ABSTRACT

Evangelical Jeremiads and Consuming Eves: The Relationship of Religion and Consumerism in Eighteenth Century Colonial America

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This thesis examines the commercial world of the American British colonies from the Great Awakening to the American Revolution through the lens of eighteenth century American religious history. It examines evangelical and Quaker responses to the consumer market through published sermons and other religious rhetoric. Colonial ministers discussed the dangers of consumerism through the format of jeremiads, seeing God's punishment for indulgence in luxury through the turmoil of the eighteenth century. However, revival ministers also used commercial methods to spread the gospel. Additionally, women in particular were a focal point of religious discussion about consumerism. While many historians have focused on the consumer revolution, and many have focused on early American religion, little has been done to unite these threads. This thesis hopes to do that by showing that religious discussion was essential to the American tradition of participating in the marketplace.

Evangelical Jeremiads and Consuming Eves: The Relationship of Religion and Consumerism in Eighteenth-Century Colonial America

by

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A Thesis

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DEDICATION

To John Fea, who inspired this project in the first place, and for your gentle nudges to study history at Baylor. It has been more than worth it.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Colonial American tourist sites like Colonial Williamsburg often lead Americans to believe that their history is rooted in self-sufficiency, whether that be within a household or as a town or community. This is the sort of picture that is presented at a living history site complete with blacksmith, cabinetmaker, and milliner. Yet, while towns like Williamsburg employed self-sustaining craftsmen, the dominant historiography of the past thirty years has maintained that colonists were actually avid consumers of goods from Great Britain. Today, most American historians agree that colonists began purchasing luxury commodities more frequently until they became conveniences and even necessities. Items like coffee, tea, sugar, and rum were imported from foreign lands to the colonies through Great Britain's mercantile system. Soon, not only the affluent but the middling and poorer sorts were taking tea with sugar, served in imported china dishes.

As with almost any topic of popular interest, historians have had much to discuss and debate. For one thing, much interdisciplinary work has been done, including studies by anthropologists, social, cultural, and economic historians, and specialists in material culture. These scholars do not often work together, although many have attempted to bring the study of material objects together with traditional historical approaches. Other conversations have attempted to determine why a demand for goods existed in the first place, and whether or not consumerism happened in a "revolution." Scholars also cannot

agree on the differences between consumerism of the lower classes and consumerism of the wealthy. Both purchased British goods, but there is disagreement about how they related to each other. Some claim that colonists remained divided by gentility and class despite common participation in the marketplace, while other scholars believe that shared consumerism actually united the colonists in a common identity and cause. No matter what historians have said about consumerism, though, they all seem to agree that it was a mutual trait in the American colonies by mid-century.

The intent of this thesis is to examine the commercial world of the American British colonies from the Great Awakening through the American Revolution in tandem with eighteenth century colonial American religious history. Many colonial ministers discussed the social, political, and religious implications of participating in the consumer market through published sermons. Throughout this thesis, the majority of the ministers discussed are New England Congregationalists. This means that they were descendants of New England Puritans who practiced congregational church authority, and evolved into the established Congregational denomination in New England. However, evangelical Anglicans and Pennsylvania Quakers are also discussed in this thesis to a smaller extent.

When discussing consumerism and luxury, Congregational ministers gave sermons reminiscent of Puritan jeremiads. These jeremiads were originally derived from the Puritan Synod creating a report for the use of preachers from the Book of Isaiah or Jeremiah to show that "God avenges the iniquities of a chosen people."[1] The Puritans believed themselves to be a "City Upon a Hill," or a chosen people. Thus, when they found their society to be lacking in moral and godly character, jeremiads were used as an

[1] Perry Miller, "Errand Into The Wilderness," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1953): 10.

attempt to steer society back on track. Perry Miller, renowned historian of the Puritans, stated that, "in the whole literature of the world, including the satirists of imperial Rome, there is hardly such another uninhibited and unrelenting documentation of a people's descent into corruption."[2] However, Miller made famous a declension thesis in which he stated that jeremiads were used by the Puritans for the purposes of discovering their identity as Americans (instead of trying to return to a purer state of society). He did not think that jeremiads could be approached at face value, but rather as "purgations of the soul." By purging themselves, according to Miller, they were actually liberating themselves and encouraging each other to "persist in…heinous conduct." Ultimately, the Puritans made changes, including in the realm of commerce, because changes "were thrust upon the society by American experience."[3] For Miller, jeremiads were the Puritans' key to Americanization, whether consciously or unconsciously. Historian Richard Bushman took Miller's declension thesis and explored it further, attempting to understand the shift from Puritan to Yankee. He determined that economic growth and religious decline contributed to this process.

Based on the research performed for this thesis, I think it is possible to agree with Bushman and Miller that the Puritans became Americanized from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, but not necessarily because of the jeremiad sermon. It is reasonable to take these sermons at face value. Nevertheless, the Americanization process happened simultaneously while ministers preached jeremiads. In the 1720s and 1730s, jeremiads had been preached for seventy years. Over the course of that time they evolved from warnings not to provoke God, to warnings that God had been provoked and judgment

[2] Ibid., 11–12.

[3] Ibid., 11.

was coming. They prayed for revival and the Holy Spirit to come out of a new level of desperation, and it came in the form of the Great Awakening. This thesis partially traverses that train of thought, but by the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, jeremiads showed their belief that judgment had actually come in the form of a degenerate society and war. Specifically, this thesis explores these jeremiads in relationship to consumerism and luxury.

However, this thesis does not discuss only consumerism and jeremiads. It explores the relationship of consumerism and religion more broadly, taking evangelical use of commercial methods into account. During the Great Awakening, itinerant revival preachers used new commercial advertising techniques to spread their message, and some made comparisons between the marketplace and salvation. Famous itinerant George Whitefield worked collaboratively with Benjamin Franklin to reach a wide audience. Evangelical Christians did not completely spurn consumerism in jeremiad-type sermons. Still, colonists thought that consumerism did not bring the best possible traits out of Christians, as it allowed them to craft their own image through goods rather than through following God and purifying their souls. While jeremiads discussing the spiritual pitfalls of consumerism existed during the Great Awakening, though, they surprisingly did not berate or blame women as evidently as mid-century onward. Consumerism may have been an effeminate action even during the revivals, but this rhetoric was less noticeable, especially as ministers used consumerism to further the gospel.

The relationship between consumerism and religion continued mid-century and into the Seven Years War. Consumer jeremiads persisted during this era, in part due to belief that colonists had been swept away by British goods and that God was punishing

their ungratefulness through the present war. Furthermore, jeremiads explained that consumerism was a detriment to salvation. Consumerism and religion related mid-century through Quaker morality as well. Many consumer goods, especially those requiring sugar, were linked to terrible slave conditions in the Caribbean. Quakers participated in boycotting these goods in protest.

Consumer jeremiads continued in full force through the Stamp Act, the Townshend Duties, the Tea Act, the Coercive Acts, and into the Revolutionary War itself. During this era, sermons against rampant consumerism grew in strength, as it seemed God's judgment had indeed come. Colonists had purchased unnecessary British goods in such excess, that Parliament felt justified in taxing them to help pay for the Seven Years War. It appeared to Parliament that Americans were wealthy enough to afford it. Colonial Americans disagreed, and by 1775 war broke out. Ministers, especially Congregationalists, believed these troubles were God's judgment for too much indulgence in selfishness and luxury.

Publications held women responsible for the consumer mess, often using religious rhetoric. A typical parallel was drawn between Eve, the selfish woman who couldn't control her desires and colonial women and their selfish consumer desires. This was in sharp contrast to the absence of negative religious rhetoric indicting women for luxurious desire during the Great Awakening. Revolutionary women decided not to let negative rhetoric stand in their way, though, and worked to prove men incorrect. They gathered to spin their own homemade cloth in minister's homes, and drank homegrown tea. In this way, they attempted to throw off the shackles of Eve. Through religious discussion surrounding women and consumerism, and jeremiad sermons throughout the eighteenth

century warning of the perils of luxury, it is apparent that religion and the marketplace were deeply influential on one another. Religion is an essential component for understanding the consumer revolution. Many historians have focused on American consumerism, and many have focused on early American religion. Very little has been done to show the parallels between them. The following review of literature will summarize what has already been examined about the consumer revolution.

Carole Shammas began to ask important questions in 1982 concerning the nature of American colonists and the economy. She questioned whether colonists were truly self-sufficient as had been assumed, or if they participated heavily in the market and overseas trade. In her article on "Consumer Behavior in Colonial America," she determined that spending in a market economy depended on levels of wealth, location, and the age of particular colonial settlements. Even though farming households made many of their own goods, they still purchased items fairly often. Shammas ultimately concluded that the new republic did not change drastically to "some new market mentality" due to "nascent industrialization" after the American Revolutionary War because colonists had already been participating in the market.[4]

Within the same year, Shammas wrote a similar article to determine the level of self-sufficiency for early America. She began with an oft-cited letter of a farmer bemoaning his wife and daughter's tendency to spend his money on consumer goods when they could be living self-sufficiently. Shammas questioned whether this "farmer" existed, crunched some figures, and decided that his spending goals were too unrealistic. Her calculation of tasks that would need to be completed displays an outrageous amount

[4] Carole Shammas, "Consumer Behavior in Colonial America," *Social Science History* 6, no. 1 (1982): 67, 83.

of demand upon a family and proves that colonial families still had to participate in the market no matter how self-sufficient they were. Even making one's own clothes did not stop women from purchasing cloth. Neither did owning a cow mean that a family was completely self-sufficient in dairy production. In the end, Shammas established that most colonists did indeed participate in the commercial world.[5] Thus, early in the 1980s, the foundation for the study of consumerism in the Anglo-American world was laid with the conclusion that colonists did not make everything for themselves and did indeed purchase consumer goods.

Afterward, scholars began debating about the nature of consumerism in the colonies, especially concerning the differences between upper and lower classes. Lorena Walsh produced an article, "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency," to highlight the differences of living standards between classes in the colonial Chesapeake region. She maintains that homes of all living standards were willing and able to purchase "a wide range of non-essential consumer goods either previously unavailable or long considered unimportant," but that country folk were not influenced to make these spending changes by trying to imitate urban or wealthier lifestyles. In fact, they hardly had to make significant spending changes at all. This happened because goods were becoming less expensive. Also, by mid-century there were fewer immigrants and colonists were more established, thereby able to afford more. Walsh concludes that, "Items of comfort and convenience were no longer luxuries, but rather were becoming essential to life in middling households and were deemed increasingly desirable among the poor." The wealthy in towns were able to purchase new luxuries to show off their status, while items

[5] Carole Shammas, "How Self-Sufficient Was Early America?," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 13, no. 2 (1982): 248–250, 253, 258, 261, 267.

once considered luxuries were now deemed essentials for middling and lower classes. She states, "The intensely competitive consumer culture of the towns attracted few adherents in the countryside," but those in the country could participate in the consumer culture by purchasing goods that helped to define "family routines and relationships with the community at large."[6] Thus, three new important themes were introduced to the discussion of consumerism in the Anglo-American world. First, Walsh highlights the differences in location that Shammas discussed, but also brings differences in class into the conversation. Second, she states that luxuries were becoming necessities as a result of decreased prices and increased consumer participation, a theme that quickly became accepted in the narrative of early American consumerism. Finally, Walsh introduces the idea that consumer goods contributed to the creation of routines and relationships in families and in society. As material goods became necessities, they had the potential to establish important roles in societal interaction.

In the mid-1980s, John Tyler also contributed to the discussion of consumerism, albeit in a tangential manner. In a study of *Smuggler and Patriots*, he linked the role of Boston merchants and illegal smugglers to the American Revolution. In the American colonies, through the Navigation Acts, foreign goods could only be imported if they passed through an English port first. Conversely, colonial-grown items like sugar, rice, indigo, tobacco, and cotton could only be exported to Great Britain. This system of mercantilism was challenged by smugglers, both patriots and loyalists, who were interested in the market outside of the British Empire. Most smugglers, he concedes, were viewed as patriots. He summarizes his argument by claiming that, "Careful observation

[6] Lorena S Walsh, "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1643-1777," *The Journal of Economic History* 43, no. 1 (1983): 111–113, 115–117.

of their behavior during the prerevolutionary period provides a deeper understanding of the role of economic self-interest as a cause of the American Revolution." Furthermore, "Ideology and economic self-interest should not be viewed as conflicting interpretations of the Revolution, but rather as mutually reinforcing explanations."[7] In this way, Tyler becomes one of many scholars to link the market and consumption of goods to the impending conflict with British Parliament. Furthermore, his idea that economics and self-interest in the marketplace were one of several reasons for the American Revolution is completely compatible with the idea that ministers discussed consumerism and self-interest as the reason for God's judgment through wartime.

In a study of English consumers during the eighteenth century in *A Polite and Commercial People*, Paul Langford discusses the middle and lower class's desire to be a part of refined and polite society. In chapter three of his work, he shows that this pursuit began to seem attainable, especially for the middle class.[8] This study shows that the pursuit of worldly goods and luxury was universal among the eighteenth century Anglo-American world, whether in England or in the colonies.

In the next ten years, monumental works on consumerism in Anglo-America began to appear. First, Carole Shammas turned her work on consumerism into *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America*. The point of her culminating work was to show that the explosions in consumer demand occurred before the era of industrialization, and not as a result. The argument that colonists were not self-sufficient reappeared. To challenge the idea that the poor had to be self-sufficient, she countered,

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[7] John W Tyler, *Smugglers & Patriots: Boston Merchants and the Advent of the American Revolution* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 9, 11, 17.

[8] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1989), 59–122.

"Being poor and a consumer, it turns out, were not mutually exclusive conditions." Her book reveals that, "the old Industrial Revolution paradigm has collapsed and its demise has had a very liberating effect on the study of past levels of consumption." She also returns to the idea that consumerism happened over time for various reasons (location and wealth), thus challenging the concept of a sweeping "consumer revolution."[9] This work provided further thoughts for the conversation on consumerism through discussions of why there was a demand for goods before industrialization, and whether or not consumerism happened in the form of a revolution.

Following Shammas, Richard Bushman produced *The Refinement of America*. Nearly every source dealing with consumerism or material culture following Bushman references this important work. His study blends history with material culture and discusses the material world that spread gentility to the middle classes by the beginning of the nineteenth century. He does this through the curatorial categories of persons, houses, and cities rather than through broad historical themes. He emphasizes that gentility in the eighteenth century was exclusionary, but by post-American Revolution the middle classes could participate in refining gentility. Gentility, according to Bushman, was a combination of manners, performance, and possessions. It was something lower and middle classes could only be envious of in the eighteenth century. After independence, however, gentility and refinement, both of manners and possessions, was attainable for lower classes because it became difficult to reconcile aristocratic gentility with republican equality. Thus, class consciousness became confused and "refinement held out the hope of elevation from ordinary existence into an exalted society

[9] Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford [England]; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1990), 1, 299.

of superior beings."[10] Later scholars eventually challenged this argument with the idea that the middle class, and even lower classes, could participate in a shared experience of the world of goods.

Ann Smart Martin remarks that many scholars in the decade of the 1980s had focused on consumerism, and that a major shift in study from producers to consumers and from institutional forces to personal choice occurred. In "Makers, Buyers, and Users," she provides a few definitions, stating that "consumerism" means "the cultural relationship between humans and consumer goods and services, including behaviors, institutions, and ideas." She also laments that historians do not devote enough attention to the objects themselves to let them be a part of the consumer story. Martin calls for interdisciplinary study. She also draws attention to the idea that historians agree a consumer society developed in eighteenth century Anglo-America, but they do not agree on what caused this change. Finally, she highlights the importance of choice. By being consumers, individuals were empowered with the option to choose how they fulfilled needs and desires.[11] The theme of choice definitely appeared in discussions about consumerism and religion, and is discussed in this thesis. Ministers grew concerned about their congregation making consumer choices and fashioning their self-identity rather than living to please God.

In perhaps the most monumental volume on consumerism of the decade, various art historians, historians, and social scientists discussed consumerism and style in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*. This volume assumes

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[10] Richard L Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1992), xiii–xvi–xvii, xix.

[11] Ann Smart Martin, "Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework," *Winterthur Portfolio* 28, no. 2/3 (1993): 142, 144, 157.

use of the term "consumer revolution" and focuses on many aspects of consuming interests. Bushman contributed an article on shopping and advertising. Housing, fashion, art, music, reading, sports, and leisure all make an appearance. T. H. Breen analyzes the consumer revolution and determines that the colonies became united through a shared experience of purchasing British consumer goods, and thus became more Anglicized rather than Americanized prior to the American Revolution. In Breen's estimation, this shared "language of consumption" allowed them to be united in boycotting when commodities suddenly became politicized. Interestingly, Breen's shared language of consumption seems to disagree with Bushman's dichotomy of the gentry and the middle and lower classes. It also contrasts with Perry Miller and Richard Bushman's thesis about the Americanization of the Puritans. Finally, in the concluding article, Cary Carson attempts to determine why colonists suddenly demanded consumer commodities. He begins by recognizing that demand for goods came before industrialization, and concludes that colonists were attempting to define their place in the social order in a land without an aristocratic history by demanding consumer goods.[12]

Patricia Cleary finally brings in a discussion of women's roles in the sphere of consumerism in "She Will Be in the Shop." She discusses shopkeeping women and determines that "in the decade preceding the Revolution, women's participation in the sale and consumption of British wares contributed directly to their politicization." Since shopkeeping women were involved in catering to consumer demand, and many consumer goods became politicized in pre-Revolutionary boycotts, women were then inextricably linked to the rhetoric of "consumption, corruption, effeminacy, and vice." This analysis

[12] Bruce C Daniels, "Book Review: Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century," *American Studies* 37, no. 2 (1996): 194–195.

applies Breen's thesis of a shared language of consumption to women, and concludes that, "Somewhat paradoxically…the association of women with buying imported goods, which fostered enduring negative images of women as consumers in our culture, empowered them in the political sphere in the 1760s and 1770s by necessitating their involvement in boycotts."[13] Quite surprisingly, this appears to be one of only a few works that discuss the role of women and the world of goods in eighteenth century colonial America. After such an interesting thesis, more work needs to be completed to analyze the importance of women in the consumer revolution. This idea is expanded upon and discussed further in this thesis, especially as the consuming woman was related to Eve.

After her 1993 essay discussing the importance of historians listening to the voice of material objects, and the theme of choice in consumerism, Martin produced another article touching on themes similar to Walsh's article on "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency." In "Frontier Boys and Country Cousins," Martin once again discusses choice, this time in the context of rural "cousins" attempting to use material objects to fit into the society of their well-to-do city "cousins." The difference between Martin's assumption and Walsh's is that Martin's "country cousins" are indeed imitating their "city cousins" by consuming the same goods and trying to share the same consumer language, while Walsh's rural folk did not try to imitate the urban folk. In her estimation, they were simply able to purchase goods because they became more accessible. Martin maintains, however, that "society was no longer merely divided into the haves and the have-nots but, increasingly, the knows and the know-nots." Basically, material objects became a way in which "knows" could gather to socialize because they knew how to use

[13] Patricia Cleary, "'She Will Be in the Shop': Women's Sphere of Trade in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia and New York," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 119, no. 3 (1995): 182, 201–202.

the objects in question. The "know nots" were increasingly excluded by a material world that left them socially inept when transplanted from their settings."[14]

The beginning of the twenty-first century brought another decade of work on the consumer revolution, complicating the previous two decades of study with further connections to identity, morality, and links to the American Revolution. John Crowley contributed by discussing the transformation of the meaning of comfort for Anglo-Americans in *The Invention of Comfort*. No longer did comfort mean emotional or spiritual comfort, but it increasingly referred to physical comfort. While much of the book is about homes, architecture, stoves, and lamps, Crowley includes a chapter on the political economy of living in comfort. This is relevant to consumerism because he demonstrates that consumer preferences became "decencies" or "conveniences," a half step between luxury and necessity. He states that, "the development of political economy in the eighteenth century made it possible for both *luxury* and *necessity* to become morally neutral terms." In the years before the American Revolution, these consumer patterns were interpreted as "symptoms of weak public virtue and liability to political corruption."[15]

In a new interpretation of American independence, Breen built upon his thesis of a shared colonial identity in consumerism. *Marketplace of Revolution* looks at the idea of a "consumer revolution" and takes it a step further to link it to the American Revolution.

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[14] Ann Smart Martin, "Frontier Boys and Country Cousins: The Context for Choice in Eighteenth-Century Consumerism," in *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*, ed. Lu Ann De Cunzo, Bernard L Herman, and Winterthur Conference (Winterthur, Del.; Knoxville: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum ; Distributed by University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 76–77; see also Ann Smart Martin, *Buying Into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

[15] John E Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort Sensibilities & Design in Early Modern Britain & Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 141–143, 153, 160.

Breen attempts to explain how disparate colonies managed to unite under the same political banner. He explains this could not have happened solely through the ideological reasons of an elite few, because this would not have swept up the common colonist. He believes this unity was accomplished through a shared language of consumer goods. Colonists could communicate their grievances by uniting in a denial of the goods they had loved to purchase.[16]

Christina Hodge provided another look at women and consumerism in an article titled "Widow Pratt's World of Goods." Pratt did not make consumer choices because she was trying to emulate wealthy neighbors, but because she used material goods to position herself in society and used them to define "the boundaries of roles as mother, matriarch, entrepreneur, widow, and head of household." Like Martin and Bushman, Hodge advocates an interdisciplinary study of material culture and history. She firmly believes that this will help historians to understand that middling colonials, especially women, were not trying to copy elite customs, but were participating in consumerism as a means to construct "personal and social identities."[17] This theme of identity is strongly present in previous works like Martin's "Frontier Boys and Country Cousins," the volume *Of Consuming Interests,* and Breen's *Marketplace of Revolution.*

This overview of consumer history shows that while religion is not excluded from the discussion, it does not receive the attention it should. The study of consumerism, beginning with the establishment that colonists were not self-sufficient and that demand

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[16] T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[17] Christina J Hodge, "Widow Pratt's World of Goods: Implications of Consumer Choice in Colonial Newport, Rhode Island," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8, no. 2 (2010): 219–220, 234.

existed before industrialization, questioning why the demand for goods exploded, and explaining the meaning of consumerism in relation to social identity and the identity of the thirteen colonies, has come a long way in the last three decades. Consumer goods went from being luxuries to conveniences, and even necessities. Scholars have deliberated on whether consumer demand constituted a "consumer revolution," on whether lower classes were imitating wealthier classes or simply trying to form their own place in society because they could now afford goods, and on whether consumerism united the colonies. A few studies have even been conducted on women's roles in consumerism and on the morality of consumer desire. While not every work on the topic of the consumer revolution has been acknowledged in this literature review, the major themes of the topic have been addressed.

While religion and morality are under discussion regarding consumerism, the historiography is slighter. Morality did exist in the analyses of Bushman, Cleary, Crowley, and Breen, but only in small portions. Bushman and Crowley discuss the anti-republican and anti-virtue sentiments of consumer desire. Cleary discusses the vices of consumer desire that were associated with women, especially as goods became politicized after Parliamentary taxation acts. Breen touches on this subject as well. A few historians have discussed the relationship between consumerism and religion and morality more significantly. Regarding religion, Breen and Timothy Hall have addressed the strong connection between the revivals of the Great Awakening and the consumer revolution. They show that while the two events seem unrelated, they are actually well-connected, and urge historians of colonial money and historians of religion to talk. They highlight that New England society was evolving to affirm personal choice, which

became a link between participating in the marketplace and participating in evangelical revivals of the era.[18]

Christine Heyrman also discusses New England evangelicalism, specifically third generation Puritan clergy and their emphasis on charitable giving for wealthy merchants. She explains that ministers felt charitable giving and church membership was a better method for determining social hierarchy than accumulated wealth, goods, and purchasing power.[19] In *Heavenly Merchandize*, one of the most important historiographical works on religion and consumerism, Mark Valeri assesses the transformation of early eighteenth century Puritan beliefs about the interactions between economics and piety. He attempts to correct the Weberian idea that New England society descended to accommodate "individualism, materialism, and fractious social values," thus becoming Yankees and setting aside puritan values. Nor, he argues, did they spurn community for individualism. Ultimately, he concludes that as social conditions changed, puritan ideas of providence changed alongside them. They "did not make a radical break with their past," but instead, found "congruence between Christian devotion and commercial demand."[20]

Each of these authors address significant points about the confluence of religion or morality and consumerism, but there is more, especially concerning the latter half of the eighteenth century. This thesis provides an addition to the existing historiographical discussion by extending the timeline through mid-century and into the American

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[18] T. H Breen and Timothy Hall, "Structuring Provincial Imagination: The Rhetoric and Experience of Social Change in Eighteenth-Century New England," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (1998): 1412, 1415, 1427-1429.

[19] Christine Leigh Heyrman, "The Fashion Among More Superior People: Charity and Social Change in Provincial New England, 1700-1740," *American Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1982): 107–24.

[20] Mark R. Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1-10, 248.

Revolution. For example, what did colonists say about the morality of the desire to purchase sugar and rum, goods that were available on the market at the expense of back-breaking slave labor in the West Indies? Did ministers decry this crazed desire for goods? What of goods like tea and china from Asia that had to be purchased through Great Britain? Perhaps more can be said about the politicization of these goods and the tactics colonists employed to keep themselves accountable while boycotting them. Certainly more can be uncovered about religion at odds with or attempting to restrain the colonists' jealous coveting of material goods. Pastors in the present day preach about keeping the focus on heavenly rather than earthly desires all the time. Did this happen in the colonial era?

Additionally, Cleary and Hodge discuss women, but more can be written about women and consumerism. Many religious historians have written about women in the seventeenth century and post-Revolution, but there are fewer works from the Great Awakening through the Revolution. Furthermore, these discuss their significant roles in the consumer marketplace very little. This is a problem because religious rhetoric pinpointed women as weak, vain, susceptible, and even the cause of consumerism. This thesis attempts to bring answers to these questions about the connections of religion, consumerism, and women. Quite a lot has been discussed in reference to consumerism in eighteenth century Anglo-America, but there is still a lot of work to be completed. The eighteenth century witnessed gendered changes in consumerism as sermons increasingly labeled it as an effeminate problem. Religion throughout the eighteenth century forced colonists to examine their consumer habits, including its effects on salvation, and choose whether or not to correct them.

CHAPTER TWO

"The love of the world quenches the love of God:" The Odd Relationship between Marketplace and Evangelicalism during the Great Awakening

The role of the Holy Spirit was a key part of the Great Awakening and a major theme in Boston evangelical revivalist William Cooper's sermon "The Sin and Danger." The sermon discussed the sin and danger of the love of earthly things. In it, Cooper exclaimed, "Again, *Earthly-mindedness* is a sin that quenches the Spirit. Earth puts out fire as well as water." He continued, explaining that the love of the world and the love of things were not compatible: "The love of the world quenches the love of God. The earth is damp; and earthly-mindedness will damp and quench the fire of divine love. Therefore, take heed and beware of covetousness."[1] Cooper was not alone in teaching and reminding colonists that the fear of God should come before the love of money and earthly things. Many other ministers, especially in Congregationalist New England, participated in deriding marketplace behavior in a manner echoing the Puritan jeremiad of their forbearers in the seventeenth century. This jeremiad-like zealous response was brought on by the simultaneous consumer revolution, which lasted the duration of the eighteenth century, and began approximately at the same time as the Great Awakening. Despite being beyond the era of the Puritan jeremiad, evangelical ministers continued to denounce sin in the form of worldliness throughout the rest of the eighteenth century.

[1] William Cooper, *The Sin and Danger* (Boston: Rogers for Eliot, 1741), 31–32.

Evangelical Christianity spread throughout the colonies with the help of revivalist itinerants like George Whitefield. Described by Mark Noll as an evangelical preacher prototype, Whitefield mediated between evangelicals in established churches and Dissenters. By his death in 1770, Whitefield had helped spread evangelicalism among the colonies, which changed "the face of religion in the English-speaking world as a whole."[2] Evangelicalism spread from New England to the southern backcountry during a series of revival movements and conversions in the 1740's, known as the Great Awakening. J. A. Leo Lemay describes the Great Awakening as a mixture of European pietism and English humanitarianism which provided conversions necessary for New England covenant theology and emotional and spiritual life in the frontier.[3]

Thomas Kidd defines the Great Awakening as a series of revivals which created a long Great Awakening extending even beyond the period of 1740-1743. The Awakening was not only defined by revivals, but by the spread of evangelicalism through individual conversions and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It was also complex, with radicals, antirevivalists, and those who fell in between these two categories, meaning that evangelicals of the Great Awakening were not a homogenous group.[4] Catherine Brekus, author of *Sarah Osborn's World*, describes these evangelicals as "revivalists who

[2] Mark A Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 155; Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

[3] J. A. Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 420.

[4] Thomas S Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xviii–xix.

emphasized a personal relationship with God, the joy of being born again, and the call to spread the gospel around the globe."[5]

At the same time as the Great Awakening, the consumer revolution, a transatlantic consumer craze in the American colonies and England, spread. This meant colonists could display their social status through items they were finally able to purchase, especially those in middling classes. Marketing efficiency improved, and manufacturing and transportation became more streamlined. As a result, items once considered luxury goods became more plentiful, less expensive, and more varied. Advertising also began to improve, directly affecting consumer desires. Colonists from New England to the Chesapeake were able to keep up to English standards.[6]

Despite the evangelical derision of consumer products due to their detrimental spiritual effects, evangelicalism and consumerism rose side by side and even depended on the other to a certain extent. Evangelical ministers frequently spoke about the perils of vanity and luxury, yet revivalist itinerants often used consumer methods of advertising to spread their message. Additionally, the individuality of consumerism was closely related to the individuality present in the evangelical idea of salvation. Choice was the key. Yet, choice and individuality were also challenges to the evangelical idea of salvation. Humans were sinful and needed to spend their lives in relationship with God, fighting against the sinful nature. When they indulged in worldliness and forgot their relationship with God, they misspent their lives. Several historians have discussed the relationship of

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[5] Catherine A Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) 5.

[6] Lois Carr Green and Lorena S. Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 105, 111, 117.

the consumer revolution and the Great Awakening. It is also interesting to compare religious rhetoric concerning women and consumerism during the Great Awakening era and the latter half of the eighteenth century approaching the American Revolution. In addition to considering the discussion of women, it is the purpose of this chapter to reinforce the deep connections of the unusual relationship between consumerism and evangelicalism.

The connection between evangelical revivalism and the consumer revolution is expressly discussed by T. H. Breen and Timothy Hall. They state that in 1740, these two separate threads were both on the minds of New England colonists, which forced "ordinary people to rethink traditional social categories."[7] They conclude that the link between these two variables was the creation of a new society where individuals were free to make their own reasoned decisions and choices and were their own sources of social authority. They found a simultaneous "marketplace of ideas and goods."[8] Though Breen and Hall admit that these two threads seem unrelated because the discourse was not explicitly shared in colonial newspapers and pamphlets, the connection they explain has been well-accepted among other historians since the publishing of their article.[9] This thesis assumes the connection between the Great Awakening and the consumer revolution, and proposes that their relationship was contradictory in nature.

Selfishness and the creation of the self was a common theme related to the problem of consumerism and religion. As Breen and Hall explain it, self-interest and

[7] T. H Breen and Timothy Hall, "Structuring Provincial Imagination: The Rhetoric and Experience of Social Change in Eighteenth-Century New England," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (1998): 1411.

[8] Ibid., 1413.

[9] Ibid., 1412–1413.

assertiveness was a direct challenge to the Puritan ideal of selflessness. Many New England ministers hearkened to their Puritan forbearers to attempt to curb what they perceived as a serious problem of consumerism and self-interest.[10] Contradictorily, the Great Awakening opened the field up for religious choice, so even though evangelicals were uncomfortable with the idea of choosing to fashion one's own identity, they were in effect, doing so by choosing to attend field revivals and fashioning their religious identity. Breen and Hall explain this by claiming that itinerants were challenging the norm by creating a "new 'liberal' sense of self" through offering Christians the option to choose from which preachers to heed the Word of God. Additionally, these choices facilitated social leveling, which was also a source of concern for the wealthy in reference to consumer choice.[11] The transatlantic consumer market was expanding in the eighteenth century, both among the colonial population and in personal choice in taste and religion.

Historian Richard Bushman tries to understand how the transition from extremely conscious, God-fearing Puritans to self-image fashioning Yankees occurred. He looks at the era between 1690 and 1765, specifically in Connecticut. His reasoning for choosing this timeline and location was Connecticut's lack of involvement in British imperial affairs, and although this actually seems to make Connecticut less of the norm than a standard by which to measure colonial American life, the analysis still sheds light on the transition from Puritan to Yankee. Bushman attempts to uncover what changed in this time frame that allowed the Puritans to relax restraints on feelings and actions, and what

[10] Ibid., 1415.

[11] Ibid., 1427–1428.

they did to maintain social order as "traditional social cohesion" crumbled around them. Ultimately, he determines that law and authority in governance deflated due to economic ambition and Great Awakening religious impulses.[12] This conclusion shows that both economics and the religious revivals of the Great Awakening had serious impacts upon colonial society and social relations and transformed the way that colonists viewed themselves.

The marketplace may have provided more freedom of choice and ruptured standard social class norms, but clergymen were mostly concerned with the self-interestedness that accompanied this freedom. In their eyes, God did not create man to fashion his image how he pleased. However, consumer choice leaned quite far in that dangerous direction. Even a decade before the Great Awakening, ministers were providing commentary on the luxuries of life. Ebenezer Gay, minister of the First Church of Hingham, Massachusetts and later to join the Arminian camp, asked his people to pray for their wealthy magistrates because they were especially susceptible to this sin.[13] He stated, "They are exposed more than others to the Snares of this World, the Pleasures, Honours and Riches of it, which are very dangerous Temptations unto them to Luxury, Pride, Avarice and Oppression…."[14] Since magistrates held power over the people, self-fashioning and the fall into corruption was clearly a real concern.

Josiah Smith chimed in with the same cautions. Smith was involved in promoting moderate evangelical revivals in South Carolina, especially in Charleston, and promoted

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[12] Richard L Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee; Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), x–ix.

[13] Alasdair Macphail, "Book Review: The Benevolent Deity: Ebenezer Gay and The Rise of Rational Religion in New England, 1696-1787.," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19, no. 2 (1985): 278–283.

[14] Ebenezer Gay, *The Duty of People to Pray* (Boston: Fleet, 1730), 20–21.

Whitefield's preaching.[15] According to Kidd, Smith was modest about the changes that evangelicalism would bring to the region. He wanted religion that could "threaten the planter class's consumer excesses," but not upset the racial social order otherwise.[16] Using Solomon as his focal point, Smith discussed the potential danger of abusing wine. While God created it to cheer the heart of man, abuse of it was forbidden and could lead to lack of reasoning and appetite control and inflamed passions. Furthermore, liquor led to sloth, poverty, bad character, unclean actions, profanity, and even "sometimes murder." Liquor, according to Smith, had the power to conquer.[17]

Marston Cabot, pastor of Thompson Congregational Church in Connecticut, agreed that eating and drinking at a feast of thanksgiving was reasonable, but when doing so to satisfy bodily appetites and pleasure, and eating and drinking in excess to drunkenness, it was a sinful act. He determined that true worth was found in God, not in worldly excess.[18] It was not simply abusing God's gifts to humankind in excess that came under fire, but also forgetting to be thankful for those gifts. Some ministers like Whitefield felt compelled to remind Christians to be grateful, lest their ingratitude lead them away from God's fold. Whitefield asked, "For out of those many thousands that receive blessings from the Lord, how few give thanks in remembrance of his holiness? … And yet as common as this sin of ingratitude is, there is nothing we ought more earnestly

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[15] Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 70.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Josiah Smith, *Solomon's Caution* (Boston: Henchman, 1730), 1–10.

[18] "Windham County Connecticut CTGenweb Project," *Early CT Marriages to 1800*, accessed April 30, 2015, http://www.ctgenweb.org/county/cowindham/records/marriages/thompsonearlyctmarriages.htm; Marston Cabot, *The Nature of Religious Thanksgiving* (Boston: Kneeland & Green, 1735), 4–6.

to pray against. For what is more absolutely condemned in holy Scripture than ingratitude?"[19] Forgetting to thank God would likely encourage self-centeredness, and this inward focus was a part of the transition from Puritan to Yankee that Bushman discusses. Evangelical ministers had to remind colonial Christians of the perils of rampant consumerism.

Historian Cary Carson, in an article attempting to understand why the situation of consumer demand arose in the first place, notes that colonists were captivated by goods in order to climb social ladders. This was the fear of ministers, because climbing social ladders could "spawn a dangerous insubordination in society," and indicated attempting to fashion one's own identity apart from God.[20] In their view, God did not intend for humans to try desperately to improve their social status, and instead wanted them to improve in their spiritual lives. While trying to emulate the wealthy or compete for status was nothing new, a surge in advertising and the growing availability of goods was emerging.[21] Therefore, the problem of trying to fashion one's identity with earthly goods was renewed stronger than ever before from the perspective of the religious clergy.

Choosing worldliness over devotion to God was a large part of the concern that ministers shared with their congregations. God employed his people to glorify him in their work and families and support of those in need, all necessary things for life, rather

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[19] George Whitefield, "Thankfulness for Mercies Received, a Necessary Duty," in *Sermons of George Whitefield*, ed. Evelyn Bence (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 38–39.

[20] Cary Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial America: Why Demand?," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 494, 519.

[21] Lois Carr Green and Lorena S. Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," 134.

than unnecessary luxuries that created pride and intemperance.[22] Evangelical ministers worried about the incompatibility of capitalism and consumerism on their theological beliefs. Participation in the consumer craze could undermine one's theological commitment and cause wavering. Specifically, Congregational evangelicals in New England believed in the utter depravity of humankind. In contrast, consuming goods was a pleasurable experience, one that did not allow for self-reflection and self-improvement of humanity. Instead, it indulged the sinful nature by placing worldly choice over self-repression.[23] Brekus provides an example of this through the struggle of eighteenth century evangelical Sarah Osborn. She harbored concern about the noticeable drift from "the Puritans' stark vision of human helplessness and depravity in favor of a more positive understanding of human goodness and free will."[24] Free will could include participating in the worldliness of the consumer market.

In one "Lecture Sermon," Isaac Chauncy, a late seventeenth - early eighteenth century English dissenting minister, specifically told his congregation "*Don't lose your Souls by worldliness*." He warned that luxuries and things of the world could easily blind men so they could no longer see their purpose, which was to await the coming World. He explained that those who became wrapped up in "secular business, and filled with cares

[22] John Brown, *An Ordination Sermon Preach'd at Arundel* (Boston: Fleet for Hancock, 1731), 20.

[23] Catherine A. Brekus, "The Perils of Prosperity: Some Historical Reflections on Christianity, Capitalism, and Consumerism in America," in *American Christianities a History of Dominance and Diversity*, ed. Catherine A Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 283.

[24] Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 21.

about the supports and refreshments of Life" ended up having "no heart or leisure to attend the one thing necessary."[25]

Worldliness created a conflict with Reformed theology. Most ministers were in accord that luxury and worldly leisure were not necessarily bad so long as one did not become consumed by it and forget that the chief end of man was to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Puritans a few generations before had not been opposed to wealth either and thought it could demonstrate God's favor. However, ministers like Cotton Mather were aware the wealthy could easily be tempted by riches. Bushman explains that Puritan Jeremiads frequently exclaimed: "Where a Selfish, Covetous spirit and a Love of this world prevails, there the Love of God decayeth."[26] Puritans, however, had not experienced the temptations of the consumer revolution in the same way that eighteenth century New England Congregationalists did. Catherine Brekus even makes the claim that eighteenth century sermons were harsher than Puritan jeremiads.[27] Therefore, the addition of consumerism to society provided good reason for eighteenth century ministers to use the jeremiad as a model to curb the dangerous consumer desires of their congregations.

Funeral sermons provided plenty of opportunity for reflection on how one lived one's life. Often, these sermons took time to reflect upon how the deceased had lived with eternity in mind, and warned the living that they should constantly have this in mind as well. Hearkening back to seventeenth century jeremiads, these sermons often warned

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[25] Isaac Chauncy, *A Lecture Sermon* (Boston: Kneeland and Green for Phillips, 1732), 17.

[26] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee; Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, 188–189.

[27] Catherine A. Brekus, "The Perils of Prosperity: Some Historical Reflections on Christianity, Capitalism, and Consumerism in America," 286.

of the consequences for those who did not remain steadfast and enjoyed purchases of this world too much. Roger Price, an Anglican Massachusetts minister, gave a funeral sermon for John Jekyll and agreed on the basic sentiments of the pleasures of this world. Pleasures were alright, but "an immoderate Love of Pleasure…has so corrupted even the Minds of the Rich."[28] It also "infected the meaner sort of People." This was not just a concern among the wealthy, but even the middling sort of people. As a result, they did not think "serious thoughts of Death…or a concern for the future well-being of the Soul." Rather, those who focused on consuming pleasures of this world would find these thoughts to be "the effect of narrow Principles and a confin'd Education." They would rather "pass away the time merrily" instead of improving themselves.[29] Living a pleasurable life on earth appeared to be more important to colonists than preparing for life after death and was a major concern of eighteenth century ministers.

Just as Puritans had grown concerned about God's wrath when they did not obey and submit to His purpose for their lives, eighteenth century New England ministers had the same concerns. Price cried in the funeral sermon that while death was a certainty, and God could easily enact vengeance upon them for a misspent life and would in fact send them to eternal punishment, "they studiously avoid these mortifying considerations, and endeavor to live as if they were Immortal." Luxuries like Solomon's wine might sparkle, but in the long run they would "bite like a Serpent, and leave a deadly Venom behind them." Thus, Price proposed living a life of self-denial and "Contempt of the World."[30]

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[28] Frank Chase, "St Paul's Episcopal Church," accessed April 30, 2015, http://www.stpaulhopkinton.org/about.php?p=5.

[29] Roger Price, *A Funeral Sermon...John Jekyll* (Boston, 1733), 1.

[30] Ibid., 2, 7–8.

The perfect example of a life well lived, presented in a funeral sermon, was "prudent in his Oeconomy and Expences, sober and temperate in all Things, not given to Wine, to Luxury and Extravagance." Instead, such a man loved hospitality, good men, and was a just, holy, and blameless "Steward of God."[31] Attending a funeral was a sober reminder that obtaining consumer goods might be pleasurable, but they would never help one attain the everlasting kingdom of God.

Not only did ministers spend time orating Puritan-like jeremiads about consumerism and luxury, but newspapers took on this role as well. An object of consumerism themselves, Carson explains that newspapers printed their own jeremiads. Since Britons experienced the same consumer revolution, many newspapers were British and reprinted in the colonies. Yet "there was no shortage of homegrown polemicists who found special reason to decry extravagance in the colonies."[32]

Some of these polemicists brought to light social class differences. Society was challenged by consumerism as wealthy colonists concerned themselves with the effect rising middling colonists would have on the social order.[33] According to Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, the consumer revolution did have an effect on social life. Before 1760, dress, household décor, and social ceremonies were the way the wealthy flaunted their social standing. Thus, purchasing consumer goods was a prideful right accorded to those at the top of the social bracket. However, as middling sorts and even some poor began to assert themselves in the consumer marketplace, the medium for showing wealth

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[31] Thomas Foxcraft, *Elisha Lamenting* (Boston: Fleet for Eliot and Parker, 1737).

[32] Cary Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial America: Why Demand?," 519.

[33] Ibid., 520.

and power was forced to change. Sumptuary laws could not stop middling classes from accumulating luxury items, because they could not be denied goods they were easily able to purchase. Therefore, by 1800 the wealthy showed their status through elegance of lifestyle.[34] Christine Heyrman's article on third-generation Puritan clergy also discusses social hierarchy and wealth. Ministers felt that social hierarchy needed to be determined by church membership and charitable giving rather than wealth alone. She states that "the clergy deliberately played upon the anxieties of merchant families recently rich and eager for recognition." Charity had the ability to neutralize the negative stain and power of wealth associated with commercial interests in colonial society. Spiritual nourishing was encouraged by these ministers rather than worldly wealth and wisdom.[35]

Bushman explains that there were relatively few conflicts of economic interest in the seventeenth century. However, by 1744 a poor man could assume wealth through involvement in trade. New men became self-interestedly involved in trade, and the social balance was upset. Bushman states, "Commercial prosperity, exciting and rewarding as it was for individuals, did not increase the peace and order of Connecticut society."[36] New traders upset established merchants, especially because of the difference in monetary mediums. The disturbance of societal norms was one thing. For another, ministers were highly concerned by the disruption of traders entering the commercial atmosphere. One

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[34] Lois Carr Green and Lorena S. Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," 61, 66; Karin Calvert, "The Function of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 252, 259.

[35] Christine Leigh Heyrman, "The Fashion Among More Superior People: Charity and Social Change in Provincial New England, 1700-1740," *American Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1982): 108, 112–115, 124.

[36] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee; Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, 107–117.

Middletown minister claimed God was upset with "many of his people of this land for their love of filthy lucre in their Indean trade and in these and those covetings to have license for effect of trade on virtue." The minister stated that righteousness and moral principle were affected by commerce, and only God knew just how badly. They were also upset by inflation because of its link with oppression, cheating, and injustice.[37] Community relations became strained as previously non-existent competition between farmers and merchants increased, and clergymen squirmed while watching.[38] It seemed that heightened involvement in the commercial world had nothing positive for society or religious self-identity. Colonists' affections for wealth grew over and above religion, at least via the perspective of evangelical ministers, and had a significant effect on the peace of society. According to these ministers, only an inward heart transformation would rectify the mess.[39] It is very clear that consumerism had its critics in both the evangelical religious world and through the societal uproar it caused.

Another way newspapers participated in the consumer revolution aside from lambasting its problems was through changes in advertising. New advertisements provided a medium for promoting goods rather than simply listing them. This afforded colonists the opportunity to be drawn to the increase in choice. Newspapers were already an important part of British and colonial American life, culture, and commerce. Colonists shared the experience of reading the newspaper since it was already a part of their British

[37] Ibid., 117, 120, 132, 135.

[38] Catherine A Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 35.

[39] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee; Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, 143.

identity.[40] As advertisements became more specific, newspapers became an integral part of the consumer revolution. Bushman explains that emphasis on personal decision became a part of the experience. In fact, advertising helped cultivate the act of shopping, which meant not merely purchasing necessary items, but weighing pros and cons of items that may not have offered as many choices before.[41] More choices in shopping meant self-fashioning. The act of fashioning one's self through consuming goods is what became such a concern to evangelical ministers in the early eighteenth century.

Uriel Heyd agrees that newspapers were an essential part of creating a consumer culture. The middling sorts especially hung on the newspaper's fashion information and entertainments. Simultaneously, newspapers, a commodity themselves, were becoming more fashionable and desired as colonists purchased them and read about other available commodities for purchase. Frank Lambert explains that advertising in newspapers was part of a "communication revolution that both promoted and resulted from the new commercialism."[42] Heyd also notes that newspapers occasionally targeted women condescendingly because they were key participants in the consumer revolution.[43] As the eighteenth century wore on, evangelical ministers increasingly expressed concern about "proud" women who self-fashioned themselves by indulging in the consumer market. Women who attempted to create their own image through goods apart from God were

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[40] Uriel Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Press and Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain and America* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012), 2, 6–7.

[41] Richard Bushman, "Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 235, 242–246.

[42] Frank Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 32–33.

[43] Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, 58, 81, 86.

subverting the ideal modest traits of a subordinate, godly woman.[44] Ultimately, because of the increase in newspaper advertising, colonists had more choice. More choice meant the creation of the self. As a result, ministers felt that religious identity suffered.

Once the Great Awakening developed, ministers, even itinerants, continued to decry worldliness. Gilbert Tennent, an itinerant minister in the middle colonies, gave a sermon on the riches of Christ, located in a diverse ministers collection.[45] While he noted that wealth was not bad in itself because it was a gift of God, he explained that humans were so corrupted and sinful that riches only served to "swell Mens Pride and feed their Luxury." Wealth would never be able to fill the role of God and make humankind wise or content on earth or in heaven. It couldn't make any person noble or virtuous. In fact, "it's impossible, feeling they are of a gross, elementary, and limited Nature, that they shou'd satisfy the expanded Whishes of a spiritual and immortal Soul."[46]

James Davenport, an itinerant revival minister, even stripped his pants at a revival in New London, Connecticut, because colonists had "made Idols of their Gay Cloaths." In turn, those at Davenport's revival began to join in stripping their clothes to add to the pile. Davenport determined that God approved of this method of purging sinful idols, and stripped the rest of his clothes. Before a fire was lit, colonists retrieved their clothes in a panic.[47] As Davenport demonstrated through his eagerness to rid himself of material idols, "self-interest, freedom, choice" and "the pursuit of happiness…were celebrated in

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[44] Catherine A. Brekus, "The Perils of Prosperity: Some Historical Reflections on Christianity, Capitalism, and Consumerism in America," 284.

[45] Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 66.

[46] Gilbert Tennent, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ Considered, in Two Sermons* (Boston: Draper for Henchman, 1739), 46.

[47] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 182.

the marketplace…and subtly undermined Calvinist assumptions about God and human nature." Evangelicals were expected to strive for discipline rather than indulgence.[48] While ministers' concerns over consumerism were not in conflict with the use of consumer methods to spread their message during the Great Awakening, it was an interesting paradox given the sharp theological conflict. Consumerism presented a direct challenge to the evangelical faith.

Evangelical itinerant Whitefield recognized this challenge and preached a sermon to a wide audience in England, imploring them to pray for kings because of the heavy authority bestowed upon them. Britons (and colonists alike) were subject to the authority of the king, wanting to live quiet, honest, godly lives, so it was imperative that their king lived his life in such a manner. Whitefield explained, "If we set before us the many Dangers and Difficulties, to which Governours by their Station are exposed, and the continual Temptations they lye under to Luxury and Self-Indulgence; We shall not only Pity, but Pray for Them."[49] Just as he requested that colonists pray for authorities due to their tempting position, Massachusetts minister Peter Clark noted how he believed new magistrates should enforce laws against impiety and vice. These laws would curb overzealous consumerism with penalties and "correct and repress…Luxury, Whoredom, Drunkenness" among other sins because they violated the peace of society and the "rules of religion."[50] Rulers, because of their position and wealth, could be tempted, but could

[48] Catherine A. Brekus, "The Perils of Prosperity: Some Historical Reflections on Christianity, Capitalism, and Consumerism in America," 285.

[49] George Whitefield, *Intercession for Every Christian's Duty: A Sermon Preach'd to a Numerous Audience in England* (Boston: T. Fleet for Charles Harrison, 1739), 9–10.

[50] Peter Clark, *The Rulers Highest Dignity* (Boston: Kneeland, 1739), 19–20.

also control others who were unrestrained. Restraining consumer desires for king and colonist alike were important to evangelical ministers.

During the height of the Great Awakening, sinful excess continued to be a strong discussion point. William Cooper's discussion of the Holy Spirit and earth was one. Nathaniel Appleton's "Clearest and Surest Marks" was another. Appleton, a moderate evangelical revivalist of Cambridge, also discussed the Spirit, stating that anyone intoxicated from sinful excess was obviously "not under the governing Influences of the blessed Spirit."[51] It was necessary for a person to understand that gluttonous eating and drinking "discomposes the Mind, or indisposes the Body, and unfits for the Service that God calls unto, and that evidently tends to hurt our Healths." Appleton made it very clear this type of consumption was sinful. Even those who had a great deal of wealth and could afford to live luxuriously within their means, but did not live piously or offer charity, were living in sinful excess. Luxurious living was just as inappropriate as one who was drunk and intoxicated. It was not condoned by the Holy Spirit.[52]

According to Lambert, Whitefield, although an employer of commercial techniques, felt uncomfortable about the driving consumer market, and echoed Puritan "pronouncements against luxuries" from a century earlier. He was heavily critical of anyone who placed their worldly material wealth in front of salvific concern.[53] Lambert notes that Whitefield particularly condemned sins associated with consuming goods that led to self-fashioning. He explains, "Consumer goods served as props for presenting self

[51] Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 94, 126.

[52] Nathaniel Appleton, *The Clearest and Surest Marks* (Boston: Green, Bushell, & Allen for Henchman, 1743), 170–171.

[53] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 8; Thomas S Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 76.

to others—markers of social identification."[54] The wealthy in particular were able to show off their status through goods, and in a sense, fashion themselves. The middling classes attempted to copy this act of self-fashioning once they had the means to do so. Bushman claims that the conditions needed for an evangelical conversion to happen during the Awakening were "an increased desire for material wealth," also known as "worldly pride or covetousness," and more and more authority clashes as a result of material gain. He states, "Both were the results of economic expansion, and both were, in the Puritan mind, offenses against God."[55] Increased desires for wealth and materialism led colonists to realize their utter depravity and instead, cry out for salvation.

Even after the height of the Great Awakening in the early 1740's, evangelicalism flourished. Ministers continued to handle problems of frivolous consumerism with no foreseeable end in sight. Peter Clark explained that this was the majority of the Christian's daily struggle because of the close surroundings of tempting worldly objects. He suggested that "we have need of a Spirit of Fortitude, that we may *quit* our selves *like Men*, and preserve the Dignity of our Natures, *as Men*" in order to keep a reasonable conscience "over brutal Appetites and Passions." This called for fortitude as a "Guard to every Virtue, and a Bulwark against every Vice." Clark explained that fortitude was necessary because without it, men would be too weak to protect themselves from the trap of luxury and passion, and would fail to be charitable. Among other reasons, this was his

[54] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 42.

[55] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee; Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, 188.

strong argument for the necessity of fortitude.[56] Consumer desire was a continuing situation which evangelical ministers felt the need to discuss with their congregations.

When the discussion of women, effeminacy, and consumer desire during the era of the Great Awakening is compared to the Revolutionary era, however, there appears to be a striking difference. Despite the large number of jeremiad sermons warning against consuming luxuries, there were significantly low numbers of ministers who blamed women or compared consuming practices to effeminacy. Throughout the eighteenth century, evangelical ministers expressed growing concerns over women's participation in the consumer market, and gender became more prevalent during the Revolution. However, the lull in this female-specific concern during the Great Awakening is worth noting.

This is not to say that consumerism was never equated with effeminacy or women during the Great Awakening. As demonstrated, newspapers sometimes addressed women specifically. Yet in large part, the silences can be explained using Brekus's understanding of eighteenth century women as preachers. Brekus argues that the Great Awakening was extraordinary because it seemed to open up a "new era of female religious leadership." Women could speak and teach authoritatively in religious settings. Unfortunately for women, this radical breakthrough fizzled within a decade, and evangelical New Englanders and Southerners returned to averting women from leadership roles. Furthermore, sharp lines were drawn between the "'masculine' and the 'feminine,' the public and the private'" during the American Revolution.[57] While Brekus discusses

[56] Peter Clark, *Christian Bravery* (Boston: Kneeland & Green for Henchman, 1756), 16.

[57] Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 11.

women in religious leadership positions in *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America*, her gender observations shed light on eighteenth century consumer trends and the religious conversation surrounding the topic.

Later, during the American Revolution, consumerism became a distinctly feminine occupation, and evangelical jeremiads focused on the effeminacy of participating in the consumer market to discourage the practice. Purchasing goods was generally a task done for the purposes of the private home, which was identified as the woman's sphere. However, the moderate radicalism of the Great Awakening toned down these sharp gender distinctions. The consumer burden that women later bore in evangelical jeremiad sermons approaching the Revolutionary era was hardly present during the revival era. Brekus states, "What made the Great Awakening *great* was its brief but dramatic challenge to the gendered divisions of male and female, clergy and laity, speech and silence."[58] Furthermore, "the gendered self became meaningless at the moment of union with Christ" during the few years of the Great Awakening, and women could downplay their distinct weaknesses and bodily corruption.[59] The one-sex model downplaying gendered differences between male and female had tapered out in the eighteenth century, but for this brief period gender seemed to matter little. If gender distinctions were less prevalent concerning preaching, then these sources certainly show that they were less prevalent concerning consumerism.

Ironically, despite significant discussion among evangelicals about the negative aspects of consumerism, many Great Awakening itinerants, especially Whitefield,

[58] Ibid., 44.

[59] Ibid., 42.

employed consumer techniques to spread evangelicalism. Mark Valeri's book *Heavenly Merchandize* is an attempt to understand how post-Puritans viewed economics and trade differently than their Puritan ancestors. By mid-century, Congregationalists had adopted a marketplace mindset. In fact, he claims that puritanism transformed its mindset to focus on inner piety, which made the market culture a possibility. This is because the merchant could be successful, yet have good intentions of benevolence and honesty. Ultimately, he claims that the puritans did not descend from spirituality because of the market, but rather that they adapted their spirituality which then allowed the marketplace to become a part of their culture.

While Valeri asserts that post-puritan New Englanders did not wholly abandon community for the individuality of evangelicalism, and instead modified their ideas of providence and community to accommodate consumer culture, he agrees with other historians that the spreading of evangelicalism opened Christianity in the colonies to a consumer mindset in which colonists could create their own evangelical identity.[60] Part of the problem ministers experienced during the Great Awakening was reaching complete strangers. Normally, a minister had one congregation for the duration of his career, but itinerating ministers preached in open spaces while traveling. Since interpersonal relationships could not be facilitated this way, it was important to find new ways to connect with people.[61] For Whitefield and other itinerant preachers, this involved using marketing strategies and entering into a paradoxical relationship with consumerism.

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[60] Mark R. Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2–9, 248-249.

[61] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 8.

Whitefield's use of consumer market methods was heavily facilitated by his friendship with the printer Benjamin Franklin. Oddly enough, Whitefield was the powerhouse of evangelical revivals, while Franklin did not profess to be an evangelical Christian. Their partnership began through business interests and developed into a beneficial thirty-one year friendship. Whitefield helped Franklin by giving him his sermons and journals to print, and Franklin's publishing helped Whitefield become "the first media sensation of the modern world." Franklin published more about Whitefield than any other printer in the year 1740 and taught him the power of self-promotion through the newspaper.[62] At the time of Whitefield's first tour, local newspapers with colonial authors and interests were becoming popular.[63] Magazines were also an effective method for communication, and Whitefield realized that using new methods was necessary for spreading the Gospel.[64] The changes in advertising in the consumer world that targeted audiences made advertising evangelical revivals an easier task. By having Franklin publish his spiritual autobiography and sermons, Whitefield transcended the gap between religion and consumerism.[65] In doing so, he made connections between the incompatible.

A major reason why the Great Awakening aligned so closely with the consumer revolution were the similarities in choice both provided. Whitefield noted that the colonists, as opposed to those in England, preferred to listen to him preach out of doors.

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[62] Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, 2:420–422; Harry S Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 223; Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 76–85.

[63] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 35.

[64] Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 151.

[65] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 13.

This way, non-Anglicans did not have to enter the established church to hear him speak.[66] In the colonies, the choice to hear a preacher speak in a field and to avoid established religion helped man to create his own evangelical identity. According to Harry Stout, Whitefield's ability to make religion popular in a marketplace environment was his ability to unite the two themes.[67] He gave people freedom of choice. Stout claims that Whitefield transcended denominational lines and created "a religious trade in the open air of the marketplace. His 'product' he offered to all who would voluntarily enter under its canopy and participate."[68] In contrast, Frank Lambert purports Whitefield to have been ambivalent about consumerism, but to have used commercial techniques to spread evangelicalism. Brekus is also skeptical of religious revival leaders' acceptance of the everyday changes that the consumer revolution brought to society. In a nutshell, Lambert claims that Whitefield was simultaneously "backward-looking," afraid of the market eroding Christian values, but also "forward-thinking," and able to adapt modern marketing strategies to further his cause.[69] Brekus explains that evangelicals despised avarice, pride, greed, and selfishness, promoted by the changes in the market, but that itinerants often used marketing terms to explain Christianity. Jonathan Edwards compared revivals to the opportunity of a market day.[70] Notable marketing strategies of Whitefield's included portraying himself as a merchant of the Lord, and preaching

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[66] Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, 2:423.

[67] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, xvii–xviii. According to Stout, Whitefield's marketing techniques revolved around his use of theater experience.

[68] Ibid., xviii.

[69] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 7–8.

[70] Catherine A. Brekus, "The Perils of Prosperity: Some Historical Reflections on Christianity, Capitalism, and Consumerism in America," 281–282.

salvation as a good lifetime investment. Thus, he was both suspicious of consumerism while simultaneously embracing it.[71] Interestingly enough, Whitefield became one in a long line of evangelists in American history to adapt modern marketing strategies to spread the Christian gospel. In effect, he married evangelicalism and consumerism.

After 1742, itinerant preaching was no longer permitted in Connecticut. When Whitefield visited the American colonies again in 1744, he was unable to itinerate as widely as he had done before.[72] The revival age in New England was beginning to wane. However, because the Great Awakening extended beyond 1743, the use of marketplace methods to spread the Gospel continued. As Brekus has noted, capitalism is a large part of why Christianity has flourished in America. This tradition has its roots in the eighteenth century. She notes that Christians have also been wary of consumerism since the eighteenth century.[73] While Great Awakening ministers used the consumer revolution to advance their purpose, ministers of this period also continued to deliver jeremiad-like sermons decrying worldliness and its associated sins. Despite the seventeenth and eighteenth century ideologies about womanhood and femininity, though, jeremiads from this particular era did not equate consumerism, luxury, and a lack of self-control with effeminacy as much as sermons would in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The Great Awakening era was actually somewhat revolutionary for women, even if short-lived. Over the eighteenth century, this would change.

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[71] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 46, 48.

[72] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee; Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, 186–187.

[73] Catherine A. Brekus, "The Perils of Prosperity: Some Historical Reflections on Christianity, Capitalism, and Consumerism in America," 279.

Following the Great Awakening until the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, there was a spike in the purchase of British goods.[74] As consumerism grew to be a part of colonial society, evangelicalism adopted a strange relationship with it. During this era of the eighteenth century, consumerism and evangelicalism became compatible, and ministers found the marketplace advantageous. Simultaneously, ministers found consumerism and evangelicalism to be completely incompatible. The relationship of consumerism and religion in the early eighteenth century was indeed a great contradiction. Colonists were faced with the religious discussion of the marketplace and had to make a decision about how moderately to incorporate consumerism in their lives, especially as it could affect their salvation.

[74] Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*, 32.

CHAPTER THREE

"The Oppression and Cry in the Land:" Consumer Morality and God's Judgment for Luxurious Living during the Seven Years War

"The Sin and Danger" that William Cooper preached in 1741 in Boston was the sin and danger of luxury. Consuming unnecessary goods was a mental and physical problem because it drowned reason and was a poor use of personal income, but was also harsh on spiritual edification. He noted, "Luxury will suppress the actings of the spiritual life."[1] Additionally, John Woolman led an example for Quaker brethren in abstaining from commercial goods for the aforementioned reasons, but mostly for moral reasons concerning manufacturing through slave labor. As purchasing goods grew in prominence, ministers increasingly made their opinions on consumerism known. Therefore, religion played a key role in the rise of consumerism in the American colonies based on moral and spiritual concerns.

In *Crossroads of Empire*, Ned Landsman explains that consumer goods become more available and more frequently purchased in the middle colonies as wealth and trade increased, excluding a few religious groups who spurned consumerism, including Anabaptists and Quakers. Specifically, goods from Great Britain increased in value fourfold between the 1740s and 1760s in Pennsylvania.[2] Simultaneously, ministers offered warning sermons discussing the pitfalls of luxury. Just as the Puritans had listened to jeremiad sermons warning about the consequences of sin, New England and

[1] Cooper, *The Sin and Danger*.

[2] Ned C Landsman, *Crossroads of Empire: The Middle Colonies in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 103–104.

Middle colony ministers during the era of the Seven Years War delivered similar warning sermons. These jeremiad-like sermons explained the consequences of consuming luxury goods, a few focusing specifically on the implications of consumerism during wartime. The Seven Years War stretched from 1754-1763 on a European scale, but was referred to in the American colonies as the French and Indian War. The essence of the conflict in the colonies dealt with British westward expansion, mainly in Pennsylvania, encroaching upon French territory. Ultimately, a British victory involved coaxing the Ohio Valley Indians to ally with them against the French, their former allies. This involved making promises about land that were never upheld.[3]

During wartime, ministers encouraged their flock to pursue frugality and avoid unnecessary consumer goods, both for their salvation and the good of country. Even outside of the church frugality was looked upon as virtuous. In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin remarked upon the benefits of having a wife "as much dispos'd to industry and frugality as myself." He explained how they lived very simply, without servants, fine china, or tea. However, he continued on to explain that "luxury will enter families, and make a progress, in spite of principle." It creeps in, and overcomes even the most diligent. For instance, he said, "being call'd one morning to breakfast, I found it in a China bowl, with a spoon of silver! They had been bought for me without my knowledge by my wife." He stated that she had no reason for it other than the thought that her husband might deserve them since their neighbors had such goods.[4] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace explains that goods such as caffeine, in the form of tea and coffee,

[3] Ibid., 195–196.

[4] Frank Woodworth Pine, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/20203/20203-h/20203-h.htm.

tobacco, and sugar, were once luxuries until consumption began to occur daily, even in the countryside. Furthermore, "once the practice of visiting the country shop for these no longer luxurious commodities became a familiar habit, the door was opened for other forms of consumer behavior." Mass consumption of these once-luxury items was beginning to be seen as a necessity.[5] In the case of Franklin's wife, she felt these items became necessary as she watched her surrounding neighbors acquire them, so she purchased them as well.

Sarah Osborn, of Catherine Brekus's book *Sarah Osborn's World*, experienced poverty in Newport, Rhode Island during the Seven Years War while many around her experienced commercial abundance. Yet, she found some comfort in her frugal life because marketplace choice led to revering "individual agency and self-interest." Instead of understanding themselves as sinful humans before a perfect God, avid consumers saw themselves as "free agents who could fashion their identities however they pleased, gratifying their desires instead of repressing them." Sarah was wary of this trap of sin, thus she understood that living frugally was okay despite the consumer revolution around her. It was better to be poor and "on the way to heaven" than to be wealthy and en route to hell.[6]

Franklin's 1758 *Poor Richard's Almanac* also discussed wealth and luxury as a vice as well. "Father Abraham's Speech" stated, "What maintains one Vice, would bring up two Children. You may think perhaps, that a little Tea, or a little Punch now and then, Diet a little more costly, Clothes a little finer, and a little Entertainment now and then,

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[5] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 77.

[6] Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 193, 199.

can be no great Matter; but remember what Poor Richard says, Many a Little makes a Mickle."[7] Kowaleski-Wallace ties this concept in to evangelicalism. She states that evangelicals rejected the competitiveness of showing off acquired luxury goods. Plain clothes were valued for the humility they exhibited, even for those who were not Quakers. She explains, "As pride was a sin, then overly fine clothing surely signified shameful worldliness."[8] In reality, though, evangelicals likely struggled with consumerism, especially since the sin of luxury and pride was an oft-discussed topic in minister's sermons.

A perfect example was presented in 1741 by William Williams, a liberal pastor of the first church in Weston, Massachusetts since 1709.[9] Williams preached that "Luxury and Intemperance are Vices very dishonourable in themselves, as they subject our noble Part, to mean and brutal Appetites." The results of partaking of luxury items or being intemperate were a weak and enfeebled body, a depraved mind, and an inability to serve themselves and others. He likened intemperance, luxury, and excess to a disease that would "weaken and destroy them."[10] Williams was concerned about colonists indulging in luxuries both because it destroyed personal lives and ability to serve others. According to the clergy, consumerism was a religious problem that ruined both mind and body.

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[7] Benjamin Franklin, "Father Abraham's Speech," in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, 1758.

[8] Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 137.

[9] Massachusetts : Unitarian) First Parish (Weston, *An Account of the Celebration by the First Parish of Weston, Massachusetts, of Its Two Hundredth Anniversary: On Sunday, the Nineteenth of June and Sunday, the Twenty-Sixth of June, MDCCCXCVIII ; Also Sundry Addresses and Other Papers Therewith Connected, 1698- 1898.* (Weston, Massachusetts: First Parish of Weston, Massachusetts, 1900), 63–68.

[10] William Williams, *God the Strength of Rulers* (Boston: Kneeland, 1741), 9, 29.

Ministers were also worried about consumerism in relation to salvation. Nathaniel Appleton, a Congregational pastor in Cambridge, addressed personal sin and salvation in terms of blame, stating, "People are very apt to shift the Blame off themselves, and lay it upon others, when perhaps they themselves are as much or more to blame." Rather than placing the blame on merchants and traders, "it ought to be duly considered, how much the common People have had a Hand in our present Calamities." Because of "the Pride, the Prodigality, the Luxury and Extravagance of this People," they experienced "the Oppression and Cry in the Land."[11] The people were responsible for their own debt due to succumbing to their own desires. The problem with consumerism was that it caused people to shift blame upon others and circumstances rather than assuming responsibility for themselves. This sort of attitude was not conducive for salvation.

William Currie, Presbyterian minister turned Anglican minister in Radnor, Pennsylvania, took the salvation and consumerism connection even further through his cry that luxury led to atheism. He claimed it was a "very natural" progression; "when a Man has broke Bounds, and given a Loose to lawless Desires, and indulg'd himself in the Accomplishment of 'em, he is glad to entertain Thoughts of Impunity, and this makes him take Shelter in Atheism."[12] For Currie, the problem of consumerism and luxurious living was directly related to Christianity. He did not imply that prosperity was in itself inherently bad, but admitted it could be a blessing. However, it became a curse when people "make God's Blessing subservient to their Lusts and Passions." Obsession with position and feverish pursuit of wealth and consumer goods was the problem, not prosperity itself.

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[11] Nathaniel Appleton, *The Cry of Oppression* (Boston, n.d.), 43–44.

[12] William Currie, *A Sermon Preached in Radnor Church* (Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1748).

Andrew Eliot of the New North Church in Boston largely agreed with William Currie on the sin of pride and luxury.[13] He stated that, "It appears in our Dress, in our Furniture, and in all our Behaviour." Pride had everything to do with luxury and consumption because "Superiours treat those, who are below them, with Haughtiness and Contempt," while "Inferiours affect to make as good an Appearance, as they do, whom Providence has placed over them." Wealth and luxury made the wealthy haughty, and made the less wealthy yearn to live up to the standards of the wealthy. He strongly asserted that the poor attempting to live sumptuously and give in to appetites "destroys our Health, consumes our Substance, enfeebles the Mind, feeds our Lusts, and stupefies Conscience. While we feed and pamper our Bodies, we starve our Souls."[14]

For Philip Reading, missionary at Apoquiniminck in New-Castle, Delaware, "virtuous Frugality" was the only real way to be wealthy, whereas luxury and vice were to be "discouraged and branded with Infamy."[15] Reading's idea of wealth was more aligned with wealth of the soul than the world's idea of wealth. James Sterling illustrated this concept by using the ancient Israelites as an example. They grew apart from God, becoming "wanton, like the stall-fed Ox fit for Slaughter," because of their waxing love for opulence and luxury."[16] Thus, luxury and salvation were intimately connected for many ministers. As a whole, mid-eighteenth century colonial ministers agreed that consumerism was destructive for the person, destructive in terms of salvation, and often

[13] Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 169.

[14] Andrew Eliot, *An Evil and Adulterous Generation* (Boston: Kneeland, 1753), 19.

[15] Philip Reading, *The Protestant's Danger* (Philadelphia: Franklin & Hall, 1755), 9.

[16] James Sterling, *A Sermon Preached Before His Excellency* (Annapolis, 1755), 27.

led to an atheistic response. They were in agreement that consumerism was a religious problem.

While flagrant consumerism was continuously perceived to be a problem, it increased around 1756 as the Seven Years War grew to be a major situation in the middle colonies. In order for men to be good soldiers, to learn fortitude, valor, and hardiness, they needed to throw off "indolence, luxury, effeminacy, and other vices, that enervate and debase mankind." It was not enough simply to have the appropriate armor and weaponry. John Mellen's sermon, "The Duty of all to be Ready," explained that soldiers needed the right attitudes and lifestyles to be prepared. Additionally, Mellen, pastor in Lancaster, Massachusetts, explained that they had found themselves in "this dreadful rebuke of heaven," because of their luxurious living. Mellen felt that God could "righteously withhold from us those blessings which we have heretofore consumed upon our lusts; and turn our fruitful land into barrenness, for the sins of them that dwell therein."[17] He believed colonists had brought the war upon themselves by their lustful desire for goods, and the only way out of the situation was to return to humble frugality.

Arthur Browne, an Anglican minister of Rhode Island and New Hampshire, noted that luxury was one of many reasons why future prospects seemed "dismal" and "have taken possession both of town and country."[18] Vices were increasingly disguised as "modish and fashionable," and to their detriment, colonists forgot to give thanks to God for blessings. Browne exclaimed, "He has fed us to the full, but how do we requite this blessing, why, by the gratification of our wanton lusts.—He has given us repeated

[17] John Mellen, *The Duty of All to Be Ready* (Boston: Kneeland, 1756), 6–7.

[18] William Stevens Perry, *The History of the American Episcopal Church, 1587-1883* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1885), 315–316.

warnings of his intentions to destroy us, but what effect have they had? They are become as wind to us."[19] His warning shows that he was concerned that carelessness would lead to destruction, and they would have none other to blame than themselves. Notably, Browne's sermon in 1757 occurred amidst the Seven Years War, so his connections between God, thankfulness, and consumerism also connected to war.

In a more vociferous jeremiad, Samuel Finley, a New Light Presbyterian who served as a minister in Connecticut and later as the President of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University), asked if their "pious and valiant Forefathers" could bear to see their offspring's "dastardly, sordid, and selfish Dispositions" which included luxury and effeminacy, a side-effect of consuming luxury items. He determined that their Puritan ancestors would disown them, blush, and "hasten back to their Graves" out of shock.[20] Ministers like Finley clearly believed that their forebears had been more religious, conscious of choice, and frugal than they were themselves. Luxury and consumerism was clearly a strong topic for colonial ministers to expound upon, especially as it related to wartime.

Still other ministers made connections between flagrant consumerism, sin, and the nation. Nathaniel Potter, four year minister of the First Parish church in Brookline, Massachusetts, gave a discourse on Jeremiah, speaking on the vices of luxury and extravagance, using the biblical prophet to speak to the colonists about their present situation.[21] He explained that these vices led to sloth and idleness, and "enervate, debase,

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[19] Arthur Browne, *The Necessity of Reformation* (Portsmouth, 1757), 7–8.

[20] Samuel Finley, *The Curse of Meroz* (Philadelphia: Chattin, 1757), 28.

[21] John William Denehy, *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts, from the First Settlement of Muddy River until the Present Time; 1630-1906; Commemorating the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Town, Based on the Early Records and Other Authorities and Arranged by Leading Subjects. Containing*

and destroy the true Spirit of Trade, Husbandry and Business of every Sort!" Potter grew more emphatic, crying, "What horrid Consumption do they make of rich and valuable Commodities!" Furthermore, from Potter's perspective, colonists were defensive and unwilling to consider that they were acting sinfully, crying, "We have only changed our Vices and Virtues, and may upon the whole, boast as great and perfect a Piety and Goodness, as we ever could." Potter's sermon on Jeremiah attempted to point out their hypocrisy. He also explained that consumer vice did not just affect the wealthy, but the poor too because "Men naturally emulate those above them, and study to equal or resemble their Superiours in the Luxuries and Superfluities of Life." For Potter, this was how an entire nation could be ruined. Pursuing gratification impaired the mind and made men into unreasonable fools. Thus, as fools, men could not lead a nation. He asked," Is it not the bad Principles and Practices of particular Persons, that denominates a Nation corrupt and vicious?"[22] Potter spoke of the American colonies as part of Great Britain, embroiled in the Seven Years War and struggling because of softness due to overindulgence in luxury and ignoring God. According to New England and Middle colony ministers, they had led themselves into their own mess.

Ebenezer Prime, First Presbyterian church minister in Huntington, New York, claimed that "Luxury, Wantonness, and Effeminacy" were the worst kind of disease that destroyed more lives than did the sword.[23] Abraham Keteltas, also a Presbyterian minister

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Portraits and Sketches of the Town's Prominent Men Past and Present; Also Illustrations of Public Buildings and Residences. (Brookline, Mass.: Brookline Press Co., 1906), 99, 104.

[22] Nathaniel Potter, *A Discourse on Jeremiah* (Boston: Edes & Gills, 1758), 7–16, 26.

[23] "Rev. Ebenezer Prime, Memorial # 29922938," *Find A Grave, Inc.*, September 2, 2008, http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Prime&GSfn=Ebenezer&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=29922938&df=all&; Ebenezer Prime, *The Importance of the Divine Presence* (New York: Parker, 1759), 12.

and later well known as an ardent patriot of the American Revolution, touched directly on the issue of the sword and consumerism. He reprimanded those who "sacrifice the INTERESTS OF A NATION to their luxury, effeminacy and ease." Rather, "he that devote himself to a military life, should learn to endure hardness, to mortify his appetites, and [?] himself, when the interests of his country, call him, to it; otherwise he will prove but a very indifferent soldier."[24] The only way a man, and by extension a nation, would do well in war would be to control wanton lust for goods so as to avoid effeminacy and softness. Key terms used by these ministers throughout these consumer jeremiads were pride, effeminacy, and luxury.

Jonathan Mayhew's "Two Discourses" delivered in Boston in 1760 used these terms as well. Colonists, according to Mayhew, a Boston Congregationalist minister, needed to be careful to see God's blessings and beware not to let pride, luxury, and effeminacy turn these blessings into curses.[25] These could come in the form of "outward prosperity, riches, and security."[26] The status of the colonies and the British nation, especially during wartime, were directly affected by consumer habits according to these sermons. Consumerism could lead people into war as punishment for ungratefulness. Furthermore, soldiers and citizens had to learn how to control their desires for luxury during wartime lest the situation go terribly awry.

For Philip Doddridge, an English Dissenting minister open to evangelical concerns, the only way to prevent the calamity of indulging the human appetite was to

[24] Abraham Keteltas, *The Religious Soldier* (New York, 1759), 10.

[25] Thomas S Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 31.

[26] Jonathan Mayhew, *Two Thanksgiving Discourses Delivered October 9th, 1760* (Boston: Draper, Edes & Gill, and Fleet, 1760), 64.

train children properly in the "Way of Self-Denial" right from the beginning.[27] He pointed out that it was impossible to be followers of Christ and "pass comfortably through the World" simultaneously. One was either a "Slave of Appetite," or a true Christian. In order to learn this, early self-denial was key, lest mothers who let their children eat and drink as they please, lay "a Foundation for most of those Calamities in human Life." Doddridge added that these lessons in self-denial referred to food and dress. Man could only be successful in life's difficult circumstances if he was familiar with plain fare, whereas a life of luxury and delicacy would make a man incapable of handling life's challenges.[28] Thus, consumerism was directly related to religion because it interfered with salvation, and caused a miserable life separated from God. God also was believed to be angry when thankless colonists chose luxury above Himself, thus he punished them. The effects were miserable situations such as the Seven Years War. In attempts to rectify these situations, ministers offered jeremiad-like sermons that would stir the attention of the offenders.

Specifically, there were certain consumer luxuries that colonists struggled with most often. Tea was a huge offender among women, as well as other items like coffee, sugar, fine china, cloth, and alcohol. Women were often singled out for the overconsumption of tea, but they were able to dish out accusations in return, criticizing men for overconsumption of alcohol. For instance, in a poem entitled "The Drunken Husband and Tea-Drinking Wife," the husband spoke first and accused his wife of sleeping in late, heading straight for the tea kettle to gossip with friends, not having

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[27] Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 155, 161, 191.

[28] Philip Doddridge, *Sermons on the Religious Education of Children*, 4th ed. (Boston: Kneeland, 1763), 3–4.

dinner cooked on time, and pining over new fashions. He asserted her laziness, overindulgence, gossip, sauciness, and pridefulness. She did not stand there and take the lecture, however, and in return told him, "if I have those faults I am sure you have worse." The wife explained to him that he must rid himself of his drunken habits and be a better example before accusing her of "innocent tea." She accused him of leaving her alone late at night while getting drunk at an ale-house, waking her up when he came home reeling, and acting quarrelsome the next day. In her opinion, tea was a far cry more acceptable to purchase and consume than alcohol. In the end, she proposed an agreement: "Then let us still love and to kindness incline, You mend your own faults, and I will mend mine."[29]

Mary Beth Norton comments on this subject in *Separated by their Sex*, showing that women felt comfortable offering their opinions about published observations on women. "The Drunken Husband and Tea-Drinking Wife" is a perfect example of her point, as she explains that women replied to confrontations about "women's penchant for drinking tea by contending that men's habit of drinking alcohol was far more damaging to individuals and society." One of Norton's examples is "Suckey Goodtaste" of New York, who felt that if there be a beverage to complain about, "let it be against such Liquor whose spirituous Fumes intoxicate the Brain."[30] Overall, women felt it unfair for men to receive a pass for their consumer habits, while women did not. Surprisingly, while many print sources blamed women for luxurious tastes and placed the weight of responsibility for this problem on wives, some religious folks, especially Quakers, did

[29] *The Drunken Husband and Tea-Drinking Wife*, 1760.

[30] Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 159–160.

not. Many ministers used the image of femininity when discussing consumerism and luxury, thus tying luxury with gender, but Quakers believed in the spiritual authority of women. Therefore, this view of women and spiritual authority transferred to respect for women and not holding them solely responsible for the problem of consumerism.[31]

In terms of consuming alcohol, women weren't the only ones to complain. Religious ministers also had their own comments to offer. Whitefield asserted in his journal that he "went to Bed, pitying the miserable Condition of those who live a Life of Luxury and Lust, and are led Captive by the Devil at this Will: They are afraid to look into themselves; and if their Consciences are at any Time awaken'd, they must be lulled asleep again by Drinking and evil Company."[32] Consuming liquor at this point was considered an unnecessary luxury that led men into sin. Becoming intoxicated perfectly exemplified everything that ministers decried about living a life of luxury. Concerns about the less wealthy sort spending money irresponsibly extended to alcohol as well, especially since the lower classes spent more on alcohol than the wealthy.[33]

One minister of Charleston, South Carolina, Josiah Smith, gave a sermon on "Several Important Subjects," including the topic of abuse of luxury regarding liquor.[34] Smith explained that God made wine to cheer the heart of man, and did not make it in vain. However, "it may not be abused, to feast our Luxury, and to quench our drunken

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[31] Geoffrey Gilbert Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 92.

[32] George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal from His Embarking after the Embargo,. To His Arrival at Savannah in Georgia* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by B. Franklin, in Market-Street, 1740), 98.

[33] Sarah Hand Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 86.

[34] Kidd, *God of Liberty*, 25.

and excessive Thirst." Abuse of anything God made was not only forbidden, but unwise as it "dethron'd" reason and made passion absolute. Men can often have good intentions in the world, but becoming addicted to liquor reduces them to "penury and want," living on charity, and ending up in jail. Furthermore, Smith pointed out that consuming liquor was expensive, both time-wise and financially. Insatiable alcohol consumption was both a moral and a costly problem.[35]

Newtown, Connecticut Congregational minister David Judson offered a "Timely Warning," to be moderate in consumption as God "kindly nourishes and strengthens our animal Nature."[36] Yet, when man did not hold back, the stomach was overloaded, senses blunted, the brain intoxicated, and men became stupid. Drunkenness was dependent upon unnecessary extravagant expense, made one unfit for work, and led to foolishness, bad habits, and eventually poverty. The worst part of all this was that men (and women) became unfit for "the Service of God, or the Duties of Life."[37] Alcohol consumption in excess was not only a matter of earthly failure, but a salvific concern as well.

Alcohol contributed to other religious concerns aside from spending money and drunkenness. Norton explains that rum became a new alcoholic option for consumption in the Chesapeake region by the mid-eighteenth century. Colonists were increasingly able to purchase alcohol and no longer had to rely on making their own.[38] Rum, more readily available and affordable after 1760, was produced in the islands of the Caribbean from

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[35] Josiah Smith, *Sermons on Several Important Subjects* (Boston: Edes & Gills, 1757), 330–332.

[36] Daniel Cruson, *Legendary Locals of Newtown, Connecticut*, 2013, 15.

[37] David Judson, *Timely Warning* (New York, 1752), 7, 9.

[38] Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake*, 82.

sugar cane harvested by slaves in inhumane conditions. It was shipped and smuggled increasingly over the eighteenth century, and became popular especially among sailors.[39] Furthermore, Andrew White claims that the British Atlantic was on a "sugar high" because England consumed about 140 calories of sugar per person each day, and Americans almost double at 260 per day.[40] Religious groups, Quakers in particular, grew concerned with the purchase of sugar and rum for moral reasons involving slave conditions in addition to their general tendencies to live simply.

Abolitionist Benjamin Lay shared these Quaker moral sentiments as early as 1737. He began with the evils of sugar, which was then used to make rum and molasses. He explained that sugar contained "Grease, Dirt, Dung, and other Filthiness, as, it may be Limbs, Bowels and Excrements of the poor Slaves." He labeled colonists "ridiculously infatuated" for purchasing the "filthy Stuff, which tends to the Corruption of Mankind," in addition to purchasing slaves. All in all, according to Lay, the use of sugar, rum, molasses, and slaveholding would destroy Pennsylvania and the Country.[41]

A popular example of the moral critique of sugar, rum, and slavery was found in abolitionist Anthony Benezet's "A Short Account of that Part of Africa, Inhabited by Negroes…" in 1762. He discussed the importance of ending the slave trade, and rebutted arguments that objected to it. Benezet explained that some objected to prohibiting the slave trade because it would "greatly lessen, if not utterly ruin, some other considerable Branches of our Commerce, especially the Sugar and the Tobacco Trades" because the

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[39] Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America*, 82–83.

[40] Andrew White, "A 'Consuming' Oppression: Sugar, Cannibalism and John Woolman's 1770 Slave Dream," *Quaker History* 96, no. 2 (2007): 2–3.

[41] Benjamin Lay, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates..."* (Benjamin Franklin, 1737), 34–35, http://triptych.brynmawr.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/HC_QuakSlav/id/7019/rec/3.

number of laborers able to produce these goods would be reduced. He asserted that this was not a worthy objection, though, because the forfeit of tobacco and sugar were worthwhile losses in the struggle to end slave cruelty. Benezet desired to see no more men tormented and tortured, even if "we were never any more to see an Ounce of Tobacco or Sugar in Great-Britain."[42] Overall, Benezet hated "love of wealth" including "consumption, ingestion, appropriation and assimilation." Benezet found consumerism to be a moral problem in terms of slave contribution, and as a personal problem related to over-indulgence and a lack of self-control. Andrew White explains that Benezet was also influential for Quaker John Woolman, an antislavery activist who critiqued society's infatuation with consumerism.[43]

Woolman was opposed to alcohol merchandising among British Americans because of "luxury and covetousness," but also because it was a way to profit off of Indians and disrupt their society. For Woolman, consuming luxury food items did not jibe well with Quaker piety and frugality. Instead, it enabled slave injustices.[44] In other words, Woolman boycotted luxury items for the purposes of religious asceticism, but more importantly, for his anti-slavery views.

Manning Marable explains that Quaker attitudes toward ending the slave trade were often based on business ethics rather than ill-feeling toward slavery or racism. According to Marable, Quaker slave-trade businessmen did not apply the concept of God in every man, or Inner Light, to slavery. He states that acceptance of slavery and slave-

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[42] Anthony Benezet, *A Short Sermon on That Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes...Second Edition* (Philadelphia, 1762), 60.

[43] White, "A 'Consuming' Oppression," 1–2.

[44] Ibid., 15.

trading continued until the French and Indian War, when the Society of Friends "began to revert from its worldliness and reject "the Riches and Possessions of this World." After this, "real progress was gained by Quaker anti-slavery protesters."[45] Brycchan Carey explains that the development of Quaker anti-slavery attitudes was a slow process, and that "Quakers argued about the morality of slavery among themselves for more than a century before directing their antislavery arguments outward to the wider world."[46] He explains that Barbados Quakers had difficulty reconciling their beliefs with slaveholding in the seventeenth century, and that Pennsylvania Quakers spent the first half of the eighteenth century debating the morality of slavery. In 1758 at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, slave trading was denounced as "an enforceable breach of Quaker discipline."[47]

This also involved consuming goods produced by slaves. Geoffrey Plank explains that Delaware Valley Quakers began to take seriously Quaker advisories to avoid drinking excess rum in mid-century. Coupled with concerns about Caribbean slavery, many Quakers started boycotting sugar and rum in the 1760s when Woolman asked fellow Quakers to think seriously about their consumer purchases.[48] Part of his plan, as a shopkeeper, included removing rum from his store shelves so that he was consistent across the board in campaigning against alcohol. Rum, sugar, and molasses were luxury commercial items, but also "fruits of the labor of slaves."[49] Plank asserts that Woolman

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[45] Manning Marable, "Death of the Quaker Slave Trade," *Quaker History* 63, no. 1 (1974): 17–32.

[46] Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 1.

[47] Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 1.

[48] Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*, 7–8.

[49] Geoffrey Plank, "Sailing with John Woolman: The Millennium and Maritime Trade," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 1 (2008): 55.

prefigured American patriot consumer boycotters during the 1760s. He states, "Like Woolman, the Patriots recognized the global impact of consumer expenditure."[50] While Woolman and future American Patriots did not boycott consumer goods for the same reasons, they had similar reasons, especially with religious asceticism and moral opposition to luxury as a common link.

Eighteenth century Quakers also struggled with consumerism even as it did not relate to slavery, and only to the consumer revolution. Ross Eiler shows that Quakers began to find ways of side-stepping Quaker codes of discipline without actually violating them. These moral codes required simple dress so as not to assert wealth or vanity and to maintain spiritual purity. However, with the new consumer market, Quakers could purchase finer items to make necessities. These luxurious necessities fit the letter of the code, but stepped outside the bounds of its spirit. He explains, "People would have recognized such Friends as luxuriously enjoying unnecessarily costly items, and yet they would be violating no written code of discipline and participating in no explicitly condemned behavior." Unfortunately, these changes were ambiguous, and therefore difficult for elders to tackle, causing anxiety and fear of spiritual decline.[51]

Aside from alcohol, tea and coffee were becoming fashionable among consumer beverages. Even as rum became more available and popular, a shift toward tea and coffee became more prevalent as the eighteenth century wore on. For instance, Sarah Meacham explains that even the way religious prints depicted alcohol began to change. Prints depicting the prodigal son from the 1750s showed alcohol present during the son's return

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[50] Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*, 8.

[51] Ross E. Martinie Eiler, "Luxury, Capitalism, and the Quaker Reformation, 1737-1798," *Quaker History* 97 (Spring 2008): 14-15.

celebration feast. However, by the 1790s, alcohol was hardly present in the celebratory reunion scene, but in scenes where the prodigal son squandered his inheritance.[52] Either way, just as seen in "The Drunken-Husband and Tea Drinking Wife," consuming both tea and alcohol involved a moral dilemma of sorts, and both required sugar as well. White presents sugar as "blood-sugar," or "the life essence of the slave." This affected most colonists since it was the most popular way to sweeten coffee and tea. Thus, "in drinking the cup there is a symbolic ingestion of the slave, or cannibalization of the producer's body."[53] Taking advantage of the poor conditions of slaves was the extreme concern of most Quaker protesters of sugar consumption.

Tea by itself was also associated with luxury for some, and according to Plank, John Woolman stopped selling tea in addition to rum and "joined a number of Quaker reformers who condemned tea drinking as the epitome of ostentation and waste."[54] For Woolman, consumerism in general was not God-pleasing, as he stated in his diary: "In the love of money the voice of the stranger finds entrance, In the love of money the eye is not single to God, In the love of money the understanding is closed up against the pure example of truth, and thus becomes darkened."[55] No part of consuming goods was compatible with the worship of God. Plank is clear to explain that Woolman's reason for boycotting tea was related to the slave problem and not the patriotic problem of liberty.[56]

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[52] Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake*, 129.

[53] White, "A 'Consuming' Oppression," 3.

[54] Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*, 82–83.

[55] Ibid., 84.

[56] Ibid., 188.

Landsman of *Crossroads of Empire* explains that most mid-Atlantic colonists never stopped to consider that their consumer habits were dependent upon the labor of slaves. He states: "The presence of slaves in colonies that had little real necessity for them is itself an indication of the penetration of the commercial system of the Atlantic into the heart of mid-Atlantic life."[57] Mahogany, a stylish, luxury wood coveted by colonists, was also indicative of this obliviousness, as it was endangered and fulfilled consumer desires based on the exploitation of slave labor in the Caribbean.[58]

Consumerism in the American colonies between 1740 and 1760 definitely had religious and moral implications. With buzzwords like luxury, effeminacy, and vanity, various ministers devoted time in sermons to dissuading colonists from partaking of, purchasing, and consuming unnecessary goods. They argued this based on poor income use and negative effects upon the reasoning mind. More importantly, the ungrateful attitude many consumers boasted was not conducive to living a godly life, thus linking consumerism with salvation. According to colonial ministers, God was not pleased when His people chose not to be thankful and as a result, punished them. This led them into turbulent times, including the Seven Years War. During wartime, the clergy especially pushed frugality among soldiers and citizens. Some Quakers also decried consumerism as it related to the slave trade, and boycotted sugar cane items produced by suffering slaves. These included molasses, rum, and even tea which typically required sugar as a sweetener. Religion played a significant role in the consumer market of the mid-eighteenth century morally and spiritually, especially among clergymen who championed

[57] Landsman, *Crossroads of Empire*, 110.

[58] Jennifer L Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 7, 13.

frugality, and among religious groups who advocated boycotting slave-produced consumer goods.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Be humbled before God on account of our sins:" Consumer Crisis and the Wrath of God before the American Revolution

As one voice crying out among many other Revolutionary era Christian voices, Peter Whitney lamented the place the consumption of foreign goods had landed the colonies. Most unfortunately, "Many things absolutely superfluous" had been imported from Great Britain; "things which tend only to feed our pride and vanity." What was worse, "Many things are imported, which might be manufactured among ourselves."[1] Items most commonly cited in these occasional sermons were linen and tea. For Congregational minister Whitney, and many other ministers touting these jeremiads, the excessive purchase of British consumer goods led the colonies to the crises of the Stamp Act, the Townshend Duties, and the Tea Act, directing them right into the American Revolutionary war. [2]

Though historians have discussed consumerism in the American colonies, few have discussed it in tandem with religion during the Revolutionary era. The full story of religious attitudes, rhetoric, and sermons expressing thoughts about consumerism is untold. How did sermons address the issue of consumerism? How did colonists understand consumerism religiously once Parliament enforced taxation? If we assume that colonists had a shared sense of identity rooted in consumerism despite hearing

[1] Peter Whitney, *The Transgression of a Land* (Boston, 1744), 44.

[2] Both Perry Miller's *Errand Into the Wilderness* and Harry S. Stout's *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* discuss the pervasiveness of the jeremiad in New England sermons.

sermons and religious rhetoric warning against vanity and luxuriousness, then we can infer that colonists heard them and did not listen. As the pressure built and the situation turned into war, colonists understood their plight as divine punishment for consumption and luxurious living.

One leading scholar of the consumer revolution, T. H. Breen, touches on religion but does not dwell on it. He discusses classical republican and Christian virtue, but chooses to add his own category of consumer virtue, arguing that this mobilized the colonists. He notes, "Unlike Christian virtue, it was essentially a secular quality whose origins could be found in the experience of participating in an advanced commercial economy rather than in the Bible." Breen's separation of secular consumer virtue from religious virtue is not necessary, though, when consumerism is understood within the context of pertinent sermons and religious rhetoric. He notes that, "A virtuous person was one who voluntarily exercised self-restraint in the consumer marketplace" for the sake of the common good.[3] The common good may have been the new aspect Breen brings in to create a new category of consumer virtue, but religion had long been teaching self-control in the marketplace.

Colonists also understood their plight collectively. They had fallen into the trap of luxury that ministers had been warning against and saw their imperial predicament as punishment from God. Thus, it is unnecessary to understand consumer virtue apart from religious virtue since they were intertwined. Breen notes that colonial discussions of the virtuous consumer employed religious vocabulary, but in a secular manner devoid of religious meaning. While this may have been true oftentimes, discussions of virtue,

[3] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 264.

luxury, and frugality made frequent appearances in sermons which had clear religious influence.[4]

Although scholarship on the consumer revolution is missing an important religious component, several historians have established that religion was an important part of the American Revolution as a whole. Thomas Kidd asserts that the idea of republican virtue was formed during the war, and that public spirituality united colonists in the war effort. The result was the close intertwining of religion and virtue.[5] James Byrd asserts that religion was central to the American Revolution, specifically through Scripture. The Bible influenced colonists to be virtuous patriots. He states, "Sermons could also inspire patriotism…because biblical preaching shaped virtue, and patriotism could not exist without virtue."[6] These works relate tangentially to the consumer revolution, as colonists listened to sermons imploring them to set aside luxurious, consuming lifestyles to achieve the virtuousness needed to sustain a republic.

In order to be good patriots, colonists could not be luxurious consumers, but had to be virtuous and frugal, relying on homespun and homemade goods. Ministers, mainly New England Congregationalists, but also those of other denominations, wrote sermons that consistently warned against the snares of consumerism. Colonists had not listened. Therefore, the American Revolution appeared to them as divine punishment, forcing colonists to reform their lives. By looking at sermons and religious rhetoric from the Stamp Act through the war, this chapter intends to bring these two areas of interest,

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[4] Ibid., 209.

[5] Kidd, *God of Liberty*, 8, 10, 110–111.

[6] James P Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 17–18.

consumerism and religion, together. On the whole, religion played an essential role in the consumer revolution of the American colonies as they approached war.

The Stamp Act was the first major issue of strife pertaining to the scope of this chapter. In 1765, British Parliament implemented a direct tax upon printed materials, despite mounting protest among American colonists. They viewed the tax as a challenge to their liberty and demanded taxation only by their directly elected representatives. Colonists, especially merchants, formed associations and pledged nonimportation. A Stamp Act Congress was held in October of 1765 to petition against Parliament's right to tax them in this manner, and mob violence surrounding the act occurred, including the attack of the stamp distributor in Massachusetts. Parliament made an agreement to repeal the Stamp Act in February of 1766.

After the act was officially repealed on March 18, 1766, a flood of sermons delighted in the happy news. Ministers admonished their parishioners to continue steering clear of luxury and opulence lest they find themselves caught in the same situation again. Two months following the repeal, Edward Barnard, Congregational pastor of the First Church in Haverhill, preached a sermon in Boston on the occasion of the anniversary of the election of the governor and local House of Representatives. Barnard preached affection for the king and Parliament, and "our commercial interests flourishing,—the land of our original pouring in her ample stores upon us, for *convenience* and *delight.*" Yet, he asked, if they should "grow proud in heart, and forget God," making "proficiency in extravagance, luxury, and every vice dependant upon plenty, how sad would be our condition?" Barnard stressed that the colonists should take care not to forget God in favor

of luxurious consumption pouring in from Great Britain.[7] He was unopposed to consuming British luxury goods for convenience and delight, but sought to make his parishioners understand the necessity of thanking God rather than falling into prideful dependency upon goods.

Jonathan Mayhew, a Congregational minister, also published a Thanksgiving-Discourse at the West Church in Boston upon the repeal of the Stamp Act. Titled "The Snare Broken" after Psalm 124: 7, which declares, "the snare is broken, and we are escaped," the sermon rejoices in divine providence allowing the colonists to escape the tax on printed goods. Mayhew requested that colonists "render to God, in some poor measure, the glory due to his name."[8] Later, sermons would lament that colonists' ungratefulness for God's mercies and all He had given them led them into destruction.

Even sermons dedicated to thanksgiving warned colonists not to continue down the road of ungratefulness and luxurious living. Despite fertile soils and the ability to live independently apart from severe commercial laws, including the newly enacted Townshend Duties of June 1767, Connecticut minister Abiel Leonard exclaimed that colonists had only themselves to thank for their dependent state. How could colonists complain of poverty when they were responsible for it? He warned, "Had we been content with the produce of our own soil, and less fond of importing superfluities, tending to promote luxury, we had been at this day a wealthy people: now nothing but industry and frugality will save these colonies." Some colonists, however, had entered agreements to self-manufacture goods rather than purchase European goods, and Leonard

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[7] Edward Barnard, *A Sermon Preached before His Excellency* (Boston, 1766), 35–37.

[8] Jonathan Mayhew, *The Snare Broken* (Boston, 1766), 10; see also Charles Chauncy, *A Discourse on "the Good News from a Far Country"* (Boston, 1766); Benjamin Throop, *A Thanksgiving Sermon* (New London, 1766).

proclaimed, "May the same laudable spirit and zeal animate and warm the breast of every *American*." Hope had not been lost for Leonard, but his thanksgiving sermon warned that colonists should use what God provided to avoid further commercial burden and embarrassment. Leonard imparted hope that God "hath great things in store for us."[9]

Colonists heard the consistent message of being careful not to overindulge in earthly pleasures and to use wealth, given by God, for the "noblest purposes." Ministers lamented that "too frequently, wealth becomes subservient to the purposes of pride, luxury and wickedness." Samuel Fothergill reminded Quaker parishioners in a funeral sermon that it was difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Sharing with the poor would help to alleviate this problem.[10] Fothergill's sermon was delivered after the Stamp Act crisis, which colonists believed was precipitated by rampant consumption of unnecessary goods. Fothergill's reminder to be good stewards was probably connected to the consumer revolution. A 1769 published catechism warned colonists that earthly pleasures "are not to be pursued too ardently, which have no tendency to our salvation."[11] One minister expounded upon chapter 5 of the book of James, showing that the rich who feast upon luxury end up living in misery. They could "reasonably expect from the righteous governor of the world, who observes their conduct with detestation,…proper recompense."[12] Colonists were reminded on a consistent basis that they needed to be careful in their consumption of earthly goods lest they find themselves punished by God.

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[9] Abiel Leonard, *The Memory of God's Great Goodness* (Providence, 1768), 25–26.

[10] Samuel Fothergill, *The Prayer of Agur* (Philadelphia, 1768), 11–13.

[11] Joseph Robinson, *Affections of the Mind* (Augusta, Virginia, 1769), 34.

[12] Abraham Williams, *A Sermon on James V.9* (Boston, 1766), 3–4.

This warning is also evident in a sermon by Robert Smith of Pequea, Pennsylvania on the "Principles of Sin and Holiness" delivered in the wake of the Stamp Act and the rise of the Townshend Duties. Smith was a patriot and an ardent New Light Presbyterian, converted as a child during a Whitefield revival.[13] Within his sermon he presented "riches, the luxuries, the pomp, and the various gaieties of this life" to be the "gods of ungodly sinners, and temptations to the saints themselves." These luxuries took hold of weak sinners and became idols in their lives, even tempting those strong in the Lord. Smith continued, stating that "fine cloathes, [ ] houses, glittering equipages, and high sounding titles, strike the mind with their fancied beauty. Relishing dishes and flowing bowls please voluptuous palates. The adulterer's heart is caught by deceptive charms. Large treasures and large estates are snares for the covetous." He compared luxuries to David's lust for Bathsheba, Achan's "covetous desire" for gold, and Nebuchadnezzar's pride of his kingdom. Smith asserted that unregenerate sinners were under the influence of the "things of the flesh." His warning of the "Principles of Sin and Holiness" implored colonists to be wary of lusting after earthly riches, luxuries, and equipages.[14] For Smith, careful frugality was directly linked with sin, holiness, and salvation amidst the taxation crisis.

Victory, extolled by many thanksgiving sermons, was short-lived. The Townshend Duties were imposed in 1767 as an indirect tax on glass, paint, paper, and tea. The colonial boycott surged with greater force this time. Colonists refused to import

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[13] Mark A Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822: The Search for a Christian Enlightenment in the Era of Samuel Stanhope Smith* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 59–60.

[14] Robert Smith, *The Principles of Sin and Holiness and the Conflict Between These, in the Hearts of Believers* (Philadelphia, 1769), 22–23.

or consume British goods. Women in particular participated in the effort, learning to be self-sufficient by making homespun clothing and drinking herbal tea. The duties remained on these items until 1770, but the tax on tea remained beyond that date. An eerie calm, according to Gordon Wood, settled over the colonies until the 1773 passage of the Tea Act. This act was intended to help the British East India Company by allowing them monopolize the sale of tea to the American colonies without having Great Britain as the middleman. In effect, this made the price of tea cheaper for the colonists, but they were outraged by the unconstitutionality of the tax. In addition, the East India Company favored the sale of tea to particular colonial merchants, rubbing salt in the wounds of other excluded merchants. John W. Tyler notes that often, favored merchants were Loyalist and Anglican.[15] Other merchants mentioned by Tyler, such as Bourn and Davis, were Boston Congregationalists at Samuel Cooper's liberal Brattle Street Church.[16]

After the Tea Act passed, angry Boston colonists with no intentions of importing or consuming tea dumped a cargo of tea into the harbor, inciting a chain reaction of Coercive Acts. One particular etching by Paul Revere titled "The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught," shows how colonists felt about the Boston Port Bill, one of the Coercive Acts. In the etching, Prime Minister Lord North holds the bill while forcibly pouring tea from a kettle into a Native American woman's throat as she is held down by Chief Justice Mansfield. The woman represents colonial America and is seen spewing the tea into the air.[17] Tea, as one of the most popular consumer goods, had

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[15] Tyler, *Smugglers & Patriots*, 18.

[16] Ibid., 26.

[17] "The Illustrated Inventory of Paul Revere's Works at the American Antiquarian Society," *The AAS Collection of Paul Revere*, accessed May 10, 2015, http://www.americanantiquarian.org/Inventories/Revere/royal.htm.

become a political problem. As ministers had warned, colonists had consumed too fast and too often. Following this point and into the war, patriotic colonists recognized they could no longer continue to consume the British goods they had once held so dear.[18]

Americans believed that Parliament felt it was justified in taxing colonists because they tended to purchase unnecessary British goods, providing the illusion that they were wealthy and could afford to pay taxes. According to Breen, colonists had been participating in a consumer revolution that led to Anglicization, or the process of becoming more culturally British.[19] Breen provides the example of Reverend Ebenezer Baldwin from Danbury, Connecticut, in 1774, who spoke about the relationship between the impending crisis with Great Britain and the consumer marketplace. Baldwin maintained that colonists' reliance on luxury goods were noticed by Britons who believed they could sustain taxation. If colonists would stop giving in to their "excesses," perhaps they could convince Parliament otherwise. Breen explains, "All they had to do was reform their buying habits, putting aside the imported goods that had made them seem richer than they actually were."[20] Benjamin Throop noted that the colonies had "been represented as drenched in luxury" and "abounding in wealth," therefore "able to pay a

[18] Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 28–38.

[19] Martin, *Buying Into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia*, mentions that colonists in ethnic groups possessed "a shared preference for specific goods." While she discusses consumer patterns of varying ethnic groups in the backcountry, the idea that ethnic and religious groups consumed alike and in similar patterns works nicely with the idea of Anglicization and the British American obsession with consuming similar goods.

[20] T. H. Breen, "Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 50, no. 3 (July 1, 1993): 103–104.

much larger proportion."[21] In reality, they weren't exceedingly wealthy, just avid consumers of British goods.

Breen explains that ministers were "curiously ineffective" in slowing the tide of rampant consumerism, but not for lack of trying.[22] According to Ann Smart Martin, evangelical faith impacted "material expressions of a social hierarchy." She states that "evangelism rejected the very competitive climate of conspicuous display that was one of the most important features of consumerism."[23] This incompatibility of Christianity and luxurious display of purchased fineries is the wisdom that evangelical ministers tried to impart on colonists.

Yet, despite all of the warnings that colonial ministers preached during the Stamp Act era, colonists did not listen and found themselves embroiled in tea taxes, boycotts, and by 1775, a war. Eradicating consumer goods from daily life, especially politically-charged goods like tea, proved to be a difficult chore. Philip Vickers Fithian, a patriot from southern New Jersey, experienced a slow transition from consuming tea to nonconsumption. In 1773 and 1774, while a tutor at Nomini Hall in Virginia, he noted taking tea during various visits. By late 1774 things had changed. On Sunday, May 29, he noted that Virginians, "Drank Coffee at four, they are now too patriotic to use tea." Perhaps the best example of a definitive transition from tea to coffee was his journal entry on the evening of Monday, September 26, which read, "Something in our palace this Evening, very merry happened – Mrs. Carter made a dish of Tea. At Coffee, she sent

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[21] Throop, *A Thanksgiving Sermon*, 10.

[22] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 182–184.

[23] Martin, *Buying Into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia*, 129.

me a dish - & the Colonel both ignorant – He smelt, sipt – look'd – At last with great gravity he asks what's this? – Do you ask Sir – Poh! – And out he throws it splash a sacrifice to Vulcan.[24] Fithian eventually participated in the tea boycott because tea was unpatriotic, but it did not occur to him until 1774, well into the turmoil over the tea tax and Tea Act.

Consuming goods was so well ingrained in colonial minds that both ministers' warnings and political advertisements struggled to gain serious followings. The difficulty of relinquishing taxed goods is perhaps best shown in the first stanza of "An Elegy" printed in the *Connecticut Courant* in 1775. The poem is Cynthia's lament over the tea boycott. It starts: "Alas! (said Cynthia, as she pour'd the Tea), What Sorrows crowd around my Heart; Time quickly hastes with rapid Wings away, When thou and I, like dearest Friends, must part."[25] Cynthia grieves over the loss of consuming the tea which she grew to love.

Even one of those remembered as a founding father, John Adams, took a while to abstain from consuming tea and join the nonconsumption movement. He wrote a letter to his wife Abigail on July 6, 1774 and described a moment of realization upon stopping at Mrs. Huston's home. He said he had ridden at least thirty-five miles when he stopped and asked for refreshment. Specifically he asked, "Madam…is it lawfull for a weary Traveller to refresh himself with a Dish of Tea provided it has been honestly smuggled, or paid no Duties?" She responded, "No sir…we have renounced all Tea in this Place. I can't make

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[24] Philip Vickers Fithian, Hunter Dickinson Farish, and Fritz Kredel, *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion.* (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg, 1965), 195; John Fea, *The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian and the Rural Enlightenment in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 143–144.

[25] *Connecticut Courant*, March 6, 1775.

Tea, but I'll make you Coffee." He concluded his letter by telling Abigail, "Accordingly I have drank Coffee every Afternoon since, and have borne it very well. Tea must be universally renounced. I must be weaned, and the sooner, the better."[26] After being reprimanded by a woman about drinking tea, even smuggled tea, Adams decided that he must lend his full patriotic support to non-consumption. Although not an evangelical, that this famous patriot was unable to make a definitive decision to boycott tea until July of 1774 shows the power of British goods and consumer attitudes in the colonies.

Ministers continued to discuss religious implications of consumerism. Byrd describes the colonists' abundant use of the Bible to fuel virtuous patriotism during the American Revolution. They used it to celebrate and explain their circumstances, but also to rationalize defeat. Many of these sermons in the 1770s sounded like jeremiads, lamenting consumer sins and God's punishment. Before the war's start, evangelical Connecticut minister Israel Holly used the Bible to preach on Boston's defiant act of dumping tea into the harbor. He thought God might punish both Great Britain and America for their sin and wickedness. While Holly did not specifically address consumption of tea, he did find the colonial response to the Tea Act to be extreme. The Tea Act had imposed a duty and an East India Company monopoly upon tea, resulting in a negative colonial response.[27] The Tea Act challenged their weakness for consuming British tea, and many colonists who had not previously participated in non-consumption and non-importation joined in.

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[26] "Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams," April 6, 1774, *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, The Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/letter/.

[27] Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War*, 36–37.

In a Sermon Before Congress on May 31, 1775, Samuel Langdon, Congregational minister and Harvard president, asked his audience to consider that a people's sins may cause God to let a government become corrupted, and that only reformation would bring about restoration. He explained that as governments become complacent, frugality and prudence go out the window, and vice "increase[s] with the riches and glory of an empire." The Israelites under Judah "loved gifts and followed after rewards…and their avarice and luxury were never satisfied." In consequence, God in His "righteous judgment" led them to destruction because they had forgotten him. Just as the Jewish people had suffered this fate, argued Langdon, so would the American colonists. The Americans, "especially in our Seaports," sank deeply into pride and luxury. He considered that the commonwealth and country might be saved if the people turned away their minds from pleasure and luxuries, and that the people themselves might be saved. While pastors and colonists saw the British government as tyrannical, pastors imparted the idea to their parishioners that they were responsible in large part for the political mess.[28]

Peter Whitney chimed in with agreement that extravagance and luxury, mainly in "larger and more wealthy trading towns," were cause of the "natural and necessary" "*evils*" the colonies were experiencing. For instance, he specifically indicted colonists for their consumption of tea. He claimed that the tax on tea "is a just judgment, and righteous punishment upon this people, for their vile abuse, and prostitution of that article of

[28] Samuel Langdon, *Government Corrupted by Vice* (Watertown, 1775), 10–24.

foreign trade, and…*needless* luxury." Whitney believed that participating in the "fashionable" foolishness brought trouble upon the colonists.[29]

One particular pamphlet, titled "News from the Moon," agreed with these ministers' critiques and made a social commentary on the vileness of pre-revolutionary colonial society. Printed in Boston in 1772, the title page read "Very suitable to the PRESENT TIMES." Another version had originally been written by Daniel DeFoe in 1710 to review the British nation, but clearly colonists felt the themes of vice applied to the current era as well. The premise was that a man decided to investigate "Lunar Country," a fictional society located on the moon. He learned from an Honest Landlord that most of the streets were filled with corrupt merchants and dealers. He encountered cheating and dishonesty in merchants selling goods, such as those who sold rum. Instead of rum, consumers often unknowingly purchased water. The storyteller recounted a lunar poem about dishonest rum sellers, noting that they, "Do not remember they must shortly come, To give an Account for all they have done. They think by this that they shall gainers be, But they are loosers they will shortly see; If of this Evil they do not repent, They will at last for it to Hell be sent."[30] God would not condone dishonest merchandising.

It was not just the merchants who were corrupted, though. He noted on "Proud Lane" that women were harsh on their husbands' wallets and "tho' they are but tradesmen's wives they must have their silk gowns and scarlet cloaks and fine pattoons,

[29] Whitney, *The Transgression of a Land*, 37–41.

[30] *News from the Moon* (Boston, 1772), 9, 11.

and have chocolate or Tea or Coffee for their breakfasts."[31] Consumerism was linked with pride, a typical association made by ministers. By the end of his visit, the man was frustrated with the lunar people and decided to return home. He visited "Father Honesty" once more and explained to him that the lunars acted exactly like people from his own country.[32] Ultimately, "News from the Moon" was a satirical piece that pointed a finger at the consumerism and despicable behavior of American colonists in 1772. They had brought the political situation upon themselves by their actions, and were responsible to God.

Other pastors were not so confident of God's actions in connection with consumerism. In 1774, Timothy Hilliard, minister of the First Congregational Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, noted that if "luxury and extravagance were to increase among us, in the proportion they have done for some years past, we should in all probability be in a great measure ruined, without the concurrence of any other causes." Yet, Hilliard admitted that it would be presumptuous to assume to know "the designs of God's providence." In fact, he was optimistic that if the colonists were penitent and obedient, God would help them in their trouble and show them the way to walk. Still, Hilliard recommended colonists be "humbled before God on account of our sins" because they were "the procuring causes of our sufferings."[33]

Hilliard was cautious to pretend to understand the mind of God, but he did believe that their sufferings were caused by sin, which included partaking of luxury and

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[31] Ibid., 6.

[32] Ibid., 15.

[33] Timothy Hilliard, *The Duty of a People* (Boston, 1774), 27.

extravagance. Samuel Sherwood, however, proclaimed that "the present judgment" and "God's displeasure against us" were due to "indulging pride and vanity, luxury and intemperance. The plain voice of providence is, that God is awfully offended with all that practice these ruinous and destructive vices."[34] Sherwood clarified in his sermon that Britain was tyrannical and to blame for the present situation, but he also did not hedge around the idea that God was punishing the colonists for their sins of overconsumption.

Jacob Duchè of Christ Church, Philadelphia, noted that God was the source of all prosperity in a General Fast sermon preached in July 1775 before the Continental Congress. He cried, "Alas! My brethren, have we not rather been so far carried away by the stream of prosperity, as to be forgetful of the source from whence it was derived?" Colonists had been too overcome by the availability of luxuries and forgotten to be thankful to God for them. In addition, Duchè asked, "Have not luxury and vice, the common attendants of wealth and grandeur, too soon made their appearance amongst us, and begun to spread a dangerous infection through our hitherto healthy and thriving state?"

He continued on in this train of thought, and asked his audience if it was not for this reason that God "hath bared his arm against us" and "speaks to us in thunder." The colonists' ungrateful descent into luxurious consumption of goods led to chastisement with "the rods of his wrath" and the "flames of an unnatural war" bursting "forth in the very bowels of our native land." For this reason, the colonies observed a day of fasting on July 20, 1775, so that God might have mercy upon them. Duchè quoted Scripture, advising the colonists to repent and reform their lives by ridding themselves of the "Syren Luxury, with all her train of fascinating pleasures, idle dissipation, and expensive

[34] Samuel Sherwood, *A Sermon, Containing Scriptural Instructions* (New Haven, 1774), 36.

amusements," so as to reinstate God's favor among them. God would look with favor upon those who were industrious, frugal, simple, plain, and benevolent.[35] Duchè was convinced that rampant consumption of British luxury goods had led the colonies to this point.

John Lathrop in Boston, while using the jeremiad form, attempted to offer solutions to the present situation in a sermon preached to the artillery-company on the anniversary of their officer elections. New England patriarchs had been content to dress plainly without expense, so he suggested they also make their own clothes. Lathrop believed these patriarchs would "shrink back into the darkness of death" ashamed, if they could see the way their children dressed in "costly apparel" that they could not afford.[36] The colonists' godly ancestors would be appalled to discover their children's consumer behavior. In order to right the wrongs, colonists would have to return to the simple and frugal patterns of their forefathers.

Other sermons offered hope to colonists for reforming their behaviors. So long as colonists guarded themselves against "luxury, veniality, and corruption," America would be triumphant.[37] Overall, most of these sermons agreed with Whitney, concluding that the fault and guilt of the British government aside, the present calamities "are but a just and righteous punishment as coming from the hands of God, which may be averted by deep humiliation and hearty contrition for our offences."[38]

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[35] Jacob Duchè, *The American Vine* (Philadelphia, 1775), 23–27.

[36] John Lathrop, *A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery-Company* (Boston, 1774), 29.

[37] William Smith, *A Sermon on the Present Situation* (Wilmington, 1775), 16.

[38] Whitney, *The Transgression of a Land*, 59.

Making the effort to restrain themselves from British goods and various luxuries proved difficult for all colonists. This is evident from the mid-1760s as ministers preached sermons begging colonists to set aside luxurious desires and vanities to pursue God. If they did not, they warned, God's judgment would pour forth. And pour forth it did, as evidenced by the jeremiads of the 1770s, lamenting the awful state of oppression and war in which the colonies found themselves. Ministers and colonists felt that they had brought God's wrath upon themselves because they had indulged too frequently, thoughtlessly, and thanklessly in purchasing British luxuries. Despite Breen's argument for consumer virtue as distinct from religious virtue, and in spite of the lack of religious influence found in histories of consumerism during the Revolutionary era, religion actually was an essential component of colonial consumer culture. Religion had always forced colonists to understand the influence of the marketplace on eternal salvation. Before the Revolution, the political situation, understood as God's judgment for colonial sins and love of luxury, was a catalyst for forcing colonists to do something about overconsumption of marketplace goods.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Love your country much better than fine things:" Women's Consuming Habits before the American Revolution

In a poem written in 1769, Joseph Hopkins of Farmington, Connecticut confronted the "modern ladies" about the way their vain and luxurious lifestyles conflicted with their spiritual lives. He did not appear to be upset about their attentiveness to appearance and purchase of "Paints, expence, and spending time," but with their propensity to be inattentive to God because of these interests. He asked, ""Can you spend months to curl your Hair, And years to fix the cloathes you ware. Can you spend all the Sabbath Morn, Your Dust and Ashes to adorn – Nor all the morning read and Pray [unreadable text]…you come into church so late."" Hopkins was exasperated by these ladies spending money and taking time to make themselves look nice for church, coming in late, and making a scene only to display their fineries.

Hopkins also took issue with their consumption of food and drink, especially tea, because they gathered "Without a thought that GOD hath given, Or thinking all you have's from Heaven." Instead of thanking God, they played "Pranks" and told fortunes from their tea dregs "Which none but Satan could impart."" In the end, Hopkins did not implore them to quit their eating and drinking tea, but simply the manner in which it was consumed. He begged, "Remember when you Eat or Drink, Whatever do, or ever think, You are oblig'd by laws of nature, To glorify your great creator." His reasoning for the necessity of glorifying God in the way ladies dressed and consumed goods was based on the idea that one day all souls would "receive their doom" and they should see that theirs

was not to "depart, For practicing the devils art."[1] There are several things to note about this particular poem. First, Hopkins connected this sort of consumerism and vanity with women. He addressed women directly for their poor habits of spending and the frivolities of eating and drinking tea. Second, he did not identify the problem of consumerism among women as a political issue, but rather as a religious issue. Despite being printed in 1769 amidst the political turmoil of the Townshend Acts, Hopkins did not discuss the political problems of consumption, but rather the religious implications of consuming goods instead. Religious discussion was a large part of the consumer revolution that is often overlooked in the era of the American Revolution.

Furthermore, gender often entered into the religious discussion on consumerism, which contributed to fueling political solidarity. Consumerism was often viewed as effeminate and a problem that mainly pertained to women, likely because goods were used in domestic spaces. Men did not want to be associated with overconsumption because this would make them effeminate. Women strove to be virtuous patriots by rising above the religious rhetoric that blamed consumerism on effeminacy. By looking at sermons and religious rhetoric from the Stamp Act through the war, this chapter intends to bring these two areas of interest, consumerism and religion, together. On the whole, religion played an essential role in the consumer revolution of the American colonies as they approached war, but little of the historiography covering consumerism and religion extends into the war era. Additionally, gendered aspects of religious discussion on the morality of consumerism were used as methods for stirring up patriotism. While gender is not vitally essential to understanding the role of religion and consumerism, it is important

[1] Joseph Hopkins, *A Line to the Modern Ladies*, 1769.

because it complements and nuances the relationship, and the language was certainly present.

Historians of the consumer revolution in colonial America have noted that consumerism was thought to be an effeminate problem and used to advance political ideals in the name of liberty through boycotting consumer goods. T. H. Breen's *Marketplace of Revolution* argues that colonists found solidarity in purchasing British goods, and therefore found solidarity in boycotting those same goods once they became politicized. He uses this argument to explain how the disparate colonies became united in the short amount of time between Parliamentary taxation acts and the first shots of the Revolutionary War.[2] Clearly, consumerism and the political crisis were directly related. However, religion and gender were also a part of the story of consumerism and the American Revolution. Religious language and ministers' sermons often used gender to discuss consumer habits and push for patriotic consensus. It was effective, since it targeted entire congregations, but not necessarily as effective as pamphlets and newspapers which targeted women specifically and more intensely.

There was a growing conviction that consuming goods was effeminate, especially the practice of drinking tea. Such a connection between consumerism and luxury, "dependence, moral weakness, and femininity" led colonists to make further links to their own dependent state on Great Britain. In order to assert their disdain for Parliamentary taxation and dependence on the Mother Country, colonists had to prove their masculinity, thereby shunning all things feminine. As a result, colonists boycotted marketplace goods

[2] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*.

because consuming them was effeminate.[3] Homespun and colonial-made goods became the best way to separate oneself from the luxury and femininity of British consumer goods. Thus, colonial American consumer historiography has made it clear not only that marketplace goods were feminine with a negative connotation, but also that women were centrally important participators in the political crisis.

Brekus argues that Revolutionary era women were caught between transitioning ideas of what it meant to be a woman. The seventeenth century idea of a licentious woman shifted to the virtuous woman of the nineteenth century, but women during the Revolution were still associated with luxury and corruption.[4] Their actions of boycotting British consumer goods and being frugal were necessary to fight against religious tropes, which compared women to Eve in the Garden of Eden and assumed luxury to be effeminate. Yet despite their involvement in the war effort, gender was still a great problem for women, even greater than it had been before the American Revolution.[5]

Unlike the brief period during the Great Awakening, gender distinctions, including in discussions about consumerism, had become quite sharp. Boston Congregationalist minister Jonathan Mayhew, in a jeremiad-like sermon, warned his congregation in 1760 that God would turn His blessings to curses if they engaged in

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[3] Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 11, 178–179, 190–191.

[4] Catherine A Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 75. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, in The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America, also notes that consumerism was tied to femininity, moral weakness, and servile dependency (191). Interestingly, she also argues that this femininity and luxury could "civilize raw masculine agression" and promote productive labor. See also Patricia Cleary, *Elizabeth Murray: A Woman's Pursuit of Independence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 20; Kate Haulman, *The politics of fashion in eighteenth-century America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2011), 89.

[5] Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 71–72.

"pride, effeminacy, and luxury." He explained that these were commonly found in "outward prosperity, riches and security."[6] Therefore, the consumption of goods was seen as a matter of the "effeminate." This connection was based in the view of the woman as Eve, who was unable to control her selfish desire to consume in the Garden of Eden.

Since Breen's consumer revolution thesis, other historians have considered the role of women and gendered language for understanding the connection between consumerism and the politics of the pre-Revolutionary era. Patricia Cleary recognizes the importance of including women in the narrative of consumerism, showing that women were involved in the marketplace, both as shopkeepers and as consumers. She identifies gender distinctions that were involved in the consumption of goods by explaining how women shopkeepers benefited from and helped cultivate the desire to shop among women. She then notes, as did Breen, that this gendered association of shopping as a feminine vice was used conversely by women to prove that they could be involved in the political crisis through boycotting pertinent consumer goods.[7]

As mentioned in the introduction, Christina Hodge studied Elizabeth Pratt to understand that consumerism helped women to construct identity. She explains that while Pratt was a middle-class woman from Newport, she did not attempt to look like her wealthier neighbors or even copy her fellow middle-class neighbors. Instead, she made her own consumer choices and constructed her own middle-class identity using material goods to position herself in society and to define her roles "as mother, matriarch,

[6] Jonathan Mayhew, *Reflections on the Occasion*, 1760, 64.

[7] Cleary, "She Will Be in the Shop," 181–202.

entrepreneur, widow, and head of household."[8] She emphasizes women's ability to make their own choices.[9] If evangelical ministers found marketplace choice to be threatening, then women with this freedom was even more threatening. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor disagrees with the idea of commerce as a way for women to exercise independence, explaining that economic participation in the American Revolution did not bring drastic change to women's roles in life. However, she does agree that they were able to create networks and ties showing that women were central to the economy.[10]

Overall, historians have recognized that women were targeted for consumerism during the Revolutionary era, and that goods were seen negatively as feminine. This made women centrally important to the political situation. Historians have also recognized that religion was a major part of the consumer revolution and the American Revolution. It has yet to be shown that gendered religious discussion about the morality of consumerism was a major part of fueling the patriotic effort.

Elizabeth Kowalski-Wallace, although a historian of British women, explains that British culture "projected onto the female subject both its fondest wishes for the transforming power of consumerism and its deepest anxieties about the corrupting influences of goods."[11] The same can be assumed for colonial American women because of their status as British citizens. Newspapers and printed materials were instrumental in displaying the corrupting power of feminine goods. Tea was one particular consumer good that received significant attention. Poems such as "The Drunken Husband and Tea-

[8] Hodge, "Widow Pratt's World of Goods," 219.

[9] Ibid., 217–234.

[10] Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 6, 11.

[11] Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 5.

drinking Wife" placed the blame for consumerism right on the shoulders of women and associated sloth and gossip with women's tea habits. As mentioned previously, the space between public and private, and the separation between masculine and feminine, was becoming more distinct.[12] In this poem, these differences are highlighted. The husband chided his wife for sleeping until ten or twelve in the morning and then having the audacity to relax by making tea. He complained of her afternoon spent gossiping to the detriment of a timely dinner. He described her as saucy, prideful, and indulgent, and criticized her desire to buy "fine cloaths" and "longing for every new fashion you see." Although she offered a rebuttal, claiming her tea ritual as innocent in comparison to her husband's drunkenness, the associations of consuming goods with luxury, femininity, and pride were impossible to ignore.[13]

While "The Drunken Husband and Tea-drinking Wife" was published in 1760 before the major problems of Parliamentary taxation occurred, the negative feminine rhetoric surrounding the consumption of goods increased to convince colonists of the importance of disassociating themselves from the weaknesses of consumerism as a means to bolster the patriotic cause. Another poem, "The Female Patriot, No.1. Addressed to the Tea-Drinking Ladies of New York," published May 10, 1770, addressed many of the same themes. In this poem, women were portrayed as having slid far to the bottom on the scale of moral values when drinking tea. This gendered issue is presented as a problem for the patriotic cause, and may have served to convince men of the need to steer women

[12] Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 72.

[13] *The Drunken Husband and Tea-Drinking Wife*.

in the right direction, and to avoid consuming tea themselves lest they be seen as feminine and unpatriotic.

The address focused on the story of two women, Madams Hornbloom and Strong, but first discussed Adam and Eve. It noted the fault in Adam for cursing the human race, but also claimed the reason was "for to please his Wife." Furthermore, he did so for her by laying down his "Honour, Pride, and Wealth." Women, like Eve, on the other hand, "are not quite so compliant, If they want TEA, they'll storm and rave and rant, And call their Lordly Husbands Ass and Clown, The jest of Fools and Sport of all the Town."[14] Madam Hornbloom requested that her husband pick up some tea so that she could entertain Madam Strong that evening. Her husband protested, stating that although the Townshend duties had been repealed, the tax on tea remained. In response, she clobbered him with a broomstick and cried, "Go, dirty Clod-pole get me some Shushong."[15] Amidst her temper tantrum, Madam Strong knocked at the door. Madam Hornbloom once more implored her "Blockhead" husband to retrieve some tea. The poem concluded with Madam Strong apologizing for being late because her "stupid Husband too has gone astray, To wait upon the Sons of Liberty." Both women appeared as enemies of liberty, careless about the current political situation. Their consumption of goods was problematic because it led them to selfishness and prideful desires. They looked upon the patriotic cause with disdain because it thwarted their effeminate vanity. Clearly, this

[14] "Addressed to the Tea Drinking Ladies of New York," *Female Patriot No. 1*, May 10, 1770.

[15] Souchong is a type of Chinese tea that was imported by the British.

poem allowed colonists to argue that tea should not be consumed because its corruptive nature prevented the support of liberty.[16]

Furthermore, the poem spoke about gendered religious themes. Madam Hornbloom made a fool of herself and was compared to selfish Eve, while Adam, though responsible for ruining the human race, at least had the tact to do so selflessly for his wife. Hartigan-O'Connor noted that "'Effeminate luxury' tempted consumers to buy things they did not need with money they did not have." Philadelphia merchants "fearing that an aura of feminine servile dependency clung to their commercial relationships," attempted to disassociate themselves from this aura of effeminacy.[17] Thus, the world of goods was problematically seen as effeminate, weak, and vain. Parallels with Eve pushed colonists to see consumerism as a negative action. Thus, gendered religious discussion on consumerism pressured them to participate in boycotting.

Advertisements asked women to set aside their pride and vain desires in order to cultivate virtue. One way of doing so was to insist upon homemade goods instead of purchased goods. One particular address asked women to, "First then, throw aside your high top knots of pride, Wear none but your own country linen; Of Oeconomy boast, lest your pride be the most, To show cloaths of your own make and spinning." It implored the ladies to "Love your country much better than fine things," and to drink only colonial-grown Labrador tea rather than imported Bohea.[18] These addresses are continually directed toward women and rarely men, showing that the consumption of foreign goods

[16] "Addressed to the Tea Drinking Ladies of New York."

[17] Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 191.

[18] "Address to the Ladies," *Boston News-Letter*, November 9, 1767.

was primarily seen as women's problem.[19] Women had to be targeted directly in order to sacrifice their vain desires.

While sermons did not offer specific addresses to women as often as secular print did, they were often gendered and equated consumerism with effeminacy. Examining the religious aspect of the consumer revolution is important, first, because the discussion was essential to the political arena approaching the Revolutionary War. Secondly, this discussion often had content aimed toward women that was influential in persuading colonists to support the patriotic effort. Francis Bailey was a Revolutionary War printer from Lancaster, Pennsylvania and a Presbyterian deacon during the war, although he later joined the New Church (Swedenborgianism).[20] One of his published works, a "Sermon on Tea," was printed in 1774 amidst boycotts and in response to the Tea Act of 1773. It claimed that if preachers could turn into politicians, taking Scripture and turning it into a political sermon, then he could "take a text from the Gazette, and deliver what ought to appear from the pulpit, in the form of a sermon." He used biblical imagery to make his political statement, such as the example of the weak-willed Eve. Prime Minister Lord North, responsible for enacting the Coercive Acts, held tea, chains, and military law in his hands while the "guardian genius of America" hung her head, using her last strength to exclaim, "'Taste not the forbidden fruit; for in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die.'—Here and there a silly Eve, regardless of her countries call, stretches forth her

[19] All applicable addresses between 1765-1775 available in Early American Imprints and Early American Newspapers.

[20] Ed and Kirsten Gyllenhaal, "New Church History Fun Facts: Francis Bailey, Revolutionary War Printer (1744-1817)," *The Academy of the New Church*, November 21, 2009, http://newchurchhistory.org/funfacts/indexda6e.html?p=502.

unthinking hand, and receives the accursed herb with all its baneful attendants."[21] Eve, the epitome of the sinful, weak woman in the Bible, was used to describe the enslavement of the colonies to consuming British tea, thereby to Parliament's taxation. Descriptions of Eve, associated with destructive tea, motivated colonists to avoid it lest they be known as silly and unthinking themselves.

Benjamin Carp, scholar of the Boston Tea Party, discusses the association of women, tea, and Eve, explaining that "the Western world had associated women with sinful appetites, and women's appetite for tea and other consumer goods…threatened to destroy the nation." This destruction would come in the form of effeminacy.[22] As such, the language of consumerism and religion were intertwined with reference to women. Gendered religious language was concerned with warning colonists of the dangers of luxurious lifestyles. This was a method for encouraging patriotism.

Patriotic men were concerned that women would not be able to adhere to stringent nonconsumption rules. Their fears were based on the male belief that women were weak and unable to control their desires, just like their understanding of Eve.[23] This criticism occurred first during the Stamp Act, then during the boycotts of the Townshend Duties and the Tea Act. Columns appeared in newspapers addressed to ladies, imploring any dissenters of the boycott to sacrifice a few luxuries for the sake of liberty.[24]

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[21] Francis Bailey, *A Sermon on Tea* (Lancaster, Pa., 1774), 3, 6.

[22] Benjamin L Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots : The Boston Tea Party & the Making of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 62.

[23] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 280–282; Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 63.

[24] *Boston Evening Post*, February 5, 1770; *Boston News-Letter*, November 9, 1767.

One particular man, William Beadle, published an advertisement in 1775 addressed to ladies about their obsession with consuming tea. Beadle's personal story is interesting in and of itself. He was a successful and wealthy merchant in Fairfield, Connecticut, but his downfall was his dedication to the patriotic cause. He donated money to the city of Boston and continued to accept depreciated Continental money while keeping his goods at the original price as the Continental Congress decreed. In consequence, Beadle's family became significantly less successful and struggled. Beadle could not handle the situation. He turned to Deism and determined to take his own life as well as the lives of his wife and four children, believing that God approved. By December 10, 1782, he carried out his plan.[25]

In 1775, Beadle lamented the difficulty he would have in trying to coerce his wife and daughters to keep away from the weakness of the "Idol, TEA" should he lock up their remaining supply in a cabinet. He worried she may prove to be of "Eve the Daughter, to have a Kind of Hank'ring after This noxious Herb, and when I'm gone, With Ax or Hatchet, should lay on and find the "potent Poison."[26] If she proved to be weak as did Eve and give in to her vain desires, consumer virtue and the goal of liberty would be lost. He resolved to keep a watch upon her. Women recognized men's lack of faith in them. For instance, "The Ladies Friend" noted that the "estimable part of the sex" were the "greatest sufferers by luxury" because men would not take them seriously. These honorable women's impressions were hurt by women who "procure[d] themselves those glittering gewgaws" by having no difficulty in "departing from the paths of

[25] "The Story of the Murder of the Beadle Family by William Beadle," *Wethersfield Historical Society*, April 21, 2011, http://wethersfieldhistory.org/articles-from-the-community/the_story_of_the_murder_of_the_beadle_family_by_william_beadle/.

[26] "Advertisement, Addressed to the Ladies," *Connecticut Courant*, January 30, 1775.

honour."[27] Unfortunately for virtuous women, other women propelled the image of a consuming Eve. This image caused concern about the sinfulness of consumerism, and assisted in promoting the revolutionary boycott of goods.

Not only were consuming women connected with Eve, but they were accosted for their unspiritual conduct due to their apparent obsession with fineries. Women were understood as unable to control themselves in church. As expressed in Hopkins's "A Line to the Modern Ladies," luxury and church were not compatible. One public announcement in the Pennsylvania Gazette indicted a woman for using her bad tea-table manners in church. It stated, "Madam, when in a dancing room You may some little airs assume; Oer tea or coffee, or quadrille, May chat and titter as you will. But madam, when you are at prayers, You ought to lay aside those airs. Such carriage when the Parson's reading, Shews want of *grace* and want of *breeding*."[28] The tea-table was associated with women's gossip and idle chatter, so her behavior was especially inappropriate in a church setting. This also helps to explain the negative gendered imagery associated with consuming tea. The tea table made her ungraceful and weak-willed so that she could not even control her luxurious desires and manners in church.

Just as luxury and church were incompatible, so were luxury and salvation. Gendered religious discussion of consumerism is also evident in the "Principles of Sin and Holiness" sermon by Robert Smith. While Smith did not use the term effeminate directly, the same ideas about the consumption of goods are present as in other printed materials. Womanly seduction is suggested in the imagery of fancied beauty, voluptuous palates, and deceptive charms. He also stated that the "unregenerate are wholly under its

[27] *The Ladies Friend*, 1771.

[28] "To a Lady Who Misbehaved in Church," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 25, 1767.

power" and are "carried away with the 'lusts of the flesh'…and 'the pride of life.'"[29] Pride was often coupled with effeminacy and the selfishness of Eve. Therefore, Smith's sermon is an example that religious discussions on consumerism were peppered with gendered language, which in turn influenced the political war scene.

Another sermon, delivered in 1769, covered a section on earthly pleasures. It stated that pleasure could be good, but only in certain manners. Other pleasures, though, "are contrary to the rules of frugality and continence; the use of which doth make us effeminate, and fixeth our hearts upon mundane things" rather than on godly things. He asserted that innocent pleasures could be desired, but pleasures should not "be pursued too ardently" because "they have no tendency to our salvation." When "excessively indulged," these pleasures "weaken the power of the mind, defile the body, disturb the conscience, and do introduce many other evils; they are productive of the highest destruction to many kingdoms and common-wealths."[30]

It is likely that these statements about consumerism were made with the present political turmoil in mind. Patriotic colonists believed nonconsumption to be an effective way to prevent the enslavement of the colonies, so it is fitting that a sermon would advocate avoiding excessive indulgence in order to prevent eternal destruction. Consuming earthly pleasures was detrimental to salvation. Effeminacy and weakness were problems of reliance on consumer goods. These sermons did not present the issue of consumerism as a problem specific only to women, but did use gendered language. Ministers tried to convince colonists of the implications of indulging in consumer goods from the pulpit at the same time that political advertisements warned colonists of the

[29] This sermon is referenced on page 6-7 of Chapter Four.

[30] Robinson, *Affections of the Mind*.

political implications of consuming goods. Thus, gendered religious language was one way colonists were convinced of the need to support the consumer boycott.

T. H. Breen provides the example of evangelical Reverend Ebenezer Baldwin from Danbury, Connecticut in 1774, who spoke about the relationship between the impending crisis with Great Britain and the consumer marketplace. Baldwin maintained that colonists' reliance on luxury goods were noticed by Britons who believed that they were able to sustain taxation. If colonists would just stop giving in to their "excesses," they could save the political situation. Breen explains, "All they had to do was reform their buying habits, putting aside the imported goods that had made them seem richer than they actually were."[31]

Jonathan Mayhew also preached about the problem of a society weakly dependent upon commercial goods. Breen notes that he found the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766 to be cause for celebration in a sermon entitled "The Snare Broken."[32] One of Mayhew's pertinent examples in an earlier sermon on Two Thanksgiving Discourses was the wealth of the Roman city of Carthage, which was overcome because it succumbed to luxury. Educated Americans would have been familiar with the example of the Roman Republic, known for its decline into the luxurious and oppressive empire due to its focus on leisure and decadence rather than public virtue.[33] In the same manner, he warned America not to become like Carthage, wrapped up in the luxurious and effeminate practice of consuming goods, lest they too fall prey to its destructions.[34]

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[31] Breen, "Narrative of Commercial Life," 103–104.

[32] Ibid., 107.

[33] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 174.

[34] Mayhew, *Two Thanksgiving Discourses Delivered October 9th, 1760*, 64–65.

Women's historian Mary Beth Norton asserts that there was a sense in which colonial women were understood as inferior both by contemporary men and by themselves.[35] Thus it is not surprising that consuming goods was seen as effeminate, which was understood as a weakness. She states that women often referred to themselves as helpless, but men did not do this. Ultimately, because "so many 'feminine' qualities had negative connotations that were neither questioned nor challenged at mid-century," the historian can "conclude that American white women in all likelihood believed themselves inferior to men."[36] Therefore, because women were seen as inferior and consuming goods was seen as a public vice, the rhetoric that encouraged colonists in nonimportation and nonconsumption was presented in negative feminine terms of luxury, pride, and vice.

Soon, men realized that the success of their economic boycott depended on their ability to enlist the help of women.[37] Rather than be continually accosted, women strove to rise above the criticism and lend their efforts to the consumer boycotts during the Stamp Act crisis and the Townshend Duties and Tea Act. Linda Kerber addresses the question of women's independence and the assumption that women had no ability to exercise independent political choice under the coverture law. This law absorbed a woman's property into her husband's upon marriage. Without holding property, a woman

[35] Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), xiv.

[36] Ibid., 117.

[37] Ibid., 157–158.

couldn't express free will.[38] Through the language of consumerism, though, women were able to assert political independence.

Colonists blamed a major part of the consumer disaster on women and their uncontrollable purchasing behavior. This behavior, no doubt, led to the need for ministers' lamentations through jeremiad-style sermons as presented in chapter three. Brekus argues that women during the American Revolution were able to assert themselves politically by boycotting British goods, such as tea and cloth, and making homemade goods, but women continued to receive much of the blame.[39] Women had to prove themselves above this association and assert their patriotism through participation in the boycott. Norton explains that when tea gained great symbolic political significance in the mid-1760s, female networks were created and forced women into public roles from which they had previously been excluded. The private female tea table entered into the realm of male public space through boycotts, and which "worked to break down those gendered barriers" of public and private, affording women a short time the "role of state actors."[40]

Kate Haulman analyzes feminization of consumerism in eighteenth century America in terms of fashion. She explains that fashion, much like other consumer goods including tea, was also ridden with gendered understandings that became problematic as goods were politicized. The association of fashion with femininity was an issue because

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[38] Linda K Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 9. Similarly, Norton in *Liberty's Daughters* argues that women were able to assert their patriotism apart from men through non-consumption of goods, making homespun, boycotting tea and other luxury items taxed by the Townshend Act of 1767, and drinking coffee and other herbal teas.

[39] Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 72.

[40] Norton, *Separated by Their Sex*, 174.

loyalty to the colonies was seen in masculine terms. Therefore, homespun and colonial-made goods became the best way to separate oneself from the negative luxury and femininity of British-made goods.[41] By participating in these acts, women were able to assert their political roles. For instance, following the Stamp Act, women participated in spinning circles.[42] Many public declarations revealed women's determination to boycott foreign cloth through the creation of their own. In Providence, Rhode Island in 1765, the ladies "esteem[ed] it no disgrace to turn the spinning wheel, and contribute to the prosperity of their country."[43]

Women spun in religious contexts, too. Kerber states that Newport, Rhode Island Second Congregational Church minister and patriot Ezra Stiles, "played host to 'ninety-two daughters of Liberty' who brought seventy spinning wheels at the break of day to his house and 'spun and reeled, respiting assisting one another' until 170 skeins were done."[44] By inviting women in to his home, Stiles acknowledged women's attempts to overcome the sinfulness of luxury that had led the colonies to this situation. According to Kerber, women were called upon to spin in patriotic, commercial, and religious contexts. She explains that one Philadelphia advertisement used the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, who 'seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands' and 'layeth her

[41] Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, 116, 154.

[42] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 230–231, 282–285.

[43] "American Intelligence," *Georgia Gazette*, October 17, 1765.

[44] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 38; Brian Stinson, "Newport Notables," *Redwood Library & Athenaeum*, 2004, http://www.redwoodlibrary.org/research-projects/newport-notables.

hands to the spindle, and her hand holdeth the distaff' to encourage women to spin their own linen.[45]

Women continued to show political support by making homespun cloth after the repeal of the Stamp Act and the implementation and repeal of the Townshend Duties. Women of First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts gathered at Reverend Jonathan Parsons home in May 1768 and spun 270 skeins of yarn. Like good patriotic women, they also took Labrador tea and coffee rather than British East India Company tea and ended with an exhortation from the minister.[46] The *Newport Mercury* also reveals that in 1773, many women met at a Reverend's home to spin 183 skeins of thread on sixty different wheels.[47] They participated in the boycott all under the guidance of their minister. These women's political and religious lives became wrapped up together. Women were motivated to be patriotically involved in boycotting by way of religious encouragement and negatively gendered religious language. They had enough of being equated with Eve and determined to prove themselves otherwise.
Women took matters into their own hands in other ways as well, and published their decisions to continue making homespun clothes and drinking tea grown in the colonies.[48]

Following the Townshend Duties and the Tea Act, Boston women signed agreements to avoid purchasing and drinking tea.[49] Despite comparisons to Eve for their

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[45] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 41–42.

[46] "Newbury-Port, April 28, 1768," *Boston Gazette*, May 9, 1768.

[47] *Newport Mercury*, May 31, 1773.

[48] *Connecticut Courant*, April 8, 1768; "The Female Patriots: Addressed to the Daughters of Liberty in America, 1768," *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, January 18, 1769.

[49] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 285–289; "A Lady's Adieu to Her Tea-Table," *Essex Journal*, March 2, 1774; "An Elegy," *Connecticut Courant*, March 6, 1775.

tea-drinking habits, women's contributions in refusing to drink tea were even more publicly announced than their homemade linen contributions. In Boston in 1770, a group of young ladies signed an agreement to abstain from foreign tea "in hopes to frustrate a Plan that tends to deprive the whole Community of their all that is valuable in Life."[50] Many women implemented substitutes and consumed thyme, Labrador, and other homegrown varieties of tea.[51] Colonial women's public decisions to sacrifice British pleasures for patriotism was their moment to prove that they could overcome their weak, luxury-loving, Eve-like natures.

Norton provides William Tennent III's "To the Ladies of South Carolina" as an example of an evangelical appeal, or revolutionary jeremiad, which encouraged women to be firm tea boycotters. Tennent, nephew of the revival itinerant Gilbert Tennent, was an evangelical minister of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.[52] He wrote a backhanded plea which simultaneously blamed women for the present situation and recognized the need for their help. Tennent asserted that "It is Tea that has brought Vengeance upon Boston, and you may thank your Tea-Tables that Thousands are now cruelly deprived of their Bread. It is for Tea that the very Vitals of America are stabbed…." The colonies' punishment was a direct consequence of vain overconsumption. His emotional appeal carried to plead with the women of his congregation to save their Country, because it was "threatened with a Deluge of Blood

[50] "Agreement of the Young Ladies of This Town," *Boston Gazette*, February 12, 1770.

[51] "Address to the Ladies"; *Boston Gazette*, November 2, 1767; *Boston Gazette*, February 26, 1770.

[52] Kidd, *God of Liberty*, 83–84.

from this accursed tea."[53] Despite men's criticisms, women were vital in boycotting the Tea Act and proved their virtue in so doing.

One particular example, printed in 1768 in response to the Townshend duties on tea, paper, glass, and paint, noted at the top: "Gentlemen, I send you the inclosed female Performance for a Place in your Paper, if you think it may contribute any Thing to the Entertainment or Reformation of your Male-Readers…." It is addressed to the Daughters of Liberty, written from the perspective of women because it gloatingly addresses their success in contrast to the Sons of Liberty's failure to be successful. The women proclaimed that "As American Patriots our Taste we deny." They were willing to part with tea rather than freedom. They have "Paper sufficient at Home," can drink tea from Pennsylvania's own meadows, wear homespun, and use berries for paint. It ends with a jab, declaring, "And should the Bound-Pensioners tell us to hush, We can throw back the Satire, by bidding them blush." It is signed by "A Female."[54]

This haughty address to women, by women, shows that women were not just passively willing to allow their "weak" nature to be used as an excuse for being uninvolved in the current political situation. Cleary insightfully explains that, "Somewhat paradoxically, then, the association of women with buying imported goods, which fostered enduring negative images of women as consumers in our culture, empowered them in the political sphere in the 1760s and 1770s by necessitating their involvement in boycotts."[55] Women took the negative images purported throughout political and

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[53] Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 159; William Tennent III, "To the Ladies of South Carolina, August 1774," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 52 (1974): 370–371.

[54] "The Female Patriots: Addressed to the Daughters of Liberty in America, 1768."

[55] Cleary, "She Will Be in the Shop," 202.

religious rhetoric and used them conversely to strengthen their position in political nonconsumption.

Making the effort to restrain themselves from British goods and various luxuries proved difficult for all colonists. This is evident from the mid-1760s as ministers preached sermons begging colonists to set aside luxurious desires and vanities to pursue God. Women were usually associated with the purchase of fine material goods, mainly clothing and tea, and were accused of being responsible for this kind of indulgence. This made them weak, sinful, and uncontrollable, much like Eve in the Garden of Eden. In light of this understanding, consuming goods was seen as implicitly effeminate. Despite Breen's argument for consumer virtue as distinct from religious virtue, and in spite of the lack of religious influence found in histories of consumerism, religion was actually an essential component of colonial consumer culture. It played an important role in consumer boycotts as the American colonies approached and participated in the Revolutionary War. Most importantly, though, gendered religious language concerning the consumer revolution motivated both religious men and especially women to participate patriotically in nonconsumption and nonimportation movements.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Although consumerism has been discussed by many historians, very little has been explored in terms of the relationship between consumerism and religion. Quakers and Evangelicals, mainly Congregationalists and Presbyterians, but also Anglicans, had a fraught relationship with the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century. Evangelical ministers often expressed concern about self-interest, pride, and unnecessary luxurious-living in sermons that resembled seventeenth century Puritan jeremiads.

These concerns surfaced during the early eighteenth century in the era of the Great Awakening. Consumption of British luxury goods became more standard among colonists during this time, thus evangelical ministers expressed their concern about the detriments of luxury for salvation. These sermons were just as, or more intense than, Puritan jeremiads. Interestingly, gendered differences that became more explicit during the American Revolution were hardly present during the Great Awakening. Ministers did not single women out or equate luxury with effeminacy to the extent that was done later in the century. Yet, despite sermons warning against consumerism, Great Awakening itinerants had a complicated relationship with the marketplace. While Christians have typically been wary of consumerism, they have also used the marketplace to advance the gospel message throughout American history. Beginning with the Great Awakening, itinerant ministers used marketplace methods and language to spread knowledge of their revivals. This included the use of newspapers and magazines. George Whitefield is a

well-known example of an evangelical itinerant minister who was wary of the market, but also used it to his advantage, especially relying on his friend Benjamin Franklin, the printer of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Consumer jeremiads existing alongside marketplace evangelistic methods created a contradictory reality for evangelical circles of the Great Awakening.

The timeline of the relationship between consumerism and religion did not end with the Great Awakening, though. Colonists continued to purchase goods in the marketplace with increasing fervency as they became more affordable. Ministers continued to use the jeremiad as a model to warn colonists of the implications of being earthly-minded rather than heavenly-minded. Words like luxury, effeminacy, and vanity were littered throughout sermons meant to dissuade congregation members from excess purchases and consumption. Living a godly life would prove to be more beneficial in the long run, even if it meant less comforts on earth. Furthermore, ministers grew concerned when colonists were ungrateful for all the pleasures they were able to enjoy. It was their belief, then, that God chose to punish the colonies by allowing them to become embroiled in war. The turbulence of the Seven Years War led clergy to ask their congregations to be more frugal. Additionally, consumer goods from the Caribbean, including sugar, molasses, rum, and even tea since it was served with sugar, were boycotted based on the immorality of slave-labor production. This was mainly a Quaker movement, led by abolitionists including Anthony Benezet and John Woolman. Religion played a significant role in colonial American consumerism in the mid-eighteenth century through Quaker morality and evangelical ministers' warnings and jeremiad sermons.

After the Seven Years War, Great Britain taxed the American colonies in order to pay for war debts. It seemed apparent to Parliament that the colonists could afford to pay taxes on consumer goods based on the rise of market demand. However, American colonists were upset by this action because they did not believe they had been fairly and accurately represented in Parliament. As they began to boycott British goods in the mid-1760s, ministers preached sermons asking colonists to set aside luxurious desires and focus on God. They warned that God would not be pleased if colonists did not reform their lives. Consumerism proved a political and a religious struggle during this time. Parliament did not let up on taxation, so jeremiad-sermons began lamenting the oppressive situation of the colonies, especially as they entered into war. From their perspective, it seemed that colonists had brought the situation upon themselves from their ungratefulness and lack of self-control. Thus, despite the lack of significant study on evangelicals and the Revolutionary consumer boycott, religion was an influential factor in Revolutionary era consumerism.

It is also important to understand how gender and religious language during this era played into consumerism. Addresses and pamphlets directed their attention directly to women, while sermons ascribed effeminacy to the purchase of goods. Women were often associated with purchasing items like tea and cloth, and were therefore blamed in large part for causing the consumer and taxation crisis. They were compared to Eve in the Garden of Eden because they were believed unable to control their desires, just like Eve who could not control her desire to eat the fruit the serpent presented. Ascribing a gender to goods through religious language certainly helped to stigmatize them and was effective for promoting the colonial boycott. Men did not want to be involved in purchasing goods

that would render them effeminate, and women grew tired of collectively being labeled Eve. They took it into their own hands to participate in the political effort by spending time with other ladies from their church congregations, spinning their own linen and drinking homegrown herbal tea. In this way, gender and religion played an important role in consumer boycotts during the American Revolutionary era.

Religious discussion surrounding consumerism was not necessarily a huge issue in colonial America until the consumer revolution grew, around the time of the Great Awakening. It has never ceased to be a conversation, though. Even today evangelical pastors warn against becoming too attached to worldly things, and to set eyes upon what is unseen and more important spiritually. A discussion between religion and pursuing worldly pleasure through items exists today, thus it makes sense to ask about this discussion in the eighteenth century. Religion influenced the idea of consumerism as effeminate. Religion was concerned with the incompatibility between salvation and consumerism. As a result, most ministers believed God intervened, causing alarming political strife when consumerism got out of hand. Even if colonists did not always heed the advice of their ministers, or even if ministers concerns over their congregations spending habits were too alarmist, religion had a significant role in how colonists viewed purchasing British consumer goods.

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