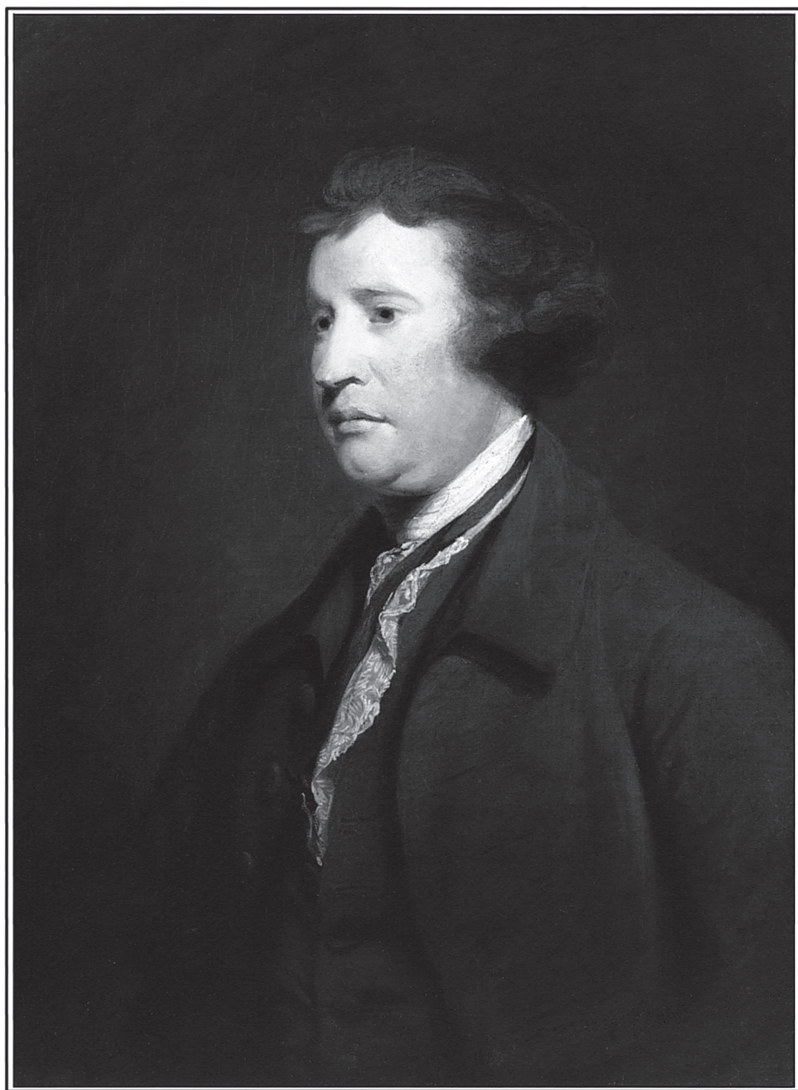


FURTHER REFLECTIONS
ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE



EDMUND BURKE

FURTHER
REFLECTIONS
ON THE
REVOLUTION
IN FRANCE

EDMUND BURKE

EDITED BY DANIEL E. RITCHIE



Liberty Fund
INDIANAPOLIS

This book is published by Liberty Fund, Inc., a foundation established to encourage study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals.



The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo and as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (*amagi*), or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

Foreword and other editorial additions © 1992 by Liberty Fund, Inc. All rights reserved. All inquiries should be addressed to Liberty Fund, Inc., 8335 Allison Pointe Trail, Suite 300, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250-1684. This book was manufactured in the United States of America.

Frontispiece photo courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London. Portrait from the studio of Joshua Reynolds.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Burke, Edmund, 1729–1797.

Further reflections on the revolution in France/Edmund Burke ; edited by Daniel E. Ritchie.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-86597-098-x (hardcover).—ISBN 0-86597-099-8 (pbk.)

1. Burke, Edmund, 1729–1797—Correspondence. 2. France—History—Revolution, 1789–1799—Foreign public opinion, British. 3. Public opinion—Great Britain—History—18th century. 4. Burke, Edmund, 1729–1797. Reflections on the Revolution in France. I. Ritchie, Daniel E. II. Title.

DC150.B8 1992

944.04—dc20

91-33265

11 10 09 08 07

C 6 5 4 3

12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 P 7 6 5 4 3

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

vii

EDITOR'S NOTE

xxi

LIST OF SHORT TITLES

xxiii

1. LETTER TO CHARLES-JEAN-FRANÇOIS DEPONT

(November 1789)

3

2. LETTER TO PHILIP FRANCIS

(February 1790)

19

3. A LETTER TO A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY

(May 1791)

27

4. AN APPEAL FROM THE NEW TO THE OLD WHIGS

(August 1791)

73

5. THOUGHTS ON FRENCH AFFAIRS

(December 1791)

203

6. LETTER TO WILLIAM ELLIOT

(May 1795)

257

7. A LETTER TO A NOBLE LORD

(February 1796)

277

INDEX

327

FOREWORD

In the two hundred years since Edmund Burke produced his writings on the French Revolution, the question of how to achieve liberty within a good society has remained a pressing one. Simon Schama's masterful chronicle of the French Revolution, *Citizens*, argues that the Revolution attempted to create two entities, "a potent state and . . . a community of free citizens," whose interests were irreconcilable. It was impossible, Schama states, to serve one without damaging the other.¹

Burke's alternative to revolutionary freedom and the revolutionary state may be found throughout this volume, especially in his description of what liberty is. "Practical liberty," as Burke calls it in the first work printed here, differs in almost every respect from the revolutionary liberty of the French on both the individual and corporate levels. The individual that Burke describes is the "gentleman," a member of a "natural aristocracy." This gentleman is educated to respect the ancients, for they anticipate the errors of the moderns, and to revere God. His upbringing includes a respect for parents, for we "begin our public affections in our families," as Burke says in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.² The gentleman enjoys his liberties in and through his social, economic, religious, and political institutions. They mediate his liberties through his obligations to them. Those obligations are not at war with the Englishman's liberties: rather, they provide the means for him to develop fully into the virtuous, free human being that God intended (p. 161). Aware of the hostility of the revolutionaries to the ideal of the gentleman, Burke writes: "The great object of your tyrants is to destroy the gentlemen of France. . . ." (p. 54).

By contrast, the individual suited for revolutionary liberty is the "citizen." To quote Schama on the cultural construction of the French citizen: "In this new world [of the French citizen,] heart

¹ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1989), p. 15.

² Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 315. Subsequent references to this work will be given as *Reflections*.

FOREWORD

was to be preferred to head; emotion to reason; nature to culture. . . . To possess *un coeur sensible* (a feeling heart) was the precondition for morality.”³ Rousseau, the chief educator of the revolutionary generation of French citizens, taught that liberty was to be enjoyed after the individual had *removed* his existing social, economic, religious, and political obligations.

Practical liberty differs from revolutionary liberty in its corporate construction also. This difference is epitomized by the distinction between Burke’s “Constitution” and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. Burke’s critics, such as Thomas Paine, jeered that Britain lacked a constitution altogether, for there was no single piece of paper with that title. Burke’s defense of the Constitution, especially in *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* and *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, shows the simple-mindedness of Paine’s criticism. Paper declarations and manifestoes of “universal” rights for abstract “man” do nothing to further liberty, argued Burke. Burke’s words on the American crisis in 1775 are apropos. The Americans, he said,

are not only devoted to liberty, but to liberty according to English ideas, and on English principles. Abstract liberty, like other mere abstractions, is not to be found. Liberty inheres in some sensible object; and every nation has formed to itself some favourite point, which by way of eminence becomes the criterion of their happiness.⁴

By the “sensible objects” of liberty, Burke means the actual practices of the assemblies, courts, churches, and commercial institutions of an actual people. The liberty pursued by Burke and the other Rockingham Whigs, he says in *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, “was a Liberty inseparable from order, from virtue, from morals, and from religion. . .” (p. 287). Burke consistently denied the possibility of discussing liberty in abstract terms and denied that liberty and constitutional law could ever truly be separate.

A fundamentally different approach to reality underlies the contrast between the practical liberty enjoyed by the gentleman under the British Constitution and the revolutionary liberty of the

³ Schama, p. 149.

⁴ Edmund Burke, *Speech on Conciliation*, in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 9 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854–62), I:464. Subsequent references to this collection will be given as *Works*, Bohn.

FOREWORD

French citizen. To Burke, every principle such as liberty must be *mediated* by actual practices. To put it another way, a spiritual truth becomes real only insofar as it becomes flesh. By contrast, the revolutionary finds that the limitations of the flesh enchain the spirit, and he therefore attempts to strip away appearances—conventions, habits, prejudices, customs, and traditions—in order to recover the essential reality beneath them, as Jeffrey Hart has explained.⁵ The spirit of revolutionary liberty is disembodied, and pervades an international atmosphere, inspiring universal movements now in one place, now in another, requiring universal declarations of the rights of man now in one time, now in another. Bodies, whether they are legislatures, churches, families, or individual persons, are merely accidental. Indeed, they have always been, throughout history, the limiting factor in the revolutionary's achievement of his goals. The revolutionary envisions an immediate liberty with no social institutions outside the self to limit his freedoms.

Burke never believed that the achievement of liberty, in historical time, could enable men somehow to transcend their human nature. The sort of liberty he envisioned enables men to realize their nature to the imperfect degree that it is possible on earth, but not to overcome their natural limitations. The paradoxical truth is that those fleshly limitations, especially as they are mediated by the artificial institutions of society, are the very means by which men achieve such liberty as they can. "Art is man's nature," writes Burke in *An Appeal*. In contrast to the sentimental French citizen, who saw art as opposed to nature, Burke writes:

The state of civil society . . . is a state of nature; and much more truly so than a savage and incoherent mode of life. For man is by nature reasonable; and he is never perfectly in his natural state, but when he is placed where reason may be best cultivated, and most predominates. Art is man's nature. We are as much, at least, in a state of nature in formed manhood, as in immature and helpless infancy. [p. 168]

Burke had argued against the revolutionary notion of a "natural society"—a society constructed with reference to an *immediate* "nature" and without reference to the actual practices of govern-

⁵ Jeffrey Hart, *Acts of Recovery* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1989), pp. 228-232.

FOREWORD

ment—ever since his first published work, the satirical *Vindication of Natural Society* (1756).

The belief that our liberties must be mediated to be enjoyed has consequences for both the individual and the corporate construction of freedom. In the earliest work printed here, the letter to Depont, Burke lays out the conditions for judging when a nation has achieved a “real *practical* liberty, with a government powerful to protect, [and] impotent to evade it. . .” (p. 11; Burke’s emphasis). He does not believe these conditions preclude a strong government, as Schama believes they did in France. On the contrary, practical liberty requires strong government. The individual, Burke writes, needs security of property, a free market for labor, freedom from confiscatory taxation, and freedom of expression. The corporate body, the state, needs a constitution which affirms the rule of law according to precedent, administers equal justice by an independent judiciary, gives control of the armed forces to a freely chosen legislative body, and provides for the security of ancient, prescriptive rights.

Toward the end of the letter to Depont, Burke begins to develop another individual precondition for practical liberty: virtue. The pursuit of virtue is what Burke means by “education” in the widest sense. In *Letter to William Elliot*, Burke says that the educated gentleman would not use his freedom as a pretext for throwing off morality (p. 274). Rather, morality and liberty are dependent upon each other, as he explains in yet another text:

Men are qualified for civil liberty, in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. . . . Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters. [*A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, p. 69]

As Burke well knew, the literary culture preceding the Revolution rejected as stultifying or unnatural, artificial or scholastic, the kind of moral reasoning he recommended. He knew that passion—whether the romantic passion of Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Héloïse* or the political passion of the revolutionary—was thought to justify itself by its own intensity and sincerity. The sympathies elicited by

FOREWORD

Rousseau's novel and his other works, especially *Emile* and the *Confessions*, were, again, very different from those that Burke considered necessary to an educated gentleman, and he profoundly disagreed with a revolutionary education. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that while the revolutionary citizen preferred the heart to the head, the Burkean gentleman preferred the head to the heart. In *Letter to Philip Francis*, where Burke responds to the criticism that his famous remembrance of the Queen of France is "pure foppery" and that her moral failings made her unworthy of Burke's attention, he protests that Francis's "natural sympathies" are disordered:

What! Are not high rank, great splendour of descent, great personal elegance and outward accomplishments, ingredients of moment in forming the interest we take in the misfortunes of men? The minds of those who do not feel thus, are not even systematically right. "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?" Why, because she was Hecuba, the queen of Troy, the wife of Priam, and suffered, in the close of life, a thousand calamities! I felt too for Hecuba, when I read the fine tragedy of Euripides upon her story. . . . [p. 23]

An education in Shakespeare and Euripides, Burke implies, teaches one how to feel for a queen. This is not to say, however, that all feeling is good, regardless of its object; Burke's opponents would be more likely to maintain that view. He maintains his preoccupation with the gentleman's proper mode of feeling from the first to the last in this volume, concluding *A Letter to a Noble Lord* with a meditation on how one of his friends would have felt, in 1796, had he witnessed the Revolution.

The debilitating effect of *false* sympathy, created by a misguided education, is explained in *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*. Burke warns against the Assembly's "scheme of educating the rising generation, the principles which they intend to instil, and the sympathies which they wish to form in the mind, at the season in which it is the most susceptible. . . . Rousseau is their canon of holy writ; in his life he is their canon of *Polycletus*; he is their standard figure of perfection" (pp. 46–47). The "natural" education of Emile and of Julie (in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*) removes them from a sympathy with their families and previous social relations. Reflecting on Julie's illicit passion for her tutor, Saint-Preux, which commanded the sympathies of Rousseau's readers, Burke comments, "That no

FOREWORD

means may exist of confederating against their tyranny, by the false sympathies of this Nouvelle Eloise, they endeavour to subvert those principles of domestic trust and fidelity, which form the discipline of social life" (p. 54).

Burke had already written in the *Reflections* that "[w]e begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen."⁶ By sending out their children to the Foundling Hospital and refusing to form a family, that most demanding and rewarding of all social relations, Rousseau and his mistress became for Burke the very antithesis of society's guardians. The Rousseauian education, charges Burke, teaches "[b]enevolence to the whole species, and want of feeling for every individual. . . ." The revolutionary citizen is prepared to exercise compassion among the liberated, universal masses, but as to individual Frenchmen, particularly family and neighbors, that's quite a different story. Beginning with the repudiation of actual family relations that should (according to the ancients quoted in *A Letter to a Member*) naturally elicit one's sympathies, the modern, revolutionary citizen ends with nothing more than a promise of redirecting his sympathies toward an abstract concept: the masses. By re-educating his sympathies away from the traditional and the familial, the habitual and the customary, the revolutionary citizen "liberated" himself from the very circumstances in which most ordinary citizens enjoyed their liberty.

One final contrast between the education of the gentleman and that of the citizen, with large consequences for the constitutional Parliamentarian, as against the passionate revolutionary, has to do with their attitudes about the past. Burke, like many of the great British writers of the eighteenth century, was profoundly skeptical of the Enlightenment and its claim to a moral and political wisdom greater than that of the ancients. "The author of the *Reflections* has *heard* a great deal concerning the modern lights," writes Burke of himself, "but he has not yet had the good fortune to *see* much of them. . . . Where the old authors whom he has read, and the old men whom he has conversed with, have left him in the dark, he is in the dark still" (p. 147).

Burke's strategy—which we may call a "useful fiction," as long as we recall that the deepest truths are often conveyed by fiction—is to discover modern advances latent in the wisdom of the ancients.

⁶ *Reflections*, p. 315.

FOREWORD

Burke is confident, for instance, that the constitutional settlement of the Glorious Revolution (1688–89) was a reassertion of *ancient* laws and that the Bill of Rights (1689) was merely declarative of pre-existing liberties and rights. To Thomas Paine, who in this respect may serve as a model for the revolutionary citizen, Burke's "referring to musty records and moldy parchments" was beneath contempt.

In *An Appeal*, Burke pleaded guilty as charged: "It is current that these old politicians [at the time of the Glorious Revolution] knew little of the rights of men; that they lost their way by groping about in the dark, and fumbling among rotten parchments and musty records" (p. 147). Not only does Burke argue that the ancients' understanding of liberty was superior to Paine's, he finds that they anticipated modern *errors* as well. He discovers in ancient (and medieval) letters the very categories of the revolutionary rhetoric of liberty that the moderns mistakenly believe they have invented. He continues by comparing the language of Paine with that of John Ball, a leader in the Peasant Revolt in 1381, and he quotes Tacitus on the Germans' invasion of the Gallic provinces: the invaders used the cant of liberty, but their real motives for war were lust, avarice, and a wish to leave their homes. The ancients, Burke suggests, can teach us to distinguish practical from revolutionary liberty.

The dispute between ancients and moderns is a clear case of an individual matter—education—with corporate consequences. Burke expounds these consequences in *Letter to William Elliot*, where he calls for a new Maccabeus to "assert the honor of the antient law." Also, in *Letter to a Member*, he marshals the authority of Juvenal and Cicero in his dispute with Rousseau over "natural" affections (pp. 50–51). In *Thoughts on French Affairs*, Burke refers with horror to the offer of Condorcet to serve as the dauphin's tutor. A year later, Condorcet's Report on Education (April 1792) would conclude that a profound knowledge of Greek and Latin was too difficult to attain to justify it as a goal for the French citizen, that classical literature was "full of errors," that the citizen's education should be secular, and that the teaching of moral principles was to be derived directly from natural sentiment and reason, rather than mediated by religion.

Burke, by contrast, argues that for a man to be free from the fear of any earthly master, he needs to learn to fear God. The alliance between liberty and piety is thus fundamental: "[Despots]

FOREWORD

know," he writes in *A Letter to a Member*, "that he who fears God fears nothing else; and therefore they eradicate from the mind, through their Voltaire, their Helvetius, and the rest of that infamous gang, that only sort of fear which generates true courage. Their object is, that their fellow citizens may be under the dominion of no awe, but that of their committee of research, and of their lanterne" (p. 55). Condorcet's goal for education was to form citizens who were free, equal, and serviceable to the *Patrie*. The older ideal of the gentleman is, ironically, more individual and, submitting to instruction from Greeks and Romans, Jews and Christians, more cosmopolitan. Contradictory as it may seem, Burke suggests that English liberty requires gentlemen whose education is decidedly "non-English": their natural sympathies for English authors can be assumed, but their sympathies for others separated by great distances of time and space must be cultivated.

After education, perhaps the clearest link between the individual and the corporate requirements for practical liberty is property. Of all the institutions that mediate between the British Constitution and the British gentleman, property and property rights summon up a number of Burke's most characteristic images and deepest thoughts.

Burke maintains that the security of property, especially landed property passed down through generations, is essential to a free people. The security of property does not guarantee liberty, but it serves as a precondition for liberty. For instance, Burke invites his opponents to reflect whether "under that domination [of the French absolute monarchs], though personal liberty has been precarious and insecure, property at least was ever violated." Property seems to be a necessary, though not sufficient, characteristic of a free society.

In Burke's thought, the propertied classes are represented by the Whig grandees of the Glorious Revolution and the rest of the landed gentry. Why are English liberties safer with propertied men as leaders, rather than with unpropertied men? Propertied men are not desperate men, as Harvey Mansfield comments, and their political ambitions are therefore somewhat more limited and trustworthy than those of unpropertied, politically ambitious ideologues.⁷

⁷ Harvey Mansfield, *Statesmanship and Party Government: A Study of Burke and Bolingbroke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 185.

FOREWORD

"We know that parties must ever exist in a free country," Burke says in *A Speech on Conciliation*.⁸ The Constitution could safely incorporate party government, Burke thought, if party leaders were drawn from the landed gentry, because they would be as careful of constitutional rights as they were of their own property rights.

In addition to security of property, Burke believed that practical, constitutional liberty required that a free people be led by a "natural aristocracy"—a term that seems intentionally to contrast with "hereditary aristocracy." Burke's later works defended the constitutional rights of hereditary aristocrats, who made up the House of Lords, even though he trusted them less than he did the landed gentry. In the final two works printed here, Burke delights in the irony of a commoner defending noblemen whose radical sentiments would overthrow their own rights. In 1795, he wrote *Letter to William Elliot* in response to an attack by the Duke of Norfolk, earl marshal of England and the eighth-ranking nobleman in the land. That work was but a trial run, however, for *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, a withering response to the Duke of Bedford and Earl of Lauderdale, who had attacked Burke's pension. "These noble persons," Burke replies with scorn, "have lost no time in conferring upon me, that sort of honour, which it is alone within their competence, and which it is certainly most congenial to their nature and their manners to bestow" (p. 279). Despite his disdain for these aristocrats, particularly for their delusive self-images as radicals, Burke describes the leaders needed by a free people as a natural aristocracy. Here, the connection between the individual and corporate requirements of practical liberty is again very close, and it explains the prerequisites necessary for the individual to be "naturally" suited for political leadership:

To be bred in a place of estimation; To see nothing low and sordid from one's infancy; To be taught to respect one's self; To be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye; To look early to public opinion . . . To have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse; To be enabled to draw the court and attention of the wise and learned wherever they are to be found . . . To be taught to despise danger in the pursuit of honour and duty . . . These are the circumstances of men, that form what I should call a *natural* aristocracy, without which there is no nation. [*An Appeal*, p. 168]

⁸ *Works*, Bohn, I:506.

FOREWORD

For a nation to maintain that it protects and enjoys liberty, it must be so constituted as to cultivate a natural aristocracy for its ruling class. This natural aristocracy is inseparable from the state, he says: "It is the soul to the body, without which the man does not exist." Only a nation that functions under its direction, Burke believes, deserves to be called "a people." A people is therefore neither the revolutionary mob addressed by John Ball, nor the counter-revolutionary mob that burned the home of Burke's opponent, Joseph Priestley, nor any "majority of men, told by the head." "The idea of a people is the idea of a corporation. It is wholly artificial"—just as, one might add, all of society is artificial (p. 163). Burke's natural aristocracy, which itself depends upon the artificial structures of a civilization, becomes the crucial term in his definition of a people: "When great multitudes act together, under *that discipline of nature*, I recognize the PEOPLE" (p. 169, italics added). "That discipline" is the direction of the multitudes by the natural aristocracy. Apparently, then, a merely hereditary, wealthy aristocracy does not lead to a virtuous liberty any more certainly than, as Burke recognized, a good education does. It is a help, like a good education, but not a guarantee. "Aristocrat" becomes, in Burke's language, a designation for the virtuous gentleman.

Burke finds an analogy for the political rights enjoyed under the British Constitution in the rights that accrue over time to the uncontested holders of lands—"prescriptive" rights. Whereas the revolutionary desires an *immediate* enjoyment of his liberty and submits to a government only upon sufferance, Burke believed that liberty, proceeding from God as natural law, is mediated through the established, prescriptive laws, usages, and customs of a people. Property rights are the outward and most visible manifestation of prescriptive rights.

The origins of property rights, like the origins of virtually every historical government, are shrouded in antiquity and even rooted in injustice. They cannot survive revolutionaries' continual questions concerning the legitimacy of their authority, especially if the revolutionaries suppose that the only legitimacy comes from the simple majority of a people at any given moment. But if, over time, a government fulfills the purposes of civil society—namely, the development of man's moral and reasonable nature—then the government (like the property holder) acquires a prescriptive authority. By the same token, the citizens of that land acquire all the rights

FOREWORD

that have accrued to them over time, through custom, legal precedent, royal charter, and Parliamentary law.

If the defender of revolutionary liberty finds this explanation of prescriptive rights unconvincing, Burke invites him to consider the ultimate consequences of his own argument: "Who are they who claim [land] by prescription and descent from certain gangs of banditti called Franks," he asks of the revolutionaries, "... whilst at the very time they tell me, that prescription and long possession form no title to property?" (p. 166). Were he to nullify the force of prescriptive law, the citizen would nullify his right to his own land and citizenship in France. The rotten parchments and musty records of the statute books, which guarantee property and prescriptive rights, arouse Burke's imagination as much as natural right arouses Thomas Paine's. Against the natural rights asserted to be the foundation of revolutionary liberty, Burke defended prescriptive rights, found in actual statutes and sanctioned by custom, as the best guarantee for a just, constitutional liberty. Burke "is resolved not 'to be wise beyond what is written' in the legislative record and practice; that when doubts arise on them, he endeavours to interpret one statute by another; and to reconcile them all to established recognized morals, and to the general antient known policy of the laws of England" (p. 134). The object of this submission to precedent is not legalism, but liberty. "They did not wish," writes Burke of the Rockingham Whigs, "that Liberty, in itself one of the first of blessings, should in it's perversion become the greatest curse which could fall upon mankind. To preserve the Constitution entire, . . . in all it's parts, was to them the first object" (p. 287). Burke knew that the inchoate tyrant begins by asserting an "extravagant liberty" against existing, repressive laws, and ends by ruling for his own pleasure (p. 119). The language of the statute books is not extravagant, but what it obtains, it keeps. The rotten parchments cannot compete with the promises of revolutionary liberty, but duly constituted courts guarantee what the tribunal must put off until the revolution is finally over.

The system of practices which govern the citizen and regulate Britain's mixed government of Kings, Lords, and Commons Burke calls the Constitution. Its prescriptions are authoritative, regardless of what a simple majority of persons living in England at any given time may think. The Constitution will change over time, as all living systems change, but its changes will come from its internal life and

FOREWORD

not, to repeat, from being acted upon by a majority maintaining that majority dictates alone possess legitimacy.

In Burke's view of practical liberty, the Constitution is where one must seek a resolution of the tension between principle and actuality. Or, rather, it is where one must seek a paradox at its most intense, as when Burke merges Windsor Castle with the Temple of Jerusalem as a symbol for the Constitution:

But as to *our* country and *our* race, as long as the well compacted structure of our church and state, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power, a fortress at once and a temple, shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion—as long as the British Monarchy, not more limited than fenced by the orders of the State, shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor . . . oversee and guard the subjected land . . . [a]s long as our Sovereign Lord the King, and his faithful subjects, the Lords and Commons of this realm, the triple cord, which no man can break; the solemn, sworn, constitutional frank-pledge of this nation . . . [a]s long as these endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe: and we are all safe together. . . . [*Letter to a Noble Lord*, p. 310]

Burke is symbolizing the Constitution as Coleridge defines “symbol”: the Constitution/Temple/Castle is characterized by the “translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible. . . .”⁹ The individual elements of the nation (King, Lords, Commons) participate in the unity of the Constitution without losing their identity. Or, as Coleridge said of Burke's metaphorical language in another place, this language expresses “meaning, image, and passion *triunely*.”¹⁰ Here, in Burke's example, one sees the merging of meaning and image, of ideal and concrete. There is always something beyond—in this example, the Sion that is not merely British. Yet Burke also leaves the reader whose sympathies derive from a Burkean rather than a Rousseauian education with the conviction

⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, ed. E.R. White, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 16 vols., ed. Kathleen Coburn, et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969–), VI:30.

¹⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 3 vols., ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York: Pantheon, 1957), III:2431f4. The quotation is from 1805, only nine years after Burke's words were written. The emphasis is Coleridge's.

FOREWORD

that he has participated in a union of the spirit and the flesh, liberated within history to the highest degree possible.

Nothing in Burke is immediate. The experience of liberty is not the immediate one that the revolutionary citizen wishes for. Practical liberty is mediated through a Constitution, which *A Letter to a Noble Lord* represents by the mediating symbols of Windsor Castle and the Temple. Nature is mediated through art, natural law through social institutions, the acts of a people through the leadership of a natural aristocracy. Burke's view of practical liberty is complex, but its complexities are those of human life. Its satisfactions are limited, but its limitations are those of human life as well.

DANIEL E. RITCHIE

Bethel College

EDITOR'S NOTE

Regarding the texts used for this edition, the letters to Charles-Jean-François Depont and Philip Francis come from *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke between the Year 1744, and the Period of his Decease, in 1797*, eds. Charles William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, and Sir Richard Bourke, 4 vols. London: Francis and John Rivington, 1844. They have been compared with the Copeland edition of Burke's *Correspondence*. The other texts have been chosen in accordance with William B. Todd's *Bibliography of Edmund Burke* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964) to represent the most authoritative version of each work.

The text of *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* is that of the first impression of the first English edition on 21 May 1791.

The text of *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, first published on 3 August 1791, comes from the fourth impression of the first edition.

Thoughts on French Affairs, written in December 1791, comes from the first impression of the first edition, published on 7 September 1797, in *Three Memorials on French Affairs*.

Letter to William Elliot, dated 26 May 1795, comes from the first impression of the first edition of *Two Letters on the Conduct of Our Domestick Parties, With Regard to French Politicks*, published on 31 October 1797.

The text of *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, first published on 24 February 1796, comes from the thirteenth impression.

Minor errors of spelling have been silently corrected, although the eighteenth-century orthography of the texts has been preserved. One or two minor doubtful readings have been revised for greater clarity, in accordance with the Bohn and Oxford editions, and other variants have been compared. Burke's eighteenth-century Greek has been modernized. Quotation marks surround translations from Latin if the quote is direct or fairly direct; quotation marks do not surround translations of proverbial Latin sayings and very indirect (or untraceable) Latin quotations. The editor's foot-