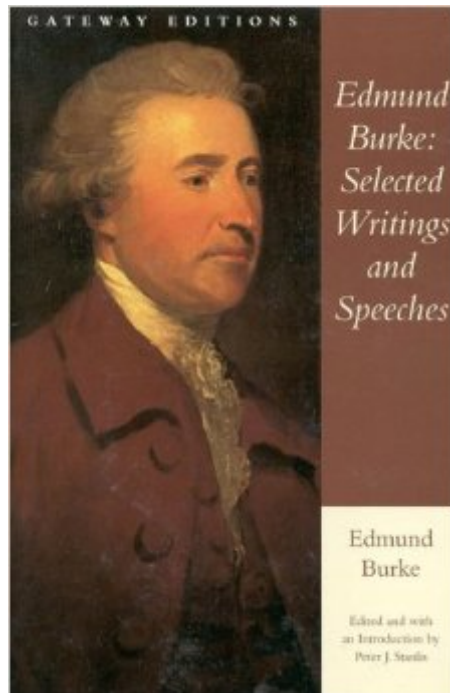


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Edmund Burke: Selected Writings And Speeches



Synopsis

This is the most comprehensive anthology of works and speeches by the statesman and political philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797). Peter J. Stanlis, professor of humanities emeritus at Rockford College, has taken care to preserve the beauty of Burke's prose while selecting the most essential passages from his numerous writings. Stanlis's introduction gives important insight into Burke's early life, education, professional training, literary and political career, prose style, political philosophy, and more.

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Customer Reviews

What a heady time were the late 1700's. For hundreds, even thousands, of years, Western man had been saddled with monarchy; kings who were said to rule by divine right. But by the end of the 18th century, Martin Luther, John Locke and Adam Smith had propounded the essential framework for modern liberal capitalist democracy and the Revolution in America had launched a grand experiment based on those ideas. Then came the French Revolution and it was blithely assumed that here again Liberty was on the march. When suddenly, rising to meet the tide of history, came Edmund Burke to excoriate the Jacobins and denounce the Revolution. In so doing, he not only did mankind a great service, by sounding the alarms against unchecked liberty, he also basically gave birth to modern Conservatism. Today, after a long period in the wilderness, particularly during the Cold War, Edmund Burke has come roaring back into fashion. In a sense, he has finally won his argument with the defenders of the French Revolution, two hundred years after the fact, and is

reaping the spoils. For two centuries a controversy has raged over Burke's political philosophy, in particular whether the great defender of American, Irish and Indian rights was inconsistent in opposing the French Revolution. The very existence and the stubborn persistence of this controversy seem to demonstrate either a complete misunderstanding or a willful misrepresentation of Burke's basic arguments. One suspects it's a bit of both. The greatness of Burke lies in the fact that he was among the first, and certainly the most eloquent, defenders of democracy to recognize the dangers it entails; that power in the hands of the masses is just as great a threat to liberty as when it lies in the hand of a dictator or king.

~Edmund Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches~ is a great anthology of conservative luminary Edmund Burke's political and social writings. Burke is considered by many to be the godfather of conservatism. The Irish-born British conservative entered Trinity College at Dublin in 1744 and later moved to London in 1750. In 1770, in his tract entitled the 'Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents,' he scolded George III for his efforts at undoing the hard-won liberties that were thought to have been secured by the Glorious Revolution. Burke was a champion of the rule of law, and surmised that prerogatives of the king may not usurp that law, and that even the magistrates are to be constrained by the law. He defended the constraining hand of Parliament against the king's usurpations and cronyism in political appointments. He supported principled, calm, deliberative criticism of royal prerogatives by Parliamentarians, which he held to be a vital link in the preservation of the British constitution and ordered liberty. Burke was an Old Whig, and on the Right side of the political spectrum and had no rosy delusions about human nature. His contemporaries on the Left like Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a positive and a optimistic view of human nature, and in his eyes humanity merely needed to be liberated from the decadent enslaving institutions of civil society. On the other hand, Burke recognized man's sinful nature and innate depravity and incorporated the Augustinian-Christian doctrine of original sin into his political philosophy. "Whatever disunites man from God, also disunites man from man," declares Burke. What is more, Burke does not see equality as self-evident, but he astutely observes that inequality is part of the natural order of things.

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