SCOTLAND'S ENLIGHTENMENT IN AUSTRALIA: SCOTTISH MORAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT FROM MACQUARIE TO MENZIES

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INTRODUCTION

In his landmark study of the intellectual history of Australia, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, John Gascoigne argued that in the formative decades of modern Australia 'the goals which gave shape and direction to the conduct of life drew heavily on the worldview of the Enlightenment.'[1] The European encounter with and later colonisation of Australia occurred at the same time as the most prominent Scottish Enlightenment thinkers were at work. Much of what they had pioneered across diverse fields was already circulating in Scotland's republic of letters and beyond. Some of the most important Scottish writers and ideas had emerged just prior to, or during, the early colonisation of Australia: Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), David Hume (1711–1776), Henry Home, or Lord Kames, (1696–1792) and James Mackintosh (1765–1832), for example. Adam Smith (1723–1790) lived to see the convict settlement of Australia before he died, his most famous work, *The Wealth of Nations*, having been published in 1776. His successor as professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow was Dugald Stewart (1753–1828). Stewart was notably a supporter of the early stages of the French Revolution, which had broken out just one year after Arthur Phillip raised the British flag at Port Jackson.

It was almost inevitable that those first European colonists would bring with them a firm belief in the autonomy of reason, the importance of progress and moral improvement, and the relationship between the two. Bruce Buchan and Annemarie McLaren have noted that the 'expansion of Britain's Empire went hand-in-hand with the global reach of Scottish Enlightenment notions of civilisation, ideas of stadial historical development, and a political economy of "improvement".' The Scottish Enlightenment and the British Empire, they argue, 'were inseparably entwined, such that the former's conceptualisation of humanity bore the indelible impression of the latter.'[2] It has been argued that the Scottish stadial view of agricultural development goes at least some way to explaining why the land interests of indigenous peoples were not recognised by colonists.[3] In the debate about the founding of a new colony, hopeful supporters were driven by a range of motivations, from the narrow expectation of a

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[1] John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 169.

[2] Bruce Buchan and Annemarie McLaren, 'Edinburgh's Enlightenment Abroad: Navigating Humanity as a Physician, Merchant, Natural Historian and Settler-Colonist', *Intellectual History Review* 30, no. 3 (2020).

[3] Kate McCarthy, 'Agrarian Discourse in Imperial Context: landed property, Scottish stadial theory and indigenes in early colonial Australia', *Australia & New Zealand Law & History E-Journal* 4 (2005): pp. 60-69.

solution to the overcrowding of Britain's gaols, to the expansion of commerce, right through to the creation of a new society in which, as Manning Clark would later put it, 'the great dream of the Enlightenment would come to pass, the perfection of the human race.'[4] Indeed, in 1822, the Scottish physician and merchant Alexander Berry, speaking to the Philosophical Society of Australia in Sydney, suggested that because Australia 'is so peculiar, and has so many apparent disadvantages in the midst of some seeming advantages, it becomes our duty to improve the latter, and to obviate the former.' He thought it

> perhaps happy that [Australia's] colonization has been deferred until the present time, when the sum of human knowledge, both moral and physical, is so extended, that these attempts may be made upon just and rational principles, the result of which may be expected to be very different from such as originate in mere experiment, or (what is still worse) from such as are the offspring of a false theory.[5] As Gascoigne suggested, the small elite of the new Australian society, who in large part determined the shape and direction of the colonies, generally assumed that society's problems could be solved by the exercise of reason and that if such a path were followed improvement would naturally follow – in short, that progress was possible.[6]

Beliefs such as these became deeply ingrained. Australian politics and political thinking are still determined in large part by the idea that the application of reason is the key to improvement. As Gascoigne puts it, those on the Left of Australian politics 'look to the prospects for social betterment offered by a state which serves its citizens through careful planning and the cultivation of improving institutions such as schools, gaols and hospitals', while parties and individuals on the Right have often placed their stock in 'the widening horizon of economic growth which the programme of Adam Smith had laid down in the language of the Scottish Enlightenment.'[7]

This reveals both the substantial influence of the European Enlightenment in Australia, as much as it does the difficulties that we might encounter in attempting to identify its exact relationship to the nation and its institutions. The influence is often so diffuse that what one might describe as a remarkable legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment, another would simply see as the natural order of the world; the ways things are and the way they have always been. Nevertheless, it is a question worth considering, and this article explores some facets of the Scottish Enlightenment and its relationship to Australia.[8] Although the Scottish Enlightenment encompassed a broad

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[4] Manning Clark, 'The choice of Botany Bay', in *The Founding of Australia: The Argument About Australia's Origins*, ed. Gen Martin (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1978), p. 76.

[5] Alexander Berry, 'On the Geology of Part of the Coast of New South Wales, Read 1822, Before the Philosophical Society of Australia', in *Geographical Memoires on New South Wales; by Various Hands*, ed. Barron Fields (London: John Murray, 1825), p. 254.

[6] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment*, p. 169.

[7] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment*, p. 169.

range of ideas about human nature, ethics, aesthetics, religion, law, historiography, language, and science, the discussion here is focused – in a series of vignettes that span the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries – on the Scottish influence on Australia in two main areas: free trade and moral improvement. It was this 'faith in improvement' that had the most impact on the economic and social development of the Australian colonies; the possibility of moral enlightenment, for nineteenth century colonists, had a 'unique power to dissolve the ills which beset Australia's development.'[9] This influence is notably evident, some decades after the Enlightenment milieu of 1788, during the transition point between Australia as a penal colony and Australia as a free society for European settlers.

READING THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT IN AUSTRALIA

The 1820s in Australia saw what Alan Atkinson has described as 'a sudden opening out' to the world of ideas, and 'a rapid increase in traffic, investment, and immigration, bringing the colonies into closer touch with the outside world.'[10] New ideas came to Australia through the written word and the well-read, and it was the quantity of materials – new publications and books, letter-writing, and the expansion of colonial bureaucracy – that made the difference. The question, of course, is what books European Australians were reading. The existence of records for book sales and auctions between 1800 and 1849 in the Australian colonies help to answer this question.[11] Unsurprisingly, the books people read were much like reading matter today: history, biography, religion, textbooks, fiction, poetry, and plays. Books on economics and political theory were, as to be expected, not the most popular available. However, those that were on bookshelves provide some insights into what people might have been reading, and the ideas they might have been taking on.

The religious utilitarian William Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy* was popular, as were John Locke's *Essays and Works* and Hume's *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* and Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France, Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, as well as his *Works*.[12] Many works by writers

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[8] This article was originally given as a speech to the Genealogy Society of Victoria Scottish Ancestry Seminar in July 2019.

[9] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment*, p. 172; Michael Roe, *Quest for Authority in Eastern Australia 1835-1851* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961), p. 150.

[10] Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History. Volume Two: Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. xix.

[11] Chris Berg, 'Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham in the Australian Colonies', *History of Economics Review* 68, no. 1 (2017): pp. 2-16.

[12] William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (London: R. Faulder, 1785); David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1875); Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: James Dodsley, 1790); Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: James

of the European Enlightenment were available in Australia in the first half of the nineteenth century, including Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau.[13] Jeremy Bentham's works were on bookshelves, too; most of those books were purchased in 1831 by the Scottish Presbyterian Reverend John Dunmore Lang and sold at auction in 1846.[14]

The most remarkable feature of this index of books is the complete dominance of the Scottish economist and moral philosopher, Adam Smith. There were 132 copies of his most well-known work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, sold in Australia during the first half of the nineteenth century. The next most popular book on politics, philosophy, or economics was Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy* with 89 copies sold. Readers in Australia were also exposed to Smithian thinking through the popularising writings of Harriet Martineau, who sought to bring his arguments in *Wealth of Nations* and his other great work, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, to a wider reading public. Smith's *Wealth of Nations* first appeared for sale in 1812 in Sydney, and thenceforth remained part of the standard works for sale in the nineteenth century and a common fixture of newspaper advertisements. In the 1830s, every library in Australia held a copy of Smith's magnum opus.[15] The *Wealth of Nations* was on the syllabus of the University of Melbourne's first political economy course in 1855; the University would become known from the mid-nineteenth century as a centre for classical liberalism and free trade economics.[16]

The mystery remains: In the first half of the nineteenth century, one of the key works of the Scottish Enlightenment was the most popular book on economics and politics sold in Australia, but were people reading it? And were its ideas informing political choices? At least one publication, the *Edinburgh Review* in Scotland, had its doubts. In 1819, it suggested that the colony of New South Wales 'appears to have suffered a good deal from the tyranny, as well as the ignorance of its Governors', many of whom had been Scottish. They appeared to know little of the benefits of free enterprise, it alleged, and Governor Lachlan Macquarie's December 1816 order fixing rates of wages across various industries seemed to confirm this. 'We have only to observe', opined the *Edinburgh Review*, 'that a good stout inundation of the Hawkesbury would be far less pernicious to the industry of the colony, than such gross ignorance and absurdity as this order evinces.' Furthermore, by way of solution, the periodical noted that just as

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Dodsley, 1757); Edmund Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund* Burke (London: Bell & Daldy, 1873).

[13] Charles de Secondat [Baron de Montesquieu], *The Spirit of Laws* (Glasgow: David Niven, 1762); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Miscellaneous Works of Mr J. J. Rousseau* (London: T. Beckket & P. A de Hondt, 1767). Berg notes that George Gipps owned '86 French volumes of Voltaire, including 20 volumes of correspondence and a 14-volume edition of his philosophical dictionary'; and Berg, 'Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham', p. 9.

[14] J. Blackman, *Catalogue of Books of General Literature, Philosophy, Science, and Theology, Forming Principal Part of the Library of The Rev. Dr. Lang M.C.* (Sydney: Kemp and Fairfax, 1846).

[15] Robert Dixon, *The Course of Empire: Neo-Classical Culture in New South Wales, 1788–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[16] Berg, 'Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham', pp. 8-9.

surgeons 'are examined in Surgeons' Hall on the methods of cutting off legs and arms before they are allowed to practice surgery … [an] examination on the principles of Adam Smith, and a license from Mr Ricardo, seem to be almost a necessary preliminary for the appointment of Governors.'[17] It is worth mentioning here, however briefly, the presence of Robert Campbell and other Scottish merchants from India, including William Douglas Campbell, Charles Hook, and William Walker, who were largely responsible for breaking the monopolies on foreign trade from Australia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[18] Scots were, despite Macquarie and other governors, arguably instrumental in promoting and enacting colonial free trade in Australia and the British Empire.

MACQUARIE, JUSTICE AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

If the Governors of colonial Australia had failed to implement the insights of Adam Smith on free trade and free enterprise, perhaps some other strands of Scottish Enlightenment thought did make their way through as part of a wider web of beliefs and experiences that informed the behaviours and actions of the Australian colonial elite. Lachlan Macquarie, the subject of the *Edinburgh Review*'s chastening, might not have been the ideal champion of a free economy and society, but in some spheres of colonial administration his decisions seemed to suggest the presence of a Scottish Enlightenment thread in his web of beliefs, and those of his influential wife, Elizabeth. Macquarie's sometimes extravagant investment in town public, civic buildings, and infrastructure – a notable legacy of his time as Governor of New South Wales – was evidence of the idea, for example, that public works could be an instrument of colonial moral improvement. More broadly, Lachlan Macquarie was driven by an Enlightenment emphasis on bringing order to the colony and realising its improvement.[19] Indeed, a focus on pathways to moral improvement was particularly the case when it came to Macquarie's approach to the treatment of convicts and emancipists.

Lachlan Macquarie's treatment of convicts and emancipists in New South Wales was marked by a belief in the possibility of convict redemption. This belief informed several decisions he made as Governor. In the granting of pardons and tickets-of-leave, and the insistence that all mall convicts attend church, Macquarie hoped to foster virtue in convicts by providing them with opportunities to work toward their own material and moral improvement. He employed the more well-educated emancipists in occupations where their skills and abilities could be best utilised, regardless of their convict origins. Ultimately, Macquarie wished to see emancipists, who had proved their redemption,

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[17] *The Edinburgh Review* 32 (July 1819), p. 38.

[18] Malcolm Prentis, *Scots in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008), p. 103.

[19] Lenore Coltheart and Peter Bridges, 'The elephant's bed? Scottish enlightenment ideas and the foundations of New South Wales', *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 68 (2001): pp. 19-33.

readmitted back into society as equals; free settlers who objected were chastised as 'too proud and too delicate in their feelings.'[20]

Macquarie's treatment of convicts and emancipists was entirely in keeping with Scottish Enlightenment theories of justice and virtue. But it was not through reading or study that Macquarie gained and developed his ideas. It was through an encounter in Bombay in 1806 with James Mackintosh, the Scottish philosopher and legal theorist, that Macquarie most likely first began considering these issues. The two met and discussed the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment: Macquarie would subsequently become Governor of New South Wales, while Mackintosh would become a supporter of the emancipist cause in Parliament and an advocate of colonial pardons and trial by jury for former convicts. He also defended Macquarie in 1816 against attacks on his governorship from the British Parliament, and he attended Macquarie's funeral procession in St James's Square in 1824.[21] It was more than likely Mackintosh who most influenced Macquarie's approach to convict reform and moral improvement.

Scottish Enlightenment thinkers tended to be interested in questions of morality and justice across the whole of society, rather than in criminals and convicts specifically. They acknowledged everyone's capacity for both good and evil and saw justice as primarily a 'personal virtue.'[22] This belied a fundamentally optimistic view of human nature. Mackintosh himself argued that property crimes — the crimes that most convicts transported to Australia had committed — were the result of 'the distresses, rather than of the depravity of the community.'[23] Francis Hutcheson wrote that 'All men feel something in their own hearts recommending virtue, which is difficult to explain [and] often depraved by custom, habits, false opinions, [and] company.'[24] Dugald Stewart reminded his readers that 'the proportion of human life which is spent in vice, is inconsiderable when compared to the whole.'[25] Adam Smith said, sympathetically, that those 'who have had the misfortune to be brought up amidst violence, licentiousness, falsehood, and injustice; lose … all sense of its dreadful enormity.' '[F]amiliarised with

[20] Macquarie to Bathurst, 28 June 1813, *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 1, Vol. 1, pp. 775-6.

[21] Diane Sylvester, 'Governor Lachlan Macquarie, Sir James Mackintosh and the Scottish Enlightenment', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 12 (2010): pp. 23-38.

[22] Knud Haakonssen, 'Natural jurisprudence and the theory of justice', in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 205.

[23] J. Mackintosh, 'Speech on Moving for a Committee to Inquire into the State of the Criminal Law, Delivered in the House of Commons on the 2nd of March 1819', in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh Complete in One Volume*, ed. J. Mackintosh (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851), p. 717.

[24] Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections with Illustrations upon the Moral Sense* (London: W. Innys and J. Richardson, 1728), pp. xiv-xv.

[25] Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy: For the Use of Students in the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1818), p. 216.

it from their infancy', wrote Smith, 'custom has rendered it habitual to them.'[26] For David Hume, 'Repentance wipes off every crime, especially if attended with an evident reformation of life and manners.'[27]

Ideas such as these migrated to the Southern Hemisphere with Lachlan Macquarie. As Lenore Coltheart and Peter Bridges have noted, 'While Scotland wrestled in a philosophic and cultural sense with the English elephant', there were, nevertheless, many Scots infiltrating English academia, defence forces, government, and the social elite more generally. Macquarie can be counted as one such Scot, and Coltheart and Bridge suggest that the 'ideals of the Scottish enlightenment were one means of lightening the darkness of their economic and political night. Macquarie's governorship of New South Wales took that struggle into a new century and a new colony.'[28]

TEMPERANCE AND MORAL IMPROVEMENT

The Macquarie example is useful in terms of intellectual history because it reminds us that ideas can make their way out into the world in a variety of ways. There is not always a direct line of transmission between, for example, a book and a reader. James Mackintosh was a formidable conversationalist by all accounts, and Lachlan Macquarie lent him an ear while the two were in India together. Sometimes, it is not always clear where the ideas originated, but we can be certain of their nature in any case. A review of colonial Australian periodical and newspapers shows that — especially from the middle of the nineteenth century when political and economic debates in Australia took on more local concerns as responsible self-government emerged — it was the distinct free trade liberalism of the Scottish Enlightenment that became particularly prominent throughout the Antipodes until, at least, the end of the nineteenth century.[29]

Adam Smith is invoked in public and political discussions of everything from the 1840s debates about placing a cap on interest rates to the influence of alcoholic drinks on the economic depression of the 1890s. Smith's views on free trade and tariffs are of course discussed, as are his ideas about taxation and government debt. He is brought up in considerations of why protectionism might be acceptable in the case of overseas shipping. His ideas are naturally criticised too and amended as time goes by. Smith's name appears in newspaper articles and letters well into the twentieth century, as do discussions of new editions and interpretations of his major works.

Although we might recognise the argument of a Scottish Enlightenment thinker when we see it —— he might even be mentioned by name, as is the case so often with Adam Smith — we cannot always determine its origins, or how it found its way to the Australian colonies. In some cases, however, we can trace that journey, and one

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[26] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. 234-235.

[27] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 459.

[28] Coltheart and Bridges, 'Scottish enlightenment ideas and the foundations of New South Wales', p. 33.

[29] Chris Berg, 'Classical Liberalism in Australian Economics', *Econ Journal Watch* 12, no. 2 (2015): pp. 192-220.

particularly unique and interesting example is in the creation of a wine industry for New South Wales in the nineteenth century. Smith, perhaps surprisingly, had much to say about wine. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith called for the removal of discriminative tariffs on the import of French wine to Britain. The Methuen Treaty of 1703 allowed for Portuguese wines to enter Britain at two-thirds of the customs duty of lighter French wines, and in return Britain could maintain a monopoly on the import of woollen cloth to Portugal. Smith said that the Treaty left British consumers 'prevented by high duties from purchasing of a neighbouring country [France], a commodity which our own climate does not produce but is obliged to purchase it of a distant country [Portugal], though it is acknowledged that the product of the distant country is of a worse quality than that of the near one.'[30] In response to those who might suggest removing tariffs on French wine might cause a rise in drunkenness, Smith said that those who had access to good quality light wines tended to be more moderate in their alcohol intake. He noted that, in his experience. people who lived in wine regions were inclined towards sobriety:

> If we consult experience, the cheapness of wine seems to be a cause, not of drunkenness, but of sobriety. The inhabitants of the wine countries are in general the soberest people in Europe: witness the Spaniards, the Italians, and the inhabitants of the southern provinces of France. People are seldom guilty of excess in what is their daily fare. Nobody affects the character of liberality and good fellowship, by being profuse of a liquor which is as cheap as small beer.[31]

For those in the Australian colonies who believed in the possibility of moral improvement, the alleged high levels of drunkenness among soldiers and convicts and later the working classes were a threat to the vision of a society that would reward those who followed the law, lived temperately, and worked industriously. One measure intended to address the colonial working-class preference for heavy beer and spirits — a British tendency — was to substitute it for lighter wines and a Mediterranean culture of drinking. One of the earlier governors of New South Wales, Phillip Gidley King, thus introduced customs duties on strong liquor and encouraged the cultivation of wine grapes, believing as Smith did that proximity to vineyards and the consumption of wine would promote civility among the population. King's experiment would ultimately fail, but in the minds of colonial authorities Adam Smith's arguments about wine and sobriety were inextricably linked to the need for a local wine industry.

From the 1820s onwards there were numerous attempts to develop wine cultivation in Australia, which would come to include the immigration of experienced European workers. The size of colonial vineyards steadily increased, moving from government farms to larger private properties, but even by 1855 beer consumption was ten times that of wine. By the end of the century, the total quantity of wine produced in New South Wales had yet to reach a million gallons per year. It would take nearly another century for Australians to begin drinking wine in great numbers, and it was not until the 1990s that Australian wine became a truly competitive export industry. 'Why

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[30] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, Chapter VIII.

[31] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, Chapter III.

then did growers persist for such slow and meagre returns in a disinterested market?' asks one historian of wine in Australia. 'The answer', she says, 'lies in the faith that colonial wine could civilise the civiliser.'[32]

While the example of Macquarie reminds us that the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment could travel around the world in a variety of ways, the case of wine and sobriety in nineteenth century Australia illustrates the unpredictability of the colonial setting. As John Gascoigne observed, 'Even European convicts proved much less malleable than Enlightenment theory had postulated ... The Enlightenment left a deep imprint on Australia, but the land and its peoples were also to demonstrate the limits, as well as the possibilities, of the Enlightenment's faith in improvement.'[33]

FREE TRADE AND COLONIAL LIBERALISM

So much, then, for moral improvement. One strand of Scottish Enlightenment thought that maintained a constant presence in Australian life throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, however, was the economic liberalism of the free trade movement. It has already been noted how popular and widespread were the works of Adam Smith, perhaps the most famous and most influential advocate of free trade economic policy. In the second half of the nineteenth century, those ideas would form a key topic of debate in Australian colonial politics and public life as political positions became firmly divided between liberal protectionism and liberal free trade.

After the larger Australian colonies were granted self-government from the 1840s, debates were focused on how the colonies should trade with each other and with the world. On the classical liberal side, Free Trade Associations were established, publishing pamphlets and engaging in debate through periodicals and newspapers; their arguments were replete with references to Adam Smith and other Enlightenment philosophers. The first Australian work of economics was James Aikenhead's *Principles of Political Economy* from 1856, and it was in essence a restatement of Adam Smith. Aikenhead argued for 'security of property, freedom of industry, and moderation in the public expenditure', which he said were the 'means by which the various powers and resources of human talent and ingenuity may be called into action, and society made continually to advance in the career of wealth and civilisation.'[34]

Liberalism was the ascendant political vision in nineteenth-century Scotland, and the Scottish Liberal Party dominated from the 1830s until the First World War. The liberal movement in Scotland was responsible for significant reforms to suffrage and land laws that aimed to unseat the corrupt and unrepresentative *ancien régime*. Free trade was a matter of intense loyalty—but Scottish merchants had broken the monopoly of the East India Company, and later in the nineteenth century Scots enthusiastically demanded the abolition of the Corn Laws. More broadly, the pursuit of non-

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[32] Julie McIntyre, 'Adam Smith and Faith in the Transformative Qualities of Wine in Colonial New South Wales', *Australian Historical Studies* 42, no. 2 (2011): p. 204.

[33] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment*, p. 172.

[34] James Aikenhead, *Principles of Political Economy* (Launceston: J. S. Waddell, 1856), p. 40.

protectionist policies was understood to be in the economic interests of the nation. Scotland's economy was heavily embedded in imperial and global networks, and restrictions on international trade would be damaging to key Scottish industries such as shipbuilding and textiles. It was precisely the economic transformation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scotland that provided the means to export its people and their ideas throughout the British Empire and beyond. Liberalism was also strongly associated with Scottish nationalist sentiment. With its support for Home Rule, nineteenth-century Liberal Party's social agenda focused most notably on temperance, but from the twentieth century there was a greater emphasis on the minimum wage, social insurance and housing.

Ultimately, the liberal tradition in Scotland itself helps to account for the predominance of Scots in Victorian and New South Wales arguments for manhood suffrage, land reform, and free, compulsory schooling. Scottish merchants and pastoralists were prominent in Victoria's free trade movement in particular. Colonial liberalism was a distinctly Scottish affair. Much of the debate took place in the press. The *Sydney Morning Herald* was a proponent of free trade, while *The Age* in Melbourne, under the leadership of the Scot David Syme, was staunchly protectionist. Protectionists tended to follow John Stuart Mill's line of reasoning and argued that the industries of smaller nations or colonies required a short term of protection against larger international competitors. The protectionists, with the help of Syme and *The Age*, were politically successful in Victoria, while the free traders fared better in New South Wales. This meant, however, that Victorian free traders were not shackled by the pragmatism required of an elected official, and Victoria – particularly the University of Melbourne – maintained a 'strident ideological expression' of free trade liberalism.[35]

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the continued defence of political and economic ideas laid down in the Scottish Enlightenment over a century beforehand. One student shaped by the University of Melbourne's free trade liberal culture was Bruce Smith, born in 1851, who studied law there under W. E. Hearn, the University's first professor of modern history, literature, political economy, and logic. Smith's *Liberty and Liberalism* from 1887 was to become the most significant work of Australian liberalism, and Smith himself was the dominant free trader at the turn of the century. The book was intended to be a defence of the true and original liberalism of Adam Smith against the 'spurious' liberalism of protectionists such as David Syme, and argued that the only legitimate justification for taxes, limitations on liberty, and the acquisition of property was if it would secure 'equal freedom to all citizens.'[36] As a parliamentarian for the federal Free Trade Party, Smith argued against immigration restriction.[37]

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[35] Greg Melleuish, 'Bruce Smith, Edward Shann, W. K. Hancock: The Economic Critique of Democracy in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2009), p. 580.

[36] Bruce Smith, *Liberty and Liberalism: A Protest Against the Growing Tendency Toward Undue Interference by the State, with Individual Liberty, Private Enterprise, and the Rights of Property* (Sydney: Centre for Independent Studies, 2005), p. 299.

[37] Berg, 'Classical Liberalism', p. 195.

The leader of the federal Free Trade Party was the Scottish-born George Houston Reid, another dominant turn-of-the-century free trade liberal. Although the free trade argument had essentially been won in New South Wales by the middle of the 1870s, Reid saw the necessity of continued defence of free trade principles. This he attempted in his *Five Free Trade* Essays from 1875, which won him an honorary membership of the London free trade gentlemen's association, the Cobden Club. Reid was elected to the New South Wales parliament in 1880. By 1889 he had established Free Trade and Liberal Association of New South Wales to advance liberal legislation based on free trade and direct taxation, and in 1891 he was elected as leader of the Free Trade Party. He was the Premier of New South Wales from 1894 to 1899. After Federation, Reid became the first federal leader of the opposition, and then in 1904 was Prime Minister. A stubborn free trader to his last days, Reid opposed the formation of the Commonwealth Liberal Party – a merger with Protectionists – resigned and accepted a role as Australia's first High Commissioner to the United Kingdom between 1910 and 1916.[38]

By the turn of the century, however, Reid and the free traders had become a minority in Australian politics, which was dominated by protectionist liberals such as Alfred Deakin on one side, and the Australian Labor Party on the other. The labour movement of the late-nineteenth century and the economic depression of the 1890s had moved political sentiment towards protectionism. The new Australian Constitution prohibited barriers to interstate trade, but legislators otherwise favoured protection when it came to overseas trade. The Free Trade Party was merged with the Protectionists 1909, creating a non-Labor opposition that would eventually lead to the modern Liberal Party of Australia in 1945.

THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT IN MODERN AUSTRALIA

Sir Robert Menzies, founder of the modern Liberal Party, is perhaps the most famous Scottish Australian of the twentieth century, and many of his political ideas recall the eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish liberal emphasis on middle class individualism, self-help, third, hard work, independence, and respectability.[39] Menzies once wrote in a foreword to a history of the Royal Caledonian Society of Melbourne, of 'two Scots characteristics which endure, which the world values, and which mankind needs.' One looks to tradition and the good of society, the other emphasises the individual and their independence. Elaborating, he wrote:

> One is a sense of continuity. No great good is done by those who say, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' But the man who feels pride in the past and a sense of responsibility for the future, though he may be called 'dour', or

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[38] W. G. McMinn, 'Reid, Sir George Houston (1845–1918)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/reid-sir-george-houstoun-8173/text14289. Accessed 12 July, 2019.

[39] This section is expanded on in Benjamin Wilkie, 'Menzies, Scotland, and the Australian Liberals', *Meanjin Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2019): pp. 149-155.

> 'canny', or even – in Barrie's celebrated phrase, 'a Scotsman on the make' – does much for development and growth and the stability of society.
>
> The second characteristic is allied to the first. It is the spirit of independence. That spirit is today in the twilight. We have learned to lean, to criticize, to expect, to see our neighbour's duty much more clearly than our own. It is impossible to believe that this is a permanent state of mind. But if and when we come out of it, the sturdy independence of the sons and grandsons of Caledonia will have played some part in the revival.[40]

These sentiments, grounded in Scottish Enlightenment sentiments about the individual in society, echo what is easily the most well-known demonstration of Menzies' Scottishness: his 1942 radio broadcast now commonly known as the Forgotten People speech. The speech, part of a much wider-ranging set of orations from Menzies, makes clear that many of Menzies ideas on thrift, self-help, hard work, family life, and the value of education were inspired by Scottish thinkers, writers, and political trends. Rather than simply a projection into the homes of a future, postwar Australia, this paean to the middle classes also looked back to the colonial liberalism of Victoria, the warmth of his family home as a child, and to the emergent suburban dreaming of the interwar years.

Perhaps unconsciously, for his political thinking was of an often intuitive and common-sense nature, Menzies and his new Liberal Party had rediscovered Scottish Enlightenment liberalism in a form that had been obscured by the Free Traders' emphasis on economic issues. Adam Smith, we should be reminded, argued for sympathy as the basis for social bonds and moral behaviour in the relatively underappreciated *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and for self-interest in the more widely read *Wealth of Nations*. The two works, however, are intellectual counterparts, not opposites. Self-interest, in Smith's thinking, was self-interest in economic exchange, not in any other human relationships.[41] Indeed, there was a clear communitarian impulse to Menzies' thinking: duty to society is balanced with individual aspiration. We see this most clearly in his consideration of the importance of home and family, and of 'homes material, homes human, and homes spiritual.'[42] Of homes human, Menzies said, 'My home is where my wife and children are. The instinct to be with them is the great instinct of civilised man; the instinct to give them a chance in life—to make them not leaners but lifters — is a noble instinct.' Building on key elements of Scottish liberal tradition, he continues:

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[40] Robert Menzies, 'Foreword' in *Scots Wha Hae: History of the Royal Caledonian Society of Melbourne*, ed. Alec Chisholm (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1949).

[41] Alexander Broadie and Robin Downie, *Glasgow Moral Philosophy in the Enlightenment: Ideas and their International Influence* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2012), p. 6.

[42] A full transcript of Robert Menzies' 'Forgotten People' speech can be found online at https://australianpolitics.com/1942/05/22/the-forgotten-people-robert-menzies.html.

> If Scotland has made a great contribution to the theory and practice of education, it is because of the tradition of Scottish homes. The Scottish ploughman, walking behind his team, cons ways and means of making his son a farmer, and so he sends him to the village school. The Scottish farmer ponders upon the future of his son, and sees it most assured not by the inheritance of money but by the acquisition of that knowledge which will give him power; and so the sons of many Scottish farmers find their way to Edinburgh and a university degree. … The great question is, 'How can I qualify my son to help society?' Not, as we have so frequently thought, 'How can I qualify society to help my son?' If human homes are to fulfil their destiny, then we must have frugality and saving for education and progress.

Turning to homes spiritual, Menzies drew upon Robert Burns – who thought Adam Smith was a 'sage philosopher' and drew heavily on his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* – more explicitly.[43] He suggested that 'homes spiritual' was 'a notion which finds its simplest and most moving expression in "The Cotter's Saturday Night" of Burns.' Menzies observes:

> Human nature is at its greatest when it combines dependence upon God with independence of man. We offer no affront—on the contrary we have nothing but the warmest human compassion—toward those whom fate has compelled to live upon the bounty of the State, when we say that the greatest element in a strong people is a fierce independence of spirit. This is the only real freedom, and it has as its corollary a brave acceptance of unclouded individual responsibility. The moment a man seeks moral and intellectual refuge in the emotions of a crowd, he ceases to be a human being and becomes a cipher. The home spiritual so understood is not produced by lassitude or by dependence; it is produced by self-sacrifice, by frugality and saving.

Indeed, it was arguably through Menzies that Burns re-presentation of Adam Smith's moral philosophy made its mark on the popular conscious of the Australian middle classes of the mid-twentieth century. As Prentis noted:

> Burns hoped that his simple, hardworking, sincerely pious countrymen would be free of 'luxury's contagion.' Such humble Scottish families as that of the cotter in the poem fired in their members both personal ambition and a desire to be active and responsible citizens … these ideas struck a deep chord in the broad Australian middle class.

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of ideas — how they are transmitted from one place to another — can be difficult to follow. Furthermore, the reception and context for ideas can change their very nature. Sometimes they simply fail to take root. Robert Menzies' signature political ideas about economic freedom and social responsibility owed perhaps more to the Scottish Enlightenment than even he recognised, but to prove this is a difficult task.

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[43] J. Walter McGinity, *Robert Burns and the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 2018), Chapter 3.

Certainly, however, what are essentially Scottish ideas have provided the basis for significant electoral success in the years following the establishment of the modern Liberal Party. Likewise, in the nineteenth century, Scottish arguments for free trade and liberalism were a central feature of Australian political debates. Before the advent of self-government, Scottish Enlightenment ideas about justice, virtue, and moral improvement lay the groundwork for a transition from penal colony to free society. Although no one seriously doubts that European Australia emerged in the intellectual environment of the Enlightenment, it is perhaps time to fully explore the ways in which it was the *Scottish* Enlightenment in particular that has provided so many of the goals.