Mr. Wilberforce,

ON

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Frontmatter

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A L E T T E R
ON
THE ABOLITION
OF THE
S L A V E T R A D E ;

ADDRESSED TO THE
FREEHOLDERS AND OTHER INHABITANTS
OF
YORKSHIRE.

By W. WILBERFORCE, ESM

“There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but CHRIST is all, and in all. Put on therefore bowels of mercies, kindness,” &c.—COL. iii. 11. 12.

“GOD hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”—ACTS xvii. 26.

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978-1-108-02499-0 - A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade

William Wilberforce

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

i

C O N T E N T S.

	Page
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	1
Sources of Information - - - - -	11
Methods by which the Slaves are supplied in Africa	18
Slave Trade's Effects in the Interior and on the Coast	30
Proof of Abolitionists' Facts decisive, and contrary	
Allegations groundless - - - - -	47
Pleas against Abolition, that Negroes are an inferior	
Race - - - - -	53-4
Opponents' description of Negro Character con-	
trasted with other Accounts - - - - -	57
Argument from Africa's never having been civilized,	
considered - - - - -	71
New Phenomenon—Interior of Africa more civi-	
lized than Coast - - - - -	86
Plea of Opponents, that Slaves State in Africa ex-	
tremely miserable - - - - -	89
Plea from Cruelty of African Despots - - - - -	92
Ditto, that refused Slaves would be massacred in	
case of Abolition - - - - -	95
Middle Passage - - - - -	96
Opponents' grand Objection—that Stock of Slaves	
cannot be kept up in West Indies without Impor-	
tations - - - - -	103
Presumptive Arguments against the above Allega-	
tion, from universal Experience - - - - -	104
Positive Proof that the Stock of Slaves might be	
kept up without Importations—Argument stated	109
I.—Abuses sufficient to account for great Decrease.	
The Increase a subordinate Object of Attention -	116
Insufficient Feeding - - - - -	119

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02499-0 - A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade

William Wilberforce

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ii

CONTENTS.

	Page
Defective Clothing and Lodging, and over-working	122
Moral Vices of the System - - - -	123
Especially Degradation of the Negro Race, and its important Effects - - - -	127
Proofs of Degradation—a Negroe Sale - -	133
Sale of Negroes for Owners Debts - -	136
Working under the Whip - - - -	140
Cruel and indecent Public Punishments - -	144
Inadequate legal Protection - - - -	147
Ditto, considered in its Effect of degrading, and late Barbadoes Incidents - - - -	153
Three other Vices of the System—Absenteeship -	177
Pressure of the Times - - - -	186
West Indian Speculations - - - -	190
Admirals and Governors contrary Evidence and Remarks - - - -	192
Decisive Proof that Slaves' State is miserable -	205
II.—Yet, though Abuses so great, the Decrease quite inconsiderable - - - -	211
III.—Hence, Abuses being corrected, Slaves would rapidly increase - - - -	215
West Indians most plausible Objections, and re- maining Pleas against Abolition - - - -	216
Grand Plea, that Co-operation of Colonial Legis- latures necessary - - - -	219
Disproved, both by Reason - - - -	222
And Experience - - - -	225
Mr. Burke's supposed Plan - - - -	238
Efficacy and beneficial Consequences of Abolition -	241
Immediate, preferable to gradual, Abolition -	254
Abolitionists vindicated for not emancipating -	256
Abolition's Effects on Commerce and Manufactures	261
Present West Indian System ruinous - - -	266
West Indian Opposition to Abolition accounted for,	274
Strong Party Spirit Proofs - - - -	282
No Hopes of West Indian Opposition ceasing -	288

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02499-0 - A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade

William Wilberforce

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

iii

	Page
Appeal to gradual Abolitionists - - - -	288
Objection to Abolition on the ground of Slave Trade's Effects on our Marine - - - -	302
Objection, that Foreign Nations would carry on Slave Trade if we relinquished it - - - -	305
Objection to Abolition on grounds of Justice - - - -	312
Objection on grounds of Religion - - - -	318
Abolitionists' further Plea against Slave Trade—	
Insurrection, extreme danger of - - - -	321
Our Population drained to defend the West Indies	330
Summary View of the Miseries produced by the Slave Trade - - - - - - - -	333
Instance of Individual Misery - - - - -	340
Conclusion - - - - - - - -	345

APPENDIX.—A few Specimens in Proof of Effects of the Slave Trade in Africa, and of the natural Dispositions and Commercial Aptitudes - - - - -	353 to 394
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English Slave Trade as carried on so late as Henry 2d's Time.