

Real Christianity Contrasted with the Prevailing Religious System by William Wilberforce, abridged and edited by James M. Houston, Introduction by Senator Mark O. Hatfield, published by Multnomah Press, Portland, Oregon, 1982; hb., 131 pp.,

Real Christianity's original title was *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity*. To make this classic not only readable but stimulating, Dr. Houston has edited, abridged and rewritten it. Senator Mark Hatfield wrote a fitting introduction for it. *Real Christianity* doesn't only give insight into Wilberforce's pilgrimage and reasons for his political decisions, but also into the Senator's as well. "It has become increasingly obvious to me," observes Hatfield, "that Christians reaching out in deed as well as word to touch the lives of the poor, the oppressed, the lonely, and the frightened, are the only expression in the flesh of the living Christ that many people are going to know. Wilberforce was certain, as I am, that social progress, if it is to be true, needs a biblical base." William Wilberforce (1759-1833) profoundly challenged England's ruling class to Christian action. He fought the slave trade through Christian political debate and influence. He called for repentance and a return to the Biblical foundations. He was concerned about the paucity of sound doctrinal preaching. He complained that "the unique doctrines of Christianity have almost disappeared from view. Even in the majority of sermons today, one can scarcely find a trace of biblical doctrine." But doctrine was not considered abstract teaching. Pure doctrine must be backed up with sound living. Wilberforce wrote, "there is perfect harmony between the major doctrines of the faith and their practical precepts."

Real Christianity aroused England. I hope that many will read this book meditatively and carefully. May it stir the conscience of today's Christians in the English speaking world. I heartily recommend this faith enriching and soul stirring little gem.

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