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The Polygenesis of Capitalism: A Religious Perspective

By Stephen Strehle

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I. Introduction

This article explores some of the religious influences behind the development of capitalism in the modern world. It questions any conception of life that limits its objects or ideas to a singular causal series of actions. It forwards a view of life as a confluence of many forces in a constant state of interaction that come together in creating the world. It rejects any notion that might think capitalism or any system of nature and thought develops in an orderly sequence from a simple linear direction of cause and effect outside a multitude of influences that constitute a network of relations sharing reciprocal information.[1] What the article hopes to display is a few of the religious influences that served in the mix of a multitude of forces in developing the economic system called capitalism. It repudiates those who live in the binary and think it is possible to separate religion from society and the government. It repudiates any attempt to separate the forces of life into secular and sacred categories as if existing in a separate space and time or asking wrongheaded questions like what came first in a process that ever remains mixed together within the reciprocal interactions of the real world. The notion the one religious community or material condition has priority in a temporal sequence displays little more than an unscientific way of thinking and often represents the prejudice of those who isolate what they wish to forward in studying a complex system like capitalism and advance as an ideology.

The term capitalism is subject to much interpretation as it slips and slides within the varied perspectives of an evolving culture. No Platonic form exists to provide it with universal definition or a singular meaning for all times and places, leaving the wayfarer with the difficult task of grappling with a range of meaning that supplies some vague sense of direction. This means the study must remain content with analyzing certain recurring themes that people associate with the term and leave the pursuit of a more exacting definition and settling the ambiguity to the debate of others. For our purposes, the study choses to concentrate on some important concepts that readily appear in the discussion of capitalism—concepts like property rights, monetary profit, credit, capital investment, market value, self-interest, consumerism, and progress—just to name a few.[2] These and other concepts are readily recognized by most scholars as significant aspects of capitalism and are used by this study to show the significance of various religious sources as proximate and prominent forces in developing the concepts and the economic system associated with them.

II. Catholicism

Many identify capitalism with a belief in property rights as a sacred concept. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels thought of this notion as the product of the bourgeoisie's material concern to protect their financial position and exploit or alienate the lives of working-class people in industrial Europe; but the concept is more ancient than this modern class struggle. It is as old as the ancient Middle Eastern law codes and the Decalogue's prohibition against stealing or simply coveting a neighbor's possessions (Ex. 20:15, 17).[3] What makes the modern era different from the ancient world is not the concept of property rights but the exalted place it came to occupy within it. The capitalists were able to exploit the concept because it was placed at the center of western civilization as one of the few and most sacred "inalienable rights" that commanded the devotion of the people and the protection of the state.

The story of its evolution as an inalienable right has strong religious roots in the philosophical schools of the Graeco-Roman world and their mystical speculations about a natural law. Philosophers like Plato

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[1] This is how quantum physicists tend to see the world these days. E.g., Carlo Rovelli, *REALITY IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS: A Journey to Quantum Gravity*, Simon Carnell and Erica Segre (trans.) (New York: Riverhead Books, 2014), 254; *Seven Brief Lessons of Physics*, Simon Carnell and Erica Segre (Trans.) (UK: Penguin Books, 2014), 17; *Helgoland: Making Sense of the Quantum Revolution*, Erica Segre and Simon Carnell (trans.) (New York: Riverhead Books, 2021), 75–76, 140ff.; *The Order of Time*, Simon Carnell and Erica Segre (trans.) (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018), 956–97.

[2] Fredrik Albritton Jonsson and Carl Wennerlind, *Scarcity: A History form the Origins of Capitalism to the Climate Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2023), 6; Jeffrey Lau and John Smithin, "The Role of Money in Capitalism," *Int'l Journal of Political Economy* 32/3 (Fall 2002): 5; Richard Lachmann, "Origins of Capitalism in Western Europe: Economic and Political Aspects," *Review of Sociology Annual* 15 (1989), 48.

[3] Joseph Isaac Lifshitz, "Jewish Economic Theology," in *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*, Stefan Schwarzkopf (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2020), 266–67.

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spoke of an ideal Good or universal standard of justice that transcended its specific manifestations in Greek city-states and provided a blueprint for an ideal social order here on earth. Philosophers like Cicero followed this concept of a natural law in Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno during later Roman times and spoke of a divine truth (*recta ratio*) indwelling all human beings and providing them with a moral existence that lifts them above the beasts of the field and brings judgment to bear on specific legal codes in society.[4] Christians also followed the same basic idea: Paul spoke of a natural law that resonates in the hearts of all Gentiles throughout the world as a means of knowing the divine will within the conscience (Rom. 1:19-20; 14-15); Justin Martyr spoke of Gentiles knowing God through the seeds of divine reason (*logos spermatikos*) within each and every one;[5] Thomas Aquinas and the Medieval Scholastics spoke about the natural law as a universal standard and witness to the truth, representing the presence of divine reason within humankind and judging the conduct of all nations.[6] The concept of the natural law permeated all Christian teaching throughout the Reformation and much of modern times.

In the Middle Ages, the concept took on another nuance that became essential to its modern interpretation. The natural law (*ius naturale*) started referring to more than just the obligations that a creature has to serve the divine will; it also referred to positive rights that all people receive from their Creator. This new deconstruction of the *ius naturale* had some antecedent in the ancient world but came to the forefront in the Middle Ages through the work of the Decretalists or interpreters of canon law.[7] The most significant proponent of natural rights was William Ockham (ca. 1285–1347), the brilliant Franciscan theologian and Nominalist philosopher. He used the concept of the *ius naturale* to question the papacy and its claim to possess a "fullness of power" (*plenitudo potestatis*) in temporal and spiritual matters. He found the present pope using his authority to despoil the kings of Europe and plunder the riches of their subjects, as if no one had a right to their property except the pope. Ockham said no one has a right to deprive the people of their life, liberty, or possessions without some evidence of fault or reasonable cause. God has given these good things to all people in nature as their legal right.[8]

> Therefore, a pope should appreciate the kind of power he has over others and be ready to render an account to all who demand one, just as he would provide for his faith. He must not disturb the rights (*iura*) of others . . . but conserve them. . . . Therefore, it is important that the subjects of the pope know their common rights.[9]
>
> The pope cannot deprive people of their rights. These rights do not come from him, but come from God, nature, or another man. For the same reason he cannot deprive the people of their liberties. They are granted to them by God and nature.[10]
>
> The prelates ought to strive for the affection of their subjects by securing their interest, rather than promote fear by depriving them of their rights, liberties and possessions (*iura, libertates et res*), unless the prelates back certain necessities.[11]
>
> As long as the faithful remain ignorant [of the extent of papal power] and the pope strives to secure his own ends, whether from the will to power, the love of material possessions, or simple ignorance, unending conflict will not cease between them, since the people have some understanding of their possessions, rights, and liberties

[4] Cicero, *De legibus*, in *The Loeb Classic Library*, C. W. Keyes (trans.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 1.18–43; 2.8–10.

[5] Justin Martyr, *Apologia prima pro Christianis*, 46 (PG 6.397, 398); *Apologia secunda*, 8, 10 (PG 6.457-62); Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, John Austen Baker (ed. and trans.) (London and Philadelphia: Darton, Longman & Todd/Westminster Press, 1973), 40–43; Carl Andresen, "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," *Zeitschrift fur Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 44 (1952/53), 170. The exact source of Paul's words in the book of Romans is difficult to identify but probably received some inspiration from his upbringing in Tarsus, a center of Stoic philosophy in the Mediterranean world. Justin clearly borrows the expression *logos spermatikos* from Stoic philosophy, although his interpretation is colored by Platonic and Christian ideas. His overall philosophy reflects the middle Platonism of the day more than any other school of thought. David Ulansey, *The Origins of Mithraic Mysteries* (Oxford: University Press, 1983), 68–69; Calvin Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998), 28–29; Reinhold Seeburg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, Charles E. Hay (trans.) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 3.13.9 (1.118).

[6] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a. 1, 2; q. 93, a. 2, 3; q. 95, a. 2; q. 96, a. 6; Paul Sigmund, *Natural Law in Political Thought* (Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1971), 36–39, 43–45; H. McCoubrey, *The Development of Naturalist Legal Theory* (London, New York, and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987), 49–52; Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law, 1150–1625* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 59, 62, 73–76.

[7] Gratian, *Decretum*, in *Incipit concordia discordantium canonum* (Basel: Michael Wenssler, 1482), part 1, dist. 1, 5, 8, 9; Marsilius von Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, Richard Scholz (hrsg.) (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1932), 12.12.6; 13.5, 10 (268, 279, 282); Conrad Summenhart, *De contractibus licitis atque illicitis* (Venice, 1580) 1.1; Sigmund, *Natural Law in Political Thought*, 36-39; Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights*, 59, 62, 73–76. In the hand of the Decretalists, the term *ius* became polysemous, slipping and sliding within contexts and sometimes implying "law" or "right" or both, depending on the context. Many scholars point to the Decretalists, but Richard Tuck and Brian Tierney are most significant in this new direction among academics.

[8] *Breviloquium de Principatu Tyrannio*, 2.3.59–64; 3.1–6, 12; *An Princeps*, 2.84–86, 7; *Opus Nonaginta Dierum*, 61.55–64; *De Imperatorum et Pontificum Potestate*, 4.7; Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights*, 184–85, 190–91. In *An Princeps*, the specific controversy is whether the church is bound to contribute to Edward's just war. The Pope is trying to deny royal levies on the church. Ockham sides with Edward and lists many other instances of dire need where the church is required to support the government. *An Princeps*, 1.8–13; 7.1–7; 11.1–24. Ockham's works are found in *Opera Politica*, H. S. Offler (ed.) (Manchester: University Press, 1963).

[9] *Breviloquium*, 1.3. 26–28; 4.10, 11.

[10] *De Imperatorum et Pontificum Potestate*, 4.8–11.

[11] Ibid., 7.157–60.

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(whether through a reason that offers itself in time of trouble or without reason they strive to preserve what is customary).[12]

The corruption of the papacy led to a schism in the church when two candidates staked a claim to the papal throne in 1378. The Conciliar Movement and the Council of Constance settled the dispute and reconciled the papal office in 1415 but insisted the pope must exercise his power through the hierarchy of the church and not usurp the rights of his subjects to their property.[13] Jean Gerson said God had given those rights to all people in nature as an "equal and inalienable" possession (*pluribus competens ex aequo et inabdicabile*).[14]

The natural rights tradition continued to make its way throughout Western Europe and became a significant doctrine in the systems of governance. It received special treatment and gained considerable notoriety through the works of scholars like Francisco de Vitoria, Francisco Suarez, Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, and so many others, but it was John Locke who deserves special mention for exalting the natural law to the primary place it serves today in constructing the social order and laying the foundation of the government.[15] Locke specifically rejected the other possibilities of the day that would base social action on a utilitarian calculus or promote the will of the people, as if the *vox populi vox Dei*. He thought no community or government had the right to construct the law outside the will of God. The law of nature must serve as the supreme rule of all people.[16]

> It is a power that hath no other end but preservation, and therefore can never have a right to destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the subjects; the obligations of the law of Nature cease not in society, but only in many cases are drawn closer, and have, by human laws, known penalties annexed to them to enforce their observation. Thus the law of Nature stands as an eternal rule to all men, legislators as well as others. The rules that they make for other men's actions must, as well as their own and other man's actions, be conformable to the law of Nature—i.e., to the will of God, of which that is a declaration, and the fundamental law of Nature being the preservation of mankind, no human sanction can be good or valid against it.[17]

The law of nature included his famous trilogy of life, liberty, and property, which helped inspire the same basic rhetoric and statement of the doctrine in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Both Locke and the Founding Fathers considered these rights "inalienable," meaning they are nonnegotiable or not subject to any social contract or democratic polity.[18] The government has a sacred responsibility to serve the laws of God as found in nature, and the people have a duty to depose the government if it fails to fulfill its fundamental obligation—at least after a "long train of abuses."[19]

Locke's analysis came into some difficulty when trying to establish what the government was to protect or how people acquire the boundaries of their property in the first place. He decided to emphasize the labor of one's hand as a means of taking what was common and making it an individual possession. So, the initial gathering of nuts or catching a fish takes whatever is harvested out of the common pool of things and makes it one's own; the initial labor over a field "improves," "cultivates," "enclose(s)," and annexes the soil making it a part of one's own legal domain. Locke thought labor produced value, and the raw material of the earth was worth very little without it. He cited the commission of Genesis 1:28 to "subdue" and "improve" the planet, although he was not so triumphant as some Puritans and clearly recognized a problem with granting humankind a license to "carve out" more than it can use to meet its needs and acquire too much.[20] Most

[12] Ibid., 26.36–41.

[13] Jean Gerson, *De Potestate Ecclesiastica* [in *Oeuvres Completès*, intro., texte et notes par Palémon Glorieux (Paris: Desclee & Cie, 1965)], 6.211–42. The general council can question the actions of a pope and remove him from office under certain conditions. If the pope refuses to summon a council, the church can convoke its own and remove him. Ibid., 223, 233.

[14] Ibid., 246. Gerson was the leader of the movement and council.

[15] Pufendorf is similar to Locke in this regard. He believes the sovereign has an obligation to insure the proper observance of the natural law by force when it is necessary. *De Officio Hominis et Civis juxta Legem Naturalem Libri Duo* (Vol. 1, a reproduction of the Latin edition of 1682, and Vol. 2, a translation by F. G. Moore), in *The Classics of International Law*, James Brown Scott (ed.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), II, 1.9, 10; 5.7; 6.7, 14; 12. 3, 6–7 (1.101, 102, 117, 120, 122, 140–42; 2.91–92, 104, 107, 109, 125–26). Locke displays evidence of Pufendorf's ideas in his writing and praises the latter's work on the subject of natural law in society as the quintessential textbook. Richard Tuck, *Natural rights theories*: *their origin and development* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 433. Cf. Sigmund, *Natural Law in Political Thought*, 81–82; *John Locke: Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett (ed.) (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 22, 74–75. Sigmund points to sections 58, 65, 74, and 105, and other sections could be listed. One should also note the pervasive influence of Grotius at the time. Tuck, *National rights theories*, 176; Stephen Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property*: *Grotius to Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 139. Locke's *Essays* were written before Pufendorf's but after Grotius' work on the subject.

[16] John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, W. von Leyden (ed.) (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1958), 161, 213; Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Politics*, 146; James O. Hancey, "John Locke and the Law of Nature," *Political Theory* 4/4 (Nov. 1976): 449.

[17] John Locke, *Concerning Civil Government, Second Essay*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, Robert Maynard Hutchins (ed.) (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1978), 135 (56).

[18] Ibid., 26 (30), 221–22 (75–76).

[19] Ibid., 4 (25–26), 155, 209 (60– 61, 73); 225 (77).

[20] Ibid., 30–32 (24–34), 34 (43), 35–36 (51); Richard Boer and Christina Petterson, *Idols of Nations: Biblical Myths at the Origin of Capitalism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 72–77, 80–82. Locke blames

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acquisitive capitalism saw no special problem with exceeding one's "needs," believing the lusts of the consumer produces a more luxurious lifestyle for the next generation, where the concept of what is essential or needed constantly changes or moves into a higher standard of living.[21] What became a more significant problem for the capitalists was the limited nature of resources on the planet, which had difficulty keeping up with the insatiable demands and exploitation of the new consumer economy.

The new economic system had its problems but possessed some solid roots within a universal religious vision. It had roots in the ancient belief concerning an ideal world that supplied life with a transcendent commentary or moral perspective. Its laws and rights could not develop from a rational or secular analysis of this material world—an analysis that contains no ability to transcend the world and offer a commentary on what happens to transpire in it.[22] The concept of property rights came from a longstanding religious tradition that connected the rights to the will of God in ancient texts like the Hammurabi and Mosaic law codes, the ideal Good in philosophers like Plato and Cicero, and the revelation of the divine *Logos* to all humankind in Christian theology. These rights came to the forefront in the modern world and demanded special protection from the government as its sacred duty. The exalted place helped lay the foundation for an economic system like capitalism to make property a centerpiece of devotion and to prosper under the new civic policies.

III. Puritans

Max Weber brought the question of the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism to the forefront of academic interest with the publication of two articles on the "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" in 1904 and 1905. R. H. Tawney defended the basic theory that was presented in these articles in his book *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, helping to promote its popularity in the English-speaking world and elevate its status to one of the most celebrated theses in all of social studies.[23] The thesis starts out at the beginning of the Reformation contending that Martin Luther provided an early impetus for the new economic order through his radical belief in the spirituality of the laity and their life in society. This teaching was meant to challenge the concept of spirituality in the Middle Ages, which found a higher ideal within a life cloistered in a monastery or walls of the church, separate from the secular world of business and the material temptations to cheat and profit at the expense of others.[24] Luther changed all this with his concept of the priesthood of the believers. He considered the worldly "professions" (*Berufe*) of the laity a genuine spiritual "calling" before God.[25] The Puritans provided the most radical expression of this teaching and laid the "seedbed" for the ultimate triumph of a new economic order that emphasized participation in the world and building the community. William Perkins wrote *A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men* (1605), where he exhorted the members of his Puritan community to fulfill their individual callings in the family and society, not just the

the invention of money as a durable good that led people to possess more than they really needed. Ibid., 35 (46–50).

[21] Bernard Mandeville thinks that wealth is increasing. What was once called luxury is now "enjoy'd by the meanest and most humble Wretches." *Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, F. B. Kaye (intro.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 1.169. What was criticized by moralists/philosophers in the past tends to gain acceptance later on. Many thought the concept of luxury was relative to culture, even one's station in life according to sumptuary laws. *The Works of Voltaire* (Paris: E. R. DuMont, 1901), 37.216–18; Ferdinando Galiani, *Della Moneta Libri Cinque* (Napoli: Nella Stamperia, 1780) 12.29–30; Saint-Lambert, "Luxe," in *Encyclopédie*, L, 84; Fredrik Albritton Jonsson and Carl Wennerlind, *Scarcity: A History from the Origins of Capitalism to the Climate Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2023), 38. Jacob Viner talks about an oft-repeated tradition in western civilization that he first discovers in Clement of Alexandria and continues on into modern times with scholars like Locke, Pufendorf, Defoe, Wolf, and Amyraut. It sees God supplying necessities in abundance like water and air, while hiding from us what is not so necessary like gold and pearls. Jacob Viner, *The Role of Providence in the Social Order: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1972), 28.

[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logic-Philosophicus*, D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (trans.) (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 3, 5 (1, 2, 2.01), 19 (4.003), 25–26 (4.112–4.1212), 56–57 (5–5.61, 5.632–5.633), 67–74; *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.) (New York, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1968), 103ff. (308ff.).

[23] Robert W. Green (ed.), *Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and Its Critics* (Boston: C. Heath and Co., 1959.), vii; Manfred Bergler, "Max Webers Thesen über die Entstehung des modernen westlichen Kapitalismus," *Zeitschrift für Religions-und Geistesgeschichte* 39/1 (1987): 27, 28; Hartmut Lehmann, "The Rise of Capitalism: Weber versus Sombart," in *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Ethics, and Context*, Hatrmut Lehmann and Guenther Roth (ed.) (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 197–198; M. J. Kitch, *Capitalism and the Reformation* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1968) xvii–xviii.

[24] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Ephraim Fischoff (trans.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 220; Manfred Brocker, "Max Webers Erklärungsansatz für die Entstehung des Kapitalismus," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 43/6 (1995): 501; Jacob Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), 17, 61; Lanfranc, *Elucidarium*, in *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, John Allen Giles (ed.) (Oxonii: Parker, 1844) 2.18; Kitch, *Capitalism and the Reformation*, 95–96; Edmund Schreiber, *Die volkswirtschaftlichen Anschauungen der Scolastik seit Thomas v. Aquin* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1913), 154; Gratian, *Decretum*, in *Incipit Concordia discordatium canonum* (Basel: Michael Wenssler, 1482) part 1, dist. 88, cap. 11.

[25] WA 6.407–410, 413 (LW 44.127–32, 136–37). Cf. WA 7.56-58 (LW 31.354-56); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, T. Parsons (trans.) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 79–81; Brocker, "Max Webers Erklärungsansatz," 504–505. Luther translates *klēsis* (calling) in the NT as *Berufung* or *berufen.*

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church, based on Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 7:20 to "remain in the situation (*klēsis*) that God has called" each and every one.[26] Richard Steele wrote *The Trademan's Calling* (1684), in which he provided a special "case of the conscience" for those who serve God through "some peculiar Imployment in this world."[27]

> A pious Tradesman may act Grace, as much as the greatest Rabbi. Famous is the story of Primitive Saint in Egypt, Who having for many Years retired himself from the World and chiefly imployed himself in the Acts of Mortification and Devotion; and being thereupon tempted to think himself among the holiest Men on Earth, and long'd to know who should sit next him in Heaven, was warned to inquire for a Man in Alexandria who was holier than himself; and who should that be but, when he had found him, but a poor Cobler, that work'd hard most of the day, but was so circumspect in his Life, so just in his Dealings, so thankful with 'his Wife for his mean fare, and then so truly devout in the Worship of God, that the poor Hermite return'd crest-faln to his Cell, and found that the honest Tradesman was like to sit above him in Heaven. So that the Exercise of Grace should be no uncouth Business to a Christian Tradesman.[28]

Weber thinks the Calvinists were driven to fulfill this calling or "worldly asceticism" more than other Protestants because of their difficulty in obtaining assurance before God. The Calvinists (and particularly the Puritans) worked hard in building the community because of the enormous onus their divines placed on the shoulders of each and every one to make their calling sure through a lifetime of hard work and struggle. They had no sacramental means of assuaging anxieties, no simple answer to afford the laity and provide final certainty of their standing before God.[29] Their divines wrote tomes and tomes of works on the "cases of the conscience" exhorting the wayfarers to examine their inward motives and outward deeds and discern whether they were exhibiting the true fruits of divine election—probably producing even more anxiety and doubt in the constituency as the people proceeded to look inwardly at their own depravity or shortcomings before God and became obsessed with an issue that had no clear answer. Few found much solace in the process, but all were challenged to exhibit a life of service and devotion to secure their place in the kingdom of God. The divines had no answers to afford the faithful but set them off in pursuit of one, spurring them onward and helping produce a work ethic that was vital to the foundation of capitalism—a work ethic that was zealous to invest its time and resources into the community, not just the church, as a religious calling.[30]

Weber's thesis is right to underscore the relation between the work ethic and the doctrine of assurance in the Puritan community, but he makes several historical/theological mistakes along the way that are worth correcting in understanding the precise nature of the problem. He blames much of the problem on the community's obsession with the dark mysteries of predestination but fails to recognize the importance of synergistic elements in their theology that offset this doctrine and exerted a decided impact upon the problem at hand. Calvin's doctrine of predestination did not cause a problem in the community. In fact, Calvin speaks of Christ as the "mirror of predestination" or the one who reveals the Father's elective purposes to the believer, uniting the will of the Father and the words of Christ together and making the decree of the Father and the faith of the regenerate in the promises of Christ one and the same. In this doctrine of eternal security, Calvin rejects any reason to search some secret intendment or dark mystery outside the revelation of God in Christ to find the elective purpose or hidden will of the Father. Those who accept the call of the gospel can rest assured that no secret or hidden decree lies behind what is revealed to overturn the free gift of salvation for those who have faith in Christ.[31] If anything, Calvin (along with Martin Butzer) eliminated much of the mystery in the doctrine of predestination that plagued the church, rejecting the traditional dichotomy in its teaching between the saved and the elect, overturning its historical position that many who receive salvation are not destined for ultimate perseverance, that many lose their salvation and fail to receive the crown of eternal life, that those who believe have no certainty of their election, their final perseverance, or the ultimate will of God concerning them.

It was not Calvin's teaching or emphasis upon predestination that caused a problem in the doctrine of

[26] *The Work of William Perkins*, Ian Breward (ed.) (Appleford, Abingdon, and Berkshire: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970) 446–49, 456.
[27] Richard Steele, *The Trades-man's Calling* (London: J. D., 1684), 1–2.
[28] Ibid., 214–15.
[29] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 110–14, 117, 157–60, 166–69, 230-31; Brocker, "Max Webers Erklärungsansatz," 505–506; Kemper Fullerton, "Calvinism and Capitalism: An Explanation of the Weber Thesis," in *Protestantism and Capitalism*, 13–14; Charles L. Cohen, "The Saint Zealous in Love and Labor: The Puritan Psychology of Work," *Harvard Theological Review* 76/4 (1983): 458.
[30] Ibid., 40; Robert M. Mitchell, "The Weber Thesis …," *Fides et Historia* 4/2 (1972): 57; Gianfranco Poggi, *Calvinism and the Capitalist Spirit: Max Weber's Protestant Ethic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 60.
[31] *Inst.* III, xxiv, 3–5; CO 1.74 [*Inst.* (1536)]. Calvin probably developed this teaching in conjunction with Martin Butzer, his confidant. Butzer speaks definitively about uniting the will of Christ and the will of the Father together and so providing security for believers concerning their ultimate perseverance and election. Martin Bucer, *Metaphrases et narrationes perpetuae epistolarum D. Pauli Apostoli, . . .* (S.1.1536), 359bff., 402–405; *Opera Latina* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 188), 2.240, 347; *Calvinus Theologus* (Hrsg. Wilhelm Neusner; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Nekirchener Verlag, 1976), 89.

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assurance but two other doctrines that went in the opposite direction and brought a human element into the process of securing salvation. The first was the so-called "practical syllogism" of Theodore Beza and Jerome Zanchi that became popular among the Puritans as a method to deduce one's standing before God. The syllogism required an introspective analysis of the "marks" and "signs" of election in oneself, an examination of the conscience about the sincerity of one's faith, or a "reflexive act" to ascertain how one "feels and believes."[32] The purpose of the syllogism was to deduce a person's election in an Aristotelian manner by examining inward and outward manifestations and see if the fruits matched the biblical exhortation to believe as the condition or genuine sign of election. The problem was the tendency to take one's eyes off Christ in the process and look upon the deficiencies of the human response to divine grace. The problem was the object of faith had turned away from the Christ who justifies the believer toward an inward examination that puts faith in one's faith. Calvin warned against the move in the *Institutes*, believing our conscience derives more fear than comfort when inspecting the motivations and deeds of the flesh. He recognized some place for self-examination but exhorts his followers to remain Christocentric or fixated on the good things of Christ and the work of the Spirit and turn away from an analysis of human frailty as an uncertain means of consolation.[33]

Along with the practical syllogism, the Reformed added another doctrine that had similar results in emphasizing the human component—the doctrine of covenant. Heinrich Bullinger was most responsible for turning the covenant into a bilateral arrangement and disseminating this synergistic interpretation to all Reformed Europe through a widely circulated treatise on the subject, *The One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God* (1534). Bullinger had turned away from Luther, Zwingli, and the strong emphasis upon grace in his early career and moved toward a more moderate or synergistic understanding of salvation that incorporated a human component like "free will" into the process of salvation.[34] He incorporated the synergism into his interpretation of the covenant, believing humans had certain "conditions" to fulfill if they "expect" to receive what God has promised and lost their salvation if they fail to continue in their federal responsibilities.[35] Many of the Reformed theologians adopted this concept of a bilateral covenant with "mutual obligations" from Bullinger, with or without recognizing a tension in their overall theology.[36]

Other Reformed theologians were more astute and saw a real conflict between its teaching and the fundamental emphasis upon *sola gratia* in Luther and Calvin. They were particularly concerned about its application to the doctrine of assurance. John Eaton founded an English antinomian movement that complained about the many false prophets appearing in "these latter days" with a "legal zeal for works" and turning the focus of the church away from the "wedding garments of Christ" to meditate on the "menstruous cloth" of human righteousness.[37] He found much of his inspiration in the writings of Luther and maintained the same type of Christocentric vision that looked beyond all "reason, sight, sense, and feeling" to the "bare and naked word of God."[38] The controversy reached its most fervid pitch in the Massachusetts Bay Colony between October 1636 and March 1638.[39] John Cotton was the most eminent theologian of the movement and disparaged both the practical syllogism and any talk of conditions in the covenant of grace. He felt Puritanism was losing the original focus of Calvin upon Christ and

[32] Theodore Bèze, *Tractationes Theologicae* (Genevae, 1582), 1.10, 15–16, 687–90; *Quaestionum & Responsionum Christianum libellus* (Londini,1571); Joel Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 82ff.; R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 32ff.; Girolamo Zanchi, *Opera Theologica* (Genevae, 1613), 2.506 (*De Natura Dei*, 1577); 7.230; 8.716–17 (*Miscellanae*, 1566). Perkins translates parts of Zanchi's *De Natura Dei* on assurance into English, and two important treatises of Beza on the subject are also translated in 1570 and 1574. The two have a particular impact on the Puritans, but the practical syllogism became a part of the discussion and treatment of theologians in all Reformed Europe.

[33] *Inst.* III, ii, 18, 38; xiv, 18–20; *Commentarius in Iohannis Apostolis Epistolam*, 3:14 (CO 27.339); Timothy Miller, "Comparing Calvin and Barth on the Doctrine of Assurance," *PRJ* 12/2 (2020): 133–34; CD II/2.335; Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, Harold Knight (trans.) (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980), 173–75.

[34] For details, see Stephen Strehle, *The Catholic Roots of the Protestant Gospel: Encounter between the Middle Ages and the Reformation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 51–58.

[35] Heinrich Bullinger, *De Testamento seu Foedere Dei unico et aeterno* (Tiguri, 1534), 5b, 8a–9a, 11b, 14b; *Sermonum Decades quinque* (Tiguri, 1567), 121b.

[36] Johannes Heidegger, *Corpus Theologiae Christianae* (Tiguri, 1666), 1.9.10; Francis Turrettini, *Institutio Theologica elenctiae* (Genevae, 1688), 8.3.3, 12.1.8; Georg Sohnius, *Opera* (Herbornae Nassoviorum, 1609), 1.74, 234; Zacharias Ursinus, *Explicationum Catecheticarum* (Heidelbergae, 1607), 128–29.

[37] *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification by Christ alone* (Lancaster, 1642), 206–207, 372, 386, 468; *The Discovery of the Most Dangerous Dead Faith* (London, 1642), preface, 47, 135, 149, 172ff.

[38] *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification*, 25–26, 115, 178–83, 241, 395; *Discovery* [*Abrahams Stepps by Faith*], 176–77, 185. Eaton particularly found Luther's commentary on Galatians (1535) inspiring, citing it no less than 106 times. Norman Graebner, "Protestants and Dissenters: An Examination of the Seventeenth-Century Eatonists and New England Controversies in Reformation Perspective" (Durham, NC: Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1991), vi, 154, 167, 182. See J. Wayne Baker, "Sola Fide, Sola Gratia: The Battle for Luther in Seventeenth-Century England," *SCJ* 16/1 (1985), 118, 120–21, 125. Eaton did not proceed as far as Johann Agricola and disparaged the place of the law in our conversion. Graebner, "Protestants and Dissenters," 4. 144. 184–87, 193.

[39] David Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: a documentary history, edited, with introduction and notes* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan Press, 1968), 146, 178–79, 182–83, 186, 232, 240–41; John Cotton, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London, 1671), 10, 14, 19–21, 28–29, 35–37, 66, 129–30, 213–14, 220; *The New Covenant* (London, 1654), 14–15, 52–57.

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the witness of the Spirit and producing despair among its people through the overemphasis upon self-examination.[40] The controversy only subsided when Cotton and other antinomians were accused of causing a schism and put under duress through the authority of Winthrop to reconcile their point of view with the rest of the community, meaning the emphasis upon covenant conditions was here to stay. The bilateral covenant continued to cause a tension with the Reformed doctrine of grace and unconditional election but provided a positive social force and strong incentive to work hard in building the community and secure one's place in the kingdom of God.

Whatever the reason, no one doubts the Puritans earned their reputation as an industrious and practical people. The focus of their sermons and writings centered upon the pursuit of a practical piety, rather than scholastic theological disputes or metaphysical speculations. Their education shunned literary flourishes and theoretical abstractions for more concrete subjects like science and history, more practical and utilitarian approaches like vocational training, especially in America.[41] The purpose of life was to make a concrete difference in building the community, not fritter away the time on philosophical musings or idle meditation in a cloistered cell. Idleness was considered the root of all evil; and diligence inculcated among the rich and poor alike.[42] Perkins chides the rich for spending "a greater part of their increase upon hawks, bulls, bears, dogs, or riotously misspend[ing] the same in sporting or gaming."[43] Steele chastens immoderate "Gaming," "Frequenting Taverns, Ale-houses, and Coffee-Houses," and "all bewitching Pleasures and Recreations" as wasting time and squandering sources on what should be spent on the productive affairs of business.[44] The purpose of life was found in building or investing one's time, energy, and resources in the community, not pursuing a life of luxury, pomp, and excess, not accumulating wealth to squander it on frivolous entertainment.[45] The Puritan form of capitalism hated the corpulent life-style of aristocrats and demanded the rich invest their capital in the community, rather than waste it on eating French pastries and going on fox hunts.

The Puritans proceeded to bolster the work ethic with a strong incentive that envisaged the community making real progress in creating a better world for their children and so energizing the people with an optimistic view of life. The Puritans started this vision within the church, working to reform the institution into a more faithful image of its divine calling but soon ended up expanding the program to include all of society.

> Reformation must be Universal, . . . reform all places, all persons and callings; reform the Benches of Judgment, the inferior Magistrates, ... Reform the Church, . . . , Reform the Universities, ... Reform the Cities, reform the Countries, reform inferiour Schools of Learning; reform the Sabbath, reform the Ordinances, the worship of God, &c.[46]

The "Reformed" wanted to ameliorate all social ills and dreamed of a "Great Instauration" or renewal that was destined to encircle and encompass the entire globe with the truth of the gospel in all areas of life. The Puritans who came to America thought of their community as the "New Israel" or epicenter of God's activity in the world, as a "City on a Hill," shining its light to the nations, leading the march of history toward a brighter tomorrow and the dawning of the kingdom of God.[47] Jonathan Edwards, the greatest of all American-born theologians, echoed the basic Puritan spirit of progress in his writings. He understood the gospel and all human endeavors in the arts and sciences as following the path of the sun and circumambulating the planet from east to west, starting in Jerusalem, proceeding to Asia Minor and then Europe, and finally coming to England and now America. He pointed to real concrete progress taking place in navigation, agriculture, astronomy, physics, and all the rest of human endeavors.[48] He saw the Puritans at the forefront

[40] Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 57–58, 119, 189; Cotton, *A Treatise*, 39, 43–44, 53, 84, 139, 149–50, 218–20; *New Covenant*, 130–31.

[41] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 1.52, 297, 315; 2.3; Richard Baxter, *A Christian Dictionary: Or, A Summ of Practical Theologie* (London: Robert White, 1673), 1.13; Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning and Novum Organum* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1900), 14–18; Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 17–19; Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1976), 189–90, 199–200; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, 270, 271, 299ff., 332–33, 327–28, 349.

[42] Martin Butzer, *De Regno Christi* [*Buceri Opera Latina* (Paris, 1955) vol. 15], 2.48–52; Steele, *The Trades-man's Calling*, 19, 22, 77–95; Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*: *A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 208–209. Butzer's work was written in England and addressed to Edward VI, his royal pupil. In the year 1551 (the year of Butzer's death), Edward enacted many of the measures Butzer proposed in his work, whether under his direct influence or not. *Melanchthon and Bucer*, Wilhelm Pauck (ed.), in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1969), 171; Christopher Hill, *Society & Puritanism in pre-Revolutionary England* (New York: Schocken Boos, 1964), 272; *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Penguin, 1975), 264.

[43] Perkins, *The Workes* (Cambridge, 1608), 1.754.

[44] Steele, *The Trades-man's Calling*, 70, 84–85.

[45] Butzer, *De Regno Christi*, 2.50; Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1993), 159–60; Perkins, *The Workes*, 2.128 (D).

[46] Thomas Case, *Two Sermons Lately Preached at Westminster* (London: I. Raworth, 1642), 2.13, 16.

[47] Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 2, 29–30; Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 129; Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 97–98.

[48] Jonathan Edwards, *Polypoikilos Sophia. A Compleat History Or Survey Of all the Dispensations and Methods of Religion* (London, 1699), 610–15, 621, 634, 637, 642, 689–91, 741. Christopher Hill finds this westward movement in Herbert, Sibbes, Ward, Vaughan, Trapp, Winstanley, and Twisse. According to Twisse, "many divines

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of society leading the advancement of humankind and creating the conditions for a future millennial kingdom, which no longer required a cataclysm from the heavens or a personal return of Christ to redeem all of humankind and transform this fallen world into a more Christ-like image.[49] This instauration was the present existential mission of the people of God.

The paradigm of progress was the undeniable advance that was taking place in science and technology. Puritans led the way toward the emergence of modern science according to the famous and well-received thesis of Robert Merton.[50] The Puritans certainly dominated the Royal Society of London in the seventeenth century and made sure its scientific agenda encouraged "useful arts" and worked for the "advancement of the human race."[51] They wanted a science that served the practical needs of the community in "devising inventions for the betterment of humankind," in turning stones into metal, idle lands into productive farming, and ameliorating the lot of the community in the here and now.[52] All of this worked in accordance with their favorite verse of Scripture that said "knowledge shall increase" in the latter days (Dan. 12:4—KJV).[53] All of this fulfilled the original commission of humankind to take dominion and rule over the "beasts of the field," the "fish of the sea," and the "birds of the air" (Gen. 1:28–30).[54] The people were inspired through these and other verses to build a better world but never really understood the downside of the commission to change the world into their image as a temptation toward arrogance or a license to run roughshod over nature and its inhabitants. The commission worked as long as the bounty was plentiful and resources endless, as long as capitalism and technology had no limits. The Puritans who came to the American wilderness followed the western march of the gospel and its manifest destiny to tame the savages, cultivate the land, and consume or exploit the resources but had little thought of preserving what existed before their arrival.[55] The new technological science demonstrated the superiority of their culture in the advancement of humankind and their ability to consume or re-create all things without recognizing serious limits to the paradigm.[56]

Among the names associated with the new paradigm are Francis Bacon, Richard Baxter, and Benjamin Franklin. Francis Bacon is celebrated as the great apostle of the new scientific method, although he was not a speculative pacemaker offering a different approach to the subject outside the typical adages of his day in the Puritan and scientific community. His writings came to the forefront during the times of Puritan Revolution and served as a guiding light of the new philosophical approach to nature in the Royal Society of London and the community at large.[57] Much like the Puritans, he cites the prophetic words of Daniel 12:4 in his writings several times believing that knowledge will

saw a westward movement, and he himself wondered whether New England might not become the New Jerusalem." *The English Bible*, 139–40. In *A History of the Work of Redemption*, Edwards divides world history into four great periods, which are marked by the work of Christ (and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70), the rise of the Holy Roman Empire with Constantine, the destruction of the Antichrist, and the second coming of Christ. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Perry Miller (ed.) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957—2008), 9.351; George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 196, 198. Apparently in his notebooks on the "History of Redemption" he planned on creating a seven-fold rhythm of history. *Works*, 9.61–72, 546–47; Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 483, 485. For progress in all areas of life, see also Robert Boyle, *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle* [London, 1772] (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 1999), 4.16–18; Wilhelm Whiston, *A New Theory of the Earth* [1696] (London, 1725), 62, 81.

[49] Ibid., 665–725, 731–35.

[50] For details, see Stephen Strehle, *The Egalitarian Spirit of Christianity: The Sacred Roots of American and British Government* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 223–28. Cf. Jacob Viner, *The Role of Providence in the Social Order: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1972), 26.

[51] *The Record of the Royal Society of London for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge* (London: Morrison & Gibb LTD., 1940), 237 (251). Cf. Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 54–56, 88.

[52] Baxter, *A Christian Dictionary*, 1.13; Francis Bacon, *Valerius Terminus*, in *Works*, 3.221–22; Joseph Glanvill, "The Usefulness of Real Philosophy to Religion," in *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* [London, 1676] (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 5–6, 20, 25; Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 50, 328; Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 133–34; Michael S. Burdett, "The Religion of Technology: Transhumanism and the Myth of Progress," in *Religion and Transhumanism*, Calvin Mercer and Tracy J. Trothen (eds.) (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2015), 135.

[53] Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 9ff.

[54] Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society of London* (London, 1722), 62; Joseph Glanvill, *Plus Ultra* [London, 1668] (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1958), 86-88; *Scepsis Scientifica* 1665[London] (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), "An Address to the Royal Society," b3ff.

[55] Thomas P. Hughes, *Human-Built World: How to Think about Technology and Culture* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 31. Cotton Mather speaks of whaling as a good gift of God, designed to "suck the abundance of the sea." He paints a dark picture of the natives as brutal "savages," who worship many gods or demons, practice black magic, and possibly descended from the wicked Canaanites. *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702), 1.62; 2.426, 440, 446.

[56] Andrea Finkelstein, "Nicholas Barbon and the Quality of Infinity," *History of Political Economy* 32/1 (2000): 83ff., 100; Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, 4.81–82 (lxxxiv); Gabriel Plattes, *The profitable Intelligencer: Communicating his Knowledge for the Generall good of the Common-wealth and all Posterity* (London, 1644); Frederick Albritton Jonsson and Carl Wennerlind, *Scarcity: A History from the Origins of Capitalism to the Climate Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard university Press, 2023), 8, 17, 49, 57, 63.

[57] Christopher Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution Revisited* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 85ff., 111, 115–18; T. K. Rabb, "Puritanism and the Rise of Experimental Science," in *Puritanism and the Rise of Modern Science: The Merton Thesis*, I. Bernard Cohen (ed.) (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 211; R. F. Jones, "The Advancement of Learning and Piety," in *Puritanism and the Rise of Modern Science*, 164ff.; Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 24, 514.

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increase in the future and make real progress toward building and shaping a better society.[58] Much like the Puritans, he rejects speculative flights of fancy and thinks "knowledge is to be valued according to its usefulness."[59] It is better to limit the study of nature to mundane questions of secondary causality or practical value than engage in too much metaphysical speculation about ultimate questions or divine mysteries like the Scholastics of old. Let Scripture address issues of ultimate concern and let science recognize the limits of human reason and address what it does best in studying matters of secondary concern through its experimental method.[60]

Richard Baxter provided the quintessential defense of Puritan ethics in his *Christian Directory* (1673)—a large tome with 1172 pages of very tiny print. The work contains all the basic themes and practical exhortations associated with the spirit of capitalism in its Puritan form. It speaks of life as short and exhorts the wayfarer to redeem the time and work hard to enter the kingdom of God.[61] There is no time to waste on frivolous entertainment, extravagant living, or unprofitable ventures.[62] The purpose of life consists of "service to God and public good"—the investment of one's time, talent, and capital in the community for the sake of future generations.[63] The goal remains rooted in the utilitarian, altruistic, and teleological values of the Puritan community that wanted to lead a useful life of service to others and help improve the lot of those who come afterwards. Baxter provides the most important and complete witness to the type of ethics and theology that provided the Puritan form of capitalism with its spiritual matrix.[64]

Benjamin Franklin embodied the Puritan spirit of capitalism and technological science, perhaps more than anyone else during the era. He did not share all the theological convictions of the community, but he represented much of the ethical and spiritual commitments of his Puritan upbringing. He provides testimony to these values in his autobiography, pointing to the example of his parents' "Labour and Industry," referring to his reading of Puritan classics like *Pilgram's Progress* and *Essays to Do Good*, which "gave me a Turn of Thinking that had an influence on the principal future Events of My Life," with its exhortations to avoid extravagant living and work hard in serving the community.[65] His *Poor Richard's Almanack* filled its pages with Puritan-like exhortations, "with Proverbial Sentences, chiefly such as inculcated Industry and Frugality, as the Means of procuring Wealth and thereby securing virtue"[66]: "Time is money," "Diligence is the mother of good luck," "Leisure is time for doing something useful," "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."[67] He speaks of following this advice for much of his life, refusing to waste his time in "Taverns, Games, or Frolicks," his

[58] Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning and Novum Organum* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1900), passim; Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 22–24.

[59] Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 1.13.

[60] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, 5, 97, 137; Jones, "The Advancement of Learning and Piety," 164–65; Joseph Glanvill, *Philosophia Pia (1671)*, in *Collected Works of Joseph Glanvill*, B. Fabian (ed.) (Hildesheim and New York: George Olms Verlag, 1970), 5.119. See Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society*, 353–59.

[61] Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 1.58, 128, 274–93, 448; *Dying-Thoughts*, in *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter* (London: James Duncan, 1830), 18. 408–409; *Poetical Fragments* (London: T. Snowden, 1681), 40

[62] Ibid., *A Christian Directory*, 1.65, 108ff., 134, 143, 147, 288, 451–65, 632; K. Fullerton, "Calvinism and Capitalism: An Explanation of the Weber Thesis," in *Protestantism and Capitalism*, 16–17.

[63] Ibid., 1.131–33, 447–50; 4.147; W. Hudson, "Puritanism and the Spirit of Capitalism," in *Protestantism and Capitalism*, 59–60.

[64] Weber points to Baxter as providing the "most complete compendium of Puritan ethics" but fails to note his rejection of the doctrine of predestination in the text, leaving only an implicit reference to his position in the footnotes. If anything, Baxter is an "Anti-Antinomian." He tries to destroy this "heresy" for encouraging spiritual laziness. He rejects its Christocentric point of view that depicts Christ as the "mirror of predestination" and wants assurance to reside in hard work, struggle, and self-examination. He emphasizes conditions of mutual responsibility in the New Covenant and even broaches the Catholic doctrine of justification by works at times, preferring the charge of synergism to destroying the human element of the covenant and the call to discipleship. Of course, Weber fails to underscore this synergism because it undermines his view of the relationship between predestination and the work ethic. See Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 156; Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, J. T. Wilkinson (ed.) (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), 2, 12, 30, 35, 37, 54, 86, 108, 113, 118; *Aphorismes of Justification* (Hague: Abraham Brown, 1655), 4, 8, 59–60, 70, 82–83, 208; *The Right Method for a Settled Peace of Conscience and Spiritual Comfort*, in *The Practical Worksof the Rev. Richard Baxter* (London: James Duncan, 1830), 9: 57–58, 151; *The Right Method for a Settled Conscience*, passim; *The Mischiefs of Self-Ignorance, and Benefits of Self-Acquaintance*, in *The Practical Work*, 16.124–125; *Universal Redemption of Mankind* (London, 1694), 31–32; Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in the Seventeenth-Century: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 2, 66–67, 71, 75–76, 115, 135, 154, 165, 195, 203; David Hall, The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-38: a documentary history (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 280ff.; N.H. Keeble, Richard Baxter, *Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982), 133, 139, 138–43; Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, 1993), 164, 196, 197. Baxter denies he's an Arminian. He never makes a definite leap or creates sufficiently explicit statements to warrant the label, but his sympathies appear to gravitate in that direction. *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Matthew Sylvester (ed.) (London, 1696), 1.107; *Confutation of a Disseration for the Justification of Infidels* (London: R. W., 1654), 201; *Penitent Confession and his Necessary Vindication* (London, 1691), 24; Margaret L. Wiley, *The Subtle Knot: Creative Scepticism in the Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 162–63.

[65] *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin with Related Documents*, Louis P. Masur (ed. and intro.) (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 29–32, 80–81, 120–21, 136–37, 140–41; Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge: University Press, 1984) 12.

[66] Ibid., 4, 106.

[67] *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, Jared Sparks (ed.) (Boston: Tappen and Dennet, 1844), 2.87, 95–97.

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money on "Superfluities" or "expensive follies" like Chinaware and Indian silks.[68] His life is devoted to improving the quality of life in his community through establishing schools, public libraries, fire departments, and postal services, refusing to take out patents on his many inventions, and finding more pleasure in serving the public good than acquiring excessive wealth and living a luxurious lifestyle.[69] His science finds its purpose in creating "little advantages" that might add up one day to eliminating disease and extending the span of human life "beyond the antediluvian standard."[70] His ethics and vision came right out of his background in Boston and came to fruition during his adult life in Philadelphia.[71] He represented the supreme example of early capitalism and technological science, the relationship between Weber's and Merton's theses, and the fundamental validity of their work that points to the significance of Puritanism in shaping the modern world.

Along with the religious elements, Weber saw capitalism as a "rational economic technique" and Puritanism as a part of this rationalism or demystification (*Entzauberung*) of the world.[72] He saw capitalism becoming a purely rational enterprise in the course of time as it sought to make a profit through its various utilitarian techniques like efficient production, technological innovation, division of labor, large turnover, consumer prices, balance sheets, double-entry accounting, bookkeeping, and so forth.[73] Many scholars disagreed with Weber's assessment at this point and found the techniques of capitalism and the process of secularization developing long before the Protestant Reformation. They particularly pointed to the Italian city-states during the times of the Renaissance as developing an incipient form of capitalism and its various utilitarian techniques.[74] Weber accepted the criticism to some degree but remained firm in finding a significant acceleration of the process or qualitative difference in the impact of Calvinism, paving the way to a more sinister outcome. He believed capitalism became an "iron cage" of rational mechanisms in the modern world that ended up reifying the original and creative impulse of Calvinism producing in its place a totalitarian regime of these steering mechanisms.[75] The present system lost its religious moorings, or all contact with the original *Geist* that provided it with so much meaning and purpose.

This part of his analysis discusses some interesting techniques of capitalism and is correct as far as it goes, but it fails to provide a sufficient account of the origin and place of interest in the rationalization of the monetary system—a most essential feature of modern capitalism. Credit money serves as the most dynamic force of stimulation or investment in the capitalist scheme of things. Deficit financing, cultivating debt, and increasing the money supply provide the necessary condition for future expectation and expansion.[76] This new vision developed for a multitude of reasons but received an important stimulus from the church and its change of heart about usury. The Church

[68] *The Autobiography*, 82, 92– 93; *The Works*, 2.90; *Benjamin Franklin Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1987), 1082; *Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue: His Formula for Successful Living*, George L Rogers (ed.) (Eden Prairie, Minn.: Acorn Publishing, 1986), 159. The austerity began to wane as he and his wife grew older.

[69] Karl J. Weintraub, "The Puritan Ethic and Benjamin Franklin," *The Journal of Religion* 56/3 (1976): 236; *The Autobiography*, 124.

[70] *The Autobiography*, 94–95, 101–103, 164; *Writings*, 1017, 1167.

[71] Quakers grow out of Puritanism and emphasize the work ethic as much, if not more than the Puritans.

[72] Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1922), 94–95; Richard Roberts, "Introduction: Religion and Capitalism— a new convergence?," in *Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism*, Richard Roberts (ed.) (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 1; Richard Lachmann, "Origins of Capitalism in Western Europe," *Annu. Rev. Sociol*. 15 (1989): 49; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Religion, Science, and Technology in the Post-Secular Age: The Case of Trans/Posthumanism," *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences* 4/1 (2017): 27.

[73] Max Weber, "The Author defines his purpose," in *Protestantism and Capitalism*, 2; *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 25, 64, 67; *General Economic History*, Frank H. Knight (trans.) (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), 275–78, 354; Milan Zafirovski, "Any Proof of the Calvinism-Capitalism Thesis? The Exemplars of the 'Rule' Reexamined," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 16/4 (2015): 339; Jefferey Y. F. Lau and John Smithin, "The Role of Money in Capitalism," *Int'l. Journal of Political Economy* 32/3 (Fall 2002): 12; Brocker, "Max Webers Erklärungsansatz," 495.

[74] Jere Cohen, "Rational Capitalism in Renaissance Italy," *American Journal of Sociology* 85/6 (May 1980): 1342, 1349–52; Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 194–96; Georg Simmel, *Conflict and The Web of Group-Affiliation*, Reinhard Bendix (trans.) (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955), 137; Lau and Smithin, "The Role of Money," 51; Zafirovski, "Any Proof of the Calvinism-Capitalism Thesis?," 346–47, 354–56, 363–64.

[75] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., Thomas McCarthy (tras.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984–87), 2.166–68, 183, 196, 254, 302, 312; Alan Milchman, "Weber on Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy," *Socialism and Democracy* 7 (1988): 99, 103–106, 110; Volker Heins, "Weber's Ethic and the Spirit of Anti-Capitalism," *Political Studies* 41 (1993): 273, 274; Brocker, "Max Webers Erklärungsansatz," 498. In his great work, *The Technological Society* (1954), Jacques Ellul affords the most excoriating analysis of *la technique* taking over our lives, replacing the religious foundation of society with material efficiency and dead scientific analysis.

[76] Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, Joshua David Jordan (trans.) (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2012), 77–81; Philip Goodchild, "Credit and Debt," in *Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*, 102; Viner, *The Role of Providence*, 9; Lau and Smithin, "The Role of Money in Capitalism," 11–15. The national debt is driven by this same spirit. Deficit spending is considered a way of growing the economy. Carlo Salzani, "False and True Politics: Countering Capitalism as Religion," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 19/3 (Fall 2020): 456–57. Nietzsche and many others find the origin of guilt *(Schuld)* in debt *(Schuld)* or money *(Geld)*. If a person fails to pay a debt, the creditor has a right to punish the debtor as guilty. The relationship between debt and guilt illustrates a link between religion and "profane" realms like money. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (Trans.) (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 62–65; Goeffrey Ingram, *The Nature of Money* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2004), 90; Camilla Sløk, "Guilt," in *Routledge Handbook*, 73–74; Goodchild, "Credit and Debt," 101.

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Fathers and Medieval Scholastics all considered the lending of money and the charging of interest an unseemly business, if not an outright form of exploitation.[77] The clergy were forbidden to engage in the practice at the Council of Nicea (325) and subsequent councils extended the prohibition to include the laity—most notably at Aix-la-Chappelle (789) during the reign of Charlemagne.[78] Of course, the policy did not prevent the nobility and merchant houses like the Medici from concealing the sources of their income and violating the spirit of canon law. In fact, some Italian clerics like Cardinal Hostiensis and Antonius of Florence began to question the strict prohibition of the practice later on. They recognized that lending money meant the forestalling of an expected profit for the lender (*lucrum cessans*) and deserved remuneration, and so advocated a more tolerant policy on the issue toward the end of the Middle Ages and beginning of the Renaissance in their region of influence.[79] Protestant countries soon followed and began to ease restrictions on the purse strings at the beginning of the Reformation.[80] Robert Filmer lists some of the leading theologians who favored the new policy: "Bishop Babington, Mr. Perkins, Dr. Willet, Dr. Mayer, Mr. Brinsley, and others here at home: and abroad, Calvin, Martyr, Bucer, Billinger, Danaeus, Hemingius, Zanchius, Ursinus, Bucanus, Junius, Polanus, Malineus, Scultetus, Alstedius, Amesius, Grotius, Salmasius."[81] Robert Fenton depicted the Swiss theologians as responsible for leading the church away from the restrictions and particularly blamed Calvin as the "chief patron" of the new heresy that was condemned "for the space of fifteen hundred yeeres after Christ."[82]

Calvin's analysis of usury illustrates Weber's thesis concerning rationalism and secularism to some degree. Calvin condemned the exploitation of the poor and remained uneasy about the overall practice from a religious viewpoint but refused to bind the conscience of those who had sufficient means to engage in what the Bible does not strictly condemn. He and the Reformed had a tendency to follow the admonitions of the OT and its law more strictly than other Christian groups, but he made an exception in this case and provided a dispensational analysis of the Mosaic economy and its admonitions against usury, recognizing the difference between the situation in ancient Israel and the demands of a modern economy to emancipate capital, finance trade and commerce, and fund its complex and wide-scale operations.[83] It is possible to see Calvin's exegesis at this point following his constituency or trying to accommodate them with some form of biblical justification for the practice, skewing his analysis accordingly. He certainly felt the onus of the business community in this regard. His blessing was necessary to end the restrictions and sanction a practice that was crucial to the new economic order. It seems probable his exegesis of Scripture was influenced by the needs of the community, but it is hard to say for sure what had priority in his mind in a complex world, where secularism gives rise to religion and religion to secularism. It is safer to say that religion was a part of the mix in promoting the good of the community and sanctioning the means of investment in its future growth. It certainly provided a similar impetus among his disciples to move toward capitalism with their emphasis upon the priesthood of the believers, their rejection of cheap grace, and their postmillennial eschatology—all promoting a mission to improve the community and make a better world for humankind.

IV. Jews

The Jews also appear to provide a significant impetus within their ideology and activity toward the development of capitalism. The evidence might proceed in opposing political and economic directions but equivocations in the Jewish position does not preclude the evidence of their participation in advancing one side of the equation. Many of their detractors proceeded to criticize the Jews in modern times for displaying a dual nature in these matters, but this display of "hypocrisy" does not negate the decisive impact of their overall concepts upon one side of the variables; it only shows that influence proceeds in many different directions and never follows one simple path.[84] No one doubts the influence of Georg Hegel upon Marx, Engels, and other "Young Hegelians" just because of the many right-wing

[77] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II/2, q.78, a.1, 2; T. P. McLaughlin, "The Teaching of the Canonists on Usury," *Medieval Studies I* (1939): 105ff.; Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society*, 89, 90, 96; Christian Deutschmann, "Profit and Interest," in *Routledge Handbook*, 85–86

[78] Sidney Homer and Richard Sylla, *A History of Interest Rates* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 70; Roman Ohrenstein and Barry Gordon, *Economic Analysis in Talmudic Literature: Rabbinic Thought in the Light of Modern Economics* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 204–205.

[79] Hostensius, *Commentaria super quinque libros decretalium* (Venice, 1581), 5.16 (*De usuries*); John T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 118; S. Antonio, *Summa Moralis* (Verona, 1740), 2.1.7, xviii (101); Bede Jarrett, *S. Antonio* and *Mediaeval Economics* (London: Manresa Press, 1914), 65; ; M. J. Kitch, *Capitalism and the Reformation* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1968), 118; Philipp Robinson Rössner, "Martin Luther as Economist," in *Routledge Handbook*, 299.

[80] Kitch, *Capitalism and the Reformation*, 123.

[81] Robert Filmer, *Quaestio Quodlibetica; or a Discourse, whether it may be lawfull to take Use for Money (1653)*, in *The Usury Debate in the Seventeenth Century: Three Arguments* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 111.

[82] Ibid., 10–11, 58–66.

[83] CO 10.245–49; 24.680–83; 31.147–48; 40.430–32 (CC 5.126–32; 8.121–14; 23.226–28). CC stands for Calvin's *Commentaries* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society). Kitch, *Capitalism and the Reformation*, 70; Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 106.

[84] Paul Morris, "Judaism and Capitalism," in *Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism*, Richard H. Roberts (ed.) (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 95–97, 110–11.

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moments in his work.[85] The Jews display the same sort of tensions as Hegel in their thinking and provide influence in competing directions through their complex way of approaching issues.

Many have suggested a decisive role of the Jews in the development of capitalism. Most (in)famously, Marx thought that the Jews leavened the entire Christian world with the *Geist* of capitalism, with their faith in "commercial and industrial practice," selling "usury" and "huckstering," turning citizens into "atomistic individuals who inimically oppose one another," venerating the "jealous god of Israel" who serves their "self-interest," corrupting society through their money system and "egoistic need and trading," and so forth. He decried the "materialistic egoism" of the Jews for overcoming the Christian world with this system of narcissism and greed. Capitalism is depicted as nothing more than the Jews and their religion writ large.[86]

There is a paucity of academic literature on the subject to dispute or defend the accusation of Marx one way or another. The most famous and thorough treatment of the subject is Werner Sombart's *The Jews and Capitalism* (1911). It represents the Jews as largely responsible for capitalism but has a more positive view of the system and the Jews than Marx's account. It particularly spends its time and focus on Weber's thesis, maintaining that the Jews played a much more essential role in the development of the economic system than the Protestants or the Puritans. The book proved to be more controversial than Weber's work and received mixed reviews. It was justly criticized for some defective research and historical inaccuracy in certain areas, but much of the disdain came from the specter of the Nazis and anti-Semites using the book for their nefarious purposes, not from its scholarship.[87] Weber responded to Sombart's work with some harsh criticism of his own and claimed the Jews only had a primitive or limited role in developing a "pariah" form of capitalism that is not so much an integral part of its modern expression in the industrial world. Weber was probably right to reject the idea that Puritans developed the sum and substance of their ideas from the Jews, but he went too far in rejecting some clear evidence in the work of Jewish influence and chose instead to deprecate and depreciate the Jewish contribution. If Sombart overstated his case, Weber "understated the role of Jews in the rise of the new economic order."[88]

In his book, Sombart provides statistics and first-hand testimony to demonstrate the presence and power of the Jewish community in financial brokering,

[85] Denis R. Janz, *World Christianity and Marxism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), 7–8; Richard P. Appelbaum, *Karl Marx* (Newbury Park, London, and New Dehli: Sage Publications, 1988), 21–22; Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, P. S. Falla (trans.) (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 80, 83; Julius I. Loewenstein, *Marx and Marxism* (London, Boston, and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 9. Hegel recognizes right-wing political concerns like the self-interest of capitalism, property rights, inequality, penal justice (*lex talionis*), et al. G. W. F. Hegel *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, A, V. Miller (trans.) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 229 (382), 233–34 (390); *The Philosophy of Right*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, 23–28 (44–46), 37–39 (99–101), 67 (200), 23–28, 37–38, 67. Jews have some left-wing tendencies. They are more into law than the NT concept of the freedom of the Spirit; they identify more with those who suffer due to their trials and tribulations of living in diaspora. Above all, they view themselves as a collective people who are not afraid to proclaim their piety or identity as Jews. They do not fear hypocrisy as much as Christians and do not go into the closet and shut the door while praying (Mt. 6:5–6). They wear a distinctive garb and pray together as a people.

[86] "On the Jewish Question," MECW 3.171–72 (1.174–75); *Holy Family*, MECW 4.109–110 (2.116); Delos B. McKown, *The Classical Marxist Critique of Religion: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky* (The Hague: Martinus Nijoff, 1975), 38; Morris, "Judaism and Capitalism," 88–95. The English translation of Marx and Engel's work is abbreviated MECW [*Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975)], and the German translation is given in parentheses [*Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1964)].

[87] Jack Barbalet, "Max Weber and Judaism: An Insight into the Methodology of the 'Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," *Max Weber Studies* 5.2/6.1 (July 2005): 52; Morris, "Judaism and Capitalism," 102, 106–107; Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, M. Epstein, Bert Hoselitz (intro.) (Glencoe, ILL: The Free Press, 1951), xix, xxviii, xxx, 191–92, 248–49. Some like Milton Friedman provide the book with favourable reviews. Even Hoselitz diatribe against the book admits there are some accurate chapters on the Jewish role in the trade of certain goods, markets, stock exchange, et al. Otherwise, Hoselitz finds the social theory "defective," the historical facts "faulty," the analysis "speculative," and the interpretation of the Jewish religion "biased and incomplete." Many associate the book with Nazi propaganda and find the image difficult to overcome and remain objective about it. Even Sombart recognizes the political danger of providing support to "coarser spirits" (252). He proceeds anyway and includes a discussion on "Jewish character" that might give fodder to the enemy. He thinks Jews possess a distinct anthropology or physiognomy, although he hesitates to call them a separate race (289–92). He thinks their religious system grew in concert with their "Intellectuality, Rationalism, Teleology," and other characteristics (300). He is less certain whether their intellectual ability is purely genetic (320–21), but he certainly admires the Jews and their "genius" for the development of capitalism, regardless of its precise origin in nurture or nature. He exalts the Jews for valuing education; using their intellect, not their brawn; their cleverness, resourcefulness, and thriftiness; their practicality, mobility, and adaptability; and their organizing skills—all of which equipped them to become good capitalists (258ff., 268, 274–75, 278, 320–21). He certainly takes notice of the many complaints about Jews monopolizing business and their dishonest practices to gain the upper hand and reap a profit, but he only cites the pejorative comments to prove his point about their relationship to capitalism and clearly does not share the animosity (116–19). Mostly, he expresses a deep admiration for the Jews. He might not appreciate the breadth of the Jewish experience, overemphasize their rationalism (much like Weber's treatment of Puritanism), and ignore other important aspects of the religion like the mysticism of the Kabbalah and Hassidism (xx–xxi); but the work is suggestive as far as it goes. Outside the work, his overall sentiment about capitalism as an economic system and the Jews as a people is a much more complicated story. Morris, "Judaism and Capitalism," 100–103.

[88] Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 211; Gerhard Lenski, *The Religious Factor: A Sociological Study of Religion's Impact on Politics, Economics, and Family Life* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 113–14; Morris, "Judaism and Capitalism," 105; Barbalet, "Max Weber and Judaism," 53.

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commercial branches of business, the banking industry, and the stock market that is difficult to deny.[89] He finds the Jews contributing to capitalism by inventing a "good many details" of "commercial machinery," providing a framework for international economic relations and the participation of the modern state in the process and supplying the new economic system with its fundamental spirit.[90] He notes an increase in capitalist enterprise and economic prosperity following the Jews wherever they happened to migrate in the diaspora.[91] One might question the exact numbers and speculative nature of his analysis in some of its parts, but the overall identification of the Jews with commercial and financial business is much more solid; it is based on the testimony of so many sources, making it difficult to deny the collective impression of the witnesses and discount a modicum of truth in the thesis.

A more controversial question is what role religion played in the formation of the Jewish economic activity and mentality. Some believe that capitalism made the Jews and not vice versa. Others point to their *Sitz im Leben*, living in diaspora, excluded from the land, the guilds, and industry, needing to find an alternative source of income, and so forth.[92] These "secular" points of view present a plausible part of the story but do not exclude the possibility of a religious element providing the Jews with a significant impetus to proceed forward in this direction. Sombart suggests some of the religious possibilities in his work: their aversion to mystical divine union or preference for a practical/rational faith; their emphasis upon covenant or contract with God and others; their keeping account of good and evil deeds; their austerities when it comes to the family and sexual promiscuity; and their general distaste for ascetic practices—some of which are more compelling than others.[93]

Certainly, the list must begin with the status of money and wealth in the Jewish community. In this regard, Judaism is much different than Christianity; it does not include the ascetic demands of Christianity when it comes to the accumulation of wealth. Christians often thought of Jewish wealth as unseemly and denounced their materialism and lust for gain, many times questioning their methods as dishonest and sometimes using the accusation as a pretext for anti-Semitism.[94] The earliest writings of the church present Jesus as choosing the poor and telling the rich young ruler to renounce his riches and give them to the poor as a precondition for entering the kingdom of God (Lk 6:20; 18:18–20).[95] The early church followed the teaching with literal obedience, renouncing all their possessions and sharing all things in common (Acts 4:32). This high call is simply unknown in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Wealth is viewed in the Jewish scripture more as a reward from God or a sign of divine blessing in this life than a stumbling block to true religious devotion. The book of Proverbs particularly resonates with this viewpoint:[96]

> The wealth of the rich is their fortified city,
> but poverty is the ruin of the poor (Prov. 10:15).
>
> The wealth of the wise is their crown,
> but the folly of fools yields folly (Prov. 14:24).
>
> Humility and the fear of the Lord
> bring wealth and honor and life (Prov. 22:4).

The matrix of this mentality comes from the bilateral nature of the Mosaic covenant, which pronounces material blessings and curses upon the chosen people in accordance with their faithfulness to the law (Dt. 28). Even a book like Job that questions a simple equation between the conduct of people and their material status ends up rewarding the hero of the story with "twice as much as he had before" his troubles (Job 42:10). Jews simply do not have the same ascetic qualms toward seeking material gain and profiting off their endeavors as Christians and often find their riches a sign of divine favor.

In addition, the Jewish interpretation of the Torah allowed for more flexibility than historic Christian

[89] Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, 21, 26–27, 41, 50ff., 84, 90–91, 98–99, 105; Albert Hyamson, *A History of the Jews in England* (London: Chatto & Wndus, 1908), 174–78; Richard Markgraf, *Zur Geschichte der Juden auf den Messen in Leipzig vom 1664–1839: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Leipzig* (Bischofswerda: Friedrich May, 1894), 93; Max Grunwald, *Hamburgs deutsche Juden bis zur Auflösung der Dreigemeinden, 1811* (Hamburg: Alfred Janssen, 1904), 21–22.

[90] Ibid., 21.

[91] For example, Sombart thinks Spain and Portugal prospered during the times of cultural exchange between Jews, Christians, and Muslims but declined after the expulsion of the Jews at the end of the fifteenth century. Antwerp, Holland, and other places of refuge greatly benefitted from their policies of toleration toward the Jews. *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, 13–17, 212–17; H. J. Koenen, *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland* (1843), passim; Johann Jacob Schudt, *Jüdische Merkwürdigkeiten* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1714), 4.271, 277; Émile Ouverleaux, "Notes et documents sur les juifs de Belgique l'ancien régime" (Paris: Libraire A. Durlacher, 1885), 72, 78–79. Sombart along with many others reject the popular notion that Jews only took up trade, finance, and banking because of their position in the Middle Ages. These scholars say that exclusion from land and local crafts was nothing new for the Jews; it was part and parcel of their life in the diaspora from the very beginning and led them to seek other sources of income associated with a form of capitalism. Ibid., 301, 306, 310–12; Christian Deutschmann, "Profit and Interest," in *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*, Stefan Schwarzkopf (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2020), 84.

[92] Barbalet, "Max Weber and Judaism," 65; Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, xxx.

[93] Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, 202–51.

[94] Ibid., 120–24, 131, 136–54, 183ff.; Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Tradesman* [1727] (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969), 2/1.128ff.; Morris, "Judaism and Capitalism," 91–93.

[95] The Gospel of Luke particularly emphasizes this message. See also Lk 12:13–21; 16:19–31.

[96] William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 466; Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 28–30; Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, 215–21.

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sensibilities when it came to questionable business practices like selling usury or interest on loans. The Torah might reject the exploitation of the poor or its own people, but it provided some latitude when dealing with foreigners in commercial matters (Ex. 22:25–26, Lev. 25:35–37, Dt. 23:20–21).[97] The Mosaic law made distinctions between the treatment of Hebrews and non-Hebrews in this and other regards that Jewish merchants might exploit and use to their purposes (e.g., Lev. 25:45–46). In fact, they might proceed even farther and entertain a more liberal interpretation to tear down the distinction between Jew and Gentile altogether, allowing for some commercial loans among fellow Israelis and limiting the prohibition to the exploitation of those living on the edges as the basic spirit of the law.[98] In fact, this type of rational interpretation became a part of the later Rabbinic community and justified the expanded practice.

Roman Ohrenstein has done a masterful job of expanding the discussion beyond the Hebrew Bible to include the discussions of the Rabbinic community in the Talmud and some later sources of Judaica. Ohrenstein finds central concepts of an incipient capitalism in certain passages of this literature, although the exact relationship between these Rabbinic discussions and the development of the modern economic system remains difficult to ascertain at this preliminary state of scholarship.[99] Of course, there are problems using the Talmud to prove much of anything: it contains two and a half million words on 5,894 folio pages, in which one might find some parallel or proof for almost any position; it contains the discussion of different and sometimes opposing points of view, rarely arriving at a concrete decision for the faithful to follow and often leaving the result up to the community to figure out on its own.[100] In the case of capitalism, there is no direct advocacy or systematic presentation of its various concepts, just parallels here and there that one might deduce from the discussions and compare with the later aspects of the economic system in a favorable way.

With all these limitations, Ohrenstein produces some interesting passages that show some analogy with the basic spirit of capitalism and are worth noting:

One, Ohrenstein sees the Talmud overturning the early Rabbinic position that usury "bites" the borrower and "enriches" the lender.[101] In the later period, beginning with R. Nahman (d. 320), the Talmud expresses more sympathy toward the lender than before as it begins to recognize that charging interest represents a just compensation for the person's "waiting" or foregoing the opportunity to use the money during a certain period of time.[102]

> Said R. Nahman: The general principle is: Any payment made for waiting is interest . . . .[103]

The Talmud finds it possible for the poor to benefit from a loan without the lender taking a loss, directly circumventing the strict biblical mandate against charging them interest.[104] This type of rationalization had a long history in Judaism, particularly when it came to monetary policies. Hillel the Elder once was willing to modify the law in Deuteronomy 15:2 that canceled all debts on loans every seventh year when he noticed people were "unwilling to lend money to one another" because of the policy, causing unnecessary downturns in the economy.[105]

Two, there is some recognition that entrepreneurs risk their capital with the prospect of receiving a reasonable profit. This risk-profit motif is found in the *Kethubah*, which deals with the specifics of the marriage contract. Here the husband is obligated to augment the sum of his wife's dowry that she receives in the case of divorce or death since he was able to invest the dowry during the marriage as a liquid asset and turn a profit.

> If a woman undertook to bring to her husband on thousand *denarii*, he must assign to her a corresponding sum of fifteen *Maneh* [fifteen hundred *denarii*].
>
> If a women undertook to bring to her husband ready money, every *Sela* [or four denarii] of hers counts as six *denarii*.[106]

Three, there is some recognition of market forces or the place of supply and demand in determining prices. Here Ohrenstein points to one episode involving R. Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel.

[97] Dt. appears to extend the prohibition to Israelis, while Ex. and Lev. just focus on the needy.

[98] Deutschmann, "Profit and Interest," 84; Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 37–39, 205–206; Sombart, *The Jews and Capitalism*, 242–43.

[99] Morris, "Judaism and Capitalism," 109; Roman Ohrenstein, "Economic Self-Interest and Social Progress in Talmudic Literature: A Further Study of Ancient Economic Thought and Its Modern Significance," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 29/1 (Jan. 1970): 69; *Economic Analysis*, ix, xiii.

[100] Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 3–4, 8.

[101] Mishnah, Baba Metzia, IV, 1; Baba Metzia, 60b; Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 87–90.

[102] Roman Ohrenstein, "Economic Thought in Talmudic Literature in the Light of Modern Economics," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 27/2 (April 1968): 189; *Economic Analysis*, 90–91. Along with this, there is some understanding of inflation and deflation, prosperity and depression. R. Johanan (middle of the third century) distinguishes between "a situation where money is cheap and commodities dear" and one where "money is dear and commodities cheap." The latter he considers a state of emergency. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Taanit, 19b; Ohrenstein, "Economic Thought," 194–95. References, citations, and translations in this section are taken from Ohrenstein.

[103] Baba Metzia, 63b.

[104] Babylonian Talmud Baba Kama, 20b; Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 92, 161–62.

[105] Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 11, 15–16.

[106] Babylonian Talmud, Kethuboth, chap. 6, 66a–b; Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 126–29.

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> It came to pass that the price of a couple of birds [for sacrifice] rose to one gold dinar [twenty-five silver dinarim]. As a result of this prohibitive price few people could afford such luxury. So R. Gamaliel vowed not to rest until the price of a pair will be reduced to one silver dinar, that is 1/25 of a gold dinar. In order that this come to pass he decided to reduce the *demand* for that product. This was facilitated by the Talmudic Academy which ruled that one sacrifice may take the place of the usually required five. The ratio was then 5:1. As a result of this ruling the *demand actually fell and was followed by a spectacular dip in the prices*. The very same evening "a pair" could be obtained for a quarter of a silver dinar, that is 1/100 of a gold dinar, by far exceeding R. Gamaliel's expectations.[107]

Ohrenstein says the majority of the Rabbis understood this principle, even if one might also glean anti-market comments from other passages in the Talmud.[108]

Four, there is recognition in Rabbinic literature that the evil impulse (*Yetzer-Ha-Rah*) in human beings might have a societal benefit.[109]

> "But can the evil passion be very good?" they wondered. Yes! Because, were it not for the evil passion, no one would marry, neither build nor engage in business, and the world could not exist.[110]

> For three days the "Evil Yetzer" was imprisoned;
> Temptation vanished, greed and pride ceased.
> Hurrah! The battle over the sex-impulse has won—
> Alas . . . a fresh egg is needed, there is none.
> What shall we do?—they now intensely thought,
> Shall we kill him? The world couldn't survive,
> No one would build, nothing be sold or bought
> Neither shall one marry, no children, no drive.
> At last it dawned—a truth profound
> In scheme divine—a principle sound:
> Vicious forces as passion, avarice and greed
> Are vehicles of progress the world doth need.[111]

These references provide a striking parallel to the later emphasis of Jansenists and capitalists on self-interest working for the benefit of society and driving the economy, but there is no systematic presentation of the idea that might insure its place in the Jewish community or the society at large. A more cautious conclusion might attribute to the Torah, the Talmud, and the rest of Jewish literature a general spiritual matrix for the Jewish businessman to justify his activity and leave it at that. Perhaps, the basic influence of the writings is found in shaping the Jewish businessman and granting him permission to proceed in his endeavors, providing the Gentiles with an indirect testimony to the values of the religion through his practices, more than a direct inspiration from the writings on analogous ideas in later capitalism.

V. Jansenists

The new economic order received a clearer impetus from the Jansenists and their recognition that self-interest had a social or economic benefit. This type of acquisitive capitalism found its earliest major expression within the works of Pierre Nicole, Jean Domat, Pierre de Boisguilbert, and other Jansenist scholars of northern France and southern Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They followed the Augustinian doctrine of total depravity in their works and thought that humans are motivated by desire (*cupidité*) or self-interest (*amour-propre*), more than the Christian virtue of love (*charité*).[112] Through this dark view of human nature, they came to recognize that society did not necessarily function on simple Christian principles, that inward motives made little practical difference in society, that charity and self-interest gave rise to the same type of acts and effects. It did not seem to matter whether the poor receive their sustenance from the merciful sacrifice of a devout Christian or the hypocritical desire for recognition among one's peers as a great philanthropist. In either case, the poor were fed.[113]

> If charity extends its benefits to those of whom it expects nothing, even to enemies alike, but it only regards their good, and not its own interest, self-interest does the same, because it knows that the more the benefits appear disinterested and exempt from all need for investigation, the more they attract a general affection, by the hope they give everyone in order to receive in like manner.[114]

The Jansenists will end up expanding the concept to explain the way society functions in general. They thought the principle of reciprocal recognition is what stimulates or circulates goods in society, allowing it to meet the needs of all people involved. Self-interest is able to serve as the basis of all human commerce, circulating and exchanging goods to all, without resorting to specific acts of charity.[115] The law of supply and demand is able to free society from moral considerations in determining a just price or wage. The government has no need to meddle into the economy

[107] Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Keritut, 1:7.
[108] Ohrenstein and Gordon, *Economic Analysis*, 101–107.
[109] Ohrenstein, "Economic Thought," 62–67; *Economic Analysis*, 49–50.
[110] Midrash Kohelet Rabba, 4:4.
[111] Rashi, Sanhedrin, 64a; *Midrash Rabba* (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1965), chap. 16; *Midrash Tehilim*, Salomon Buber (ed.) (Jerusalem: Brothers Rom, 1967), chap. 37, 272.
[112] Pierre Nicole, *Essais de Morale*, Laurent Thirouin (ed.) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Frances, 1999), 213; David W. Smith, *Helvétius: A Study of Persecution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 123.
[113] Ibid., 381, 395, 401–403; Jacob Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society*, Jacques Melitz and Donald Winch (eds.) (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978), 136.
[114] Ibid., 403–404.
[115] Ibid., 384; *Essai de Morale* (Geneve: Slatkine, 1971), 1.139–40; "Of Grandeur," in *Moral Essays* (London, 1696), 2.97–98; Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society*, 135–36; Gilbert Faccarello, *The Foundations of Laissez-faire: The Economics of Pierre de Boisguilbert* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 27–28.

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through heavy-handed regulations and excessive taxation to create a prosperous state of affairs for everyone; the economy has a "natural state" of equlibrium running like a perfect machine in giving to those who lack and taking from those who have a surplus of goods.[116] As long as nature is "left alone" to its own self-sustaining principles, divine providence will maintain the equilibrium and ensure that every one receives the necessities of life through a policy of free trade and competition.[117]

This revelation about self-interest and its social efficacy was greatly disturbing to the Jansenists' concept of Christian virtue. The Jansenists were known for their emphasis upon altruism. They were known for annihilating the ego or any reference to their own person, substituting instead the indefinite French pronoun *on* and preferring to make reference to the group as a whole.[118] Pasquier Quesnel said that love "labours to forget her-self," while "self-love, always intent on her own interests" forgets the things of God and her neighbor.[119] The decided emphasis upon altruism or self-sacrifice conflicted with the way the real world of economic and social relations seemed to work in their understanding of things and helped increase a fissure between faith and reason to explain the dichotomy that had already found some justification in their writings. In fact, Jansenists theology thought of the grace and revelation of God as living above and beyond human reason and its finite and fallible capacity to probe ultimate metaphysical truth.[120] Their theology so emphasized grace in the process of salvation that it undermined the medieval dictim of "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*) and allowed reason to have its own autonomous avenue of seeking truth wherever it might lead, no longer considering it a servant of the faith or threat to its existence—just the fallible and finite musings of humankind that can never penetrate divne mysteries. This concept of faith and reason proved consequential in the modern world, where humans began to live under two desks that were not so united in its study as before when life was a simple system. It was the Jansenists' strong emphasis upon divine grace that gave people permission to think on their own and not worry about the outcome. It allowed them to accept the verdict of reason regarding the economic benefits of self-interest as an honest result of their analysis, and yet remain secure in their faith, believing an ultimate reconciliation of all things existed only within the depths of God.

This same fissure of faith and reason finds its way into the writings of more famous exponents of early captitalism like Pierre Bayle and Bernard Mandeville. Bayle promoted the dichotomy in his *Dictionaire historique et critique* (1696), perhaps the most popular work of the eighteenth century. He agreed with the Jansenists that people are often motivated by the "love of praise" or "fear of disgrace," but these and other "glorious sins" accomplish great things in this world beyond their simple intendment. Self-interest and other devices of human depravity are sometimes more useful in promoting the welfare of society than strict fidelity to Christian virtue.[121] Bayle provides an infamous article on "David" in his dictionary to illustrate the point, showing how the king of Israel exhibited unscrupulous methods and "exceedingly wicked" deeds to establish his kingdom and thereby giving implicit permission to the monarchs of the present day to question the advice of "strict moralists" and follow a more realistic or Machiavellian path.[122] He also employs his critical acumen to question the rigor of standard philosophical proofs for the existence of God, but none of his skepticism or critical analysis ends up disturbng his

[116] "Factum de la France, contre les demandeurs en delay," in *Pierre de Boisguilbert ou La Naissance de L'Économie Politique* [NEP] (Paris: Institut National d'Études Démographiques, 1966), 2.748–49, 891, 919; "Dissertation: De la nature des richesses, …," in NEP, 2.991; Du Pont de Nemours, *Ephemerides du Citoyen* (Paris: LaCombe, 1769) 9.10–12; Faccarello, *Foundations of Laissez-Faire*, 17–20, 28, 58, 72, 96, 130, 146–47. The later physiocrats also wanted to let "nature rule" (*physiocratie*). They merged the laws of nature and society together, thinking the "regular course of every physical event of the natural order" was "most advantageous to mankind." François Quesnay, *A Treatise on Natural Right*, Francis Walker Gilmer (trans.) (Baltimore, MD : Fielding Lucas, Jun., 1828), 187, 197–201; Le Mercier de La Rivière, *L'ordre naturel et essential des sociétés politiques* (A Londres: Jean Nourse, Libraire, 1767), 1.120–21; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origin of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), 9, 12, 47, 91; Thomas P. Neill, "The Physiocrats' Concept of Economics," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 63/4 (Nov. 1949): 538–42, 546, 549–53; Guy Routh, *The Origin of Economics Ideas* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Sheridan House, 1989), 70.

[117] "Factum de la France," 2.891–92; Faccarello, *Foundations of Laissez-faire*, 41–42, 99–100, 108, 138. Of course, he recognizes the need for some government regulation to "provide protection and prevent violence," but this serves as an exception, not the rule.

[118] Nicole, *Essai de Morale*, 389; *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr Peter Bayle*, Reprinted from the second edition (London, 1734–38) (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1984), 4.491–92; *Pascal's Pensées*, T. S. Eliot (intro.) (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co, 1958), 131–36 (470–94).

[119] Pasquier Quesnay, *The New Testament with Moral Reflections, . . .* (London: R. Bonwicke et al., 1719), 4/2.559–64 (1 Cor 13:4, 5, 8). In other passages, he speaks of a "well-regulated love of ourselves" as a "Perfect Modal" for loving others "if not as much as ourselves, at least in the same rank, wherein we ought to love ourselves." Ibid., 1/1.254, 587 (Mt 19:19, Mk 12:31).

[120] For example, Pascal emphasizes grace in his work and thinks of faith as a gift of intuition that God gives to the heart above and beyond reason. Faith is not contrary to reason, but reason has its limits and is unable to prove the existence of God. *Pascal's Pensées*, 52, 66, 72–73, 78–81 (187, 233, 245–48, 277–87).

[121] Bayle, *Dictionary*, 4.441; 5.811–13; Thomas Horne, *The Social Thought of Bernard Mandeville* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 30.

[122] Pierre Bayle, *Political Writings*, Sally L. Jenkinson (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36, 39–40, 46. In the article, he condemns David's cruelty and marrying for power, much like William of Orange. He speaks of David deceiving the king of Gath, stealing Nabal's property, annihilating populations, et al.; yet he calls David a "good and great king." Ibid., 36, 39–43, 49–50.

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faith. Like the Jansenists, he resorts to his strong view of divine grace and the inability of human beings to traverse the heavens and unveil the secrets and mysteries of the divine plan. He refuses to take his philosophical musings too seriously and prefers the solace of a child-like faith that places an ultimate trust in the grace and revelation of God or the vidication of divine truth in the end.[123] As a member of the Reformed Church, he emphasizes the dependence of human beings upon God and confesses *sola fides*, *sola gratia*, and *sola scriptura*, above and beyond most Jansenists and Protestant fellowships.

Bernard Mandeville also helped bring these ideas to the forefront of England and other countries in Europe through his controversial work *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714). Mandeville was influenced by Bayle and other proto-capitalists to question the wisdom of imposing the ascetic or altruistic demands of strict Christian piety upon society when the vitality of the economy seemed to depend upon the private vices or self-interest of the citizens to make it grow and prosper.[124] He was a part of Reformed circles like Bayle and developed his teaching from the same dark Augustinian view of the human condition as other acquisitive capitalists believing that humans find "real Pleasure" within the "Mundane and Corruptible things" of this world, with the rare exception of a very "few Devout Christians."[125] In society, humans are driven by the pride of "self-liking" or the desire to obtain honor from their fellow citizens.[126] They are driven by many vices that withstand basic ideas of Chrisian virtue and vex the souls of true believers, but Mandeville finds it unwise to impose a strict moral code on society. He thinks that many of these vices seem to play a necessary role in the proper function of society—however disconcerting that might be for him and other members of the Christian community. He thinks it is wrong to try and cleanse the world of sin and establish an ideal Christian society. In fact, he finds the vices beneficial to society or "necessary" in the public arena to create a "wealthy and powerful Nation," "an opulent and flourishing people."[127] "No society can be rais'd into a rich and mighty kingdom, or so rais'd, subsist in their Wealth and Power for any considerable time, without the Vices of Man."[128] While this discovery bothered his sense of Christianity as an ascetic religion that demanded the denial of oneself and shunned the passions of this world, he was unable to deny the veracity of his conclusion. He finds refuge only by forging the same theological contrivance as Bayle that divides faith and reason into separate compartments. He relates the same dim view of human sagacity and its inability to obtain ultimate metaphysical knowledge and challenge the authority of Scripture. He denigrates human reason and refuses to let it judge the divine word.[129] Mandeville believes that divine providence works in mysterious ways, somehow able to use the vices of humankind to serve a greater purpose and finds no need for the government or human wisdom to intervene in the process and try to resolve what appears to be chaotic, nonsensical, and beyond its capacity.[130]

Some exponents of acquisitive capitalism tried to eliminate the paradox between divine providence and the questionable means of self-interest in reaching its goal. Claude Adrien Helvétius tried to liberate self-love from the disparaging analysis of Christian orthodoxy and make it the "only basis on which we can place the foundations of a useful morality."[131] As a radical *philosophe*, he spends much of his time attacking the church and its moral view of life and wishes to substitute self-interest (*amour-propre*) as the principal motive behind the formation of legal, civic, and social institutions.[132] He rejects the calls for self-sacrifice and

[123] Bayle, *Dictionary*, 4.363; 5.831; Elisabeth Labrousse, *Bayle*, Denys Potts (trans.) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 41, 43, 46, 55, 60.

[124] Bayle came to Rotterdam when Mandeville was eleven years of age and living there. Mandeville follows the same basic outline and understanding of the relation and separation of faith and reason. In his *Free Thoughts*, he draws on many of Bayle's "concrete illustrations and documentary evidence," without bothering to provide credit in the main text. *Free Thoughts on Religion, The Church, & National Happiness*, Irwin Primer (ed.) (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), ii–iii, xviii–xix; Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, 1.ciii–cv; Horne, *Social Thought of Bernard Mandeville*, 28.

[125] Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, 1.146, 166; 2.63, 91, 122.

[126] Mandeville, *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War*, M. M. Goldsmith (intro.) (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1971), xiii, 3, 6, 18, 29–30, 39, 42–43, 64, 79–80; *Fable of the Bees*, 1.42, 51, 68, 221–222, 245–47, 264–65; 2.133; Henry Monro, *The Ambivalence of Bernard Mandeville* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 7–8, 140; E. J. Hundert, "Bernard Mandeville and the Enlightenment's Maxims of Modernity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56/4 (Oct. 1995): 589–93.

[127] Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, 1.6–7, 24–26, 36, 48–49, 103–106, 250–51, 344.

[128] Ibid., 1.228–29.

[129] Ibid., 2.220–21, 310–11; *An Inquiry into the Origin of Honour*, l, 26–27, 30–31, 38; *Free Thoughts on Religion*, 23; Monroe, *Ambivalence of Bernard Mandeville*, 151, 166.

[130] Ibid., 1.xcviiiff., cxxxix–cxl, 109–16, 299–300; *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*, ix; *A Letter to Dion (1732)*, in *The Augustan Reprint Society* (vol. 41), Jacob Viner (intro.) (Los Angeles: University of California, 1953), 11–14 (intro.). He allows for some government interference in matters of trade and taxation through the "dexterous management of a skilful politician," but his overall direction proceeds toward laissez-faire government policy. Ibid., 1.115–16, 204, 249; *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*, xix; Nathan Rosenberg, "Mandeville and Laissez-Faire," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24/2 (Apr.–June 1963): 184–89.

[131] Helvétius, *De l'Esprit or Essays on the Mind and its Several Faculties* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 179. For the influence of Mandeville on Helvétius, see Kaye's discussion in the *Fable of the Bees*, cxliv–clv. Kaye and other scholars think of him as a religious subversive, but such an interpretation practices a hermeneutics of suspicion and contravenes his clear and continuous testimony in his works. For details, see Stephen Strehle's *Forces of Secularity in the Modern World* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), 59–60.

[132] Helvétius, *Mandement de Monseigneur l'archevêque de Paris, …* (Paris, 1758) 27; "Archiepiscopo Farsaliae, Generali in Hispaniarum Regnis Inquisitori gratulatur, …," in *Bullari Romani continuatio*

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believes society should be based on the "supreme law" of public utility.[133] His new "science of morals" eliminates all metaphysical speculation by finding an empirical basis within our corporeal sensibilities or desires and developing a calculating sum of mathematical certainty to meet those needs, rather than continuing in the same old religious mumbo jumbo about the will of God. In this way, he represents an early form of social utilitarianism that became so popular during the times of the French Enlightenment with its vitriol against the church and its attempt to anchor ideology in reason or science rather than religion. Helvétius and so many other *philosophes* thought it no longer necessary to seek a metaphysical, ontological, or platonic foundation for moral judgment in the heavens above and preferred to substitute a simple calculating sum centered around the greatest happiness principle or the wants and desires of the people and grounded in this material world.[134]

Adam Smith also tried to eliminate the paradox in the most celebrated treatment of acquisitive capitalism, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Smith follows the tradition's accent upon self-interest or self-love as a fundamental impetus of human activity, but he does not consider its passions particularly evil as Mandeville and so eliminates the tension between private vice and public virtue in this sense. He tries to explain how self-interest works for the benefit of all involved in purely secular terms, without making it an impenetrable mystery.[135]

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard for their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.[136]

This example seems to explain how life works on its own terms, yet he does not consider it totally satisfying and continues to see some mystery about its inner workings and life in general.[137] He never becomes a complete secularist or abandons the old religious categories that speak of God's providential care and adds a transcendent/metaphysical commentary when life does not live up to an ideal standard or what God expects to transpire. He still ascribes to the "Invisible Hand" or divine "wisdom and goodness" an ability to transform the "weakness and folly of men" into the greater good beyond human comprehension, following the traditional accent upon the providence of God among early acquisitive capitalists.[138] He also admits some problems with his basic laissez-faire economic policies that might require a sense of the old religious and moral principles to check the system. Here he finds some need for the government or some "impartial spectator" to intervene on occasion in society and the economy to correct the abuses of self-interest with a sense of "fair play" and "laws of justice."[139] He might

summorum pontificum Clementis XIII, … (Romae, 1835) 1.209–10; *De l'Esprit*, 42–43, 56–57; *A Treatise on Man: His Intellectual Faculties and His Education*, W. Hooper (trans.) (London: Albion Press, 1810), 1.279, 289; Smith, *Helvétius*, 39–40, 44; Jean Bloch, "Rousseau and Helvétius on Innate and Acquired Traits," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40/1 (Jan.–March 1979): 32–33.

[133] Helvétius, *A Treatise on Man*, 2.144–48, 428, 433, 446. He particularly hates the celibacy and the sexual taboos of the church that deny the supreme pleasure of sexual gratification. "Correspondence d'Helvetius avec sa femme" (Nov. 1900), in *Le Carnet historique et littéraire* (Paris, 1900), 437–38; Smith, *Helvétius*, 135.

[134] Ibid., 1.124, 133, 138; 2.5. 144–45, 148, 213, 308, 428, 432–33; *De l'Esprit*, 103, 108, 135, 179–81; Smith, *Helvétius*, 14, 116.

[135] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis, IND: Liberty Classics, 1976), 481–82, 493–95, 501–502; Boer and Petterson, *Idols of Nation*, 94; R. H. Coase, "Adam Smith's View of Man," *Journal of Law and Economics* 19/3 (Oct. 1976): 537, 541–42; Pierre Force, "Self-Love, Identification, and the Origin of Political Economy," *Yale French Studies* (1997): 54–55, 60–61; August Oncken, "The Consistency of Adam Smith," *The Economic Journal*, 7/27 (Sept. 1897): 447–48; A. L. Macfie, "Adam Smith's Moral Sentiments as Foundation for His Wealth of Nations," *Oxford Economic Papers* 11/3 (Oct. 1959): 227–28. Both the *Wealth of Nations* and *Theory of Moral Sentiments* stress the importance of self-interest, but the latter has a stronger emphasis upon the sympathetic side of humans that is not simply derived from self-interest; i.e, it involves your pain, not mine (altruism). The former is less optimistic about self-interest providing for the general happiness and welfare of society, even if it works in "most cases."

[136] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), 14.

[137] Ibid., 14, 249, 423; Samuel Hollander, "Adam Smith and the Self-Interest Axiom," *Journal of Law and Economics* 20/1 (Apr. 1977): 134; Harvey C. Mansfield, "Self-Interest Rightly Understood," *Political Theory* 23/1 (Feb. 1995): 53; Jacob Viner, "Adam Smith and Laissez Faire," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 35/2 (Apr. 1927): 209–13. Smith recognizes that self-interest does not always relate to the general welfare. For example, the institution of slavery promotes the indolence of aristocratic landowners who lead a frivolous lifestyle and slaves who have little incentive to work. Hollander, "Adam Smith and the Self-Interest Axiom," 147.

[138] Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 152, 168–69, 195; Coase, "Adam Smith's View of Man," 538; Viner, "Adam Smith and Laissez Faire," 202, 206; Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 2.361. Modern secular scholars who live under the binary of church/state separation often put on mental blinders at this point and discount the clear religious import of the phrase "Invisible Hand" to rescue Smith and capitalism from the taint of religion. The phrase came to the forefront as a reference to divine intervention and care in the seventeenth century, and Smith uses it three times in this sense. A belief in providential care or supervision was a typical aspect of the acquisitive capitalist tradition. Smith might be proceeding away from this perspective toward a more deist or secular framework, but he has not totally abandoned the old religious perspective of divine involvement in our lives. Viner, *The Role of Providence*, 81–82; Lisa Hill, "Invisible Hand," in *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theory* [RHET], Stefan Schwartzkopf (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2020), 314–16; Boer and Petterson, *Idols of Nations*, 97–99. It is clear the moral perspective of earlier times is giving way in Smith to the impersonal and secular forces like supply and demand. Raymond Benton, "The Economic Theology of the High Middle Ages," in RHET, 293; Peter Berger, "Capitalism and the Disorders of Modernity," *First Things* (Jan. 1991): 15; Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Touchstone Book, 1982), 65, 85, 351. Cf. Michael Novak, "The Future of Democratic Capitalism," *First Things* (June/July 2015): 34.

[139] Ibid., 227–28, 651; *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 263–64; Macfie, "Adam Smith's Moral Sentiments," 215; Patricia H. Werhane, "The Role of Self-Interest in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations," *The Journal*

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reduce the paradox by making self-interest less maniacal and explaining its relationship to the benefit of all in a more intelligible way than others before him, but he still is unable to abandon the need for God and the old religious categories that seem necessary to intervene and fix the problems with the new economic system.

Capitalism provided a greater challenge to traditional religious and moral beliefs as it gave way to Social Darwinism and its pitiless view of the real world and how it operated. This new deconstruction of capitalism received an early impetus from the work of Thomas Malthus, a disciple of Smith's economic theory. In his *Essay of the Principle of Population* (1798), he finds self-interest the fundamental motivating factor of human life and rejects the need for the government or rich people to interfere in the lives of the poor through acts of benevolence.[140] Suffering and struggle are necessary components of checking a population that has overgrown its own subsistence.[141] It is best for government to let nature take its course, practice a laissez-faire economic policy, and withstand any temptation to create poor-laws or hand out money, which only drives up prices, spreads the misery among the general population, and makes the situation worse for all others.[142] Malthus recognizes the disconcerting nature of his thesis, but he prefers to follow the traditional spirit of acquisitive capitalism and face the facts of life no matter how disturbing it might be to traditional moral sensibilities; he prefers to deal with the brute realities of everyday existence than live in an ideal world of illusory or optimistic expectations, like the writings of William Godwin, the Marquis de Condorcet, and his other delusional opponents.[143]

Charles Darwin developed an even darker view of life when he took the ideas of Malthus and the acquisitive capitalists a step farther and translated them into an explanation for the origin of life. His writings provide a clear testimony to this influence, particularly mentioning the work of Malthus several times as a major inspiration in arriving at his theory of evolution.[144]

> In October 1838, that is, fifteen months after I had begun my systematic inquiry, I happened to read for amusement Malthus on *Population*, and being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on from long-continued observation of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me under these circumstances favourable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavourable ones to be destroyed. The result of this would be the formation of a new species. Here, then, I had last got a theory by which to work; but I was so anxious to avoid prejudice, that I determined not for some time to write even the briefest sketch of it.[145]

Darwin displays in this and other testimonies a fundamental agreement with Malthus about the difficulty of supporting a large population and the need for a natural check upon geometric expansion, making starvation inevitable and the survival or selection of the strong over the weak the mechanism for evolving the species.[146] Darwin even talks in favor of Malthus' program that would reject poor-laws or any interference in life to prop up the weak as "highly injurious to the race of man" and impeding natural selection or the ultimate triumph of the strong.[147]

of Philosophy 86/11 (Nov. 1989): 677–78; Viner, "Adam Smith and Laissez Faire," 231. He supports improving the lot of the poor through public education, a "level playing field," and an equitable distribution of the "produce of labor," but he never proposes any specific system of insuring equitable distribution. Viner, "Adam Smith and Laissez Faire," 228; Werhane, "The Role of Self-Interest," 678; Donal Winch, "Adam Smith: Scottish Moral Philosopher," in *Adam Smith: International Perspectives*, Hiroshi Mizuta and Chuhei Sugiyama (eds.) (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 111.

[140] Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Philip Appleman (ed.) (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976), 44–47, 97–101. For his relation to Smith, see Strehle, *Forces of Secularity*, 67–68. He shares many of the basic themes of Smith and acquisitive capitalism, but he is not a simple disciple. For example, he thinks a nation might grow in prosperity without benefiting the poor or increasing their supply of food. Ibid., 102–11.

[141] Ibid., xiv–xv, 52–54, 118–22, 129; Barry Gale, "Darwin and the Concept of a Struggle for Existence," *ISIS* 63/3 (Sept. 1972): 338; James Allen Rogers, "Darwinism and Social Darwinism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33/2 (June 1972): 269–70. He has a dark view of human nature and particularly identifies it like Augustine with the lust to copulate. He thinks it is wise to educate people about nature and tell them to marry later in life, when they are able to support children. Poor-laws just make them more promiscuous and exacerbate the problem of overpopulation. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, xviii, 132, 136–39; Boer and Petterson, *Idols of Nations*, 138–39; Jonsson and Wennerlind, *Scarcity*, 133.

[142] Ibid., 20–23, 37–39, 54–55, 134–35. Distinguished politicians like Edmund Burke agreed with Malthus' point of view. In the nineteenth century, the British government denied countries like India and Ireland humanitarian aid to relieve the starving populace for these and other reasons. Jonsson and Wennerlind, *Scarcity*, 126–30.

[143] Ibid., 11–18, 92; Boer and Petterson, *Idols of Nations*, 140; Robert M. Young, "Malthus and the Evolutionists: The Common Context of Biological and Social Theory," *Past & Present* 43 (May 1969): 112–13; Rogers, "Darwinism and Social Darwinism," 269–70.

[144] Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (London: John Murray, 1885), 1.10; "To A. R. Wallace" (April 6, 1859), in *More Letters of Charles Darwin*, Francis Darwin (ed.) (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 1.118; *On the Origin of Species*, Ernst Mayr (ed.) (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), *Origin of Species*, 3.63; *The Foundation of the Origin of Species: Two Essays Written in 1842–44*, Francis Darwin (ed.) (Cambridge, 1909), 88. Alfred Russel Wallace provides a similar testimony to Malthus. *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905), 1.232.

[145] *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin and Selected Letters*, Francis Darwin (ed.) (New York: Dover Publication, 1958), 1.42–43.

[146] Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 3.62–79; *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Akron, OH: The Werner Co., ca. 1910), 145 (I, v), 621 (II, xxi); Peter J. Bowler, "Malthus, Darwin, and the Concept of Struggle," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37/4 (Oct.–Dec. 1976): 635, 647–48; Rogers, "Darwinism and Social Darwinism," 270–71.

[147] Darwin, T*he Descent of Man*, 136 (I, v); 139 (I, v); *The Life and Letters of Darwin*, Francis Darwin (ed.) (London: John Murray, 1887), 1.316.

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> We civilized men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilized societies propagate their own kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man.[148]

Darwin applies the principles of acquisitive capitalism in such a way that the very existence of God becomes threatened as an unnecessary postulate. Like Mandeville, he compares life to a ship that evolves in a piecemeal manner from numerous trials and errors of many civilizations, making small changes along the way over a long period of time to reach its present form. The process does not come from an antecedent mathematical design with a specific end in view.[149] Life is not so much like a watch that needs a watchmaker or an intelligent design.

> When we no longer look at organic being as a savage looks at a ship, as at something wholly beyond his comprehension; when we regard every production of nature as one which has had a history; when we contemplate every complex structure and instinct as the summing up of many contrivances, each useful to the processor, nearly in the same way as when we look at any great mechanical invention as the summing up of the labour, the experience, the reason, and even the blunders of numerous workmen; when we thus view each organic being, how far more interesting, I speak from experience, will the study of natural history become.[150]

Just like the economy, life evolves on its own terms without any need for a transcendent power to meddle into its affairs or correct the course. Mandeville and the acquisitive capitalists set the precedent for this dangerous idea through developing laissez-faire economic policies: considering it best not to meddle through the "short-sighted wisdom" of "well-meaning people" in what "flow[s] spontaneously" on its own "from the Nature of Society"; and finding the order of life evolving on its own in slow incremental changes through the "joynt Labour of Many Ages," making "morals, mores, reason and speech the product of an evolution that has taken" place over a long period of time.[151] Darwin simply takes this notion and applies it to life in general. He eliminates the need for God by explaining the origin of life without a prime mover, creating another dichotomy between faith and reason, and making it more difficult to ignore the verdict of reason and continue to believe in the Almighty than it was before his alternative explanation to what seemed like a mystery.

VI. Conclusion

This article shows a cross-pollination of religious and secular forces arising from each other and working together to form an economic system. The confluence of forces provides a reciprocal recognition that is difficult to separate into a temporal sequence and assign priority to one thing over another. Conditions on the ground provide a pretext for religious leaders to alter the interpretation of sacred texts and justify the ongoing practices of their community in the secular world but hardly eliminate the spiritual principles that helped create the situation to begin with and remain latent in its expression. Capitalism might appear as a nonreligious secular force to those who live in the binary world of church/state separation, but this modern attitude maintains its position of "secular" superiority through an *argumentum ex ignorantia* that is unwilling to grapple with the historical, philosophical, and theological matrix of its own ideas.[152]

[148] Ibid., 136 (I, v).

[149] Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, 2.141–44; Stephen G. Alter, "Mandeville's Ship: Theistic Design and Philosophical History in Charles Darwin's Vision of Natural Selection," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69/3 (July 2008): 457; Louis Schneider, *Paradox and Society: The Work of Bernard Mandeville*, Jay Weinstein (Forward) (New Brunswick, NJ and Oxford: Transaction Publishers, 1987), 176–77. Hume also uses the analogy of a ship. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, J. C. A. Gaskin (ed.) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 69 [Part V]. He read Hume's *Dialogue* in September of 1838 and Mandeville's *Fable* (vol. 2) in April of 1840. Here is Mandeville's account:

> *Cleomenes:* The Chevalier Reneau has wrote a Book, in which he shews the Mechanism of sailing, and accounts mathematically for every thing that belongs to the working and steering of a Ship. I am persuaded, that neither the first inventors of Ships and sailing, of those, who have Improvements since any Part of them, ever dream'd of those Reasons [or technological improvements], any more than now the rudest and most illiterate of the vulgar do when they are made Sailors, which Time and Practice will do in Spight of their Teeth. . . . I verily believe, not only that the raw beginners, who made the first Essays in either Art, good manners as well as Sailing, were ignorant of the true Cause, the real Foundation those Arts are built upon in Nature; but likewise that, even now both Arts are brought to great Perfection, the greatest Part of those that are most expert, and daily making Improvements in them, know as little of the Rationale of them, as their Predecessors did at first.
>
> *Horatio:* If, as you said, and which I now believe to be true, the people, who first invented, and afterwards improved upon ships and sailing, never dreamed of those reasons of Monsieur Reneau, it is impossible that they should have acted upon them, as motives that induced them a priori to put their inventions and improvements in practice, with knowledge and design; which, I suppose, is what you intended to prove. *Fable of the Bees*, 1.143–44.

[150] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 485–86.

[151] Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, 2.141–42, 353; M. M. Goldsmith, *Private Vices, Public Benefits: The Work of Bernard Mandeville's Social and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 64, 71–73.

[152] The US Supreme Court is notoriuos for declaring concepts like democracy, liberty, equality, or whatever is sacred to its political agenda as "secular" (or "nonreligious" in its sense of the word), without any serious discussion of these concepts. Stephen Strehle, "The Separation of Church and State: The Court's 'Secular Purpose' and the *Argumentum ex Ignorantia*," in *The Palgrave Handbook of*

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This article illustrated this point through displaying the influence of certain religious forces on the development of a few leading ideas in capitalism. The discussion started with property rights and showed how this concept came to play a leading role in modern society and its economic system. The story began with the religious mysticism of the Graeco-Roman world and showed Decretalists and medieval theologians deconstructing the ancient concept of a divine law in nature and developing the concept of property rights against the temporal powers of the pope. John Locke and other modern philosophers ended up following the tradition and thought the government found its basic role in protecting these inalienable rights that God has given to us in nature.

Next, the Puritans found a place in the study with their admonition to work hard and invest their time, talent, and money in the community. Their work ethic had religious roots in a concept of assurance that rejected any notion of "cheap grace" and found it necessary to display true fruits of election and secure one's place in the kingdom of God. The spirit of capitalism was exhibited in their utilitarian, altruistic, and teleological religious affections, as it exhorted the people to make a concrete difference in society and help create a better world for their children, following the progression of the gospel around the globe in all areas of life. This idealistic form of capitalism exhibited a "worldly asceticism" in its call for self-sacrifice in the service of others and provided at least one motive for proceeding toward the new economic order.

Then the study turned to the Jews, mainly because of the repeated testimony throughout history concerning their leading role in commerce and finance. Their religion probably contributed to the story and provided some justification for their business dealings, beyond whatever influence came from their position in life as a separate and oppressed people. In some ways, Judaism provided a better pretext for an economy like capitalism to germinate and prosper than Christianity and its rejection of materialistic concerns. Judaism never told the people to forsake this material world and its riches for a spiritual kingdom, and even considered wealth a sign of divine favor in some of its sacred texts. The Rabbis had few ascetic demands and sometimes expressed their own sympathy for the way the real world works in certain Talmudic discussions that recognize the need to rationalize the practices of the religion and loosen the strictures of the Torah in the world of business. These Rabbis exercised little influence outside their community, but they allowed the Jewish businessman to practice his craft and exert some indirect influence from his religious background upon the outside world.

Finally, the article concluded the discussion with the discovery of the Jansenists and early acquisitive capitalists that self-interest had a societal benefit. The revelation certainly brought some tension with the Puritan conception of capitalism and its appeal to altruistic motives in helping the community and serving future generations. It greatly disturbed those who conceived of society working this way, as it challenged the Christian conception of morality or how people should act in an ideal world. Its brutal honesty came from a spiritual matrix that emphasized the depravity of human motives, the grace of God as the basis of faith, and the limits of philosophical reasoning to probe the mysteries of divine providence. In time, this type of reasoning only deepened the fissure between faith and reason as atheists like Helvétius wanted to extend the analysis and replace the will of God altogether with a utilitarian calculus based on self-interest; as scientists like Darwin thought individual struggle was sufficient to explain the origin of the species all by itself, without any need to posit the existence of a Creator or appeal to the miracle of divine providence. Most people hesitated at this point and continued to find some room for the old theism and its categories to explain some problems with a consistent application of the theory. Adam Smith found it necessary to protect the moral order from the excesses of self-interest and explain how the chaos of individual struggle brought about such a sublime ending in society through invoking the Almighty. His equivocations represented the typical sort of inconsistencies that remained a part of most people's way of thinking, although the general trend was moving away from the need for theistic explanations toward a secular worldview. The process of secularization was growing and consigning religion more and more to the margins of society and its general way of thinking. Religion was fading or losing its place as Western civilization began to display little appreciation for the spiritual origin of its ideas and resigned the existence of God to the ever-closing gaps in its secular way of approaching and understanding the world. Religion was now kept underneath the surface as an inconsistent remnant of a former age, even if it was impossible to dispense with many of its ideas.

Religion and State: Theoretical Perspectives (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 492–94, 511–12.

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