

# DR RICHARD PRICE, D.D. F.R.S.

‘ALL THAT IS NECESSARY (FOR A GOOD LIFE) IS NOT INNOCENCE, BUT  
INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER; TRUE VIRTUE’

# Dr Richard Price – His London Move

- ▶ Having spent the best part of the journey to London on foot, the young Richard found a home with his uncle, Samuel Price who was able to find him a place as a student at the Hoxton Academy
- ▶ He attended lectures given by very orthodox teachers and did well at his studies. However, he continued to arrive at conclusions that not only were out of kilter with his father's views but also those of his uncle

# Dr Richard Price – His London Move

The cost of travelling by coach to London was astronomical:

For instance, in 1794 people paid 19 shillings to travel inside the London coach from the Golden Cross Inn, Oxford (which would have picked up Headington passengers at the Britannia Inn) and 10 shillings to sit outside in all weathers



*J. M. W. Turner's painting of a coach on Headington Hill in 1803*

# Dr Richard Price – His London Move

- ▶ So what was Richard Price actually like?
- ▶ Contemporary reports describe him as thin, strong featured and with an intelligent eye, modest, kind, and well liked by local children and the poor
- ▶ Devoted to his family
- ▶ He lived a simple life, and gave one fifth of his income to charity

# His Religious Views

- ▶ Richard once wrote “you know the religion I am for is not a sour or enthusiastical religion, but a religion free from bigotry, superstition, and uncharitableness, and that shows itself in all good works and amiable qualities as well as in the discharge of the duties of devotion”
- ▶ His religious views would have made it impossible for him to attend Oxford or Cambridge university

# Pudding Lane

- ▶ Eventually Richard took a humble lodging in Pudding Lane near the monument, where he lived over a barber's shop. It was whilst doing this he became more and more interested in Sciences, Mathematics and Calculus but he was still quite poor and largely self taught
- ▶ Unfortunately life in the city with its thick air and unsanitary conditions made him unwell and he was forced back to Bridgend for a short period to stay with his sister until he recovered from jaundice – usually making journeys 'home' on horseback

# Monument commemorating the Fire of London



# Dr Richard Price – Return to London

- ▶ On his return to London Richard went to live in Hackney and enrolled in the ‘Fund Academy’ in Tenter Alley, Moorfields, one of the Dissenting academies that had been established independently by Nonconformists
- ▶ In 1744, as a 21 year old he became a Tutor/Chaplain to Mr George Streatfield, a wealthy member of his congregation at whose house at Stoke Newington he lived for the next twelve years
- ▶ During this time he was also an assistant preacher to a Samuel Chandler of Old Jewry Chapel, in the City of London, finishing up as the chief minister

# Dr Richard Price – His Ministry Years

- ▶ In 1756 Mr Streatfield died leaving him with a handsome financial legacy
- ▶ His uncle, Samuel Price died about the same time and left his nephew some property in Leadenhall Street. He was thus financially secure for the rest of his life as a result
- ▶ He was now in a position to marry Sarah Blundell, the only child of a man who had lost a large fortune in the South Sea Bubble (what today would be known as a “scam”)

# Richard and Sarah married here – 16<sup>th</sup> June 1757



St Mary's Old Church, Stoke Newington

As it was in the 1750's

As it is today

# The Bowood Circle

- ▶ Price became a leading figure in liberal intellectual groups, especially the Bowood Circle, which was named after the Wiltshire house of its leader, Lord Shelburne, and included Joseph Priestley and Benjamin Vaughan. They met informally at Bowood House – their common interest being political reform and have been compared to a ‘think tank’
- ▶ He also belonged to the group that Benjamin Franklin dubbed the “Club of Honest Whigs”, a dining group revolving round John Canton, a scientist whose paper on the making of artificial magnets saw him elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society

# Dr Richard Price – His Ministry Years

- ▶ After their marriage Richard and Sarah moved to a house in Newington Green where he became friendly with many well known people of science and mathematics
- ▶ Throughout their marriage, Sarah remained a communicant of the Church of England
- ▶
- ▶ A few years after their marriage Sarah had a severe illness, and afterwards her health remained delicate
- ▶ Mr and Mrs Price had no children though Richard was very attached to his sister Sally (Sarah) and her family

# The home of Dr and Mrs Price in Newington Green



54 The Green is to the left of the picture

# The home of Dr and Mrs Price in Newington Green

The townhouse is situated in the oldest surviving brick terrace in London and was built in 1658 before the Great Fire of 1666

It is one of four red brick houses at 52–55 Newington Green which was built on the site of a much larger single house

The terrace was restored in the 1980s by English Heritage and is a Grade 1-listed building, retaining many original features

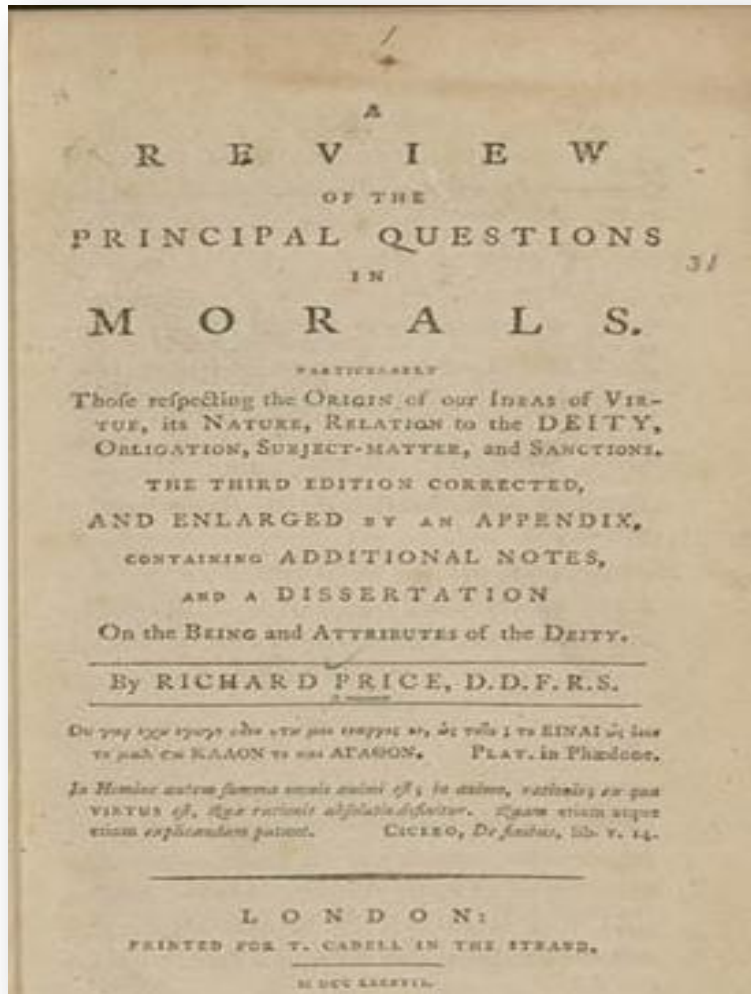
Here Dr Price hosted guests such as Benjamin Franklin and John Adams



# Dr Richard Price – His Ministry Years

- ▶ Richard considered it his duty to devote himself to his profession so for some years denied himself the pleasure of pursuing his scientific studies
- ▶ In 1758, at the age of 35, Richard Price became minister at the Unitarian Church, Newington Green and at the same time he and his wife took up residence at 54 Newington Green. That very year he wrote the highly influential **“A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals”**
- ▶ Believing however that he was a failure in his ministerial duties he sought to employ his abilities in another direction for the benefit of mankind

# Review of the Principal Questions in Morals



Price asks by what faculty we know right from wrong, what are right and wrong and where do our ideas about them come from. He also explores the importance of reason and sensation in making moral judgments and the efficacy of virtue and candour in life

Price prefigures by more than 30 years the later and more famous work of Immanuel Kant

# The Unitarian Chapel, Newington Green



The Church in 1708



The Church was altered and reopened in 1880

# Price's Meeting House at Newington Green

- ▶ Price's meeting house at Newington Green. Today the Chapel is of the Unitarian denomination. Later in life, Price tended towards Unitarianism although he always denied being one
- ▶ Today it is the oldest non-conformist place of worship still in use in London. There is a memorial plaque to Price inside. It declares Price to be :
- ▶ 'A Friend to Freedom and Virtue, Brother of Man, Lover of Truth as of God'. It also recalls that: 'Few have been more useful in their generation, or more valued by the wise and good, nor more pure and disinterested. Honoured be his name. Imitated his example'.

# Plaque to the Memory of Richard Price

Situated in the Unitarian Church,  
Stoke Newington, London

Theologian, philosopher, mathematician,  
friend to freedom as to virtue

Brother of man  
Lover of truth as of God

His eminent talents were matched by his  
integrity, simplicity, and goodness of  
heart

His moral dignity by his profound humility

Few have been more useful in their  
generation, or more valued by the wise  
and good

None more pure and disinterested  
Honoured by his name  
Imitated his example



# Dr Richard Price – Funeral

- ▶ Dr Richard Price died, aged 68, on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1791, just five years after Sarah, his beloved wife. He was laid to rest inside the tomb of his wife and his Uncle Rev. Samuel Price
- ▶ The day of his funeral took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord that opened the American Revolution. His funeral route was so crowded by well-wishers that his coffin arrived five hours late for the service.
- ▶ There were over 50 carriages in the cortege that accompanied him to his burial at Bunhill Fields Cemetery in the City of London
- ▶ A plaque commemorating his remarkable life is displayed in the Newington Green Unitarian Church

# Bunhill Fields, Borough of Islington – Dr Richard Price's Grave



# Bunhill Fields

Bunhill Fields is a non-conformist burial ground dating from the 1600s and the site of around 123,000 burials

It's the final resting place of John Bunyan, Isaac Watts, Daniel Defoe and William Blake, along with many other leading intellectuals, radicals and clergymen from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

## Burial Ground

**Thomas Bayes (1702–1761)**  
A mathematician and Presbyterian minister who is remembered for his theories regarding statistics and probability.

**Monument to Daniel Defoe (1660–1731)**  
Author of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and around 500 other books, leaflets etc.

**John Bunyan (1628–1688)**  
He was a tinker by trade but turned to religion and became a travelling preacher, imprisoned for unlicensed preaching (1660–72) and began writing. His most famous book is the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

**William Blake (1757–1827)**  
An artist, poet and visionary. He was not widely recognised in his time, but today he is considered a major reference point in British culture.

**Thomas Foxwell Buxton, oldest son of Isaac and Sarah died 3rd December 1795 aged 37. In this tomb several members of the family of the anti-slavery philanthropist, Sir Thomas Foxwell Buxton, Bart, are also buried**

**Susanna Wesley (1669–1742)**  
Mother of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism who is buried at Wesley's Chapel on City Road.

**Cromwell Family** Two tombs bear the name Cromwell. One was erected by Major Henry Cromwell – a grandson of Oliver in memory of his family, however Henry is not buried at Bunhill, he died in Luban in 1711 and is buried there. The other tomb commemorates great, great, grandchildren of Oliver.

Further information regarding Bunhill Fields can be obtained from

- Burial registers for 1713–1854 are held by the National Archives, Kew, Richmond TW9 9DU. Tel: 020 8876 3444. Website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)
- General documents referring to burials in the 18th to 20th Century are held at the London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, London, EC1R 0HB. Tel: 020 7332 3820. Website: [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma)
- 1789–1854: interment order books 1789–1854 (indexed 1823–1854) and a list of inscriptions visible in 1869 on gravestones of persons buried 1700–1854, with an index and map can all be found at the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London, EC2V 7HH. Tel: 020 7332 1862/3. Website: [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)

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