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Richard Price: On the American Government *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 16 May 1787

In February 1776 Richard Price (1723–1791), a British clergyman and a writer on theology, morals, finances, and politics, defended the American cause in a pamphlet entitled *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America*, which circulated widely in Europe and America. In 1784 Price published *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World*. Price praised the American government as “equitable” and “liberal,” predicted that America would become the refuge of the oppressed of the world, and encouraged Americans to complete the fight for liberty by freeing their slaves. He also insisted that Congress have the power to pay the debts of the United States and to call upon state militias to suppress internal rebellion, but he warned that the greatest care should be taken to safeguard the civil and religious liberties already achieved.

Extract of a letter from Dr. Price, dated London, January 26, 1787, to one of his correspondents in this city.

“The newspapers which you sent me were very acceptable to me, the essays and information they contain have contributed towards gratifying a curiosity which I am always feeling with respect to the affairs of the United States. Your federal government is a point of great difficulty and importance which I find still remains unsettled. I dread the thoughts of such a division of the states into three confederacies, as you say have been talked of. It is a pity that some general controuling power cannot be established of sufficient vigor to decide disputes, to regulate commerce, to prevent wars and to constitute a union which shall have weight and credit. At present the power of Congress in Europe is an object of derision rather than respect, at the same time the tumults in New-England, the weakness of Congress, the difficulties and sufferings of many of the states, and the knavery of the Rhode-Island Legislature, form subjects of triumph in this country. The conclusion is that you are falling to pieces, and will soon repent of your independence. But the hope of the friends of virtue and liberty is (to borrow an expression from your letter) that whereas the kingdoms of Europe travelled to tranquility through seas of *blood*, the United States are travelling to a degree of tranquility and liberty that will make them an example to the world, ONLY through seas of BLUNDERS. God grant this may be the truth.”

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