



**An Essay on the First Principles of Government:
And on the Nature of Political, Civil, and Religious
Liberty (Cambridge Library Collection - British &
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Joseph Priestley

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In this 1768 publication, Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) expounds his political philosophy, revealed in part through his earlier writings on education and theology. While teaching at the dissenting academy at Warrington, he had argued against a scheme of national education in his *Essay on a Course of Liberal Education* (1765), included and expanded on in his *Miscellaneous Observations Relating to Education* (1778), which has been reissued in this series. Here, he explains that freedoms of education and religion promote free discourse, which is essential for social progress. Such discourse is only possible when government protects both civil liberty, power over one's own actions, and political liberty, the right to vote and hold office. Although harshly criticised at first for its perceived attack on church and government authority, Priestley's work inspired later liberal political theorists, notably enthusing Jeremy Bentham with its incorporation of a principle of utility.

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