



Welcome

to **OUR 68th VIRTUAL GSP class!**

Today we
talk about

William Wilberforce



**WHAT
ARE
THE
CONTRIBUTIONS
OF
WILLIAM
WILBERFORCE?**



Presented by Charles E. Dickson, Ph.D.



**COLLECT FOR WILLIAM
WILBERFORCE,
SOCIAL REFORMER**

30 July

Let thy continual mercy,
Ⓞ Lord,
enkindle in thy Church the never-failing gift of love;
that,
following the example of thy servant William Wilberforce,
we may have grace to defend the poor,
and maintain the cause of those who have no helper;
for the sake of him who gave his life for us,
thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost,
one God,
now and for ever. Amen.



The young William **WILBERFORCE**

WHO WAS WILLIAM WILBERFORCE?

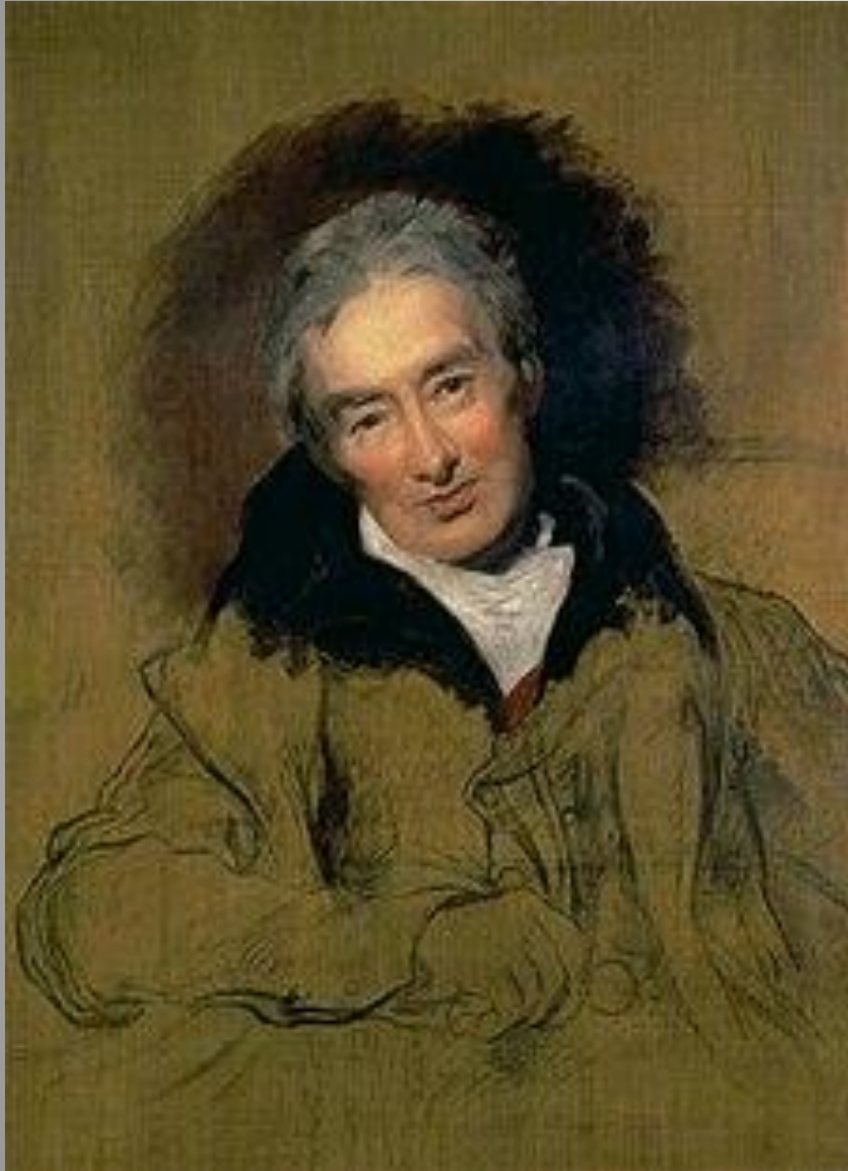


William **WILBERFORCE**,
1793,
by Karl Anton Hickel

William WILBERFORCE (1759-1833) was a British politician, philanthropist, orator, and Evangelical layman. He is best known as a leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade.

Evangelical Anglicans in the 18th century stressed Anglicanism's Reformed, Protestant nature, the supremacy of Scripture, the majesty of Jesus Christ, the lordship of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of either instantaneous or gradual conversion, new birth, and the importance of fellowship. They emphasized evangelism, social welfare, and missions. They give a "low" place to the episcopal form of church government, the sacraments, and liturgical worship.

WHO WAS WILLIAM WILBERFORCE?



WILBERFORCE was said to be “the wittiest man in England, and the most religious” (Madame de Stael), and one who possessed “the greatest natural eloquence of all the men I ever met” (William Pitt). When he spoke, another quipped, “The shrimp became a whale” (James Boswell).

Historian G. M. Trevelyan called this “shrimp” the primary human agent for “one of the turning events in the history of the world.”

Unfinished portrait of William **WILBERFORCE**,
1828, by Sir Thomas Lawrence

WHAT WERE WILBERFORCE'S EARLY YEARS LIKE?

WILBERFORCE was born in 1759 in the maritime city of Hull, East Yorkshire. The wealthy Wilberforce family were successful merchants, who traded in imported goods, like wood and cloth, from northern Europe and the Baltic states.



Wilberforce House,
Hull

WHAT WERE WILBERFORCE'S EARLY YEARS LIKE?

When **WILBERFORCE** was eight years old, his father died. William's mother then became ill, and so she sent him to live with his childless aunt and uncle, **Hannah and William Wilberforce**, in London for two years. Hannah and William were Evangelical Methodists (still part of the Church of England until 1795) and they took William to church regularly, where he listened to Bible stories and sermons by prominent figures in the Methodist movement. He heard George Whitefield (1714-70), a close friend of his aunt and uncle, preach.



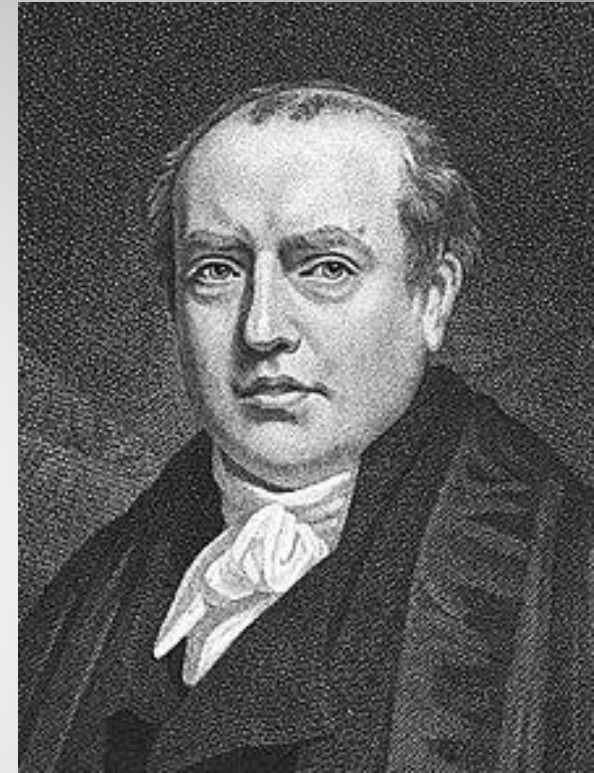
Hannah and William Wilberforce,
c.1750,
by Joseph Highmore

WHAT INFLUENCED THE YOUNG WILBERFORCE?

WILBERFORCE's mother, worried about his exposure to such a strong religious influence, brought him home to Hull, but he continued to exchange letters secretly with his aunt and uncle, who had become surrogate parents to him.

Another of **WILBERFORCE's** major religious influences was the mathematician and inventor, **Isaac Milner** (1750-1820), who never parted from the Anglican fold but came to embrace the central Evangelical doctrines of the late 18th century. He was a young teacher when **WILBERFORCE** attended Hull's grammar school.

In 1784 they traveled together and conversed for hours across many topics, especially religion, on their continental journey. Milner encouraged him to read Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745).



WHAT INFLUENCED THE YOUNG WILBERFORCE?



Stained-glass image of John Newton at St. Peter and Paul Church in Olney, Buckinghamshire, where Newton served as parish priest.

Another influence on **WILBERFORCE** was **John Newton** (1725-1807), his Aunt Hannah's half-brother, an English Evangelical Anglican cleric and slavery abolitionist, who had previously been a captain of slave ships and an investor in the slave trade. He was the author of the hymns "Amazing Grace" and "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken." Newton was one of the wealthiest men in Europe and a great humanitarian and philanthropist, and gave many gifts to Evangelical churches. He encouraged **WILBERFORCE** to stay in Parliament and "serve God where he was."

WHAT INFLUENCED THE YOUNG WILBERFORCE?



Portrait of William Pitt the Younger,
c.1804-06,
by John Hoppner

In 1776 at the age of 17 **WILBERFORCE** went to Cambridge University, where he met **William Pitt the Younger** (1759-1806), who became a lifelong friend and political ally. He and Pitt both were graduated from Cambridge in 1779. Pitt tried for Parliament in 1780 and made it there in 1781.

WILBERFORCE became a Member of Parliament for Hull in 1780 on his first try, at the age of 21. Four years later he became an MP for the whole of Yorkshire. He was to remain an MP for various constituencies for 45 years.

HOW INFLUENTIAL WAS WILBERFORCE?

Two of **WILBERFORCE**'s most appealing qualities were his engaging personality and his eloquent speaking voice, useful traits for a politician. He was a popular figure and was known to be charming and witty and a great public speaker. He was so famous for his public speaking that he was nicknamed the “Nightingale of the Commons.”



The House of Commons,
1793-94,
by Karl Anton Hickel

WHAT WAS THE CLAPHAM SECT?

WILBERFORCE left Hull in 1792 and moved to Clapham, London to be closer to his work in Westminster. Within the local community he found friends who shared his interests in religion and politics. This group of Evangelical Anglicans became known as the **Clapham Sect**, and they actively supported the anti-slavery abolitionists. The name came from Clapham Parish Church, Holy Trinity, on the outskirts of London, where many of them worshiped.

Some of the group, including **WILBERFORCE**, were responsible for the founding in 1787 of **Sierra Leone** in West Africa as a settlement for some of the Black loyalists freed by the British during the American Revolutionary War as well as some poor Blacks in England.

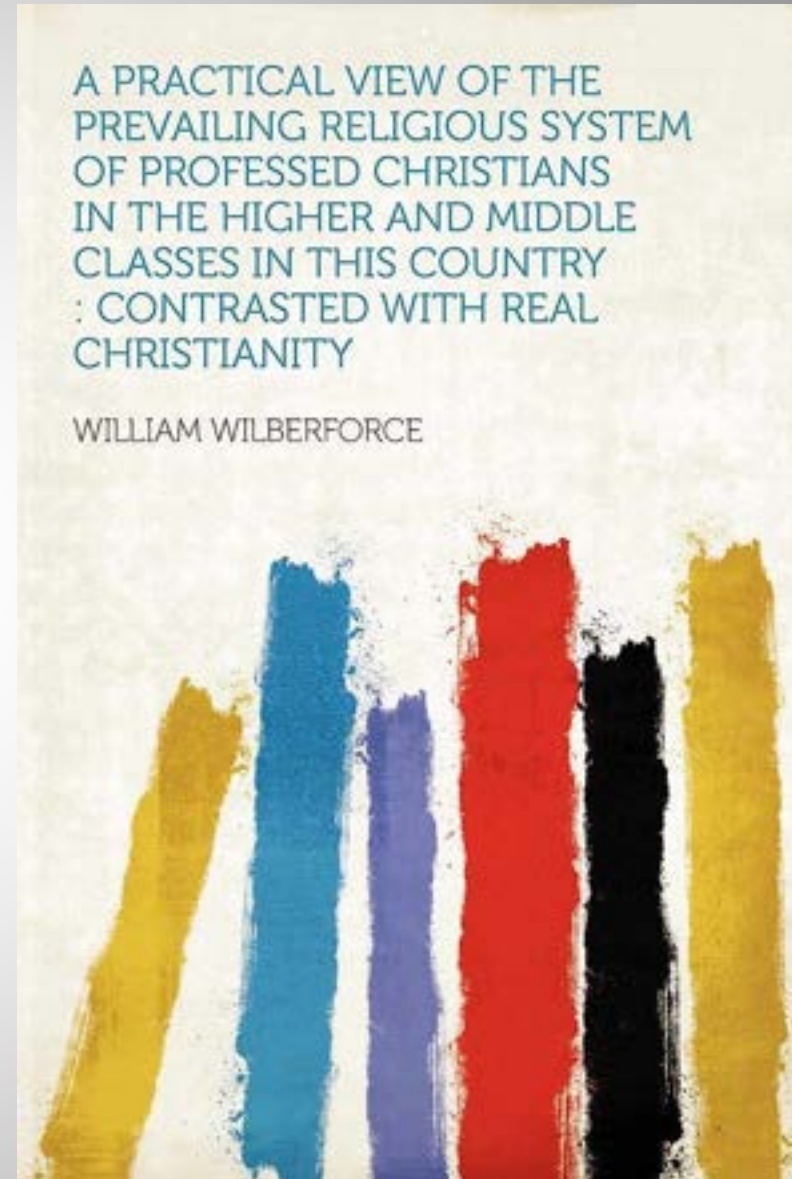


Location
of Sierra Leone
(dark green)

HOW STRONG WERE WILBERFORCE'S CHRISTIAN BELIEFS?

In 1797 **WILBERFORCE** published his major reform volume, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in the Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity*. The chief point of his book, whose short title was *Real Christianity*, was to distinguish between two types of Christians, the nominal or lukewarm and the real or vital. The vital Christian knows that conversion and the transformation of life are at the heart of Christianity.

WILBERFORCE regularly heard this distinction made in the sermons of his pastor and colleague, John Venn, rector of the Clapham Church and Chaplain of the Clapham Sect.



HOW DID WILBERFORCE WORK AGAINST SLAVERY?



It was in the House of Commons that **WILBERFORCE** worked against slavery and the slave trade. He became active in the abolition effort as early as 1787 through his association with the Quaker-founded **Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade** founded in that year.

The society did not aim at ending slavery altogether, but only to abolish British involvement in the international slave trade. They would do this by awareness-raising campaigns highlighting the cruel practices involved in the trade.

William **WILBERFORCE**, c. 1794, by Karl Anton Hickel

HOW DID WILBERFORCE WORK AGAINST SLAVERY?



WILBERFORCE's first political success occurred in 1788, when legislation was passed that reduced the number of slaves carried aboard a slave vessel. Because of overcrowding, the mortality rate in slave vessels was quite high.

WILBERFORCE introduced the first Bill to abolish the slave trade in 1791, which was defeated by 163 votes to 88. He concluded:

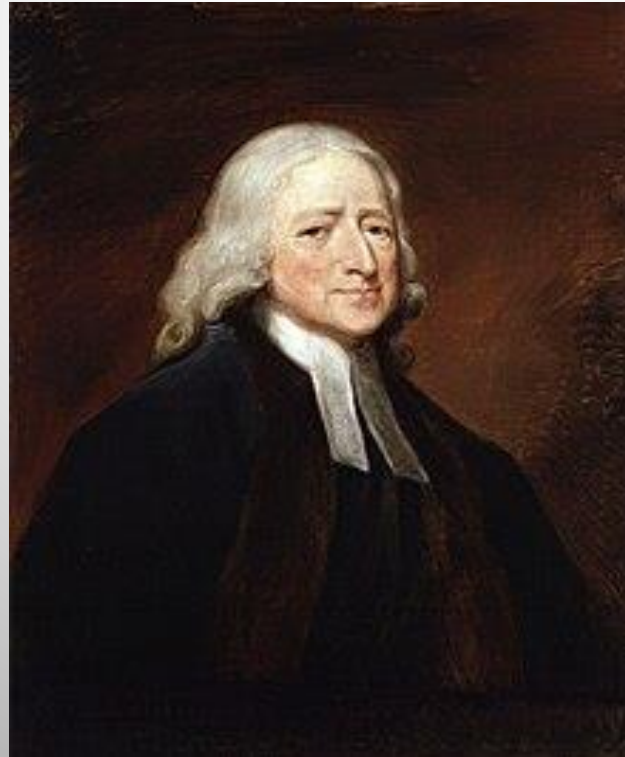
Having heard all of this you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say you did not know.

William **WILBERFORCE** at the age of 30, 1790, by John Rising

HOW DID WESLEY SUPPORT WILBERFORCE'S CAMPAIGN?

The last letter of John Wesley (1703-91), written from the Methodist leader's deathbed in 1791, was to **WILBERFORCE**, encouraging the young member of parliament in his abolition campaign:

. . . if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing. Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.



John Wesley,
1789,
by George Romney

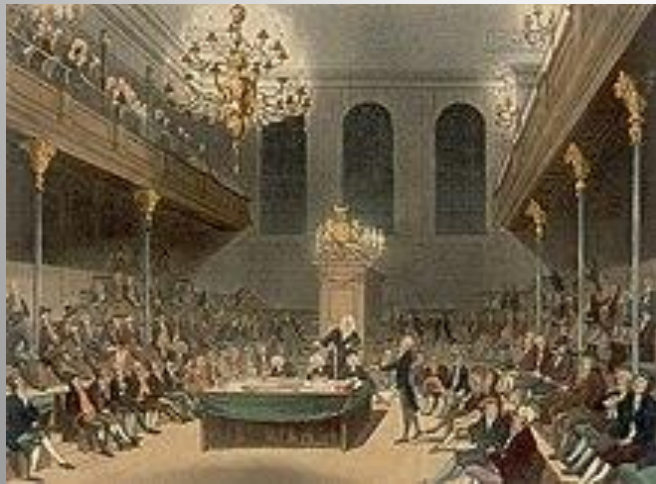


Medallion created for the anti-slavery campaign,
1787,
by Josiah Wedgwood

HOW DID WILBERFORCE WORK AGAINST SLAVERY?

The Abolition Society's raised awareness of the barbaric practices involved in the transatlantic slave trade.

WILBERFORCE was so well informed on the subject of slavery that he was able to give a three-hour Abolition Bill speech to members of the House of Commons in 1789. **WILBERFORCE** used his speech to paint a word picture of the horrors of the slave trade and in particular of the Middle Passage. He made sure not to attack directly his political opponents who were in favor of keeping the slave trade, but appealed to their consciences instead.



The House of Commons in **WILBERFORCE** 's day,
1808–1811,
by Augustus Pugin and Thomas Rowlandson

HOW DID WILBERFORCE WORK AGAINST SLAVERY?

WILBERFORCE attempted several times to bring private members' bills before Parliament to end Britain's involvement in the slave trade, but the **Slavery Abolition Bill** was defeated many times. It was finally passed on 25 March 1807 after the solicitor-general concluded the floor speeches with his own closing words:

When [Wilberforce] retires to the bosom of his happy and delighted family, when he lays himself down on his bed, reflecting on the innumerable voices that will be raised in every quarter of the world to bless him, how much more pure and perfect felicity must he enjoy, in the consciousness of having preserved so many millions of his fellow-creatures.

Members of the House rose to their feet and gave three cheers, and **WILBERFORCE's** name rang through the legendary halls. The night culminated in a 283-16 vote in favor of abolition.

The bill made it illegal for British ships to transport slaves and for British colonies to import them. However, it did not ban slavery itself.

WILBERFORCE retired from politics in 1825 due to ill health, but he continued to campaign for the abolition of slavery.

WHAT WERE SOME OF WILBERFORCE'S OTHER CAUSES?

WILBERFORCE's aim was to make the idea of humanitarianism popular. He campaigned for a number of causes, such as the limiting of the hours children should work. Like his contemporary, Quaker campaigner Elizabeth Fry, he fought for prison reforms, and he was also passionate about policing, education, healthcare, and issues caused by gambling. He appealed for amendments to the Poor Law (to improve the conditions for the poor) and in 1796 became a founding member of the **Society for the Bettering Condition and Increasing Comforts of the Poor**. This organization worked to reform Parish Relief and Workhouses for the poor and improve their general living conditions and helped create the **Royal Institution**, an organization for scientific education and research.

He was also instrumental in forming the **Proclamation Society** which was dedicated to promoting virtue in public life and suppressing the publication of obscenity.

He was also one of the founders of the **Royal Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)**.

WHAT WERE SOME OF WILBERFORCE'S OTHER CAUSES?

At one point, **WILBERFORCE** was backing 69 different philanthropic causes benefiting low-income families, orphans, and juveniles.

He also assisted in starting parachurch organizations such the **Society for Missions to Africa and the East**, which became the **Church Missionary Society** (now the **Church Mission Society**) and the the British and Foreign **Bible Society**.

Although he had never been there, **WILBERFORCE** was passionate about reaching India with the gospel.

He is most known for his work advocating the abolition of the slave trade. He recounted how the gospel and the doctrine of the *imago Dei* had impressed his conscience.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE END OF WILBERFORCE'S LIFE?

On 26 July 1833, as he lay on his deathbed, **WILBERFORCE** was told that Parliament had just passed the **Slavery Abolition Bill**, granting freedom to all enslaved people within the British Empire. The bill emancipated slaves in all British colonies and appropriated nearly \$100 million in today's money to compensate slave owners for their losses.

WILBERFORCE died three days later.

As a mark of respect for his achievements, Parliament resolved that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey. His grave is next to William Pitt in the north transept and in 1840 his statue, by Samuel Joseph, was set up nearby in the north choir aisle.



HOW IS WILBERFORCE HONORED?

A portion of the inscription on **WILBERFORCE's** statue in the Abbey speaks of his

ABIDING ELOQUENCE OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE. EMINENT AS HE WAS IN EVERY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LABOUR, AND A LEADER IN EVERY WORK OF CHARITY, WHETHER TO RELIEVE THE TEMPORAL OR THE SPIRITUAL WANTS OF HIS FELLOW-MEN, HIS NAME WILL EVER BE SPECIALLY IDENTIFIED WITH THOSE EXERTIONS WHICH, BY THE BLESSING OF GOD, REMOVED FROM ENGLAND THE GUILT OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE, AND PREPARED THE WAY FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN EVERY COLONY OF THE EMPIRE: IN THE PROSECUTION OF THESE OBJECTS HE RELIED, NOT IN VAIN, ON GOD. . . .

His life and work are commemorated in the Episcopal calendar of the church year on 30 July, the day of his death.



WILLIAM WILBERFORCE QUOTES

“Let it not be said that I was silent when they needed me.”

“We are too young to realize that certain things are impossible....So we will do them anyway.”

“Africa, your sufferings have been the theme that has arrested & engaged my heart.”

“No matter how loud you shout, you will not drown out the voice of the people!”

“The shortening of devotions starves the soul, it grows lean and faint.”

“Lovely flowers are the smiles of God’s goodness.”

“Life as we know it, with all its ups and downs, will soon be over. We all will give an accounting to God of how we have lived.”

“Can one serve God and one’s nation in parliament?”

“It is the distinguishing glory of Christianity not to rest satisfied with superficial appearances, but to rectify the motives, and purify the heart.”

“Bountiful as is the hand of Providence, its gifts are not so bestowed as to seduce us into indolence, but to rouse us to exertion.”



**“A PRIVATE FAITH THAT
DOES NOT ACT IN THE
FACE OF OPPRESSION
IS NO FAITH AT ALL.”**

William Wilberforce

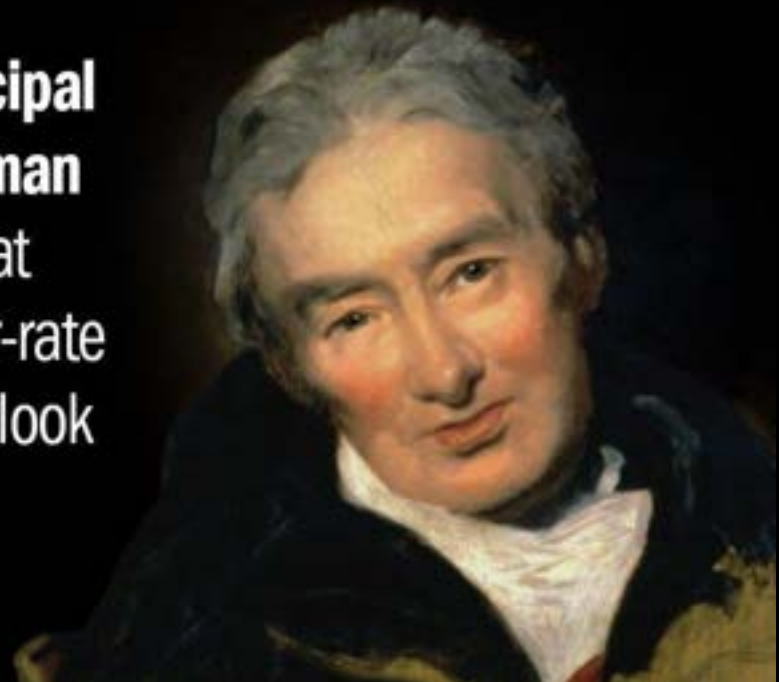


It is the true duty of every man to **promote the happiness of his fellow** creatures to the utmost of his power.

— *William Wilberforce*

Selfishness is one of the principal fruits of the corruption of human nature; and it is obvious that selfishness disposes us to over-rate our good qualities, and to overlook or extenuate our defects.

— *William Wilberforce*



William WILBERFORCE
Holding the Slave Trade
Abolition Bill



The End