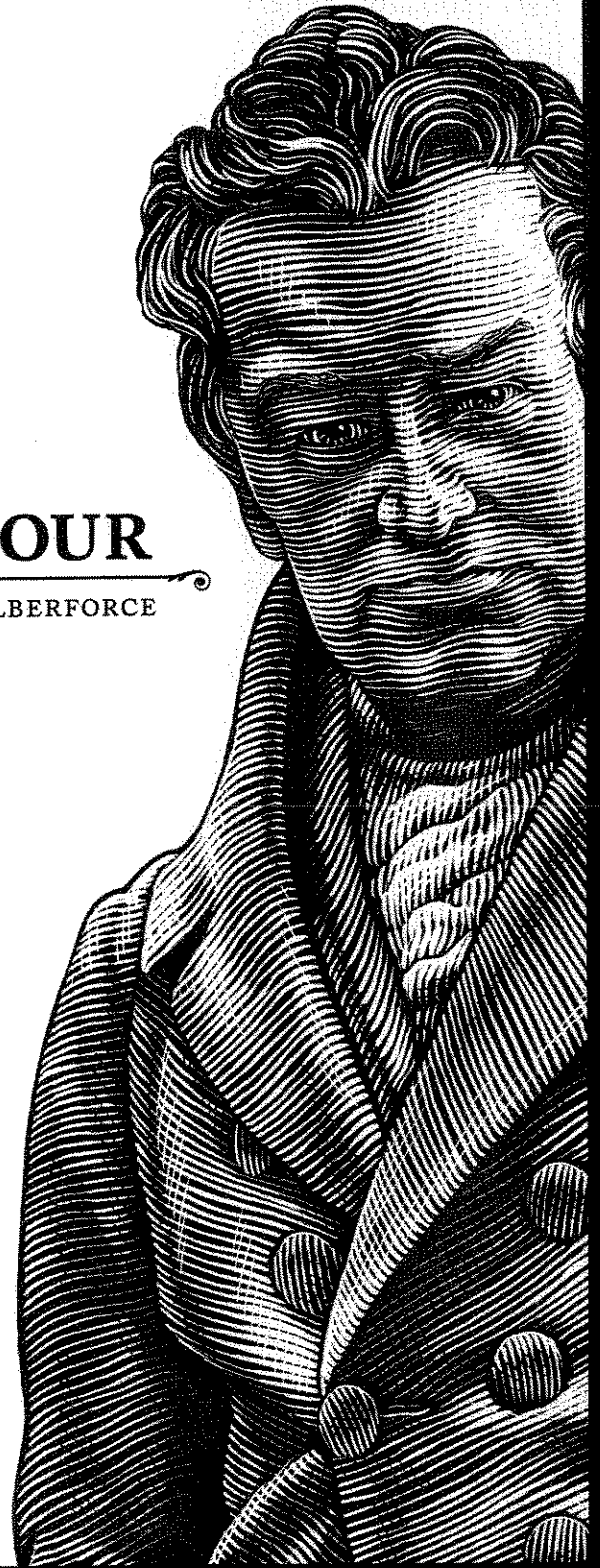


Foreword by
Rick Warren

CREATING THE
BETTER HOUR

LESSONS FROM WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

Edited by
Chuck Stetson



CREATING THE
BETTER HOUR
LESSONS FROM WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

Edited by Chuck Stetson

SH STROUD & HALL
PUBLISHERS

Foreword vii

Preface ix

Introduction: Your Biblical Faith in Action xv

PART I

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE & THE CLAPHAM CIRCLE CREATED THE BETTER HOUR

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. William Wilberforce
<i>John Pollock</i> | 3 |
| 2. Wilberforce & the Clapham Circle
<i>Clifford Hill</i> | 19 |
| 3. A Man of Character
<i>Kevin Belmonte & Chuck Stetson</i> | 35 |
| 4. The Zeal of Hannah More
<i>Anne Stott</i> | 59 |
| 5. Wilberforce's Principles
<i>J. Douglas Holladay</i> | 75 |
| 6. The Birth of Issue Campaigning
<i>Chuck Stetson</i> | 87 |

PART II

COMPLETING THE LEGACY OF WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 7. The Unfinished Business of Abolition
<i>Beth Herzfeld</i> | 105 |
| 8. Globalization: Incubator of a New Slavery
<i>Os Guinness</i> | 117 |

9. India: Peril & Promise <i>Vishal Mangalwadi</i>	135
10. Slavery in the Sudan <i>Elizabeth Ashamu</i>	153
11. Slavery of the Mind <i>Nina Shea & R. James Woolsey</i>	165

PART III

WILBERFORCE AS A MODEL FOR EFFECTING CHANGE

12. The Reformation of Manners <i>Don Eberly</i>	181
13. Making Goodness Fashionable <i>Mark Rodgers & Bill Wichterman</i>	201
14. Eleanor Roosevelt & Human Rights <i>Mary Ann Glendon</i>	223
15. Fighting Slavery in Africa <i>Baroness Caroline Cox</i>	239
16. Fighting Persecution & Human Trafficking <i>Michael Horowitz</i>	257
17. Positive Engagement with Islam <i>David Blankenhorn & Alex Roberts</i>	271
18. Serving the Least, the Lost, & the Last <i>Chuck Colson</i>	285
19. Creating a Healthier Society <i>Joseph A. Califano, Jr.</i>	299
20. In Memoriam <i>Benjamin F. Hughes</i>	311

PART IV

A COMMITMENT TO ACTION ON BEHALF OF OTHERS	327
<i>Endnotes</i>	337
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	350

Making Goodness Fashionable

By Mark Rodgers & Bill Wichterman

Mark Rodgers and Bill Wichterman have each worked as congressional staff and as policy advisors to the U.S. Congress for nearly twenty years. Bill Wichterman has recently joined a law firm. Both men have a great admiration for William Wilberforce and his leadership as a statesman, particularly in leading the changes in society that were necessary for changes in legislation.

⌚ Much has been made of William Wilberforce's effort to abolish the slave trade, what he referred to as one of his Great Objects. His work to abolish the slave trade and ultimately slavery transformed Western Civilization, and rightly has been recorded as one of the great crusades of modern times. But his lesser-known second Great Object, the reformation of manners (or, in modern language, the reformation of morals) was inextricably linked to his first, and in many ways made possible the demise of slavery. For a nation to countenance the destruction of an entire industry that served to enrich the Empire meant that money and selfish ends must be subjugated to the common good—a common good that transcends place and time.

The Culture: Upstream from Politics

As men who have each spent almost twenty years working as policy advisors in the U.S. Congress, we are committed to making just laws. We are passionate about the process and the aims of politics. We are deeply involved in the day-to-day business of

lawmaking, and we each feel a strong calling to the political realm as a means of improving our nation. Yet we recognize that politics is not sufficient to bring about justice and promote liberty. We write this not because we are discouraged with the political process. To the contrary, we believe that national politics is portrayed in the media far too negatively. In our experience, most people in policy-making, on the Left and the Right, are chiefly motivated by a desire for just and compassionate policies.

Still, many important “Great Objects” cannot be pursued through political and policy activity alone. Indeed, many of our policy objectives will only be achieved by a prior or concurrent change in the cultural norms that shape the political realm. Legislation is never created in a vacuum, but in a “cultural context” in which people’s beliefs and worldviews have largely already been shaped at a foundational level. Surveys consistently show that opinions are molded by one’s family, religion, education, and by the news media. But more dominant now than ever, especially for those growing up in the “infotainment age,” is the role of entertainment. The culture-creating sector that manufactures fine art, fashion, movies, television shows, console games, graphic novels, extreme sports, streaming video shorts, and pop music is not just consequential to our post-Baby Boomer generations, but as our most influential export to the world at large.

In short, the culture, both broadly and narrowly defined, is upstream from politics. Politics is more about reflecting the beliefs forged in other, more powerful “gate keeping” institutions. Though we may trace our history by political events—Jacksonian Democracy, Jim Crow laws, the New Deal, the Great Society, the Civil Rights Movement, *Roe v. Wade*, etc.—it was the culture of the time that made each development possible, for good or for ill.

Wilberforce’s two Great Objects reflected this understanding. As a Member of Parliament, he sought to change the laws of the nation. But he leveraged his work in the political sphere by seeking to renew the culture of his times, to shape hearts and minds through other institutions, both as a means to an end and an end in itself. The success of his efforts is a model for us as we seek to fashion just laws and renew American culture. Examining how Wilberforce changed England will help guide today’s reformers in their efforts to create a better society.

Wilberforce's Focus on Society

At twenty-eight years old, Wilberforce wrote in his diary on October 28, 1787, "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners." True to his intent, Wilberforce would spend the next forty-six years working to accomplish these lofty goals. To the surprise of many, he would achieve both.

Looking back from our age plagued by child pornography, gambling addictions, and Enron scandals, we might wonder what morals Wilberforce thought needed to be reformed. After all, wasn't eighteenth-century England a tame and cultured time?

Actually, no! Wilberforce had witnessed first-hand the degradations of the age, which included drunkenness among Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, frequent duels, debauched lifestyles among the rich and famous, a corrupt clergy, and bribery among elected officials. Fatherless families, alcoholism, and the grinding effects of the nascent industrialization that was swelling urban centers afflicted the lower classes. The social injustices were grave, with workers, especially children, exploited and abused.

Wilberforce's driving concern in his campaign to reform England's manners was to improve the welfare of the entire society, especially the poor and the powerless. He was distressed at the cavalier imposition of the death penalty and the effects of crime on the lower classes. "The barbarous mode of hanging has been tried too long and with the success which might have been expected from it: the most effectual way of preventing the greater crimes is punishing the smaller, and endeavoring to repress that general spirit of licentiousness which is the parent of every species of vice." (1) Mayor Rudy Giuliani transformed New York City by enforcing laws against petty crimes, such as public urination, graffiti artists, and subway gate-hoppers, which in turn caused the serious crime rate to plummet. This is a modern-day attempt at what Wilberforce accomplished two hundred years earlier.

In a letter dated September 27, 1787, Wilberforce found that "there is always a great deal of religious hypocrisy: we have now an hypocrisy of an opposite sort, and I believe many affect to be worse than in principle they really are, out of deference to the

licentious moral [sic] of the fashionable world.” He was disturbed by the moral slide from which he had only recently emerged himself, and he set out to change the moral climate of the time. And yet, “the profligacy and moral decay . . . when Wilberforce first entered public life gave way to the moral integrity and concern for the welfare of others that was the hallmark of the Victorian era” shortly after his death. Wilberforce truly made goodness fashionable in the course of his life.

The question was how? How did an obscure politician get traction to turn around an entire culture? Wilberforce had a plan that he executed for decades to come.

How the Clapham Circle Helped

Although William Wilberforce was an extraordinary man, he did not achieve his objectives alone, but in community. Wilberforce understood that humans are made to live in fellowship with one another, not as isolated individuals. He personally relied on his own tight-knit circle of family, friends, and neighbors to help him achieve his dreams and strive to accomplish the two Great Objects. He also depended on communities to implement the reformation of manners throughout England.

Wilberforce lived in the rural village of Clapham, just outside London, with his cousin Henry Thornton and several other close friends who also served in Parliament. Thornton and Wilberforce started this intentional community of like-minded men and women to help strengthen their respective callings. They became known as the Clapham Circle. Wilberforce relied on these friendships as a brain trust, an operational nerve center, an in-house think tank, and a personal support to help him through the rough and tumble of public life, including the sometimes-fierce criticism he received from his political opponents. When several of his colleagues in the House of Commons committed suicide, he challenged others to rely on a circle of friends to help them avoid a similar fate.

One key member of this community was poet and author Hannah More, one of the most successful writers, and perhaps the most influential woman, of her day. She entered the social and cultural scene in the 1770s by writing for and engaging with the theater. Through a gradual conversion, she became aligned with Evangelicalism, and wrote poetry and essays targeting the

upper class on matters of manners and religion. However, she also weighed in on the great debates of the day, including slavery and the French Revolution. She published *VILLAGE POLITICS* in 1793 to counter the arguments of *RIGHTS OF MAN* by Thomas Paine. She wrote a series in *THE CHEAP REPOSITORY TRACTS* to promote the plight of the working lower class, who were virtually enslaved by their economic conditions. Her work was so consequential that when the Cheap Repository was closed, the Religious Tract Society was founded to continue her work.

One of her early social commentaries was published anonymously in 1788 as *THOUGHTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MANNERS OF THE GREAT TO THE GENERAL SOCIETY*. Many believed the author to be William Wilberforce himself. The book was phenomenally popular: the second edition sold out in six days, the third in four hours, and an eighth edition appeared in 1790. In admonishing the upper classes, More made clear her belief in a hierarchical and deferential society. She argued that a reformation of manners could be achieved only if the leaders of society reformed themselves. This belief was shared by Wilberforce and the Clapham community, and would influence their tactical engagements and priority of projects.

This community of like-minded conviction and faith was central to the pursuit and accomplishment of Wilberforce's two Great Objects. But it is important to note that dozens of initiatives were born out of the fellowship, from efforts to reform the Church and promote the Christian faith to efforts to protect animal welfare. It has been said that more than sixty different initiatives, projects, and societies were operating simultaneously out of the Clapham circle.

First Steps: The Proclamation of Manners

In 1769, King George III issued the "Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue and for the Preventing of Vice, Profaneness and Immorality." It was routine for new monarchs to issue such proclamations, but they were usually ignored. The Proclamation is strict by today's standards. It forbade playing cards or dice on Sundays, drunkenness, blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, lewdness, pornography, and required church attendance.

Wilberforce, More, and their colleagues saw potential in the Proclamation, and successfully petitioned the King to reissue it on June 1, 1787, eighteen years after his ascension to the throne. They used the re-issuance of the Proclamation as a springboard to launch a campaign to make a kinder and gentler society. King William and Queen Mary's moral proclamation almost a century earlier had been successful, thanks to the formation of local societies to encourage recognition of the Proclamation. Wilberforce and his community sought to repeat history by creating nationwide voluntary associations of "Great" men and women to ensure that the Proclamation was not ignored. These so-called Proclamation Societies were comprised of community leaders, most of whom were morally upright, though some were notoriously dissolute—much like enlisting today's celebrities, such as Madonna or Kid Rock.

The Proclamation Society movement also reflected Wilberforce's understanding that people learn what to love and what to hate in communities of like-minded people. The myriad meetings that took place surrounding implementation of the Proclamation were designed to develop positive peer pressures to adhere to moral standards. Inherent in the notion of "making goodness fashionable" is the belief that people pay attention to what others think. If some people followed the new and more upright norms of behavior solely out of concern for what their friends thought of them, that was for Wilberforce one step on the road to real virtue. Although he didn't want just superficial compliance with the Proclamation, he did recognize that norms and mores could lead to the embrace of the underlying virtue motivating the norm. Where the adherence was superficial, a sort of "positive hypocrisy" might develop so that at least others might be less tempted into wrong behavior by degraded mores.

Today's counterparts to the Proclamation Society are small groups. Some studies estimate that as many as 40 percent of Americans are involved in small groups, from scout troops to Bible studies. While these groups are formed around many diverse aims, they are an essential part of the glue of a healthy society. They knit us together as a nation.

The Role of “The Great”

Wilberforce and More understood the role and the power of the elite in shaping society, and consciously integrated this appreciation into their efforts. Their aim was to make goodness fashionable or “cool.” By enlisting the elites, they ensured that their movement would have the support of the Establishment.

[M]en of authority and influence may promote the cause of good morals. Let them in their several stations encourage virtue and [discourage] vice in others. Let them enforce the laws by which the wisdom of our forefathers has guarded against the grosser infractions of morals. Let them favor and take part in any plans which may be formed for the advancement of morality. (2)

Wilberforce was not interested in simply putting a veneer of goodness over corruption and licentiousness. He was no fan of hypocrisy. Instead he aimed to reduce the allure of debased morals by lifting up the good, the true, and the beautiful as a model to be venerated. His aim was to restore genuine virtue and refinement at the core, not just on the surface.

The core for Wilberforce was the soul. His conversion to Christianity was central to his life and what he believed necessary for the renewal of the culture. In 1797, he wrote a book entitled *A PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE PREVAILING RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF PROFESSED CHRISTIANS, IN THE HIGHER AND MIDDLE CLASSES IN THE COUNTRY, CONTRASTED WITH REAL CHRISTIANITY*. He was passionate about reinvigorating what he believed was a calcified Anglican Church that was more cultural than it was authentically spiritual. It would be difficult to underplay the pervasive influence of his faith on everything that Wilberforce did. Though he was a man comfortable among the non-religious—friends like Jeremy Bentham—his devotion to God permeated every aspect of his life, from his daily Bible study and prayers to his scrupulous attention to his personal habits. His faith was well known and an object of admiration and sometimes derision. Towards the end of his life, it became fashionable in the upper classes to have lengthy family prayers as was patterned by the Wilberforce family.

Wilberforce and company believed that voluntary associations were more effective at encouraging adherence to the Proclamation than law enforcement, but they were not grassroots populists, *per se*. The societies held numerous meetings all over the country on the implementation of the Proclamation. These included parish officers, constables, and churchwardens. And this was not without practical impact. For example, licenses were no longer renewed for businesses that promoted immorality. But it was more by positive example than by threats of retribution that the Proclamation began to be more widely observed in daily life. Just as smoking has declined in recent years—less by the passage of anti-smoking laws for public places and more by the powerful ad campaigns and the example of famous athletes and Hollywood stars—so Wilberforce managed to strategically use the levers of power to persuade people to project goodness and morality. He recognized the power of law to change behavior was not as great as the power of fashion and culture, and the elite who define it.

There were some critics of Wilberforce's campaign, including those who said that the poor were targets of the campaign. This was never Wilberforce's intent. He believed that effective moral renewal required renewal within the upper strata of society. In fact, he made great in-roads with the elite, including Princess Victoria through her tutor, an Evangelical clergyman. He also captured the imagination of the young social elite, so much so that he had to encourage them not to be self-righteous or "preachy" with their parents. In later years, it would actually be considered old-fashioned in the upper classes to curse.

In her book *THOUGHTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MANNERS OF THE GREAT TO GENERAL SOCIETY*, Hannah More made the direct connection between the positive and negative "pattern" set by society's elite:

Reformation must begin with the Great, or it will never be effectual. Their example is the fountain whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters. To expect to reform the poor while the opulent are corrupt is to throw odors into the stream while the springs are poisoned. . . . If, therefore, the rich and great will not, from a liberal spirit of doing right, and from a Christian spirit of fearing God, abstain from those offenses, for which the poor are to suffer fines and imprisonments, effectual good cannot be done. (3)

The effects of the moral reforms would be far-reaching and enduring. By strategically recruiting powerful cultural, political, and religious leaders in his campaign and by extending its reach to the grassroots, England would eventually become known as a society of gentility, refinement, and moral uprightness—all of the things it was not during Wilberforce's youth.

The Importance of a Moral Society

Wilberforce's second Great Object, the reformation of manners, reflected the truth that law alone is not sufficient to bring about a more just society. There must also be just people to enact, implement, and obey just laws. Laws are not self-enforcing, and robust law enforcement is not sufficient to ensure compliance. Creating a just society is only partially a function of law, and much more a product of other institutions—family, religion, education, entertainment, journalism, civic associations, etc.—institutions that help us to shape what we love and what we hate.

It is unlikely that Wilberforce would have been successful in abolishing slavery without a corresponding, or perhaps even antecedent, renewal of the moral foundation for British society. The interdependence of the two Great Objects seems more than coincidental. Instead, it reflects the reality that the passage of just laws requires a virtuous citizenry. In Wilberforce's words,

It is a truth attested by the history of all ages and countries . . . that the religion and morality of a country, especially of every free community, are inseparably connected with its preservation and welfare; that their flourishing or declining state is the sure indication of its tending to prosperity or decay. It has even been expressly laid down, that a people grossly corrupt are incapable of liberty.

The abolition of slavery with all of the economic sacrifice that it required would only be possible if people were motivated by something better than crass self-interest. Ensuring that the British people would be prepared to accept the abolition of the slave trade meant that the morals of the nation must be the soil in which the laws would take root. Remaking those mores was Wilberforce's second Great Object, but not necessarily second in importance.

We are not suggesting that politics is just a reflection of culture. Law is a teacher, and the passage of just laws has an effect on people's behavior. Legal sanctions help to inform and guide the conscience of a nation. Everything from abortion laws to tax policy play a role in shaping culture. Our personal political involvement for decades underscores this conviction. Voter guides, congressional hearings, petition drives, debates, and political campaigns are integral to a healthy republic.

But, as Wilberforce teaches us, law and politics only go so far. No matter how large a political party's majority in Congress, there are certain legislative goals that remain elusive absent cultural change. King George's initial Proclamation issued in 1769 was widely ignored. But when it was issued a second time in 1787, it was taken more seriously thanks to the Proclamation Society making its adherence compelling. The Society breathed life into the Proclamation by giving it what sociologists call "plausibility structures"—systems that make rational the passage, implementation, and compliance with law. Just look at all of the old and widely ignored laws throughout the United States, such as gum chewing, that no longer make sense to a new generation. Compliance with a particular law presupposes a certain kind of civilization. Once that civilization morphs into something new, old laws fall into disuse. In short, cultural mores dictate which laws pass and are obeyed, and which laws are defeated or ignored.

The tendency for many people is to overstate the importance of politics in shaping culture. As two men who have spent our careers in the halls of power, we are convinced that law and politics play a relatively minor role in forming culture when compared to religion, Hollywood, academia, media, or the family. Law, while it may appear to be at the vanguard of a society, is more like the infantry. Law stands at the front lines, but is directed from the rear by the culture. Its prominence in ongoing battles over abortion, same-sex marriage, stem cell research, and Supreme Court nominations may deceptively suggest that the battle rages there. Because our history is often a record of government, one may think that law and politics lead our society. Instead, law and politics protect a particular social order, but do not primarily lead or guide it.

Wilberforce's contemporary and fellow Member of Parliament Edmund Burke wrote, "Manners are of more importance than laws." (4) Individuals rarely change their lives based on a political speech or a government act. An individual

may be inspired to work for a political candidate who reflects what he finds most important in preserving or creating a certain kind of culture. But, more often than not, a cultural consensus precedes the enactment of laws.

Across the sea in the former British colonies, the Framers of the U.S. Constitution had concluded the same thing. John Adams, a friend of Wilberforce, had said that "our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." It is entirely possible that Adams and Wilberforce had discussed this very thing. President George Washington in his Farewell Address of 1796 said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports." (5) John Witherspoon, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, said, "Corruption of [morals] make a people ripe for destruction. A good form of government may hold the rotten materials together for some time, but beyond a certain pitch, even the best constitution will be ineffectual." (6)

It is not enough to craft a government that relies on checks and balances, the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and a strong legislative branch. The American Experiment required the right kind of people to create and sustain it. The old adage that "you get the government you deserve" was as fundamental to the American Framers as it was for Wilberforce.

The Two Great Objects as One

Wilberforce's reformation of England's decaying morals made possible the abolition of slavery. Wilberforce biographer Kevin Belmonte maintains that Wilberforce understood the connection between the first and second Great Objects, and that "the linkage was deliberate and Wilberforce believed abolition [of the slave trade] could not have taken place without a concurrent moral reformation to strengthen the consensus that the [British] slave trade was a tragic national sin." (7)

It is not clear, however, that Wilberforce understood at the outset how necessary cultural reformation was to the success of the abolition of the slave trade, and eventually slavery. As a legislator, his instinct was to win the old-fashioned way, through power and petition. But as Ernest Howse observed in his book *SAINTS IN POLITICS*:

All the workers were being gradually convinced that their only hope lay in an appeal from Parliament to the people, an appeal that would be viewed with little favor in eighteenth-century England. Wilberforce at first had been suspicious of such tactics. He approved of promoting petitions to Parliament. . . . In his first labors, however, Wilberforce "distrusted and disowned the questionable strength which might be gained by systematic agitation." He did not then favor the use either of corresponding societies or of public meetings. Be he was to be taught by his cause. He found that his hope lay only in the people; and in a short time he and his friends became the most persistent agitators in all Britain. "It is on the general impression and feelings of the nation we must rely," Wilberforce confessed early in 1792. "So let the flame be fanned. . . ." (8)

Consider the civil rights laws of the 1960s. These laws would not have passed without the prior decade of an active civil rights movement. The countless personal sacrifices of African Americans who bravely endured the retributions of water hoses, police clubs, dog bites, and church bombings—broadcasted on the nightly news to the outrage of a nation—changed the minds of enough Americans to demand the abolition of Jim Crow laws. It's true that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 continued to change hearts and minds, but their effect was predicated on a prior reformation of manners. In the end, filibustering Southern politicians were unable to stand in the way of the cultural demand for change. The law simply reflected the growing culture of racial equality.

Culture is upstream from politics. Certain legislative goals from either political party are impossible absent a change in the culture. And when a political party gets out-of-step with the prevailing cultural ethos of the nation for a sustained period of time, voters are apt to vote them out of office. It's no wonder that politicians are constantly polling their constituents on every issue under the sun: they are trying to stay in step with their electorate.

This intuitively rings true for us, after almost two decades on Capitol Hill. Legislating is not conducted in a vacuum, but in a cultural context in which people's foundational beliefs have already been shaped. The sectors that are intrinsically world-view shaping include the family, religion, academia, peer groups and associations, the news media, and entertainment. Wilberforce

and his colleagues engaged virtually every one of these sectors to “reform the manners” of their cultural context, making their legislative goal to end the slave trade eventually achievable.

Arts, Entertainment, & the Elites

Several years ago, as we surveyed our political relationships and networks, we realized that there was one sector with which we had virtually no strategic engagement: the only inherently “culture-creating” sector, arts and entertainment. This was not the case for the Clapham Circle. William Wilberforce the politician knew he needed more than bills in Parliament and a general improvement in the moral climate to change people’s hearts and minds about slavery. He and his fellow abolitionists turned to the arts to set forth the case for change. They understood that it takes more than abstract propositions or personal piety to change culture. It requires images and creative words to stir people’s souls.

Ernest Howse continued his observation regarding the effort to shape broad public opinion regarding slavery:

The flame was fanned accordingly. New experiments were attempted. Even before his time the abolitionists had adopted unusual methods of propaganda. . . . Cowper’s poem, “The Negro’s Complaint,” has been printed on expensive paper and circulated by the thousand in fashionable circles, and afterwards set to music and sung everywhere as a popular ballad. Wedgwood, the celebrated potter, had made another effective contribution to the cause. He designed a cameo showing, on a white background, a Negro kneeling in supplication, while he utters the plea to become so famous, “Am I not a man and a brother?” This cameo, copied on such articles as snuffboxes and ornamental hairpins, became the rage all over England. . . . (9)

On the eve of the first debate on slavery in 1788, Hannah More published the poem entitled “Slavery.” The abolitionists commissioned a print of a slave ship visualizing how Africans were abused. A few decades later in America, a novel called *UNCLE TOM’S CABIN* would help to ignite the abolitionist movement that would lead ultimately to the Civil War.

It is a timeless truth that art shapes belief at a deep and often subconscious level. Damon of Athens wrote, "Give me the songs of a nation, and it matters not who writes its laws." And what was true for the Greeks and for Wilberforce's time is no less true today, and perhaps more so. Arts and entertainment, especially in commercial "pop culture," have an enormous impact on what we think today. The notion that entertainment is "just fluff" or a "wasteland" betrays a profound misunderstanding of how the creative side of our brains shapes what our logical side believes.

If you are like most people, you may be hard-pressed to recall more than a few political events or speeches. In contrast, think about how many songs you know by heart, how many movies you watched, and what commercials and TV shows you remember. Far from diverting our attention, it was, and still is, stories that shape us. They teach us what to love and what to hate. They inspire us, enrage us, and help us to understand complex issues. It is no wonder that Jesus taught in parables: narratives speak to our souls in ways that abstract propositional truths cannot.

So what are the cultural artifacts today that shape hearts and minds? Podcasting, streaming music videos (even on your cell phone), comic books, novels, video games, magazines, and sitcoms—the list is endless. Perhaps more today than ever before, our society is captivated by arts and entertainment. It is not enough for academic lectures to be informative: the professor has to be "culturally relevant." Commercial ditties stick in our minds. The television is stuck in the "on" position. And our iPods are stuck in our ears.

Our media elites are our "Greats" today. And like eighteenth century European elites, in many cases they are "patterning" lives and behavior that promote vice rather than virtue. Even more disconcerting, the cultural artifacts they create do the same. A disturbing fact is that much of today's ubiquitous entertainment industry is leading to the coarsening of American society. Musicians who sing songs glorifying violent rape win Grammys. Movie directors who marry their stepchildren are lifted up as avant-garde. Films that make light of bestiality and glamorize prostitution are "edgy." Hotels make their profits by in-room pornographic videos. Many people of all political and ideological stripes worry about the corrosive effect of the entertainment industry on our society. They worry that far from being innocuous fun that exposes the hypocrisy of Victorian ethics, the entertainment is leading us to become numb to things

we should hate. Some people fear that we are reaping domestic violence, child abuse, pedophilia, as well as disregard for the weak and vulnerable.

Any effort to address the social pathologies that plague our nation must involve the “Greats” of arts and entertainment. Thankfully, many do take on ills such as global AIDS and drug abuse. Rather than just cursing the darkness, many of today’s Wedgwoods are seeking to reform the manners of our civilization by working with and through the arts. Tom Wolfe, Bono, Bill Cosby, Oprah, billionaire Phil Anschutz, and even Angelina Jolie are using their craft and position to promote the common good. They aren’t perfect, but they are cognizant that with their public profile comes public responsibility.

The Great Objects Applied

As political animals, we believe the battles over who controls the Congress, who sits on the Supreme Court, and who sits in the White House are vitally important. We think it is a shame that too many Americans do not vote. But we are clear-eyed about the limits of politics—not just what the limits should be, but what they are. Law will continue to be more of a reflection of the soul of a people than its shaper. Plato was right when he said that the government is simply the soul of a people written in large letters.

Once one understands the primacy of culture and joins in the effort to renew it according to transcendent standards, the question of one’s political label becomes less important. A healthy culture is about lifting up the good, the true, and the beautiful. These are not ideological categories. There is plenty of common ground for cultural renewal among individuals who differ on the particular role law should play. Some citizens may join in the cultural fight against social pathologies, even though they oppose legal restrictions on those pathologies. This applies to violent prime time television, pornography, divorce, and many other social maladies. This is not to say that the policy differences are inconsequential. But renewal can be furthered even without political agreement, again, because culture trumps politics.

America in 2007 is very much like England in 1807. We have elites, a culture that often promotes vice rather than virtue, and social pathologies such as high out-of-wedlock birthrates and sexually transmitted diseases that threaten the public health. We

need a reformation of manners. Let us suggest several lessons that we could apply from Wilberforce and his colleagues' successful enterprise:

1. Elites Must Be Recruited

Our entertainment elite set trends, shape behavior, and fashion beliefs. The PBS FRONTLINE show "Merchants of Cool" documented the way in which corporate America taps pop culture icons to sell their products. Just as the landed gentry and upper society were recruited to use their power and prestige as a public good, our elites must be recruited to do the same. In addition, we must encourage our best and brightest to go into the culture-shaping sectors to become the next elites, and we need to build the institutions to support them in their vocational pursuits. Non-profit groups like Act One, which mentor young aspiring filmmakers on how to write high-quality scripts that tell the truth about the world and are accessible to a wide audience, need to be encouraged and supported.

2. Earnest Dialogue Must Be Initiated

A community needs to be created that allows conversations to take place between poets and politicians regarding the great objects we face as a culture today. For example, when one catalogues the cost of the sexual revolution (out of wedlock births, sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS, abortion, and marital infidelity), there is an obvious public policy consequence. But how can the consequences of the sexual revolution be addressed without engaging arts and entertainment—the very vehicles through which the revolution was first propagated? We have been privileged to be part of a dialogue with artists in New York, Hollywood, and Nashville. Many writers, singers, and filmmakers realize that they are no less in the field of justice than those of us in policy. Policy-makers may have a larger impact on next year's election, but artists will have a huge impact on elections ten and twenty years from now. We need to be in conversation with each other.

3. Promote Virtue Rather Than Vice

When the cover of Forbes magazine announces that “Bad Ass Sells,” we know that the wrong thing is being exalted. Essayist and author Walker Percy said that bad books lie, and good books tell the truth. More and more artists are producing works to tell the truth, to restore cultural health and wholeness. Alternative rock bands like Switchfoot and P.O.D. are making Top 40 songs that speak to the consequences of the sexual revolution and no-fault divorce. Their impact may not be felt for a generation, but they cannot help but make a difference. U2 has been doing this important work for almost 30 years and is still going strong.

4. Capital Must Be Invested

Over the course of our conversations with “culture creators,” the refrain we keep hearing is “investment and distribution.” The issue is not simply creating ennobling art, but finding the means to disseminate it to the public. The Internet, technology, and grassroots marketing may address the distribution question over time, but investment will undoubtedly continue to be a challenge. It is critical that wealthy individuals do more than just donate money to worthy causes, but also choose to invest wisely in entertainment that will positively shape society. eBay founder Jeff Skoll started Participant Productions, a film development company that has as its mission not to make blockbusters but messages—movies that promote social and economic justice. “I think of this as philanthropy,” he said in WIRED magazine. “Participant is the only production company in town that has a double bottom line: social good plus financial returns. It’s too early to tell how our returns are going to look—though all signs are promising—but social good is what we’re really after.” (10)

Conclusion

The reformation of manners was not just a project for Wilberforce’s time, but for every time and every culture. His courageous and visionary life spent working to free the slaves and

renew the culture is instructive in our fresh attempts to restrain evil and exalt the good.

Politics is not enough. William Wilberforce is our patron saint in this regard. He led with both political conviction and recognition that political activity is not conducted in a cultural vacuum. An exclusive or even primary focus on law to transform society is shortsighted. It is the cultural fields, long overgrown with tares from decades of neglect, which need to be plowed and re-sown. We who care about cultural renewal must learn it is the unwritten constitution of culture that shapes the written constitution of a nation. The sooner we get this straight, the sooner our efforts will produce lasting fruit.

We cheer the rediscovery of William Wilberforce. His tireless years devoted to the reformation of manners bore rich fruit, from the abolition of slavery and a deepened concern for justice in the public square to a greater attention to personal virtue. His strategic use of law, and much more his engagement of the arts, civic associations, and the natural aristocracy of his day instruct us how to pursue today's objective of a more just and compassionate society as we, too, seek to make goodness fashionable.

"An irresistible call to action for building a better world."

—*Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe, International Director of the World Evangelical Alliance*

The spirit of William Wilberforce, who worked to stop the transatlantic slave trade 200 years ago, is alive and active in all people whose faith compels their tireless efforts to transform their culture and build a better world. *Creating the Better Hour: Lessons from William Wilberforce* is no ordinary study book. It is a call to end ongoing human oppression and slavery. The life of this great Christian parliamentarian and abolitionist is the starting point for a first-class group of contributors to show Wilberforce as a model for engaging modern culture. Essays detail how people today can emulate his life, great persuasive techniques, and his Clapham Circle colleagues to bring about cultural change and end oppression. Each chapter's Extended Observation draws readers and study groups into transforming reflections and conversations—all designed to help people become a force for good and commit to a life on behalf of others.

Contributors: *Baroness Caroline Cox, David Blankenhorn, Chuck Colson, Don Eberly, Os Guinness, Mark Rodgers, Nina Shea, R. James Woolsey, Joseph A. Califano, Jr., and more.*

"It is my sincere hope that our next generation will be able to build on the example of William Wilberforce [in this book] as they work to right wrong and build better communities."

—*Floyd Flake, President of Wilberforce University, former Congressman and Senior Pastor, Greater Allen Cathedral, New York*



"Leadership and character are essential for engaging the culture and making a better world.... William Wilberforce and his Clapham colleagues show the way..., engaging and working with others, while never compromising principle."

—*J. Stanley Oakes, President, The King's College, New York*

Chuck Stetson is a Managing Director of PEI Funds, a private equity firm based in New York. He is a graduate of Yale University and Columbia University's Graduate School of Business. He created the *Doubleday Pocket Bible Guide* and his book *The British Abolitionists and Their Influence in America* is due to be released in early 2008. Mr. Stetson is also the Chairman of the Bible Literacy Project and co-author of the acclaimed public school textbook, *The Bible and Its Influence*.

STROUD & HALL

P.O. Box 27210
Macon, GA 31221
www.stroudhall.com



9 780979 646218

ISBN 978-0-9796462-1-8