

<<普莱斯政治著作选>>

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内容概要

Richard Price was eminent Welsh philosopher and Dissenting minister. His political pamphlets won him considerable fame in the eighteenth century as a supporter of the American rebels in their struggle for independence, and for the enthusiasm with which he greeted opening events of the French Revolution. It was this enthusiasm which provoked Edmund Burke into writing *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Price noteworthy as a defender of freedom of thought (especially on religious matters), as a proponent of parliamentary reform, and as an advocate of a minimalist conception of government. He espoused the doctrine of natural rights and the principle of self-government, namely that every individual capable of independent judgment has the right to participate in some measure in the government of his society, and that every community capable of independence has the right to govern itself. This book is a collection of Price's most important pamphlets of the period 1759-89, and is accompanied by a comprehensive introduction putting Price's work in context, complete bibliographical material, a chronology, and biographical notes on persons mentioned in the texts.

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书籍目录

Introduction
Chronology
Biographical notes
A note on the texts
Britain's Happiness, and the Proper Improvement of it
Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, the War with America, and the Debts and Finances of the Kingdom
General Introduction
Observations on the Nature and Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America
Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty, and the War with America
A Fast Sermon
Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the Means of making it a Benefit to the World
The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement in the State of Man
A Discourse the love of our Country
Index

章节摘录

and when he asserts the competence of our legislature to revive the High-Commission Court and Star-Chamber , and its boundless authority not only over the people of Britain , but over distant communities who have no voice in it. But whatever may be Mr. Burke's sentiments on this subject , he cannot possibly think of the former account of government that 'it is a speculation which destroys all authority'. Both accounts establish an authority. The difference is that one derives it from the people and makes it a limited authority; and the other derives it from heaven and makes it unlimited. I have repeatedly declared my admiration of such a constitution of government as our own would be , were the House of Commons a fair representation of the kingdom and under no undue influence. The sum of all I have meant to maintain is , 'that legitimate government as opposed to oppression and tyranny , consists in the dominion of equal laws made with common consent of men over themselves and not in the dominion of communities over communities , or of any men over other men'. How then can it be pretended , that I have aimed at destroying all authority ?

Does our own constitution destroy all authority ?

Is the authority of equal laws made with common consent no authority ?

Must there be no government in a state that governs itself ?

Or , must an institution , contrived by the united counsels of the members of a community for restraining licentiousness and gaining security against injury and violence , encourage licentiousness and give to every one a power to commit what outrages he pleases ?

The Archbishop of York [William Markham] (in a sermon preached before the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts , 21 Feb.1777) has taken notice of some loose opinions , as he calls them , which have been lately current on civil liberty; some who mean delinquency having given accounts of it 'by which every man's honour is made to be the rule of his obedience , all the bad passions are let loose , and those dear interests abandoned to outrage for the protection of which we trust in law'. It is not difficult to guess at one of the delinquents intended in these words. In opposition to the horrid sentiments of liberty which they describe , but which in reality no man in his senses ever entertained , the Archbishop defines it to be simply the supremacy of law , or government by law , without adding to 'law' as I had done , the words 'equal and made with common consent'; and without opposing a government by law to a government by men , as others had done. According to him , therefore , the supremacy of law must be liberty , whatever the law is , or whoever makes it. In despotic countries government by law is the same with government by the will of one man , which Hooker has called 'the nursery of all men';but , according to this definition , it is liberty. In England formerly the law consigned to the flames all who denied certain established points of faith. Even now , it subjects to fines , imprisonment and banishment all teachers of religion who have not subscribed the doctrinal articles of the church of England; and the good Archbishop , not thinking the law in this case sufficiently rigorous , has proposed putting Protestant Dissenters under the same restraints with the Papists. And should this be done , if done by law , it will be the establishment of liberty. The truth is that a government by law , is or is not liberty , just as the laws are just or unjust; and as the body of the people do or do not participate in the power of making them. The learned prelate seems to have thought otherwise , and therefore has given a definition of liberty which might as well have been given of slavery. At the conclusion of his sermon , the Archbishop adds words which he calls comfortable , addressed to those who had been 'patient in tribulation' , and intimating that they might 'rejoice in hope' , 'a ray of brightness then appearing after a prospect which had been long dark'. And in an account which follows the sermon , from one of the missionaries in the province of New-York , it is said that , 'the rebellion would undoubtedly be crushed , and that then will be the time for taking steps for the increase of the church in America , by granting it an episcopate'.

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