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Richard Price (1723–1791), Scotland and the Scottish Enlightenment

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Abstract

The dissenting minister, philosopher, and mathematician Richard Price (1723–1791) is usually located within Atlantic-republican, transnational, or Welsh contexts. Those analytical frameworks have obscured connections with Scotland. A Welshman who lived in Newington Green, near London, Price is an unlikely candidate for a study of Scottish philosophy. Criticising historiographical pigeonholing, and building on research on Price's engagement with a David Hume essay, and Adam Ferguson's Remarks on Dr. Price's Observations on the nature of civil liberty (1776), this paper examines Price's contacts with Scots. It identifies points of convergence and common concerns with Adam Ferguson, and it discusses contexts of discussion in Price's immediate circles of sociability, in particular with the Perthshire-born James Burgh, and through club life (where he met James Boswell) and private correspondence with Scottish burgh reformers and kirk ministers. This article stresses that Price's engagement with Scots is not one of outright disagreement (or opposition between a pragmatic and an idealistic Enlightenment) but a sociable process in which Price, his fellow Rational Dissenters and the Scottish literati shared an ethic of mutual respect and bold, honest discussion. A nuanced picture emerges in which Price appears as knowledgeable in some aspects of Scottish life and as a respected figure, even in the case of disagreement over important philosophical or political issues.

Introduction

Richard Price (1723–1791) is a name familiar to students of the French Revolution, of British culture of the 1790s, of English Dissent and of Welsh intellectual history—but probably only peripherally so to specialists of the Scottish Enlightenment. Price's connections to Scotland

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are not an established historiographical topic, especially because he has long been associated to the 'Atlantic' paradigm and more recently reclaimed as a Welsh philosopher. Price belonged to transnational networks, believed and saw that ideas travelled across borders, and while many historians have highlighted his connections to the American Founding Fathers, his pan-British networks have not received the attention they deserve.[1] Some historiographical schools tend to dissociate Price from Scotland, and sometimes to oppose Price to supposedly more sensible or more practical Scots. This article seeks to bring out some links of sociability and mutual understanding, as well as some similarities, without denying glaring differences. Price frequented, corresponded with, or knew of, a number of Scots: beside Adam Ferguson, David Hume, Lord Monboddo, William Robertson, Adam Smith, Thomas Reid, he also knew less famous figures. This article does not purport to establish all the intellectual connections between Price and the literati—'the Scottish Enlightenment'—because this group is too varied and too extensive. Rather, this article offers to chart Price's Scottish contacts, and to present a panorama rather than in-depth textual criticism of particular thinkers. It sets out to counter several historiographical constructions of the 'Enlightenment' that tend to pigeonhole Price and the Scots in separate quarters, and therefore isolate them and ignore grounds of agreement, and, especially, ties of sociability. Despite many substantial disagreements on various philosophical and political issues, Richard Price and the thinkers associated with the Scottish Enlightenment nurtured intellectual relations that were not primarily hostile but rather rested on an ethic of mutual respect and an agreement to disagree. Sociability provided a common ground explaining this mutual respect and provides a corrective to antagonistic views expressed in pamphlets by Ferguson and lesser-known writers.

Some biographical information is useful at this point.[2] A Welsh-born Presbyterian clergyman who spent most his life in Newington Green, a middle-class suburb of London, Price thought of himself as a preacher first and foremost, but was also somewhat of a polymath, though to a lesser degree than his friend Joseph Priestley, to whom he has usually been compared. An accomplished mathematician, he contributed to actuarial science and demography, and commented on economics and especially on the national debt. He also authored a bulky treatise of moral philosophy and burst into the political arena in March 1776 with *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America*, a best-selling pamphlet that defended reconciliation with the American colonies but was widely read, in Britain and in the colonies, as a justification for independence. This pamphlet attracted dozens of refutations, some from Scotland, and turned Price into a leading pro-American figure. Posterity, however, has mainly retained his sermon preached to the London Revolution Society, a club of Dissenters established to celebrate the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688–1689. In his sermon on 4 November 1789, published soon after as *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, Price praised the French Revolution

1 Price is not mentioned in Mark C. Wallace and Jane Rendall (eds), *Association and Enlightenment: Scottish Clubs and Societies, 1700–1830* (Lewisburg, PA; London, 2020).

2 There are two biographies of Price: David Oswald Thomas, *The Honest Mind: The Thought and Work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977); and Paul Frame, *Liberty's Apostle: Richard Price, His Life and Times*, Wales and the French Revolution (Cardiff, 2015). Thomas emphasises Price's intellectual achievements while Frame's study is more approachable for the general public.

as the culmination of the revolution of 1688 and the American Revolution. Edmund Burke selected Price as a prime target in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (November 1790), and Burke's attacks on Price's allegedly misguided, and dangerous, idealism, have tarnished his reputation ever since.

This article will first present a few Scottish views of Price, showing that, even among 'major' figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, famous critical judgments should not obscure less frequently cited defences of his life and work. The second section reviews historiographical categorisations that established an opposition between reasonable Scots and an idealistic, ultimately misguided Dr Price: such a binary opposition was born in his own lifetime and has continued ever since. As a result, disagreements have been highlighted and common points neglected. The third section examines Price's engagement with Adam Ferguson and David Hume; without any attempt to exhaust the topic, the section presents evidence of common views and mutual respect. This paves the way for the fourth section, which looks at Price's sociable circles and proposes that his relationships with Scottish literati were premised on an ethic of respectful conversation. The following sections examine Price's relations with Scots, starting from his familiar surroundings in London, and moving outwards toward networks of correspondence and indirect communication with Scotland (through friends returning from Edinburgh for instance). The last sections adduce evidence from diaries, autobiographies and correspondence to gauge Price's engagements with Scots in various sociable networks. Price refused to give direct advice to Scottish burgh reformers; however, his works certainly fuelled political discussion in Scotland during the American Revolutionary War. Though sociable links held firm, they were strained to breaking point when the French Revolution polarised opinion: then, Price played a new role of go-between with French intellectuals, providing them with news from Scotland, especially after Adam Smith's death.

Ferguson, Smith, Millar and Reid, or the variety of judgments passed on Price

Price's reception among the Scots was not unified. It is impossible to argue that 'the Scots' or 'the Scottish Enlightenment' formed a coherent block rejecting Price's 'radicalism' in favour of a more practical 'Enlightenment'. The brief biographical outline given does not do justice to his polymathic achievements and especially to the variety of his Scottish contacts. Even a cursory review of major figures, however, makes it clear at this stage that there was no agreement in condemning him.

Admittedly, several Scots brought out refutations of Price's political philosophy and denounced his principles as dangerous. Adam Ferguson gave him credit for candour and took his views seriously in *Remarks on Dr. Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776), which constitutes the longest and most systematic engagement with Price's thought by a Scot and possibly the most intellectually cogent of the times.[3] While many hack writers

[3] Adam Ferguson, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Lately Published by Dr. Price, Intitled, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of*

vilified Price, Ferguson proposed a philosophically grounded refutation of his ideas. Other Scottish literati passed more fleeting, disparaging comments on Price. Adam Smith famously wrote that:

> Price[']s speculations cannot fail to sink into the neglect that they have always deserved. I have always considered him as a factious citizen, a most superficial Philosopher and by no means an able calculator.[4]

For all that, Smith and Price partly spoke the same language, and Donald Winch showed that it is impossible to neatly align Smith with Burke against Price.

Without neglecting the evidence of hostility to Price, this paper contends that Price had extensive contact with Scots in London and by correspondence, and that intellectual exchanges were polite and respectful, and often fruitful, although Price disagreed with most Scots on basic issues, at least on moral philosophy (his own rational intuitionism being at odds with all Scottish doctrines of his own times, from David Hume's sentimentalism to Common Sense philosophy). One indication of possible harmonious conversation is the number of Scots—less numerous that that of critics, admittedly—who vindicated Price's legacy and ideas. John Millar, Professor of Civil Law at the University of Glasgow, and Thomas Reid, Professor of Moral Philosophy also at Glasgow, celebrated the Fourteenth of July (the Fall of the Bastille) in 1791 in Glasgow and shared Price's enthusiasm for the French Revolution.[5] In a draft letter penned a month after the Glasgow dinner, Thomas Reid exclaimed:

> I have been very long perswaded, that a Nation, to be free, needs onely to know the Rights of Man. I have lived to see this Knowledge spread far beyond my most sanguine hopes, and produce glorious Effects. God grant it may spread more and more & that those who taste the Sweets of Liberty may not turn giddy but make a wise and sober Use of it.[6]

This development is very similar to the beginning of Price's peroration, a variation on the *nunc dimittis*:

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the War with America, &c. In a Letter from a Gentleman in the Country to a Member of Parliament (London, 1776).

4 Smith to George Chalmers (22 December 1785), quoted in Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750–1834* (Cambridge, 1996), 125.

5 Bob Harris, *The Scottish People and the French Revolution* (London, 2008), 25.

6 Thomas Reid, *The Correspondence of Thomas Reid*, ed. Paul Wood, (Edinburgh, 2002), 223. There remain two letters from Reid to Price, from 1772/3 and 1775: *The Correspondence of Richard Price*, ed. D. O. Thomas and W. Bernard Peach, (3 vols, Durham, NC; Cardiff, UK, 1983), I, 153–4, 192–5.

> What an eventful period is this! I am thankful that I have lived to it; and I could almost say, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error.[7]

Shortly after Price's death, James Mackintosh published *Vindiciae Gallicae*, an influential defence of Price and his interpretation of the Glorious Revolution from a moderate Whig standpoint.[8] Though a full study of the Scottish reception of Price goes beyond the scope of this article, it should clearly appear that opposing Price to 'the Scots' makes no sense.

Price versus the Scots, or the result of unhelpful historiographical pigeonholing

This section reviews three approaches that had tended to isolate Price from the Scots, invariably placing him in the 'wrong' category: the classical republican Atlantic paradigm associated with J. G. A. Pocock, neo-conservative and libertarian approaches premised on the notion of 'spontaneous order', and finally Jonathan Israel's dichotomy of radical and moderate Enlightenments. Despite their evident divergent political leanings, all three approaches have located Price apart from a broad British moderate tradition and placed it, for better or for worse, in a French-style, democratic-revolutionary trend.

One common characterisation of Price has been that of an 'Atlantic' thinker born in Wales, based in London and looking westward for the advent of liberty while corresponding with French *philosophes*.[9] In 1959, Robert Palmer noted his contribution to the framing of the American Constitution through debates with John Adams and Turgot.[10] Price's language was consonant with that of the American Insurgents and was part of a family of 'Whig' idioms. For J. G. A. Pocock:

> Price was a moralist first and a democrat (to the extent that he was one) by way of consequence. He infuriated those of his time who believed in the primacy of civil society and its authority, incurring the wrath of figures as diverse as Adam Ferguson, Josiah Tucker, Edmund Burke and John Adams.[11]

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7 Richard Price, *Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge; New York, 1991), 195.

8 J. Mackintosh, *Vindiciæ Gallicæ: Defence of the French Revolution. A Critical Edition*, ed. E. Garratt (New York, 2007), 137–54.

9 Chris Williams, ed., *Richard Price and the Atlantic Revolution* (Cardiff, 1991).

10 Robert R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, (3 vols, Princeton, 1967), I, 267–79.

11 J. G. A. Pocock, 'Political Thought in the English-Speaking Atlantic, 1760–1790. Part 2: Empire, Revolution and the End of Early Modernity', in J. G. A. Pocock, Gordon J. Schochet, and Lois G. Schwoerer (eds), *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800* (Cambridge; New York, 1993), 286.

Price was a Christian and a minister of the church even before he was a moralist, but indeed his plea for democracy (in theory if not in practice) stood on moral and theological grounds. Pocock identified an important faultline separating Price from some of his detractors, including Ferguson. His remark confirms that discourses cut across national boundaries. Price and his Scottish contacts all drew on transnational idioms. The Atlantic historiography, while not looking at Scotland specifically, notes Scottish participation in some of Price's sociability circles, for instance James Boswell's regular attendance at the Club of Honest Whigs, a familiar resort of Benjamin Franklin, Price and other friends of America in London.[12] Price regularly heard of Scots-Americans, for instance of Samuel Blair's election to the College of New Jersey in 1787.[13] Price has never really been considered within either the British or four-nation frameworks; rather, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, he has been rediscovered as a Welsh thinker, with no attention paid to Scottish connections.[14]

Other historiographical tendencies have set Price against the Scots. Though they adopt antithetical ideological viewpoints, the overall effect is similar: oversimplification and an emphasis on division where common ground existed. Friedrich Hayek, followed by Gertrude Himmelfarb in a neo-conservative interpretation, and Ronald Hamowy, in a libertarian vein, all aligned Price with a rationalistic, 'French' (essentially Rousseauvian) line of political theory leading inexorably to totalitarianism.[15] Hamowy took up Hayek's view that ethical systems founded differences in political outlook, 'the one empirical and unsystematic, the other speculative and rationalistic'.[16] Price and Ferguson, in this interpretation, embody two competing Whig views of the American Revolution: a dangerously rationalistic project pitted against a moderate and constructive analysis. Himmelfarb viewed Price as part of the wrong king of Enlightenment, the destructive one that raged in the French Revolution, while the Scots shone in the sound 'British Enlightenment' and inspired the practical 'American Enlightenment'. Central to those neoconservative and libertarian lines of criticism is the alleged difference between Ferguson's advocacy of a self-regulating civil society and Price's 'French'-style argument for state intervention pregnant with tyranny. Jonathan Israel provides another influential classification, reversing criteria of association and this time placing Price, Priestley and other Rational Dissenters firmly within the progressive 'Radical Enlightenment' while the Scots fell on the 'moderate' side.[17]

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12 V. W. Crane, 'The Club of Honest Whigs: Friends of Science and Liberty', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 23 (1966), 210–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/1922508

13 Benjamin Rush to Price, 29 July 1787, in Price, *Correspondence*, III, 139.

14 See the 'Wales and the French Revolution' series (University of Wales Press, 2012–2015), which comprises Paul Frame's biography of Price and other studies on political discourse in late eighteenth-century Wales.

15 Friedrich A. Hayek, 'Individualism: True and False', in *Individualism and Economic Order* (London, 1949), 1–32; Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York, 2005); Ronald Hamowy, 'Two Whig Views of the American Revolution: Adam Ferguson's Response to Richard Price', *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*, 31 (2003), 3–35.

16 Hamowy, 'Two Whig Views of the American Revolution', 13.

17 Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford; New York, 2011), 206–69 on Hume and the Scottish Enlightenment.

Though politically opposed, Hayek's and Israel's interpretive lines share a tendency to select Price's most philosophically abstract pronouncements (e.g., in the first sections of the 1776 *Observations*) and systematically ignore his practical qualifications, for instance those he voiced in his answer to critics in *Additional Observations* (1777), as will be developed in the next section. In 1782, in response to Irish Volunteers consulting him for practical measures to reform the Dublin Parliament, Price recommended caution, respect for local customs and acquired rights—certainly not the imposition of an abstract bureaucratic scheme.[18] Furthermore, a full view of Price's achievements demonstrates his practical sense. To the accusation of theoretical, heartless utopianism, the best answer is Price's advice to the Church of Scotland minister Alexander Webster 'relative to the establishment for a provision to the widows and children of the ministers and professors in Scotland'.[19] Price applied his mathematical and demographic learning to the solution of a very practical problem, that of setting the premiums of an insurance company. His advice was followed because the board realised the financial basis of their company (which still exists under the name of Scottish Widows) was unsound and must be changed.

Disagreement and common ground: Price, Ferguson, and Hume

Fortunately, a few historians have devoted more detailed attention to Price and Scottish literati. Iain McDaniel showed that opposition between Ferguson and Price was not just one of pamphleteering but hinged on large republican categories in a longstanding debate. It had started early, at least in the early 1770s, when Ferguson targeted Price's perceived commitment to Harringtonian agrarian reform, which was supposedly hostile to modern commercial society.[20] Ferguson's *Remarks on a Pamphlet Lately Published by Dr. Price* (1776) are now recognised as a lucid exposition of political philosophy.[21] They are the only book-length answer to Price coming from an individual connected with the Scottish Enlightenment. I would like to stress that Price's and Ferguson's positions were closer than they appear at first sight, especially in view of corrections made by Price later.

Price is discussed in several passages, mostly 447–8.

18 Price to Lieutenant-Colonel Sharman, 7 August 1783, in Price, *Correspondence*, II, 188–92. The letters of Price and five other British reformers were published in book form in 1783.

19 Richard Price, *A Letter from the Rev. Dr Webster, of Edinburgh, to the Rev. Dr Price, of London, and Dr Price's Answer, Relative to the Establishment for a Provision to the Widows and Children of the Ministers and Professors in Scotland.* (Edinburgh, 1771). It is reprinted in Price, *Correspondence*, I, 118–20.

20 Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Cambridge, MA; London, 2013), 137–8; Yiftah Elazar, 'Adam Ferguson on Modern Liberty and the Absurdity of Democracy', *History of Political Thought*, 35 (2014), 768–87.

21 McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment*, 185.

A crucial fact framing the whole Price–Ferguson exchange is a common commitment to plain-dealing, yet courteous, exchange. Ferguson, then Professor of pneumatics and moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, put pen to paper on the invitation of the Treasury, the government wishing 'to print at least one moderate and well-reasoned reply to Price', as Richard Sher explains.[22] Hamowy recognises that Ferguson's was '[o]ne of the most measured of the published rebuttals to Price's essay'.[23] Ferguson was measured and courteous, in stark contrast with most pamphlets published in Scotland at the time.[24] Price and other Dissenters, meanwhile, cherished 'candour', an attitude of intellectual honesty and respect for a contradicter's opinions.[25] Dissenting 'candour' entailed an attitude of intellectual honesty but also a willingness to sift and criticise received opinions. A systematic comparison between Dissenting 'candour' and Scottish Enlightenment ideas of conversation would probably reveal many common features, including the refusal of *ad hominem* arguments and of arguments of authority based on reputation, tradition or social standing. Both Price and Ferguson insisted on such measured yet frank conversation. Ferguson, in his *Remarks*, avoided any *ad hominem* argument, peppering his text with phrases such as: 'let the question be fairly stated and put in the train of pacific discussion'.[26] This resonates with remarks made by Price in the prefatory material of his own pamphlets, and more broadly with the Dissenting ethic of candour. In the preface to the 1779 *Two Tracts*, combining *Observations* and *Addition Observations*, Price himself, as Hamowy noted, 'referred to [Ferguson] as 'one even of the most candid as well as the ablest of my opponents'.[27]

The two thinkers started from widely different sets of principles, Price arguing on the basis of Lockean natural right and Ferguson on constitutional and legal precedent. Beyond the controversy over the American War, Price's and Ferguson's visions of society also differed significantly. Price promoted a society of virtuous smallholders, without nobles and established clergy, and occasionally praised agrarian laws. In 1772, before the American War, Ferguson rejected Harringtonian republicanism, a doctrine associated with Price among others.[28] However, similarities appear when the focus broadens to include other writings by Price, especially his correspondence and his pamphlet giving advice to the fledgling United States, published in 1784 as *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World*. This wider corpus built around the American Revolution comprises points of convergence with Ferguson, on both political ideology and the ethic of

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22 Richard Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 2016), 264.

23 Hamowy, 'Two Whig Views of the American Revolution', 5.

24 See e.g., Thomas Blacklock, *Remarks on the Nature and Extent of Liberty, as Compatible with the Genius of Civil Societies…* (Edinburgh; London, 1776).

25 Alan Saunders, 'The State as Highwayman: From Candour to Rights', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion : Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), 241–71.

26 Adam Ferguson, *Adam Ferguson's Later Writings: New Letters and an Essay on the French Revolution*, ed. Ian Stewart and Max Skjönsberg (Edinburgh, 2023), 150.

27 Hamowy, 'Two Whig Views of the American Revolution', 10.

28 McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment*, 138–9.

public discourse. Was Price the democrat that Ferguson thought he was? Ferguson blamed him for prioritising broad popular political participation, as if democracy by itself promoted a just and free government:

> Corrupt and vicious men, assembled in great bodies, cannot have a greater curse bestowed upon them, than the power of governing themselves.[29]

But Price would agree with this pronouncement. Corruption, for instance in the form of the 'Influence of the Crown', sapped the possibility of a free government. He repeatedly wrote that moral virtue was a prerequisite for self-government, and while he considered that universal male suffrage was ideal, he advised more limited reform for Britain and Ireland, suggesting that in Ireland only copyholders and leaseholders could be safely entrusted with the vote.[30] Price was no enthusiastic democrat. He warned against democratic unicameral chambers, prone to excessive emotions, and defended 'an hereditary council, consisting of men of the first rank in the state'.[31] If the United States should ideally not set up a hereditary upper house, Price felt Britain should keep its House of Lords. Concessions and qualifications due to the impossibility of an ideal representation in the degenerate state of Britain brought Price considerably closer to Ferguson than appears in the 1776 clash of pamphlets.

As to the American crisis, as distinct from ideal constitutional arrangements, Ferguson recognised that Britain should adapt its policies to changing circumstances, that the colonies needed 'better security for their property' and that they should ask for it using constitutional forms.[32] Price, again, would not object to that: 'security for … property' was a basic Lockean tenet. Ferguson wanted the Americans to specify which tax they would consent to in order to pay back the debts of the empire. Price agreed that the fiscal system must be overhauled. The fundamental divide between Price and Ferguson was over Britain's right to tax the unrepresented colonies. Yet, it seems that Price and Ferguson wished a similar way out of the crisis: a financial settlement enabling the colonists to contribute to the imperial budget, and a continuation of Britain's control over the empire and the armed forces. Ferguson felt the Americans were not willing to pay, while Price felt Lord Shelburne's reconciliation plan might win the Americans back.[33]

Similar anxieties emerge over America's potential as an independent nation. In 1776, Ferguson quoted Montesquieu against Price on the instability of democracy and its impossibility beyond a city or a small state. An independent America:

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29 Ferguson, *Adam Ferguson's Later Writings*, 141.

30 Rémy Duthille, *Le Discours radical en Grande-Bretagne, 1768–1789* (Oxford, 2017), 285.

31 Price, *Writings*, 37.

32 *Adam Ferguson's Later Writings*, 150.

33 *Adam Ferguson's Later Writings*, 153. Price presented Shelburne's 10 November, 1775, speech to the Lords in conclusion to the 1776 *Observations* (*Political Writings*, 72–4).

> a republic extending 1200 miles in one direction, and without any known bounds in the other, is still an experiment to be made in the history of mankind.[34]

This interrogation was common to many, and Price was not ready to hail the prospect of a boundless republic unreservedly. After the war, in his *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the Means of making it a Benefit to the World* (1784),[35] he repeatedly voiced anxiety about the possibility of maintaining a democracy of small, independent, farmers for a long time. The continuance of slavery would spell civil war and the end of the republic, he warned.

In the *Additional Observations*, published in 1777 in answer to his critics, Price quoted twice from *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Tellingly, the extracts are taken from Part vi. sect. 5, whose topic, 'Of Corruption, as it tends to Political Slavery', was highly relevant to Price's criticism of Britain's degraded political and martial spirit and praise of the more rustic, and virtuous Americans. Price borrows two ideas from Ferguson. First, conquest and 'the perpetual enlargement of territory' surely lead to despotism.[36] The idea is not original to Ferguson and Price may have quoted *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* specifically, instead of, for instance, Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*,[37] because Ferguson had written against him in 1776. The other reference to Ferguson concerns hostility to standing armies, an idea originating with seventeenth-century English Commonwealthmen and Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, rather than Ferguson:

> Dr Ferguson calls the establishment of standing armies 'a fatal refinement in the present state of civil government.' Mr Hume pronounces 'our standing army a moral distemper in the British constitution, of which it must inevitably perish'.[38]

Price certainly feared civilisation's potential for moral and political decline, and often opposed the pure, virtuous Americans and the degenerate Britons. He may well have been influenced by Ferguson's historical understanding of the stages of civilisation, though only a few sentences penned in the idiom of civilisation decline justify this hypothesis. Price's anxiety about America's potential of regenerating Old Europe, and his fear of possible American decadence, suggest a cyclical view of civilisation. In early 1776, Price wrote in *Observations*:

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34 *Adam Ferguson's Later Writings*, 149.

35 Price, *Political Writings*, 116–51.

36 Price, *Political Writings*, 99. The original is: Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge; New York, 1995), 257.

37 Price quoted Montesquieu several times (especially *Political Writings*, 30, 66, 67, 80).

38 Price, *Political Writings*, 47; Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 256. Price quotes from Hume's 'Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth'. The phrase 'mortal distemper' appeared in editions of Hume's essays until 1760: David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Tom Lamar Beauchamp and Mark A. Box, (2 vols, Oxford, 2021), II, 1147.

> Our American Colonies, particularly the northern ones, have been for some time in the happiest state of society or in that middle state of civilization, between its first rude and its last refined and corrupt states.[39]

This phraseology is reminiscent of the three-stage vision of civilisation expounded in the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767).

The hypothesis of a Fergusonian influence over Price's view of historical decline is not easy to substantiate given the concision of Price's writings. The twin themes of corruption and decline pervaded many of Price's readings, for instance Burgh's *Political Disquisitions* (1774–1776), as well as Dissenting millenarianism.[40] Those themes, therefore, cannot constitute conclusive evidence. However, Price's handling of Locke's theory of the state of nature provides a conjecture. Price wrote at the outset of the *Observations* that his principles were no other than 'those taught by Mr. Locke',[41] yet he never mentioned any primeval social contract, which is a central concept in Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*.[42] It is of course difficult to interpret silence, but one may surmise that the fiction of the social contract had become untenable before the advances of Scottish conjectural history. This suggests Price may have embraced a more historical-stadial, 'Scottish' view of the progress and declension of societies, coexisting with other sources. Nor was Price's work merely conjectural. As early as 1769, his research in demographics proved that mortality was higher in large cities, especially London. He drew moral conclusions couched in the language of sin but also civilisational advance:

> Moderate towns, being seats of refinement, emulation, and arts, may be public advantages. But great towns, long before they grow to half the bulk of London, become checks on population of too hurtful a nature, nurseries of debauchery and voluptuousness.[43]

Price's view that the progress of civilisation entails urbanisation and 'luxury', his hostility to standing armies[44] and his fears of territorial enlargement and despotism suggest echoes with stadial theory of civil society, though textual parallels are slim. Rather than a full-fledged

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39 Price, *Political Writings*, 56.

40 On Price's millenarian optimism: Jack Fruchtman, *The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: A Study in Late Eighteenth-Century English Republican Millennianism* (Philadelphia, 1983).

41 Price, *Political Writings*, 20.

42 Priestley and other contemporaries of Price also eschewed the state of nature: H. V. S. Ogden, 'The State of Nature and the Decline of Lockian Political Theory in England, 1760–1800', *American Historical Review*, 46/1 (1940), 21–44, https://doi.org/10.2307/1839787.

43 Richard Price, 'Observations on the Expectations of Lives, the Increase of Mankind, the Influence of Great Towns on Population, and Particularly the State of London with Respect to Healthfulness and Number of Inhabitants. In a Letter from Richard Price, F.R.S. to Benjamin Franklin, Esq, L.L.D. and F.R.S', *Transactions of the Royal Society* 59 (1769) 89–125; reprinted in Price, *Correspondence*, I, 58–79, quotation p. 75.

44 See especially Price, *Political Writings*, 98.

adoption of a Fergusonian view of civilisation, Price's quotations of the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* in *Additional Observations* can plausibly be interpreted as strategic responses to Ferguson's *Remarks*, aiming to show that Ferguson himself endorsed at least some of Price's views.

While convergences between Price and Ferguson are easy to overlook in the heat of battle, those between Price and Hume are also elusive because the two philosophers defended such different doctrines on knowledge, faith and politics. Ryu Susato, however, has shown how a variety of British reformers, a priori hostile to Hume's conservatism, engaged with the enigmatic essay 'Idea of the Perfect Commonwealth'. Price mentioned the essay as a model of political construction in a speech during a public political dinner of the Revolution Society on 4 November, 1790—exactly a year after his fateful discourse and in the same society. Price then must have taken Hume's proposals (two-tiered elections and large republics) seriously, or he would not have pronounced Hume's name in vain at such a public dinner attended by dozens of guests.[45] This is tantalising evidence, and unfortunately Price never picked up the thread. The editors of Price's correspondence rightly called his relations with Hume 'cordial'. When Hume thanked Price for refuting his principles in *Four Dissertations*, he wrote: 'you like a true Philosopher, while you overwhelm me with the Weight of your Arguments, give the Encouragement by the Mildness of your Expressions.'[46] Price's answer provides an excellent concise definition of the Dissenting value of 'candour':

> I am not, I hope, inclin'd to dislike any person merely for a difference in opinion however great, or to connect worth of character and God's favour with any particular set of sentiments. It is one of my most fix'd and favourite principles which I endeavour often to inculcate, that Nothing is fundamental besides a faithful desire to find out and to practise truth and right.[47]

In *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution*, nine years after Hume's death, Price publicly returned the compliment:

> I cannot help adding, however strange it may seem, that I owe much to the philosophical writings of Mr. Hume, which I likewise studied in early life. Though an enemy to his scepticism, I have profited by it.[48]

This agreement to disagree, 'however strange it may seem', and the notion that truth will spring out of the shock of contradiction, are typical virtues of the Rational Dissenters. This candour, exemplified in *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism, and Philosophical*

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45 Ryu Susato, 'Hume as an Ami de la Liberté: The Reception of His "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth"', *Modern Intellectual History*, 13 (2016), 569–96, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244314000687

46 Hume to Price, 18 March, 1767, in Price, *Correspondence*, I, 45.

47 Price to Hume, 24 March 1767, in Price, *Correspondence*, I, 46–47.

48 Price, *Political Writings*, 142.

Necessity, in a Correspondence between Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley... (London, 1778), was, however, extended to others beyond the small sphere of Rational Dissent, all the way to Scotland.

Mapping networks and sociability: the first circle. Newington Green and James Burgh

Networks of sociability provide an indication of Price's relations in Scotland. Correspondence, discussion with mutual acquaintances, and hearsay, kept him posted about Scottish intellectual developments and suggest some engagement with Scotland. He lived in London for most of his life and only used to spend a few weeks in Wales in the summer. Price never visited Scotland, but this did not prevent him from meeting and corresponding with Scots, reading and discussing their work. This section starts with Price's immediate surroundings—the Newington Green-Hackney area in East London, a Dissenting enclave with a burgeoning culture of intellectual enquiry[49]—and moves outwards toward farther circles of clubs and correspondence.

It is clear that the works of the Scottish Enlightenment were discussed in the Dissenting microcosm of Newington Green, Hackney, and in the circles surrounding booksellers like Joseph Johnson. Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, settled in Newington Green in 1784 and soon became a member of Price's circle. Her *History of the French Revolution* reveals intimate knowledge of Scottish stadial history,[50] and it is easy to imagine Price discussing Robertson or Ferguson with her. James Burgh (1714–1775) was an earlier, and probably a more significant, mediator of Scottish thought. A neighbour of Price, Burgh had arrived from his native Perthshire in the early 1740s; he ran a dissenting academy at Stoke Newington and worshipped in Price's congregation. Burgh left his mark on the British reform movement through his *Political Disquisitions*, a three-volume collection of political extracts from various writers, which provided a mine of arguments and precedents.[51] According to H. T. Dickinson, Burgh 'probably interpreted universal manhood suffrage as meaning all householders and ratepayers, thus excluding paupers and domestic servants from the rights of active citizenship.'[52]

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49 Ana M. Acosta, 'Spaces of Dissent and the Public Sphere in Hackney, Stoke Newington, and Newington Green', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27 (2003), 1–27.

50 Isabelle Bour, 'Space into Time: Scottish Enlightenment Theoretical History in Mary Wollstonecraft's Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark', in Isabelle Bour and Line Cottegnies, eds, *Scénographie du récit de voyage et imaginaire viatique (XVIe-XVIIIe Siècles)* (Paris, 2018), 169–79; Neven Leddy, 'Mary Wollstonecraft and Adam Smith on Gender, History, and the Civic Republican Tradition', in Geoffrey C. Kelley and Neven Leddy (eds), *On Civic Republicanism: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics* (Toronto, 2016), 269–81.

51 Carla H. Hay, *James Burgh, Spokesman for Reform in Hanoverian England* (Washington DC, 1979).

52 H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1977), 227.

Price held similar views but, besides Burgh's substantive proposals (which are often implicit among a mass of collected material), the *Disquisitions* matter for their canon-building function. Burgh constructed a canon of English, but also Scottish, authors. Several Scots are on the list of authors quoted at the outset of the first volume: Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, Sir John Dalrymple's *Memoirs*, Hume's *History* and *Essays* and Alexander Murray's pamphlets.[53] In the second volume, he adds 'the brave Fletcher of Scotland' (Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, mostly on the necessity of militias) and William Robertson's *History of Charles* V.[54] In the third volume, he refers to George Buchanan's *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* (1579). 'The Scots, he [Buchanan] says never failed to restrain, or punish their kings for maladministration.' Burgh's eclectic collection suggests that the sources of 'English' radicalism crossed national and party boundaries, since he quoted mostly Whigs, but also some Tories, or men reputed so, such as Boswell and Johnson, to shore up his arguments.

Beyond passing on a canon of Presbyterian resistance to authority, and diving into diverse Scottish precedents and even Hume's history and essays, Burgh may well have contributed to shape Price's patriotism and his commitment to a Britishness based on rights and the pursuit of virtue and knowledge. Burgh was passionately committed to the Anglo-Scottish Union and asked for parity of esteem and rights between Scots and Englishmen; he even advised to drop the names of English and Scots.[55] He criticised the 'silly narrowness' of English Scottophobes, with John Wilkes in view. 'Partiality for our own country, and contempt of others, arise from a disposition as thoroughly despicable as the same partiality in an individual in favour of himself …. Accordingly national prejudice appears always strongest in the vulgar'.[56] This is very close to Hume's essay 'On National Characters' but also to Price's views, most fully expounded in *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789), on the need to refine and enlighten the country to purify love of country of its xenophobic hatred. Price and Burgh must have held political conversations, which of course went unrecorded. Burgh's contribution to Price's political development goes beyond the precedents collected in *Political Disquisitions*. The kind of critical patriotism advocated by Price certainly drew on Scottish sources discussed with Burgh. At least one Scottish source for the *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* was identified by P.A.L. Jones: the closeness of textual parallels leaves no doubt that Price drew on a sermon by the then President of Edinburgh University William Wishart.[57] Wishart's sermon was preached to the General Assembly of the Church of

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53 James Burgh, *Political Disquisitions: Or, an Enquiry into Public Errors, Defects, and Abuses. Illustrated by, and Established upon Facts and Remarks Extracted from a Variety of Authors, Ancient and Modern. Calculated To Draw the Timely Attention of Government and People to a Due Consideration of the Necessity, and the Means, of Reforming Those Errors, Defects, and Abuses; of Restoring the Constitution, and Saving the State* (3 vols, London, 1774), I, xxv–xxix. Burgh briefly discusses the trial (1751) of Alexander Murray of Elibank (1712–1778).

54 On Fletcher: Burgh, *Political Disquisitions*, II, 78, 170; 'the sagacious Fletcher of Saltoun' (356). On Fletcher, see John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh, 1985).

55 Burgh, *Political Disquisitions*, III, 336–40.

56 Idem, III, 371.

57 Richard Price, *Cariad at Ein Gwlad. A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, trans. and ed. P. A. L. Jones (Aberystwyth, 1989), 170.

Scotland in May 1746, a few days after the battle of Culloden.[58] Price was not interested in the Scottish context, though Wishart's pro-Hanoverian stance would be congenial to him. Price probably took inspiration from Wishart because they preached nearly on the same text.[59] Wishart posited that God asked mankind '[t]o be Citizens of the World, as one common City, Under the Divine Government'; particular nations and governments were instituted to preserve men's persons and properties.[60] There is a very close textual parallel between Price's definition of 'our Country' in the *Discourse* and this passage in Wishart's sermon:

> Our native Country, then, is not so much that *Spot of Earth* on which we have our Birth; as that *Society of Men* in Conjunction with whom we are born, under the same Government and Laws; Laws formed for the Welfare of every Person, as best suits the general Good of the whole Society: Laws by which we are protected and defended, in the Enjoyment of our just Liberties and Properties.[61]

Price too distinguished affection to a 'spot of earth' and to a political community. Wishart's emphasis on the protection of 'our just Liberties and Properties' sounds Lockean but this passage in his sermon is compatible with a more conservative Whig view of government by tacit consent without universal suffrage or any democratic content. Later in his sermon, Wishart also rejoiced that Britain's constitution ensured that: 'Subjects were not made for princes, to be treated as their absolute property, … but princes are made for their subjects, to govern them legally and seek their good.'[62] Again, this passage strongly resonates with Price's principles, but the notion that 'subjects were not made for princes' was central in seventeenth-century republican discourse. Since Price mentioned Milton in the *Discourse*,[63] there is every reason to believe that he found such notions of popular sovereignty in Milton's republican writings,[64] and that Wishart's sermon continued a Presbyterian discourse on authority. In other words, Price's borrowings from Wishart suggest an affinity with Wishart, and probably some knowledge of important sermons, such as those preached to the General Assembly. Price's borrowings have to do with phraseology rather than substance.

Such parallels between Price's sermon and Scottish sources suggest there was a pan-British, rather than narrowly English, dimension to Price's thought. His disagreement with Scottish philosophers on this issue should not obscure the more important fact that he was in dialogue

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58 William Wishart, *Publick Virtue Recommended. A Sermon Preach'd in the High-Church of Edinburgh, on Thursday, May 8th, 1746 at the Opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1746), reprinted in William Wishart, *Discourses on Several Subjects* (Edinburgh, 1753), 227–60.

59 Wishart on Psalm 122, 6–9; Price on Psalm 122, 2, 4–9.

60 Wishart, *Discourses on Several Subjects*, 233.

61 Wishart, *Discourses on Several Subjects*, 234; Price, *Political Writings*, 178.

62 Wishart, *Discourses on Several Subjects*, 233. Again, P.A.L. Jones noted the parallel: Richard Price, *Cariad at Ein Gwlad*, 23.

63 Price, *Political Writings*, 182.

64 E.g. John Milton, 'The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates', *Political Writings*, ed. Martin Dzelzainis (Cambridge, 1991), 8–9.

with them, implicitly answering them in a common intellectual space. Price called for the practice of 'universal benevolence', understood as goodwill for the whole world beyond family and local circles. Scottish philosophers had taken strong stances on this issue. Hume wrote that universal benevolence was impossible, and Adam Smith argued that it was highly commendable in theory but impossible to practice and best left to providence.[65] Smith might have had Price in mind when he distinguished love of country from the love of mankind in the 1790 edition of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.[66] Alexander 'Jupiter' Carlyle thundered against Price's delusive patriotism from his pulpit, long into the 1790s.[67] This list of Scottish luminaries should not lead us to believe that Price's patriotism owed nothing to Scotland: besides Wishart (a rather superficial borrowing), Price, a Welshman displaced in London, voiced the politicised British patriotism of Burgh, a Scottish immigrant to London, and discussed benevolence along lines that took different directions to those of Smith and Hume but were recognisably addressing the same problem.

Mapping networks and sociability: Price's conversation with the Scottish literati

Beyond Newington Green, Price came in contact with Scottish literati in several places of sociability. The English Rational Dissenters and the Scots could find a common ground on an ethic of peaceful disagreement. Sources can be elusive here, but they suggest that Price frequented clubs and dined with friends, and in those venues, he talked with Scots, listened to them and heard of them. He therefore clearly knew more about Scottish intellectual developments than his published writings, or even his private correspondence, suggests.

Here is one example of 'indirect' intercourse with the Edinburgh literati: Price gave letters of recommendation to at least one friend heading for Edinburgh, Samuel Rogers, who noted in his autobiography:

> When a young man, I went to Edinburgh, carrying letters of introduction (from Dr. Kippis, Dr. Price, &c.) to Adam Smith, Robertson, and others.[68]

It is worth noting that letters of introduction from Price and Kippis (another Dissenting divine with similar political views and notoriety) opened doors in Edinburgh. On a Sunday,

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65 Rémy Duthille, 'Richard Price on Patriotism and Universal Benevolence', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 28 (2012), 24–41.

66 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, (2 vols, Indianapolis, IN, 1982), I, 229.

67 Michael Brown, 'Alexander Carlyle and the Shadows of Enlightenment', in Bob Harris, ed., *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 2005), 226–46.

68 Samuel Rogers, *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogersa. To Which Is Added Porsoniana* (London, 1856).

'after breakfasting with Robertson, I heard him preach in the forenoon, and Blair in the afternoon, then took coffee with the Piozzis, and supped with Adam Smith.'[69] What a day! Rogers's autobiography makes clear the intellectual and emotional bonds to Price: he must have discussed Scottish thought and sociability with his mentor on his return to Newington Green.

In 1780, Price wrote a letter to Lord Monboddo suggesting the breadth of his contacts among the Edinburgh literati:

> I have enclosed a note for Dr Webster. May I give your Lordship the trouble of getting it convey'd to him? I am acquainted with Dr Robertson, Dr Smith, and Mr Stewart the Mathematical Professor, and I have also corresponded with Dr Erskine. Should any of them happen to come in yo[ur] way at Edinburgh, deliver my respectful [remembran]ces to them.[70]

It would be good to examine the difference between being 'acquainted' and having merely 'corresponded' with someone—biographies of Smith devote at most a few short references to Price, but the two men were acquaintances, not just distant correspondents like Price and Erskine, at least if we trust Price here.

A place where English Dissenters, Scots and Americans could meet was the Club of Honest Whigs, which included Price and Burgh; Benjamin Franklin and James Boswell visited when they were in town. Take Boswell, supposedly on the other side of the political spectrum. Price, like other pro-Americans, drew a parallel between the American crisis with the oppression of Corsica by France. Whether he had read Boswell on Corsica, or talked to him, is a matter of speculation; yet Price could scarcely be ignorant of Boswell, who was anthologised in Burgh's *Disquisitions*. Boswell's brief account of an evening at the Club of Honest Whigs on April 9, 1772 (where Price may or may not have been present) also suggests that Corsica was a topic of discussion in that context: 'I went to my club at the London Coffee-house. Dr. Priestley read us *Corsica*, a poem by Miss Aikin of Warrington. We were very well'.[71] Warrington connects the club with Joseph Priestley and the Midlands dissenting academies: the Club of Honest Whigs brokered news from several parts of Britain and the Empire, and, crucially in a period still reeling from Wilkite Scottophobia, a prickly Scot like Boswell felt at home there. Boswell's testimony on the demeanour of another Rational Dissenter and close friend of Price, Joseph Priestley, is telling. He wrote on 26 March 1772:

> The club is composed principally of physicians, dissenting clergy, and masters of academies. Dr. Priestley was there this night. I should not have known him by his works of religious controversy. *They* are in my opinion insolent; and *he* appeared to be very civil.[72]

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69 *Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, 45.

70 Price to Lord Monboddo, Newington Green, Augst 2d to 12th 1780. Price, *Correspondence*, 2.67–68. 'Mr Stewart' is Dugald Stewart (1753–1828).

71 James Boswell, *Boswell for the Defence 1769–1774* (Melbourne, London, Toronto, 1960), 103.

72 Idem, 66.

Priestley, and presumably Price, could be perceived as 'civil' in conversation and 'insolent' in pamphlet controversy.

Diaries like Boswell's suggest that sociability must be considered if one wants to gauge Price's involvement in Scotland, which is minimal in his own writings but may be reconstructed through other sources. Other Scots who met Price and Rational Dissenters offer contrasted testimonies. The Church or Scotland minister Thomas Somerville felt that Price's conversation was calm and polite but that he became heated on political topics during the Wilkite agitation.[73] Carlyle had no patience with Price and his fellow Dissenting minister Andrew Kippis, and in his autobiography, presented them as 'very bad company indeed, for they were fiery republicans and Wilkites, and very pedantic, petulant, and peremptory.'[74] Price in fact disliked Wilkes for his immorality and his 1789 portrait of the true patriot as virtuous reads like an indictment of the author of the *Essay on Woman*;[75] this did not prevent Carlyle and other Scots from branding him as a seditious Wilkite.[76] Price's reception was therefore contrasted, appearing as an apostle of benevolence, or as a political firebrand, mirroring the polarisation of Scottish political opinion during the American War. The Scottish clergy overwhelmingly spoke out against Price and American Independence. While Presbyterian ministers like George Campbell or John Stevenson criticised Price during fast sermons, or even wrote pamphlets against him, like Stevenson, one Scottish clergyman, only James Murray, an Independent minister in Newcastle, defended Price's principles.[77]

Despite pulpit and pamphlet denunciations by vocal Moderates, and Alexander Carlyle's outbursts, Price's exchanges with Scottish intellectuals were broadly mediated by what I called above an ethic of peaceful disagreement. This could even be good-humouredly staged, as evinced in a dinner organised for Hume by Thomas Cadell, the London printer who also published Price and other Dissenters:

> Hume told Cadell the bookseller that he had a great desire to be introduced to as many of the persons who had written against him as could be collected and requested Cadell to bring him and them together. Accordingly, Dr. Douglas, Dr. Adams, &c. &c, were invited by Cadell to dine at his house in order to meet

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73 Thomas Somerville, *My Own Life and Times, 1741–1814*, ed. William Lee (Edinburgh, 1861), 145–6.

74 Alexander Carlyle, *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle, Minister of Inveresk, Containing Memorials of the Men and Events of His Time*, ed. John Hill Burton (Edinburgh; London, 1860), 519–20.

75 Frame, *Liberty's Apostle*, 72; Price, *Political Writings*, 193.

76 Thomas Blacklock, *Remarks on the Nature and Extent of Liberty, as Compatible with the Genius of Civil Societies; on the Principles of Government and the Proper Limits of Its Powers in Free States; and, on the Justice and Policy of the American War. Occasioned by Perusing the Observations of Dr. Price on These Subjects. In a Letter to a Friend* (Edinburgh; London, 1776), 4–5.

77 Florence Petroff, *La Révolution américaine et l'Écosse: regards croisés et identités hybrides* (Paris, 2026), 248, 266.

> Hume. They came; and Dr. Price, who was of the party, assured me that they were all delighted with David.[78]

Hume was a sociable man, and it may appear strange that the rather dour, austere Dr Price should took a liking to him. Yet, Samuel Rogers's testimony evidences the sunny side of Price's personality, his genial conviviality, which responded well to Hume's own love of sociability.

Friendships and religious divides in revolutionary times: Price and Scottish church politics

The maintenance of sociable conversation and mutual respect suggests that the Scottish reception of Price is more complex than simply a story of moderates rejecting a republican radical. This section shows how the American War put this sociable ethic under strain. Price did not intervene in Scottish politics, though he was informed of religious affairs, through a network of Scottish church ministers in Scotland and England.

Personal friendship and family alliances intersected with party principles and church politics. Theories about correlation between ideology, denomination, and political stance go only so far explaining Price's alignment with some Scots.[79] Price's 'radicalism' pales in comparison with that of other reformers, like John Cartwright or John Jebb, when his views on reconciliation with the Americans, limited parliamentary reform and his relatively muted abolitionist stance are considered.[80] Price's support for the Americans can convincingly be ascribed to his vast and intimate correspondence with many colonists, and Emma Macleod explains why this pro-American stance is so close to that of 'Rev Dr John Erskine, the leading Church of Scotland evangelical' who is otherwise far apart from Price on the political and theological spectra.[81]

Price was actually approached by reformist Scots in 1784, and the resulting answer displayed support for the Americans but no radical democratic programme. The Edinburgh merchant Thomas McGrugar, author of *Zeno's Letters* (serialised in the Edinburgh press then published as a pamphlet in 1782) and secretary of the Committee of Citizens of Edinburgh, sent Price the minutes and information on burgh reform, and asked him for advice during the campaign

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78 *Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, 73.

79 J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty, 1660–1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge, 1994), 37 on the connection between Dissent and 'rebellion'; James E. Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, the Crown, and Public Opinion* (Macon, GA, 1986) on socio-religious factors.

80 Emma Macleod, 'A Proper Manner of Carrying on Controversies: Richard Price and the American Revolution', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 82 (2019), 187. https://doi.org/10.1353/hlq.2019.0015; Anthony Page, '"A Species of Slavery": Richard Price's Rational Dissent and Antislavery', *Slavery & Abolition*, 32 (2011), 53–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2011.538198

81 Macleod, 'A Proper Manner of Carrying on Controversies', 288.

for burgh reform in the early 1780s. The Scottish situation—in which reformers focused their efforts on the elections to, and internal administration of, burghs rather than parliamentary representation—was rather different from that of England, though the movements started to converge.[82] McGrugar plausibly knew Price by his reputation as a pamphleteer and through their common acquaintance, Christopher Wyvill, whose Yorkshire Association organised reformers throughout England and interlocked with Scotland. Price's answer, dated 27 January 1784 and published in the *Scots Magazine* in April 1784, expresses support for the Scots but, for all the solidarity and encouragement given, the letter gives out a feeling of distance and isolation, Price professing to be ignorant of the political plight of the Scots and refraining from giving advice adapted to Scotland but rather rehearsing more general argument.[83] This is in keeping with the views he expressed earlier to the Irish reformers: local people know best, and Price offered philosophical inspiration. Price might have known more than he let on of Scottish realities (via Burgh, for instance) but his stance was clearly in keeping with his definition of liberty as 'self-determination': he would let the Scots decide for themselves.

Despite Price's non-interference in Scottish affairs, his principles were divisive. The most telling example of this is provided by the massive correspondence between James Wodrow (1730–1810) and Samuel Kenrick (1729–1811). Wodrow and Kenrick were the sons of Presbyterian clergymen and became close friends as students at the University of Glasgow in the late 1740s. Kenrick was a Welshman, like Price, and Wodrow came from a line of covenanting clergymen. Anthony Page characterised him as a representative of 'prudent Scottish Moderate Presbyterianism', and he was often in conflict with the 'Popular Party'.[84] Wodrow's and Kenrick's readings of Price's *Observations on Civil Liberty* mediated their disagreements on the American War, Kenrick adopting a radical Whig stance, close to Price, and Wodrow a more sceptical attitude. Kenrick sent Wodrow a copy of Price's *Observations*, and Wodrow replied:

> I love & esteem the Doct^{r}. & coud embrace him as a bosom friend agree with him in many things in his general prin^{l}. that Gov^{t}. is a trust […]. But I differ from him in many of his applications & unfoldings of this general principle in his Idea of Liberty of representation of Colonies & many other things.[85]

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[82] Bob Harris, 'Scottish-English Connections in British Radicalism in the 1790s', in T. C. Smout, ed., *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1603 to 1900* (London, 2005), 195–212. https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197263303.003.0010. On burgh reform: Archibald Fletcher, *A Memoir Concerning the Origin and Progress of the Reform Proposed in the Internal Government of the Royal Burghs of Scotland; which was First Brought under Discussion in 1782…* (Edinburgh, 1819).

[83] The letter is reproduced in Rémy Duthille, 'Thirteen Uncollected Letters of Richard Price', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 27 (2011), 104–108.

[84] James Wodrow and Samuel Kenrick, *The Wodrow-Kenrick Correspondence 1750–1810. Volume 2: 1784–1790*, ed. Martin Fitzpatrick, Emma Macleod, and Anthony Page (Oxford, 2020), 33.

[85] Wodrow to Kenrick, 24 June 1776: *Wodrow-Kenrick Correspondence*, I, 365.

Wodrow's sociable life sheds light on Anglo-Scottish networks surrounding Price. In October 1788, he spent time in London and '"got a good deal of intelligence" from Richard Price… who had "great hopes of the extension of Liberty from the present struggles in France".'[86] Kenrick carried a letter by Reid for Price, and after repeated attempts to meet Price and Kippis, finally managed to dine with Price on 15 October. Always the avuncular minister, Price introduced him to several of his acquaintance. 'He had loaded me', Kenrick concludes, 'with presents of his Books & Pamphlets not as he says to disseminate his Heresy in the North but to gratify some friends he has there who may not have seen them'.[87] Kenrick also frequently corresponded with 'Thomas Christie, a Young man in the Medical way here, but one who has a very Literary & even a theological turn'.[88] This young man, as will be shown below, connected Price with the Scottish reform agitation of the 1790s.

Wodrow and Kenrick matter because their networks of correspondence spread Price's words (and books) in Scotland and led to discussions of his ideas, by way of letters but also probably in clubs and societies. This correspondence also illustrates the growing tensions between political disagreement and private respect and esteem, even friendship, which came under additional strain in revolutionary times.

Conclusion. Price's final year: the French Revolution, Scottish church politics and the international legacy of Adam Smith

This concluding section discusses Price's Scottish and French networks and interests from the Spring of 1790 to his death (on 19 April, 1791), a crucial moment when the French Revolution promised Anglo-French reconciliation and the application of enlightened principles in France. Price remained in correspondence with one Scottish friend, the Dissenting minister Alexander Christie. Their conversation, framed within discourses of improvement and bigotry, concerned, among other matters, Adam Smith's work and posthumous reputation in France. The last months of Price's life thus illustrate both abiding denominational networks linking him to kirk ministers, and an opening dialogue with French improvers.

Price's knowledge of Scottish church politics was mediated by Dissenting networks and his acquaintances such as the Wodrows, Kenricks, and Christies. On 1 April, 1790, Alexander Christie, a merchant and sometime provost of Montrose, informed Price that he had published extracts from A *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* in a series of letters addressed to the town kirk-session. He also mentioned that his son Thomas was currently staying in Paris.[89] Price answered that he knew Thomas, and commented on 'the folly, and misery of

86 Wodrow to Kenrick, 25 October 1788: *Wodrow-Kenrick Correspondence*, II, 390.
87 Ibid., 387–388.
88 Quotation from letter by Wodrow to Kenrick, 16 September 1788, Ibid., 379.
89 Alexander Christie to Price, 1 April 1790, in Price, *Correspondence*, III, 276–7, quotation p. 277.

that Religious bigotry' characterising the high kirk-session of Montrose.[90] Thomas Christie, the most vocally political man of the family, published *Letters on the Revolution of France…* (London, 1791), a spirited defence of Price against Burke, and a vindication of unfettered religious liberty.[91] Thomas Christie further connects Price with the reformist Friends of the People, Scotland's largest reforming network, which developed after Price's death in 1791. Alexander Christie wrote another glowing letter to Price, eulogising his *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* as 'that almost divine work, in favour of the Civil and Religious Liberties of Men', which, unsurprisingly, aroused the opposition of '*Bigots* and *high Churchmen*.'[92]

While the critical conversation with Christie went on with renewed vigour, Price started corresponding with prominent French improvers and scientists, who asked him about Adam Smith.[93] Price admired Smith's works on economics, but the reverse was far from true, as was made clear earlier.[94] The Revolution Society's correspondence had connected Price with some of the French élites, especially the two cousin Ducs de La Rochefoucauld (d'Enville and Liancourt), both improving landlords and keen observers of British developments. A letter to d'Enville suggests that Price could have become an intermediary between the British intellectual world, including Scotland, and French liberals, passing material by or on Smith to Paris and receiving prime information from France. On 14 October, 1790, Price wrote to d'Enville, paying homage to the recently deceased Smith, noting his disagreements but hoping that such inevitable divisions among the learned would help unveil the truth.[95] Price quoted a passage from the preface to the sixth edition of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in which Smith promised to write 'a treatise on the general principles of law and government, and the different revolutions they had undergone in the different ages and periods of society'. Smith, Price commented, had delivered part of this promise with 'his book on the Wealth of Nations' but there remained 'the theory of Jurisprudence'. Knowing his French correspondent's keen interest in economics and free trade, Price added: 'I am told that [Smith] has left the world no room for expecting any posthumous works of his, except, perhaps, a

90 Price to Alexander Christie, 11 May 1790, in Price, *Correspondence*, III, 290–1, quotation p. 290.

91 On Thomas Christie: John Brims, *The Scottish Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution*, (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1983), 116–9.

92 Alexander Christie to Price, 20 May 1790, in Price, *Correspondence*, III, 294–5, quotation p. 294; see also letter of 25 October 1790, Ibid., 329–32. This 25 October 1790 letter by Christie may well have been the very last Price received, at least this is suggested by a manuscript note by Christie: '[s]oon after Dr Price received this letter he was seized with an afflicting disorder, which having born patiently for some months, terminated at last in his Death; so that he never had it in his power to write me a return thereto.' (Price, *Correspondence*, III, 332).

93 The Revolution Society sent a letter of congratulation to the French National Assembly on 4 November 1789; this started an extensive correspondence with Jacobin clubs.

94 This point is noted by several commentators, e.g. Himmelfarb, *Roads to Modernity*, 97.

95 Duthille, 'Thirteen Uncollected Letters of Richard Price', 136. Price's correspondent is mistakenly identified as Liancourt in this article.

few Essays' because Smith had burnt much material. But Dugald Stewart, Price added, promised to publish a life of Smith.[96]

This overview of Price's Scottish contacts dispels the view of Price as an extreme rationalist utopian opposed to more practical Scots. Even the correspondence with d'Enville and Liancourt has a practical bent, discussing issues such as economics, agricultural improvement and provision for the poor alongside admiration for Adam Smith.

More generally, Price's correspondence and other forms of interaction with Scots in clubs and sociable venues demonstrate the divisions within Scotland and the impossibility of opposing Price to one single 'Scottish Enlightenment'. Nothing in his writings suggests that Price viewed his correspondents as part of a national, Scottish, school. Why should he, when he defended universal principles based on reason? This article has shown that Price and at least some of the Scottish literati, including Hume and Smith, sometimes addressed similar philosophical issues while belonging to distinct but overlapping networks of sociability. Despite frequent—but sometimes more apparent than real—disagreement, Price's interactions with Scottish philosophers and ministers show that they shared an ethic of candour and respect.

This mapping of Price's Scottish contacts raises further questions, especially because he was not an isolated thinker but a member of networks that themselves deserve full attention. Joseph Priestley had his own links to Scotland. Some were common with Price, others were singular and there might have been triangulation effects with various intermediaries. While a Rational Dissenter like Price, Priestley was based in the Midlands and the North of England; his scientific pursuits connected him with the likes of William Small and James Watt, who appear remote from Price's world but might well be connected with it. A study of the Rational Dissenters and their relations with the Scottish Enlighteners would probably bring out unexpected connections and interactions.

[96] Ibid., 138–9.