

WILLIAM STEVENS.  
JOSEPH ALMAZE.  
BOUGHWA GEGANSMEL.

THOMAS OXFORD.  
JOHN ADAMS.  
GEORGE WALLACE.

4. FOR *THE PUBLIC ADVERTISER*, 28 JANUARY 1788.

To J. T. [James Tobin] Esq; Author of the BOOKS called CURSORY REMARKS & REJOINER.

Sir,

That to love mercy and judge rightly of things is an honour to man, no body I think will deny; but "if he understandeth not, nor sheweth compassion to the sufferings of his fellow-creatures, he is like the beasts that perish." Psalm lix verse 20.

Excuse me, Sir, if I think you in no better predicament than that exhibited in the latter part of the above clause; for can any man less ferocious than a tiger or a wolf attempt to justify the cruelties inflicted on the negroes in the West Indies? You certainly cannot be susceptible of human pity to be so callous to their complicated woes! Who could but the Author of the Cursory Remarks so debase his nature, as not to feel his keenest pangs of heart on reading their deplorable story? I confess my cheek changes colour with resentment against your unrelenting barbarity, and wish you from my soul to run the gauntlet of *Lex Talionis*<sup>4</sup> at this time; for as you are so fond of flogging others, it is no bad proof of your deserving a flagellation yourself. Is it not written in the 15th chapter of Numbers, the 15th and 16th verses, that there is the same law for the stranger as for you?

Then, Sir, why do you rob him of the common privilege given to all by the Universal and Almighty Legislator? Why exclude him from the enjoyment of benefits which he has equal right to with yourself? Why treat him as if he was not of like feeling? Does civilization warrant these incursions upon natural justice? No. —Does religion? No. —Benevolence to all is its essence, and do unto others as we would others should do unto us, its grand precept—to Blacks as well as Whites, all being the children of the same parent. Those, therefore, who transgress those sacred obligations, and here, Mr. Remarker, I think you are caught, are not superior to brutes which understandeth not, nor to beasts which perish.

From your having been in the West Indies, you must know that the facts stated by the Rev. Mr. [James] Ramsay are true; and yet regardless of the truth, you controvert them. This surely is supporting a bad cause at all events, and brandishing falsehood to strengthen the hand of the oppressor. Recollect, Sir, that you are told in the 17th verse of the 19th chapter of Leviticus, "You shall not suffer sin upon your neighbour"; and you will not I am sure, escape the upbraidings of your conscience, unless you are fortu-

nate enough to have none; and remember also, that the oppressor and the oppressed are in the hands of the just and awful God, who says, Vengeance is mine and I will repay—repay the oppressor and the justifier of the oppression. How dreadful then will your fate be? The studied and torturing punishments, inhuman, as they are, of a barbarous planter, or a more barbarous overseer, will be tenderness compared to the provoked wrath of an angry but righteous God! who will raise, I have the fullest confidence, many of the sable race to the joys of Heaven, and cast the oppressive white to that doleful place, where he will cry, but will cry in vain, for a drop of water!

Your delight seems to be in misrepresentation, else how could you in page 11 of your Remarks, and in your Rejoinder, page 35, communicate to the public such a glaring untruth as that the oath of a free African is equally admissable in several courts with that of a white person? The contrary of this I know is the fact at every one of the islands I have been, and I have been at no less than fifteen. But who will dispute with such an invective fibber? Why nobody to be sure; for you'll tell, I wish I could say truths, but you oblige me to use ill manners, you lie faster than Old Nick can hear them. A few shall stare you in the face:

What is your speaking of the laws in favour of the Negroes?

Your description of the iron muzzle?

That you never saw the infliction of a severe punishment, implying thereby that there is none?

That a Negro has every inducement to wish for a numerous family?

That in England there are no black labourers?

That those who are not servants, are in rags or thieves?

In a word, the public can bear testimony with me that you are a malicious slanderer of an honest, industrious, injured people!

From the same source of malevolence the freedom of their inclinations is to be shackled—it is not sufficient for their bodies to be oppressed, but their minds must also? Iniquity in the extreme! If the mind of a black man conceives the passion of love for a fair female, he is to pine, languish, and even die, sooner than an intermarriage be allowed, merely because the complexion of the offspring should be tawney—A more foolish prejudice than this never warped a cultivated mind—for as no contamination of the virtues of the heart would result from the union, the mixture of colour could be of no consequence. God looks with equal good-will on all his creatures, whether black or white—let neither, therefore, arrogantly condemn the other.

The mutual commerce of the sexes of both Blacks and Whites, under the restrictions of moderation and law, would yield more benefit than a prohibition—the mind free—would not have such a strong propensity toward the black females as when under restraint: Nature abhors restraint, and for ease either evades or breaks it. Hence arise secret amours, adultery, fornication and all other evils of lasciviousness! hence that most abandoned

boasting of the French Planter, who, under the dominion of lust, had the shameless impudence to exult at the violations he had committed against Virtue, Religion, and the Almighty—hence also spring actual murders on infants, the procuring of abortions, enfeebled constitution, disgrace, shame, and a thousand other horrid enormities.

Now, Sir, would it not be more honour to us to have a few darker visages than perhaps yours among us, than inundation of such evils? and to provide effectual remedies, by a liberal policy against evils which may be traced to some of our most wealthy Planters as their fountain, and which may have smeared the purity of even your own chastity?

As the ground-work, why not establish intermarriages at home, and in our Colonies? and encourage open, free, and generous love upon Nature's own wide and extensive plan, subservient only to moral rectitude, without distinction of the colour of a skin?

That ancient, most wise, and inspired politician, Moses, encouraged strangers to unite with the Israelites, upon this maxim, that every addition to their number was an addition to their strength, and as an inducement, admitted them to most of the immunities of his own people. He established marriage with strangers by his own example—The Lord confirmed them—and punished Aaron and Miriam for vexing their brother for marrying the Ethiopian—Away then with your narrow impolitic notion of preventing by law what will be a national honour, national strength, and productive of national virtue—Intermarriages!

Wherefore, to conclude in the words of one of your selected texts, "If I come, I will remember the deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words."

I am Sir,  
Your fervent Servant,  
GUSTAVUS VASSA, the Ethiopian and the King's late Commissary for the  
African Settlement.  
Baldwin's Garden, Jan. 1788.

##### 5. FOR *THE PUBLIC ADVERTISER*, 5 FEBRUARY 1788.

To MR. GORDON TURNBULL, Author of an "Apology for NEGRO SLAVERY."

Sir,

I am sorry to find in your Apology for oppression, you deviate far from the Christian precepts, which enjoin us to do unto others as we would others should do unto us. In this enlightened age, it is scarcely credible that a

man should be born and educated, in the British dominions especially, possessed of minds so warped as the author of the *Cursory Remarks* and yourself. Strange that in a land which boasts of the purest light of the Gospel, and the most perfect freedom, there should be found advocates of oppression—for the most abject and iniquitous kind of slavery. To kidnap our fellow creatures, however they may differ in complexion, to degrade them into beasts of burthen, to deny them every right but those, and scarcely those we allow to a horse, to keep them in perpetual servitude, is a crime as unjustifiable as cruel; but to avow and defend this infamous traffic required the ability and the modesty of you and Mr. Tobin. Certainly, Sir, you were perfectly consistent with yourself attacking as you did that friend to the rights of mankind, the Rev. James Ramsay. Malignity and benevolence do not well associate, and humanity is a root that seldom flourishes in the soil of a planter. I am therefore surprised that you have endeavoured to depreciate his noble *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves &c.* That learned and elegant performance written in favour of a much injured race of men, we are happy to think has had a good effect in opening the eyes of many of his countrymen to the sufferings of their African brethren; for the Apostle calls us brethren; but if I may form a conjecture from your writings; the Apostles have very small credit either with you or your worthy partner in cruelty, Mr. Tobin; for can any man be a Christian who asserts that one part of the human race were ordained to be in perpetual bondage to another? Is such an assertion, consistent with that spirit of meekness, of justice, of charity, and above all, that brotherly love which it enjoins? But we trust that in spite of your *hissing* zeal and impotent malevolence against Mr. Ramsay, his noble purpose of philanthropy will be productive of much good to many, and in the end through the blessing of God, be a means of bringing about the abolition of Slavery. To the Reverend Gentleman we return our most unfeigned thanks and heartfelt gratitude, and we also feel ourselves much indebted to all those gentlemen who have stepped forward in our defence, and vindicated us from the aspersions of our tyrannical calumniators.

You and your friend, J. Tobin, the cursory remarker, resemble Demetrius, the silversmith, seeing your craft in danger, a craft, however, not so innocent or justifiable as the making of shrines for Diana, for that though wicked enough, left the persons of men at liberty, but yours enslaves both body and soul—and sacrifices your fellow-creatures on the altar of avarice. You, I say, apprehensive that the promulgation of truth will be subversive of your infamous craft, and destructive of your iniquitous gain, rush out with the desperation of assassins, and attempt to wound the reputation of the reverend Essayist by false calumnies, gross contradictions of several well-known facts, and insidious suppression of others. The character of that reverend Gentleman to my knowledge (and I have known him well both here and in the West Indies for many years) is irreproachable. Many of the facts he

relates I know to be true, and many others still more shocking, if possible, have fallen within my own observation, within my own feeling; for were I to enumerate even my own sufferings in the West Indies, which perhaps I may one day offer to the public, the disgusting catalogue would be almost too great for belief. It would be endless to refute all your false assertions respecting the treatment of African slaves in the West Indies; some of them, however, are gross; in particular, you say in your apology page 30, "That a Negro has every inducement to wish a numerous family, and enjoys every pleasure he can desire." A glaring falsehood! But to my great grief, and much anguish in different islands in the West Indies, I have been a witness to children torn from their agonized parents, and sent off wherever their merciless owners please, never more to see their friends again. In page 34 of the same elaborate and pious work, you offer an hypothesis, that the Negro race is an inferior species of mankind: Oh fool! See the 17th chapter of the Acts, verse 26, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, &c." Therefore, beware of that Scripture, which says, Fools perish for lack of knowledge.

GUSTAVUS VASSA, *the Ethiopian,*  
and late Commissary for the African Settlement

*Baldwin's Gardens.*

6. FOR *THE PUBLIC ADVERTISER*, 13 FEBRUARY 1788.

To the Senate of GREAT BRITAIN.

Gentlemen,

May Heaven make you what you should be, the dispensers of light, liberty and science to the uttermost parts of the earth; then will be glory to God on the highest—on earth peace and goodwill to man:—Glory, honour, peace, &c. to every soul of man that worketh good; to the Britons first (because to them the Gospel is preached) and also to the nations: To that truly immortal and illustrious advocate of our liberty, Granville Sharp, Esq., the philanthropist and justly Reverend James Ramsay, and the much to be honoured body of gentlemen called *Friends*, who have exerted every endeavour to break the accursed yoke of Slavery, and ease the heavy burthens of the oppressed Negroes. "Those that honour their Maker have mercy on the Poor";—and many blessing are upon the heads of the just. —May the fear of the Lord prolong their days, and cause their memory to be blessed, and may their numbers be increased, and their expectations filled with gladness, for commiserating the poor Africans, who are counted as beasts of burthen by base-minded men. May God ever open the mouths of these

Your Lordships very humble and devoted Servant,  
 GUSTAVUS VASSA,  
 the late Commissary for the African Settlement.  
 No. 53, Baldwin's Gardens, Holborn.

8. FOR *THE PUBLIC ADVERTISER*, 28 APRIL 1788.

To the Rev. Mr. RAYMUND HARRIS, the Author of the Book called—  
 “Scripture Researches on the *Licitness* of the *Slave Trade*.”<sup>7</sup>

SIR,

THE Subject of Slavery is now grown to be a serious one, when 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. Being contrary to religion, it must be deemed a national sin, and as such may have a consequence that ought always to be dreaded.—May God give us grace to repent of this abominable crime before it be too late! I could not have believed any man in your office would have dared to come forth in public in these our days to vindicate the accursed Slave Trade on any ground; but least of all by the law of Moses, and by that of Christ in the Gospel. As you are so strenuous in bringing in the blessed and benevolent Apostle, Paul, to support your insinuations, with respect to Slavery, I will here attack you on the Apostle's ground. The glorious system of the Gospel destroys all narrow partiality, and makes us citizens of the world, by obliging us to profess universal benevolence; but more especially are we bound, as Christians, to commiserate and assist, to the utmost of our power, all persons in distress, or captivity. Whatever the Worshipful Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, and their hirelings, may think of it, or their advocate, the Rev. Mr. Harris, we are not to do evil that good may come, though some of our Statesmen and their political deceivers may think otherwise. We must not for the sake of Old England, and its African trade, or for the supposed advantage or imaginary necessities of the American colonies, lay aside our Christian charity, which we owe to all the rest of mankind; because whenever we do so we certainly deserve to be considered in no better light than as an overgrown society of robbers—a mere banditti, who perhaps may love one another, but at the same time are at enmity with all the rest of the world. Is this according to the law of Nature? For shame! Mr. Harris. In your aforesaid book I am sorry to find you wrest the words of St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon. St. Paul did not entreat Philemon to take back his servant Onesimus in his former capacity, as you have asserted, in order to render bondage consistent with the principles of revealed religion; but St. Paul said expressly, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, &c. —So, Mr. Harris, you have notoriously

wrested St. Paul's words; in the other texts, where St. Paul recommends submission to servants for conscience sake, he at the same time enjoins the master to entertain such a measure of brotherly love towards his servant, as must be entirely subversive of the African trade, and West India slavery. —And though St. Paul recommends Christian Patience under servitude; yet at the same time he plainly insinuates, that it is inconsistent with Christianity. —The apostle's right to have detained Onesimus, even without the master's consent, is sufficiently implied in the 8th verse. —The dignity of Christ's kingdom doth not admit of Christians to be slaves to their brothers. —Canst thou be made free, says the apostle to the Christian Servant, choose it rather; for he that is called of the Lord being a servant, is the free man of the Lord; ye are bought with a price, be not therefore the servants of men. —Sir, to me it is astonishing, you should in the open face of day, so strangely pervert the apostle's meaning in the 16th verse. —Of this epistle, which you cite strongly in favour of slavery, when the whole tenor of it is in behalf of the slave, I think if you were not hired, you must necessarily observe and acknowledge this matter beyond dispute: and if you were well acquainted with the Bible, you would have seen the very time St. Paul sent Onesimus back to his former master. He then was a Minister or a Preacher of the Gospel. This is corroborated by a variety of circumstances; pray see the epistle to the Colossians. —Surely every reasonable Christian must suppose St. Paul mad, according to the doctrine presumed in your book, to send Onesimus to be a slave and private property the very time when the Christians had all one heart, one mind, and one spirit; and all those who had property sold it, and they had all things common amongst them. You, Sir, as a Clergyman ought to have considered this subject well; I think you have done no credit to the doctrine of Christ, in asserting, that Onesimus was to be received by Philemon for ever as a slave. —St. Paul in his epistles enjoins servants to submission, and not to grieve on the account of their temporal estate. For if, instead of this, he had absolutely declared the iniquity of slavery, tho' established and authorised by the laws of a temporal government, he would have occasioned more tumult than reformation: among the multitude of slaves there would have been more striving for temporal than spiritual happiness; yet it plainly appears by the insinuations which immediately follow, that he thought it derogatory to the honour of Christianity, that men who are bought with the inestimable price of Christ's blood, shall be esteemed slaves, and the private property of their fellow-men. And had Christianity been established by temporal authority in those countries where Paul preached, as it is at present, in this kingdom, we need not doubt but that he would have urged, nay, compelled the masters, as he did Philemon, by the most pressing arguments, to treat their quondam slaves, not now as servants, but above servants—a brother beloved —May God open your eyes while it is called to-day, to see aright, before

you go hence and be no more seen. —Remember the God who has said, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay not only the oppressor, but also the justifier of the oppression.

SIR,

I am fervently thine,  
GUSTAVUS VASSA,

The African.

*Baldwin's Gardens.*

### 9. FOR THE PUBLIC ADVERTISER, 19 JUNE 1788.<sup>8</sup>

To the Honourable and Worldly Members of the BRITISH SENATE.

Gentlemen,

Permit me, one of the oppressed natives of Africa, thus to offer you the warmest thanks of a heart glowing with gratitude for your late humane interference on the behalf of my injured countrymen. May this and the next year bear record of deeds worthy of yourselves! May you then complete the glorious work you have so humanely begun in this, and join with the public voice in putting an end to an oppression that now so loudly calls for redress! The wise man saith, *Prov. xiv. 34*, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." May all the noble youths I heard speak in our favour in the Senate, be renowned for illustrious deeds, and their aspiring years crowned with glory! May the all bountiful Creator, the God whose eyes are ever upon all his creatures, who ever rewards all virtuous acts, and regards the prayers of the oppressed, make you that return, which I and my unfortunate countrymen are not able to express, and shower on you every happiness this world can afford, and every fulness of which Divine Revelation has promised us in the next! Believe me, Gentlemen, while I attended your debate on the Bill for the relief of my countrymen, now depending before you, my heart burned within me, and glowed with gratitude to those who supported the cause of humanity. I could have wished for an opportunity of recounting to you not only my own sufferings, which, though numerous, have been nearly forgotten, but those of which I have been a witness for many years, that they might have influenced your decision; but I thank God, your humanity anticipated my wishes, and rendered such recital unnecessary. Our cries have at length reached your ears, and I trust you are already in some measure convinced that the Slave Trade is as impolitic as inhuman, and as such must ever be unwise. The more extended our misery is, the greater claim it has to your compassion, and the greater the pleasure you must feel in administer-