

Release us out of this Cruel Bondage

Anonymous Slave

August The Forth, 1723

Contents

Two Photos of the Letter	3
Text	6
Abbreviated with original spelling	6
Full letter with modernised spelling	6
Audio	8

Two Photos of the Letter

J. Hall

34

167

18

August 9th forth 1423

The Right High Reverend father in god my Lord
 arch Bishop of London
 this coms to satisfie your honour that there
 is in this Land of virginia a sort of people
 that is call'd molaters which^{are} Baptised and brought
 up in the way of the Christian faith ~~and the~~
 and followes the wayes and Rull's of the Arch of England
 and sum of them ahas white bathans and sum
 white mothers hand there is in ^{this} Land a Law
 a Law or act which keeps and makes them
 and there see Slaves for ever
 and most honoured Sir amongst the Rest of your
 Charitabell atts and wee ~~wee~~ ^{wee} humbly your humbll
 and poore partishiners doo begg for your
 aid and assistance in this one thing which is
 as I doo understand of your Lordships best
 which is that ~~if~~ ^{if} your honour will
 by the help of our Suffering Lord King George
 and the Rest of your Rulers will Release us out of
 this Cruell Bondage and this wee beg for
 Jesus Christ's his sake who has Comanded
 us to seeke first the Kingdom of god and
 all things shall be added un un to us

and here it is to be note that one brother
 is a Slave to another and one sister to another
 which is quite out of the way and as for
 mee ~~and~~ my selfe I am my brother's
 Slave but my name is Secrott

and here it is to be note againe that wee
 are Comanded to keepe holy the Sabbath day
 and wee doo hardly know when it comes
 for our ~~for~~ task masters are has hand with
 us as the Egyptians was with the
 Childamr of Issarall god be mercifull un to us

168
which is all att present with our
prayers to god for itt & good success
before your honour these from your humbell servants
in the Lord
my writing is verry bad I whope yr honour
will take the will for the deed
I am but a poore slave ~~that~~ that
writt itt and has no other ~~time~~ time
but Sunday and hardly that att sumtimes
September the 8th 1723

To the Right Reverend father in god
my Lord arch bishop of
London
these with care

wee dare nott ^{name} see to write any more to this
for feare of our masters & for if they know
that wee have sent home to your honour
wee should go neare to being upon the
pallab tree

Text

Abbreviated with original spelling

to the Right Raverrand father in god my Lord arch Bishop of Lonnd ...

this coms to sattesfie your honour that there is in this Land of verJennia a Sort of people that is Calld molatters which are Baptised and brouaht up in the way of the Christian faith and follows the ways and Rulles of the Chrch of England and sum of them has white fathars and sum white mothers and there is in this Land a Law or act which keeps and makes them and there seed Slaves forever ...

wee your humbell and poore partishinners doo begg Sir your aid and assistanccce in this one thing ... which is that your honour will by the help of our Sufvering Lord King George and the Rest of the Rullers will Release us out of this Cruell Bondegg ...

wee are commandded to keep holey the Sabbath day and wee doo hardly know when it comes for our task mastrs are has hard with us as the Egypttions was with the Chillardann of Issarall ... wee are kept out of the Church and matrimony is deened us and to be plain they doo Look no more upon us then if wee ware dogs which I hope when these Strange lines comes to your Lord Ships hands will be Looket in to ...

And Sir wee your humble perticners do humbly beg ... that our childarn may be broatt up in the way of the Christtian faith and our desire is that they may be Larnd the Lords prayer the creed and the ten commandements and that they may appeare Every Lord's day att Church before the Curatt to bee Exammond for our desire is that godllines Should abbound amongs us and wee desire that our Childarn be putt to Scool and Larnd to Reed through the Bybell.

My Riting is vary bad ... I am but a poore Slave that writt itt and has no other time butt Sunday and hardly that att Sumtimes ... wee dare nott Subscribe any mans name to this for feare of our masters for if they knew that wee have Sent home to your honour wee Should goo neare to Swing upon the gallass tree.

Full letter with modernised spelling

August the fourth, 1723, to the Right Reverend Father in God, my Lord Archbishop of London, this comes to satisfy your honour that there is, in this land of Virginia, a sort of people that is called mullattos, which are baptized, and brought up in the way of the Christian faith, and follows the ways and rules of the Church of England, and some of them has white fathers and some white mothers, and there is, in this land, a Law or Act which keeps and makes them and their seed, Slaves Forever.

And most honoured Sir, amongst the rest of your charitable acts and deed, we, your humble and poor parishioners do beg Sir your aid and assistance in this one thing which lies, as I do understand, in your Lordship's breast, which is that your honour will, by the help of our Sovereign Lord King George and the Rest of the Rulers will:

Release us out of this Cruel Bondage

And this, we beg, for Jesus Christ's his sake, who has commanded us to seek first the Kingdom of God, and all things shall be added unto us.

And here it is to be noted, that one brother is a slave to another, and one sister to another, which is quite out of the way, and, as for me myself:

I am my brother's slave, but my name is secret.

And, here it is to be noted again, that we are commanded to keep holy the Sabbath Day and we do hardly know when it comes, for our taskmasters are as hard with us as the Egyptians was with the Children of Israel.

God be merciful on to us.

Here follows our severity, and sorrowful service. We are hard used upon every account.

In the first place, we are in ignorance of our salvation, and in the next place we are kept out of the Church, and matrimony is denied us

And to be plain, they do look no more upon us than if we were dogs, which I hope, when these strange lines comes to your Lordship's hands, will be looked into.

And here, we beg for Jesus Christ his sake that, as your honour do hope for the mercy of God at the day of death and the Redemption of our Saviour Christ, that when this comes to your Lordship's hands, your honour will take some pity of us who is your humble but sorrowful petitioners.

And Sir, we, your humble petitioners, do humbly beg the favour of your Lordship, that your honour will grant and settle one thing upon us which is that our children may be brought up in the way of the Christian faith and our desire is that they may be learned the Lord's Prayer, the creed, and the ten commandments, and that they may appear every Lord's day at Church, before the curate, to be examined, for our desire is that godliness should abound amongst us, and we desire that our children be put to school and learned to read through the Bible

Which is all, at present, with our prayers to God for its good success before your honour These, from your humble Servants in the Lord

(my writing is very bad, I hope your honour will take the will for the deed)

I am but a poor slave that writ it and has no other time but Sunday, and hardly that at some times
September the eighth, 1723

To the Right Reverend father in God, my Lord Archbishop of London.

These with care

We dare not subscribe any man's name to this, for fear of our masters, for, if they knew that we have sent home to your honour, we should go near to:

Swing upon the Gallows Tree

Audio

Audio clip of the 1723 letter being read by Sydney Sainte from their play, 'Incidents in the Life of an Anglican Slave, Written by Herself' (2023).

The Library of Unconventional Lives

Anonymous Slave
Release us out of this Cruel Bondage
August The Forth, 1723

“Dissent In America”

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