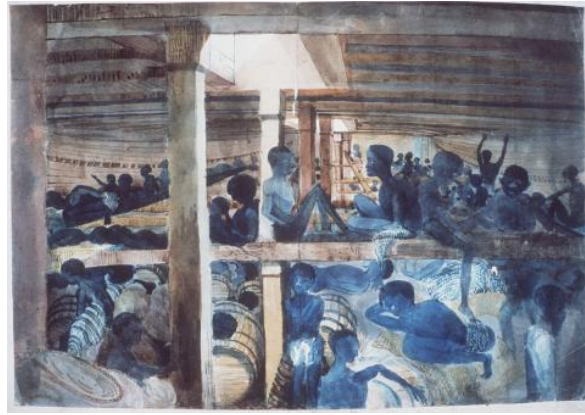




0. MASSIVE EXPLOITATION - Story Preface

1. AFRICA, BEFORE SLAVERS

2. SLAVE-TRADE BEGINNINGS

3. THE TRIANGLE TRADE

4. THE MIDDLE PASSAGE MYTH

5. MIDDLE PASSAGE REALITY

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14. SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED - FEBRUARY 23, 1807

15. MORE TRAGEDIES

16. AMAZING GRACE

In this image, we see a pencil-and-watercolor work by Lt. Francis Meynell. Entitled "Slave deck of the *Albaroz*, Prize to the *Albatross*, 1845," the illustration shows captured Africans, intended to become slaves, who were liberated by the British Navy. The *Albanes* (erroneously identified as the *Albaroz*) was a Brazilian ship, captured by the *Albatross* (a Royal Navy vessel) off the mouth of the Coanza/Cuanza River in 1845. The artist was serving aboard the *Albatross* at the time. The image (E029) is online via Slavery Images.org, compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite; sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library. Click on it for a better view.

First-hand accounts of slave-trading horrors reached people in Britain.

Even hardened hearts were touched by the story of the Zong captives: 133 Africans who were deliberately thrown overboard, and left to drown, by slavers hoping to increase the size of an insurance settlement. (If the "cargo" - i.e., the slaves - went overboard alive, owners of the "cargo" were entitled to compensation under their insurance policy.)

Only one African survived. No one involved with the crime, which took place in 1781, was ever prosecuted for murder.

How could such treatment of human beings ever be justified? As John Wesley notes, in his analysis of the British slave-trading industry:

The grand plea is, "They are authorized by law." But can law, human law, change the nature of things? Can it turn darkness into light, or evil into good? By no means. Notwithstanding ten thousand laws, right is right, and wrong is wrong still. . . Who can reconcile this treatment of the Negroes, first and last, with either mercy or justice?

"This treatment" could *not* be reconciled. The law *had* to change.

Three hundred Quakers, mostly from London, petitioned Parliament - in 1783 - to abolish the law allowing slave-trade. Nothing meaningful happened. At the time, Quakers were not even allowed to be members of Parliament.

Meanwhile, millions of British men, women and children worked sixteen hours a day, six days a week, in factories which processed the slave-trade's raw materials, principally cotton.

Hoping to find work in the cities, these laborers lived in crowded, filthy dwellings where cholera, typhoid and tuberculosis germs were ever-present neighbors. After his conversion, William Wilberforce tried to help these people by drawing Parliament's attention to their plight.

As William tried to make a difference for the working poor, he was approached by Lady Middleton, known as

Albinia Townshend before her marriage. She had another, bigger project in mind for the young MP. She asked him to use his influence, and power, to end the slave trade.

Wilberforce sought the counsel of his friend, the Prime Minister William Pitt. Should he jump into the slave-trade abolition movement? During a conversation, which took place under an [oak tree on Pitt's estate](#), "Pitt the Younger" agreed with Lady Middleton.

William accepted the challenge. Despite misgivings, he agreed to do his best, writing:

I feel the great importance of the subject and I think myself unequal to the task allotted to me.

Four years after the Quaker's petition to change the law, Thomas Clarkson formed a committee to spearhead an abolition movement. It was formally instituted on the 22nd of May, 1787. Nine of its original twelve members were Quakers.

Their charge was to find the evidence Wilberforce - also a committee member - needed for his first slave-trade-ending speech to Parliament.

The evidence they found was so overwhelming it took Wilberforce more than three hours to summarize it. Let's examine some excerpts from his famous speech.

[See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MASSIVE-EXPLOITATION-Amazing-Grace>

[See Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MASSIVE-EXPLOITATION-Amazing-Grace>

Questions 2 Ponder

Is It True that "Right Is Right" and "Wrong is Wrong?"

In 1783, three hundred Quakers, mostly from London, petitioned the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade. It did no good whatsoever since, at the time, Quakers were not even allowed to become Members of Parliament.

Meanwhile, millions of British men, women and children worked sixteen hours a day, six days a week, in factories where they processed the slave-trade's raw materials, principally cotton.

William Wilberforce tried to change the conditions of Britain's working poor until he was asked to tackle the whole problem, starting with abolishing the slave trade.

Other individuals, like John Wesley, tried to "change the atmosphere," by decrying the laws which allowed slave trading. Among other things, he said:

The grand plea [in favor of slave-trading and slavery] is, 'They are authorized by law.' But can law, human law, change the nature of things? Can it turn darkness into light, or evil into good? By no means. Notwithstanding ten thousand laws, right is right, and wrong is wrong still. . . Who can reconcile this treatment of the Negroes, first and last, with either mercy or justice?

Recognizing we cannot turn 21st-century eyes on an 18th-century issue, and expect to consider everything going-on at the time, we can still assess some basic concepts. Did, for example, mercy and justice apply to the plight of Africans who were captured and turned into slaves? Why, or why not?

Can a man-made law declare something which is wrong to be something which is right? Explain your answer.

Suppose, for example, that a government-passed law says that it's acceptable to steal. Would such a law, to use Wesley's words, turn "evil into good?" Why, or why not?

Do you think that "right is right" and "wrong is wrong?" Explain your answer.

How do we know what is right and what is wrong if the law, itself, cannot tell us?

Media Stream

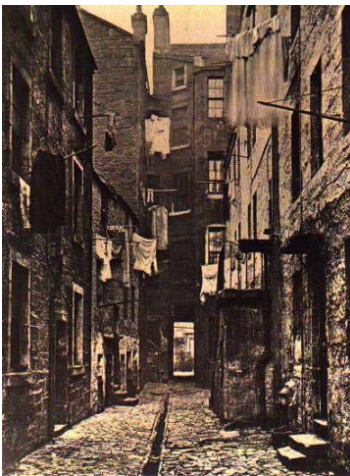


John Wesley in Edinburgh

Image, Library of Congress.

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Living Quarters for City Workers in Britain

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Oak Tree - Pitt the Younger and William Wilberforce

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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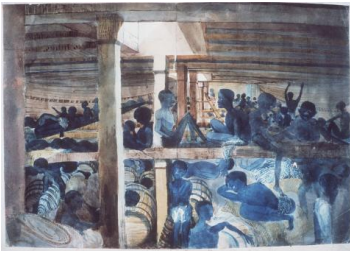
William Pitt's Estate - Holwood House

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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MASSIVE EXPLOITATION

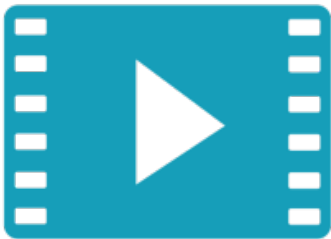
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Zong Affair

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Zong Affair - Part 2

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