

William Wilberforce's "Practical Christianity."

Table of Contents to observations on William Wilberforce's "*Practical Christianity.*"

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## INTRODUCTION

In the “Advertisement” of William Wilberforce’s *Practical Christianity*, [1] the Reverend Thomas Price cites John Milton:

“Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them, to be as active as that soul was, whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve, as in a vial, the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them” (Milton’s, *Areopagitica* – CD).

What I plan to do with Wilberforce’s book (which is essentially a critique of nominal Christianity) is to make some observations on its contents. This loosely termed “review” also seeks to determine with specific Wilberforce quotes, whether he be a true saint, or an antichristian heretic. Wilberforce ascribed significant influence in his “conversion” to preacher-hymn-writer, Philip Doddridge’s *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745). According to A.C. Clifford, Doddridge is classified as a “moderate Calvinist” whose views reflect that of Richard Baxter (though details of exactly how far these views are reflected, Clifford does not say). “Moderate Calvinists” believes that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception (albeit in different “senses”), and thus it’s just as damnable as “Arminianism.”

[1] The elongated title is: “A practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians, in the higher and middle classes in this country; contrasted with real Christianity.” There are many versions of Wilberforce’s book, and thus not all of them are likely to contain the “Advertisement” by Thomas Price. Due to the many versions available, page numbers are omitted.

For historical interest’s sake, here is a brief history of Wilberforce:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/wilberforce\\_william.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilberforce_william.shtml)

A longer history of Wilberforce is found here:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Wilberforce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wilberforce)

## CHAPTER ONE

### Gutter-Box

Chapter one is called “Inadequate conceptions of the importance of Christianity.” Speaking of the nominal Christian, Wilberforce writes:

“If we listen to their conversation, virtue is praised, and vice is censured; piety is perhaps applauded, and profaneness condemned. So far all is well. But let anyone, who would not be deceived by these ‘barren generalities,’ examine a little more closely, and he will find, that not to Christianity in particular, but at best to religion in general, perhaps to mere morality, their homage is intended to be paid. With Christianity, as distinct from these, they are little acquainted; their views of it have been so cursory and superficial, that, far from discerning its peculiar characteristics, they have little more than perceived those exterior circumstances which distinguish it from other forms of religion. There are some few facts, and perhaps some leading doctrines and principles, of which they cannot be wholly ignorant; but of the consequences, and relations, and practical uses of these, they have few ideas, or none at all.

Does this language seem too strong? View their plan of life, and their ordinary conduct; and let us ask, wherein can we discern the points of discrimination between them and professed unbelievers?” (Wilberforce)

In my experience, many nominal Christians do NOT praise virtue or censure vice (at least not often, and certainly not in any consistent manner). Among professing Christians who are not considered “nominal,” they too, refuse to venerate virtue, and do laud licentiousness instead. One palpable instance is that MANY (if not MOST) professing Christians take pleasure in the same wicked movies and television shows as non-Christians (cf. Romans 1:32). Professing Christians and non-Christians APPROVE OF THE EXACT SAME GUTTER-BOX. They may SAY they abhor adultery, but, evidently do not abhor it enough to watch it acted out on the television screen.

Wilberforce further laments the nominal Christians who obtained the name of “Christian” by hereditary succession:

“...his father was a member of the Church of England; so is he...[and

thus] it cannot surprise us to observe young men of sense and spirit beginning to doubt altogether of the truth of the system in which they have been brought up, and ready to abandon a station which they are unable to defend. Knowing Christianity chiefly in the difficulties which it contains, and in the impossibilities which are falsely imputed to it, they fall perhaps into the company of infidels; where they are shaken by frivolous objections and profane cavils, which, had their religious persuasion been grounded in reason and argument, would have passed by them 'as the idle wind'" (Wilberforce).

The Church of England is not a true Church of Jesus Christ, but rather, a synagogue of Satan. Wilberforce recounts the common occurrence of the nominal Christian who doesn't really know what he believes, or why he believes it, and so ends up abandoning it when he goes off by himself to a secular (or "Christian") College or University (for example).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Presumptuous Calvinists And Prayerful Saints

Wilberforce continues his critique of the nominal Christian:

“Their standard of right and wrong is not the standard of the gospel; they approve and condemn by a different rule: they advance principles, and maintain opinions, altogether opposite to the genius and character of Christianity” (Wilberforce).

Wilberforce's comments remind me of the many fashionable Calvinists we've encountered, who, just like the nominal Christians of Wilberforce's day, approve and condemn by a different rule. Witness here, the great effrontery of the fashionable Calvinists who prattle presumptuous visions of “peace” to those despising God (cf. Jeremiah 23:16-17; Ezekiel 13:9-15; 2 John 9-11).

“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; and no one expects to attain to the height of learning...without vigorous resolution, and strenuous diligence, and steady perseverance. Yet we expect to be Christians without labour, study, or inquiry. This is more preposterous, because Christianity, being a revelation from God, and not the invention of man, discovering to us new relations with their correspondent duties; containing also doctrines, motives, and precepts peculiar to itself; we cannot reasonably expect to become proficient in it by the accidental intercourses of life, as one might learn insensibly the maxims of worldly policy, or a scheme of mere morals” (Wilberforce).

These comments recall passages of Scripture that admonish us to pray with vigilance and perseverance for others and ourselves, and especially that God answer our requests for His name's sake, that He might be glorified. Other passages spring to mind, that in one respect or another, should “*rouse us to exertion,*” “*vigorous resolution, and strenuous diligence, and steady perseverance*”:

“Labor [Greek: *agōnizomai*] to enter in through the narrow gate, for I say to you that many will seek to enter in and will not have strength”

(Luke 13:24).

“But I exhort you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf” (Romans 15:30).

“...through all prayer and petition, praying at all times in the Spirit, and watching to this same thing with all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints. Pray also for me, that to me may be given speech in the opening of my mouth with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I may speak boldly as it is right for me to speak” (Ephesians 6:18-20).

“I thank my God on all the remembrance of you, always in my every prayer on your behalf making my prayer with joy over your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now” (Philippians 1:3-5).

“...according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but as always in all boldness even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20-21).

“Only behave yourself worthily of the gospel of Christ, so that whether coming and seeing you or being absent, I hear the things concerning you, that you stand fast in one spirit and one soul, striving together in the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

“...whom we announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ Jesus, for which also I labor, struggling according to the working of Him who works in me in power” (Colossians 1:28-29).

“But refuse the profane and old-womanish tales. And exercise yourself to godliness. For bodily exercise is profitable to a little, but godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the present life now, and of that coming” (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

“Give care to these things; be in these things in order that your progress may be plain in all. Give attention to yourself and to the doctrine; continue in them, for doing this, you will both deliver yourself and those hearing you” (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

“All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be perfected, being fully furnished for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“So therefore we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses lying around us, having laid aside every weight and the easily surrounding sin, through patience let us also run the race set before us, looking to the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right of the throne of God. For consider Him who had endured such gainsaying of sinners against Himself, that you do not grow weary, fainting in your souls” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

## CHAPTER THREE

### They Have Done Violence To The Law

Previously, Wilberforce went over “*defective notions of the importance of Christianity in general.*” Here, his focus is on “*particular misconceptions;*” particularly, the misconception of the corruption and weakness of human nature. This subject, he says, is of the deepest import and “*lies at the very root of all true religion, and is eminently the basis and groundwork of Christianity.*” He further states that:

“...the generality of professed Christians among the higher classes, either altogether overlook or deny, or at least greatly extenuate, the corruption and weakness here in question. They acknowledge, indeed, that there is, and ever has been in the world, a great portion of vice and wickedness...They own that it is too often in vain that you inform the understanding, and convince the judgment...These facts are certain; they cannot be disputed; and they are, at the same time, so obvious, that one would have thought the celebrated apophthegm of the Grecian sage, ‘the majority are wicked,’ would scarcely have established his claim to intellectual superiority” (Wilberforce).

The biblical truth of total depravity has been greatly extenuated among Calvinists who assert that faith is an “*instrumental non-meritorious condition*” for salvation. The reality regarding one aspect of total depravity, is that every natural descendent of Adam owes a debt to God’s law and justice that he cannot pay, or be “*spiritually-enabled*” to pay by meeting an allegedly “*non-meritorious condition.*” This particular aspect of the total depravity of man’s nature is connected to God’s law and its function, which is to show forth God’s perfect standard of righteousness, that His people may (1) Learn their natural inability to meet that standard (2) Rest in a Substitute who would and did meet that standard on their behalf (3) And strive to obey Him out of love, thankfulness, and a desire to glorify Him.

“For as many as are out of works of Law, [these] are under a curse. For it has been written, Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all the things having been written in the book of the Law, to do them. And that no one is justified by Law before God [is] clear because, The just shall live by faith. But the Law is not of faith, but, The man doing these

things shall live in them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us; for it has been written, Cursed is everyone having been hung on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might be to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith...But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, having come into being out of a woman, having come under Law, that He might redeem the ones under Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba! Father!" (Galatians 3:10-14, 4:4-6).

Contrary to unregenerate Calvinists who twist faith into a condition or prerequisite for salvation; true faith, rather, believes that Jesus Christ ALONE met ALL the conditions for salvation (the Galatians passages cited above presenting a clear and strict view of what those conditions are). Jesus Christ met, in full, the penal and prescriptive demands of God's law and justice. The aforementioned Calvinists, with their additional conditions and prerequisites, have made themselves debtors "*to do all the law*" (Galatians 5:3).

At the time of God's appointing, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of His Son, is sent forth to glorify Jesus Christ in the hearts of all whom Christ represented by granting to them a faith that receives the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and is justified, crying out, Abba! Father! While this faith IS INDEED the instrument through which God's elect receive imputed righteousness, justification, and adoption; this imputed righteousness, justification, and adoption COME TOGETHER WITH FAITH as an immediate and inevitable result (fruit) of the Spirit's regenerating work (Galatians 4:4-6).

"But, though these effects of human depravity are every where acknowledged and lamented, we must not expect to find them traced to their true origin...Prepare yourself to hear rather of frailty and infirmity, of petty transgressions, of occasional failings, of sudden surprisals, and of such other qualifying terms as may serve to keep out of view the true source of the evil, and, without shocking the understanding, may administer consolation to the pride of human nature. The bulk of professed Christians are used to speak of man as of a being, who, naturally pure, and inclined to all virtue, is sometimes, almost involuntarily, drawn out of the right course, or is overpowered by the violence of temptation"(Wilberforce).

Unless I'm missing something here, Wilberforce is saying that the *majority* (the "bulk") of professed Christians have a Pelagian conception of human nature. Obviously, this bulk of professed Christians did not adhere to, or were ignorant of, the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England (some of these articles, while being damnably heretical, are clearly not Pelagian).

"But to put the question concerning the natural depravity of man to the severest test: take the best of the human species, the watchful self-denying Christian, and let him decide the controversy; not by inferences drawn from the practices of a thoughtless and dissolute world, but by an appeal to his personal experience. Go with him into his closet, ask him his opinion of the corruption of the heart, and he will tell you that he is deeply sensible of its power...that he feels within him two opposite principles, and that 'he cannot do the things that he would.' He cries out in the language of the excellent Hooker,

'The little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing in the world for it, we dare not call God to reckoning, as if we had him in our debt-books; our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences.'

Such is the moral history, such the condition of man. The figures of the piece may vary, and the colouring may sometimes be of a darker, sometimes of a lighter hue; but the principles of the composition, the grand outlines, are every where the same" (Wilberforce).

Some comments on the Richard Hooker citation. Clearly, the fruit in holiness is not sinless, as Romans 7:14-25 teaches us. But since this fruit is not free from indwelling sin, is it therefore "corrupt," as Hooker says? What does Hooker mean by "*corrupt fruit*"? Would Hooker say the "*corrupt fruit*" had "*in holiness*" is fruit unto God, or would he say that it is fruit unto death (cf. Romans 7:4-5)? Does Hooker believe the fruits had "*in holiness*" are "*corrupt and unsound*," or are they "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:11)?

By the appeal to the "*watchful self-denying Christian*" as evidence of the natural depravity of man, Wilberforce is articulating the common nefarious notion that the heart of a regenerate person remains deceitfully and desperately wicked (or, at least has a residual sin principle in his breast, that is deceitful and desperately

wicked). This is a blatant DENIAL of the Holy Spirit's transforming work (cf. Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17). It is quite clear that a regenerate person has a remaining or residual sin principle (see Romans 7:14-25); however, in STARK CONTRAST to Wilberforce *et al*, this sin principle is NOT deceitfully and desperately wicked, since the deceitfully and desperately wicked heart was completely excised by God upon regeneration:

“And I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give to you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Do Christians still sin? They most certainly do. Indwelling sin remains a constant and unwelcome presence to harass them and make them do what they do not want to do, to the point of making them cry out that they are afflicted, distressed, grieved, and vexed (Romans 7:14-24). But they even sin differently than the wicked — the sin of the wicked comes from their totally depraved hearts; the sin of believers comes from the principle of sin dwelling in them. There is a world of difference in how they view the sin in themselves.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### This Godless Endeavor

Next we move to what is called, “*Evil spirit. Natural state of man.*” Wilberforce starts with this:

“But the word of God instructs us that we have to contend not only with our own natural depravity, but with the power of darkness, the evil spirit, who rules in the hearts of the wicked, and whose dominion we learn from scripture to be so general, as to entitle him to the denomination of ‘the prince of this world.’ There cannot be a stronger proof of the difference which exists between the religious system of the scriptures, and that of the bulk of nominal Christians, than the proof which is afforded by the subject now in question” (Wilberforce).

The heresy of Wilberforce concerning “*natural depravity*” was addressed previously, but one question that comes to mind is this: Is Wilberforce saying that the bulk of nominal Christians are unregenerate children of disobedience, in whom the evil spirit rules and works? It appears he is saying this.

“But it is not sufficient to ASSENT to the doctrine, we must also FEEL it” (Wilberforce; emphasis Wilberforce; italics in original—CD).

What should be said about this? What if one CLAIMS to “*assent to the doctrine,*” but does not KEEP His commandments (does not “*feel*” it?); is he a liar and the truth is not in him (cf. 1 John 2:4)? Or, does Wilberforce employ the word “FEEL” in a mystically-heretical sense, in order to DENY that everyone who ASSENTS to the doctrine of the gospel will be saved (cf. Romans 1:16)?

In the next section Wilberforce addresses objections to the “corruption of human nature”:

“...some more bold objector faces about and stands at bay, endeavoring to justify what he cannot deny,

‘Whatever I am,’ he contends, ‘I am what my Creator made me. I inherit a nature, you yourself confess, depraved, and prone to evil: how, then, can I withstand the temptations to sin, by which I am environed? If this plea cannot establish my

innocence, it must excuse, or at least extenuate, my guilt. Frail and weak as I am, a Being of infinite justice and goodness will never try me by a rule which, however equitable in the case of creatures of a higher nature, is altogether disproportionate to mine.'

Let not my readers be alarmed! The writer is not going to enter into the discussion of the grand question concerning the origin of moral evil, or to attempt to reconcile its existence and consequent punishment with the acknowledged attributes and perfections of God. These are questions, of which, if one may judge from the little success with which the acutest and profoundest reasoners have been ever labouring to solve the difficulties they contain, the full and clear comprehension is above the intellect of man" (Wilberforce).

Wilberforce's "bold objector" is basically asking God, "*Why have you made me like this?*" (Romans 9:20). Most who call themselves Calvinists would say that God did NOT make you like this; you were "left to your own devices," and thus you made yourself like this. But that is NOT what God through the apostle Paul taught. The teaching is, rather, that not only did God make you like this, He has the power and authority to make you like this (Romans 9:21). An interesting note on the depraved reasoning of this bold objector: The "reasoning" is that the more wicked someone is, and the more they are badly-molded by their environment, the less accountable to God they ought to be.

Wilberforce will not alarm the reader by entering into a discussion upon one of the easiest and simplest theological questions in existence. God actively caused moral evil to enter into His world, that the elect and reprobate would be equally ruined and undone, equally guilty and defiled, and equally in need of a righteousness that neither could produce, or be "spiritually-enabled" to produce. He actively caused moral evil to enter into His world that He might be glorified in the Person of His Son, by saving a particular people from their sins.

To Wilberforce, even highly skilled theologians and the most acute reasoners, cannot plumb the supposedly "*mysteriously hidden*" depths of this truth. Discerning God's perspicuous revelation on this issue is not about intellectual acumen, or intelligence quotients (IQ). The Bible is the Word of God and since Wilberforce INSULTS its clarity on this issue, he necessarily INSULTS God the Holy Spirit Himself, who has CLEARLY spoken through His Apostles and Prophets. Wilberforce says God HAS NOT spoken on this issue. God says He HAS. Let God be TRUE, and Wilberforce a LIAR.

“We should probably do better, if we were to endeavor rather to draw him off from those dark and slippery regions (slippery, in truth, they are to every human foot), and to contend with him, where we might tread with firmness and freedom, on sure ground, and in the light of day... and we might conclude, with fairly putting it to him, whether all this weight of evidence were to be overbalanced by one difficulty, on a subject so confessedly high and mysterious; considering, too, that he must allow, we see but a part (Oh, how small a part!) of the universal creation of God, and that our faculties are wholly incompetent to judge of the schemes of his infinite wisdom” (Wilberforce).

Wilberforce appears to offer professing Christians a brief course in apologetics concerning how to give an answer to the “avowed sceptic” regarding “*the grand question concerning the origin of moral evil,*” and the “*attempt to reconcile its existence and consequent punishment with the acknowledged attributes and perfections of God.*”

The pungent stench of Wilberforce’s false piety and false humility is extremely nauseating. Wilberforce is a wicked, rebellious, pseudo-pious potsherd who is unable to “reconcile” God’s justice and righteousness with the consequent punishment of those vessels of wrath whom He made morally evil. If Wilberforce were honest, he must say that God is being unrighteous and unjust when He finds fault with and punishes those whom He has made evil (cf. Romans 9:18-22). This is common parlance among today’s fashionable Calvinist, who, with great swelling words of vanity makes this Godless endeavor of hiding the obvious fact that he is Paul’s tumultuous teapot, short and stout, shaking his handle, and emitting seditious steam from his spout:

“So, then, to whom He desires, He shows mercy. And to whom He desires, He hardens. You will then say to me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? Yes, rather, O man, who are you answering against God? Shall the thing formed say to the One forming it, Why did You make me like this? Or does not the potter have authority over the clay, out of the one lump to make one vessel to honor, and one to dishonor? But if God, desiring to demonstrate His wrath, and to make His power known, endured in much long-suffering vessels of wrath having been fitted out for destruction, and that He make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy which He before prepared for glory, whom He also called, not only us, of Jews, but also out of nations” (Romans 9:18-24).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Pious-Sounding Prose

This section of Wilberforce's *Practical Christianity* has this involved and lengthy title:

*“Chief defects of the religious system of the bulk of professed Christians, in what regards our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit; with a dissertation concerning the use of the passions in religion.”*

I read somewhere that by “passions” Wilberforce means the “affections.” Of course, we then must find out what he means by the “affections.”

On the *“Inadequate conceptions concerning our Saviour and the Holy Spirit.”* Here Wilberforce points to what he thinks are inadequate conceptions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit among professing Christians in England. He lists some essential truths concerning Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and bemoans the fact that while the bulk of professed Christians

“... assent to them in terms, [they do not] discern their force and excellency in the understanding, and feel their power in the affections, and their transforming influence in the heart.”

If all this pious-sounding prose is simply meant to convey James' sentiment that faith without works is dead, then these professed Christians have NOT YET ASSENTED to the doctrines pertaining to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Wilberforce then presents what I suppose is a hypothetical objection to his judging the hearts of the bulk of professing Christians in England:

“‘Can you look into the bosoms of men?’ Let us appeal to a test to which we resorted in a former instance. ‘Out of the abundance of the heart,’ it has been pronounced, ‘the mouth speaketh.’ — Take these persons then in some well selected hour, and lead the conversation to the subject of Religion. The utmost which can be effected is to bring them to talk of things in the gross. They appear lost in generalities; there is nothing precise and determinate, nothing which implies a mind used to the contemplation of its object. In vain you strive to bring them to speak on that topic, which one might expect to be ever uppermost in

the hearts of redeemed sinners. They elude all your endeavours; and if you make mention of it yourself, it is received with no very cordial welcome at least, if not with unequivocal disgust; it is at the best a forced and formal discussion” (Wilberforce).

Nothing novel here. Just an example of the nominal, “in name only” Christian, who is quite loathe to get into specifics of doctrine and precise theological formulations. This kind of professing Christian regards many essential truths with outright disgust, or with apparent indifference. Wilberforce’s nominal Christian reminds me of the typical tolerant Calvinists who regard the essential gospel doctrine of Jesus Christ’s cross-work either with disgust, or indifference when they call “Arminians” their brothers in Christ.

“True love is an ardent, and an active principle — a cold, a dormant, a phlegmatic gratitude, are contractions in terms. When these generous affections really exist in vigour, are we not ever fond of dwelling on the value, and enumerating the merits of our benefactor? How are we moved when any thing is asserted to his disparagement! How do we delight to tell of his kindness! With what pious care do we preserve any memorial of him, which we may happen to possess? How gladly do we seize any opportunity of rendering to him, or to those who are dear to him, any little good offices, which, though in themselves of small intrinsic worth, may testify the sincerity of our thankfulness! The very mention of his name will cheer the heart, and light up the countenance!” (Wilberforce)

I wonder how “emotional” or “emotion-filled” does gratitude have to be in order to not be judged by Wilberforce as “*phlegmatic*”? At any rate, if one TRULY ASSENTS to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, they will NOT display “unequivocal disgust,” but will rather “*exult with joy unspeakable*” (1 Peter 1:8).

“If the love of Christ be thus languid in the bulk of nominal Christians, their joy and trust in him cannot be expected to be very vigorous” (Wilberforce).

Does this statement include the nominal Christians who, according to Wilberforce, view the doctrines of Jesus Christ with “unequivocal disgust”? Do those who manifest “unequivocal disgust” toward Jesus Christ, merely possess a “languid love and trust” in the Redeemer? As the “disgust” decreases and languishes, does the “trust” and “love” correspondingly increase, and grow more

vigorous? Perhaps Wilberforce has spent an inordinate amount of time marinating his brain in the pernicious juices of pseudo-pious Puritan deceit.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Love True And Lasting

Next up for Wilberforce is the following: “*On the Admission of the Passions into Religion.*” Wilberforce investigates the suitable role of the “*passions*” in religion, specifically of Christianity. In the following quote, he determines what is to be the proper criterion or standard by which the particular “*passion*” called “*love,*” is to be judged:

“But the passion, which alone the Holy Scriptures dignify with the name of love, is a deep, not a superficial feeling; a fixed and permanent, not an occasional emotion. It proves the validity of its title, by actions corresponding with its nature, by practical endeavours to gratify the wishes and to promote the interests of the object of affection. ‘If a man love me, he will keep my sayings.’ ‘This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.’ This, therefore, is the best standard by which to try the quality, or, the quality being ascertained to estimate the strength of the religious affections” (Wilberforce).

Jesus says that those who love Him will keep His commandments. Those regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and have His love poured out into their hearts, indeed possess a love that is deeply-grounded and everlasting, and not superficial or evanescent. They cry “Abba, Father.” They love Him whom they have not seen, yet rejoice with joy inexpressible. Further, as John says, those who are regenerate love their brothers who have also been regenerated by Him. This love is true, unfeigned, and fixed, and permanent toward our brothers and sisters in Christ.

“...in brotherly love to one another, loving fervently” (Romans 12:10)

“Now as to brotherly love, you have no need for me to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

“Let brotherly love continue” (Hebrews 13:1).

“Having purified your souls in the obedience of the truth through the Spirit to unpretended brotherly love, love one another fervently out of a

pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22).

“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are revealed: Everyone not practicing righteousness is not of God; also the one not loving his brother...We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers. The one not loving the brother remains in death. Everyone hating the brother is a murderer, and you know that every murderer does not have everlasting life abiding in him. By this we have known the love of God, because that One laid down His life for us; and on behalf of the brothers we ought to lay down our lives. Whoever has the means of life of the world, and sees his brother having need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:10, 14-18).

And some passages on true and unfeigned love for the Triune God of Scripture:

“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. The Lord comes!” (1 Corinthians 16:22).

“And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38).

“If you love Me, keep My commandments...He that has My commandments and keeps them, it is that one who loves Me; and the one that loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and will reveal Myself to him. Judas said to Him, not the Iscariot, Lord, what has happened that You are about to reveal Yourself to us and not at all to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father shall love him. And We will come to him and will make a dwelling place with him. The one who does not love Me does not keep My Words. And the Word which you hear is not Mine but of the Father who sent Me” (John 14:15, 21-24).

The passages in John are especially moving – we love Jesus Christ and ardently desire to keep His commandments that we might magnify Him for all that He has done in saving us from our sins. When we falter by sinning against Him, it greatly grieves us, and so we repent and strive to live for righteousness with a heightened and acute awareness of our weakness, and the need for His gracious strength to live a life that would glorify Him.

“...who Himself carried up in His body our sins onto the tree; that dying to sins, we might live to righteousness, of whom by His wound you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

“And by the superabundance of the revelations, that I not be made arrogant, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, that he might buffet me, that I not be made haughty. Beyond this I entreated the Lord three times, that it depart from me. And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Therefore, I will rather gladly boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may overshadow me. Because of this, I am pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in dire needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for the sake of Christ. For when I may be weak, then I am powerful” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

“Then having a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we do not have a high priest not being able to sympathize with our weaknesses but One having been tried in all respects according to our likeness, apart from sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and we may find grace for timely help” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

“Now the God of Peace, He leading up out of the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of the everlasting covenant, our Lord Jesus, perfect you in every good work, in order to do His will, doing in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Hebrews 13:20-21).

“Then be humbled under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in time; casting all your anxiety onto Him, because it matters to Him concerning you. Be sensible, watch, because your adversary the Devil walks about as a roaring lion seeking someone he may devour; whom firmly resist in the faith, knowing the same sufferings are being completed in your brotherhood in the world. Now the God of all grace, the One calling you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, you having suffered a little, Himself will perfect, confirm, strengthen, establish you. To Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:6-11).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Unemotional Unfeeling Intellectuals

Wilberforce “*On the Admission of the Passions into Religion*”:

“It was the remark of an unerring observer, ‘The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.’ And it is indisputably true, that in religion we have to argue and plead with men for principles of action, the wisdom and expediency of which are universally acknowledged in matters of worldly concern” (Wilberforce).

Wilberforce alludes to Luke 16:8, seemingly to bewail the inconsistent, indifferent, and apathetic attitudes of professing Christians who acknowledge the “wisdom and expediency” of certain “principles of action” in temporal worldly affairs, that they do not admit into matters of eternal and spiritual significance.

“Do you not know that those running in a stadium indeed all run, but one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain. But everyone striving controls himself in all things. Then those truly that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. So I run accordingly, as not uncertainly; so I fight, as not beating air; but I buffet my body and lead it captive, lest proclaiming to others I myself might be disapproved” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

For illustration’s sake, let’s assume Wilberforce’s nominal Christians were all unified concerning the wisdom and expediency of shrewd, prudent, sagacious, and temperate training for a corruptible crown. Evidently, these nominal Christians were not of Paul’s mind, who ran and strove for the imperishable crown with the zeal and vigor of those who merely trained and competed for perishable crowns (1 Corinthians 9:25; cf. Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 16:8; 1 Timothy 4:7-8). True Christians need to train, run, and fight hard: lop limbs, gouge eyes, resist world, flesh, and devil; pray without ceasing, give thanks to God in all things, and seek to magnify Christ whether by life or by death. For to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

“So therefore we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses lying around us, having laid aside every weight and the easily surrounding sin, through patience let us also run the race set before us, looking to the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus, who for the joy set before

Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right of the throne of God. For consider Him who had endured such gainsaying of sinners against Himself, that you do not grow weary, fainting in your souls. You did not yet resist unto blood, wrestling against sin” (Hebrews 12:1-4).

In running “the race set before us” we look to Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. A multitude of gospel-specific and gospel-related arrows we must place “at the ready” in our intellectual quivers. By faith in our conquering King we are admonished to war the good warfare (cf. Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Timothy 1:18).

We are to eschew, to lay aside weights (e.g., hindrances, impediments) and sins. Sin is transgression of God’s law, and therefore evil in and of itself. So, we are to lay aside and cast away sins for sure — but what of “weights”? What exactly are these “weights,” we are told to lay aside BOTH?

In considering the context along with the Greek word for “weight,” it seems that a “weight” is not of itself sin, but has (or could?) become the occasion of sin, due to its hindrance of your running. Do not weights by nature, hinder running? If this be granted, would it not make these “weights” inherently sinful? Perhaps, but it may be that what is an “item of hindrance” for one Christian, might be an “item of helpfulness” for another. Or, it may be that a given “item” (i.e., a “weight”) neither helps nor hinders, and thus might be considered an item of *adiaphora*, or a matter of Christian freedom and conscience. In this case, a “weight” would only be an actual weight if it sinfully hindered running the race. And if it didn’t or doesn’t hinder, then it wouldn’t be a “weight.”

At any rate, that’s my attempted interpretation of Hebrews 12:1, and some of its practical implications.

“Then you suffer hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, so that he might please the one having enlisted him. And also if anyone competes, he is not crowned unless he competes lawfully” (2 Timothy 2:3-5).

Similarly to Hebrews 12:1, is the admonition to not be “entangled” with “the affairs of this life.” Living an “entangled life” is contrasted with living a God-pleasing life. We were sovereignly and unconditionally enlisted for His glorious namesake, not to entangle ourselves in civilian affairs, but to engage in the

valiant demolition of various intellectual strongholds that vainly lift themselves up against the knowledge of God (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). We battle, we war, we fight with our loins girded with the truth that we more than conquer through Him loving us (cf. Romans 8:37-39). One key word is “entangle.” Obviously we necessarily involve ourselves in “civilian affairs” – but these affairs are NOT to impede us in serving and glorifying our Commander and King.

Wilberforce:

“Frail and ‘infirm of purpose,’ we have a business to execute of supreme and indispensable necessity. Solicitations to neglect it every where abound: the difficulties and dangers are numerous and urgent; and the night of death cometh, how soon we know not, ‘when no man can work.’ All this is granted. It seems to be a state of things wherein one should look out with solicitude for some powerful stimulants. Mere knowledge is confessedly too weak. The affections alone remain to supply the deficiency. They precisely meet the occasion, and suit the purposes intended. Yet, when we propose to fit ourselves for our great undertaking, by calling them in to our help, we are to be told that we are acting contrary to reason. Is this reasonable, to strip us first of our armour of proof, and then to send us to the sharpest of encounters? To summon us to the severest labours, but first to rob us of the precious cordials which should brace our sinews and recruit our strength?  
(Wilberforce).

This quote brings to remembrance a brother's thoughts concerning “*Christians and Emotions.*” Here are some excerpts:

“Some of our enemies accuse us of being unemotional, unfeeling intellectuals. They ask us (not that they want answers, but they want to accuse us) if we have ever cried over a lost soul or have ever deeply felt sorrow over our sins.

This post is to give the readers our view of Christians’ emotions.

What are emotions? Emotions are hard to define. In fact, they’re so hard to define that Webster’s Dictionary uncharacteristically defines an emotion by some examples of emotion! Here’s the definition: ‘Any one of the states designated as fear, anger, disgust, grief, joy, surprise, yearning, etc.’! Interesting, eh? ‘Feeling’ is sometimes used as a synonym.

The basic emotions (from admittedly secular sources) are love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear. Under each of these basic categories are sub-categories: ...

... We who are Christians have love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We care for our families, even if they are not brothers and sisters in Christ. We have compassion on the poor and needy. We have joy in our fellowship with the saints and in our salvation. We are excited about and have zeal for the true gospel. We are amazed at the blindness of the lost and at the grace of our God. We have holy anger against the God-haters and their damnable doctrines. We have sorrow for the lost, especially those of our flesh and blood. We are ashamed of our sin. We work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Of course, there are also sinful expressions of any of these emotions as well, and we as Christians continue to be beset by sinful emotions. But let us dwell on those emotions that are not sinful in and of themselves.”

If those whom Wilberforce mentioned were detractors of the biblical and godly “affections” and “emotions” that were expounded upon, then they know not whereof they speak.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Giving The Papists A Run For Their Money

Wilberforce's next section is "*Consideration of the Reasonableness of Affections towards an invisible Being*":

"Now, an object, it is admitted, is brought into closer contact with its corresponding passion, by being seen and conversed with. This we grant is one way; but does it follow that there is no other? To assert this, would be something like maintaining, in contradiction to universal experience, that objects of vision alone are capable of attracting our regard. But nothing can be more unfounded than such a supposition" (Wilberforce).

Well, "such a supposition" is unfounded because God through the apostle Peter says that it's unfounded:

"... Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you exult with joy unspeakable and being glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:7-9).

Droves upon droves of professing Christians have a serious problem with making graven images of someone they're calling "Jesus Christ" — their insatiable desire is to make Jesus Christ an idolatrous object of physical vision. This lust clearly reveals their "issue" with Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 4:15-16, Isaiah 40:18, and Habakkuk 2:18-20. This is palpably evident in their idolatrous picture books, and also on their blogs and websites.

"What does an image profit, for its maker has carved it; a molten image, and a teacher of falsehood? For does the maker trust in his work on it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to the wood, Awake! To a mute stone, Rise up, it shall teach! Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, but no breath is in its midst. But Jehovah is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him" (Habakkuk 2:18-20).

John Piper's "Desiring God" website is only one salient and sickening example of the disgusting pervasiveness among the Reformed and Calvinist world that is wholly given to idolatry. As even certain of their own poets have said:

“To represent Him by a material, visible and palpable image or picture is a false representation. He is omnipresent. To draw or carve Him as bounded by an outline, and contained in a local form, belies this attribute. He is self-existent, and has no beginning. To represent Him by what His puny creature made, and what yesterday was not, belies His self-existence and eternity. He declares Himself utterly unlike all creatures, and incomprehensible by them. To liken Him to any of them is both a misrepresentation and insult. Hence, a material image of the Godhead, or of any Person thereof, is an utter falsehood. Papists used to be fond of saying: ‘Images are the books of the unlearned.’ We reply: they are books then, which teach lies only” (R.L. Dabney).

As we survey the theological landscape, it appears that many Reformed and Calvinist persons are giving the Papists a run for their money on this particular issue of idolatry. As cited above, even one of their own prophets'/poets' words condemns them.

More from Wilberforce:

“We find therefore that sight and personal intercourse do not seem necessary to the production or increase of attachment, where the means of close contact have been afforded; but on the other hand, if an object have been prevented from coming into close contact, sight and personal intercourse are not sufficient to give it the power of exciting the affections in proportion to its real magnitude. Suppose the case of a person whom we have often seen, and may have occasionally conversed with, and of whom we have been told in the general, that he possesses extraordinary merits. We assent to the assertion. But if we have no knowledge of particulars, no close acquaintance with him, nothing in short which brings his merits home to us, they interest us less than what we know to be a far inferior degree of the very same qualities in one of our common associates.

A parent has several children, all constantly under his eye, and equally dear to him. Yet if any one of them be taken ill, it is brought into so much closer contact than before, that it seems to absorb and engross the parent's whole affection. Thus then, though it will not be denied that an object by being visible may thereby excite its corresponding affection with more facility; yet this is manifestly far from being the prime consideration.

And so far are we from being the slaves of the sense of vision, that a familiar acquaintance with the intrinsic excellences of an object, aided, it must be admitted, by the power of habit, will render us almost insensible to the impressions which its outward form conveys, and able entirely to lose the consciousness of an unsightly exterior” (Wilberforce).

And “it will not be denied that” the aforementioned idolaters who watch wicked “passion plays” (e.g., Mel Gibson’s “passion play”), seek to excite their affections “with more facility” by means of the visible object of a blasphemously sinful man pretending to be the sinless Son of God incarnate.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Speaking Peace When There Is No Peace

Wilberforce writes:

“Old age has at length made its advances. Now, if ever, we might expect that it would be deemed high time to make eternal things the main object of attention. No such thing! There is still an appropriate good quality, the presence of which calms the disquietude, and satisfies the requisitions both of themselves and of those around them. It is now required of them that they should be good natured and cheerful, indulgent to the frailties and follies of the young; remembering, that when young themselves they gave into the same practices. How opposite this to that dread of sin, which is the sure characteristic of the true Christian; which causes him to look back upon the vices of his own youthful days with shame and sorrow; and which, instead of conceding to young people to be wild and thoughtless, as a privilege belonging to their age and circumstances, prompts him to warn them against what had proved to himself matter of such bitter retrospection! Thus, throughout the whole of life, some means or other are devised for stifling the voice of conscience. ‘We cry peace while there is no peace;’ and both to ourselves and others that complacency is furnished, which ought only to proceed from a consciousness of being reconciled to God, and a humble hope of our possessing his favour.

I know that these sentiments will be termed uncharitable; but I must not be deterred by such an imputation. It is time to have done with that senseless cant [1] of charity, which insults the understandings, and trifles with the feelings, of those who are really concerned for the happiness of their fellow-creatures. What matter of keen remorse and of bitter self-reproaches are they storing up for their future torment, who are themselves its miserable dupes; or who, being charged with the office of watching over the eternal interests of their children or relations, suffer themselves to be lulled asleep, or beguiled by such shallow reasonings into sparing themselves the momentary pain of executing their important duty! Charity, indeed, is partial to the object of her regard; and where actions are of a doubtful quality, this partiality disposes her to refer them to a good, rather than to a bad, motive. She

is apt also somewhat to exaggerate merits, and to see amiable qualities in a light more favourable than that which strictly belongs to them. But true charity is wakeful, fervent, full of solicitude, full of good offices, not so easily satisfied, not so ready to believe that every thing is going on well as a matter of course; but jealous of mischief, apt to suspect danger, and prompt to extend relief” (William Wilberforce).

[1] The word “cant” is defined as “hypocritically pious language.”

This quote about “charity” reminds me of the Great Whore’s proclivity to bedazzle the tolerant Calvinists (among others) into a “charitable view” of her “doctrinal imperfections.” To the tolerant Calvinist, the Great Whore is NOT infected with theologically damnable and pernicious plagues, but stained only with mere “theological blemishes.” Her abominations are not so abominable for them to come out of her, lest they share in her sins and receive of her plagues. Many tolerant Calvinists even bicker and fight with the Great Whore — but despite this, they must find something “sufficiently amiable” in her for them to admit spiritual oneness and to commit spiritual fornication.

The Wilberforce quote also brought to my remembrance this quote from Abraham Booth’s, *“Reign of Grace”*:

“He, indeed, who pretends to be a friend to revealed truth, but is cool and indifferent to its honour and interest; whose extensive charity is such, that he can allow those who widely differ from him in, the capital articles of the Christian faith, to be safe in their own way; may enjoy his peculiar sentiments without much fear of disturbance. But though such conduct maybe applauded, under a false notion of Christian candour, and of a catholic spirit; though it may be the way to maintain a friendly intercourse among multitudes whose leading sentiments are widely different; yet it will be deemed, by the God of truth as deserving no better name, than a joint opposition to the spirit and design of his gospel” (Abraham Booth).

This is an apt description of the typical tolerant Calvinist, who, while pretending to be a friend of revealed GOSPEL TRUTH, maintains “cool [indifference] to its honour and interest,” and exhibits a great fervor in opposing its honor and interest by defending the LIE. The tolerant Calvinist heretic will invariably exude a “cool indifference” towards the TRUE efficacious atonement of Jesus Christ, while zealously breaking forth in “responsive heat” in defense of the LIE of salvation conditioned on the sinner.

The typical tolerant-of-damnable-heresy-that-is-antithetical-to-the-gospel-of-Jesus-Christ, Calvinist, makes the HOLLOW CLAIM that he is indeed a friend of the Chaste Spouse, all the while he is ardently defending the joint “*theological venereal imperfections*” of himself and of the Great Whore.

“And after these things I saw another angel coming down out of Heaven having great authority, and the earth was lighted up from his glory. And he cried in a strong, great voice, saying, Babylon the great has fallen! It has fallen, and it has become a dwelling-place of demons, and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean bird, even having been hated, because of the wine of the anger of her fornication which all the nations have drunk, even the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her; and the merchants of the earth became rich from the power of her luxury. And I heard another voice out of Heaven saying, My people, come out of her, that you may not share in her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues” (Revelation 18:1-4).

The efficacious cross-work of Jesus Christ is THE capital article of the Christian faith. The tolerant Calvinist allows those who count the word of the cross as foolishness (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18) “to be safe in their own way” by speaking to them “peace, peace,” when there is no peace. The charity of these tolerant Calvinists is as extensive as the false prophets’ charity was in the days of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 6:13-15; cf. 2 John 9-11).

## CHAPTER TEN

### Riding This Bull

Wilberforce:

“All who have read the Scriptures must confess that idolatry is the crime against which God’s highest resentment is expressed, and his severest punishment denounced. But let us not deceive ourselves. It is not in bowing the knee to idols that idolatry consists, so much as in the internal homage of the heart; as in the feeling towards them of any of that supreme love, or reverence, or gratitude, which God reserves to himself as his own exclusive prerogative. On the same principle, whatever else draws off the heart from him, engrosses our prime regard, and holds the chief place in our esteem and affections, that, in the estimation of reason, is no less an idol to us, than an image of wood or stone would be; before which we should fall down and worship. Think not this a strained analogy; it is the very language and argument of inspiration. The servant of God is commanded not to set up his idol in his heart; and sensuality and covetousness are repeatedly termed idolatry. The same God who declares: ‘My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images,’ declares also: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches.’ ‘No flesh may glory in his presence;’ ‘he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.’ The sudden vengeance by which the vain-glorious ostentation of Herod was punished, when, acquiescing in the servile adulation of an admiring multitude, ‘he gave not God the glory,’ is a dreadful comment on these injunctions” (William Wilberforce).

One day when Herod was giving a public address he spoke with such eloquence that the people shouted, “*The voice of a god, and not of a man!*” Since the king did not see fit to give the glory to God, God saw fit to glorify Himself by devouring Herod’s god, which was his bloated and arrogant belly:

“And on a set day, having been clothed in a regal garment, and sitting on the tribunal, Herod made a speech to them. And the mass of people cried out, The voice of a god, and not of a man! And instantly an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give the glory to God. And having been eaten by worms, his soul went out” (Acts 12:21-23).

If not giving God all of the praise in oratory skills provoked Him whose name is Jealous, how much more in the matter of salvation?

I believe it to be redundantly right and not tediously trite;  
To reiterate the truth that Jesus Christ has the majestic might;  
To save all those whom He represented, those sheep for whom He died.  
For He ever lives to intercede for them till they all be glorified.  
Many arrows of gospel truth are in the Scripture quiver;  
So I'll keep on riding this bull like I'm Chris Shivers [1].  
In the vain speech of many "grace" has the name;  
but "*instrumental 'non-meritorious' conditions*" have the game.  
What a self-righteousness establishing shame,  
for those who call Jesus "*The Mighty God*" by name;  
Yet in their very next breath this great name is denounced and denied;  
When they affirm that for those in hell He was "*in some sense*" crucified.  
They say, "*We believe in irresistible grace don't you know?*"  
Yet "*graciously-enabled-condition-meeting*" steals the show.  
They must repent of this antichristian and autosoteric heist;  
And believe that salvation alone belongs to Jesus Christ!  
The antidote for these conditionalists is regeneration;  
They have not submitted to the righteousness of the Son.

[1] I'm not necessarily endorsing Chris Shivers or bull-riding in this rhyme any more than Paul was necessarily endorsing everything entailed in the Grecian games in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Just as Paul admonished Christians to be as temperate in imperishable gospel matters as the Olympians were in perishable athletic matters, so I admonish myself and other Christians to continually, untiringly, and zealously keep on "riding this bull" (e.g., keep on preaching, rebuking, exhorting, encouraging, defending, loving, comforting, etc., etc.):

"For this reason I will not neglect to cause you to remember always concerning these things, though you know and have been confirmed in the present truth. But I deem it right, so long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by a reminder, knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will also be diligent to cause you always to have memory of these things after my departure" (2 Peter 1:12-15).

"But it is good to be zealous always in a good thing and not only in my

being present with you” (Galatians 4:18).

“Then I solemnly witness before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, He being about to judge the living and dead at His appearance and His kingdom: preach the Word, be urgent in season, out of season, convict, warn, encourage with all long-suffering and teaching. For a time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own lusts, they will heap up to themselves teachers tickling the ear; and they will turn away the ear from the truth and will be turned aside to myths. But you be clear-minded in all, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fully carry out your ministry. For I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is here. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. For the rest, the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me in that Day, and not only to me, but also to all the ones loving His appearance” (2 Timothy 4:1-8).

“Having made all haste to write to you about the common salvation, beloved, I had need to write to you to exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

“Now as to brotherly love, you have no need for me to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. For you also do it toward the brothers in all Macedonia. But, brothers, we exhort you to abound more...For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we say this to you in the Word of the Lord, that we the living who remain to the coming of the Lord will not at all go before those who have fallen asleep. Because the Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven with a commanding shout of an archangel’s voice, and with God’s trumpet. And the dead in Christ will rise again first. Then we who remain alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to a meeting with the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. So, then, comfort each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, 14-18).