

**VINDICIAE BRITANNICAE. CHRISTIANITY
INTERESTED IN THE DISMISSAL OF
MINISTERS. A VINDICATION OF THE
PEOPLE FROM THE CHARGE OF
BLASPHEMY, AND A DEFENCE OF THE
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS**

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Vindiciae Britannicae. Christianity interested in the dismissal of ministers. A vindication of the people from the charge of blasphemy, and a defence of the freedom of the press by W. Wilberforce

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W. WILBERFORCE

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Vindiciae Britannicae.

CHRISTIANITY

INTERESTED IN

THE DISMISSAL OF MINISTERS.

A

VINDICATION OF THE PEOPLE

FROM THE CHARGE OF

BLASPHEMY,

AND A

DEFENCE OF THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

IN SIX LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO

W. WILBERFORCE, ESQ. M. P.,

AND THE

RELIGIOUS PUBLIC.

BY CHRISTOPHILUS.

"Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see in her an eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unskaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms."

Milton's Speech for the Liberty of the Press.

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LONDON:

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1821.

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THIS

Humble Vindication

OF THE

PEOPLE AND THE PRESS,

IS INSCRIBED TO THE

LORDS AND "COMMONS"

OF THE

UNITED KINGDOM,

BY

ONE OF THE PEOPLE.

"Lords and Commons of England, consider what a Nation it is whereof ye are the Governors: a Nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, suttle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to. But now, as our obdurate clergy have with violence demeaned the matter, we are become, hitherto, the latest and backwardest scholars of whom God offered to have made us the teachers.

"Behold now this vast City; a city of refuge, the mansion house of Liberty, encompassed and surrounded

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with his protection; the shop of war has there not more anvils and hammers working, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice in defence of beleagured truth, then there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present as with their homage the approaching reformation: others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement. What could a man require more from a nation so pliant and so prone to seek after knowledge? What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful labourers, to make a knowing People, a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies?"

MILTON. *Speech for the Liberty of the Press.*

PREFACE.

THESE Letters have been hastily drawn up, at the earnest request of some zealous friends of Christianity. I have regarded more the matter than the style; and being exclusively occupied in a laborious profession, possessing only the leisure moments of the wearisome hour of midnight, I claim forbearance from the critical reader. Having been till within the last twelvemonth intimately connected with the political Press, and possessing considerable knowledge of the amazing mass of religious and polemical publication increasingly diffused throughout the whole empire; having also much opportunity, from personal connexion, for learning the habits and opinions of the manufacturing classes of society, I have esteemed it an imperative duty to vindicate the Press, and to rescue my fellow-countrymen from the bold and sweeping imputation of infidelity. It has been my wish, as far as possible, to confine myself, in the

following Letters, to this one object, and to avoid other questions of political and controversial prejudice. I have abstained, wherever I could, from any direct allusion to party and doctrinal differences of opinion, and am not aware that I have levelled at either even an unintentional *insinuation*; yet if the cap may sometimes fit, I have no desire to deprive the occupant of the honour of wearing it. My argument is, that a Ministry exhibiting such an ignorance of the real character of the People, must be utterly incompetent to hold the reins of government. The speech from the Throne (January 23, 1821,) leaves them completely in the lurch: and though the eulogy on the loyalty of the People is rather ambiguous, it is still sufficient for conviction. *Out of thine own mouths will I convict thee.*: “I well know that, notwithstanding the agitation produced by temporary circumstances, and amidst the distress which still presses upon a large portion of my subjects, the firmest reliance may be placed on the affectionate and loyal attachment to my person and government, of which I have recently received so many testimonials from all parts of my kingdom;

and which, while it is most grateful to the strongest feelings of my heart, I shall ever consider as the best and surest safeguard of my throne."

Though a student of the laws of England, I am also a Protestant Christian; and in that character I sometimes presume to read my Bible, and to meditate on the laws of Christ. There I discover the philosophy and foundation of all law—there I discover the extreme variance of the acts of the Ministry with the precepts of revelation—and there I have sometimes detected the most glaring contradictions between British and Gospel-legislation. *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken to you more than to God, judge ye?* Acts, iv. 19.

Our Lord foresaw these days of pretended zeal for religion. *Not every one that cries unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity.*