

APS

ACADEMY OF  
POLITICAL  
SCIENCE

---

The Relations between Adam Smith and Benjamin Franklin before 1776

Author(s): Thomas D. Eliot

Source: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Mar., 1924), pp. 67-96

Published by: The Academy of Political Science

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2142684>

Accessed: 13-02-2022 18:40 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*The Academy of Political Science* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Political Science Quarterly*

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN ADAM SMITH AND  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BEFORE 1776

IT was claimed by the late Dr. Simon N. Patten that *The Wealth of Nations* is a defense of the colonies, and an attack on the English colonial system. It was claimed that, but for Benjamin Franklin, Adam Smith would have written the treatise on politics promised in the passage at the end of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Franklin was sent to England twice on missions to Parliament, as representative or agent of Pennsylvania, and by appointment, of other colonies; from 1757 to 1762, and again from December, 1764, to 1775, inclusive. It was said that he went to Scotland to see Smith, with a view of persuading him to write a treatise on colonial policy; or, at least, that when they met, Franklin urged such a task upon him. They were said to have been close friends, and in frequent communication with each other.

Like so many of the statements Dr. Patten was in the habit of making, this is a challenging and intriguing thesis. Dr. Patten was perhaps not over-thorough in scholastic citation; but his extensive reading, thinking and writing in the antecedents of English thought made his statements worthy of attention. In the same spirit of free inquiry which Dr. Patten exemplified, the writer undertook to "run down" to its sources this alleged contribution of Franklin to *The Wealth of Nations* or to Smith's thinking. While the data are not finally conclusive, the facts developed seemed to be worth presentation. The establishment of the statements cited would entitle our Franklin to a place of great importance in the history of economic theory, which at present he is seldom given.<sup>1</sup>

It will not be possible to include a large amount of interest-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Thorpe, "Benjamin Franklin and the University of Pennsylvania," in U. S. Bureau of Education, *Circular of Information, No. 2, 1892*, Washington, 1893, pp. 99-100; also *op. cit., infra*.

ing material collected from the letters and writings of Franklin,<sup>1</sup> showing his views on questions of political economy,<sup>2</sup> and colonial economy particularly. They make an interesting study in themselves, but are too large and heterogeneous a group for treatment here. They are available to any one who cares to look up the subject.<sup>3</sup> Only such parts of his writings and doings will be considered as seem to suggest reciprocal contacts and influences of Smith and Franklin.

## I

It may hardly be claimed that "The Many Sided Franklin," as Paul Leicester Ford calls him, was an original economist. He never considered himself such and rarely recorded his views systematically on economic theories, except when they affected

<sup>1</sup>The writer wishes especially to thank the Mason Library for the opportunities of checking up data so generously afforded, and for access to documents. The personal assistance of Dr. Mason and of Mr. Edward, Miss Lapham and Mr. Carey, of the Mason Library, are also cordially acknowledged.

<sup>2</sup>There is a monograph upon this subject: "Benjamin Franklin as an Economist," by W. A. Wetzel, in *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, Thirteenth Series, IX (1895). The following is Wetzel's summary (p. 55):

"In his works we find the following theses:

- (1) Money as coin may have a value higher than its bullion value.
- (2) Natural interest is determined by the rent of so much land as the money loaned will buy.
- (3) High wages are not inconsistent with a large foreign trade.
- (4) Population will increase as the means of gaining a living increase.
- (5) A high standard of living serves to prolong single life, and thus acts as a check upon the increase of population.
- (6) People are adjusted among the different countries according to the comparative well-being of mankind.
- (7) The value of an article is determined by the amount of labor necessary to produce the food consumed in making the article.
- (8) While manufactures are advantageous, only agriculture is truly productive.
- (9) Manufactures will naturally spring up in a country as the country becomes ripe for them.
- (10) Free trade with the world will give the greatest return at the least expense.
- (11) Wherever practicable, state revenue should be raised by direct taxes."

<sup>3</sup>Mr. Lewis J. Carey, a graduate student at Northwestern University, is now working over this field (1924).

a practical problem of his career as a diplomat. He was, however, in the thick of a struggle which absorbed the thought of the time—a struggle the character of which was primarily economic. Involving, as it did, the fate of the mercantilist policy, it was bound to elicit from him some statements bearing on colonial trade, new countries, foreign exchange and population.

Franklin was a striking example of the versatile minds that could be produced when there were few books and less knowledge in the now highly specialized fields of science. Men might then excel in many fields by alert observation and acute reasoning; they were not obliged to absorb an indigestible mass of social cud before being able to browse for themselves in new fields. Locke was another such man. Synoptic minds, we may call them.

Smith's subject, "moral philosophy", is a sufficiently broad field, as he interpreted it, but Smith was rather a forerunner of the modern specialized professor, though by no means so academic. He was therefore greater in his line than Franklin could hope to be in any of his theoretical dabbings, but not so efficient as a practical man. Had Franklin specialized more, or followed up with abundant leisure some of his researches, he probably would have excelled Smith. He had a more original, though less systematic, mind.

The political situation at that time would be apt to elicit theories of imperial administration from anyone about to write a treatise on political economy. We need not be surprised, then, to find a lengthy treatment of this subject in *The Wealth of Nations* (IV, vii), besides numerous references to colonies throughout the work, especially in the last few chapters. A considerable agreement between an advocate of the victims of a false colonial policy and an economist imbued with Physiocratic ideas need not necessarily involve a mutual influence.

On the other hand, such influence seems to be very plausible from a superficial study of the evidence. Smith and Franklin met in Edinburgh<sup>1</sup> in 1759 at a supper given by Dr. Robertson.

<sup>1</sup> Rae, *Life of Adam Smith*, London, 1895, ch. viii, and pp. 150-1.

Smith at this time had headquarters in Glasgow, but seems to have oscillated between there and Edinburgh, where he was one of a brilliant circle. Franklin became a close friend of Kames, Strahan the printer,<sup>1</sup> Millar, Hume, and (in London) other well-known men who were friends of Smith. The *Économistes* of Paris, Turgot, Dupont de Nemours, Condorcet etc., were mutual acquaintances. Their very similarity of belief, independent of possible personal motives on either side, would seem to draw them together. Smith and Franklin both had the advantage of being citizens of the Empire, yet not Englishmen: they could observe the policy of the Georges and their successive (but not successful) ministries from an interested, but less partial, standpoint than could Londoners.

In 1773-6 Smith was in London revising *The Wealth of Nations*—somewhat unexpectedly, too, since he came down from Kirkcaldy with the intention of publishing at once. This is indicated in his correspondence with Hume preceding that event. Franklin was also in London during 1773 and until March of 1775. They mingled with the same group of friends.

Questions in political economy were much discussed at this time [1773] in Franklin's circle. Adam Smith, who was then employed in writing his great work upon the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, came, several times, from his lonely retreat in Scotland to consult with learned friends in London, where his master, Hume, was established as under-secretary of state.<sup>2</sup> That Franklin was one of those from whom he derived important aid, could be easily demonstrated by a comparison of passages from the writings of the two economists. To take one example: A newspaper article by Franklin upon the Laboring Poor, published in 1768, five years before the first volume of the *Wealth of Nations* was finished, contains the statement, that "our laboring poor do in every year receive *the whole revenue of the nation*; I mean not only the public revenue, but also the revenue or clear income of all private estates, or a sum equivalent to the whole," which is one of Adam Smith's most striking positions, the corner stone, in fact, of his system. We have, also, this explicit assertion of Mr.

<sup>1</sup> The first edition of *The Wealth of Nations* is "Printed for A. Strahan".

<sup>2</sup> Footnote from Parton: "Hume to Adam Smith, 1776."

Watson, the author of the *Annals of Philadelphia*: "Dr. Franklin once told Dr. Logan [etc.] . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

At this point Parton, Franklin's biographer, quotes with only slight inaccuracies. The passage in question appears in Watson's *Annals of Philadelphia*, 1844 edition, vol. I, p. 533.

He once told Dr. Logan that the celebrated Adam Smith, when writing his "Wealth of Nations," was in the habit of bringing chapter after chapter, as he composed it, to himself, Dr. Price and others of the literati; then patiently hear their observations, and profit by their discussions and criticism—even sometimes submitting to write whole chapters anew, and even to reverse some of his propositions.

This last is the real foundation for the other statements. Were it not for Watson's statement, it is not likely that Rae, Smith's biographer, and Parton, Franklin's biographer, would have made so much of the matter. Parton continues: <sup>2</sup>

In contributing his quota of thought and knowledge to a work which the author of the *History of Civilization in England* considers "the most important book ever written," and "the most valuable contribution ever made by a single man towards establishing the principles on which government should be based," <sup>3</sup> Dr. Franklin conferred a particular, and, perhaps, not unforeseen benefit upon his own country.

Watson's statement is probably based upon the statements of Deborah Logan, made after her husband's death. In a letter to a friend in 1829 she wrote: <sup>4</sup>

Dr. Franklin once told my husband that the celebrated Adam Smith, when writing his "Wealth of Nations," was in the habit of bringing

<sup>1</sup> Parton, *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, N. Y. and London, 1864; vol. I, pp. 536-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Footnote from Parton: "Buckle's 'History of Civilization in England,' i, 154."

<sup>4</sup> "Dr. Franklin, Charles Thompson and Mrs. Logan," *The Historical Magazine*, December, 1868, page 280. Communicated by Hon. William Willis, LL.D., of Portland, Maine. The quotations are from original letters then in the possession of Dr. Willis. For this reference I am personally indebted to Dr. W. S. Mason.

chapter after chapter, as he composed it, to himself, Dr. Price and others of the literati of that day, with whom he was intimate ; patiently hearing their observations, and profiting by their discussions and criticisms. Nay, that he has sometimes reversed his positions and rewritten whole chapters, after hearing what they had to remark on the subject before them.

This was written at the age of sixty-eight, eight years after her husband's death. This letter was not published until after Parton's biography, but its close resemblance shows the connection. Watson, who was a friend of Mrs. Logan, had free access to Mrs. Logan's collection and doubtless used the manuscript of her *Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton*, which was published in 1899 by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Mrs. Logan died (1839) five years before the first edition of the *Annals*.<sup>1</sup> In this *Memoir* (pp. 46-7) is found a similar statement, still more explicit, and it very likely precedes the letter above quoted :

In reading the "Wealth of Nations," which he justly appreciated without approving of all which the author has advanced, he told me of what Dr. Franklin had related to him of Adam Smith, with whom he was well acquainted. When writing that celebrated work, he was in the habit of taking the chapters as he composed them to his literary friends, and submitting the work to their inspection and criticism. He often availed himself of the benefit of their remarks, so as to rewrite chapters and reverse propositions. Dr. Franklin said he frequently brought it to himself and Dr. Price.

Mrs. Logan's competence and memory are highly praised by her editors.<sup>2</sup> *The Wealth of Nations* is said by Charles J. Stillé to have been Dr. Logan's "favorite text book."<sup>3</sup> The Logans married in 1781 ; there seems to have been great confidence between them.<sup>4</sup> The *Memoir* is said to have been begun

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 281.

<sup>2</sup> Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time*, Philadelphia, 1844, vol. I, pp. 27, 77, 558, and especially pp. 573-4; also the *Memoir* (p. 10) and the article by Willis above cited.

<sup>3</sup> *Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton*, Philadelphia, 1899, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

shortly after Dr. Logan's death in 1821.<sup>1</sup> This is thirty-one years after Franklin's death. Dr. Logan studied medicine in Edinburgh until 1779 (aged twenty-six), and soon after was intimate with Franklin at Passy.<sup>2</sup> The writer does not know whether they were acquainted in England before 1776, but they were close friends in America later in life.<sup>3</sup> We have thus no way of dating either of the conversations to which Mrs. Logan referred, except that the first of the two must have been at least thirty years before Mrs. Logan's memoir of her husband was written. Whether the memoir was based upon written notes does not appear.

In the *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Richard Price, D. D. F. R. S.*, by William Morgan, F. R. S.,<sup>4</sup> there is no mention of Adam Smith, though Franklin is frequently mentioned. This is the chief source<sup>5</sup> for the life of Dr. Price; and his is the only other name mentioned with Franklin's in Mrs. Logan's account.

It is not likely that either Parton or Rae ever saw the sources of Watson's statement as given above, and yet, in view of an elderly widow's natural bias, Rae's comments seem not unjust:

Franklin's remark may have itself undergone enlargement before it appeared in print, but though it may have been exaggerated, there seems no ground for rejecting it altogether. Smith became acquainted with Franklin in Edinburgh in 1759, and could not fail to see much of him in London, because some of the most intimate of his own London friends, Sir John Pringle and Strahan, for example, were also among the most intimate friends of Franklin. Then a considerable proportion of the additions, which we know from the text of the *Wealth of Nations* itself to have been made to the work during this London period, bear on colonial or American experience.<sup>6</sup> And as Smith

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> London, 1815.

<sup>5</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, XLVI, p. 337 (T. F.), New York and London, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> For example, American wages, I, viii, added 1773; sugar refining in the colonies taken from the French, IV, vii, added 1773. (See Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-7.) Cf. also III, ii, on emancipation of slaves by Pennsylvania Quakers.



always obtained a great deal of his information from the conversation of competent men, no one would be more likely than Franklin to be laid under contribution or to be able to contribute something worth learning on such questions. The biographer of Franklin states that his papers which belong to this particular period "contain sets of problems and queries as though jotted down at some meeting of philosophers for particular consideration at home," and then he adds: "A glance at the index of the *Wealth of Nations* will suffice to show that its author possessed just that kind of knowledge of the American Colonies which Franklin was of all men the best fitted to impart. The allusions to the Colonies may be counted by hundreds; illustrations from their condition and growth occur in nearly every chapter. We may go further and say that the American Colonies constitute the experimental evidence of the essential truth of the book, without which many of its leading positions had been little more than theory."<sup>1</sup> It ought of course to be borne in mind that Smith had been in the constant habit of hearing much about the American Colonies and their affairs during his thirteen years in Glasgow from the intelligent merchants and returned planters of that city.<sup>2</sup>

It might be added that the account by Watson is the only mention of Smith in the index of the *Annals*; that Mrs. Logan's statement is apparently memory of hearsay, resting on an undated statement, not on documentary evidence, and probably depending for its accuracy also upon the memories of Dr. Logan and Dr. Franklin. Even Rae, as compiler, made slight errors in copying it.

## II

In 1759, says Parton,

Adam Smith was correcting the proof sheets of his Theory of Moral Sentiments; a Glasgow professor then, the *Wealth of Nations* conceived, but sixteen years from being finished. With most of these noted persons, either then or afterwards, Franklin became acquainted. Not with Johnson. . . . Nor intimately with any but Burke, Smith, and Hume.<sup>3</sup>

With these statements of Mrs. Logan, Parton and Rae as a starting point, let us examine more closely the contemporary

<sup>1</sup> Footnote from Rae: "Parton's *Life of Franklin*, i, 537."

<sup>2</sup> Rae, *ibid.*, pp. 265-6.

<sup>3</sup> Parton, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

evidence of a close friendship and possible interchange between these men. The contemporary sources are the letters and memoirs of the group of men associated with Smith and with Franklin.

The present study did not cover the correspondence of any of Smith's group of friends except that of Lord Kames; but includes a careful examination of Franklin's correspondence and writings from 1759 to 1776, and the letters of that period reproduced in Rae's *Life of Adam Smith*. It also includes the lives and memoirs of as many as possible of Franklin's friends.

The outlines below trace the middle portions of Smith's and Franklin's lives, to show at what points contact without correspondence would be possible during the period when Franklin was abroad, previous to the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*. The dates of plausible bits of evidence are also noted.

FRANKLIN	DATE	SMITH
To England ( London ).	1757	Edinburgh and Glasgow.
London and England.	1758	Edinburgh and Glasgow.
London. Visits Edinburgh in Spring. Perhaps Glasgow. Feb. 12, Sept. 5.	1759	Edinburgh and Glasgow. Meets Franklin. <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> .
London and England.	1760	Glasgow. Mentions Franklin.
London except <i>circa</i> Sept. 1-20— Holland and Flanders.	1761	Glasgow. London, <i>circa</i> Sept. 1 to Oct. 10; about 20 days in London while Franklin was there.
Returns to Philadelphia.	1762	Glasgow and Edinburgh.
Philadelphia.	1763	Glasgow.
Philadelphia. To England in November.	1764	Toulouse and France. Begins " a book."
London—Second Mission. The Stamp Act trouble.	1765	Geneva and Switzerland.
London.	1766	Paris. London in November—December. "Moving among the great."
London. Paris, <i>circa</i> Sept. 1 to November.	1767	London to May. Kirkcaldy to September. Dalkeith.
London. <i>The Labouring Poor</i> .	1768	Kirkcaldy. "At work on the book."
London.	1769	Kirkcaldy.
London.	1770	Kirkcaldy. Edinburgh. June 6.
London. Ireland, Glasgow, Edinburgh (Nov. 17), Blair Drummond, Aug. 21—Dec. 1.	1771	Kirkcaldy. "At work on the book."
London.	1772	Kirkcaldy.
London. <i>Prussian Edict</i> . <i>Rules for Reducing</i> , etc.	1773	Kirkcaldy. London in Spring to April.
London. Tract on Emigration.	1774	London. Revising work.
London to March. Philadelphia.	1775	London.
Philadelphia, Paris. <i>The Revolution</i> .	1776	London till April. <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> .

The personal contacts obviously must have been either in London or in Scotland. We seek now for positive evidence of acquaintance in the writings of the two men and their friends.

There is one authenticated meeting, and one only, at Edinburgh, 1759, as the guests of Dr. Robertson. Of this meeting we have almost as vague an account as that of Watson regarding the alleged London contacts.<sup>1</sup> Parton and Rae cite from Dr. Carlyle's *Autobiography* "an imperfect account" with "little worth repeating."<sup>2</sup> Hume, Robertson, the two Franklins (the future Governor Franklin came with his father on his first mission), Dr. Cullen, Dr. Wight and Dr. Carlyle were of the group. Dr. Carlyle's account is as follows:

Wight, who could talk at random on all sciences without being very deeply skilled in any, took it into his head to be very eloquent on chemistry, a course of which he had attended in Dublin; and perceiving that he diverted the company, particularly Franklin, who was a silent man, he kept it up with Cullen, then professor of that science, who had imprudently committed himself with him, for the greatest part of the evening, to the infinite diversion of the company, who took great delight in seeing the great Professor foiled in his own science by a novice. Franklin's son was open and communicative, and pleased the company better than his father; and some of us observed indications of that decided difference of opinion between father and son which, in the American war, alienated them altogether.<sup>3</sup>

This does not argue any great contact between the two men at this time. There seem to have been no further opportunities for them to meet in Scotland.

With one exception only, the mention of Franklin by Smith himself is in a letter to Strahan, written from Glasgow, April 4, 1760, within a year of meeting Franklin for the first time:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403; Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151. Professor Thorpe makes a great deal of this meeting: "The meeting of three such forces in the world by the communion of Frankline[sic] and Hume and Smith in their conversations in Edinburgh suggests a subject for philosophical examination." (Benjamin Franklin and the University of Pennsylvania, *loc. cit.*, p. 104.)

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle*, London, 1860; pp. 394-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 394-5.

Remember me to the Franklins. I hope I shall have the grace to write to the youngest by next post to thank him in the name both of the College and of myself for his very agreeable [sic] present.<sup>1</sup>

This doubtless refers to the meeting in 1759.

The writer has collected a few additional plausible allusions in Franklin's writings. It will be seen that they are tenuous enough.

In 1760 (Jan. 3), Franklin writes a "bread-and-butter" letter to Lord Kames, for his hospitality, and speaks of "the agreeable and instructive society we found there in such plenty."<sup>2</sup>

In 1760 (Sept. 27), Franklin writes to Hume one of the few letters they exchanged, congratulating him on his *Jealousy of Commerce*, and applying its theories to the colonies very briefly.<sup>3</sup> Hume and Smith were life-long friends, and Smith also saw the book mentioned, and was probably influenced by it.

In 1766 (Nov. 22), Millar writes "to David Hume in Edinburgh, . . . that Smith was then in London and moving about among the great,"<sup>4</sup> among whom Franklin might have been included.

In 1768 (Feb. 28), a letter from Franklin to Lord Kames merely mentioned his "friends in Scotland."<sup>5</sup>

In 1769 (Feb. 21), at the end of a letter to Lord Kames in which there is a very clear statement of the labor or cost of production theory of value, he adds, "I have sent by sea . . . a little box, containing a few copies of the late editions of my books, for my friends in Scotland . . . one for your society."<sup>6</sup> Smith probably did not receive one of these. He is not

<sup>1</sup> Bonar (Ed.), *A Catalogue of the Library of Adam Smith*, London, 1894; facsimile photogravure insert opposite page 1.

<sup>2</sup> Bigelow, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, New York and London, 1904, vol. III, pp. 250-1; quoted by Parton, *op. cit.*, p. 403; also cf. Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-1, quoted below.

<sup>3</sup> Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 335-6.

<sup>4</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 405.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. V, p. 62.

specifically mentioned, nor have we any reply from him. He might have seen the copy belonging to the society, but it is unlikely, as he does not seem to have left Kirkcaldy but once more until he came to London. To be sure, Kirkcaldy is only across the Firth north of Edinburgh, but traveling was hard for Smith in those days, as we may infer from Hume's apparently vain attempts to coax him out. His visit to Edinburgh in June, 1770, seems to have been very brief. It was a gala occasion, on which he could hardly have done much studying. The set is not included in Bonar's catalog of Smith's library.

In 1771 Franklin visited Glasgow and Edinburgh on his return from a trip to Ireland. Smith, however, was still in Kirkcaldy, and Franklin does not seem to have gone out of his way to see him any more than Smith did to see Franklin. That Franklin would have gone to him had there been any close communication between them is indicated by the fact that he went much further out of his way to visit Lord Kames.<sup>1</sup> On November 17, he writes to Strahan from Edinburgh, "I have been at Blair Drummond on a visit to my friend Lord Kames, thence I went to Glasgow."<sup>2</sup> A letter to Joseph Galloway (February 6, 1772), refers to Scotch hospitality and Scotch economic conditions, but with no personal mention.<sup>3</sup>

Hume, indeed, writes Franklin (February 7, 1772)<sup>4</sup> from Edinburgh, in his cordial style, ". . . the good wishes of all your brother philosophers in this place attend you heartily and sincerely, together with much regret that your business would not allow you to pass more time among them." There is nothing definite here, however.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Blair Drummond is between Glasgow and Edinburgh, but in Perth, some distance to the north.

<sup>2</sup> Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. V, p. 270.

<sup>3</sup> A. L. S., Mason Library, not in Smyth's collection.

<sup>4</sup> Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. V, p. 325.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson* (no author), London, 1801, Appendix, p. 139, quoted from Dr. Carlyle: "Among the most distinguished Speakers in the Select Society were", etc. . . . "David Hume and Adam Smith never opened their lips." In a list from Dr. Carlyle, dated Oct. 17, 1759, included in the above, Adam Smith is listed as a member, though located at Glasgow.

A more plausible bit of evidence is found in Hume's letter to Smith, dated the 13th of February, 1774, when Smith was in London:

Pray what strange accounts are these we hear of Franklyn's conduct? I am very slow in believing that he has been guilty in the extreme degree that is pretended, tho' I always knew him to be a very factious man, and Faction next to Fanaticism is of all passions the most destructive of morality. I hear that Wedderburn's treatment of him before the Council was most cruel without being in the least blamable. What a pity!<sup>1</sup>

This is apropos of the episode of the Hutchinson Letters, in which Franklin probably made a mistake, but was so terribly abused. Hume seems to have believed his detractors. It at least proves the continued acquaintance of Smith with Franklin, but nothing further.

In *Footsteps of Dr. Johnson (Scotland)* by J. Birkbeck Hill<sup>2</sup> is the following comment in regard to Hume's residence in James Court, Edinburgh:

Here he [Hume] had welcomed Benjamin Franklin, here Adam Smith had been his frequent guest, and here he had offered a shelter to Rousseau.

So near and yet so far!

Turning then to the periods when both men were in London:

The three weeks in 1761 were busy ones for Smith, and he had not yet entered the field of political economy deeply enough to make any chance meeting with Franklin significant at that time.

The six months in 1766-7 and the three years in 1773-6 are the periods of doubt. The writer submits that in Franklin's abundant papers we should find some indication if the intercourse between the men was close enough to influence Smith

<sup>1</sup> "Hume MSS., R. S. E. Library." Quoted in Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 267. Slightly differing version in Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, vol. II, p. 471. Another (but immaterial) sentence appears after the word "morality".

<sup>2</sup> London, 1890, p. 74.

seriously or, indeed, had it been more than a friendly acquaintance.

It will be recalled that Parton (quoted in Rae, above) refers to certain memoranda in Franklin's papers which indicate discussions in which Smith is supposed to have taken part. Let us examine these. In Smyth's and Bigelow's editions of the *Works of Benjamin Franklin* is to be found a memorandum of an economic problem, which shows a well-developed practical man's analysis of the fallacy of mercantilism.

London, 7 July, 1767.

Suppose a country, X, with three manufactures, as *cloth, silk, iron*, supplying three other countries, A, B, C, but is desirous of increasing the vent, and raising the price of cloth in favor of her own clothiers.

In order to this, she forbids the importation of foreign cloth from A. A, in return, forbids silks from X.

Then the silk-workers complain of a decay of trade.

And X, to content them, forbids silks from B.

B, in return, forbids iron ware from X.

Then the iron-workers complain of decay.

And X forbids the importation of iron from C.

C, in return, forbids cloth from X.

What is got by all these prohibitions?

*Answer.*—All four find their common stock of the enjoyments and conveniences of life diminished.<sup>1</sup>—B. F.

This indeed, seems like just such a memorandum as is mentioned by Rae and Parton. Unfortunately for the theory of direct influence, Smith had left London two months before that date.<sup>2</sup>

In 1767 there is also a memorandum attached to an argument forwarded by Governor Pownall to Franklin for refutation;<sup>3</sup> this, however, was while Adam Smith was at Kirkcaldy. Governor Pownall was in America, and there is nothing to indicate that the memorandum was used for discussion. It is

<sup>1</sup>Text copied from Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, pp. 299-300.

<sup>2</sup>Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 238. The evidence in the letters corroborates this statement.

<sup>3</sup>Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, pp. 342-3.

inserted here, however, as it shows a well-worked-out theory of the international division of labor under freedom of trade, and the undesirability of obstructing it artificially.

The argument which had bothered Pownall was, briefly, as follows: If colonies are represented and are equally taxed, they must have equal powers of trade and manufactures; then Atlantic profits may shift center to America, and its producing and landed interests be benefited at the expense of the mother country. The balance of power will then shift.

Says Franklin:

This *objection* goes upon the supposition that whatever the colonies gain Britain must lose, and that if the *colonies* can be kept from gaining an advantage, *Britain will gain it*.

If the colonies are fitter for a particular trade than Britain, they should have it, and Britain apply to what it is more fit for. The whole empire is a gainer. And if Britain is not so fit or so well situated for a particular advantage, other countries will get it *if the colonies do not*. Thus Ireland was forbid the woollen manufacture, and remains poor; but this has given to the French the trade and wealth Ireland might have gained for the British Empire. . . . It by no means follows, that promoting . . . the landed interest in America will depress that of Great Britain; the contrary has always been the fact. Advantageous situations and circumstances will always secure and fix manufactures. Sheffield against all Europe these three hundred years past.

Of course, it is not impossible that some exchange of ideas took place on this question during the months from November to May, 1768, when the two men were in London together.

The next memorandum appears in 1769.<sup>1</sup> It is of the character noted by Parton, and contains some interesting theories. However, Smith was again in Kirkcaldy.<sup>2</sup> Striking resemblances and striking differences are to be noted between the positions here outlined and those later advanced by Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*.

<sup>1</sup> Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. V, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-50.



Positions to be examined, concerning National Wealth.

[Dated April 4, 1769.]

1. All food or subsistence for mankind arises from the earth or waters.
2. Necessaries of life, that are not food, and all other conveniences, have their values estimated by the proportion of food consumed while we are employed in procuring them.
3. A small people, with a large territory, may subsist on the productions of nature, with no other labor than that of gathering the vegetables and catching the animals.
4. A large people, with a small territory, find these insufficient, and, to subsist, must labor the earth, to make it produce greater quantities of vegetable food, suitable for the nourishment of men, and of the animals they intend to eat.

From this he goes on and derives wealth, defined in terms of superfluity, and explains that wages are mere subsistence because the products of labor without land are only equal to the value of that labor measured in terms of "the provisions consumed in producing them." The excessive profits of manufactures in foreign trade are ascribed to ease in transportation and ignorance of costs by the purchaser. It may be that these, like the memorandum from Gov. Pownall, are some one else's opinions "to be examined" by Franklin, and not his own mature thought.

There is also extant, in one collection of the Shipley (St. Asaph) family, a document, holograph copy, undated (not in Smyth), with the following title: *Remark on Chap. XI of the Considerations on Policy, Trade, &c.*, dealing with the surplus product of land, its exchange for manufactures, or its use as a base for local manufactures, the value of which is thus traced to land, rather than to labor. The only Chapter XI in *The Wealth of Nations* is in Book I, on the Rent of Land. The *MS.* probably refers to another work.<sup>1</sup>

In 1775 Franklin listed a number of queries relating to the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy . . . . Domestic Policy in Free Nations. . . .* London, Printed for A. Millar [acquaintance of Franklin] . . . 1767; Book II (Of Trade and Industry), chapter xi, on similar topics.

colonies to be discussed with Lord Chatham,<sup>1</sup> which partly parallel some of the material in *The Wealth of Nations*, IV., vii, in regard to the founding and growth of the colonies. The memorandum is obviously a political one, and though Smith was in London at that time, there is only the possibility that similar subjects were discussed. This does not seem to be a "jotting" of the character noted by Parton. The "Hints" for reconciliation,<sup>2</sup>—Franklin's final effort in 1775, before leaving England—are even further from the mark. They did not represent his full views, and were kept secret. There are no more such memoranda added in Smyth's edition of Franklin's writings.

It seems, therefore, that the evidence is not strong at this point for close discussion between Smith and Franklin over *The Wealth of Nations*.

Hume writes Smith in 1776 after Franklin's departure from London:

The Duke of Buccleugh tells me that you are very zealous in American affairs.<sup>3</sup>

Rae adds:

Smith followed the struggle, as we see from many evidences in the concluding portion of the *Wealth of Nations*, with the most patriotic interest and anxiety, and having long made a special study of the whole problem of colonial administration, had arrived at the most decided opinions not only on the rights and wrongs of the particular quarrel then at issue, but on the general policy it was requisite to adopt in the government of dependencies . . . Smith . . . held that there need never be any occasion for separation as long as mother country and dependency were wise enough to keep together, and that the sound policy to adopt was really the policy of closer union—of imperial federation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Smyth, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* . . . New York, 1907, vol. VI, p. 366. (Jan. 31, 1775.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 382.

<sup>3</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

It is clear that Smith's and Franklin's views were really diverging rather than being exchanged at this time.

It is unfortunate that we have not Franklin's answer (if there was one) to the letter of Georgiana Shipley (February 11, 1777) to Franklin in France<sup>1</sup> in which she asks,

Pray have you met with Smith's "Wealth of Nations"? if not, I venture strongly to recommend it to you. I have read only parts, but propose shortly to read it regularly through. His sentiments are liberal and the language clear and interesting.

This might imply that she assumed Franklin's knowledge of at least Smith's reputation, but hardly that she knew of any intimate association of the two men, or influence of the one upon the other's writing. We do not even have direct evidence that Franklin ever read *The Wealth of Nations*. There is, however, in the Mason Library a clerk's memorandum of books transferred from sitting room to office in Franklin's residence at Passy, which includes the name of *The Wealth of Nations*.

### III

Apart from the above evidence, which seems scanty enough, we have only additional secondary accounts, presumably based on the same evidence, and of value merely as cumulative scholarly judgment.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*<sup>2</sup> says,

During his sojourn of five years in England he had made many valuable friends . . . among whom Hume, Robertson and Adam Smith were conspicuous.

This refers to his first mission. No additional authority is cited.

The *Dictionary of National Biography*<sup>3</sup> cites Watson as

<sup>1</sup> Given in Hale, Edward E., and Hale, Edward E., Jr., *Franklin in France*, Boston: 1888. Part I, pp. 91 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Eleventh Ed., article "Benjamin Franklin" (Richard Webster), vol. XI, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> New York and London, 1898, article "Adam Smith" (Leslie Stephen), vol. LIII, p. 7.

hearsay, and adds: "Various passages in the book show that it was undergoing revisions at this time [1775]."

Parton writes,<sup>1</sup> with assurance:

Franklin combated this astonishing delusion [that the people and the wealth of colonies were just so much drawn from the mother country] by arguments which Adam Smith has since made familiar to the world. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the author of the *Wealth of Nations* read this pamphlet before he wrote the first book of his great work, which contains very numerous allusions to the North American colonies. . . .

Franklin's conjecture that the population of the colonies would double every twenty-five years, was very happy. . . . Adam Smith adopts the conjecture.<sup>2</sup>

Smyth in his life of Franklin,<sup>3</sup> asserts:

Adam Smith communicated with him on some particulars of "The Wealth of Nations" several years before that epoch-making work was published.

But Smyth adduces no evidence on the point.

Rae (pp. 150-1) quotes Franklin regarding the 1759 visit to Scotland: "'six weeks,' said Franklin, 'of the densest<sup>4</sup> happiness I have met with in any part of my life'". Referring to Smith's letter of April 4, 1760, cited above, Rae adds:

. . . it seems from this letter highly probable that he had gone through to Glasgow, and possibly stayed with Smith at the College. Why otherwise should the younger, or, as Smith says, youngest, Franklin have thought of making a presentation to Glasgow College, or Smith of thanking him not merely in the name of the College, but in his own? Strahan was one of Franklin's most intimate private friends.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 418.

<sup>2</sup> Footnote from Parton: "'In Great Britain[,] and most other European countries[,] they [the inhabitants] are not supposed to double in less than five hundred years. In the British colonies in North America, it has been found, that they double in twenty or five and twenty years.'—*Wealth of Nations*, book i, chapter viii." (Parton has slight errors from First edition, vol. I, p. 86, as indicated by brackets.—T. D. E.)

<sup>3</sup> Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> The letter referred to is that to Lord Kames cited above (Jan. 3, 1760): Bigelow, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 250-1. The word "densest" is italicized by Franklin.

. . . Smith had no doubt heard of, and perhaps from, the Franklins in some of Strahan's previous letters.

Rae also gives much weight to Hume's remark in the letter of congratulations he wrote Smith upon the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*: "It is probably much improved by your last abode in London."<sup>1</sup> All this, however, is at best inference from circumstance, not proof.

W. A. Wetzel, in the monograph cited above,<sup>2</sup> includes a chapter upon the relations of Franklin with the English and Scottish thinkers of the day, in which he cites the passage from Watson's *Annals* quoted above, the Robertson dinner, and the Hume and Strahan letters, cited above. Basing his conclusions, therefore, on this evidence, Wetzel concludes (p. 52):

There can be no doubt that Smith and Franklin were acquainted with each other. But to what extent Franklin contributed to the *Wealth of Nations* it is impossible to determine. It is true that Franklin and Smith spent at least two years in London at the same time. Smith came to London in the spring of 1773 with his book, as he thought at the time, almost ready to be printed. During the next three years he made many changes, especially in the chapter on the colonies, while the passage on American wages was inserted for the first time.<sup>3</sup> One would naturally expect that Smith, under such circumstances, would avail himself of Franklin's accurate knowledge of colonial affairs. Franklin's estimate that in the colonies the population was doubled every twenty or twenty-five years was accepted by Smith.<sup>4</sup> Then, too, Franklin often had occasion to defend the colonial paper currency with his pen. No doubt he understood the nature of

<sup>1</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 264; Parton, *op. cit.*, p. 537 (slight variant).

<sup>2</sup> P. 51. I am indebted to Prof. F. N. Thorpe for calling my attention to this and one or two other sources of considerable interest.

<sup>3</sup> Footnotes from Wetzel: "*Vid.* John Rae, *loc. cit.*, p. 256. It is interesting to note in this connection that Franklin later, in his *Reflections on the Augmentation of Wages*, quotes from this chapter that part which he is supposed by some to have written, the portion referring to wages in the colonies. It is the only direct quotation from the *Wealth of Nations* found in all of Franklin's economic works."

<sup>4</sup> "*Vid.* *Wealth of Nations*, Book I., ch. 8, (Bohn ed.), vol. I., p. 71."—First Ed., vol. I, p. 86. Cf. also *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th Ed., Art. "Franklin".—T. D. E.

paper money as well as any Englishman living at the time. If Smith consulted him at all, it is more than likely that he did so with reference to the chapter on money. But here at least Franklin was not very successful in causing Smith "to reverse his propositions," as Dr. Logan would have us believe. The American paper currency, which was the pride of Franklin, was characterized by Smith as "a scheme of fraudulent debtors to cheat their creditors."<sup>1</sup> And concerning the law forbidding the further issue of paper money in the colonies, Smith said that "no law could be more equitable than the act of Parliament so unjustly complained of in the colonies."<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that it was in opposition to this law that Franklin wrote his *Remarks and Facts Relative to the American Paper Money*.<sup>3</sup> It may be true that Smith occasionally consulted Franklin in revising his work, but we are forced to believe that the view expressed above is very much exaggerated.

Professor F. N. Thorpe, formerly at the University of Pennsylvania, has also made a study of this subject, and states his conclusions as follows: <sup>4</sup>

#### Influence of Franklin on Adam Smith.

Among his friends in England were Adam Smith, who at the time Franklin met him was writing his classic work, *The Nature and Cause [sic] of the Wealth of Nations*, and David Hume, the well-known author of a history of England and of essays in politics and philosophy. Adam Smith, when writing his *Wealth of Nations*, was in the habit of bringing the chapters, as he composed them, to Franklin, to Dr. Price, and others of the literati, then patiently hearing their observations and profiting by their discussions and criticisms, sometimes rewriting whole chapters after conference and even reversing some of his propositions. Hume writes to Adam Smith in 1776: "Your work is probably much improved by your last abode in London." Parton

<sup>1</sup>"*Vid. Wealth of Nations*, Book II., ch. 2, (Bohn ed.), vol. I., p. 331."—First Ed., vol. I, p. 396.—T. D. E.

<sup>2</sup>"*Ibid.*, p. 332."—First Ed., vol. I, p. 397. wording, punctuation and capitalization slightly different.—T. D. E.

<sup>3</sup>"*Vid.* p. 14" (of Wetzel's monograph—T. D. E.).

<sup>4</sup>Franklin's Influence on Education, chap. ii of *Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1902*, Washington, 1903, vol. I, pp. 120-121. The passage is taken with only slight changes from the same writer's treatise: "Benjamin Franklin and the University of Pennsylvania," in U. S. Bureau of Education, *Circular of Information, No. 2, 1892*, Washington, 1893, pp. 99-100; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 135.

has pointed out that Franklin's papers at this period "contain sets of problems and queries, as though agitated [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> at some meeting of philosophers for particular consideration at home." All students of political economy have long known that Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is the first book that illustrates its propositions by examples from America. Smith was working out a new system of economics. In seeking a field for the application of his ideas it was natural that he should refer to America, a new country, as the region where they might have a practical test.<sup>2</sup>

. . . The book had direct reference to America, due to Franklin's influence, and was influential here long before it was influential in Europe. . . . He gave to Adam Smith apt illustrations of the utility of the ideas of the *Wealth of Nations*. . . . Had Franklin done no more in the world than to contribute these illustrations to Adam Smith's book, he would have had a high place among the great teachers of mankind.

No new material seems to be adduced in either of Professor Thorpe's accounts. He told the writer, however, that he had had occasion to reexamine some of Franklin's work, and that his opinion had been reinforced thereby. He had apparently depended largely upon internal circumstantial evidence, which will not hold against strong external evidence.

The secondary evidence just cited seems to the writer to be outweighed by the negative evidence.

Hirst, in his more recent but briefer biography, says: <sup>3</sup>

. . . Smith had another friend and counsellor for his critical chapter on the colonies and their administration. Dr. Franklin is reported to have said that "the celebrated Adam Smith when writing his *Wealth of Nations* was in the habit of bringing chapter after chapter as he composed it to himself, Dr. Price, and others of the literati"; that he would then patiently hear their observations, sometimes

<sup>1</sup> The word *agitated* should read "jotted down".—T. D. E.

<sup>2</sup> Footnote from Thorpe: "See, specially, Franklin's idea of labor as a measure of wealth, expanded by Smith in Book I, and consult index to *The Wealth of Nations*, title 'America,' for illustrations of Franklin's influence on Smith."—Petty long foreshadowed Franklin and Smith in this respect, as Wetzel shows (*op. cit.*, p. 30).—T. D. E.

<sup>3</sup> Hirst, *Adam Smith* (English Men of Letters), New York and London, 1904, pp. 161-2.

submitting to write whole chapters anew, and even to reverse some of his propositions. Franklin's remark has probably been inaccurately reported. We know from one of Smith's letters [not cited—E.] that he had not a high opinion of Dr. Price as an economist; but Parton, Franklin's biographer, justly points to the countless colonial illustrations with which the *Wealth of Nations* abounds, and to that intimate knowledge of American conditions which Franklin was of all men the best fitted to impart. And there is internal evidence in the text itself that the important chapter on the colonies in Book IV was written, or at least considerably enlarged, in the years 1773 and 1774. Franklin's papers contained problems which seem to have been jotted down at meetings of philosophers, and no doubt Price as well as Smith would take a prominent part. At Glasgow Smith must have heard a good deal about the colonial trade: but colonial policy did not become the question of the day until after he left, and in the lectures there is nothing about the colonies. We may conjecture that the idea of devoting a large section of the book to the history and economics of colonial dominions did not strike him until after his return from France. The great debates of 1766 and of the early seventies, the intimate acquaintance with British policy and finance in large outline and in official detail, which his friendships with Burke and Franklin, with Oswald, Pulteney, and Shelburne, helped him to acquire, . . . conspired to make colonial policy and imperial expenditure large and imposing themes in the *Wealth of Nations*.

It would be easy to extend the negative evidence. A prisoner once objected because the judge took the word of one man who saw him commit the crime, when he, the prisoner, could bring a dozen who had not. In the absence of positive evidence, however, there are certain sources in which one would expect to find evidence if the contacts were important, and in which the absence of such evidence is itself in the nature of evidence. Such are the lives or memoirs of Lord Shelburne,<sup>1</sup> Governor Pownall,<sup>2</sup> L'Abbé Morellet,<sup>3</sup> Josiah Quincy,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of William, Earl of Shelburne*, . . . by Lord [Edmond] Fitzmaurice, 2 vols., Second and Revised Ed., London, 1912. Shelburne was an exponent of Smith's doctrines and friendly to Franklin, but does not connect them.

<sup>2</sup> *Thomas Pownall*, . . . by Charles A. W. Pownall, London, 1908. Pownall knew Franklin well, and differed with Smith's doctrines.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet*, Paris, 1821. Morellet was in England and met Franklin in 1772, when Smith was at Kirkcaldy (chap. ix).



Jr.,<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson,<sup>2</sup> Richard Price,<sup>3</sup> Joseph Priestley,<sup>4</sup> Lord Kames,<sup>5</sup> and Dr. John Fothergill.<sup>6</sup> Monroe's *Early Economic Thought*,<sup>7</sup> a series of selections prior to Adam Smith, omits Franklin.

Neither *The Gentleman's Magazine* nor *The Annual Register* seems to contain any reference to the relationship, though the references to each are many; in fact additions to the obituaries of the two men appear upon the same page of *The Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>8</sup> Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes*<sup>9</sup> also fail to yield anything.

There is no extant correspondence between the two men, though Franklin was a voluminous letter-writer, and exchanged many letters with others of the group. If there had been a correspondence we should probably have some trace of it. That there was not, is probably due to Smith's aversion to writing letters, noted by Rae.<sup>10</sup>

Not a single personal mention of Adam Smith nor of *The Wealth of Nations* was found in any of Franklin's extant

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of the Life of Josiah Quincy Jun. of Massachusetts*: by his son, Josiah Quincy, Boston, 1825 (First Ed.), Quincy was of Franklin's group in London during the year 1774, when Smith was in London revising his work; and he is usually detailed in naming the guests at various gatherings. Smith's name does not appear.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, (Library of English Classics) London, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Richard Price, D.D. F.R.S.*, by William Morgan, F.R.S., London, 1815.

<sup>4</sup> *Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley*, . . . by himself . . . by his son . . . London, 1806.

<sup>5</sup> *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honorable Henry Howe of Kames*, . . . by . . . Alex. Fraser Tytler. This work contains nothing bearing on Franklin's relations with Smith.

<sup>6</sup> *Dr. John Fothergill and His Friends* by R. Hingston Fox, M.D., London, 1919.

<sup>7</sup> Cambridge, 1924.

<sup>8</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, vol. LX (1790), p. 761.

<sup>9</sup> *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* . . . by John Nichols, F.S.A., London, 1815.

<sup>10</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 240, 280.

letters or writings, even in the letters to Strahan, Pringle, Kames, or Hume;<sup>1</sup> nor has any personal reference to Smith been discovered in his letters about his trips to Scotland, on one of which he met Smith.

There is only one quotation from Smith in Franklin,<sup>2</sup> and that is long after 1776, and does not seem to bear upon their acquaintance.

The only other direct connection would be through such pamphlets as Franklin published.

Adam Smith's library, so far as listed by Bonar, contained only a small essay by Franklin, and that on electricity. Bonar's "Catalogue includes a great part of Adam Smith's library."<sup>3</sup> Bonar seems to have gone through Smith's works for references bearing upon books or authors in his library, and he finds only one to Franklin: "The only reference to Franklin is about the propagation of sound. . . . (*Essay on the External Senses*, p. 215)."<sup>4</sup>

The letter to Strahan (April 4, 1760) is the only personal mention of Franklin by Smith so far located.

Parton claims, without giving evidence, that a tract on the Peopling of New Countries (1751, 1755) which appeared in the *Annual Register* for 1760,<sup>4</sup> must have been seen by Smith, because the doctrines expressed are similar. This is rather weak. For the rest, it is conjecture. We might say the same about the tracts on *The Laboring Poor*, *The Prussian Edict*, *Rules for Reducing a Great Empire to a Small One* etc., or we might deny it. It is not unlikely he saw some of them. It is not likely that, by the time he got to London, he

<sup>1</sup> These men, particularly Hume, were dear friends of Smith. Kames had been his patron in 1748-50.

<sup>2</sup> Wetzel, *op. cit.*, chap. IX, footnotes, cites this quotation from *The Wealth of Nations* in Franklin's paper on *The Augmentation of Wages* (pp. 52). *The Wealth of Nations*, First Ed., Book I, viii, p. 85. (Bigelow gives incorrect reference.)

<sup>3</sup> *A Catalogue of the Library of Adam Smith*. . . . Edited with an Introduction by James Bonar, London, 1894, pp. viii, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Parton, *op. cit.*, p. 418. See Smyth, *op. cit.*, III, p. 63; *Annual Register* (1760), Fifth Ed., London, 1775, vol. III, p. 191.

could gain much in theory from them. The tracts themselves, though brilliant politically, are full of fallacies and special pleading, of which Franklin was occasionally guilty when not in scientific mood.

A glance at the index of the *Wealth of Nations* will also suffice to show no mention of Franklin. Smith seems to have been in the habit of giving credit where such credit was due. It is only because of this that we know that "Smith always obtained a great deal of his information from the conversation of competent men." A Scottish biographer, however, made the following comment: ". . . few, I believe, have studied Mr. Smith's works, (particularly his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*,) without regretting, on some occasions, the omission of his authorities."<sup>1</sup>

There remains such indirect influence as may have come to Smith from Franklin through the intercourse of the latter with the *Économistes*, with Lord Kames, Hume, and others. This, like the alleged direct contacts, is largely a matter of likelihood.

In another connection, Parton himself writes:<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the striking similarity of his pamphlet [*A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency*, Philadelphia, 1729<sup>3</sup>], in tone and method, to some passages of the "Wealth of Nations,"<sup>4</sup> we are to remember, that Adam Smith, like all other writers of the first rank, inherited vast accumulations of truth, as well as vast accumulations of error. . . . A single mind can no more produce a book of the first order than a single architect, in the infancy of the race, could have built St. Peters. . . . There is no reason to suppose that Adam Smith ever saw Franklin's pamphlet. The similarity that has excited so much surprise, is owing simply to the fact, that Franklin had read Locke's essays upon Interest and the Value of Money, Defoe's works, and other writings of that day, which made approaches to the great truths afterwards systematized and demonstrated by Smith.

<sup>1</sup> *Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson* (no author), London, 1801, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 187-8.

<sup>3</sup> See Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 133-155.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Book I, iv, v.

## IV

Dr. Patten claimed that the book brought down to London in 1773 was not *The Wealth of Nations* as we know it, but Adam Smith's promised book on Politics, which was then revamped through the influence of Franklin to become *The Wealth of Nations*.<sup>1</sup> While possible, the theory is improbable. The Abbé Morellet<sup>2</sup> who had known Smith in France in 1762 when Smith spoke French badly, mentions conversations with Smith: "*nous parlâmes théorie commerciale, banque . . . et de plusieurs points du grand ouvrage qu'il méditait.*" These are not political subjects. Morellet would have noted the change in plan in his *Mémoires*, if any had been made, for he later translated Smith's work. This is not conclusive; however, it indicates that the turning point, if there was one, came from the Physiocrats rather than from later influences. Their influence on "the book" is obvious and undoubted. Rae himself says, referring in this case to Smith and Turgot (p. 203):

Questions of literary obligation are often difficult to settle. Two contemporary thinkers, dealing with the same subject under the same general influences and tendencies of the time, may think nearly alike even without any manner of personal intercommunication, and the idea of natural liberty of trade, in which the main resemblance between the writers . . . is supposed to occur, was already in the ground, and sprouting up here and there before either of them wrote at all.

This statement is probably equally true between Franklin and Smith.

In 1769, Smith writes to Lord Hailes, asking for information in regard to the "prices of provisions in former times"—certainly not political. He also discusses the Acts of James I,

<sup>1</sup> In what follows the writer does not attempt to involve himself in problems of the development of Adam Smith's thought, but only to define Franklin's relation to that development. The argument is equally valid, for example, whether Smith revised the first part or the last part of his work in London, during 1773-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 237. Also quoted by Rae (*op. cit.*, p. 201), in translation: "the theory of commerce, banking, public credit, and various points in the great work which Smith was then meditating."

which might be taken as part of the material for a book on Politics. He might, however, still have been doing some work along this line, with a view to future publication, and yet have been chiefly engaged in economic research.<sup>1</sup>

His next letter to Hailes<sup>2</sup> refers to the price of silver, again an economic subject. If any change was made in the plan of the book, it seems to the writer that it must have been made in 1772, for Smith writes in September to Pulteney, as follows: <sup>3</sup>

In the Book which I am now preparing for the press I have treated fully and distinctly of every part of the subject which you have recommended to me; and I intended to send you some extracts from it; but upon looking them over I find that they are *too much interwoven with other parts of the work to be easily separated* from it. I have the same opinion of Sir James Stewart's book that you have. *Without once mentioning it*, I flatter myself that *any fallacious principle in it will meet with a clear and distinct confutation in mine.*<sup>4</sup>

The book mentioned is, according to Rae, Stewart's *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, published in 1767. Stewart wrote no book on Politics. The first part of his book treats of population and some political questions, and there is a section on taxation; these are his nearest approaches on the subject.

In 1773, Adam Ferguson, the Scottish philosopher, says in a footnote:<sup>5</sup> "The public will probably soon be furnished (by Mr. Smith, author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*) with a theory of national economy," etc. This remark does not appear in earlier editions of Ferguson's book, and it is not clear whether it comes before or after Smith left Scotland for London. If there had been a radical change of plan at this date, however, he would not be likely to say "soon," nor would he be likely to hear of it while in Scotland. The footnote

<sup>1</sup> Rae, *ibid.*, pp. 247-8.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Rae, *ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Rae, *ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> The italics are mine.—T. D. E.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Rae, *ibid.*, p. 264.

itself was probably written some months before it was printed, and Smith was in London by spring. "National economy" sounds more like "Wealth of Nations" than like "Political Philosophy."

Rae's remark<sup>1</sup> that "Whole chapters seem to have been put through the forge afresh" seems to be based only on Watson's quotations and on Hume's and others' accounts, together with internal evidence. In short, aside from Watson's statements, there seems to be no reason for thinking that the changes made in 1773-5 were so radical, nor for believing that anything but information and illustrative material were elicited from Franklin.

Franklin had at first advocated consolidation, and did not grudge even the thought of a shift of centre of gravity of the Empire. Later he advocated imperial federation under the king, with separate legislatures, and finally he advocated separation. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith advocates Franklin's first plan, rather than the views the latter was proposing at the 1773 period.

Had Franklin attempted to influence him at all, it would have been on this point; yet it is this point at which they differ radically. Throughout the chapter on Colonies, moreover, Smith never fails to emphasize the superiority of even England's poor policy over that of other states. He stresses the failure of the colonies to defend themselves and to help the mother-country; a point which never failed to rouse the ire of Franklin, and which he always boldly refuted. There are many Britocentric passages quite foreign to Franklin's spirit (e. g., Rae, p. 283); and there is probably too much economic material to have been collected in three years if the whole purpose had changed in 1773. The chapter on Colonies, composed as it was at the climax of the struggle in London, bears strong traces of political purpose, but not of Franklin's hand or mind. While the name of the book itself is never mentioned previous to publication, it is doubtful if the evidence warrants a verdict that it was ever changed. The title may have been formulated just before publication.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

As for Franklin's visiting Smith at Kirkcaldy in 1775, it is impossible. In a letter to his son, dated March 22,<sup>1</sup> Franklin gives us a detailed account of his last three months prior to sailing for Philadelphia; and as Smith was in London, during January and February,<sup>2</sup> there is no reason to suppose that the two men met at Kirkcaldy.

It is not at all unlikely, as Dr. Patten held, that extensive changes were indeed made in Smith's work in London; for the book shows signs of haste. But the above evidence shows, in the writer's opinion, that the changes must have been in theory and arrangement rather than in subject; that the colonial theory differs from Franklin's; and that Franklin (quite apart from external evidence) would not have influenced the other doctrines.

Upon this Scotch economist, accused of Americanism, the writer delivers a Scotch verdict: "Not proven."

It is indeed amazing and regrettable that these two men did not come to know each other better. It was probably no fault of the genial Franklin.<sup>3</sup> Can it be ascribed possibly, to Smith's dread of plagiarism?<sup>4</sup> It is said he was reticent if he feared it,<sup>5</sup> and Franklin was constantly writing pamphlets in Smith's own field. But the same puzzle might be equally pertinent in the case of Watt and Franklin, or of Hume and Franklin. Chance is more likely to explain it, as it doubtless explains the failure of many of today's great men to cross paths and exchange ideas, though often together in the same city.

THOMAS D. ELIOT

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

<sup>1</sup> Smyth, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> Unless, indeed, one speculates on the bare possibility that his recent antagonistic experiences with another Smith (William Smith of Pennsylvania) may have, more or less unconsciously, turned him from Adam!

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also reference above in the memoirs of Robertson.