

# Collect, William Wilberforce, 1833 and Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, 1885

Prophetic Witnesses

HWHM

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Just and eternal God, we give you thanks for the stalwart faith and persistence of your servants William Wilberforce and Anthony Ashley-Cooper, who, undeterred by opposition and failure, held fast to a vision of justice in which no child of yours might suffer in enforced servitude and misery. Grant that we, drawn by that same Gospel vision, may persevere in serving the common good and caring for those who have been cast down, that they may be raised up through Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Background: William Wilberforce, 1833 and Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, 1885

**William Wilberforce** was born in 1759 and, after studies at Cambridge, entered Parliament in 1780. He was converted to evangelical Christianity in 1784 and became an important spokesman for evangelical ideas.

Wilberforce passionately promoted overseas missions, popular education, and the reformation of public manners and morals. He supported parliamentary reform and emancipation for Roman Catholics. Above all, he is remembered for his persistent, uncompromising, and single-minded crusade for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, for which he received the blessing of John Wesley. Acts of Parliament in 1807 finally abolished the slave trade in. It was not until 1833, a month after Wilberforce's death, that the Emancipation Act freed slaves in all British territories.

Wilberforce died on July 29, 1833 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

**Anthony Ashley-Cooper** was born in 1801, son of the Sixth Earl of Shaftesbury. He was educated at Harrow and Oxford, and became a Member of Parliament at the age of 25.

Inspired by his evangelical convictions, he soon took up the challenge of social reform, with particular concern for the just treatment of factory workers, particularly children. Lord Ashley led the charge in Parliament to limit workers' hours, improve working conditions and ensure the safety of workers.

He also successfully introduced legislation that regulated the working conditions of women and children in the mines, and restricted the abuse of little boys as chimney sweeps. He devoted his parliamentary career to issues of injustice at all levels of English society, with particular concern regarding the oppression of women and children. He was an outspoken critic of slavery.

For many years, Lord Ashley was president of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Like Wilberforce, he was a man of prayer and deep faith, and his diaries are filled with profound spiritual reflections.

Lord Ashley died on October 1, 1885 and is buried in the parish church on his estate at Wimborne St Giles in Dorset.

# A Reading from the Book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 25:11–15

A word fitly spoken

is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold

is a wise rebuke to a listening ear.

Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest

are faithful messengers to those who send them;

they refresh the spirit of their masters.

Like clouds and wind without rain

is one who boasts of a gift never given.

With patience a ruler may be persuaded,

and a soft tongue can break bones.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

## A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Galatians.

Galatians 3:23–29

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Here ends the reading.

# The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

Mark 9:33–37,42

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.

The Gospel of the Lord.

## Preface of the Incarnation

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; because you gave Jesus Christ,  
your only Son, to be born for us;  
who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit,  
was made perfect Man  
of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother;  
so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin,  
and receive power to become your children.