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Political Themes in the Correspondence of Adam Smith.
IAN ROSS .......................................................... 5

The Edinburgh Reform Convention of 1793 and the American Revolution. ARTHUR SHEPS ................. 23

“The Quay of Greenock” — Jurisdiction and Nationality in the Canadian Disruption of 1844. JOHN S. MOIR ..................... 38

Militant Scottish Missionaries in Malawi, 1953–1963
KENNETH MOFFUKA .............................................. 54

The Development of the Scottish Tourist Industry of the Highlands and Islands in the 19th century. R.W. BUTLER ........ 71

Book Reviews
Nicholson, Scotland: The Later Middle Ages by ANTHOL L. MURRAY ......................... 85

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EDITORIAL NOTE:

Due to the increased cost of printing and shortage of funds the Scottish Tradition will appear until further notice once a year. The issue will be enlarged to include as many articles as possible.

Political Themes
in the Correspondence of Adam Smith

TO AMPLIFY DISCUSSION of politics in eighteenth-century Scotland, this paper proposes to examine certain themes in the correspondence of Adam Smith. These themes are as follows: the incorporating Union with England of 1707, which gave Scotland the political system which endured for better or worse until 1832; the constituency politics which arose from that system; the political crisis of the American War of Independence and its aftermath; and the issue of free trade for Ireland, involving the British government’s role with respect to the economic order. By way of introduction, it is appropriate to observe that Smith’s advancement in life arose in part from the politics of the management of Scottish affairs flowing from the Union: his family connexions with the house of Argyll guaranteed that at critical junctures his merits would be rewarded. Also, he had both a theoretical and a practical interest in politics. It was one of the subjects included in the discipline of moral philosophy, which he professed at Glasgow, and he was consulted by successive governments about political matters, some of them to be sure, intertwined with economics. Finally, among his scholars, both specifically taught by him at Glasgow, and more broadly those exposed to his ideas through their dissemination in the Wealth of Nations, were the leading politicians of the 1780s and succeeding decades. Indeed, a first generation of the latter type: Loughborough, Dundas, and Pitt, were the parliamentary leaders most alarmed about the British Convention of Reformers at Edinburgh in 1793, and those most determined to retain power and crush the radical movements of the time. A