



# William Wilberforce: Life of the Great Anti-Slave-Trade Campaigner

*William Hague*

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## **William Wilberforce: Life of the Great Anti-Slave-Trade Campaigner** William Hague

Hague shows how Wilberforce, after his agonising conversion to evangelical Christianity, was able to lead a powerful tide of opinion, as MP for Hull, against the slave trade, a process which was to take up to half a century to be fully realised. Indeed, he succeeded in rallying to his cause the support in the Commons Debates of some of the finest orators in Parliament, having become one of the most respected speakers of those times.

Hague examines twenty three crucial years in British political life during which Wilberforce met characters as varied as Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, Tsar Alexander of Russia, and the one year old future Queen Victoria who used to play at his feet. He was friend and confidant of Pitt, Spencer Perceval and George Canning. He saw these figures raised up or destroyed in twenty three years of war and revolution.

Hague presents us with a man who teemed with contradictions, making him a hugely criticised and at times hated figure among his peers. His behaviour and the ideas he upheld led William Cobbett to describe him as a consummate hypocrite. He was described by radicals as a supporter of repression at home, and although he took up a long list of humanitarian causes, on his home turf, he would show himself to be a firm supporter of the instincts, interests and conservatism of the Yorkshire freeholders who sent him to Parliament.

William Hague's masterful study of this remarkable and pivotal figure in British politics brings to life the great triumphs and shattering disappointments he experienced in his campaign against the slave trade, and show how immense economic, social and political forces came to join together under the tireless persistence of this unique man.

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