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Pews, Proprietors, and Plutocracy: The Business Model of Unitarian and Congregational
Religious Societies in Northern New England, 1790-1850

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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There is no possible way to completely express my gratitude to my husband Tom, but this is my best attempt. I believe there is a moment in every person's life, which alters it forever. Meeting him was my moment. Quite simply, since the day I met him, he inspired me to be a better person. Had I not met him, my life would not be nearly as full as it is today. Much of this project belongs to him, for without him it never would have been completed. While I worked on this he served as a jack of all trades-driver to distant archives, master chef and dishwasher, unglorified editor of many, many, papers, carrier of books, and steadfast supporter. But he is at his best in his roles as husband and father. For all the people I have surrounded myself with, he is by far my best choice. I could not love him more.

To Tom, Brady, and Cole
My Very Own “Trident of Truth”

ABSTRACT

Pews, Proprietors, and Plutocracy: The Business Model of Unitarian and Congregational Religious Societies in Northern New England, 1790-1850

by

Amy Beth Smith

University of New Hampshire, May 2021

This dissertation examines Unitarian and Congregational religious societies in northern New England port cities from 1790-1850 and argues that pew proprietorship created a plutocracy, which resulted in the development of a corporate character for Protestant churches and a prioritization of secular over theological concerns. Scholarship on Protestant New England churches during the Early Republic is sorely lacking and historians need a greater understanding of the role proprietors played in church affairs. In the antebellum period, wealthy Protestant elites in Portland, Maine, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boston, Massachusetts consolidated their power through the purchase of pews, which provided them proportional control over religious societies. In some cases, proprietors used such influence to oust ministers with competing economic or political views. For African Americans, the inability to purchase pews and wield control led some to create their own churches where they could express their ambition and work toward economic betterment. Proprietors applied a corporate model to the pecuniary affairs of the society and this led to increased expenditures in the search for gentility and for competitive efforts. Such expenditures and concern over the debt pew owners were individually accumulating negatively affected a church's ability to respond to national economic crises.

Additionally, as pew ownership and the plutocratic nature of religious societies caused increasing conflict, religious societies increasingly employed legal and market mechanisms to regulate their financial affairs. However, the business model which proprietors applied was often inefficient due to variable costs and a revenue base, which could not be expanded or diversified. Ultimately, proprietors in the Early Republic tended to be champions of economic modernization, individualism, and ambition, which shaped the theological expression of Protestant churches and religious societies.

Introduction

In 1812, the death of beloved Joseph Buckminster, minister of North Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, sparked a surprising discussion of who exactly was qualified to vote on financial matters relating to the church. Buckminster, died at the age of sixty-one, while visiting Vermont in an attempt to relieve his “deep gloom of mind.” Reverend Nathan Parker, of neighboring South Church, delivered a memorial sermon to the congregation of North Church the following week. Parker described Buckminster as honest, generous, and intellectual, and noted that “were he content to be classed with any particular denomination of Christians, he would rank himself with the Calvinists of the old school.”¹ Buckminster was so revered by his congregation, that they considered paying to remove his remains from Vermont and transport them to Portsmouth. They decided however, to be content with erecting two monuments, one in Readsborough, Vermont and one in Portsmouth to honor his memory.²

North Church belonged to the Congregational denomination and Buckminster had eschewed the influence of Unitarianism recently sweeping the region following the appointment of Henry

¹ Nathan Parker, *A Discourse Occasioned By The Death Of The Rev. Joseph Buckminster, D.D. Pastor Of The North Church In Portsmouth, Who Died At Readsbourough, Ver. June 10, 1812, Delivered To His Bereaved People June 19, 1812*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: S. Whidden, 1812), Google Books, accessed January 21, 2020, https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_Discourse_Occasioned_by_the_Death_of_t/21oDAA_AAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=A+discourse+occasioned+by+the+death+of+the+Rev.+Joseph+Buckminster,+D.D.+pastor+of+the+North+Church+in+Portsmouth,+who+died+at+Readsborough,+Ver.+June+10,+1812,+delivered+to+his+bereaved+people+June+19,+1812+/&pg=PP7&printsec=frontcover, 10, 15-16; North Church Collection, Parish Meeting Book, 1744-1837, Box 1, Folder 1, June 10, 1812, Portsmouth Athenaeum, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 160.

² North Church Collection, Parish Meeting Book, 1744-1837, Box 12, Folder 1, November 25, 1812, 165-166.

Ware as Professor of Divinity at Harvard in 1805, an event, which became known as the “Hollis Chair Controversy.”³ It is likely that while some parishioners of North Church desired to remain solidly Congregational, others saw Buckminster’s passing as an opportunity for a theological shift.

The theological leanings of North Church’s congregation and their subsequent choice of a minister are less important for this study than the means with which they secured it. The church (consisting of members) and the society (consisting of pew owners) simply could not agree on the choice of a minister and on three separate occasions the society took pains to clarify exactly who was qualified to vote in the matter. In 1813, the church desired to settle Jacob Ides but the pew owners, also known as proprietors, voted against him. In February of 1814, the proprietors desired to settle Joseph Field as the new minister but the church declined. In 1814 the society created a list of pew owners and established a committee to investigate the qualifications to vote. Ultimately, male proprietors over the age of twenty-one who owned a pew or rented a pew for at least one year, were entitled to vote. If the religious society taxed polls and estates of parishioners in the future, those individuals would also be permitted to vote. Anyone who was not permitted to vote based upon the previous conditions were allowed to participate in decision making provided two-thirds of a group of thirty proprietors approved. Additionally, owners of pews were not allowed to vote if they were currently renting them out, that privilege remained with the renter. It mattered a great deal who voted and ultimately, societal affairs were to be determined by those who effectively contributed to the society’s revenue. It took over two years for the matter of a minister to finally be settled, but Reverend Israel Putnam, a Congregationalist

³ Conrad Wright, *The Unitarian Controversy: Essays on American Unitarian History*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Skinner House Books, 1994), 1-16.

minister, was ordained in 1815 and the issue of who could vote was laid at rest.⁴ It appears the source of the disagreement was likely theological concerns, a conflict ultimately determined by the wealthy pew proprietors who wielded voting power.

The story of North Church's battle over a minister and attempts to determine who was eligible to vote indicate how important a study of religious societies are to any analysis of Protestantism and market relations in the Early Republic. In general, scholarship on this topic is sorely lacking. In particular, research on northern New England has traditionally been underrepresented in the historiography, aside from research on the early Puritan era. Scholars that do analyze the impact market relations had on Protestantism in New England during the Early Republic tend to concentrate on how publishing organizations like the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society used market mechanisms to distribute religious materials.⁵

Additionally, religious scholarship on the Early Republic often investigates only one denomination. For example, scholars Richard Carwardine, David Hempton, and John Walsh, have focused much of their research on the impact of market relations on Methodism.⁶ Scholars

⁴ North Church Collection, Parish Meeting Book, 1744-1837, Box 12, Folder 1, October 12, 1812, April 14, 1813, February 9, 1814, March 1, 1814, July 14, 1814, August 15, 1814, December 19, 1814, 169, 171-172, 174-175, 179-180, 183-184, 186-187.

⁵ David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); David Paul Nord, "Benevolent Capital: Evangelical Book Publishing in Early Nineteenth-century America," in *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, Mark A. Noll ed., (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 147-170; Conrad Edick Wright, *The Transformation of Charity in Postrevolutionary New England*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Northeastern University Press, 1992) and R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12-39.

⁶ Richard Carwardine, "Charles Sellers's 'Antinomians' and 'Arminians': Methodists and the Market Revolution," in *God and Mammon*, Noll, ed., 75-98; David Hempton and John Walsh, "E.P. Thompson and Methodism," in *God and Mammon*, Noll, ed., 99-120; David Hempton, "A Tale of Preachers and Beggars: Methodism and Money in the Great Age of Transatlantic Expansion," in *God and Mammon*, Noll, ed., 123-146; Richard Carwardine, "Trauma in Methodism: Property, Church Schism, and Sectional Polarization in Antebellum America," in

including Nathan O. Hatch who offer comparative studies of Protestant denominations tend to focus on evangelical dissenting sects, which saw tremendous growth during the Early Republic.⁷

Other scholars are inclined to focus on one particular city or limited area. Historian Paul Johnson analyzed how eroding traditional forms of work led to class tensions and evangelical revivals in Rochester, New York while Kyle B. Roberts and Kyle T. Bulthuis analyzed the role of Protestant churches on the lives of individuals in New York City.⁸ Similarly, Mary Babson Fuhrer analyzed the impact of competing Protestant churches on the community of Bolyston, Massachusetts.⁹ Sara Georgini, in her book, *Household Gods: The Religious Lives Of The Adams Family*, focuses largely on religion in Quincy, Massachusetts.¹⁰ Comparative

God and Mammon, Noll, ed., 195-216 For more scholarship on Methodists see Russell E. Richey, *Early American Methodism* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991); George Claude Baker, Jr., *An Introduction to the History of Early New England Methodism, 1789-1839*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1941), and Emory S. Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, 3 vols., (New York, New York: Abingdon, 1964).

⁷ For a particularly engaging comparative study of evangelical denominations including Baptists, Methodists, Black churches, Mormons, and the Christian movement see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁸ Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revival in Rochester, New York, 1790-1865*, (New York, New York: Hill & Wang, 1978); Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2016); Kyle T. Bulthuis, *Four Steeples over the City Streets: Religion and Society in New York's Early Republic Congregations*, (New York, New York: New York University Press, 2014). For more local case studies see Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950); Terry D. Bilhartz, *Urban Religion and the Second Great Awakening: Church and Society in Early National Baltimore*, (Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986) and David G. Hackett, *The Rude Hand of Innovation: Religion and Social Order in Albany, New York, 1652-1836*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁹ Mary Babson Fuhrer, *A Crisis of Community: The Trials and Transformation of a New England Town, 1815-1848*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

¹⁰ Sara Georgini, *Household Gods: The Religious Lives Of The Adams Family*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

denominational studies or regional analyses are rare. Even less frequent are studies, which offer both a denominational *and* regional analysis, for New England especially.

However, in 2008, Stewart Davenport published a book titled *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon: Northern Christians and Market Capitalism*, bringing welcome focus to the New England region in the Early Republic. Davenport's book is largely an intellectual history, which focuses on prominent individuals who theorized about Christianity and economics such as Orestes Brownson and Francis Wayland. Davenport separates these individuals into three distinct groups that he refers to as "the clerical economists, the contrarians, and the pastoral moralists." Essentially, Davenport argues that Christian thinkers championed, opposed, or adapted to capitalism. Davenport claims that Christian thinkers in all three categories were highly influenced by various approaches to normative ethics, and placed themselves in their inherited ethical tradition: utilitarianism, deontology or virtue ethics. Yet Davenport divorces the writing of these thinkers from their economic and political context, a fact that he explicitly recognizes. To assume that Christians either "enthusiastically welcomed economic modernization," feared capitalism and its ability to generate inequality, or "approved of the development of market capitalism but wanted to live as Christians within its confines" may perhaps in some cases, be a gross mischaracterization.¹¹ Davenport argues that Christian thinkers were motivated by theological and ethical concerns yet this study, which contextualizes theological writings and actions by considering time, place, and circumstance indicates otherwise.¹²

¹¹ Stewart Davenport, *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon: Northern Christians and Market Capitalism, 1815-1860*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2008), xviii-xix.

¹² Davenport, *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon*, 318.

Religious scholar Mark A. Noll argues that “fresh study of different local circumstances or of different individuals in the same place might point to a variable landscape (sometimes economic motivation trumping religious conviction, sometimes moral aspiration trumping material interest)” and “might call into question whether any interpretation that assumes simple motivation for religious or economic behaviors can be adequate.”¹³ My research insists on the importance of socio-economic context. Scholarship that blends social, economic, and intellectual history provides new insights into the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism in the antebellum period.

Although the sermons produced by ministers in Portland, Portsmouth, and Boston were originally local in nature, I contend that they gained extralocal significance due to the fact that such sermons were often reprinted and disseminated elsewhere. This argument is very similar in nature to that proposed by David Waldstreicher in regard to the printed record of early political celebrations.¹⁴ The extralocal significance of sermons expands the importance of my case studies and suggests the broader significance of seemingly local histories. Temporal boundaries for this research are 1790-1850 although these are certainly not fixed. Many scholars, including John Lauritz Larson, Christopher Clark, Charles Sellers, and Daniel Walker Howe argue that market relations, as characterized by impersonal economic exchanges, wage labor, competitive markets, and corporations, significantly expanded in the early 1800s and that capitalism was deeply entrenched in American society in the northeast by the 1840s.¹⁵ Extending the

¹³ Mark A. Noll ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.

¹⁴ David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 11.

¹⁵ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007); John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise Of Popular Government In The Early United States*,

boundaries to 1790 and 1850 allows the opportunity to tell some of the important “before” and “after” story to further illustrate the impact of expanding market relations and capitalism on Protestant religion.

Charles Sellers argues that a “market revolution” occurred in the United States after 1815, while Daniel Walker Howe argues that capitalist forms existed prior to 1815 and changing market relationships afterwards therefore constituted more of an “evolution.”¹⁶ While this study will contribute to the literature on capitalism, it does not seek to enter into the debate over the origins of capitalism, which has already been amply covered.¹⁷ Rather, the study is based on the

(Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Christopher Clark, *The Roots Of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 5, 59; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 5.

¹⁷ For more information over the origins of capitalism and the spread of market relations in the Early Republic see: Edward J. Balleisen, *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Larson, *Internal Improvement*; Alfred D. Chandler Jr. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1977); Joshua D. Rothman, *Flush Times & Fever Dreams: A Story Of Capitalism And Slavery In The Age Of Jackson* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Alan Taylor, *William Cooper’s Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*, (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America*, (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); Clark, *The Roots Of Rural Capitalism*; Mary Babson Fuhrer, *A Crisis of Community: The Trials and Transformation of a New England Town, 1815-1848*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, (New York, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955); Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, And The Creation Of A Transatlantic Financial Crisis*, (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Andrew H. Browning, *The Panic of 1819: The First Great Depression*, (Columbia, Missouri: The University of Missouri Press, 2019), Jane Kamensky, *The Exchange Artist: A Tale of High-Flying Speculation and America’s First Banking Collapse*, (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2008); Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), Walter Licht, *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995); Douglass C. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860*, (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966); Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005);

assumption that market relations vastly expanded during the Early Republic and that religious matters were significantly impacted by this change. Noll, in his book, *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* posits that while significant scholarship is lacking on religion and money in the early republic, it is clear that “money in the first decades of the new American nation was everywhere on the minds of church leaders and many of their followers” and that “there was no one Protestant approach to money.”¹⁸ My findings indicate strong agreement with Noll’s thesis on the ubiquity of money in the church and aims to specify how various Protestant denominations and individual churches reacted to changing market cultures and why.

However, Noll argues that, “the effect of commerce on religious thinking seems slight.”¹⁹ This is likely more true of the thinking of Protestant ministers rather than Protestant proprietors. After examining the actions of religious societies, as will be proved in this study, it is easy to see how market relations and commerce influenced pew owners who subsequently wielded authority over their respective churches.

Historical models such as those by Christine Heyrman and Shelby M. Balik point to the benefits of a regional model for analyzing religious adaptation, accommodation, and resistance. Heyrman, in her book, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, demonstrates how evangelical churches in the South, when faced with resistance, were forced to adapt religious practices and beliefs related to class, race, and family in order to be successful. In other words,

Scott Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History Of American Financial Disasters*, (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 2012); Sven Beckert, “History of American Capitalism,” in *American History Now*, Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr eds., (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2011), 314-335; Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America, Social, Political, and Religious Expression*, (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 3, 7-8.

¹⁹ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 277.

Heyrman argues that, “there was, then, nothing inevitable about the triumph of evangelicalism in the South.”²⁰ I believe that the same is true for the triumph of capitalism in northern New England. The key features of capitalism as defined by Jürgen Kocka are “decentralization, commodification, and accumulation.” In other words, individuals have property rights and make autonomous economic decisions. Moreover, commodification results in wage labor, and profit or accumulation becomes a goal rather than a means to an end.²¹ Like evangelicalism in the South, Protestants did not immediately embrace capitalism in the North wholeheartedly. Rather, it emerged in fits and starts, in an uneven, non-linear fashion, and only after significant contestation and accommodation. Although capitalism certainly did not originate during the Early Republic, it certainly expanded and became a dominant force. As Kocka explains, a “capitalist economy” is marked by “the tendency of capitalist principles to extend beyond the economy into other spheres of society and influence them to a greater or lesser extent.”²² Different regions, cities, denominations, and individual churches reacted to expanding market relations in different ways. Local events and personalities mattered a great deal as to whether religious societies accommodated capitalism, resisted it, or reacted with a mixture of both which makes contextualization of Protestant action and doctrine a necessity in understanding the complex relationship between religion and capitalism in the Early Republic.

²⁰ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 26-27. Two of Heyrman’s other books focus on foreign religious missions. See Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Doomed Romance: Broken Hearts, Lost Souls, and Sexual Tumult In Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021), and Christine Leigh Heyrman, *American Apostles: When Evangelicals Entered The World of Islam*, (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 2015).

²¹ Jürgen Kocka, *Capitalism: A Short History*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 21.

²² Kocka, *Capitalism*, 22.

This research emphasizes the importance of including the discussions and actions of religious societies to fully understand how capitalism was influencing Protestant theological expression. Churches and religious societies were separate, yet associated organizations. Noll states that churches in New England “operated under a system of dual control, where “congregations” of members who met spiritual criteria existed alongside “societies” of those (members and nonmembers) who supported the church financially.”²³ After disestablishment, association with both churches and religious societies was completely voluntary.

To be a member of a church one needed to meet religious requirements. In 1821, the Second Church of Boston restored the covenant used during the ministry of Increase Mather from 1664-1723. Those wishing to become members had to publicly promise in part, “to walk with God & with this church of his, in all his holy ordinances, & to yield obedience to every truth of his.”²⁴ Members were expected to exhibit Christian virtues and were allowed to partake of communion.²⁵

In contrast, to be a member of the religious society, known as a proprietor, one needed to make a financial contribution by purchasing a pew and subsequently paying annual taxes on that pew. Male pew owners, also referred to as proprietors, were essentially shareholders in the corporation and thus entitled to a voice in decision-making.²⁶ Proprietors who were not church

²³ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 8.

²⁴ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, September 16, 1821, 12, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

²⁵ For more information on the evolution of church membership through the Colonial Era and on covenanted churches see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Michael P. Winship, *Godly Republicanism: Puritans, Pilgrims, and A City On A Hill*, (New York, New York: Harvard University Press, 2012).

²⁶ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 3, 1816, 1.

members likely purchased pews primarily for the power ascribed to ownership. Most importantly, pew owners voted on the settlement of ministers and thus could ordain an individual whose theological and, just as important, political leanings aligned with their own. Additionally, proprietors frequently obtained employment from the society, solidified their status through a visible symbol of hierarchical seating, and profited by functioning as creditors to the society. In fact, individuals frequently owned pews in churches they did not even worship in.²⁷ Church members who did not own a pew were restricted to sitting in the allotment of free pews designated by the society. Of course such pews were few in number and not particularly well situated in terms of visibility or acoustics.²⁸

In his opinion in a court case involving the proprietors, deacons, and former ministers of the Hollis Street Church in Boston, Judge Lemuel Shaw noted the legal difference between religious societies and churches. Shaw declared that:

the religious society is a corporation known in law, capable of taking and holding real and personal property, and charged with the duty of maintaining public worship and religious instruction. The church is a voluntary association, consisting of the whole or some part of the members of the society...for the purpose mainly of celebrating the christian ordinance of the lord's supper, and for mutual discipline, in regular church order.

According to Shaw, societies and churches acted, “respectively under certain laws and usages; each of them exercising certain powers and privileges; and distinct from each other but necessarily united.”²⁹

²⁷ *Argument of Hon. Emory Washburn*, 75; Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont, Andover Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

²⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31; Pew Accts 1820-1821 Box 8, Folder 3.

²⁹ *Parker v. May*, 59 Mass. 336, 1850 Mass. LEXIS 10, 5 Cush. 336 (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Suffolk and Nantucket March, 1850, Decided).

This research in this dissertation seeks to examine and evaluate responses of both churches *and* their respective religious societies (comprised of proprietors) to the changing values required to operate within the Early Republic marketplace. Historian Daniel Walker Howe acknowledged the significant lack of scholarship on Protestant proprietors writing, “church historians sorely need a history of the pew proprietor and pew rental system that formed the basis for congregational financing in most American denominations before the present system of annual pledges.”³⁰ The pew rental system and correlating voting system in the Early Republic essentially created a gendered and white supremacist plutocracy, which stripped church members of the influence afforded to them during the colonial period. Women made up the majority of church members, and while they could purchase pews, they could not vote.³¹ Pew proprietors were often wealthy businessmen, who brought their economic practices with them and turned religious societies into corporations, which altered theological expression.

This research attempts to answer questions about how religious societies operated and how issues of finances affected church action and doctrine. How did proprietors, who oversaw building maintenance and the supply of the pulpit “hear” the sermons of their minister? Were they influenced more by temporal or spiritual concerns? What motivated them: theological dogma or self-interest and survival? How were the theological expressions of ministers affected by the finances of the religious societies and by the economic affairs of their parishioners? This

³⁰ Daniel Walker Howe, “Afterword,” in *God and Mammon*, Noll, ed., 300.

³¹ For female membership in churches during the Colonial Era see Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 14, 241 and Jon Butler, *Awash In A Sea Of Faith*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 170. Females continued to comprise the majority of church members throughout the Early Republic. See for example membership lists in Second Congregational Church Records, Portland, Maine, 1788-1888, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine and Second Church Collection, Record Book 1650-1808 Vol. 8, Church Book 1794-1815, Box 1, Folder 5, Membership List 1833, Box 1, Folder 6, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

work contextualizes Protestant theological expression and action by considering the composition of congregations, the financial status of individual churches and the effects of historical events including but not limited to, Jefferson's Embargo and the War of 1812, disestablishment, competition by dissenting sects, and the Panics of 1819 and 1837.

This study employs a comparative analysis and focuses specifically on Unitarian and Congregational denominations, as they were the most well established in northern New England port cities and also the most doctrinally similar. Additionally, a regional model is utilized by concentrating on northern New England, primarily the cities of Portland, Maine; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and Boston, Massachusetts. These cities were all port cities whose economy relied heavily on shipbuilding and trade, particularly with the West Indies and the South. All three cities thus contained a large merchant population. Additionally, the religious composition of these three cities was remarkably similar, as Congregationalists and Unitarians dominated most churches.³²

A regional analysis is a helpful framework as church leaders formed a particular "religious network" in this region. Ministers were often trained together, at Harvard or Yale, attended each other's ordinations, exchanged letters, owned each other's publications, mentored each other, and preached at multiple churches in the region. For example, Andrew Preston Peabody, a prominent preacher at South Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire was mentored by Bernard Whitman, brother of Jason Whitman, who served as a minister in the Second Unitarian Church in

³² William David Barry, *Maine: The Wilder Half of New England*, (Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House Publishers, 2012), 58, 66; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 20-23; Nancy Coffey Heffernan and Ann Page Stecker, *New Hampshire: Crosscurrents in Its Development*, (Lebanon, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2004), 31, 109; William Willis, *The History of Portland, From 1632 To 1864: With a Notice of Previous Settlements, Colonial Grants, And Changes Of Government In Maine*, (Portland, Maine: Bailey & Noyes, 1865), 556-557, 560639-701; Brett Howard, *Boston: A Social History*, (New York, New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc. 1976), 179-202.

Portland, Maine.³³ Peabody also helped to supply the pulpit for the Second Church in Boston in 1833 during the absence of Reverend Chandler Robbins.³⁴ Additionally, Peabody attended Harvard with Ichabod Nichols, who was born in Portsmouth and later ministered at the First Church in Portland, Maine. Peabody remarked that his evenings spent with Nichols were “epochs in my intellectual life.”³⁵ These are but a few examples which demonstrate the intimate and multiple connections between ministers of northern New England, a fact that must be accounted for in any analysis of Protestant expression in the Early Republic. Such a network of connections between similar cities enables the identification of similar trends.

Sources analyzed include minister’s correspondence, sermons, and diaries. The records of religious societies, both financial and meeting minutes as well as church meeting minutes proved invaluable. Correspondence between prominent proprietors often illuminated internal dissension, and local newspapers were helpful in contextualizing church action and doctrine. Tax records, land deeds, and city directories proved important for analyzing the economic composition of congregations.

The bulk of primary sources undoubtedly consists of records for churches and their religious societies. Major collections utilized in this research for Portsmouth include those of South and North Churches. The Second Church Collection and the Hollis Street Collection provided insight into Boston’s churches. For Portland, the Abyssinian, Second Unitarian, and Second Congregational Collections were analyzed.

³³ Edward Young, *Andrew P. Peabody, D.D., LL. D., A Memoir*, (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1896), <https://books.google.com/books?id=OQcVAAAAYAAJ>, 6.

³⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, Box 4, Folder 12, 1833.

³⁵ *Harvard Graduates Whom I Have Known*, by Andrew Preston Peabody, D.D., LL.D., (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1890), <https://books.google.com/books?id=JIQ4AAAAMAAJ>, 112, 117.

Chapters are organized thematically in order to highlight the interconnectivity of Portsmouth, Boston, and Portland and to allow for denominational comparison. Chapter One examines how ministers were expected to behave in regard to their own personal financial transactions as well as those of the church. Particular controversies are explored including the division in the Second Congregational Church in Portland, which erupted over Reverend Elijah Kellogg's land dealings as well as his alleged political leanings. This chapter also analyzes the division in the Hollis Street Church in Boston over Reverend John Pierpont's views regarding temperance as well as his personal economic endeavors. The plutocracy created by the pew rental system ultimately restricted the freedom of the pulpit and resulted in conflicts, which were decidedly rooted in gender and class.

Chapter Two illustrates a paradigm shift in regard to Unitarian philanthropic efforts. Unitarians emphasized self-improvement through the aid of communal organizations until the Panic of 1837, when financial resources were exhausted. At that point communal efforts on the part of South Church declined and ministers encouraged more individual efforts. This chapter also suggests that the Panic of 1819 and the Panic of 1837 are inseparable from each other. The Panic of 1819 coincided with disestablishment and other economic crises and prompted massive spending efforts by South Church for charitable outreach and recruitment. This resulted in a limited ability to deal with the pecuniary pressures caused by the Panic of 1837.

Chapter Three analyzes religious responses to rampant speculation such as the "land fever" in Maine in the 1830s. Speculation coincided with the Panics of 1819 and 1837, which significantly impacted Protestant action and doctrine. Financial failure was common in the early republic. Investment losses sometimes led to suicides, a phenomenon that as Richard Bell has pointed out, threatened the stability of the fledgling republic and caused a great deal of public

anxiety.³⁶ This chapter examines how churches responded to problems associated with debt within their congregation.

Chapter Four is based on significant research on the Abyssinian Church in Portland, Maine which was the state's first independent African American Church and the nation's third oldest. This chapter demonstrates how the congregation of this church embraced capitalism as a weapon to promote abolition and racial equality while simultaneously using Christian values as a shield to defend itself. Data on leading members of the congregation reveals a relatively wealthy group of property owners who viewed ambition as a way to achieve social justice.

Following disestablishment, the end of state sponsored funding for religion, churches in northern New England were forced to devise new ways of raising funds. Chapter Five explores the various methods religious societies employed to raise money such as selling pews, renting church property, and encouraging subscriptions. This chapter also analyzes the expenditures approved by proprietors, particularly those expenditures that served to provide proprietors with an increasing sense of gentility. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the application of a business model to an organization that could not increase revenue led to pecuniary difficulties.

Chapter Six focuses on how market culture prompted the development of a corporate structure for religious societies. As pew ownership and the plutocratic nature of religious societies caused increasing conflict, religious societies increasingly employed legal and market mechanisms to regulate their financial affairs. Merchant parishioners applied their business practices to religious societies in their attempt to achieve greater efficiency and mitigate risk. Jonathan Levy, in his book, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*, notes how changing worldviews prompted the development of corporate risk

³⁶ Richard Bell, *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the United States*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 5, 9.

management. According to Levy, “many nineteenth-century Americans continued to invoke a ‘providential hand’ guiding the centrifugal forces of their republic...but they also invoked the wheel of fortune—a long-enduring, originally maritime image—to describe the secular voyage of a commercial, democratic social order, buzzing with so many uprooted and masterless people.”³⁷ Ultimately, based on the legal and financial mechanisms employed in daily operations, it can be concluded that in northern new England seaport towns religious proprietors were largely champions of economic modernization even when their ministers were not.

The concluding chapter serves as an epilogue to document the events and changes of the 1850s and beyond. Events of the 1850s, which increased sectional divisions finally prompted clergy in northern New England to advocate for freedom of the pulpit, particularly in regard to the issue of abolition. After the Civil War, a shift in church leadership occurred as the older generation of clergy, who led their congregations through changes wrought by Early Republic capitalism, passed off authority to a younger cohort. Additionally, the pew rental system became increasingly unpopular and churches merged or dissolved based on financial failure or as a result of creative adaptation.

In sum, during the Early Republic pew proprietorship created a plutocracy, which resulted in the development of a corporate character for Protestant churches and a prioritization of secular over theological concerns.

³⁷ Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 18.

Chapter One
Plutocracy and the Power of the Pew

“You cannot serve both God and Mammon.”
-Reverend Elijah Kellogg³⁸

“But if thou carest for the poor, or if, by wealth, thou wouldest swell the treasure of the Lord, see that thou doest the service with clean hands.”
-Reverend John Pierpont³⁹

In 1849 God smote Joshua Crane down. Or at least that is what Reverend John Pierpont believed. In March of that year, in a letter to his friend Samuel May, with whom he communicated frequently, Pierpont remarked on the death of Crane, one of his former adversaries. Writing from Troy, N.Y. Pierpont stated:

I am filled with profound amazement! Joshua Crane dead!!
Are all these men doomed to sudden death? I really stand awe-struck at the dispensations of the Most High. Scarcely does the surprise subside with which I hear of some one’s death, of those who, a few years ago, set themselves against me, so strenuously, and so bitterly, before the intelligence reaches me of the death of some other one.⁴⁰

Although Pierpont remarked that the deaths saddened him, he still seemed to presume that God was perhaps, exacting vengeance on his past enemies.⁴¹

The conflict that Pierpont referred to in his letter was the controversy beginning in 1838, and culminating with his resignation from the Hollis Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts in 1845.

³⁸ Elijah Kellogg, Sermon, August 1808, Box 1, Folder 35, Kellogg Family Collection, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine, 28. In regard to the Kellogg Collection I have modernized spelling regarding the use of the long s (f), for ease of reading.

³⁹ John Pierpont, *The Burning Of The Ephesian Letters: A Sermon Preached In Hollis Street Church, Sunday, 8th Dec. 1833*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Ford and Damrell, 1834), Box 1834, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 7.

⁴⁰ John Pierpont, Letter to Samuel May, March 16, 1849, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont, Andover Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

⁴¹ Pierpont, Letter to Samuel May, March 16, 1849, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010.

Crane conspired with fellow wealthy pew owners, in a successful bid to oust Pierpont from his ministerial position. Over the next seven years as the controversy embroiled the entire congregation, Pierpont gathered the support of many of the poorer members that did not own pews, and therefore did not hold any voting power. Ultimately, pew ownership triumphed, rather than Christian behavior and church membership, as it allowed possessors to wield un-democratic power over the rest of the congregation. The issue at hand was Pierpont's political and economic beliefs, many of which contradicted the interests of his wealthiest parishioners.

Ministers who expressed opposing political, social, or economic opinions imperiled their employment. In the Early Republic, Pierpont was not the only minister to rile his congregation. In a similar situation, almost forty years earlier, Reverend Elijah Kellogg was dismissed in 1811 from the Second Congregational Church in Portland, Maine. The cases of Kellogg and Pierpont reveals that ministers in the Early Republic were discouraged from engaging in political activity, particularly *if* that political activity threatened the pecuniary interests of their wealthiest congregants. The study of Kellogg and Pierpont also indicates a growing class rift in early America. In both cases, congregants were divided in their support of their respective ministers primarily by socio-economic status.

Life as a Protestant minister in northern New England during the Early Republic was certainly a delicate dance. The trick, of course, was not to step on any toes. Ministers were expected to encourage their parishioners to exhibit Christian virtues in their business dealings without simultaneously insulting the more prosperous among them. The wealthiest parishioners were often the primary financial contributors to the church, and offending them placed ministers in a perilous position. Additionally, the behavior of ministers in regard to their personal financial activity was closely observed and criticized when necessary.

Congregational and Unitarian ministers had a long history of participating in politics yet expressing opinions on government policy was somewhat qualified. In other words, freedom of speech was not quite unlimited for ministers in the Early Republic.⁴² However, ministers were still active in political affairs. Historian Mark A. Noll explains that during the Colonial Era Puritan thought had “a major religious influence on the Revolution” and John M. Murrin notes that revolutionary ideology was infused with the ‘millennial symbolism’ frequently found in the sermons of Congregational ministers.⁴³ During the Early Republic, Congregational ministers in New England often used the pulpit to preach against the War of 1812 and the foreign policies of President James Madison.⁴⁴ Of course these same ministers had also criticized Thomas Jefferson, Madison’s predecessor, widely due to his advocacy for religious freedom.⁴⁵ However, ministers tended to write sermons, which reflected the views of their parishioners. For example, Congregational ministers in New England typically ministered to congregations which were

⁴² In the 1850s, many ministers began to challenge the restrictions placed on them by their congregants in regard to their sermons. For several examples see: John A. Macaulay, “Tree Stump or ‘Treason?’ Unitarians Debate the Role of the Pulpit in the Age of Reform, *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 57, No. 3, (Summer, 2015), 487-506; William T. Dwight, D.D., *The Pulpit, In Its Relations to Politics. A Discourse, Delivered In The Third Congregational Church, Portland, November 20, 1856, And January 18, 1857*, (Portland, Maine: Francis Blake, 1857), Maine Historical Society, Portland Maine; *Politics And the Pulpit; An Essay On the Rights And Duties Of The Christian Pulpit In Relation To Politics. By A Minister Of The Presbyterian Church*, (Boston, Massachusetts: American Tract Society, 1860), HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31175035147076&view=1up&seq=7>.

⁴³ Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 32; John M. Murrin, “Religion and Politics in America From the First Settlements to the Civil War,” in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present, Second Edition*, Mark A. Noll, Luke E. Harlow, eds., (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55.

⁴⁴ Murrin, “Religion and Politics in America From the First Settlements to the Civil War,” 75.

⁴⁵ Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 256.

largely Federalist and opposed to conflict with Great Britain in 1812.⁴⁶ As scholar Jonathan D. Sassi notes, only a few Congregational ministers in New England spoke against partisanship or “openly identified themselves with the Democratic-Republican party.”⁴⁷ Ministers were undoubtedly hesitant to express political views, which opposed that of the majority of their congregation.

Similarly, in the beginning of the Early Republic many ministers were reluctant to take a stance on controversial social issues including temperance and abolition, particularly if some of their congregants were involved in economic endeavors, which relied on the legality of both distilling and/or slavery. For many reformers, temperance took precedence since as W.J. Rorabaugh states, “a slave had only lost control of his body, a drunkard lost mastery of his soul.”⁴⁸ However, even when the congregation supported a minister who promoted temperance, there was still the risk of angering opponents in the community. Shortly after Reverend Edward Payson of the Second Congregational Church in Portland, Maine formed a temperance society in 1815 someone burned down the church’s lecture room.⁴⁹

Abolition proved a more controversial topic than temperance, although the two were closely connected. Scholar Wendy Warren’s research into the connections of New England to slavery notes that through the 1840s in the region some individuals still owned slaves, and also that

⁴⁶ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 209; Richard Cardarwine, “Charles Sellers’s ‘Antinomians’ and ‘Arminians’: Methodists and the Market Revolution,” in *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, Mark A. Noll ed., (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 89-91.

⁴⁷ Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 107-111.

⁴⁸ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 214.

⁴⁹ Second Congregational Church Records, Portland, Maine, 1788-1888, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine, 637.

“slavery bridged the ocean between New England and the West Indies.”⁵⁰ In the colonial period New England merchants traded lumber, fish, and cattle for molasses and sugar produced by slaves.⁵¹ This trade continued into the Early Republic, molasses made by slaves in the West Indies was used to make rum in New England, which meant broaching the topic of abolition or temperance from the pulpit was risky business.⁵² After all, the owners of pews paid the salary of ministers and could and did find excuses to dismiss them for their political opinions and economic activities, as this chapter will demonstrate.

This chapter argues that power in northern New England religious societies during the Early Republic was plutocratic in nature and undermined democratic institutions. Although religious seating in New England had almost always been about establishing a hierarchical order, it transformed during the Early Republic. Before the American Revolution, most churches appointed a committee to assign seating to parishioners based on age, wealth, and influence. As Isabel Calder notes in her study of New Haven colony, men and women sat in separate sections and were seated according to “dignity, age, and estate.”⁵³ This practice resembled that followed in post-Reformation England, where assigned seating based on wealth, gender, age, and virtue was meant to preserve the social order.⁵⁴ In Colonial America, rules for assignment varied by church, with roughly half giving preference to age and the other half to wealth. The eldest

⁵⁰ Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America*, (New York, New York: Liveright Publishing Company, 2016), 50-51, 250.

⁵¹ Warren, *New England Bound*, 50-51.

⁵² Richard G. Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press, 1961), 176-208; Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 63-64.

⁵³ Isabel MacBeath Calder, *The New Haven Colony*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1934), Hathi Trust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x000515330&view=1up&seq=1>, 90-91.

⁵⁴ Christopher Marsh, “Order and Place in England, 1580-1640, The View from the Pew,” *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (January 2005), 8-12.

and/or wealthiest received the best seats, those nearest the pulpit and the communion table, which afforded the opportunity as scholar Peter Benes notes, “to see and be seen.”⁵⁵

During the Early Republic however, the privilege of status was not assigned but purchased and wealth thus became the determining factor for religious prominence. As such, it refutes the notion of the era’s expansion of democracy championed by other scholars.⁵⁶ Political suffrage expanded to all white males in the antebellum period, and as scholar Daniel Walker Howe notes, “suffrage liberalization occurred in many places with relatively little controversy.”⁵⁷ However, control of churches allowed individuals a great deal of societal influence. Elite suffrage in churches thus minimized the loss felt by elites in the expansion of political suffrage. By owning a pew, proprietors had the right to vote in all affairs regarding the financial management of the church, which also included the settlement and dismissal of ministers. The influence of a minister extended far beyond their pulpit. Their sermons and other writings were widely publicized, reprinted, and circulated. They impressed their opinions on state legislatures during election sermons, educated the youth, spoke at important community celebrations, wrote letters to other elites, and were active in reform organizations. Larry E. Tise argues that “As educators, writers, reformers, orators, and spiritual leaders, clergymen constituted the largest, most vocal,

⁵⁵ Peter Benes, *Meetinghouses of Early New England*, (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 62, 65, 67, 71-72.

⁵⁶ See Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1991); Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1967); and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁵⁷ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 489-490.

and most readily accessible national elite in American society.”⁵⁸ As will be seen, ministers were subjected to censure, rebuke, and firing when their actions did not align with the interests of the proprietors. Owning a pew, or several pews, thus enhanced the ability of proprietors to protect their political and economic interests.

The Case of Elijah Kellogg Sr.

Like Pierpont, Reverend Elijah Kellogg became a victim of religious plutocracy during the Early Republic. Proprietors of the Second Congregational Church in Portland, Maine, disapproved of Kellogg’s speculation and alleged Democratic-Republican political leanings. While Kellogg was undoubtedly an economically ambitious man, his political leanings are less clear. In the end, it seemed not to matter whether Kellogg proved his political allegiance or not. His witnesses and testimony at the ecclesiastical council were of no avail and Kellogg was dismissed in 1811.⁵⁹ Kellogg’s reputation was too damaged by both his pecuniary activities and suspected political activity, which ultimately proved to be enough grounds to terminate his employment.

Kellogg seemed destined from birth for the ministry. Born in South Hadley, Massachusetts on August 17, 1761, Kellogg was born to a family, which according to his eulogist, “not only professed religion, but exemplified it.”⁶⁰ Kellogg later recounted that following his birth, his grandmother noted that, “we will have one prophet in the family & his name is Elijah.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1987), xvii.

⁵⁹ Second Congregational Church Records, 1788-1888, 12-13.

⁶⁰ *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 9.

⁶¹ *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 9.

Kellogg described how he and siblings were encouraged by their parents to say their prayers, read the Bible, and observe the Sabbath regularly.⁶²

The American Revolution profoundly influenced Kellogg's adolescent years. At the age of fourteen, he joined the Continental Army as a drummer, then stationed at Cambridge, under the direction of General George Washington, from July 1775 to April 1776. Kellogg's parents were persuaded to allow him to join after an officer promised to watch out for "the youthful musician" and "on no account to expose him to the dangers of battle."⁶³ After two terms, Kellogg reenlisted in the army for a period of 3 years "and in July of 1777, being then only in his 16th year he started amid frost and snow for Ticonderoga."⁶⁴

Kellogg found himself near death several times during his military service and these experiences eventually helped propel him into the ministry. Twice during his service, Kellogg fell ill and was left behind by his fellow soldiers, lucky in both instances to survive. During the Continental Army's retreat from Lake Champlain the troops feared attacks from "the Savages" and fled, leaving the infirm Kellogg behind to spend a night alone in the rain before making his way to camp. After Kellogg left the army in 1780 and was preparing to go to college to study law, he had a conversation with Reverend Jacob Wood about the war, which changed the course of his life. Wood asked Kellogg, "with great seriousness & earnestness, if I ever prayed to God while I was in the army."⁶⁵ Although Kellogg had a religious upbringing, the question posed by Wood made Kellogg "feel ashamed, for in all my army life, even when at deaths door I never had prayed to God."⁶⁶ The conversation with Wood seems to have inspired Kellogg to seek a

⁶² *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 9.

⁶³ *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 10.

⁶⁴ *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 10-14.

⁶⁵ *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 14-17.

⁶⁶ *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 16-17.

career in the ministry. Shortly after graduating from Dartmouth College in 1785, Kellogg began studying theology with Reverend John Murray and two years later accepted a request from the newly formed Second Congregational Church in Portland, Maine to preach there.⁶⁷

In October 1788, Kellogg was ordained as pastor of the Second Congregational Church. Reverend Peter Thatcher, a Boston minister, gave the ordination sermon and exhorted Kellogg to seek the favor of God rather than men, turning to 1 Thessalonians 2:4: “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”⁶⁸ Thatcher argued that like the Apostles of Christ and Paul after them, Kellogg should have “a suitable respect to the approbation of his fellow men,” but that such respect should not “supersede a respect to the divine honour [sic].”⁶⁹ Were ministers to aim to please the congregation, warned Thatcher, they would inadvertently “alter the nature of the Gospel.”⁷⁰ That Thatcher felt the need to give a sermon on this issue suggests that the potential for ministers to cater to their congregation, rather than adhering to orthodoxy, was a serious concern in the Early Republic. As noted earlier, ministers from colonial times onward were beholden to their congregations who paid their salaries and approved their continuing employment.⁷¹ Ministers in the colonial era often became focal points for factional conflict within communities.⁷² Following the American Revolution, ministers continued to remain vulnerable targets, as Kellogg soon

⁶⁷ *Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, March 12, 1842, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 18.

⁶⁸ Peter Thatcher, A.M. Pastor of a Church in Boston, *Sermon Preached October, 1788, At The Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Elijah Kellogg, To The Pastoral Care Of The Second Church and Society In Portland*, Box 1, Folder 8, Kellogg Family Collection, 5.

⁶⁹ Thatcher, *Sermon Preached October, 1788*, Box 1, Folder 8, Kellogg Family Collection, 6-7.

⁷⁰ Thatcher, *Sermon Preached October, 1788*, Box 1, Folder 8, Kellogg Family Collection, 14.

⁷¹ Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 80.

⁷² Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; Harvard University Press, 1974). See chapters 2 and 3 for an in depth analysis of how factional conflict in the community of Salem led to the dismissal of four ministers (one of whom, George Burroughs, was later executed for witchcraft).

discovered. However, whereas previously male members of the church voted on important issues, such as the settlement and dismissal of ministers, in the Early Republic, pew owners wielded the bulk of influence.⁷³

Unfortunately, Kellogg did not retain the favor of the powerful pew owners in his congregation. Part of the reason for Kellogg's undoing was his desire to serve the church while also becoming financially prosperous, a goal, which may have been ignited during his service in the Continental Army, an experience that inspired many young men to aspire to greater wealth and ambition.⁷⁴ Kellogg decided to travel the road to prosperity through the purchase of real estate. The character and nature of Kellogg's property dealings were apparently criticized, as evidenced by the attempt after his death to justify his business affairs. The sermon delivered at Kellogg's funeral noted that, "when, in common with many ministers of that day," Kellogg "let & obtained property, it was freely extended in hospitality, in furnishing means for the extension of a ministerial labor, & in other benevolent uses."⁷⁵

Kellogg was heavily involved in land speculation during his ministry at the Second Congregational Church.⁷⁶ An ambitious man Kellogg, in 1790 married Eunice McClellan, the daughter of Joseph McClellan, a wealthy merchant from Portland, who had a prosperous business on Congress Street.⁷⁷ Portland tax records show Joseph McClellan as among the wealthiest citizens in the city, paying \$570.84 in taxes in 1804 when the average tax was

⁷³ David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 151.

⁷⁴ Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and The Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*, (Boston, Massachusetts; Beacon Press, 2000), 57, 65.

⁷⁵ *The Funeral of Mr. Kellogg*, Box 1, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection, 31.

⁷⁶ William Willis, *The History of Portland, From 1632 to 1864: With a Notice of Previous Settlements, Colonial Grants, and Changes of Government in Maine*, (Portland, Maine: Bailey & Noyes, 1865), 648.

⁷⁷ Willis, *History of Portland*, 557; Ancestry.com

\$16.51.⁷⁸ Following his marriage, Kellogg immediately became involved in land speculation, appearing in the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds no less than seventy-three times from 1790 to 1811, just prior to his dismissal from the Second Congregational Church.⁷⁹ From 1800 to 1805, Portland experienced a housing boom with the construction of one hundred and sixty three houses, an increase that historian William Willis describes as “unexampled in the annals of New England previous to this time.” In fact, Kellogg was responsible for developing the brick block named “Jones’s Row” on Fore Street.⁸⁰

Kellogg was quite successful at buying land and reselling it for a profit. In September of 1801, Kellogg bought a tract of land from Sarah Cordman in Portland on Mount Joy Neck (now Munjoy Hill) for two thousand dollars. By 1802, Kellogg resold the land for three thousand dollars, a profit of one thousand dollars. In November 1801, he bought another tract of land on Mount Joy Neck, from Daniel Ilsley and Alexander Barr for \$1200. Within five months, Kellogg resold the same plot of land to Smith Cobb for \$3000, resulting in a profit of \$1800. Kellogg’s transactions often involved a significant amount of money, such as the one he made in 1800 when he bought a tract of land from Lucy Greenleaf for ten thousand dollars.⁸¹ In a time where the average laborer made less than a dollar a day, ten thousand dollars would have seemed a princely sum.⁸²

⁷⁸ Portland Tax Assessments, Box 1, Volume 3, 1804, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine. This calculation includes both poll taxes and estate taxes.

⁷⁹ “Cumberland County Registry of Deeds,” accessed 10/20/2017, <http://usalandrecords.com>.

⁸⁰ Willis, *The History of Portland*, 553, 563.

⁸¹ “Cumberland County Registry of Deeds,” Document 791, Book 00032, Page 524, 6/2/1800, Document 1102, Book 00035, Page 547, 9/21/1801, Document 1340, Book 00037, Page 68, 11/7/1801, Document 789, Book 00037, Page 420, 4/12/1802, and Document 894, Book 00037, Page 525, 6/4/1802, accessed October 20, 2017, <http://usalandrecords.com>.

⁸² Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 159.

Kellogg did more than just buy and sell land for personal profit. He also operated as a real estate broker for Elijah Dix of Boston, who owned a large amount of land in Portland. Throughout 1800, Kellogg worked to sell Dix's land for him.⁸³ Kellogg also offered mortgages for real estate he sold. Like seller-financed mortgages of today, Kellogg charged interest on the money he lent. For example, in 1799 he sold a tract of land to Isaac Parker for \$3833.33. Kellogg lent Parker three thousand of that sum for which Parker had to repay \$3161.67.⁸⁴

Although Kellogg advised his congregation not to "take an undue advantage of our neighbours [sic] necessity in selling," it appears he may not have practiced what he preached.⁸⁵ As historian Edward Balleisen notes, social critique of individuals who took advantage of the economic failures of others was common during the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁶ For Kellogg, a minister, to engage in speculation, particularly if it was viewed as profiting from the economic troubles of others, might have been interpreted by members of his congregation as unseemly conduct.

Lucy Greenleaf, who sold Kellogg land in Portland for ten thousand dollars, in 1800, was likely forced to sell out of necessity.⁸⁷ Her brother-in-law, James Greenleaf, became bankrupt during the speculative bubble, which burst in the late 1790s. As historian Bruce H. Mann notes, James, along with Robert Morris and John Nicholson, speculated in land, from Washington D.C. to the Carolinas. Nicholson and Morris eventually bought James out of the company but "paid

⁸³ "Cumberland County Registry of Deeds," Document 410, Book 00032, Page 274, 4/4/1800, accessed October 20, 2017, <http://usalandrecords.com>.

⁸⁴ "Cumberland County Registry of Deeds," Document 673, Book 00030, Page 334, 07/29/1799, Document 674, Book 00030, Page 335, 07/29/1799, accessed October 20, 2017, <http://usalandrecords.com>.

⁸⁵ Sermon, March 1809, Box 1, Folder 38, Kellogg Family Collection, 15.

⁸⁶ Edward J. Balleisen, *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 136-137.

⁸⁷ "Cumberland County Registry of Deeds," Document 791, Book 00032, Page 201, 6/2/1800, accessed October 20, 2017, <http://usalandrecords.com>.

him with promissory notes backed by the Washington lots or the company shares as collateral.” Unable to pay back original investors in the company, Morris and Nicholson resorted to what Mann calls a “giant pyramid scheme,” essentially recruiting new investors to pay the old. Morris and Nicholson proceeded to cross-endorse each other’s notes and bought land on credit with the hope that prices would rise and they could make a quick profit. Unfortunately, a significant portion of the land turned out to be worthless and they were unable to sell much of it due to significant title defects. When they failed to meet their financial obligations entirely, James, who had been paid with shares of their company and promissory notes, went into bankruptcy, and subsequently, to jail.⁸⁸

When Nicholson and Morris’s pyramid scheme collapsed in 1797, many innocent victims were caught in their financial web including Lucy Greenleaf and her husband John.⁸⁹ James previously established an annuity for his brother John but failed to back it with collateral, which thus left the annuity vulnerable to James’ creditors.⁹⁰ Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams and aunt to Lucy, worried for the couple, who with the loss of the annuity, were deprived of their only source of income. Lucy’s shaky financial situation, may have in part prompted Adams to sign the Bankruptcy Act of 1800, in order to provide relief to innocent citizens destroyed by the actions of speculators like Greenleaf, Morris, and Nicholson.⁹¹

Following the sale of land to Kellogg, Lucy, who handled the business affairs, as proxy for her blind husband, was forced to take Kellogg to court for interest that was unpaid. When Kellogg purchased the property from Lucy in 1800, she mortgaged it to him with the written

⁸⁸ Bruce H. Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy In The Age Of American Independence*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 199-201, 203.

⁸⁹ Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 203-204.

⁹⁰ Woody Holton, *Abigail Adams: A Life*, (New York, New York: Atria Paperback, 2009), 310.

⁹¹ Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 2, 218.

understanding that he would pay the interest due each year. Kellogg failed to do so the first three years, claiming that interest was not due until the principal sum was due, but the court found in favor of Lucy.⁹²

Kellogg was a speculator but also a minister who tried to reconcile the spiritual and temporal worlds for his parishioners. Like his Puritan predecessors, Kellogg exhorted his congregation to industry. He noted that “to expect food and raiment and habitation to live in without labor when we are sound in body and mind and security and deliverance from danger and disease without using the proper means and remedies is presumption.”⁹³ Kellogg argued that industriousness and improvement of one’s financial affairs was actually a religious duty. In explaining the parable of the nobleman who entrusted money to several servants and rewarded those who turned it into more money, Kellogg noted “that a variety of talents is committed to men for their improvement in His absence.” As men were in debt to God for these gifts, including worldly prosperity, they were to be used “in doing good to others; in promoting the best interests of society, and the eternal welfare of mankind.” Kellogg appeared to be validating wealth not for its own sake, but for the benefits it could bring to society. Improvements of God-given gifts was seen as a Christian responsibility, as well as a republican one, and Kellogg was careful to note that rewards in heaven would be proportionate to such improvements.⁹⁴ Heads of households were instructed to “provide for the temporal subsistence and comfort of...families” but also to ensure

⁹² Diane Jacobs, *Dear Abigail: The Intimate Lives and Revolutionary Ideas of Abigail Adams and Her Two Remarkable Sisters*, (New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 2014), 368, 430; *Greenleaf v. Kellogg*, 2 Mass. 568, 1803 Mass. LEXIS 1, 2 Tyng 568 (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Essex October, 1803, Decided).

⁹³ Sermon, February 1800, Box 1, Folder 13, Kellogg Family Collection, 6-7.

⁹⁴ Sermon, January 1802, Box 1, Folder 16, Kellogg Family Collection, 2, 3, 8, 15.

that children do not become “unsupportable burdens to human society.”⁹⁵ Worldly prosperity, was thus a means to an end and as such, was not only condoned, but also encouraged by Kellogg.

Kellogg consciously employed language and metaphors his parishioners would understand. He admonished them to purify their “hearts that they may be properly fitted up for the reception of the king of kings” in the same manner they attended to “the neatness order and elegance of our houses when we expect a visit from distinguished personages, or even only from common acquaintances!”⁹⁶ In a funeral sermon in 1802, Kellogg noted that “the dust of the saints, one observes is laid up as in Gods cabinet with far more tender care than we do the most estimable jewel.”⁹⁷ When describing the joint interest Christians have in the prosperity offered by God, Kellogg exclaimed, “what an inventory of goods! What a noble estate have all Christians!”⁹⁸

A stratified society was perfectly acceptable to Kellogg. When discussing parental support of children, Kellogg noted that the degree of support parents were responsible for was difficult to ascertain because “as to their proportion, must be supposed to differ according to the different states or conditions of children in the world.”⁹⁹ Kellogg legitimated the individual ownership of property, but pointed out that prosperity should be used to benefit the common good.¹⁰⁰ Kellogg argued that “we cannot, reasonably, suppose, that St. Peters object...was to dissuade men from the exercise of care and diligence, in their respective duties & stations.”¹⁰¹ In some cases, a stratified society seemed not only inevitable, but also desirable. Kellogg argued that because people in America had “the disposal of their own earnings” they were greater inspired toward

⁹⁵ Sermon, December 1802, Box 1, Folder 21, Kellogg Family Collection, 21, 26.

⁹⁶ Sermon, January 1803, Box 1, Folder 23, Kellogg Family Collection, 25.

⁹⁷ Sermon, 1802, Box 1, Folder 17, Kellogg Family Collection, 18-19.

⁹⁸ Sermon, November 1806, Box 1, Folder 32, Kellogg Family Collection, 20-21.

⁹⁹ Sermon, April 1803, Box 1, Folder 24, Kellogg Family Collection, 15-16.

¹⁰⁰ Sermon, March 1809, Box 1, Folder 38, Kellogg Family Collection, 3-4.

¹⁰¹ Sermon, October 1803, Box 1, Folder 25, Kellogg Family Collection, 18.

“industry and economy.”¹⁰² According to Kellogg, enjoying “the fruits of our own invention and labour [sic]” was a natural right given by God to all men.¹⁰³ Admonishing against envy, Kellogg argued his congregation should view the prosperity of others with “great satisfaction” and should rejoice “that it is well disposed of.”¹⁰⁴

While Kellogg was clearly attracted to the language of the market and ideas of temporal prosperity, he was also careful to note that they should not occupy pride of place. Worldly prosperity could certainly be beneficial, as long as it did not distract one from the primary goal of salvation. Kellogg attributed such distractions to Satan, noting that Satan is often “instrumental in diverting our thoughts, from Divine things, by suggesting schemes of worldly profit, pleasure, or ambition.”¹⁰⁵ He also pointed out that while “others are counting their honours [sic] and distinctions and riches the believer may point them to a crown of life, an eternal kingdom, an everlasting inheritance.”¹⁰⁶ In 1803, Kellogg rebuked the “covetousness...of modern Christians” and praised earlier Christians, who after the ascension of Christ preferred “the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom...to their private concerns and estates.”¹⁰⁷ According to Kellogg, “pure Christians,” could be “delivered...from a supreme and ardent affection, for earthly things.”¹⁰⁸ Desire for earthly things, was acceptable if qualified by moderation and if placed secondary to desire to salvation.

Kellogg argued, however, that pursuit of temporal prosperity was in and of itself, not sacrilegious. He argued that it was acceptable to pray for “temporal blessings and for the

¹⁰² Sermon, November 1805, Box 1, Folder 29, Kellogg Family Collection, 23.

¹⁰³ Sermon, July 1809, Box 1, Folder 39, Kellogg Family Collection, 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ Sermon, July 1809, Box 1, Folder 39, Kellogg Family Collection, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Sermon, March 1798, Box 1, Folder 11, Kellogg Family Collection, 38.

¹⁰⁶ Sermon, February 180?, Box 1, Folder 12, Kellogg Family Collection, 16-17.

¹⁰⁷ Sermon, January 1803, Box 1, Folder 23, Kellogg Family Collection, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Sermon, January 1803, Box 1, Folder 23, Kellogg Family Collection, 6.

removal of temporal evils” as long as it was done “in perfect submission to the Divine will.”¹⁰⁹

If Christians prioritized God, then earthly pursuits could be “sanctified by religion.”¹¹⁰

Additionally, “instead of diminishing the satisfaction and comfort of believers in the...use of the good things of this world, the Christian religion teaches them how to make the most of them. It teaches them the true value and end of earthly enjoyments.”¹¹¹ Similarly, it was natural that people were assigned stations in life, each with a particular duty, although Kellogg noted that all would eventually be judged regardless of their place in life.¹¹²

In line with prioritizing worship of God over temporal affairs was strict observance of the Sabbath. Kellogg wrote “one day in a week, God has solemnly commanded us to devote to religion; and he who profanes it, with worldly business, or pleasures, or spends it in sleep and indolence, can have...no care of his soul.”¹¹³ On the Sabbath, all “worldly affairs should be early and utterly laid aside.”¹¹⁴ In a sermon resembling the Puritan jeremiads, Kellogg admonished his parishioners for being “less attentive to religious reading and prayer and to sermons and sabbath meeting, so that you can drowse and nod.”¹¹⁵

Likewise, pursuit of temporal prosperity was also to be tempered by charity to the poor. Kellogg argued that “when in our abundance our hearts, and our hands, are closed against the poor” it is a mark “of a heart...overcharged with the cares of his life.”¹¹⁶ Charity was not to be dispensed too liberally however. Kellogg argued that Christians needed to discern who was truly

¹⁰⁹ Sermon, February 1801, Box 1, Folder 14, Kellogg Family Collection, 5.

¹¹⁰ Sermon, February 1800, Box 1, Folder 13, Kellogg Family Collection, 8-9.

¹¹¹ Sermon, October 1802, Box 1, Folder 19, Kellogg Family Collection, 22.

¹¹² Sermon, January 1802, Box 1, Folder 16, Kellogg Family Collection, 4; Sermon, July 1802, Box 1, Folder 17, Kellogg Family Collection, 17.

¹¹³ Sermon, February 1800, Box 1, Folder 13, Kellogg Family Collection, 9.

¹¹⁴ Sermon, January 1807, Box 1, Folder 33, Kellogg Family Collection, 12.

¹¹⁵ Sermon, April 1808, Box 1, Folder 35, Kellogg Family Collection, 22.

¹¹⁶ Sermon, February 1800, Box 1, Folder 13, Kellogg Family Collection, 12.

deserving of charity so that they did not “impoverish and ruin themselves” or “encourage indolence and vice.”¹¹⁷ Additionally, caring for the material needs of the poor was a secondary interest to caring for their souls.¹¹⁸

As long as it was subservient to a pursuit of salvation, and as long as it did not degenerate into avarice, Kellogg condoned moderate pursuit of financial prosperity.¹¹⁹ Such ambivalence about the market was not new in the Early Republic. As historian Bruce C. Daniels notes, Puritans “worked for material prosperity but wanted to avoid worldly temptations.”¹²⁰ In his synthesis of colonial history, Alan Taylor has also noted similar contradictions in Puritan thought regarding the marketplace and temporal success.¹²¹ In fact, Kellogg’s sermons are testimony to the hegemony of Puritan thought at least through the beginning of the Early Republic.¹²²

By 1809, it is clear from Kellogg’s writing, that he was deeply concerned about widening divisions within his congregation. In March 1809, Kellogg noted that degrees of respect differed according to station; children should be deferential to their parents, as should a congregation to its pastor since the “order, harmony, and well-being of society depends upon it.”¹²³ In the same sermon, Kellogg reprimanded those of his congregation who would “injure the reputation of a neighbor” by “judging and condemning him without evidence, on mere suspicion or vague rumour [sic]; and without hearing what he can say in his own defence [sic],” a sin attributed to

¹¹⁷ Sermon, January 1806, Box 1, Folder 30, Kellogg Family Collection, 4.

¹¹⁸ Sermon, August 1808, Box 1, Folder 35, Kellogg Family Collection, 24.

¹¹⁹ Sermon, November 1801, Box 1, Folder 15, Kellogg Family Collection, 2.

¹²⁰ Bruce C. Daniels, *Puritans At Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England*, (New York, New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1995), 16.

¹²¹ Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*, (New York, New York: Viking Press, 2001), 162.

¹²² For more on the argument of religious declension and rebuttal of see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1983), 471-472; Taylor, *American Colonies*, 159; Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 6.

¹²³ Sermon, March 1809, Box 1, Folder 38, Kellogg Family Collection, 9-10.

“abominable pride.”¹²⁴ In October 1809, Kellogg encouraged harmony in his congregation noting, “how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”¹²⁵ By reading between the lines, one can sense that Kellogg was feeling personally attacked by some of his parishioners, and used the pulpit to admonish them.

Parishioners might have accepted Kellogg’s speculative land dealings, which appeared to be in contradiction to his theological expressions if not for an incident in 1811, which placed his political allegiance in question. At this point conflict erupted in open dissension in the Second Congregational Church over Kellogg’s standing as a minister, as he appeared to be siding with the Democratic-Republicans. The political climate of 1812 was certainly divisive. The Embargo of 1807 and the possibility of a war with Great Britain had many people at odds with each other. Thomas Jefferson, a Democratic-Republican President, enacted the Embargo of 1807, which “prohibited the departure of all American ships in international trade,” in order to protect the shipping industry from the hostilities of European nations embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars. Although the Embargo Act ended in March 1809, new legislation replaced it, which allowed trade with all nations except for Britain and France.¹²⁶ Federalists denounced the Embargo Act, and accused Jefferson of damaging “America more than England.”¹²⁷

Port cities like Portland, were devastated by the Embargo Act and the Non-Intercourse Act. In his history of Portland, William Willis notes that shipping fell off in terms of total tonnage dramatically after 1807 and did not recover until 1811. The three years prior to the embargo were flush times for Portland, tonnage increased by twelve thousand tons and duties collected

¹²⁴ Sermon, March 1809, Box 1, Folder 38, Kellogg Family Collection, 21-22, 25.

¹²⁵ Sermon, October 1809, Box 1, Folder 40, Kellogg Family Collection, 6-7.

¹²⁶ Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 649, 658.

¹²⁷ Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913*, (New York, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 72.

were as high as they would be in 1862.¹²⁸ Following the embargo however, Willis notes that in the shipping industry “people were thrown out of employment” and “eleven commercial houses stopped payment in the later part of 1807, among which were the largest ship-owners, and persons possessing the firmest credit of any in town.” The shipping industry, according to Willis, was so distressed “that the grass literally grew upon the wharves.”¹²⁹

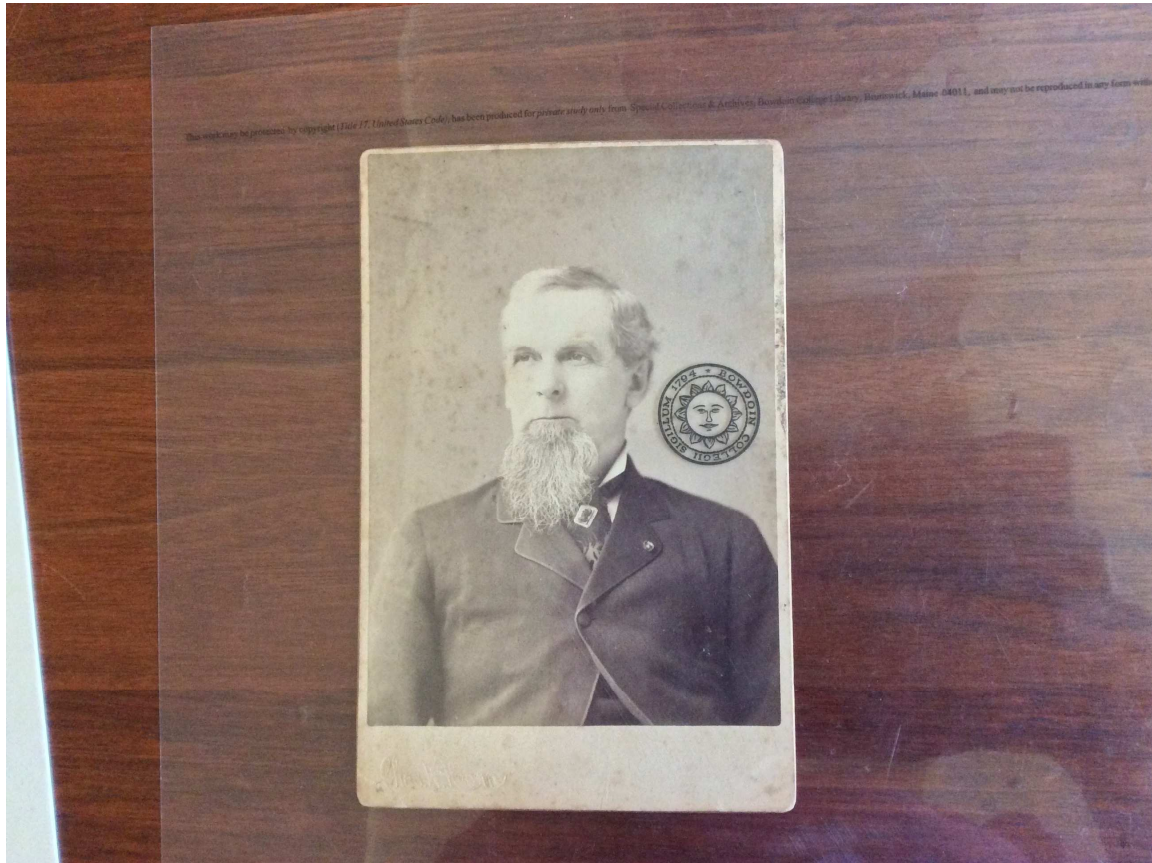


Photo of Reverend Elijah Kellogg, Sr., date unknown, courtesy of Kellogg Family Collection, Folder 18, Box 5, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Willis, *The History of Portland*, 562.

¹²⁹ Willis, *The History of Portland*, 575.

¹³⁰ Although the collection identifies the person as Elijah Kellogg Sr., it is possible it is not him given that he died in 1842 and the daguerreotype was not invented until 1837.

Accusations regarding Kellogg's Democratic-Republican leanings first began swirling following a conversation Kellogg's father-in-law had in Gray, Maine, and a letter he wrote to Martin Kinsley. Kellogg's correspondence reveals the nature of that conversation at Gray and the contents of the letter to Martin Kinsley, although it is difficult to verify the authenticity of the charges against him regarding those events. In August 1811, Kellogg wrote to his father-in-law Joseph McClellan, who had until recently, been a wealthy merchant in Portland.¹³¹ Kellogg was concerned about a conversation McClellan, now residing in Gray, had with Mr. Greenleaf, in which he called Kellogg a "democrat." Apparently, McClellan also stated that Kellogg planned to bear his expenses for travelling to Boston to help Colonel Foxcroft, a Democrat, in his bid for sheriff. In his letter to McClellan, Kellogg seemed astounded that he would make such a charge, and hoped it was meant as a joke. Apparently Greenleaf was not under the impression it was a joke and spread the accusation, although he told Kellogg that he did so in the hopes that he would "be furnished with the means of contradicting the story."

It was also rumored that McClellan had another conversation, with Reverend Weston, about Kellogg's political allegiances.¹³² Weston, the McClellan's minister, later testified at the ecclesiastical council, that he heard McClellan say Kellogg often came to Gray for "electioneering" purposes.¹³³ McClellan wrote to Kellogg in October 1811, expressing surprise that the Second Congregational Church was "kept in foment about the Gray affair" when his remarks to Greenleaf were meant only in jest.¹³⁴ The McClellans denied that any such

¹³¹ Portland Tax Assessments, Box 1, Vol. 3-8, 1804-1809.

¹³² Willis, *The History of Portland, From 1632 to 1864*, 648; Correspondence January-August 1811, Box 4, Folder 2, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹³³ Correspondence, January-February 1812, Box 4, Folder 6, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹³⁴ Correspondence, October-November 1811, Box 4, Folder 4, Kellogg Family Collection.

conversation had taken place with Weston and later expressed dismay at the “overthrow” of the Kellogg family.¹³⁵

The letter to Martin Kinsley was the second part of the charge against Kellogg. Kinsley was a Republican politician and judge in Maine linked to Massachusetts politician Elbridge Gerry. Federalists particularly hated Gerry due to his support of Jefferson’s embargo and, as the Vice President of James Madison’s administration, his support of war policy.¹³⁶ Kellogg was believed to have written Gerry with political purposes in mind. However, in August 1811, several proprietors offered testimony that they examined the letter in question, and although Foxcroft’s name was mentioned, there was no evidence of “electioneering.” Joseph McClellan also wrote testimony in support of Kellogg and noted he often made trips to the McClellan household as well as the Foxcroft household in Gray, but that these were family visits and not based on “political principles.”¹³⁷

Following these events, in September of 1811, sixty-two individuals signed a letter addressed to Kellogg in which they stated “your usefulness to us, as a Minister, of the Gospel, has in a great measure, if not wholly ceased.” The agitators, hoping for an easy resolution, asked Kellogg to resign in order to preserve “the peace, harmony, and prosperity of the Society.”¹³⁸ Shortly thereafter, twenty-two members approached the junior pastor, Edward Payson, who joined Kellogg in October of 1807, and requested that he call a church meeting. While appearing concerned over the proper course of action, Payson eventually concluded that it was best to

¹³⁵ Correspondence, January-February 1812, Box 4, Folder 6, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹³⁶ “Elbridge Gerry,” United States Senate, accessed October 15, 2017, https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/VP_Elbridge_Gerry.htm; “Martin Kinsley,” Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=K000230>.

¹³⁷ Correspondence, January-August 1811, Box 4, Folder 2, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹³⁸ Correspondence, September 1811, Box 4, Folder 3, Kellogg Family Collection.

“gratify them, for opposition will only irritate them the more.”¹³⁹ Kellogg did not easily acquiesce to the request for resignation, and instead responded that he was ready to either meet his accusers in the parish for a discussion of the charges, or answer the charges in front of an ecclesiastical council.¹⁴⁰ Ecclesiastical councils formed in New England in the 1600s and were generally made up of denominationally similar ministers from churches in the regions. These “consociations” served as Bruce Kimball explains, to ensure orthodoxy and “to settle disputes among ministers, among congregations, or most often, between a minister and a congregation.”¹⁴¹ A church meeting was held in October of 1811, in which ninety-five individuals voted for Kellogg’s dismissal while thirty-nine voted against it. Voting eligibility however, was determined not by membership, but by pew ownership.

The nature of political power within the church was determined shortly after the church was incorporated in February 1787. The church was newly formed, by a number of parishioners who withdrew from the First Parish in Portland over disagreement involving the salary for its two ministers as well as repairs for the church building. Money was needed to fund the purchase of a lot as well as the construction of a new church and the committee decided to raise the monies through subscription. The proprietary agreement stated “that no person should be allowed to subscribe for less than a pew either below or in the gallery except he meant generously to give his subscription to the society and that every matter should be determined by a majority of the subscribers.” Fifty shares were immediately purchased, thirty-four of them by twenty

¹³⁹ Second Congregational Church Records, 1788-1888 2; Correspondence, September 1811, Box 4, Folder 3, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹⁴⁰ Correspondence, September 1811, Box 4, Folder 3, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹⁴¹ Bruce Kimball, *The “True Professional Ideal” in America: A History*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995),124.

individuals.¹⁴² Economic power outside the church thus equated to political power within the church. This un-democratic method of determining voting eligibility resulted in open dissension over the request for Kellogg's resignation.

Unable to reconcile the division in the church, an ecclesiastical council was eventually held on December 4, 1811. The council noted that "two thirds of the parish had voted themselves dissatisfied with Mr. Kellogg" and that it was "expedient that the pastoral relation between the reverend Elijah Kellogg and the said Second Church in Portland, be dissolved." Part of the justification for the council's decision involved "declarations respecting his conversation at Gray, and the contents of his letter to the honorable Martin Kinsley, Esq."¹⁴³

Clearly, the controversy over Kellogg was due to the fact that some members of the congregation believed he had switched political allegiances. However, not all the congregants believed this rumor and not all saw it as a cause for concern. The "Gray affair" split Kellogg's congregation into two factions, decidedly class and gender based in nature.¹⁴⁴ The faction that sided with Kellogg totaled at least twenty-nine individuals, twenty-four of them female, and all of them members of the church. Following the results of the ecclesiastical council, which advocated for Kellogg's dismissal, this group requested dismissal from the Second Congregational Church in order to create a new church with Kellogg.¹⁴⁵ Of the sixty-two

¹⁴² Second Congregational Records, 1788-1888, 620-621.

¹⁴³ *Minutes of Portland Ecclesiastical Council, 1811*, Box 5, Folder 16, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹⁴⁴ Correspondence, 1811, Folder October-November, Box 4, Folder 4, Kellogg Family Collection.

¹⁴⁵ Second Congregational Records, 1788-1888, 657-663; Miscellaneous Documents and Meeting Minutes, Box 5, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection; *Minutes of Portland Ecclesiastical Council, 1811*, Box 5, Folder 16, Kellogg Family Collection.

individuals who wrote to Kellogg in September of 1811 asking for his resignation, all were males, and while only three were church members, most owned pews.¹⁴⁶

Portland tax assessments in 1811 reveal more clearly the class divisions separating Kellogg's supporters from his detractors. Kellogg's supporters paid an average tax of \$4.42 per person in 1811 while his detractors paid an average tax of \$17.69 per person. Not only were Kellogg's detractors the wealthiest congregants, they were also amongst the wealthiest citizens in Portland. The average tax paid in Portland in 1811 was \$11.46, over six dollars less than what Kellogg's opponents paid.¹⁴⁷ The factional division indicates that Kellogg's behavior offended wealthier males, who could afford pew rentals and thus obtained voting privileges, rather than the poorer, formal members of the church. The poor members of the church perhaps supported Kellogg because they agreed with his doctrinal leanings, after all their interest in the church as non pew owners was solely about religion rather than gaining political influence or economic connections. Or perhaps they believed that the charges against him were unfair and viewed their support as a way to exercise some power otherwise denied them in a plutocracy that privileged elite white males. It is also possible they supported Democratic-Republican policies.

The issue of class in the Early Republic is one that historians have not yet come to a consensus on. Scholars are beginning to move beyond the dominant narrative of "artisan republicanism," originating with the work of Herbert Gutman and E.P. Thompson, and are examining the role of other laborers, both wage and nonwage, such as immigrants, African

¹⁴⁶ Correspondence, September 1811, Box 4, Folder 3, Kellogg Family Collection; Second Congregational Records, 1788-1888, 657-663.

¹⁴⁷ Portland Tax Assessments, Box 2, Folder 2, 1811; Second Congregational Records, 1788-1888, 657-663; Miscellaneous Documents and Meeting Minutes, Box 5, Folder 9, Kellogg Family Collection; *Minutes of Portland Ecclesiastical Council, 1811*, Box 5, Folder 16, Kellogg Family Collection; Correspondence, September 1811, Box 4, Folder 3, Kellogg Family Collection. Note that the tax calculations include both poll and estate taxes.

Americans, and females.¹⁴⁸ Seth Rockman's study of the working class of Baltimore and Walter Johnson's examination of the slave market in New Orleans confront the myth that capitalism in the Early Republic translated into economic prosperity for all by detailing the extremely exploitative nature of the market felt by many laborers.¹⁴⁹ Still a major point of contention is the issue of class consciousness, where, when, and how it developed. Rockman, in his study of working class people in Baltimore, "does not find a shared consciousness, identity, or politics percolating from working people themselves, but sees class as a material condition resulting from the ability of those purchasing labor to economically and physically coerce those performing it."¹⁵⁰ This analysis seems to apply to the parishioners of Kellogg's Second Congregational Church as well. While there is no evidence that the poorer members of the congregation developed a distinct identity and shared class consciousness, the ability of the upper class to purchase power within the church and use it to their own economic advantage, at the very least, created material conditions of class, which led to division and conflict.

¹⁴⁸ Rockman, *Scraping By*, 9. For scholarship on artisan republicanism see Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 531-88; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class*, (New York, New York: Pantheon, 1968); Bruce Laurie, *Artisans Into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*. For particularly compelling scholarship which attempts to examine a wider variety of labor see Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in an Age of Slave Emancipation*, (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997); Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860*, (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, (New York, New York: Verso, 1997); and Herbert Hill, "The Problem of Race in American Labor History," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Jun., 1996): 189-208.

¹⁴⁹ Rockman, *Scraping By*; Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁵⁰ Rockman, *Scraping By*, 11.

Were Kellogg's alleged political reasons a likely cause of dismissal? Federalists in Portland would have highly concerned about a Democratic-Republican minister. In 1811, following the distress of the Embargo Act and Non-Intercourse Act, the prospect of a war with Great Britain would have been terrifying. Many businessmen in Portland had only just begun to recover from the economic troubles that started in 1807. A look at the composition of Kellogg's detractors reveals why they were so afraid of the possibility that he had become a Republican. Of the sixty-two men who signed the initial letter to Kellogg requesting his dismissal, at least thirty-two were heavily involved in the shipping industry. Important traders and retailers included Enoch Moody, Lemuel Weeks, William Stevens, and David Dana. Daniel Tucker was an importer and proprietor of Long Wharf while other wharf owners included Ezekiel Day, Parker Ilsley Jr., William Lowell, and Joseph H. Ingraham. Captain William Moulton was involved in shipping and Benjamin Moody was a mariner. The lumber industry, a vital aspect of Portland's commerce, was linked closely with shipping, and a number of Kellogg's detractors were surveyors of lumber. A number of Kellogg's opponents were also grocers whose customer base relied on the shipping industry, and whose goods were imported, would have also been concerned over the embargo and prospect of war with Great Britain. Many of these men were interconnected through their business pursuits, including Lemuel Tukey, Lemuel Weeks, and Daniel Tucker who were involved with the construction of and gathering of tolls on Back Cove Bridge. Likewise, William Lowell, Ezekiel Day, and Parker Ilsley Jr. had similar financial interests due to their stake in the Portland Pier, constructed in 1807.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Willis, *History of Portland*, 464, 556-557, 562, 564-565; Portland City Directory, 1823, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine; *Portland Gazette*, May 12, 1804, February 18, 1805 December 1, 1806, March 9, 1807, April 20, 1807, February 8, 1808, November 21, 1808, March 20, 1809, April 10, 1809, April 24, 1809, January 22, 1810, May 7, 1810, *Eastern Argus*, December 7, 1804, August 4, 1808, September 5, 1811, Early American Newspapers.

Many of the letter's signatories lost heavily with the Embargo of 1807. In his diary, Dr. Deane of Portland, noted many "broken merchants" including Kellogg's father-in-law Joseph McClellan and Daniel Tucker. Others affected were Joseph H. Ingraham, owner of a significant amount of real estate and retailer William Stevens.¹⁵² Jacob Cram closed his business by June 1808, as did Nehemiah Cram in March 1809. By 1811, many partnerships including those involving James Chadbourn, Parker Ilsley Jr., Enoch Moody, and Ezekiel Day were dissolved, likely due to financial failure caused by the restrictions on international trade.¹⁵³ In his analysis of debt actions, the amount of debt owed, and the use of promises to pay as currency in the Early Republic, Mann concludes that the growth of market relations made bankruptcy an increasing problem, essentially "an inescapable fact of life in early America."¹⁵⁴ The experience of Portland businessmen in the years following 1807 certainly affirms this was true.

Some of these failed entrepreneurs however, were able to reconstitute themselves fairly quickly. Nehemiah Cram, who closed his business in 1809, formed a partnership the following year with John Bailey, offering goods and groceries from West India including rum and ginger, on Jones's Row.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, David Dana dissolved his partnership with John Dean in August 1808 but was able to reopen a store on Middle Street by April 1809.¹⁵⁶ Ezekiel Day and Enoch Moody were also among those able to reestablish themselves as businessmen following

¹⁵² Willis, *History of Portland*, 575; *Portland Gazette*, February 27, 1809, Early American Newspapers.

¹⁵³ *Portland Gazette*, January 11, 1808, June 6, 1808, March 20, 1809, February 11, 1811, *Eastern Argus*, May 2, 1811, *American Advocate*, April 3, 1810, Early American Newspapers.

¹⁵⁴ Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Portland Gazette*, March 20, 1809, March 5, 1809, September 10, 1810, Early American Newspapers.

¹⁵⁶ *Portland Gazette*, August 29, 1808, April 24, 1809, Early American Newspapers.

failure.¹⁵⁷ Balleisen has noted a similar phenomenon in the 1840s, noting that entrepreneurs “with influential social connections or highly demanded skills enjoyed the greatest likelihood of being able to reestablish an independent place within America’s commercial economy.”¹⁵⁸

Even though some of Kellogg’s detractors may have successfully reestablished themselves as businessmen, they would not have entertained the prospect of war, an option favored more by Republicans than by Federalists, lightly. Most of these businessmen likely viewed the Republican party as a direct threat to their financial livelihood, and if Kellogg was indeed an embodiment of that threat, then his removal was necessary. The reasons then, for Kellogg’s dismissal, were not doctrinal in nature, but political.

Whether Kellogg actually switched his political allegiance is unclear. In 1797, he compared the nascent country to France, currently embroiled in a revolution of its own. The revolution, began in 1789 but spun out of control by 1793 as suspected enemies of the revolution became victims of the guillotine. The lack of stability and order in France resulted in the coup d’etat by Napoleon and subsequently the Napoleonic Wars which engulfed most of Europe from 1803-1815. Following in the footsteps of Atlantic historians including Bernard Bailyn, Allison Games, and April Hatfield, historian Francois Furstenberg notes that the United States in the 1790s was significantly influenced by events abroad as it “was linked to those distant places by financial connections, social networks, and a continuous flow of goods.” By the mid 1790s many wealthy aristocrats and planters fleeing the violence from the Continent as well as the French Caribbean sought refuge in the United States.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ *Portland Gazette*, January 18, 1808, *Eastern Argus*, September 28, 1809, May 25, 1812, *American Advocate*, April 3, 1810, Early American Newspapers.

¹⁵⁸ Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 170.

¹⁵⁹ Francois Furstenberg, *When The United States Spoke French: Five Refugees Who Shaped a Nation*, (New York, New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 18, 255.

Kellogg took note of events in Europe and seemed to lament the direction of the revolution, referring to France as “ill-fated” and remarking that they had achieved “nothing of permanent value.”¹⁶⁰ Kellogg’s comments echo general sentiments of the Federalists party during this era. As Gordon Wood noted, Federalists were typically opposed to the French Revolution and “primed to be suspicious of anything France did.”¹⁶¹ Kellogg referenced the bitter political divisions in 1808 in a sermon where he attempted to show the reasons for God’s seeming departure from the nation. Kellogg noted that “party prejudices” were “awful evidence” of God’s withdrawal.¹⁶²

According to Greenleaf, who initially spread the story of Kellogg’s political leanings, it was well known that Kellogg visited Colonel Foxcroft (a Republican) in Boston, and that Foxcroft had visited Kellogg in Portland. Of great suspicion is the fact that the letter, which was delivered to Kinsley, was brought back to Kellogg, and then, according to Kellogg, destroyed. No extant copy of the letter survives.¹⁶³ Kellogg’s desire to receive the letter back in order to destroy it indicates he had something to hide.

Was Kellogg dismissed because of his political leanings or because of his speculation in real estate? Perhaps it was both. In their minds, parishioners may have conflated Democratic-Republican ideology and Kellogg’s speculative business dealings. In 1811, in a port city in northern New England, political issues were often economical ones as well. Kellogg certainly had a capitalist mindset, like his detractors. The issue stemmed from the fact that his business dealings, as a potential member of the opposite political party and possible competition in a hot economic market, were threatening. Many businessmen were likely liquidating holdings

¹⁶⁰ Sermon, November 1797, Box 1, Folder 10, Kellogg Family Collection, 13.

¹⁶¹ Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 239, 243.

¹⁶² Sermon, April 1808, Box 1, Folder 35, Kellogg Family Collection, 13.

¹⁶³ Correspondence, January-August 1811, Box 4, Folder 2, Kellogg Family Collection.

following the financial failures of 1807. If Kellogg was perceived as benefitting in some way from these failures, of scooping up land at a cheap price, only to sell for immense profit later, then he would have been also perceived as benefitting from the Embargo Act and the Republican Party platform in general. While the Second Church records were preserved, the records of the society seem to have been lost, presumably when the building burned down in 1866.¹⁶⁴

However, historian William Willis, in his history of Portland, published in 1865 (the year before the fire) states that Kellogg “lost his popularity and influence by engaging in speculations and pursuits outside his profession.”¹⁶⁵ Although the cause for Kellogg’s dismissal cannot be determined with an exact degree of certainty, it is highly likely that it was a combination of his land speculations as well as his alleged political opinions.

Kellogg’s congregation was divided not by a theological dispute, but by a difference in economic interests and values. The dismissal of Kellogg was a direct result of his behavior in the market. Ministers were certainly not expected to live in poverty, but they were expected to derive the bulk of their income from the support of the parish. In 1756, Reverend John Wesley reminded fellow clergy to focus on saving souls rather than improving their economic situation. Wesley admonished his listeners, asking “Was a comfortable livelihood, then, your motive for entering into the ministry?”¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, Kellogg’s speculations in real estate were likely deemed behavior contradictory to his ministerial role

¹⁶⁴ Second Congregational Church Records, 1788-1888, 624.

¹⁶⁵ Willis, *The History of Portland*, 648.

¹⁶⁶ Herbert Welch ed., *Selections From The Writings Of The Rev. John Wesley, M.A. Sometime Fellow Of Lincoln College, Oxford. Compiled And Arranged With A Preface By Herbert Welch, One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, (New York, New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1901), Google Books, accessed March 13, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Selections_from_the_Writings_of_the_Rev/e2RIAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, 278-279; Kimball, *The True Professional Ideal*, 56-57.

The alleged political activity, evidenced by the conversations of Joseph McClellan (Kellogg's father-in-law) and the letter Kellogg wrote to Martin Kinsley, threatened the pecuniary interests of a majority of pew owners in his congregation. Kellogg held the same economic values as his opponents, but was on the wrong partisan side and was thus viewed as a potential adversary. Kellogg's congregation split among economic and gender lines, the wealthy male pew owners formed the majority of his opposition, while the poorer female worshippers, who lacked political power within the church, maintained their support of their minister. The case of Kellogg illustrates that class and gender divides in the Early Republic developed in congregations upon the occasion of ministerial controversy. Ultimately, the dismissal of Kellogg reveals that wealthy pew owners desired ministers who promoted their economic and political interests, and used their voting power to ensure it happened.

The Case of Reverend John Pierpont

Reverend John Pierpont, minister of the Hollis Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts, was also at the center of a controversy in the Early Republic over his business dealings and political opinions. In 1819, he answered the call to minister at the Hollis Street Meeting House in Boston, Massachusetts.¹⁶⁷ Reverend Henry Ware delivered the ordination sermon, the theme of which was reconciliation to God. Ware preached that, "as Christ was the messenger of God, by whom he was 'reconciling the world to himself;' so the ministers of his religion are *his* ambassadors, to

¹⁶⁷ Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont, Andover Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

act for him, and to pray men ‘in his stead, to be reconciled to God.’”¹⁶⁸ In his address, Ware gave ministerial advice to Pierpont, but he also exhorted Pierpont’s congregation to work with their new minster toward salvation. Ware told the audience, “unless your minds and your hearts concur with his, of what avail will be his most faithful labors? On your cooperation must he still depend for satisfaction and for success.”¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately for Pierpont, some of his congregation would soon turn out to be less than cooperative.

Pierpont was often likened after his death to a Christian soldier. Reverend Nathaniel Hall noted of Pierpont that “though all must be, and are called to be, ‘soldiers of the cross,’ there are those who, in the tendencies of their being, and the demand of their position and their times, are called to be eminently such-and must be, or be recreant to a voice as clearly divine as ever prophet or apostle heard. And of them was he of whom I speak.”¹⁷⁰ Likewise, Reverend Cyrus August Bartol argued that Pierpont, “in the common impression...more than any other clergyman of the Unitarian denomination, represents the Church militant, stands as the good soldier of Jesus Christ, fighting, like Paul, a good fight.”¹⁷¹ Pierpont would indeed wage a Christian war, and it was one, which eventually cost him his pulpit.

Pierpont was born in Litchfield, Connecticut on April 7, 1783 as one of eight children.

Pierpont entered Yale College at the age of fifteen and graduated in 1804 at the age of nineteen.

¹⁶⁸ Henry Ware, D.D., Hollis Professor of Divinity in Harvard University, *A Sermon Delivered in Boston, April 14, 1819, At The Ordination Of The Reverend John Pierpont, To The Pastoral Charge In Hollis Street*, (Cambridge: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1819), Box 1819, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 18.

¹⁶⁹ Ware, *A Sermon Delivered in Boston, April 14, 1819*, Box 1819, 23.

¹⁷⁰ Nathaniel Hall, *A Discourse On The Life And Character Of Rev. John Pierpont, Preached In The First Church, Dorchester, Sunday, Sept. 2, 1866*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Walker, Fuller, and Company, 1866), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 8.

¹⁷¹ C.A Bartol, “The Celebration of John Pierpont’s Centennial Birthday,” in *The Unitarian Review and Religious Magazine*. Volume XXIV, (Boston, Massachusetts: Office of the Unitarian Review,) Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont, 14.

Following graduation, Pierpont was admitted to the bar and established his law practice in Boston, Massachusetts. It was less than successful, however, as one observer noted that “he found nothing to do, and spent much of his time cutting his name on ivory seals, and engraving ‘J.P.’ so beautifully that the work would easily establish the man’s reputation as a seal engraver.”¹⁷²

Likely realizing his law business would not financially sustain himself and a future family, Pierpont accepted an offer from his brother-in-law to be employed in the jobbing and retail dry goods trade in Boston. Peace in America, following the end of the War of 1812, led to prosperity for Pierpont’s employers, and he was soon sent to Baltimore to open a dry goods branch there. Under Pierpont’s management, business flourished and it was noted that, “more goods were sold for cash than in any three or four of the other similar Baltimore stores, and at prices that quite took the breath of the company’s President away.” Pierpont was soon sent to manage a wholesale trade company in Charleston, South Carolina, but under Pierpont’s management the company struggled and the entire firm, based out of Boston, soon failed. Pierpont had left Boston only a year earlier, but with the firm’s collapse he was now in significant debt.¹⁷³ Pierpont quit business, entered Cambridge Divinity School and graduated in 1818.¹⁷⁴ Pierpont was a man of strong convictions.

¹⁷² “Gift to Unitarian Parish Revives Memories of Former Famed Minister,” Aug. 27, 1942, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

¹⁷³ “Gift to Unitarian Parish Revives Memories of Former Famed Minister,” Aug. 27, 1942, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

¹⁷⁴ Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

About his convictions and purpose as a minister, Pierpont once wrote the following:

“Father, thou knowest whether, when thou saidst
‘Go feed my sheep,’ I fed them with things true,
And that because I loved thy truth and them;
Or whether I kept back from them thy truth,
And doled out falsehood, spiced with flattery,
Because they loved and asked it; and because
Not for the flock I cared, but for the fleece.”¹⁷⁵

As his actions and his words demonstrated, Pierpont did not sacrifice his convictions to avoid conflict or preserve self-interest. Although Pierpont was an advocate for multiple causes, it appears the one, which was the most controversial within his congregation, was temperance.

The trouble originated as early as 1832, although it did not peak until 1838. Pierpont was often accused of addressing controversial topics in his sermons as well as in the legislature. Of the “exciting topics,” which the Hollis Street Church proprietors expressed concern over, temperance occupied pride of place. Pierpont often attacked the liquor business during his sermons. A major source of contention involved a temperance address Pierpont gave at Saratoga in 1832 in which “he had called the vendors of ardent spirits, ‘felons’” although Pierpont denied making such a comment.¹⁷⁶ Later, Pierpont charged that after the 1832 address, Daniel Weld, one of his primary detractors, requested that the minister “touch the business as gently as you can, seeing how many of your people have supported their families by it.” Given that several proprietors were major distillers, Pierpont had touched a nerve, yet he remarked that he simply could not remain silent on the issue of temperance.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Hall, *A Discourse On The Life And Character Of Rev. John Pierpont*, 12.

¹⁷⁶ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, (Boston, Massachusetts: S.N. Dickinson, 1839), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 25.

¹⁷⁷ *Proceedings Of A Meeting Of Friends Of Rev. John Pierpont, And His Reply To The Charges Of The Committee, Of Hollis Street Society, October 27th, 1839*, (Boston, Massachusetts: S.N. Dickinson, 1839), Box 1839, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 26.

Pierpont condemned the liquor trade in several other addresses as well. Reverend Bartol remarked that Pierpont's sermon "*The Burning of the Ephesian Letters*," was "a flank movement on the distillery which no direct assailant of intemperance could suppress."¹⁷⁸ In the sermon, delivered in 1833, Pierpont compared liquor to the Ephesian Letters, magical books used in ancient Greece and Rome and referenced in the Bible. Pierpont asked his congregation to consider whether burning the books was wasteful, "for they might have been sold for more than sixty thousand dollars, and their proceeds devoted to charity, or to defraying the expenses of the apostle's journey, or to the founding of churches in Jerusalem."¹⁷⁹ Pierpont went on to make the point, however, that the ends do not always justify the means. He argued the burning of the books was preferable to selling them for "if thou carest for the poor, or if, by wealth, thou wouldest swell the treasury of the Lord, see that thou doest that service with clean hands."¹⁸⁰ The books, like liquor, were not goods that Pierpont thought would "contribute to enjoyment" but would instead be a source of sin.¹⁸¹

To those who argued they made their money selling the books (the metaphor for liquor), Pierpont advocated a spirit of reform and replied that all employments eventually fade away due to "human improvement."¹⁸² For Pierpont, this principle applied to people of every socio-economic class, rich and poor alike. Although the burning of the books (and the destruction of liquor) would harm the richest citizens, Pierpont noted that, "the plague, in your sister city Athens, was not the less a dreadful scourge, because it fell upon her *archons*. And that gospel which we preach, 'for the healing of the nations,' would do but half its work, were its salutary

¹⁷⁸ Bartol, "The Celebration of John Pierpont's Centennial Birthday," Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont, 19.

¹⁷⁹ Pierpont, *The Burning Of The Ephesian Letters*, Box 1834, 5.

¹⁸⁰ Pierpont, *The Burning Of The Ephesian Letters*, Box 1834, 7.

¹⁸¹ Pierpont, *The Burning Of The Ephesian Letters*, Box 1834, 5, 7, 10.

¹⁸² Pierpont, *The Burning Of The Ephesian Letters*, Box 1834, 11.

power confined to cases of plebeian suffering.”¹⁸³ For Pierpont, economic and political power did not liberate an individual from moral and religious responsibility.

As in his sermons, Pierpont promoted temperance through his poetry, becoming known in the Boston area, as the “Temperance Poet.” One such poem, from a volume titled “*Airs of Palestine and Other Poems*,” referenced biblical figures and places, arguing alcohol would not have increased the bravery of Moses or improved the beauty of Eden. The poem was written by Pierpont in July 1837 to celebrate the opening of a Marlborough hotel as a temperance house.

Pierpont contended:

Of Eden’s strength and bloom
Cold water thus hath given,
If, even beyond the tomb,
It is the drink of heaven,
Are not good wells
And crystal springs
The very things
For our hotels?¹⁸⁴

Pierpont’s none too subtle attack on the liquor industry in his sermons and his poetry, planted the seeds of the controversy, which sprouted in the fall of 1838. Although Pierpont’s writings certainly irked members of his congregation, nothing provoked their anger as much as his political activism.

Temperance was a divisive topic in the 1830s, and caused controversies in many Massachusetts towns. As Mary Babson Fuhrer notes, in her study of Boylston, located forty-five miles outside of Boston, when Rev. William Stanford attempted to persuade “his flock to embrace total abstinence for all new members and church discipline for those who violated this

¹⁸³ Pierpont, *The Burning Of The Ephesian Letters*, Box 1834, 9.

¹⁸⁴ “Reminiscences: Memories of Cambridge and Boston-Old Places and Old People-Some Thoughts by a Western Poet,” 1863, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

principle” several congregants transferred membership to other area churches.¹⁸⁵ Pierpont was likely heavily influenced by Lyman Beecher, a minister who first preached in Pierpont’s hometown of Litchfield, Connecticut, and later in Boston where Pierpont would also preach. Beecher, like others in the Early Republic, was concerned by the quantities of alcohol Americans were consuming and the social ills that accompanied it. Daniel Walker Howe notes that “in 1825, the average American over fifteen years of age consumed seven gallons of alcohol a year, mostly in the form of whiskey and hard cider,” an increase of five gallons from the turn of the century. In order to address intemperance, Beecher founded the American Temperance Society in Boston in 1826, of which Pierpont was an active member.¹⁸⁶

It was Pierpont’s political activism that likely caused the controversy to reach a critical point. In 1838, the same year charges were first brought against Pierpont, he and other Boston ministers, including Lyman Beecher, and Henry Ware (who gave the sermon at Pierpont’s ordination), were instrumental in achieving the passage of Massachusetts’ highly controversial fifteen-gallon law. Essentially, the law, adopted on April 19, 1838, prohibited anyone from selling alcohol in quantities less than fifteen gallons at a time. The fine for breaking the law was ten dollars per offense with a maximum total of twenty dollars.¹⁸⁷ The law was structured as such to essentially restrict the purchase of alcohol to the wealthy, who could afford to buy in large quantities and also to prohibit sales at retail shops. As W.J. Rorabaugh argues, the

¹⁸⁵ Mary Babson Fuhrer, *A Crisis of Community: The Trials and Transformation of a New England Town, 1815-1848*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 158.

¹⁸⁶ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 166-168.

¹⁸⁷ Laws Of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed By The Acts and Resolves Passed By The General Court, In The Years 1837 and 1838, Boston: Dutton And Wentworth, 1839, accessed March 8, 2018,

<https://archive.org/stream/actsresolvespass3738mass#page/442/mode/2up>, 442.

temperance movement often targeted the poor (viewed as lacking restraint), as a way to prevent capital from being squandered on drink.¹⁸⁸

After the fifteen-gallon law passed, opponents published their objections, in a report titled, *Investigation Into the Fifteen Gallon Law Of Massachusetts*. The authors referred to the remarks of several Christian ministers, including Henry Ware (who delivered Pierpont's ordination sermon), Lyman Beecher, and Pierpont. Calling the remarks of all "unchristian denunciations," opponents referred specifically to Pierpont's remark that "the evils of intemperance can never cease until the virtuous in society shall unite in pronouncing the man who attempts to accumulate wealth by dealing out poison and death to his neighbor, as infamous." The report argued, "harsh epithets have led to harsh laws. This law was preceded by a systematic attempt to create a new moral offence in society. Professedly christian men publicly branded their fellow citizens who were as free from crime or evil intent as themselves, with robbery and murder."¹⁸⁹

It was not just that Pierpont was politically active; it was that he was politically active in a cause that threatened the pecuniary interest of some of his wealthiest congregants. A significant number of Pierpont's detractors were linked to the alcohol trade or had been at one time.

Windsor Fay, Jabez Fisher, Jon Minot, and William Fay were among the distillers while Daniel

¹⁸⁸ Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 204-205; *Fifteen Gallon: Or The Tyranny And Injustice Of Sumptuary Law: An Appeal To The Good Sense Of The People Of Massachusetts*, (Boston, Massachusetts, 1830), Google Books, accessed January 25, 2020, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Fifteen_Gallons_Or_The_Tyranny_and_Injus/uhkZAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, 9.

¹⁸⁹ *Investigation Into The Fifteen Gallon Law Of Massachusetts, Before A Joint Committee Of The Legislature, Which Began Jan. 29 and Closed Feb. 20, 1839, Upon The Memorial Of Harrison Gray Otis And Others For The Repeal Of The Law: With The Arguments Of Franklin Dexter & B.F. Hallett, As Counsel in support of the Memorial*, Boston, Massachusetts: J.H. Buckingham, 1839, Google Books, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://books.google.com/books?id=6xkZAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=investigation+into+the+fifteen+gallon+law&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiN5aKZn9vZAhWD7lMKHbGFDzKQ6AEIKjAA#v=onepage&q=investigation%20into%20the%20fifteen%20gallon%20law&f=false>, 39.

Weld, John B. Weld, Warren White, and David Williams were grocers who sold goods from West India, among them alcohol. Some of these men owned multiple pews, resulting in disproportionate amount of voting power. John B. Weld for example, purchased at least eleven pews between 1839 and 1840, a likely attempt to increase his influence within the religious society.¹⁹⁰ One of Pierpont's supporters noted "other clergymen signed petitions, and appeared before the committee of the Legislature, and made addresses also at the same time; but I have never heard that their parishioners sought to expel them from their pulpits, or even complained of them for it."¹⁹¹ For Pierpont however, the fact that many proprietors earned a living from alcohol made temperance a topic to be broached carefully.

At the annual proprietor's meeting on September 10th, 1838, concern over Pierpont's activities was formally addressed. The proprietors "*Voted*, That many members of this Society have viewed with deep regret the zeal of their reverend Pastor in those exciting topics which divide and disturb the harmony of their community." Additionally, the proprietors expressed the opinion that "the precepts of the gospel do not warrant him, as a Christian minister, in interfering

¹⁹⁰ Samuel K. Lothrop, Scribe Of The Council, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council, In The Case Of The Proprietors Of Hollis-Street Meeting-House And The Rev. John Pierpont, their Pastor*, (Boston, Massachusetts: W.W. Clapp & Son, 1841), Google Books, accessed March 9, 2018,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=bF9e7YLQRZUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=proceedings+of+ecclesiastical+council+samuel+lothrop&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj3ueq28DWAhUP4WMKHxJ0DPgQ6AEIJTAA#v=onepage&q=proceedings%20of%20ecclesiastical%20council%20samuel%20lothrop&f=false>, 186-187; *Stimpson's Boston Directory; Containing The Names Of The Inhabitants, Their Occupations, Places Of Business, And Dwelling Houses, And The City Register, With Lists Of The Streets, Lanes and Wharves, The City Officers, Public Offices And Banks, And Other Useful Information*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Stimpson and Clapp, 1832), Google Books, accessed March 21, 2018,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=raQtAAAAyAAJ&pg=PA18-IA3&dq=daniel+weld+boston&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiw4Jmc6P7ZAhWCneAKHTkwBww4FBD0AQg6MAQ#v=onepage&q=david%20williams&f=false>, 328.

¹⁹¹ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 17.

with the established laws of the land: * but that the alteration of old and the adoption of new laws, belong to legislators duly elected for that purpose.” A committee was formed to speak with Pierpont about the stated concerns, and to report back on their communication.¹⁹²

Although concerns were raised at the September 1838 meeting about Pierpont’s temperance activity, Pierpont’s dismissal was not yet the certain outcome. In response to the proprietors’ concerns, Pierpont wrote a letter in which he asked the proprietors if their intent was his removal from the pulpit. The proprietors replied to the minister that his dismissal was not their purpose.¹⁹³ At this point, the communication between Pierpont and the proprietors maintained a conciliatory tone. Pierpont even acknowledged that although his intent was pure, he questioned, “whether my means were the best” and promised to avoid such topics in the future.¹⁹⁴

Less than four months later, however, Pierpont apparently decided he could not persist in holding his tongue. On January 27, 1839, Pierpont delivered a sermon titled *The Moral Rule of Political Action*, in which he stated “if I, with my lights or opportunities for forming a judgment upon the subject, am verily convinced that war, drunkenness, and involuntary servitude, are moral evils...and if I believe, moreover, that moral action, by means of political machinery, will tend to remove or diminish these evils, I must, and...I *shall* cast my vote for those who...will most efficiently legislate for the moral wellbeing of the state.”¹⁹⁵ Pierpont’s defense of his right

¹⁹² *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 5.

¹⁹³ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 6-7.

¹⁹⁴ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 10-11.

¹⁹⁵ John Pierpont, *The Moral Rule of Political Action: A Discourse, Delivered In Hollis Street Church, Sunday, January 27, 1839*, (Boston, Massachusetts: James Munroe & Co., 1839), Box 1839, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 19.

to address the moral failings of society through political action clearly heightened the concerns of several proprietors.

The attempt to legally restrict the sale of alcohol was a fairly radical method of temperance reform. As Rorabaugh details in *The Alcohol Republic*, reformers in the 1820s mostly utilized moral persuasion to encourage abstinence. Reformers “advocated religious faith as a way for people to ease the anxieties that led to drink” and portrayed “liquor as the agent of the devil.” In order to further the ideal of a dry society, reformers worked to establish temperance societies, hotels and dry boat lines among other methods.¹⁹⁶ Pierpont’s move to promote abstinence as a legal requirement, rather than a moral choice, likely roused more ire in his congregation than other, more traditional methods of reform.

Following Pierpont’s delivery of *The Moral Rule of Political Action*, at the proprietor’s annual meeting, Windsor Fay, a prominent distiller in the Boston area, questioned the continued “usefulness” of Pierpont as the minister of the Hollis Street Church.¹⁹⁷ The committee adjourned until September 9th, at which point Fay’s question was withdrawn in favor of a vote proposed by Daniel Weld, also involved in the alcohol trade, to dissolve the connection between the church and Pierpont.¹⁹⁸ After the vote was proposed, Francis Jackson expressed his view that the primary cause of concern was the petition, which, Pierpont wrote to the Massachusetts General Court, advocating for legislation to promote temperance. Jackson argued that “this act of his has caused by far the most uneasiness among us” but defended Pierpont’s right to political action, noting “have we not all a perfect right to petition the Legislature. . . . and has not our minister

¹⁹⁶ Rorabaugh, *The Alcohol Republic*, 192-193, 194-196, 216-217.

¹⁹⁷ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 12; Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 186.

¹⁹⁸ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 13; Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 186.

equal rights with us?"¹⁹⁹ Jackson's arguments in defense of Pierpont may have held sway, as the vote to dismiss Pierpont was defeated, fifty-eight to fifty-six.²⁰⁰

The meeting was adjourned to September 16th and the results of the vote were delivered to Pierpont. Pierpont noted that the vote was lost and emphasized the importance of an independent pulpit. Additionally, he recommended that his opponents withdraw from their pews if they remained dissatisfied with him. Pierpont also pointed out that several individuals had offered him a year's salary to resign, which he viewed as a bribe and therefore declined.²⁰¹ Pierpont's letter, and his suggestion that certain proprietors quit their pews apparently struck a nerve, and another vote was proposed to dismiss the minister at the September 16th meeting, this time by Joshua Crane.²⁰² It may have been that Pierpont's response only served to increase his detractors' determination. In Pierpont's defense at the subsequent ecclesiastical council, it was alleged that although Crane was not involved in the alcohol trade, he was persuaded to offer the motion by Moses Williams and Daniel Weld who were.²⁰³ Weld and Williams likely persuaded Crane to lead the charge against Pierpont in an effort to disguise the true motive.

James Boyd offered a countervote to Crane's motion. While Crane desired to dismiss Pierpont, Boyd offered a vote "that this Society approve and will endeavor to sustain the principles of entire freedom and independence of its pulpit." Although Boyd disagreed with Pierpont's views on temperance, he defended his right to free speech and encouraged that the

¹⁹⁹ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 16.

²⁰⁰ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 29.

²⁰¹ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 30, 33, 37-38.

²⁰² *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 40, 44.

²⁰³ Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 289.

Society retain him as their minister.²⁰⁴ The results of Boyd's vote was sixty-three against and sixty-one in favor. The result of Crane's vote was almost the reverse, sixty-three in favor, and sixty against.²⁰⁵ The vote for Pierpont's dismissal was finally successful.

While it is not exactly clear what liquor the distillers opposed to Pierpont were producing, it is quite likely that most or all were involved in the rum trade.²⁰⁶ Prior to the 1800s, Boston, along with other seaboard cities including Salem and Newport, was well known for its rum production. Boston's thirty-six distilleries in 1770 contributed significantly to Boston's economy as much of the rum was exported to Africa, which was often used to trade for slaves.²⁰⁷ Even after 1802, when the repeal of a tax on whiskey made that liquor cheaper and more plentiful, the production of rum still remained profitable on the Atlantic seaport.²⁰⁸ Additionally, opponents of the fifteen-gallon law, passed in Massachusetts in 1838, were identified specifically as producers and sellers of rum and among these opponents were those who later pressed charges against Pierpont.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 40-41.

²⁰⁵ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 49.

²⁰⁶ The city directory of Boston in 1832 lists "distiller" as an occupation but does not specify what type of liquor was being produced. See *Stimpson's Boston Directory*.

²⁰⁷ Rorabaugh, *The Alcohol Republic*, 63; Charles A. Coulombe, *Rum: The Epic Story of the Drink That Conquered the World*, (New York, New York: Citadel Press, 2004), 5; Charles Bahne, *Chronicles of Old Boston: Exploring New England's Historic Capital*, (New York, New York: Museyon, Inc., 2012), 163.

²⁰⁸ Rorabaugh, *The Alcohol Republic*, 68-69.

²⁰⁹ *The Boston Opposition To The New Law For The Suppression Of Rum Shops And Grog Shops, Fully Detected And Plainly Exposed; Being An Appeal To The Country People Of Massachusetts To Protect Themselves*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Perkins & Marvin, 1838), Google Books, accessed July 16, 2018, <https://books.google.com/books?id=tfcoAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA27&dq=rum+and+boston&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiE2bj1n6fcAhVEba0KHfl1D0kQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=rum%20and%20boston&f=false>, 11; *Argument of Hon. Emory Washburn, Before An Ecclesiastical Council, Convened In Hollis Street Meeting House, July, 1841: With The Charges Preferred By*

One of Pierpont's descendants, Mary Pierpont McGlenen, later claimed that some of the parishioners who were distillers stored their liquor in the basement of the church.²¹⁰ This appears to have been a common practice as liquor was also stored in the basement of the Second Congregational Church in Portland, Maine where Kellogg ministered, likely because molasses stores best in cool, dark places. In a historical address given at the Second Church's centennial celebration, it was noted that the church rented out the cellar as a storeroom for molasses but it was rumored that "the fumes of a stronger liquid" were also discovered. Renting out such unused space provided much needed revenue for the church.²¹¹

As in Kellogg's church, the economic power outside Hollis Street Church led to political power within it. Only the pew owners at the Hollis Street Church had the right to vote on church affairs rather than those who could not afford pews, but were often members. Apparently, pew owners in the Hollis Street Church were not required to be worshippers there or be affiliated with Unitarianism.²¹² Individuals often purchased pews more for the influence it provided and less so for religious reasons, which is supported by the typical inverse relationship between church membership and proprietors. In an address given in Pierpont's defense by the Honorable Emory Washburn, this method of political power, which ignored the will of all females (who could not vote) as well as those who could not afford pews but were members, was criticized as "a doctrine that partakes more of the narrow technicalities of a close corporation, than the expanded charities

The Proprietors Of Said Meeting House Against The Rev. John Pierpont, And The Results Of Said Council, (Boston, Massachusetts: Samuel N. Dickinson, 1841), 71.

²¹⁰ Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

²¹¹ Second Congregational Records, 1788-1888, 626.

²¹² *Argument of Hon. Emory Washburn*, 75; Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

of the Christian religion.” Washburn argued that the controversy erupted “*because wealth has been lavished here to buy up and control this pulpit.*”²¹³ In this Washburn was correct.

Pierpont, however, did not go quietly. In his response to the vote in favor of his dismissal, Pierpont invoked the business rhetoric of the day and argued that “my connexion [sic] with you is the result of a mutual contract; a contract in which important interests and legal rights and responsibilities are involved; and as it takes two parties to make a contract, so it takes two to unmake it.” Pierpont requested an ecclesiastical council be held to determine the outcome instead.²¹⁴ Pierpont’s supporters, who had lost their initial bid to retain their minister, supported the idea of a council at the October 7th 1839 meeting of the proprietors. The meeting was adjourned until the 14th of that month, at which time an appointed committee would present its report on the entire affair.²¹⁵

At this point, Pierpont’s opponents expanded their list of charges. In addition to the “exciting topics” Pierpont was accused of addressing, he was also charged with being distracted from his ministry and therefore not fulfilling his duties to the best of his abilities. Essentially, Pierpont was criticized for focusing on his business endeavors rather than his responsibilities as minister. The report offered at the October 14th, 1839 meeting, accused Pierpont of being distracted “by the making of *Books*, and the manufacture of *Stoves*, and *Screws*, and *RAZOR STRAPS*-and by entering into *every* exciting topic that the ingenuity of the fanatic at home, or the imported Mountebank could conjure up to distract and disturb the public mind, such as *Imprisonment for Debt*, the *Militia Law*, *Antimasonry*, *Phrenology*, *Temperance*, and last of all, and above all, the

²¹³ *Argument of Hon. Emory Washburn*, 96-97.

²¹⁴ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 50, 52.

²¹⁵ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 53, 56.

Abolition of Slavery.” The committee voted to adjourn and to have the report printed and disseminated in the church’s pews.²¹⁶

Following the meeting, although the Society had not made any decision regarding the report, Joshua Crane leaked a copy of the report to the Commercial Gazette which prompted a meeting of Pierpont’s supporters in order to offer “an antidote” for “the insidious poison thus administered to the public.”²¹⁷ Pierpont’s friends desired that the public have possession of *both* sides of the story. At their meeting on October 27th, 1839, they decided to publicize Pierpont’s reply to the proprietors’ charges, and disseminate it in the pews. Additionally, they requested a list of the sixty-three people who voted against Pierpont on September 30th “distinguishing those who are worshippers in Hollis Street Meeting House, from those who are not” as well as the names of people who were worshippers, but not pew owners, and therefore without voting power. Pierpont’s supporters alleged that people who owned pews cast many of the votes against Pierpont, but were not regular attendees at services, and that the majority of regular worshippers supported Pierpont, although they could not vote.²¹⁸ In many ways, as in the case of Kellogg, this division was representative of class and gender conflict. Many who were wealthy enough to own pews, but were perhaps not worshippers, desired Pierpont’s removal, while those who could not afford pews, but were worshippers, wanted him to remain as minister.

In November of 1839, Pierpont continued to antagonize his opponents. He delivered a sermon titled, *The Reformer and the Conservative* in which he argued that while the reformer needs to prove the necessity of change, the conservative needs to hold onto things because they

²¹⁶ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 56-57, 60.

²¹⁷ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 60.

²¹⁸ *Proceedings Of A Meeting Of Friends Of Rev. John Pierpont*, Box 1839, 4-6.

are “*comparatively* good” not because they are “*positively* good” or because they are “old.” Pierpont aimed much of the sermon at conservatives, giving numerous examples of conservatives who ridiculed secular reformers including Galileo and Socrates by calling them “fanatics” or “radicals.” Pierpont argued that “the hard names, the abusive epithets that were lavished upon them by the conservatives of their times, went not a step towards either holding back the onward movement of the human mind, or complying with the injunction of the apostle that requires us to ‘prove all things;’ for they proved nothing but that bigoted attachment to the past.”²¹⁹

In 1840, two years after the scandal that roiled the Hollis Street Church, and while he was still the minister there, Pierpont made an “eloquent” address before the Massachusetts branch of the American Tract Society. Pierpont argued that the society resolve to “direct the attention of the public to the iniquity of giving the sanction of law to any immorality, under pretence [sic] of regulating it or restraining it.” To Pierpont, legislation that restricted the sale of alcohol, although perhaps well intended, actually served to condone what he considered immoral behavior. Complete abstinence was thus the only viable and Christian solution to the problem of intemperance.²²⁰

Later that same year, both Pierpont and the proprietors agreed on the necessity of an ecclesiastical council to settle the dispute. The council, comprised of fourteen Boston Unitarian

²¹⁹ John Pierpont, *The Reformer And The Conservative: A Discourse Delivered In Hollis Street Church, Sunday, November 24th, 1839*, (Boston: S.N. Dickinson, 1840), Box 1840, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 6-7, 10-14.

²²⁰ Annual Report Of The Council Of The Massachusetts Temperance Society, May 29, 1840. With Other Documents, (Boston, Massachusetts: John S. March, 1840), Google Books, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://books.google.com/books?id=r6sYAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=american+temperance+society+and+pierpont&source=bl&ots=LnqLNQ6xrR&sig=xXbiKoC9SD6VCoZ1Hz06gmloy8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwikjp2Ng9vZAhVH0YMKHbRqCYQ6AEITTAf#v=onepage&q=american%20temperance%20society%20and%20pierpont&f=false>, 22.

ministers and a delegate from each of their respective churches, after listening to both sides present their evidence, rendered their decision on August 9th, 1841. The council essentially broke the initial ten charges into three categories, charges relating to his “moral character,” his “ministerial character,” and those charges relating to whether Pierpont conducted himself in a Christian manner in written and spoken word since the controversy began in 1838. The council declared that as to the charges against his “moral character,” there was insufficient evidence and therefore the charges were “not sustained.” The council agreed with Pierpont’s opponents that he had been involved in “secular pursuits” but maintained “his right to do so” and declared there was a lack of evidence to show that such pursuits detracted from his ministerial duties.

However, the council did acknowledge that Pierpont was perhaps extreme in his address of certain topics, causing undue agitation. Yet, the council moderated this statement, noting “that if there was sometimes a want of prudence, gentleness and discretion in the Pastor, there may have been, on the part of some of his hearers, unconsciously a susceptibility to offence, which led them to attach a stronger meaning and to make a more pointed application of his sermons.”

While acknowledging some ministerial failing on the part of Pierpont, the council did not believe it significant enough to remove him from the pulpit. As to the charges that Pierpont had conducted himself in an unchristian manner after 1838 in regard to the controversy, the council found these largely sustained, declaring that Pierpont’s communications were often harsh and lacked a conciliatory tone. However, the council did not feel this charge justified Pierpont’s removal, noting that “it appeared in evidence that a majority of the worshippers in Hollis Street Meeting-House, a majority of proprietors now worshipping there, and nearly all the members of the Church, are satisfied with the Pastor.” To move forward, the council advised both Pierpont

and his opponents to attempt reconciliation.²²¹ For now, Pierpont was vindicated. Yet that did not mean maintaining his pulpit would be any easier. In 1845, Pierpont agreed to resign. It is unclear what prompted him to do so. Perhaps he simply tired of the conflict or determined he might do more good elsewhere.

Although Pierpont's involvement in the marketplace was offered as one of the reasons for dismissal, many, including Pierpont, argued that his involvement in temperance was the primary cause. At the time, both Pierpont and his supporters within the church argued that temperance was "*the head and front, of his offending.*"²²² Over forty years after the controversy, Bartol, a Unitarian minister and friend of Pierpont, reflected that although "there were ten written charges" against Pierpont, "his attack on the liquor interest in Boston was his main fault."²²³

Parishioners of Hollis Street Church criticized Pierpont for his engagement with the business world. However, friends of Pierpont defended such activity, pointing out that his involvement in the dry goods trade earlier in his life had left him with substantial debt that he was trying to repay. His minister's salary, of \$2200 annually in 1820, while enough to sustain him, seemed not enough to also extinguish his debt. Although Pierpont could have pursued avenues to lessen his burden, he "refused to legally exempt himself" as he "felt morally bound to pay his bills."²²⁴ In *A Discourse On The Life And Character Of Rev. John Pierpont*, preached following

²²¹ Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 5-6, 11, 24-25, 32-33, 374-375, 379-383.

²²² *Hollis Street Church Report of the Committee of the Proprietors of the Meeting House In Hollis Street: Upon the "Result" of the Late Mutual Ecclesiastical Council*, Box 1839, (Boston, Massachusetts: Clapp & Son, 1839), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 21; *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 16, 43; *Proceedings Of A Meeting Of Friends of Rev. John Pierpont*, Box 1839, 26-28.

²²³ Bartol, "The Celebration of John Pierpont's Centennial Birthday," Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont, 21.

²²⁴ Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont; Hollis Street Church Records, 1787-1879, Vouchers, 1815-1826, Box 1, Folder 4, Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Pierpont's death, Hall noted Pierpont's sense of responsibility to his creditors. Hall stated that following his business failure, Pierpont, "surrendered at once his comfortable home for one among the humblest, and lived with his family on scantiest food, rather than touch what he felt belonged to his creditors, though the usages of mercantile life in such cases, as he was told and as he knew, allowed him." According to Hall, Pierpont worked his entire life to repay his debt, using the proceeds from poetry written during his retirement to complete the efforts.²²⁵

Was Pierpont's zeal for temperance the primary cause of the conflict? Several facts seem to support Pierpont and his supporters' assertion that it was. First, in 1838, when the proprietors initially expressed concern over Pierpont's usefulness as a minister, nothing was mentioned of his business involvement, his character, or any of the other charges that would be brought later. The proprietors expressed concern *only* over his "zeal...in those exciting topics which divide and disturb the harmony of the community" and his political activism.²²⁶ The other charges, including his business dealings, were added more than a year later, after Pierpont refused to relent, in order to strengthen the case against him. While other charges aside from temperance may have been perceived as valid, however, they did not constitute the starting point.²²⁷

Secondly, the timing of the charges lends validity to Pierpont's theory that temperance was the genesis of the conflict. Pierpont was active in 1838 in the Massachusetts Legislature, urging political reform related to alcohol consumption.²²⁸ Additionally, after the initial concerns were

²²⁵ Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

²²⁶ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 5.

²²⁷ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 56-58.

²²⁸ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, Box 1839, 16.

expressed about Pierpont's political activity, he provoked further anger by delivering a sermon in which he defended his right to do so.²²⁹

Thirdly, the identity of Pierpont's opponents is also telling. Two of the three proprietors who introduced the motions against Pierpont were major distillers. Daniel Weld and Winsor Fay were two primary opponents, introducing motions to vote on Pierpont's dismissal. Additionally, it was alleged in Pierpont's defense that Joshua Crane had been persuaded to introduce a motion by Moses Williams and Weld, both of whom were involved in the business of alcohol.²³⁰

Moreover, the purchase of several pews by major distillers who were not worshippers in the months leading up to the conflict indicates a concerted effort to consolidate an opposition bloc.²³¹ After 1839, when the controversy involving Pierpont was in full swing, several major distillers, who were allegedly not current worshippers in the church bought pews, and in some cases, multiple pews. From 1839, until 1841 when the council was held, a total of thirty-nine and one half pews were sold in Hollis Street Church. Thirteen and one half were sold to Pierpont's supporters, while his opponents bought twenty-six. Of these twenty-six, no less than twenty-two were bought by nine individuals who were either currently involved in making or selling alcohol or had been at one time.²³² These purchases were an obvious attempt to wield power and silence clergy who might be vocal with their opposition to liquor.

Finally, the ecclesiastical council seemed to view the dissatisfaction with Pierpont as the opinions of a select few, noting that the majority of people in the congregation desired to retain

²²⁹ Pierpont, *Moral Rule of Political Action*, Box 1839, 8, 21; *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church*, 18.

²³⁰ Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 186, 289.

²³¹ *Proceedings Of A Meeting Of Friends Of Rev. John Pierpont, And His Reply To The Charges Of The Committee, Of Hollis Street Society, October 27th*, 1839, Box 1839, 29.

²³² Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 186-187.

Pierpont as their minister.²³³ Distillers and people who trafficked in liquor, owned multiple pews and therefore had significant voting power, constituted the majority of his detractors. Had temperance *not* been the main cause of the scandal, the scope of dissatisfaction would have likely been larger.

In the case of Pierpont, as in the case of Kellogg, the issue was not theological in nature. The issue was both economic and political. Distillers and dealers of alcohol felt that their business interests were threatened by Pierpont's views on temperance and his political activity.

Although Pierpont's business dealings were not a primary cause, it is telling that his opponents felt it a charge valid enough to justify Pierpont's dismissal and to sustain before the ecclesiastical council. The first charge presented before the ecclesiastic council was that "his too great attention to secular business" caused him to "neglect his parochial duties."²³⁴ Additionally, the proprietors questioned the morality of some of his business dealings, charging that "his secular dealings" were "wanting in that scrupulous integrity which is necessary to the respectability and usefulness of a christian minister."²³⁵ The unscrupulous business dealings essentially involved three separate incidents. Pierpont was accused of failing to fulfill a contract in which he agreed to furnish letters to Mr. William W. Clapp, (one of Pierpont's opponents in the controversy), while traveling in Europe, for publication in the Evening Gazette, for which he was paid two hundred and fifty dollars in advance. After sending one letter, Pierpont declared he was too ill to send more and returned the money. The council found this to be a legitimate reason for breaking the contract. Pierpont's opponents however, claimed he violated the contract since he was well enough to write other letters and returned the money without interest. Pierpont

²³³ Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 382.

²³⁴ Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 32.

²³⁵ Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 375.

was accused of later deciding the rate per letter was too low and that was the real reason he failed to fulfill his obligation to Clapp. Following the council's decision, Pierpont's opponents questioned whether the council understood "the morality of contracts" and noted that "the business of society could hardly get along, if when the day of payment came, the vendor had his option of rescinding a contract, which had turned out disadvantageous, and if the man whose labor had been purchased, paid for, and depended upon, could thus throw down the money and absolve himself from his bargain."²³⁶ Such a view reflects a need in the Early Republic to shore up public confidence in economic instruments and the individuals who utilized them.

The second incident involved a copyright of one of Pierpont's books. Pierpont's opponents claimed he promised William B. Fowle first right of refusal to the copyright, yet gave it to another without consulting Fowle. The council found that Pierpont did not "pledge the copyright of the book, but merely his share of the proceeds" in order to pay a debt. Although the council absolved Pierpont, they also noted that the question was one of "legal right" and should ultimately be determined by "a higher and more competent tribunal." The proprietors complained that the "cause of these transactions was not specified" by the council in their decision.²³⁷

The last charge related to Pierpont's involvement with the manufacture of a "Steel Hone," a device to sharpen razors. Pierpont was allegedly given the "Steel Hone" for his personal use by the inventor, with the understanding that as he was seeking a patent, Pierpont not publicize the invention. Eight or ten years later, a mechanic began manufacturing and selling the "steel

²³⁶ *Hollis Street Church Report Of The Committee Of The Proprietors Of The Meeting House In Hollis Street: Upon The 'Result,'* Box 1839, 8-10; Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 376.

²³⁷ *Hollis Street Church Report Of The Committee Of The Proprietors Of The Meeting House In Hollis Street: Upon The "Result,"* Box 1839, 7; Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 375-376.

hones,” the original source of which was said to be Pierpont. The council, noting that Pierpont did not claim invention of the “steel hone” and did not receive any profit from its manufacture, expressed “regret” that the inventor had not addressed this with Pierpont earlier. The council also noted that “no satisfactory account was given” by the inventor “of his delay during all this time to procure a patent, a circumstance which might naturally lead the Pastor to conclude that he no longer considered the matter as of any importance, and inasmuch, also, as improvements in the application of steel for the purpose of sharpening had meanwhile been made.” Additionally, the council found it unclear as to how the device ended up in the hands of the mechanic who later reproduced it. Upon this decision by the council, the proprietors made “no comment,” as the council found “only certain of the facts specified, proved to their satisfaction.”²³⁸

What these charges against Pierpont related to his business dealings reveal is that during the Early Republic, congregations began to question the extent of involvement of their ministers in temporal affairs (both political and economic) as well as the nature of any business transactions. Patents, copyrights, and contracts became important tools in the evolving marketplace, and businessmen were struggling to enforce marketplace norms. Pierpont’s case affirms what other historians, including Jessica M. Lepler, Karen Halttunen, and Scott Reynolds Nelson have already noted, knowing who to trust in business dealings in the Early Republic was a significant issue.²³⁹ As Scott A. Sandage states, “*trust* was the trickiest pun in the capitalist idiom. In the

²³⁸ Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 376-377; *Hollis Street Church Report Of The Committee Of The Proprietors Of The Meeting House In Hollis Street: Upon The ‘Result,’* Box 1839, 10.

²³⁹ Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study Of Middle-Class Culture In America, 1830-1870*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982); Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, And The Creation Of A Transatlantic Financial Crisis*, (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Scott Reynolds Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America’s Financial Disasters*, (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

vernacular, it meant not only interpersonal confidence but also financial credit.”²⁴⁰ Although people in the Early Republic likely desired that everyone adhere to established norms in order to inspire confidence, ministers were clearly held to a higher standard. Or at the very least, any perceived marketplace failings were inevitably held up to the light for scrutiny as ministers occupied a visible position in society.

The fight for Pierpont’s dismissal was not yet over. Following the decision of the ecclesiastical council, the proprietors of the Hollis Street Church refused to pay Pierpont’s salary. His supporters however, voluntarily paid his salary in order to retain his services. When his detractors persisted in continuing the controversy by filing a bill of discovery with the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Pierpont responded by suing for his back salary. The Court affirmed the decision of the ecclesiastical council, dismissed the bill of discovery and ordered the costs of Pierpont paid. Following the payment of his past salary, Pierpont tendered his resignation.²⁴¹

The controversy involving Pierpont and the proprietors is important in part because it quickly gained what David Waldstreicher has called “extralocal significance.” Waldstreicher contends that local celebrations influenced the nation through the dissemination of the printed record of such celebrations.²⁴² Like sermons during the Early Republic, church proceedings were often printed and disseminated, lending validity to the argument that this research is historically important and may perhaps be generalized to churches in other regions. In this case, the

²⁴⁰ Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History Of Failure In America*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 106.

²⁴¹ Proprietors of Meeting-House v. Pierpont, 48 Mass. 495, 1844 Mass. LEXIS 31, 7 Met. 495 (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Suffolk and Nantucket March, 1844, Decided); Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

²⁴² David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press), 11.

controversy, which engulfed the Hollis Street Church, attracted national attention, prompting the publication of all pertinent documents in one collective form. As those who compiled and printed the documents noted, “a deep interest was felt for the result, by many persons, entire strangers, *personally*, to all the parties concerned. A great number, too, of the public papers in the country, and some in the city, seemed to view the contest as one of public importance, and very generously used their columns in spreading before their readers the documents which emanated from time to time.”²⁴³

After leaving Hollis Street Church, which he ministered at from 1819 to 1845, Pierpont became the minister of a church in Troy, N.Y. where he replaced Rev. Caleb Stetson. Pierpont’s views on temperance and slavery must have worried some congregants, as initial clauses were placed in his contract to “limit the topics upon which the minister might exhort were first adopted, then rescinded, and Mr. Pierpont thereupon accepted the call.”²⁴⁴ Pierpont did not labor long in Troy and soon went to minister in Medford, Massachusetts in 1847. In 1862, he volunteered as the Chaplain of the 22nd Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteers during the Civil War at the age of seventy-six. Due to poor health and his age, Pierpont was unable to continue in this role for long, and accepted a position with the Treasury Department in Washington the same year, a place that he referred to as the “Temple of Mammon.” Pierpont’s job was “to collate and condense the decisions of the Treasury Department regarding its customs since establishment by the government.”²⁴⁵

²⁴³ *Proceedings In The Controversy Between A Part Of The Proprietors And The Pastor Of Hollis Street Church, Boston, 1838 and 1839*, Box 1839, 3; Lothrop, *Proceedings Of An Ecclesiastical Council*, 3.

²⁴⁴ “Gift to Unitarian Parish Revives Memories of Former Famed Minister, Aug. 27, 1942, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

²⁴⁵ “Reminiscences: Memories of Cambridge and Boston-Old Places and Old People-Some Thoughts by a Western Poet,” 1863; “Gift to the Unitarian Parish Revives Memories of Former

On a visit home, to Medford, Massachusetts, at the age of eighty-one, on August 27, 1866, Pierpont passed away at his home on Mystic Street. The granite obelisk, which marked his grave, included the following inscription on one side, “Poet, patriot, preacher, philosopher, philanthropist. Pierpont.”²⁴⁶ Surprisingly, although Pierpont’s contemporaries viewed him as an influential figure, he has largely been forgotten by history. He is perhaps remembered for his descendants, rather than his own accomplishments and social activism as his daughter, Juliette, became grandmother to the famous financier, J. Pierpont Morgan Sr.²⁴⁷

Famed Minister,” Aug. 27, 1942, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

²⁴⁶ “Gift to the Unitarian Parish Revives Memories of Former Famed Minister,” Aug. 27, 1942, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont.

²⁴⁷ “Gift to the Unitarian Parish Revives Memories of Former Famed Minister,” Aug. 27, 1942, Unitarian Universalist Association, Minister Files, 1825-2010, John Pierpont. The scholarship on Pierpont only briefly mentions him in a few sentences. For Pierpont’s connections to Aaron Burr see Alan J. Clark, M.D, *Cipher/Code of Dishonor; Aaron Burr, an American Enigma*, (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2005). For John Pierpont’s connections to J. Pierpont Morgan see Michael Burgan, *J. Pierpont Morgan: Industrialist and Financier*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Compass Point Books, 2007); and Ron Chernow, *The House of Morgan: An American Banking Dynasty and the Rise of Modern Finance*, (New York, New York: Grove/Atlantic Inc., 1990). For Pierpont’s connections to his great-grandfather who founded Yale University see Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities*, (New York, New York, Bloomsbury Press, 2013). For brief mention of Pierpont’s abolitionist activities see Albert Bushnell Hart ed., *American History Told By Contemporaries, Volume III National Expansion, 1783-1845*, (New York, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901); Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter eds., *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Abe C. Ravitz, “John Pierpont and the Slaves’ Christmas,” *Phylon* (1960), Vol. 21, No. 4 (4th Qtr., 1960), 383-386; Caroline E Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); and Mark A. Lause, *Free Spirits: Spiritualism, Republicanism, and Radicalism in the Civil War Era*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2016). For Pierpont’s temperance activity see Henry Steele Commager, “Tempest in a Boston Tea Cup,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (Dec., 1933), 651-675; Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom’s Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1944); and Judith N. McArthur, “Demon Rum on the Boards: Temperance Melodrama and the Tradition of Antebellum Reform,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (Winter, 1989), 517-540;

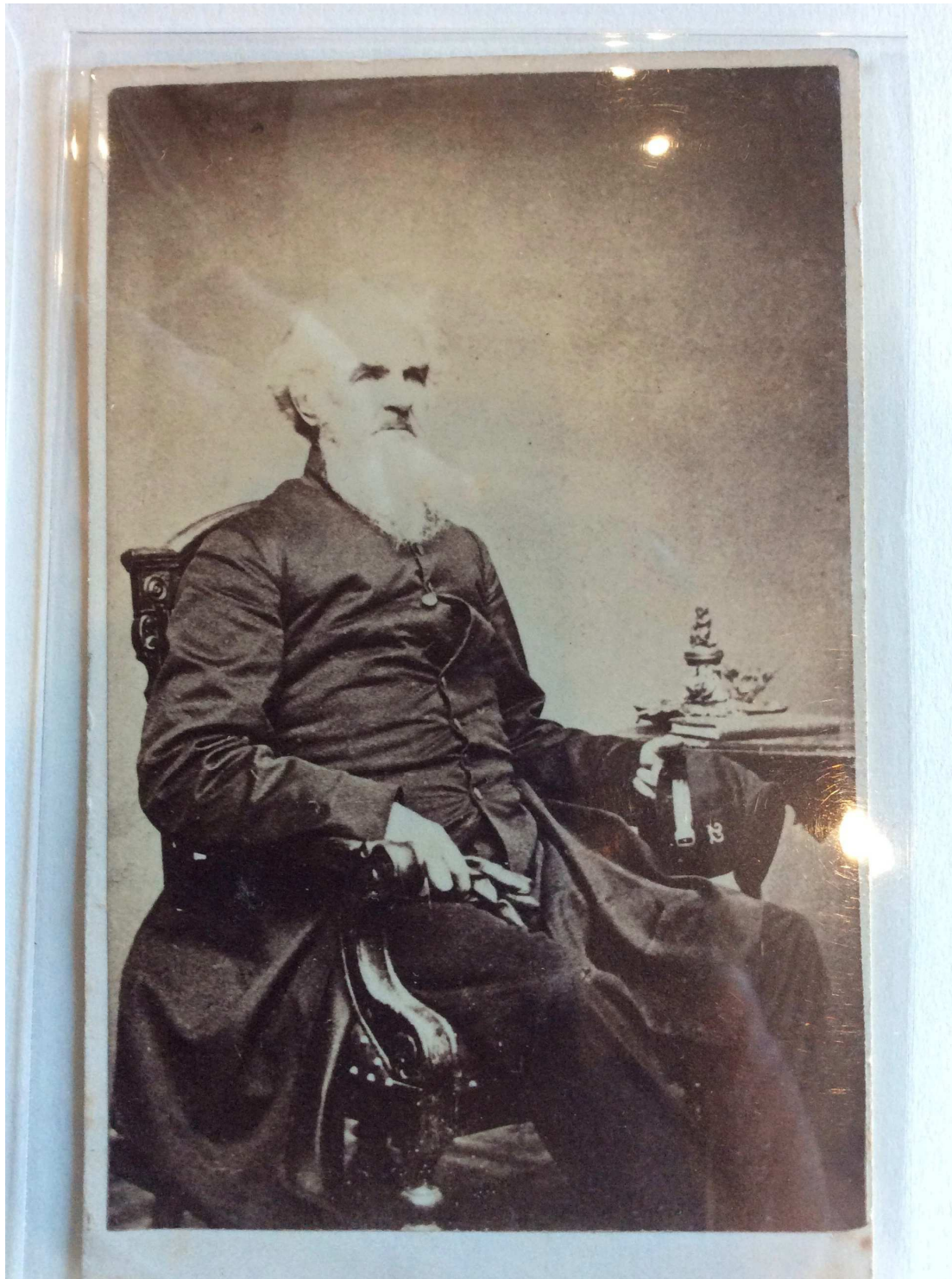


Photo of Reverend John Pierpont, date unknown, courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

As the cases of Kellogg and Pierpont definitively demonstrate, the condemnation of ministerial behavior in the market reveals a great deal about societal values and norms. Analyzing how congregations viewed their minister's commercial transactions and political leanings, indicates the reach of the market in the Early Republic. Such research also emphasizes the importance of placing congregations in the proper socio-economic context if historians are to understand their actions.

The dismissal of Kellogg and Pierpont reveals that ministers in the Early Republic were discouraged from engaging in political activity, if that political activity threatened the pecuniary interests of their wealthiest congregants. The study of Kellogg and Pierpont also indicates a growing class rift in early America. In both cases, congregants were divided in their support of their respective ministers primarily by socio-economic status. Additionally, parishioners began to question the business transactions of ministers as society attempted to establish marketplace norms to address concerns related to trust. Ministerial authority was questioned, if not diminished, by the attempts of parishioners to restrict the influence of religious leaders on secular affairs, especially those linked to the marketplace.

Chapter Two Hard Times: The Long Panic of 1819

When Reverend Nathan Parker preached before the New Hampshire Legislature on June 3, 1819, it is likely that legislators stood, rather than sat, before him as he spoke. Francisco de Miranda, a Venezuelan revolutionary and aptly named “Apostle of Liberty” for his efforts to liberate the Spanish American colonies, visited Portsmouth in 1784. While there he reflected on the practice of political officials standing during election sermons, which he found bizarre. Miranda believed the tradition made the clergy seem “vain and ambitious and the laity unduly subservient: for the ministers, after all, had no official position whatever.”¹ Regardless of the fact that Parker did not hold an official position, he was chosen to speak before the legislature on a topic of his choice. Annual election sermons were a tradition, which began in New Hampshire in 1734, continued until 1831 and were common across New England as late as 1881. Although election sermons were initially utilized to bolster the idea of a theocracy, Parker used this particular election sermon to argue (none too subtly) for disestablishment.² As Parker spoke before what was likely a large audience comprised of legislators, fellow ministers, and other prominent laity, he argued that “no good, but that infinite mischief would result from an attempt in the State to bind the conscience, or take any religious sect under its particular patronage.”³ Parker referred frequently to man’s “rational powers” and the invitation by Christ for men to

¹ Roy M. Peterson, “A South American’s Impressions of New England After Yorktown,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (Oct., 1931), 732.

² Ed. A. W. Plumstead, *The Wall and the Garden: Selected Massachusetts Election Sermons, 1670-1775*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1968), 6, 20.

³ Nathan Parker, *Sermon Preached At Concord, Before His Excellency William Plumer, Governor, The Honourable Council, And The Two Houses Composing The Legislature Of The State of New-Hampshire, June 3, 1819 Being The Anniversary Election*, (Concord: Hill & Moore, 1819), New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire, 23.

“judge for themselves.”⁴ The election sermon of 1819 by Parker laid bare the brewing controversy over state-supported religion. Less than one month later, the New Hampshire legislature passed legislation known as the Toleration Act which essentially relieved citizens from the burden of taxation for a religion which they did not subscribe to voluntarily.⁵ Churches in the state were now dependent on voluntary financial support from parishioners.

Parker’s choice of topics for the election sermon of 1819 is illuminating. Clearly, he prioritized the sectarian crisis over the current economic crisis engulfing most of the country. Like Parker, few ministers in New England chose to focus their sermons on the Panic of 1819 with the exception of Lyman Beecher, then minister of a Congregational church in Connecticut.⁶ Historian Charles Sellers notes that the postwar boom beginning in 1815, sparked extensive land sales and borrowing on credit as “both banks and borrowers were gambling on the indefinite continuance of high commodity prices and speculative prices.”⁷ When the Second Bank of the United States began to call in loans toward the end of 1818, a financial crisis occurred in Europe, resulting in the collapse of commodity prices worldwide, particularly for tobacco and cotton.⁸ Although Parker was not sounding the alarm to the financial distress in 1819, others around the country were. Thomas Jefferson, caught up in the financial distress after cosigning notes for a friend whose debt he was forced to assume, characterized the state of affairs in 1819 as filled

⁴ Parker, *Sermon Preached at Concord*, 14, 17.

⁵ George Barstow, *The History Of New Hampshire, From Its Discovery, In 1614, To The Passage Of The Toleration Act, In 1819*, (Concord, N.H.: I.S. Boyd, 1842), New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire, 424-425.

⁶ Beecher addressed the pecuniary difficulties in 1819 in “*The Means Of National Prosperity: A Sermon, Delivered At Litchfield, On The Day Of The Anniversary Thanksgiving, Dec. 2, 1819*,” (Hartford, CT: Lincoln & Stone, 1820).

⁷ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846*, (New York: NY, Oxford Press, 1991), .

⁸ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 131-138.

with “confusion, uncertainty, and panic.”⁹ Andrew H. Browning, author of *The Panic of 1819: The First Great Depression*, notes that prominent individuals including John Adams and Thomas Astley, a director of the Bank of the United States, worried about the “moral collapse” which seemed to have accompanied the economic one.¹⁰

Given the proliferation of political and economic contemporary commentary regarding the Panic of 1819, the silence of the religious sources in northern New England is striking. Extant religious sources fail to address the pecuniary difficulties in 1819 for three reasons. First, the Panic of 1819 had its origins in New England much earlier. Browning notes that “the ‘hard times’ that began in 1815 in the East” were caused when “cheap imports undercut mills and merchants.”¹¹ Secondly, New England largely avoided widespread foreclosures and business failures that the rest of the country experienced following the events of 1819. Sellers concludes, that this reprieve was due to “specie-strong banks and renewed competition from cheap foreign manufacturers” which kept the New England market from expanding beyond sustainability.¹² Third, churches such as South Church were not yet in significant debt, thus the Panic of 1819 was not an immediate financial threat. The sectarian crisis, and potential loss of members (and thus funding) however, was. South Church’s solution seemed to be a three-pronged proactive approach: develop an extensive outreach program, compete for members through improvements in the comfort and aesthetics of worship, and focus on retention. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the first two measures proved costly.

⁹ Andrew H. Browning, *The Panic of 1819: The First Great Depression*, (Columbia, Missouri: The University of Missouri Press, 2019), 183-184.

¹⁰ Browning, *The Panic of 1819*, 183-184.

¹¹ Browning, *The Panic of 1819*, 185.

¹² Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 138.

This chapter explores the reactions of South Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to the Panic of 1819 and the sectarian crisis. Ultimately, the research points to several conclusions. First, it illustrates a paradigm shift in regard to Unitarian philanthropic efforts. Prior to the Panic of 1837, Unitarians did not discard communalism, rather they emphasized self-improvement through the aid of communal organizations. It was only by 1837, when financial resources were exhausted that communal efforts on the part of South Church were limited in favor of more individual efforts.

Second, this research suggests that the Panic of 1819 and the Panic of 1837 are inseparable from each other, at least for churches in New England. The Panic of 1819 coincided with disestablishment and other economic crises prompting massive spending efforts South Church for charitable outreach and recruitment. This kept the church in a weakened financial state and significantly limited its ability to respond to the Panic of 1837. Viewing the Panic of 1819 over the *longue duree*, beyond 1823 (typically cited as the end of the Panic), may allow historians to account for the shift in Unitarian theological responses to economic need.¹³

South Church was established following a split with North Church in 1713. Members who desired a new location built a new church, which became known as North Church, in what is now Market Square. Those members who remained retained the original building, which, would in time become known as South Church. South Church had historically liberal leanings.¹⁴

¹³ Browning, *The Panic of 1819*, 9, 179, 181, 354.

¹⁴ Russell M. Lawson, *Portsmouth: An Old Town By The Sea*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 46, 52-53; Timothy Alden, Jun., *An Account Of The Several Religious Societies In Portsmouth, New-Hampshire, From Their First Establishment, And Of The Ministers Of Each, To The First Of January, 1805*, (Boston, M.A: Munroe, Francis & Parker, 1808), South Church Collection, Box 10, Folder 8, Portsmouth Athenaeum, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 15-16.

Reverend Samuel Haven who preceded Parker, and ministered from 1752-1806, was a Unitarian, although the South Church during his ministry was still considered Congregational.¹⁵ Like all Unitarians, Haven rejected the idea of predestination and instead argued that salvation was available to all.¹⁶ Following an invitation to minister there in 1808, Parker presided over South Church until 1833 when Reverend Andrew Preston Peabody took over.¹⁷

Parker was born in Reading, Massachusetts in 1782 and as the son of a farmer did not experience much in the way of luxury. Parker believed these childhood “privations and hardships” encouraged the development of his good character. According to Henry Ware, a Unitarian minister in Boston, Parker demonstrated an early proclivity for learning and his yeoman family decided he was well suited for higher education. Parker was subsequently fitted for college in Boxborough by his relative Reverend Joseph Willard and graduated from Harvard in 1803 at the age of seventeen. Although he originally intended to study law, he eventually became a student of theology under the tutelage of Reverend Aaron Bancroft, the pastor of the Second Congregational Society in Worcester.¹⁸ Bancroft was an early proponent of Unitarian

¹⁵ Kathleen Langdon-Haven McInerney, *Dear Nell: The True Story of the Haven Sisters, Based on the Haven-Pugh Letter Collection*, 2009, Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=Drmt2-YsFFgC&pg=PA5&dq=reverend+samuel+haven+and+unitarianism&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiR9vzs9bLkAhXomuAKHSeiDjYQ6AEwAHoECAIQAg#v=onepage&q=reverend%20samuel%20haven%20and%20unitarianism&f=false>, 5.

¹⁶ Samuel Haven, D.D., *The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination, and the Importance of Candor and Union among Christians of different Persuasions, who agree in the Essentials of Christianity; Illustrated In A Discourse Delivered At The Dudleian Lecture Of Harvard College, September 5, 1798*, (Boston, M.A: Manning & Loring, 1798), South Church Collection, Box 10, Folder 4, Portsmouth Athenaeum, 7-10; Peter Tufts Richardson, *The Boston Religion: Unitarianism in its Capital City*, (Rockland, M.E: Red Barn Publishing, 2003),

¹⁷ South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4.

¹⁸ Henry Ware, Jr., D.D., *Memoir Of The Rev. Nathan Parker, D.D., Late Pastor Of The South Church And Parish In Portsmouth, N.H.*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: J.W. Foster and J.F. Shores; Boston, Massachusetts: James Munroe and Company, 1835), Google Books https://books.google.com/books?id=Ui6_eYc0RIIC&pg=PR68&dq=memorial+nathan+parker&

beliefs and this influence proved to shape Parker's religious views as well.¹⁹ Bancroft delivered the sermon at Parker's ordination at the South Parish and urged the new minister to promote the common good, stating that, "In all professional duties, the minister meets his fellow beings, as the creatures, the subjects and the children of one sovereign and father....will he not be excited to deeds of benevolence and charity?"²⁰ During his ministry, Parker followed this advice and worked to develop an organization, which directed charitable energies outward toward the purpose of improvement of all members of society. What Parker viewed as the best means to this end was disestablishment, as illustrated by his sermon in 1819.

Disestablishment happened much sooner in New Hampshire than in neighboring Massachusetts. New Hampshire repealed state support of religion in 1819, as did Maine when it applied for statehood in 1820. Massachusetts did not do so until 1833. Generally, religious taxes supported the denomination of a town's majority; dissenters could apply for exemption in order to have their taxes allocated to other churches. However, New England courts often applied a narrow interpretation of what constituted a legitimate sect, which prevented many

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19999/19999-h/19999-h.htm#page&q=memorial%20nathan%20parker&f=false>, x-xi; Henry Ware's appointment as professor of divinity at Harvard University in 1805 became known as the "Hollis Chair Controversy" as it marked the origins of liberal Protestantism in America. For more information on the impact of this appointment see Conrad Wright, *The Unitarian Controversy: Essays on American Unitarian History*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Skinner House Books, 1994), 1-16.

¹⁹ Alonzo Hill, *A Discourse On The Life And Character Of The Rev. Aaron Bancroft, D.D., Senior Pastor Of The Second Congregational Society In Worcester, Delivered At His Interment, August 22, 1839*, (Worcester, M.A: T.W. & J. Butterfield, 1839), <https://archive.org/details/adiscourseonlif01hillgoog/page/n1>, 28.

²⁰ Aaron Bancroft, A.M., *The Comparative Advantages Of The Ministerial Profession, Delineated In A Discourse Delivered At The Ordination Of The Rev. Nathan Parker, Over The South Church And Parish In Portsmouth, September 14, 1808*, (Portsmouth, N.H: S. Sewall, 1808), New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire, 10.

dissenters from obtaining exemptions.²¹ Nathan S. Rives explores how Unitarian support in Massachusetts for establishment diverged from Unitarian opinions on state-supported religion elsewhere in New England. As Rives explains, the controversy over state-supported religion has often been framed as “an establishment-voluntarist binary.”²² In most New England states, Unitarianism was a dissenting sect pitted against the Congregational establishment. However, unlike their New England counterparts, Unitarians in Massachusetts defended establishment, largely because they believed “moral improvement was a central religious imperative” best served by state supported religion. In many areas of Massachusetts, especially Boston, Unitarians had gained dominance within the Standing Order and therefore saw establishment as a path both to solidify moral order and prevent dissenters from propagating religious error.²³ The Supreme Court ruling in *Baker vs. Fales*, known as the “Dedham Case,” tried in Massachusetts in 1820, was a significant step toward the separation of church and state. The decision of the court allowed churches (composed of members and proprietors) rather than the parish (made up of all individuals who lived in the town and did not belong to a legally recognized dissenting sect) to choose their minister. Scholar Daniel Walker Howe noted that the decision “facilitated the takeover of about a hundred Massachusetts Congregational churches by the liberals.” Members were those who formally agreed to follow the covenant of the church and participated in communion. Congregations on the other hand, included all adherents, even those who were nonmembers. As historian Kyle Roberts notes, “scholars agree there were more nonmembers than members sitting in the pews each Sunday.” Shortly after the “Dedham Case,”

²¹ Shelby M. Balik, *Rally the Scattered Believers: Northern New England's Religious Geography*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014,), 85-90.

²² Nathan S. Rives, “Is Not This A Paradox? Public Morality and the Unitarian Defense of State-Supported Religion in Massachusetts, 1806, 1833,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 86, No. 2, (June, 2013), 234.

²³ Rives, “Is This Not a Paradox,” 258-264.

Congregationalists realized their interests now converged with religious dissenters and began to argue against establishment.²⁴ In New Hampshire, however, most Unitarians, including Parker, believed the establishment hindered moral progress, particularly as the establishment in that state was controlled by orthodox Congregationalists.²⁵

Parker's sermon to the legislature on June 3, 1819 identified salvation as determined by free will rather than predestination and defended the right of individuals to interpret religion for themselves. His sermon to the New Hampshire legislators emphasized the rational faculties of human beings, describing Jesus's instructions as meant to "exalt the intellectual powers of man."²⁶ Such views match those of other Unitarian leaders, such as William Ellery Channing, minister of Federal Street Church in Boston from 1803 until 1842. Scholar Daniel Walker Howe argues that Channing's liberalism is "best characterized as a form of Christian humanism" due to his belief in "the potential divinity in human nature" and to which he added "an Enlightenment faith in individual rights and in reasoning from empirical evidence."²⁷ Following Parker's election sermon, the Toleration Act effectively placed Unitarians in New Hampshire on an equal footing with Congregational churches.

As historian Shelby M. Balik notes, the Toleration Act of 1819 prohibited towns from levying taxes "for meetinghouse construction or ministerial support, except where contracts were already in force," and "also ensured that all societies would be completely voluntary."²⁸ Although Unitarians viewed the law favorably, not all were of the same mind. William Smith, a self-

²⁴ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 448-449; Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making Of New York City, 1783-1860*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 268-269.

²⁵ Rives, "Is This Not a Paradox," 262-264.

²⁶ Parker, *Sermon Preached at Concord*, 7, 12-13, 14.

²⁷ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 614-615.

²⁸ Balik, *Rally the Scattered Believers*, 89.

proclaimed “Friend To The ‘Public Worship Of The Deity’” expressed his opposition to the new law in a forty-four page address to John Taylor Gilman, the former governor of New Hampshire. Smith’s opposition derived from the belief that the Toleration Act weakened “public instruction in religion and morality” which he viewed as a civil institution rather than a spiritual one, akin to public education. According to Smith, the “worst feature” of the law was that it unfairly benefitted men of property at the expense of the poor. Smith reasoned, logically so, that “where all are required to pay towards the support of public worship, the tax falls light upon the poor.” Wealth, qualified by Smith as manufacturing interests, was the cause of many societal ills, and yet the law exempted the wealthy from correcting those ills with the exemption of taxes for maintaining the moral order.²⁹ South Church soon realized the truth embedded in Smith’s address as churches’ institutional abilities to regulate public morality diminished with increased competition for revenue from limited sources.

Parker’s support of disestablishment and Unitarian views led to a schism between South Church and North Church, which had maintained cordial relations since the two congregations became independent of one another in 1713. Pastors often exchanged pulpits for monthly lectures and generally labored together in the service of God.³⁰ In 1821 South Church formed a committee to examine the causes of the rift, noting that “a connexion [sic] thus subsisting-so long, and under such circumstances-could not be broken off without casting some suspicion on

²⁹ William Smith, “*Some Remarks On The ‘Toleration Act’ Of 1819. Addressed To The Hon. John Taylor Gilman. By A Friend To The ‘Public Worship Of The Deity,’*” (Exeter, New Hampshire: Samuel T. Moses, 1823), Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=H8IrAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=new+hampshire+toleration+act+1819&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiLzIm9zNrjAhVXB50JHX08BQoQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=new%20hampshire%20toleration%20act%201819&f=false>, 8, 12, 19, 32, 40.

³⁰ South Church Collection, Committee report on the split with North Church, Box 9, Folder 1b, 1-2.

the party, from whom the separation was made.”³¹ The committee noted a letter, sent by Reverend Israel Putnam of North Church in November 1819, five months after Parker’s election sermon, which expressed doubts about continuing to exchange pulpits. Putnam requested that Parker not discuss the matter with the South Church congregation, as Putnam needed additional time to contemplate the issues at hand. Parker’s inability to discuss the reasons which precipitated the division apparently led some South Church parishioners to wonder whether Parker was at fault, resulting in the formation of a committee to investigate the matter.³²

On May 9, 1820 Putnam wrote a thirty-five page letter outlining his reasons for the separation. Parker attended the ordination of Jared Sparks, a Unitarian minister, in Baltimore in 1819, at which William Channing, also Unitarian, delivered the ordination sermon. According to Putnam, Parker’s attendance at this ordination made his theological views entirely suspect especially as he was still identifying as Congregational. The committee found that Putnam now believed Parker’s “ministerial standing was not the same it formerly was; and that he was a partizan [sic] of those who openly avow their hostility to the doctrine which Mr. Putnam preaches.”³³

Channing’s sermon in Baltimore in 1819 was widely considered by contemporaries to be a declaration of theological war. Daniel Howe notes that Channing’s sermon “became what it was intended to be, a manifesto for his religious viewpoint” which “provoked prolonged debate between ‘orthodox’ Calvinists and ‘liberal’ Unitarians.”³⁴ Putnam’s major concerns with

³¹ South Church Collection, Committee report on the split with North Church, Box 9, Folder 1b, 3.

³² South Church Collection, Committee report on the split with North Church, Box 9, Folder 1b, 5-9.

³³ South Church Collection, Committee report on the split with North Church, Box 9, Folder 1b, 9-10.

³⁴ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 614.

Channing's sermon involved the rejection of the Trinity, predestination, and the total depravity of human beings. Given that Parker chose to attend the ordination, Putnam assumed South Church accepted those same beliefs, necessitating the separation.³⁵

What is interesting about Putnam's doubts is the timing at which he expressed them. Parker asserted Putnam was always aware of their differing opinions, from the time of his ordination at North Church. Parker was obviously not concerned over their theological divergence, given that as part of the Congregational Church, he voted for Putnam to be ordained and gave the right hand of fellowship at his ordination. In a response to Putnam's letter, Parker questioned whether Putnam could claim to have been unaware of Parker's theological views prior to the Baltimore ordination.³⁶ It is likely that Putnam was aware of Parker's views prior to May 1819, although it is not clear whether he was aware of the extent. What is clear, however, is that Channing's sermon, Parker's sermon, and the resulting Act of Toleration caused Putnam significant concern. It is likely that the convergence of disestablishment with economic turmoil in Portsmouth caused Putnam, and probably all ministers, concern over the survival of their religious institutions.

Portsmouth had difficulty escaping "hard times" in the Early Republic well before the Panic of 1819. As discussed in Chapter One, the Embargo Act of 1807 significantly impacted port cities of New England, including Portland, Portsmouth, and Boston. Additionally, three fires between 1802 and 1813 produced significant damage to the city. In 1839, Edmond's Town Directory declared, "There are but few towns in New-England that have suffered so much from

³⁵ South Church Collection, Committee report on the split with North Church, Box 9, Folder 1b, 31-38; See also William Ellery Channing, *"A Sermon Delivered At The Ordination Of The Rev. Jared Sparks: To The Pastoral Care Of The First Independent Church In Baltimore, May 5, 1819,"* (Boston, Massachusetts, Hews & Goss, 1819), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

³⁶ South Church Collection, Committee report on the split with North Church, Box 9, Folder 1b, 17-18.

fires as this town.” The directory noted that the fire of 1802 resulted in the loss of 132 buildings and \$200,000 in property damage while the fire of 1806 resulted in the loss of fourteen buildings and seventy thousand in damage. It was the fire of 1813 however that devastated the town. All told, 241 buildings were lost and an estimated \$250,000 to \$350,000 in damage.³⁷ Less than two years later the tremors of the Panic of 1819 began, exacerbating the financial crisis.

In 1815, newspapers in Portsmouth, New Hampshire commented on the economic downturn. A reporter, writing for the *Intelligencer*, argued that individuals “must retrench their expenditures” and that “credit has been the great cause of their present embarrassments.”³⁸ Others highlighted the effects of intemperance on the “hard times.” The *Portland Gazette* printed a story about an individual who “must have his dram before dinner, even though his family are deprived of many little conveniences, which the ‘times’ prevent his purchasing.”³⁹ In similar fashion, an article published in Portsmouth in December of 1816 urged readers to be industrious, thrifty, and to avoid vices such as alcohol.⁴⁰

By 1819, after more than a decade of economic trouble, and while a large portion of the country was experiencing financial distress, Parker was clearly worried. Although South Church was not yet in significant debt, the stability of finances going forward was questionable. 1819 marked the beginning of disestablishment for New Hampshire and the removal of tax support, thus financial prosperity relied solely on members and voluntary donations. Disestablishment heralded a period of religious competition, which often necessitated significant expenditures to

³⁷ *Edmonds' Town Directory; Containing The Names Of The Inhabitants, Their Occupations, Places Of Business And Residence, With Lists Of The Streets, Lanes, and Wharves, The Town Officers, Public Offices, And Banks, And Other Useful Information*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Joseph M. Edmonds, 1839), V.

³⁸ *Intelligencer*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, July 25, 1816.

³⁹ *Portland Gazette*, Portland, Maine, October 8, 1816.

⁴⁰ *Intelligencer*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, December 5, 1816.

promote one's particular church. Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Universalists, Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Quakers, were all competing in Portsmouth for potential converts.⁴¹

Attracting converts posed a unique problem in New Hampshire. During the Early Republic most of America experienced a population boom. The national population grew from 3,929,625 to 23,191,876 between 1790 and 1850.⁴² In northeastern ports like Portsmouth however, climbing land prices forced many to seek their fortune elsewhere. Rural areas suffered as well. Charles Sellers notes that in Concord, New Hampshire, a fourth of taxpayers left every decade following 1790. Emigration was compounded by a declining birthrate, the effect of which was limitation on New Hampshire's overall population growth rate.⁴³ New Hampshire's population growth rate rapidly decreased from 1790 until 1840. The growth rate was 4.92% in 1790, 2.63% in 1800, 1.55% in 1810, 1.31% in 1820, .99% in 1830, and .55% in 1840.⁴⁴ In contrast, New York, which eventually took the lead in international trade, had a growth rate of 182% from 1790-1810.⁴⁵ Portsmouth's population grew from 1820 to 1839 but only marginally as compared to other areas. In 1820, Portsmouth's population was 7,327. In 1830, the total number of residents numbered 8,082, and in 1839, the population was 9,000.⁴⁶ Whereas Portsmouth's

⁴¹ Alden, *An Account Of The Several Religious Societies In Portsmouth*, South Church Collection, Box 10 Folder 8, 15-30. Sandemanians were also among sects in competition for converts in Portsmouth, although their numbers were likely negligible. For more information see Jean F. Hankins, "A Different Kind of Loyalist: The Sandemanians of New England during the Revolutionary War," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Jun., 1987), 223-249.

⁴² Christopher G. Bates, ed., *The Early Republic and Antebellum America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political, Cultural, and Economic History*, (New York, N.Y: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 834.

⁴³ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 18.

⁴⁴ "World Population Review," <http://worldpopulationreview.com/states/new-hampshire-population/>, 08/28/2019.

⁴⁵ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 40-41.

⁴⁶ *Edmond's Town Directory*, iv.

population grew by 22% from 1820-1839, Boston's population increased by over 115% in that same period.⁴⁷

Parker's solution for attracting converts, and thus confirming a steady source of revenue involved a three-pronged approach. From his ordination in 1808 until his death in 1832, Parker attempted to strengthen South Parish by transforming it into "an association for religious improvement and benevolent action."⁴⁸ Perhaps he hoped that improved affinity among parishioners and charitable actions would persuade the citizens of Portsmouth to become members of his Church. Unitarian responses to economic hardships and the sectarian crisis involved extensive outreach through the creation of Christian associations, retention of current members, and active competition to promote South Church and Unitarianism.

The first step in Parker's outreach program was an effort to recruit young converts. It also served a secondary purpose, that of retaining children currently belonging to the church as they matured into adulthood. In 1818 in New Hampshire, Parker and others in South Church worked to establish a Sunday school. It is likely that the economic trouble in Portsmouth coupled with a declining population growth rate and imminent disestablishment encouraged Parker's efforts. The school was effective, but costly for parishioners.

The school welcomed not only the children of parishioners but those of non-parishioners as well. This indicates that the church was interested in the moral improvement of all of Portsmouth's children and probably perceived the efforts as a long-term investment for the church itself. Andrew P. Peabody remarked later that the Sunday school was designed to operate as a "nurse and feeder" for the Church, and that Sunday schools in general provided "excellent

⁴⁷ "Through the Decades: Fast Facts," United States Census Bureau, January 20, 2020, https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/.

⁴⁸ Ware, Jr., *Memoir Of The Rev. Nathan Parker*, xxx, lxxv.

hunting ground for those that watch for souls.” Peabody made explicit that the Sunday school was a financial investment in the church’s future, noting that many of the children of non-church going parents often matured into “liberal supporters of the religious institutions of which they were the early beneficiaries.”⁴⁹ In 1819 the school had a total of 228 students. The number of students belonging to the school peaked in 1832 at 326 and diminished to 233 by 1835.

Apparently other churches in the area recognized the recruitment potential of Sunday Schools and implemented similar institutions around 1832.⁵⁰ Sunday schools generally provided lessons for basic literacy and religious instruction, especially for children from the working class who were often denied an education due to inability to pay.⁵¹

The Sunday school building itself was funded through the sale of shares. In 1819, the church purchased a “lecture room” to be used as a multi-purpose room, including housing the Sunday school. The cost was \$550.96, \$459.22 of which was funded through subscriptions with the remainder assumed by the parish. These subscriptions were designated for the initial purchase of the building.⁵² In 1829, the church decided to purchase the Pitt Street Church on Court Street from the Baptist Society to serve as the Sunday school building.⁵³ The cost was \$1200.00 and to fund the purchase forty-eight shares were sold at \$25.00 a share.⁵⁴

Annual operating expenditures were funded through subscriptions, donations, and legacies. Notably, by the time the Panic of 1837 began, subscriptions were declining. Subscriptions

⁴⁹ Andrew P. Peabody, *An Address On The Seventieth Anniversary Of The South Parish Sunday School, In Portsmouth, New Hampshire*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Journal Steam Printing Establishment, 1888), 17, 24.

⁵⁰ South Church Collection, Sunday School Annual Reports, Box 23, Folder 7.

⁵¹ Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation Of An American Institution*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980), 9; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 192-193.

⁵² South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, April 30, 1819 minutes, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁵³ South Church Collection, Pledge List for Purchase of Pitt Street Church, 1828, 1830.

⁵⁴ South Church Collection, Sunday School Financial Records, Treasurer’s Book, 1828-1891, Box 24.

ranged from fifty cents to five dollars annually and peaked in 1832 at a total of \$61 dollars, corresponding with the year in which the student population peaked. In 1831, the lowest total amount of subscriptions was pledged at \$27 dollars. By 1836, subscriptions totaled \$49 dollars, although the student membership rate was increasing and totaled 273 students. Some students who left in 1832 for schools at other religious institutions were returning, finding that those schools lacked teachers or were otherwise inferior.⁵⁵

Extensive outreach also included the formation in 1819 of a Charity Fund. Voluntary contributions were collected on communion Sabbaths, and when the collection totaled more than eight dollars, the excess was directed to the charity fund. This revenue was to be added to any additional donations and legacies, half of which was to be placed in a permanent fund. The primary goal of the fund was to assist needy members of the church. Once the fund reached two thousand dollars, additional monies were to be used to support the Sunday school, the church library, and other religious charities. Five trustees, one of whom was the Pastor, were to be selected to oversee the fund.⁵⁶

One can surmise that the poor of Portsmouth certainly saw the benefits of belonging to a church. Churches like South Church had a long history of assisting needy parishioners. Contributions received on communion Sabbaths paid for the cost of the table (bread, wine, cloth, and napkin) while the rest was generally dispersed among the congregation, typically to widows. Between March 1809 and April 1811, six widows in the South Church congregation received a total of \$40.11 although this was not divided equally. It is unclear how distributions were determined, as widows received anywhere from fifty-five cents to three dollars. Occasionally,

⁵⁵ South Church Collection, Sunday School Subscriptions, Box 24, Folder 2; Subscription Book 1836 Box 26, Folder 12; Sunday School Annual Reports, Box 23, Folder 7.

⁵⁶ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1.

money was diverted from charity to pay bills beyond the cost of the table, including bills for painting and mending a flag in 1815. Contributions were often unpredictable as well. For example, \$6.55 was collected in December of 1815 while only \$3.91 was collected the month before.⁵⁷ In September of 1819, the committee for the charity fund reported that the collection averaged \$6.37 a month for the last eighteen months, \$2.56 of which was used for the cost of the table, and the remaining \$3.81 distributed to the destitute widows of the church. The report made a point to note that eight of the widows were “of great age, & very infirm.”⁵⁸

Welfare was generally viewed in the pejorative during the early nineteenth century. Americans often lacked tolerance for the poor whom they believed were responsible for their situation. Historian Mimi Abramovitz notes that many citizens in the Early Republic believed that public assistance was actually detrimental as it provided a “disincentive to work.”⁵⁹ However, women, particularly mothers and widows, were exempted from this view due mainly to the rise of the “cult of domesticity” or “separate spheres” ideology that developed in the early 1800s in which a woman’s prescribed role was within the home.⁶⁰ Since they were excluded from participating in the market, a community response to their plight was viewed as appropriate. Even before the passage of legislation for the elderly, sick, and unemployed, states attempted to protect mothers who had been deserted, widowed, or divorced. By the early twentieth century, between 1911 and 1920, forty states enacted laws to “provide payments for needy widowed mothers...in order to let them care for children at home.”⁶¹ In the early

⁵⁷ South Church Collection, Collections and Disbursements, 1784-1827, Box 3, Folder 8.

⁵⁸ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1.

⁵⁹ Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy From Colonial Times to the Present* (Cambridge, MA, South End Press, 1996), 144.

⁶⁰ Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women*, 127.

⁶¹ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 9-10.

nineteenth century however, in the absence of state aid, single mothers and aged widows had to rely on local organizations, often religiously oriented, such as the South Church Charity Fund.

Of note is the fact that the South Church Charity Fund committee, in their argument for the necessity of the fund, specifically noted the need for the church, as an institutional body, to respond in a communal nature to the plight of the poor. The committee report written September 27, 1819, states that,

Private charities, it is believed, have in a great measure supplied the deficiency of the church as a body. But the committee respectfully suggest that a small fund in the hands of the Pastor, or of Trustees in behalf of the church, would be the means of much useful charity; relieving distress in some instances, where circumstances of a peculiar nature, might present an application to individuals. It is not improbable that this mode of dispensing the alms of the church, under the direction of judicious men, might be attended with a moral influence, beneficial to the interests of the church in a higher degree, than could be expected by individual members.⁶²

The committee clearly believed that pooling charitable contributions would allow the church to accomplish more as an organization as opposed to individual efforts. Additionally, the committee argued that the establishment of a permanent fund would encourage more financial donations given that the money would be distributed “where the greatest good could be done.”⁶³

In this, the Charity Fund was mirroring what national religious organizations such as the American Bible Society created in 1816 were already doing. Daniel Walker Howe notes that “the collection of small donations from far-flung contributors, which then had to be accounted for and safely invested so as to yield an income, actually pioneered techniques for pooling capital in a society with a chronic shortage of capital.” These collective endeavors are often referred to

⁶² South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1.

⁶³ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1.

as the “benevolent empire” of the Early Republic, which fostered the distribution of religious material as well as the promotion of temperance.⁶⁴

The initial plan for the Charity Fund, as stated on both September 27 and October 5, directed that the surplus of monthly contributions on communion Sabbaths (over eight dollars) be directed to the Charity Fund. The fund’s main priority was to help provide basic necessities to the most destitute parishioners and as such, half of all proceeds collected (including any interest from the permanent fund) were to be expended to this end, provided the sum did not exceed twenty dollars annually. The other half of the proceeds was to be used to increase the principal of the permanent fund. Once the fund reached two thousand dollars, the fund was to be incorporated, and additional revenue could be used to support the fund for religious charities, the Sunday school, the parish library (distinct from the ministerial library), or to other religious charities as the trustees saw fit.⁶⁵

The primary objective of the fund seems to have changed by November 1819. A summary of the plan, recounted in the meeting minutes for November 19, 1819, states that one half of the surplus of monthly contributions directed to the Charity Fund, was to be spent on support of indigent members of the Church, the church library, the Sunday School, and other religious charities. The plan as stated previously in September and October indicated all expenditures were to be for the benefit of the poor, while support for the library, Sunday school and other religious charities would happen once the permanent fund reached two thousand dollars. It is unclear how or why this decision was made. As one of the five trustees, Parker likely

⁶⁴ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 193, 649.

⁶⁵ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1.

influenced, or at least agreed with this shift in priorities. This shift also seemed to align with Parker's other efforts in the 1820s aimed at outreach, retention, and competition.⁶⁶

In its first disbursement in December 1821, the fund appropriated \$12.10 for handbills, a bookcase for the parish library, and tracts for seamen. What was left of the twenty dollars to be expended annually, \$7.90, was spent providing aid for the poor of the church. One can assume that the fund's directors, Parker among them, believed that success of South Church relied on diversified efforts. Only helping the poor, although a noble effort, would not help with recruitment or retention of wealthier members upon whom the church depended for revenue. The fund continued such diversified efforts throughout the 1820s. From 1820 through 1826 the fund contributed \$308.65 to the parish library, which encouraged the circulation of religious materials among parishioners. Fines, presumably for lost or late books, were included in this total. The Charity Fund also acted as a financial bulwark for the church itself, contributing to the Deacon's Fund and the General Fund.⁶⁷

Additionally, the Charity Fund served as a de facto creditor for the church itself. When the church needed money in 1826 they borrowed money from the fund. In other words, they were using money from a fund specifically allocated for charitable purposes to address the parish debt. The church borrowed \$190.00 and also requested that the trustees purchase the parsonage land in 1829. The church needed to sell the parsonage land in order to make payments on the parish debt. However, the church thought it improbable they would be able to sell the land at its estimated value, given "the present depressed state of business in this town." In light of this concern, the trustees of the Charity Fund bought the land for fifteen hundred dollars, a price that was likely inflated given the market. The trustees used the principal from the fund for the

⁶⁶ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1, 6.

⁶⁷ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 7, 9, 16.

purchase, but planned to use the land as a burial ground, using the proceeds from the sales to recoup the purchase price.⁶⁸

The purchase of this land significantly reduced the ability of the Charity Fund to fulfill its initial purpose. The trustees divided the land, assessing the burial ground on Pleasant Street at seven hundred dollars and the remaining area at eight hundred. The cost of preparing the lots in the burial ground amounted to \$913.16 by 1833. Fifty-four lots had been sold at an average price of \$17.85 per lot yet this was not enough to make the purchase of the burial ground profitable. In 1833, the purchase of the burial ground portion alone was still \$648.20 from breaking even. Realizing the precariousness of their situation, the trustees ordered a new valuation of the lots. On November 21, 1833 the remaining forty-four lots were assessed at an average price of \$26.57 per lot, an increase of \$8.72 per lot from those previously sold.⁶⁹

The purchase of the field from the church certainly hindered the ability of the trustees to provide charitable aid but they also encountered another difficulty. From the fund's inception until 1836, the monthly contributions received at communion Sabbaths decreased significantly, reflecting perhaps the weakened financial state of the church as a whole. Contributions to the fund declined from an annual high of \$174.65 in 1820 to \$33.20 in 1836, with the lowest amount collected \$22.78 in 1835.⁷⁰ Overall, contributions in that seventeen-year span decreased by eighty-one percent. It may be that as the church extended its charitable outreach program, donations were spread thinly among numerous efforts.

⁶⁸ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1, 7, 13, 18.

⁶⁹ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1, 47-48; Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1 Folder 4.

⁷⁰ South Church Collection, Charity Fund, Box 17, Folder 1, 9, 13, 16, 20, 35, 41, 43, 47, 50, 56, 58.

In addition to the Charity Fund formed in 1819 a “Cent Society” was formed in 1821 at Parker’s behest. Although early records of this society were lost in a fire in 1845, extant records include historical accounts written by Sarah Foster, secretary and treasurer of the society for over 37 years and other contemporary members. The purpose of the “Cent Society” was to purchase clothing and other necessities for sick members of the parish, funded by a contribution of one cent by each member each meeting.⁷¹ In 1825, the name was changed to “The Ladies Society of the South Parish for the encouragement of Domestic Missions, and other religious and charitable objects.”⁷² The intent of the society was to provide an opportunity for social communion, religious reflection, and charitable outreach to ensure Unitarianism’s survival. The constitution dictated that meetings be held once a month and opened by a prayer from the pastor. One member was to read aloud while the other ladies sewed articles that would later be sold to parishioners. The society provided an opportunity for female leadership roles, requiring the appointment of three directresses, a secretary, and a treasurer.⁷³ Although women could not vote in the church until 1920, they were the majority of church members and led the voluntary associations (benevolent empire) of the 1820s and 1830s. This research demonstrates how “socioeconomic processes” (disestablishment and capitalism), “liberalism” (voluntarism and individualism as expressed in Unitarianism), and feminism (church members and voluntary

⁷¹ South Church Collection, Ladies Domestic Missionary Society, Historical Sketches, Box 20, Folder 1.

⁷² South Church Collection, Ladies Domestic Missionary Society, Historical Sketches, Box 20, Folder 1; Record Book 1845-1867, Box 20, Folder 2.

⁷³ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1845-1867, Box 20, Folder 2. Theda Skocpol’s research sheds light on the female role in the voluntary associations of the 1820s and 1830s. In particular, Skocpol points to women’s efforts to transform private charitable outreach into public social legislation by the twentieth century. Skocpol notes that many historians have cited national values (liberalism) or “response to the logic of industrialization” as major factors in the development of the welfare state. Skocpol’s research focuses on feminism’s role in the development of legislated public welfare; Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 17-18.

associations) intersected within the religious sphere. As disestablishment prompted religious competition, voluntary outreach efforts were coordinated, largely by women, in order to increase both the size of the congregation of South Church and revenue. Disestablishment, voluntarism, and feminism were all contributing causes to the increase of communal responses to economic distress.

The scope of charitable outreach by the society broadened in 1825. The constitution of the newly named society dictated an increased financial contribution, requiring an annual subscription of fifty cents for each member. Annual subscriptions, usually amounting to fifty dollars, were collected as contributions to the Massachusetts Evangelical Society, founded in 1806, to assist struggling churches. Additional monies, raised from selling the “fancy articles” ladies sewed each month were to be used for various other charitable projects. In 1845, the society produced a variety of mittens, spectacle wipes, socks, aprons, cravats, needle books and other objects, which were sold to South Church parishioners. Between December of 1845 and May of 1846 proceeds from these articles totaled \$20.27. This revenue supported the nascent Sunday school at South Church, the American Unitarian Association, and the Unitarian mission at the Isles of Shoals. Additionally, the Society was able to help furnish the Church, and purchase books for a church library. Books purchased included works by early Unitarians, including Faustus Socinus, a sixteenth century Italian theologian who rejected the concept of the Trinity.⁷⁴

In addition to establishing the Charity Fund and the Ladies Domestic Missionary Society, South Church also engaged in the distribution of religion. Many of these efforts were aimed at seamen. As noted earlier, the Charity Fund distributed religious material to Captains, all

⁷⁴ South Church Collection, Ladies Domestic Missionary Society, Historical Sketches, Box 20, Folder 1; Record Book, 1845-1867 Box 20, Folder 2.

members of the South Parish, to distribute amongst their crew.⁷⁵ In 1821, the Charity Fund noted that eight Bibles, seven Testaments, fifty-nine tracts, and five Psalm books were distributed to eight Captains. Additionally, the fund counted twenty-three Bibles, five Testaments, ten Boston tracts, and fifty-two Andover tracts on hand.⁷⁶ Historian Daniel Walker Howe has noted that most American churches took advantage of the “communications revolution” in order to foster their own ends. Churches in the Early Republic utilized new technology to print Bibles, religious, tracts, magazines, and religious periodicals including the Unitarian *Christian Register*.⁷⁷

In addition to the philanthropic outreach and recruitment program, the church also engaged in a massive competitive effort. This largely included improving the church’s aesthetics and making it more comfortable and enjoyable for congregants to attend services. In June 1825 the female members of the church raised five hundred dollars to be used for the purchase of an organ. The Standing Committee voted to match the sum in order to fully fund the purchase.⁷⁸ The parish thus assumed not only half of the purchase price but also the upkeep of the organ, which included blowing out the organ bellows, at a cost of fifteen dollars in 1828. Of course the parish also had to pay someone to play the organ, the organists’ salary in 1828 was \$100. Organs were an expensive investment and the church obtained insurance in 1826, which cost \$6.67.⁷⁹ Organs were a relatively novel addition to churches in the Early Republic. In 1812 the

⁷⁵ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Minutes, 1808-1887, April 15, 1820, Box 7, Folder 1.

⁷⁶ South Church Collection, Charity Fund Annual Financial Statements, 1820-1836, Box 17, Folder 7.

⁷⁷ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 230-231.

⁷⁸ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, June ?, 1825 minutes, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁷⁹ South Church Collection, Account Book 1826-1845, Box 3, Folder 10.

only church in Portsmouth with an organ was the Episcopal church, St John's.⁸⁰ According to historian John Ogasapian, prior to the start of the nineteenth century many non-Anglican churches "resisted the introduction of instruments in worship." The first organ appeared in a New England Congregational church in 1770, but it was not until disestablishment that organs became an essential element in Unitarian and Congregational churches. Ogasapian highlights the explicit connection between organs and religious competition, noting that "By the 1830s most churches that could afford them were buying organs not only to support and improve congregational singing but also to improve their worship."⁸¹ Costs associated with music (beyond the purchase of the organ) also increased significantly. In 1832 thirty dollars was appropriated for music but the following year \$115 was expended. This was likely expenditures for sheet music as different entries were made in the account book noting payment for the choir director and servicing of the organ.⁸²

The largest of the church's competitive efforts involved building a new church. In April 1823, a committee was formed to inquire whether the funds could be raised by subscription. The committee reported that they had pledges for forty-three shares at \$200 per share for a total of \$8600. They were encouraged to see if they could obtain fifty pledges for a total of \$10,000.⁸³ A committee was formed and by March 1824, they developed a plan for the new building. The church was to be constructed of "brick or stone" and was to be built "between Broadstreet Church Lane & Jaffrey street; and shall front on Broadstreet." The length of the building was to be in the range of one hundred and eighty feet and the width was to be in the range of seventy-five and

⁸⁰ Lawson, *Portsmouth: An Old Town By The Sea*, 122.

⁸¹ John Ogasapian, *Church Music In America, 1620-2000*, (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2007), 60-61, 139.

⁸² South Church Collection, Account Book, 1826-1845, Box 3, Folder 10.

⁸³ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, April 28, 1823.

sixty-five feet. Additionally, the building was to be designed with a portico and was to house between eighty-five pews and 108 pews.⁸⁴ Construction began in 1824 and the new building was dedicated on February 15, 1826.⁸⁵ A chandelier was installed in the new church at a cost of \$587 and the Standing Committee also later appropriated sums for other comforts such as blinds for the eastern windows.⁸⁶

Funds seemed to have been somewhat exhausted following the construction of the new church as a committee formed to look into the purchase of a new bell determined that the \$800 dollars needed could not be raised by subscription.⁸⁷ The old building had a bell, apparently damaged on July 4, 1826 by the town, and it was unclear whether the proprietors of the old meetinghouse would release the bell for sale.⁸⁸ By 1831, it was ascertained that the old bell could be sold to recoup some of the cost associated with the purchase of a new bell. The Standing Committee voted to raise \$600 toward the purchase of a new bell through the sale of the old bell (appraised at approximately \$200), with the remaining four hundred to be raised by assessment on pews, polls, and estates over a period of two years. Given that the sum could not be raised immediately, a loan of \$200 was procured.⁸⁹

South Church also attempted to make its members more comfortable by installing stoves and using them. Although some churches in the Portsmouth area including North Church, had stoves, more often than not they were used judiciously in order to keep costs to a minimum.⁹⁰ It

⁸⁴ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, March 2, 1824.

⁸⁵ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, Feb. 15, 1826.

⁸⁶ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, April 26, 1831; Account Book 1826-1845, Box 3, Folder 10.

⁸⁷ South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, May 28, 1827.

⁸⁸ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, August 27, 1827, May 31, 1830.

⁸⁹ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, April 26, 1831.

⁹⁰ Lawson, *Portsmouth: An Old Town By The Sea*, 121-122.

seems that prior to 1826 only the lecture room for South Church, which housed the Sunday School, was heated. In 1820, it was recorded that \$5.12 was spent on wood specifically for the lecture room.⁹¹ Stoves in churches were relatively new in the Early Republic. As Sean P. Adams explains, New England churches were slow to adopt stoves, perhaps an indication of how some were uneasy about the new technology.⁹² Additionally, it was only when church buildings became dedicated solely for religious purposes (as opposed to municipal ones) physical comforts (such as stoves) and aesthetic decorations were added. Prior to 1790, church meetinghouses were often used to store gunpowder, since fires for heating were not allowed in the building. In 1772, the second Brattle Street meetinghouse in Boston, Massachusetts was the first New England church heated with stoves.⁹³ The South Church meetinghouse itself apparently had no stoves prior to 1821, as a discussion to remedy that particular situation occurred in that year. 1821 was also the year the first stove was produced for the Starbucks Company in Troy, New York, where local manufacturers utilized natural resources to dominate the cast-iron stove industry.⁹⁴ It was estimated that installing stoves that year in the South Church meetinghouse would cost \$150.00 and the purchase was deemed inadvisable given the outstanding debt on the parish.⁹⁵ However, it seems a furnace was eventually installed in the new church as a bill for repairing the furnace appears in 1832 for \$100. Fuel costs also seemed to have increased significantly after 1826, seemingly reflecting increased desire for heat. In 1819 the total spent for wood and candles was thirty dollars but in 1833 the church expended \$42.66 on wood

⁹¹ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, May 29, 1820.

⁹² Sean P. Adams, *Home Fires: How Americans Kept Warm in the Nineteenth Century*, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins Press, 2014), 37.

⁹³ Peter Benes, *Meetinghouses of Early New England*, (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 13-14, 16, 246.

⁹⁴ Tammi Kane Groft, *Cast With Style: Nineteenth Century Cast-Iron Stoves From The Albany Area*, (Albany, New York: Albany Institute of History and Art, 2008), 11, 14.

⁹⁵ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, June 4, 1821.

alone.⁹⁶ It is possible that the increased heating expenditures were necessary due to colder temperatures but a warmer meetinghouse undoubtedly induced greater attendance at Sunday services.

Outreach efforts and competitive efforts were costly and drained both the funds of individual parishioners as well as the church coffers. The third element of Parker's solution to deal with both disestablishment and economic turmoil was retention of current members. There were no costs associated with efforts to preserve the number of parishioners yet it should be considered as part of a coherent strategy to deal with sectarian competition and economic turmoil. Retaining members meant retaining the taxes, subscriptions, and donations of those individuals, a necessary component for the church's success in the religious marketplace.

Throughout the 1820s and early 1830s, the church pondered ways to retain individuals and promote the faith. A report in 1822 expressed concern at the diminishing lack of congregants. In January of that year, a committee was formed "to enquire what causes have operated to prevent a larger addition to our numbers, during the past year; and if any measures should be taken by the Church, to promote a greater attention to religion and its ordinances."⁹⁷ The report concluded that after accounting for significant outliers, the average growth rate was 4.7% from 1715-1821. In effect, the circumstances of the church were largely unchanged for over a century. The committee cited recent controversy over doctrinal differences (undoubtedly a reference to disestablishment and the split with North Church in 1821) as a significant cause. Committee members surmised that people, "in trying to learn what they should believe...are too apt to forget what they should practice." The committee also found that some were neglecting

⁹⁶ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, April 30, 1819, April 30, 1832; Account Book, 1826-1845, Box 3, Folder 10.

⁹⁷ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Minutes, 1808-1887, April 9, 1822, Box 7, Folder 1.

communion, perhaps believing themselves to be unworthy. Additionally, “professors of religion” were displaying imprudent behavior, and charity toward others was being neglected. The solutions therefore were to suspend debate over theological doctrines, encourage all to openly profess their faith through communion, be good examples of Christians, and exhibit charitable behavior. Parishioners were advised to spend a day of self-reflection and an hour each night before communion pondering this advice.⁹⁸ As discussed earlier, the committee believed that one way to increase attendance was through philanthropic efforts, renewed in part through the Charity Fund and the Ladies Domestic Missionary Society. Philanthropy likely attracted both those who wanted to engage in good works as well as those who needed help.

Following the 1822 report, members continued to discuss how to best improve church attendance and increase membership. Efforts continued to help the poor, such as the formation of a committee in October of 1822 “to attend to the wants of the poor.” Beginning in 1823, one member was assigned a topic for a dissertation to be read at the following quarterly meeting. These topics seem to have been largely affirmations of communal responses to the economic and social chaos of the Early Republic. Topics included, among others, foreign and domestic missions, lack of religion amongst youth, family worship, religious charities, and communal responsibilities.⁹⁹ In 1828, the quarterly minutes referenced the 1822 report and noted that the Thursday before the first Sabbath in January was officially designated as a day to contemplate

⁹⁸ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Minutes, 1808-1887, April 9, 1822, Box 7, Folder 1. The two significant outliers in membership growth rate were 1727 and 1742. In 1727, the increase of forty members seems to be attributed to an earthquake. Although there is no cause indicated for the sixty-two new members in 1742, it was during the time period of religious revivalism in New England generally referred to as the Great Awakening.

⁹⁹ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Minutes, 1808-1887, Box 7, Folder 1, October 8, 1822, April 8, 1823, January 6, 1824, April 5, 1825, October 3, 1826, January 9, 1827, October 9, 1827.

the suggestions for improving parish numbers. It is clear that South Parish was responding to contemporary events by improving the comfort and aesthetics of worship, but also by encouraging association with others and benevolent efforts.

In 1826, a committee established to ascertain how to best excite religion among the youth reported on the disproportion of communicants to parishioners. The committee believed that the church should “strive to induce all such as really love religion, to profess openly.” Taking communion served the parishioner with both a sense of belonging and also advertised the number of truly faithful at South Church. A potential solution to the diminishing number of communicants was to establish “some kind of meeting among the male members of the society, particularly the young men...by which they should be brought into contact with each other, & with members of the church, who should occasionally join them, & by which their mutual sentiments should be elicited.” If male members could be induced with the benefits of association privately, perhaps they would be willing to accept the benefits openly as a full member of the church. Concerned that young men might otherwise be bored at such meetings, the committee encouraged the church to “arrange such meetings, so that they may be made interesting.”¹⁰⁰ While the committee may have intended for these meetings to be socially entertaining, it is also possible that were to serve another purpose, that of financial networking.

In 1833, a report was made on the possibility of “more frequent meetings” at the church. Members of the committee apparently were concerned at the lack of social interaction among parishioners outside of church services. This was alarming not only for the decreased level of association among the congregation but for the poor message it conveyed to potential converts. The report noted, “Individuals will pass each other in the street without giving any sign of

¹⁰⁰ South Church Collection, Meeting Records, 1811-1830, Box 9, Folder 1.

acquaintance....If an enemy of our religion were standing by what think you would be the opinion that he would form; would he say ‘see how these christians love one another!’ or rather would he not say see how they dislike each other.” In order to foster a deeper connection between members of the congregation, the committee decided to suggest “that the male members of this Church have one meeting annually for the business; & oftener if necessary; that the male & female members have their quarterly meetings together that they be as now partly religious & partly social.”¹⁰¹

The church also examined how to best serve the seafaring population in Portsmouth. Earlier efforts resulted in the distribution of religious material to eight Captains who belonged to South Church. On October 7, 1834, the Standing Committee voted to work with other religious societies to analyze the best mode for improving the Christian character of sailors. The committee aimed “to call a public meeting...for the formation of a town Society whose object shall be the improvement of the Sailors comfort, habits, and moral health.”¹⁰² In his book, *Evangelical Gotham*, Kyle Roberts details the evangelical efforts in New York City directed at mariners including holding bethel meetings (prayer meetings) on ships and in boarding houses, canvassing the waterfront, and establishing a Mariner’s Church in 1819. Of great importance is the role evangelical merchants played in maritime missions.¹⁰³ Religious reform for the seafaring population of the Early Republic stemmed from domestic as well as foreign concerns. As Brian Rouleau explains, the behavior of sailors was of particular concern given that the “misdeeds of mariners shaped the attitudes of other peoples and cultures toward America and

¹⁰¹ South Church Collection, Meeting Records, 1831-1842, Box 9, Folder 2.

¹⁰² South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Minutes, 1808-1887, Box 7, Folder 1, October 7, 1834.

¹⁰³ Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making Of New York City, 1783-1860*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 101-107.

Americans, and that had very real ramifications in the fashioning of American foreign relations.” This would have been of significant concern to the merchants of South Church as well, whose economic pursuits were certainly threatened by such misdeeds.¹⁰⁴

The outreach and competitive efforts of South Church following disestablishment and the Panic of 1819 took a financial toll on individual parishioners as well as the church itself. Parishioners in South Church were responsible for paying the costs of purchasing pews (if they so chose), taxes on those pews, poll taxes, and estate taxes.¹⁰⁵ They also were encouraged to buy shares of the Sunday school building and pledge subscriptions for its annual operating costs. The congregants were asked to contribute on communion Sabbaths, fast days, and days of Thanksgiving.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, female parishioners subscribed annually to the Ladies Domestic Missionary Society while other parishioners purchased items they sewed. Subscriptions were obtained for procuring an organ and a bell while the parish assumed part of the purchase price and costs of upkeep. Parishioners also subscribed significant sums to build the new church, completed in 1826.

Unitarians of South Church, like many moral societies in the “benevolent empire,” attempted to encourage voluntary association and charitable efforts in an attempt to recruit converts and sustain their institution. Often depicted in the historiography as individualists, Unitarians were, for a time, pondering how to foster a sense of community through charitable outreach. As will be proven in Chapter Three, these efforts resulted in significant debt for South Church, and hindered their efforts to respond in communal fashion to the Panic of 1837. Indeed, this research

¹⁰⁴ Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners And The Making Of An American Maritime Empire*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), 106, 122.

¹⁰⁵ South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, April 24, 1820 minutes.

¹⁰⁶ South Church Collection, Fast and Thanksgiving Collections, Box 3, Folder 9, Portsmouth Athenaeum, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

points to the “long” Panic of 1819, which cannot be separated from the Panic of 1837, at least for Unitarian churches in New England.

Chapter Three Duties of the Times: The Turbulent 1830s

In the freezing cold, on the first day of 1837, Reverend Jason Whitman stood at the pulpit and faced his parishioners. As he looked around the Second Unitarian Church, located in the oceanside community of Portland, Maine, Whitman saw empty seats in the wooden pews and noted “many a vacant place in the circle of our relatives and friends.” Aside from the notable absences, Whitman spoke to a sizable congregation, even though the church was relatively new.¹ Although he wished his listeners a “Happy New Year”, anxiety permeated the room to the point where it felt palpable. On that day Whitman delivered a sermon, the prooftext of which was “Can ye not discern the signs of the times.-Matt.16, 3d.” One must wonder what visible and concrete “signs” in the years leading up to 1837 prompted Reverend Whitman to choose such a theme. He acknowledged that day that his parishioners were “suffering from hard times; from the scarcity of money.” In this sermon, Whitman identified what he believed were the causes for the “hard times” and attempted to provide his listeners with solace and advice for coping with their pecuniary difficulties.²

Whitman’s sermon was a direct response to the rampant speculation in Maine during the early to mid-1830s. In particular, the “land bubble” of 1835, otherwise known as the “Great

¹ Jason Whitman, *Memoir of the Reverend Bernard Whitman*. (Boston, Massachusetts: Benjamin H. Greene, 1837), 22.

² Jason Whitman, *The Hard Times: A Discourse Delivered in the Second Unitarian Church and also in the First Parish Church, Portland, Sunday January 1st, 1837*, (Portland, Maine: Arthur Shirley, 1837), Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=ASVdAAAacAAJ&pg=PA3&dq=jason+whitman+sign+of+the+times&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjYmeKmn8DmAhWEo1kKHdMhDm4Q6AEwAXoECAyQA#v=onepage&q=frugal&f=false, 3-4. Many thanks to Professor Jessica Lepler for sharing this sermon with me.

Speculation,” caused economic devastation for many Maine businessmen when prices collapsed.³ Although Whitman could not predict the Panic of 1837, which began a mere two months after the delivery of his sermon, he did perhaps have a sense of foreboding regarding the coming crisis. Whitman meant for his sermon to serve as a warning to those who engaged in speculation and tended towards extravagant living. In typical Unitarian fashion, Whitman did not blame the nature of the market with its boom and bust cycles for the economic crisis Maine was faced with.⁴ Whitman did not rail against individualism, competition, or even wealth, if realized through modest gains and industrious labor.⁵ Instead, he identified personal failings and moral deficiencies for the crisis, which could only be resolved through individual actions. Historian Richard Wood stated in 1935, that, “it is surprising that the Great Speculation was not regarded as a warning sign pointing to the Panic of 1837.”⁶ In this, he was wrong. At least one person, Reverend Jason Whitman, saw the signs and attempted to warn those who would listen.

The themes contained in Whitman’s sermon were not at all unique during the Early Republic. In fact, the minister of South Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire Reverend Andrew Peabody, was writing sermons consonant with Whitman’s. In the mid 1830s numerous businessmen were speculating in land across the nation, which gave cause for concern among many churches. A spike in land sales occurred in 1836 with twenty million acres of government land sold nationwide.⁷ Like Whitman, Peabody directed efforts toward individual correction in order to achieve social improvement. By encouraging the virtues of industry, honesty, and

³ Richard G. Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*. (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press, 1961), 82.

⁴ Mark A. Noll, *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money and the Market, 1790-1860*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 57, 76.

⁵ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 5.

⁶ Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, 82.

⁷ Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, 34, 84, 175

frugality Whitman and Peabody were echoing the voices of clergy around the nation in an attempt to curb speculation and its negative effects.⁸

This chapter explores the reactions of the Second Unitarian Church in Portland, Maine and South Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to the Panic of 1837. Reverend Nathan Parker led Portsmouth's South Church, discussed in Chapter Two, from 1808 until 1833 when Peabody took over until 1860. Portland's Second Unitarian Church was established in 1835 with Reverend Jason Whitman as its first pastor. In 1837, both Whitman and Peabody had good cause to be concerned about the behavior of their congregants in the marketplace. As will be proven in this chapter, the survival of their respective churches depended on it.

Although the themes contained in Whitman and Peabody's sermons echo others of the time period, the context into which they were placed was quite unique. As Mark Noll has argued, local case studies such as these are necessary given the lack of aggregate data regarding churches of this time period and can point to a "variable landscape" of prioritized values.⁹ There is certainly a tendency to read both sermons as motivated by moral concerns regarding behavior in the marketplace and material acquisition. However, when the sermons are placed in their proper context it becomes clear that economic motivations are much more at play. As mentioned earlier, historians such as Stewart Davenport have analyzed various Protestant reactions to capitalism during the Early Republic primarily utilizing an intellectual historical approach. This particular chapter demonstrates the potential pitfalls of relying solely on an intellectual historical approach, which fails to consider socio-economic factors.

⁸ Andrew P. Peabody, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times: A Sermon Preached At Portsmouth, N.H., May 14, 1837*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: J.W. Foster and J.F. Shores And Son, 1837), South Church Collection, Published Sermons 1837-1848, Box 10, Folder 17, 7, 11-13; Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 11, 17-18.

⁹ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 20.

Church finances often dictated the advice ministers doled out to parishioners on how to best handle pecuniary difficulties such as those caused by the economic crises of 1819 and 1837. Theological doctrine was never wholly static or homogenous during the Early Republic; time, place, and circumstance played a crucial role in determining a church's course of action. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Unitarian responses to economic instability were largely communalistic in nature during the first half of the Early Republic. What occurred during the 1830s was nothing short of a paradigm shift in Unitarian theology; the improvement of self became prioritized over aiding the improvement of others. By the time the Panic of 1837 started, the effects of disestablishment had forced the evolution of churches into competitive speculations, which necessitated the encouragement of a more individual onus to deal with "hard times." In the later part of the Early Republic, economic concerns often trumped moral ones particularly when the survival of a church depended on the behavior of its congregants within the marketplace.

Case studies of the philanthropic efforts of churches and religious societies may help explain the delayed development of social insurance programs in the United States. As noted in Chapter Two, disestablishment prompted economic competition, which often took the form of charitable outreach, in order to gain converts. This emphasis on communal philanthropy shifted as finances diminished, and by 1837 many churches were pushed to identify individual moral failings for poverty in order to shift the onus for solutions onto others. Historian Theda Skocpol notes that the US developed more of a unique "maternalist welfare state" in contrast to other Western nations which developed economic safety nets for "industrial workers." Skocpol argues that most studies of welfare policies are teleologies, which fail to explain why America was so delayed in mandating social insurance policies as compared to other Western nations. Rather

than emphasizing developments culminating in the success of the Social Security Act of 1935, Skocpol's study offers an explanation for why most federal proposals to benefit workingmen and the elderly failed between 1870 and 1920.¹⁰ My research notes the religious and economic obstacles, which prevented benefits for workingmen and the elderly much earlier, between 1820 and 1840. Analysis of the records of the Second Unitarian Church and South Church are evidence of a profound shift that occurred in the late 1830s. The paradigm shift occurred after disestablishment created a veritable religious marketplace and transformed churches into economic investments largely in jeopardy by 1837.

Above all, Whitman and Peabody were concerned with institutional success. For the Second Unitarian Church, and South Church, economic concerns in the beginning of 1837 trumped moral ones. For Whitman specifically, every parishioner was a speculator and thus represented inherent risk and potential bankruptcy. Every bankruptcy represented the loss of the subscriptions and pew rents, which that member could contribute.¹¹ Peabody had similar concerns; maintaining the financial situation and reputation of Portsmouth's merchants was paramount.¹² It seems as though for both ministers, the fate of their church, as well as their own financial well being, depended on the course its members would take in the market in 1837.

When Reverend Jason Whitman decided to embark on a career in the ministry, it is unlikely he imagined how significantly individual economic speculation would eventually threaten the survival of his church. Even Whitman's own existence seemed tenuous from the beginning. Whitman was born on April 30, 1799 in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. As an infant, he had such

¹⁰ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 2-10.

¹¹ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 17.

¹² Peabody, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*, 8-10.

serious respiratory problems that he was not expected to live past his first month. Although he survived, his health problems troubled him for most of his life and would later be the cause of his death at age forty-nine. After working on his father's farm and attending the academy in Bridgewater, Whitman entered Harvard University at the age of twenty-two and graduated with high honors in 1825. Following three years of teaching in Billerica, Massachusetts, Whitman resolved to study divinity at Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was eventually ordained and served as the minister at the Unitarian Parish in Saco for several years before accepting a position as the General Secretary of the American Unitarian Association in Boston.¹³

The Second Unitarian Church was established in 1835 on the corner of Ann (now Park) Street and Pleasant Street in Portland, Maine.¹⁴ The First Unitarian Church, under the ministry of Rev. Dr. Ichabod Nichols was overcrowded which necessitated the establishment of a new society.¹⁵ The Unitarian Society of Portland purchased the building for the sum of \$11,000 from the 2nd Methodist Society.¹⁶ Five men were chosen as members of the Standing Parish Committee, or Parish officers, including Captain Samuel Winter, Enoch Paine, Royal Williams, Charles Mussey, and Levi Sawyer. These men of "reputedly large fortune had purchased and fitted up the church" and agreed to be responsible for the "pecuniary burdens of the society, til the many pews still vacant should be filled with worshippers."¹⁷ In May of 1835, these men asked Whitman to become the pastor of their new church and offered him an annual salary of \$1,000.

¹³ Theodore H. Dorr, *Discourse On The Life And Character Of Rev. Jason Whitman, Delivered In The First Congregational Church In Lexington, Feb. 27, 1848.* (Boston, Massachusetts: Benjamin H. Greene, 1848), 10-23.

¹⁴ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, March 20, 1835, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

¹⁵ Dorr, *Discourse On The Life And Character Of Reverend Jason Whitman*, 13.

¹⁶ *New Hampshire Sentinel*, March 19, 1835.

¹⁷ Jason Whitman, *Sermons. With A Sketch of His Life and Character, And Extracts From His Correspondence*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Benjamin H. Greene, 1849), xviii.

Whitman accepted the offer and was installed as the Pastor of the Second Unitarian Church in June of 1835.¹⁸

Once the Second Unitarian Society in Portland succeeded in finding a pastor, they had to decide how they were going to pay him. According to the minutes of church meetings, the funds needed to pay Whitman's salary of \$1000 dollars annually, as well as the mortgage for the building were to be raised through loans and subscriptions solicited from members of the church.¹⁹ However, these methods of obtaining necessary funds were not enough to cushion the church from the financial troubles, which plagued the state following the massive speculation in land, among other commodities, toward the end of 1835. The Second Unitarian Church, like South Church was not immune to economic difficulties.

Whitman acknowledged the financial troubles that were felt by his parishioners. These troubles became noticeable in 1835 and 1836 as the economy contracted, and continued in greater frequency and severity, through the Panic of 1837. In referring to businessmen and speculators in the beginning of 1837, Whitman noted that many "are in trouble, cannot meet their engagements, and are prostrated in pecuniary ruin." As a result, they "are unable to pay those employed, and, in this and other ways, the distress spreads, until it is felt by all in a greater or less degree."²⁰ In his sermon, Whitman was reflecting upon the recent economic crisis caused by the unchecked speculation in eastern Maine timberlands and the subsequent collapsing prices. Throughout 1836 and 1837 the *Eastern Argus*, a newspaper published in Portland, frequently reported on local concern regarding the economy. One observer, writing for the Argus in June of 1837, noted that the "hard times" are the "theme of endless conversation" and "all Portland is but

¹⁸ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, May 25, 1835.

¹⁹ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, May 25, 1835 and September 11, 1835.

²⁰ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 9.

one thought, and that is money.”²¹ The effects of the economic pressure in 1836, made worse with the Panic of 1837, were clearly felt by many individuals and must have created difficulty in obtaining subscriptions from church members. Whitman became increasingly desperate to build the congregation of the church in order to solicit new funds. In order to improve the church’s “external strength and prosperity” Whitman began bringing himself “before the public, both by means of the press, and through courses of evening lectures adapted to attract and interest miscellaneous audiences.”²² In utilizing the press and public lectures, Whitman was essentially advertising the church with a widened appeal designed to gain new members and thus their subscriptions and pew rents.

Although the sale or rent of pews could raise a substantial amount of money, securing the promised funds was not always easy. In April of 1838 the society of the Second Unitarian Church “voted to authorize the Parish Committee to disclose of all pews that have been sold or let for which those who purchased have neglected to pay.”²³ Taxes could also be assessed by the religious society on pews that had been sold or rented in order to raise additional funds. However, like South Church, the society of the Second Unitarian Church had trouble collecting these duties. The Parish Committee was authorized in December of 1838 to “advertise and sell at auction the pews on which taxes are due.”²⁴

Following the immense speculation in Maine, and later the Panic of 1837, the Second Unitarian Church, like South Church, was deeply affected by financial troubles. The church was described in 1836 as “enfeebled and impoverished, with a crushingly heavy debt for the church

²¹ *Eastern Argus*, June 6, 1837.

²² Whitman, *Sermons*, xix.

²³ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, April 10, 1838.

²⁴ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, December 10, 1838.

and its furniture.”²⁵ In addition to authorizing the sale of pews the Parish Committee was also “authorized to give a Parish note to Mr. Appleton for the balance due on the organ” in August of 1837. Immediate payment was not possible due to a lack of funds. In the same month, the Parish Committee was also authorized to “sell a piece of the land belonging to the Parish to Mr. Richardson on such terms as they may think proper.”²⁶ This liquidation of assets appears to have been necessary to discharge the debts of the church. Later in 1837, the Parish Committee mortgaged the church building “for such sum as may be necessary to liquidate all claims against the Society.”²⁷

The church’s financial woes continued into 1838. A parish note, in the amount of \$4750.00 had previously been given to some of the leading members of the church including Enoch Paine, Charles Mussey, and George Willis and in 1838 this note was outstanding. According to the meeting minutes, a discussion ensued about dividing the note, in order to pay one or more of the individuals in full, but it was decided instead that they would be offered church pews as a substitute for cash payment.²⁸ The church also had difficulty paying the mortgage on the church building, which had been taken out the previous year, and the Parish Committee was “authorized to sell the organ to pay the mortgage on the house if funds cannot be raised by tax or subscription.”²⁹ By the beginning of 1839, the church appeared to have difficulty funding its annual operating expenses. Meeting minutes recorded in January that expected income totaled \$573.29 while debt totaled \$1062.20. The minutes reflected that the church expected to collect

²⁵ Whitman, *Sermons*, xviii.

²⁶ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, September 1, 1837.

²⁷ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, December 18, 1837.

²⁸ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, December 10, 1838.

²⁹ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, January 7, 1839.

\$663.01, which left an additional \$573.20 to be repaid at some point in the future.³⁰ The church, which relied on its members for income, had clearly been affected by the “hard times” which Whitman discerned in his 1837 sermon.

In attempting to identify the causes of the economic trouble in Maine, Whitman identified speculation as a primary cause. Whitman’s sermon argued that, “we have made haste to get rich” and noted that “the spirit of speculation” causes individuals to “grow dissatisfied with moderate but regular gains.” According to Whitman, when the “change in the times” comes “he who has made haste to get rich, finds his liabilities greater than he can meet.” He cautioned his parishioners that the Scripture condemned such a lust for wealth and that he who “maketh haste to get rich” will find that their “thoughts of God, of religion and of their own spiritual improvement have been disturbed.”³¹ In his sermon, Whitman did not attack wealth and status, only the haste with which people were attempting to acquire it through speculation.

Whitman’s father, Deacon John Whitman, shaped many of his economic views. In writing about his father Whitman noted that he was “prudent and economical in his expenses” and “did not regard wealth as worthy to become the object of man’s greatest anxieties and most strenuous labors.” Whitman also recalled that he did not “regard those who were amassing wealth...as the persons who were doing well in the world.” Like his father, Whitman was far more concerned with an individual’s spiritual improvement than the acquisition of worldly possessions.³² However, Whitman did not go so far as to reject all marketplace values for he needed his members to be successful businessmen in order to ensure continuing donations. Instead he

³⁰ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, January 14, 1839.

³¹ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 5-7.

³² Whitman, *Memoir of the Reverend Bernard Whitman*, 22.

called for people to alter their economic decision making in order to avoid risky speculation, which could potentially lead to a loss of church revenue.

Maine was a hotbed for the type of speculation Whitman condemned. Newspapers were rife with stories of those who had contracted “land fever” in their quest to attain quick riches. “Land fever” was pervasive for most of the early 1830s in Maine and peaked in 1835. The Portland Advertiser reported that year that “anyone who visits Bangor at the present time will see something of the Land Fever; a *complaint* which has been raging with more or less violence, in this State, for three or four years, and is now evidently near its crisis.”³³ In the mid-1830s speculation in Bangor real estate was especially common. The city of Bangor, less than 150 miles north of Portland, was geographically situated in an area prime for trade as it was “at the head of navigation on a broad and deep river, with most extensive, and rapidly improving back country.” The value of real estate in Bangor was rising quickly and “everybody is desirous to cut in for a fortune.”³⁴ Speculators appeared to believe that Bangor had the potential for exponential growth in the coming years. In addition to being located on the 109 mile long Penobscot River, the city of Bangor was “the principal market town of all that region...being a district larger than that depending for supplies upon any other town in N. England, except Boston.” The prediction of growth in Bangor led the residents of Bangor to discuss the possibility of constructing a “*Wet Dock* which will accommodate all their shipping for many years to come.”³⁵ The effects of “land fever” were clearly evident to Whitman by the time he wrote the “Hard Times” as he had witnessed several of his “warmest supporters and best friends” suffer heavy losses following the

³³ *Portland Advertiser*, Reprinted in *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, April 25, 1835.

³⁴ *New Hampshire Sentinel*, April 30, 1835.

³⁵ *Portland Advertiser*, Reprinted in *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, April 25, 1835.

collapse of land prices in 1836.³⁶ Enoch Paine, one of the original founders of the church, who also suffered from “land fever,” was one of the lucky ones. Paine became “one of the richest men of the state” during the Eastern land speculation. Although Paine retained his fortune through the collapse of the land bubble and the Panic of 1837 he later incurred heavy losses in the Panic of 1857.³⁷

Along with the “land fever” concerning Bangor real estate, timberlands across the state were the source of much speculation in Maine in the mid 1830s. Local newspapers frequently advertised the sale of timberlands, sometimes upwards of ten thousand acres at a time. Individuals sometimes put in ads offering their services as “land agents” to conduct transactions concerning timberlands in the state of Maine.³⁸ The *Portland Courier* reported in 1835 that across New England “the timber lands in Maine are becoming an object of strong attraction” because “many have realized their ten, twenty, and five thousand dollars, and some their one or two hundred thousand dollars.” Speculators purchased parcels of land for between five and eight dollars an acre and then typically received forty dollars an acre for “stumpage” (timber sold standing). Following the sale of “stumpage” speculators could then resell the land to reap further profits.³⁹ Some argued that timber lands would retain their value despite an economic slump and even went so far as to accuse the “capitalists of Boston” of discussing “the hard times, for the purpose of getting lands into their hands at reduced prices.”⁴⁰ The “Great Speculation” in land, which peaked in 1835 and collapsed thereafter, is evident in the records of the Land Office of

³⁶ Whitman, *Sermons*, xviii.

³⁷ Richard Cutts Shannon, *Shannon Genealogy: Genealogical Records and Memorials of One Branch of the Shannon Family in America*. (Rochester, NY: The Genesee Press, 1905), 309.

³⁸ *Eastern Argus*, March 24, 1835, April 11, 1835, May 6, 1835, June 9, 1835, July 18, 1835, July 4, 1836.

³⁹ *Portland Courier*, Reprinted in *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, April 11, 1835.

⁴⁰ *Eastern Argus*, September 9, 1835.

Maine. In 1834 land sales totaled \$22,438.61 while in 1835 they totaled a staggering \$152,537.81. In 1836, the collapse in land prices and the resulting economic pressure caused land sales to decline the following year totaling only \$53,306.71, although they were still more than double the sales in 1834. The downward trend continued in 1837 with land sales dropping sharply yet again for a total of \$22,111.48 representing a return to 1834 levels.⁴¹

Lumber from the timber lands were a prime commodity traded in the Atlantic community of Portland, which was one of the lead shipping ports in Maine during the early 1800s along with Bath, Bangor, Ellsworth, Machias, and Calais. Other commodities central to the trade in Portland included molasses and sugar. Ads were often placed in newspapers either looking for timber suitable for shipbuilding or selling wood lots with timber suitable for the construction of ships.⁴² The flourishing rum business in Portland required lumber to trade to the West Indies where it was used to make sugar boxes, primarily in Cuba. Maine lumber, especially white pine, was also used to make shooks that could be assembled into hogsheads, or barrels, at the intended destination. In return for the lumber, merchants received molasses, which was then brought back to Portland and used to produce rum in one of the city's seven distilleries.⁴³ Many of these distilleries in addition to numerous grogshops and saloons were located on Fore Street as it was the "locus of the West Indies trade."⁴⁴ The city's trade with the West Indies was extensive and central to the economy. In 1831 Portland exported 22,244,316 board feet of lumber and the majority of it was destined for the West Indies. Asa Clapp, a Portland merchant, "exported to the

⁴¹ Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, 81.

⁴² *Eastern Argus*, January 16, 1835, April 21, 1835, March 13, 1837.

⁴³ Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, 176-208.

⁴⁴ John F. Bauman, *Gateway to Vacationland: The Making of Portland, Maine*. (Amherst, Massachusetts, University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 17, 28.

West Indies nearly two million feet of boards...and brought back 5682 cases of molasses and one hundred boxes of sugar” within a period of five years.⁴⁵

Whitman and others witnessing rampant speculation in real estate and timberlands likened it to a disease. In his 1837 sermon, Whitman cautioned that those who listened to reports of success were likely to become “infected by the atmosphere which he has been breathing.”⁴⁶ Others who witnessed the speculation of the times described those who were infected with “land fever” as having an “air of abstraction” and of being unable to eat and sleep because their “nervous excitability is so great.” The sickness progressed in stages with worsening effects as time wore on. Early symptoms included the desire to purchase a copy of Greenleaf’s Map in order to plan future speculation in real estate. “Land fever” caused speculators who looked at a map of Maine to “trace out the courses of rivers with their fingers, and mutter incoherently, of bonds-of millions of lumber-of stumpage-of hundreds of thousands of dollars.” Unfortunately, no cure for “land fever” had been discovered although some hypothesized that a “powerful dose of *minus*, administered to a few, would have a sedative effect upon all the afflicted.”⁴⁷ In Whitman’s eyes, every person infected with “land fever” represented a risk to church revenue and survival. The church, already in a feeble financial position, could simply not afford to allow its members to engage in such risky games of chance.

The “land fever” in Maine during the early 1830s is an example of what economist Charles P. Kindleberger identifies as “euphoric mania” which develops in two very distinct stages. During the first stage “investors are primarily interested in the returns on a particular project” while in the second stage “capital gains play a role.” The 1830s “euphoric mania” in Maine, caused by

⁴⁵ Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, 176-208.

⁴⁶ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 6.

⁴⁷ *Portland Advertiser*, Reprinted in *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, April 25, 1835.

“waves of excessive optimism,” eventually sowed “the seeds of panic.”⁴⁸ The crash occurred at the end of 1835 as people turned to the lands they had purchased and realized “how tenuous a false map and an artificial estimate could make a plot of timberland, hitherto deemed a substantial commodity.”⁴⁹

“Land fever” in Maine was highly contagious and engulfed individuals from all social classes and occupations. In his 1837 sermon, Reverend Whitman noted that “physicians have forgotten their patients, and in some instances even clergymen, I believe, have turned speculators.”⁵⁰ The *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* reported in 1835 that “we heard of a Physician in Maine, engaged in these speculations, who recently in prescribing for his patient, ordered twenty acres of land to be taken before breakfast, and if that did not operate in two hours, to swallow twenty more.”⁵¹ Unfortunately, when the prices of land collapsed toward the end of 1835 many of these speculators finally realized the great financial risks they had taken.

The epidemic of “land fever” led observers like Whitman to offer caution against speculation. Whitman warned that an apostle said, “they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”⁵² Whitman was not the only commercial moralist to offer advice. The *Portland Courier*, in reporting on speculation in timberlands in 1835, wrote that “it behooves people...not to rush headlong and heedlessly, if they would escape being swallowed up in the vortex.”⁵³ While stories of financial success were plentiful in local newspapers, tales of ruin were not unheard of. In 1835, a rumor

⁴⁸ Charles P. Kindleberger, “Manias, Panics, and Rationality,” *Eastern Economic Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (April, 1978), 105.

⁴⁹ Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine*, 80.

⁵⁰ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 7.

⁵¹ *Boston Post*, Reprinted in *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, May 4, 1835.

⁵² Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 7.

⁵³ *Portland Courier*, Reprinted in *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, April 11, 1835.

circulated that a silver mine had been discovered on the island of Holt, currently within Acadia National Park. Multiple speculators rushed to the island “at the dead hour of the night” in order to purchase the land and profit from the mine. A speculating individual from Bangor arrived first but upon his purchase discovered that “the precious mineral of Holt’s Island was simply oxide of Iron.” The Boston Gazette reported that upon the discovery that the “mine” was worthless, “ten thousand castles of the air were demolished in a moment.”⁵⁴ By the 1840s and 1850s the high rate of bankruptcy caused in part by such speculation, led most Americans to accept that business ventures would often end in failure.⁵⁵

Speculation was not the only cause of the “hard times” that Whitman identified in his sermon. Whitman, like Peabody cited excessive consumption, noting that many were living beyond their means and were relying on “anticipated gains, as though we were already rich.” This attempt to emulate the rich in fashion and furniture led some to live “not by what he actually is, but by what he hopes to be, in point of property.”⁵⁶ Local newspapers also expressed these concerns, publishing reports of individuals who, in attempting to mimic the trends of the rich, failed to keep their expenses in proportion to their income. Subscribers to the *Eastern Argus* read of a man who had been devastated by economic pressures. The newspaper listed his furniture which was for sale including a chandelier made of “very rich, England cut glass,” an “alabaster temple, with bronze of Napoleon,” and a very elegant “brass hydraulic washstand.” The reporter concluded that, “a man who earns a thousand dollars a year, and spends ten, ought to fail, and the sooner the better.”⁵⁷ Indeed, many identified extravagant living as the primary cause of the

⁵⁴ *Boston Gazette*, Reprinted in *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, August 31, 1835.

⁵⁵ Edward J. Balleisen, *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3.

⁵⁶ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 8.

⁵⁷ *New York Herald*, Reprinted in *Eastern Argus*, May 2, 1837.

“hard times” that were felt by many after 1835. Some noted that, “we have been living in this country beyond our means” and that “property of all kinds has had fictitious value, but its possessors have been living as if that value were real.” Like Peabody, Whitman had witnessed the period of frugality at Harvard and heard of the mercantile losses of some of his professors and classmates. As Whitman pondered the Panic of 1837, these memories undoubtedly influenced the religious and economic advice he gave to his parishioners. While for the poor, poverty was an inescapable reality, Whitman was encouraging the elite members of his congregation to impose individually measured frugality in order to stabilize their own finances as well as that of the church.

Prior to the economic pressures, which followed 1835, citizens of Portland recognized that the poor population of Portland was struggling. Before land prices collapsed, the construction of a clothing store similar to one recently established in Boston, was proposed in order to “give employment to poor females.”⁵⁸ As early as 1805 Portland established an alms-house in order to provide food and shelter for the city’s neediest population.⁵⁹ In the last three months of 1835, as the effects from the “land bubble” began to be felt, approximately seventy-five inmates were admitted to the Portland Poorhouse.⁶⁰ Residents of the poorhouse performed various labors in return for their food and shelter. Males were typically employed on the farm or in the brickyard while females labored in the domestic realm sewing, knitting, or weaving.⁶¹ In addition to the clothing store and the alms-house, several citizens of Portland also endeavored to establish a wood society.

⁵⁸ *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, January 17, 1835.

⁵⁹ Bauman, *Gateway to Vacationland*, 30.

⁶⁰ Portland Poorhouse Records, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

⁶¹ *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, December 12, 1835.

In the 1830s a wood society was organized for the purpose of buying wood in the summer when it was cheaper and storing it until winter. When winter arrived, the society then disposed of it “in small quantities, to those who are not able to lay in a winter’s supply,-adding to the price only the expenses of interest and keeping.”⁶² The wood society clearly existed for the primary purpose of providing the poor of Portland with a means to procure heat, a most basic necessity given the climate of Maine. However, it also appears that profit was a secondary goal, given that the wood society was increasing the price to account for interest and storage. Following the “land bubble” of 1835, the wood society had increasing difficulty meeting the needs of the growing poor population in Portland. This difficulty could be attributed to both an increase in the number of destitute persons as well as a decrease in voluntary donations from the community at large. The report of the treasurer noted in January of 1837, before the Panic of 1837 had begun, that \$893 in donations had been accepted and \$903 in funds was dispersed, resulting in a small deficit. The report also noted that its officers predicted an increased need for relief and encouraged the community to donate in order to alleviate the misery of the poor. Of note is the fact that a reporter for the *Eastern Argus* expressed hopes that the funds would be used cautiously, primarily to aid widows and fatherless children. The reporter admonished the society against allowing “loafers” to “subtract a farthing” from the society’s funds.⁶³ As noted in Chapter Two, welfare was generally viewed in the pejorative during the Early Republic with exceptions for widows, mothers, and occasionally soldiers. Poverty in Portland was largely considered a result of personal failings rather than uncontrollable outside forces, except for the innocent victims of profligate providers

⁶² *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, February 20, 1836.

⁶³ *Eastern Argus*, January 3, 1837.

Whitman chose to examine the internal causes of the economic pressure by focusing his sermon on the desire for quick riches and extravagant living. Whitman's solutions for preventing similar occurrences were individual rather than societal. He did not attack capitalism itself or argue for government aid for the poor. Nor did he encourage the congregation as a whole to engage in charitable outreach. Instead, he argued that individuals should be content with modest gains and should live within their means.⁶⁴ Whitman's views are in keeping with historian Daniel Levine's conclusion that in the "land of abundance" citizens of the Early Republic saw "no reason for people to be poor and therefore no reason for any but the most minimal, mostly private, charity."⁶⁵ However, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, Unitarians in the first half of the Early Republic believed in the necessity of religious charitable outreach. Disestablishment and economic crises forced a necessary shift.

Like Whitman, William Ellery Channing, a Unitarian leader in Boston, identified the causes of poverty in 1834 as "moral in their origin and character" rather than the result of external forces beyond the poor's control.⁶⁶ Both Whitman and Channing's views however, were likely the result of a historical process rather than theological doctrine. In the beginning of the Early Republic, Unitarian leaders encouraged charitable church aid and outreach. By the Panic of 1837 however, the views that were only once applied to able-bodied men encompassed a larger group and individuals were encouraged to look inward at their own moral failings as a cause for poverty.

The "hard times" which Whitman referred to in his sermon were evident from the numerous auctions and "sheriff's sales" which were advertised in local newspapers and situated amongst

⁶⁴ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 5-8.

⁶⁵ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 15.

⁶⁶ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; Harvard University Press, 1978,) 90.

other advertisements of items for sale. When individuals were unable to pay their debts, items of value were sometimes seized by the sheriff and auctioned to pay creditors. In April of 1836, several parcels of real estate were advertised as part of a sheriff's sale to be held at the Inn of Orange P. Thorpe in Portland. Among the properties, which had been seized, were land and buildings in Portland taken from E.M. Correy and fifty acres in Windham previously belonging to Stephen Pattangall.⁶⁷ Sheriff's sales were often held in local inns or at the office of the local sheriff and the items up for sale frequently included real estate. Advertisements for sheriff's sales became more frequent following the Panic of 1837, which worsened already poor economic conditions in the state. Newspapers often included multiple notices of sheriff's sales in one edition indicating the increasing difficulty individuals had in meeting their financial obligations. In April of 1837, the *Eastern Argus* included several advertisements for sheriff's sales, which listed real estate in Portland, Raymond, and Windham for auction.⁶⁸ Individuals, as well as institutions, had to liquidate their assets when they became unable to pay their debts. Items taken "on sundry executions" from the Portland Museum were sent to auction on May 29, 1839, following the second crash associated with the Panic of 1837. Among others, these items included wax figures, stuffed birds, portraits of several United States Presidents, "ancient relics", and "Indian curiosities [sic]."⁶⁹ Museums, which depended on customers with leisure and spare cash, found themselves at the mercy of the market in the late 1830s.

When the "land bubble" in Maine burst, individuals from all social classes were affected. Some implemented measured frugality into their lives and curbed their spending. Ladies in Portland, who were accustomed to entertaining afternoon callers, submitted a public request in

⁶⁷ *Eastern Argus*, April 19, 1836.

⁶⁸ *Eastern Argus*, April 18, 1837.

⁶⁹ Notice of Museum Auction, Portland 1839. Maine Memory Network.
www.mainememory.net/artifact/20145.

1838 for the cessation of such visits. The reason given for the request was that they were unable to employ help and “while waiting upon their company, their kitchens have been left alone, and their husbands obliged to go hungry.”⁷⁰ Others attempted to make light of the worsening situation and increasing need for thriftiness. One reporter claimed he survived the “hard times” of 1836 by buying “butter ...so bad his family can’t eat it” and quipped, “it lasts wonderfully.”⁷¹ The following year the *Eastern Argus* reprinted a comment from the *Hartford Times*, which claimed that the times were “hard” because “ten cents will not pay a dollar.”⁷²

Others affected negatively by speculation turned to alcohol for comfort. Like South Church, the Second Unitarian Church was deeply concerned about intemperance. Whitman warned that, “if we yield to agitation of spirits...we shall be in danger of endeavoring to drown our cares in the intoxicating bowl.”⁷³ For those who sought solace with alcohol, financial troubles certainly would have been worsened. In 1839, the Overseers of the Poor in Portland charged that 380 inmates in the alms-house the previous year were brought there “directly or indirectly by intemperance,” echoing societal perceptions that poverty was the result of moral failure. The *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics* noted that in Portland there were over seventy-five shops “where liquor is sold by the glass.”⁷⁴ In a crisis-riddled city where alcohol was readily available, Whitman was obviously concerned about the temptation it might offer to those who were filled with anxiety and despondency.

Even those who were not speculators suffered the effects of the “hard times.” As speculators increasingly accrued financial liabilities they became unable to pay their employees. Whitman

⁷⁰ *Waldo Patriot*, May 4, 1838.

⁷¹ *Eastern Argus*, November 1, 1836.

⁷² *Hartford Times*, Reprinted in *Eastern Argus*, May 2, 1837.

⁷³ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 12.

⁷⁴ *Newburyport Herald*, Reprinted in *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, July 6, 1839.

noted that in this way “the distress spreads, until it is felt by all in a greater or less degree.”⁷⁵ Some of those most affected sought refuge in the Portland Poorhouse. The alms-house, which had been in operation since at least 1805, saw a significant increase in admissions beginning in 1836. The number of admissions from 1836 through 1838 can be judged as statistically significant when compared to the number of admissions in the following years. In 1836, approximately 419 persons became occupants. As tenuous economic conditions continued in 1837, admissions went up slightly to approximately 448 individuals. Beginning in 1838 the number of admissions dropped considerably, perhaps a reflection of improving or stabilizing economic conditions. In 1838 admissions dropped to approximately 249, in 1840 they decreased even further to approximately 173 persons, and by 1842 admissions dipped to just 124 persons. Admissions remained below 1836 and 1837 levels for the ten years following the speculative mania of 1835.⁷⁶ The high number of admissions in 1836 and 1837 indicate a rise in the poor population of Portland, and perhaps led Whitman to offer counsel to those already suffering from pecuniary troubles. In his sermon, Whitman urged “Christian calmness and composure of mind under our trials.” He encouraged his parishioners to see the economic pressures as a trial permitted and ordered by God to test the character of the faithful. Whitman took great pains to console those who despaired of their financial troubles stating that “the darkest day, live til tomorrow, will have passed away.”⁷⁷ While Whitman’s primary goal was to prevent pecuniary

⁷⁵ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 9.

⁷⁶ Portland Poorhouse Records. Regarding my calculations of admissions to the Portland Poorhouse I did not include children who were born in the poorhouse. Also, when the records indicated that a person and their “family” were admitted I added two people to the totals. Therefore, the numbers are approximate and probably lower than the actual total as the records are not precise.

⁷⁷ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 11.

trouble for his congregation, he recognized and ministered toward those already suffering from poverty or recent financial losses.

For some, the trials posed by the 1835 collapse were simply too much to bear. Suicide, a measure of last resort and certainly not the most common reaction, was prevalent enough to cause concern for Whitman. Local newspapers carried reports of suicides from surrounding towns as well as from across the nation. One such report concerned Mr. Anderson, a drover from Maine, who committed suicide in December of 1836 after selling his cattle at a loss.⁷⁸ In 1837, as the Panic kept the economy spiraling downward, a number of individuals committed suicide following financial troubles. Speculators seemed particularly vulnerable to suicidal tendencies. In April of 1837, John Bubring, a 45 year old speculator from Rochester, New York committed suicide following heavy losses in land speculations.⁷⁹ The following month, the same newspaper reported that Mr. Theodore Nicolet, a merchant in New Orleans, committed suicide following “embarrassments which he, among others of our merchants, have and are now laboring under, in consequence of the unprecedented pressure of the times.”⁸⁰ Henry Seymour, Esq. from Utica, New York committed suicide in 1837 reportedly as a result of “temporary derangement and pecuniary difficulties.”⁸¹ Whitman encouraged his parishioners to avoid calling in their debts, “to bear and forbear.” This, of course, was easier said than done. As historian Jessica Lepler notes of the Panic of 1837, “the chains of trade were so long and so tangled that few could afford such leniency when their own creditors did not do the same.”⁸²

⁷⁸ *New Hampshire Sentinel*, December 8, 1836.

⁷⁹ *New York Journal of Commerce*, Reprinted in *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, April 21, 1837.

⁸⁰ *New Orleans Courier*, Reprinted in *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, May 19, 1837.

⁸¹ *New Hampshire Sentinel*, September 7, 1837.

⁸² Whitman, *Hard Times*, 18; Jessica Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, And The Creation Of A Transatlantic Financial Crisis*, (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 73.

Like other clergy, the dramatic spike in suicides following the American Revolution alarmed Whitman, although as Richard Bell has argued this increase was largely an “illusion of newspaper reporting.”⁸³ Such newspaper coverage of suicides led many to believe that the very fate of the Republic depended on preventing such acts because of the challenges they posed to “community integrity and social order.”⁸⁴ Clergy like Whitman used the pulpit to deliver messages, which would counteract the growing frequency of materialism and individual self-destruction.

One can only assume that early on, Whitman sensed the immense strain financial troubles were posing for the members of his community. He urged his listeners to summon their moral courage and refuse to yield to despondency. Whitman also wrote that those who refused to give in to despair would “pass safely and successfully through—not only unharmed but actually benefitted from the struggle.” Whitman appeared empathetic, explaining that he knew what it felt like to be “unable to meet liabilities, what it is to be perplexed, harassed and driven almost to the madness of despair.”⁸⁵

In identifying with his parishioners, Whitman may have been referring to the financial trouble of the church or perhaps the struggles of his childhood. While growing up, Whitman recalled that his father was “never possessed of wealth” and often found it “impossible to make the expenditures and the receipts of the year correspond.” In order to meet the family’s financial obligations, the children, of which there were fourteen, often sought employment with their

⁸³ Richard Bell, *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly United States*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 99.

⁸⁴ Bell, *We Shall Be No More*, 23, 90.

⁸⁵ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 10-13.

neighbors.⁸⁶ The anxiety over family finances during his youth enabled Whitman to sympathize with his parishioners who were facing similar struggles.

It is also possible that Whitman's empathy stemmed from worries about his own financial future. Like Peabody, Whitman worried about the ability to sustain his family on a minister's salary. Indeed, Whitman chose to leave his congregation in Saco because its "pecuniary ability was feeble" and "his growing family required more money."⁸⁷ Should the Second Unitarian Society fail due to financial troubles, Whitman's ability to support his family would be jeopardized.

Perhaps it was also Whitman's experience with an earlier suicide, which made him more alert to the despair felt by many in his parish. When the Second Unitarian Church was founded in 1835, Captain Samuel Winter was one of five men to be appointed a member of the Standing Parish Committee. Along with Enoch Paine and Charles Mussey, two other members of the Parish Standing Committee, Winter issued a joint note for the sum of eleven thousand dollars for the purpose of purchasing the building for the Second Unitarian Society.⁸⁸ The note was to be repaid by the Society and the deed was apparently held in trust until the debt was paid in full. The church partially repaid the note held by Winter, Paine, and Mussey with the proceeds from the sale of church pews.⁸⁹ Winter was clearly a motivating force behind the formation of the Second Unitarian Society and continued to influence the church through his participation in the Parish Committee.

⁸⁶ Whitman, *Memoir of the Reverend Bernard Whitman*, 28.

⁸⁷ Whitman, *Sermons*, xvi.

⁸⁸ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, March 20, 1835.

⁸⁹ Second Unitarian Soc. v. Woodbury.

Winter's interests went far beyond religious affairs. He was active in community affairs and politics as evident by his candidacy for the Portland representative to the state legislature.⁹⁰ The Unitarian church, particularly in the northeast, generally attracted men like Winter who were "adherents to the Whig party" and members of the commercial elite. Those elites often believed "in a God who had given them power to fashion their earthly success."⁹¹ Winter ran a large commercial business out of Portland trading lumber in return for molasses.⁹² The molasses was obtained in the West Indies, namely from Havana, Cuba and Martinico, now known as the island of Martinique.⁹³ Shipping news published in local newspapers frequently noted the arrival of hogsheads of molasses received by S. Winter & Co. in the port of Portland.⁹⁴ The molasses was transported to Bath, Maine where it was used to make rum in the distillery, which Winter owned and operated.⁹⁵ During the time Winter was speculating in molasses, the Spanish controlled Cuba and the French controlled Martinique. Slavery on both islands was not abolished until after Winter's death. The molasses, created from sugar cane, was produced as a result of slave labor on the numerous sugar plantations, which were scattered across both islands. Although slavery in Maine was abolished in 1820 as part of the Missouri Compromise, profiting from the labor of slaves elsewhere was not.

The financial gains Winter derived from trading in molasses did not last forever. A significant drop in the price of molasses during 1835 caused pecuniary difficulties as Winter had

⁹⁰ *New Hampshire Sentinel*, September 24, 1835.

⁹¹ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 16, 77.

⁹² *Newhall v. Vargas*, 13 Me. 93, 1836 Me. LEXIS 16 (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine, County of Cumberland April, 1836, Decided).

⁹³ *Simonton v. Winter*, 30 U.S. 141, 8 L. Ed. 75, 1831 U.S. LEXIS 344 (Supreme Court of the United States January 25, 1831, Decided); *Snow v. Goodrich*, 14 Me. 235, 1837 Me. LEXIS 18 (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine, County of Cumberland April, 1837, Decided).

⁹⁴ *Eastern Argus*, March 25, 1833.

⁹⁵ Parker McCobb Reed, *History of Bath and Environs: Sagadahoc County, Maine: 1607-1894*, (Portland, Maine: Lakeside Press, 1894), 236.

made a large purchase on speculation.⁹⁶ By September of 1835, Winter's commercial speculations had led to heavy liabilities and he was financially insolvent. Among other debts, he owed notes amounting to \$9500.00 on which Mr. Bowman, his brother-in-law, was the endorser.

At some point on the night of September 15, Captain Samuel Winter left the house in Bath, Maine where his two daughters were sleeping. Winter was an "unusually handsome man" who was well known in Bath due to his active participation in local Whig politics and his mercantile pursuits. His horse and chaise remained at the tavern where he had been "conversing cheerfully" that evening. As he made his way toward the Kennebec River, which empties into the Gulf of Maine, he may have felt chilled by the wind coming off the ocean water. When he reached the wharves, Winter stepped into a boat, and pushed offshore into the dark water. Two days later, the boat was found empty but for Winter's coat and hat.⁹⁷ As Reverend Whitman wrote his "Hard Times" sermon in the final months of 1836 he likely kept Samuel Winter in mind.

The night of his disappearance, Winter wrote a letter to Bowman and enclosed it in a package containing among other items some financial papers, his watch, linen clothing, and his glasses. On September 17, after Winter's coat and hat were found in the empty boat and his horse and chaise were found at the local tavern, Bowman suspected that Winter had committed suicide. When the package left by Winter was opened those fears were confirmed. In his letter to Bowman, Winter wrote that the contents of the package, which included bank notes for \$3977.00 and a bank check for \$1000.00 were for Bowman "to relieve you from your liabilities for me."

⁹⁶ Reed, *History of Bath and Environs*, 319.

⁹⁷ New Hampshire Sentinel, September 24, 1835, *Woodbury v. Bowman*, 14 Me. 154, 1837 Me. LEXIS 2 (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine, County of Cumberland April, 1837, Decided), Reed, *History of Bath and Environs*, 318-319.

Winter was a widower and asked that anything left over be given to his children.⁹⁸ Several days later, Winter's drowned body was found in the river near one of the wharves in Bath.⁹⁹ As Edward Balleisen noted, bankruptcy, much like welfare, carried "a harsh stigma in a land of self-made men" and tarnished one's reputation.¹⁰⁰ For a man like Winter, a well known citizen in Portland and Bath and a leading member of the Second Unitarian Society, such a prospect must have seemed difficult to face. Ironically, shortly after Winter's death, the price of molasses rebounded significantly, enough to have covered his losses.¹⁰¹ "The Hard Times" expressed Whitman's fears that all his parishioners had the potential to suffer the same fate as Samuel Winter. For the Second Unitarian Church to survive, like South Church, it was imperative that Whitman encouraged his parishioners to sympathize with the mercantile community.

Whether Bowman had a legal right to take possession of the bank notes left by Winter illustrates one of the common financial dilemmas of the 1830s. Winter, although pursued by multiple creditors, chose to leave the check and notes in his possession to his brother-in-law prior to his death. Creditor preference was a frequent occurrence as debtors often chose to repay friends and relatives first. Commercial moralists of the time argued against such acts of creditor preference and encouraged debtors to pay all creditors equally. Federal constraints on creditor preference would not be enacted until the passage of the Bankruptcy Act of 1841, a law that remained active for a mere thirteen months during which time 41,000 individuals applied for bankruptcy.¹⁰² Following Winter's death, the administrators of his estate, in an attempt to repay all creditors equally, took Bowman to court. The administrators agreed that Winter had a right to

⁹⁸ William Woodbury et al. vs. Samuel Bowman, 14 Me. 154; 1837 Me. Lexis 2; Reed, *History of Bath and Environs*, 319; *Mercury*, September 24, 1835, *Connecticut Gazette*, October 7, 1835.

⁹⁹ *Boston Transcript*, Reprinted in *New Hampshire Sentinel*, October 1, 1835.

¹⁰⁰ Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 13.

¹⁰¹ Reed, *History of Bath and Environs*, 319.

¹⁰² Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 124.

prefer one creditor to another during his lifetime. However, they argued that in order to be legal the act had to have occurred prior to Winter's death. The court found in favor of Bowman and stated that while Winter was living he had a right to dispose of his property as he wished and these wishes were clearly indicated in writing.¹⁰³

Numerous papers carried the report of Winter's suicide and identified the cause of his suicide as the financial losses, which he sustained as a result of speculating in molasses. The *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics* reported that it was "extraordinary...that any man should dip into speculations, who cannot bear losses."¹⁰⁴ The minutes of the Second Unitarian Church also recorded the death but did not mention the cause, simply noting that a new member needed to be appointed to the Standing Parish Committee in order to replace Winter who was deceased.¹⁰⁵ The members of the Second Unitarian Church would surely have been stunned by the loss of a man who was clearly influential both in the church as well as in the larger community of Portland. When Whitman noted that "we sorrow to behold, as we look around, many a vacant place in the circle of our relatives and friends" it was likely he was referring at least in part to the loss of Samuel Winter.¹⁰⁶

Following his "Hard Times" sermon, Whitman continued to churn out religious material. Many of his later publications incorporated the themes contained in his sermon titled "The Hard Times." In 1838 Whitman published "The Young Lady's Aid to Usefulness and Happiness" in which he spent a great deal of time extolling the virtues of industry and cautioning people to live within their means. As in his 1837 sermon, Whitman was critical of those who "were aping the manners of those more wealthy than themselves." Whitman argued that as there was no disgrace

¹⁰³ Woodbury v. Bowman.

¹⁰⁴ *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, September 26, 1835.

¹⁰⁵ Second Unitarian Church Meeting Minutes, September 11, 1835.

¹⁰⁶ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 3.

attached to “honest poverty” there was no need to avoid the appearance of poverty. He identified “frivolity of extravagance” as a major source of unhappiness and urged young women to live for duty rather than pleasure. Although he offered advice for young men as well, Whitman tended to admonish women more for their desire to live extravagantly, perhaps believing them responsible for pressuring their husbands for items of luxury. For Whitman, the Panic of 1837 served as proof for the warnings against obsessive wealth he had delivered in the “Hard Times” sermon. Following the Panic, he asked his readers to look to the “constantly recurring events, in this land, of a character to teach the uncertainty of wealth, the frequency of change.”¹⁰⁷

In 1839 Whitman published another moral guide for use by both young men and women. In “Helps for Young Christians” Whitman continued to warn against a sense of despondency. His sense that all his parishioners were potential suicides was evident. Similar to his 1837 sermon, Whitman urged his readers to refrain from “brooding over their miseries” and instead “listen to his [God’s] gracious call, and cry to him to heal their wounded spirit.” Whitman attempted to explain the causes of such distress as a trial posed by God, to “excite them to greater watchfulness, and humble dependence, and to make them more diligent in their observance of his commandments.” As in the “Hard Times” Whitman encouraged his followers to view their trials as ordered by God and which would prove to be beneficial in the end. The memory of Winter’s

¹⁰⁷ Jason Whitman, *The Young Lady’s Aid to Usefulness and Happiness* (Portland, Maine: S.H. Colesworthy, 1838), 66-67, 80-81; Whitman tended to focus his advice for young men on “intellectual cultivation,” temperance and moral development. See Jason Whitman, *The Young Man’s Assistant. In Efforts At Self-Cultivation.* (Portland, Maine: S. H. Colesworthy, 1838), Google Books, accessed January 20, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Young_Man_s_Assistant/XWFgAAAacAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, 46, 142, 198.

suicide, and perhaps a sense of guilt over failing to prevent it, undoubtedly moved Whitman to provide consolation to others.¹⁰⁸

Whitman continued to discuss the perils of speculation as well. In “Helps for Young Christians” Whitman identified speculation as preventative to the growth of grace. He warned against the desire to emulate the rich and argued that “many of God’s children plunge too deeply into secular transactions...they press into business far beyond what their capital will warrant.”¹⁰⁹ As in “The Hard Times,” Whitman was not warning against the acquisition of wealth but rather against business ventures, which were risky and without sufficient financial backing. The speculations in Bangor real estate and timberlands throughout Maine had abated after 1835 but the dangers associated with them had not.¹¹⁰

On a very practical level, the “signs” which were evident to Whitman in Portland and its surrounding area influenced the religious messages, which he delivered to his parishioners. His religious writing was a direct response to a world where commercial transactions ordered all of society. For Whitman to ignore the despondent around him, affected by speculation in Maine, would clearly have been remiss.

Although Whitman only remained in Portland for ten years, he “left a deep impression” upon the city and its inhabitants. During a visit to Portland in late December of 1847, Whitman suffered an attack of pleurisy, which caused his death the following month.¹¹¹ Speaking at his funeral, Reverend A.B. Muzzey identified the time Whitman spent in Portland as “the most important period of his life” and recalled the deep devotion and kindness of the community

¹⁰⁸ Jason Whitman, *Helps for Young Christians With Intro Remarks* (Portland, Maine: S.H. Colesworthy, 1839), 41, 46.

¹⁰⁹ Whitman, *Helps for Young Christians*, 147-149.

¹¹⁰ *Eastern Argus*, May 2, 1837.

¹¹¹ Dorr, *Discourse on the Life and Character of Reverend Jason Whitman*, 10-23.

toward him.¹¹² Reverend Jason Whitman would later be remembered for his “cheerfulness of character”, support of education, devotion to truth, and for his commitment to both “work and worship.”¹¹³ There was no indication that Reverend Jason Whitman thought of or mentioned Captain Samuel Winter before he died. In fact, Whitman was “entirely calm and self-possessed” even though he “indulged no such hopes” that he might recover.¹¹⁴ Perhaps he was consoled by the presence of so many who had persevered in “devotion to moral improvement and spiritual good amid gales of worldly prosperity” during the economic tribulations of the 1830s and after.¹¹⁵

May weather typically lifts the spirits after a long New England winter. Warmer temperatures, budding trees, and the return of songbirds are often enough to assuage the doldrums of five months of cold, snow, and darkness. In 1837, the mild climes of May must have been particularly welcome as the previous winter was more difficult than normal. In nearby Dover, New Hampshire (twelve miles away from Portsmouth), January 1837 was excruciatingly cold, with temperatures almost six degrees below the average of twenty-three. Yet despite the warm fifty-degree temperatures of May, Reverend Andrew Preston Peabody did not appear to be feeling especially cheerful.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Muzzey, A.B., *Memorial of Rev. Jason Whitman: Late Pastor of the First Church in Lexington, Mass. With An Address Delivered At His Funeral, January 29, 1848.* (Boston, Massachusetts: Leonard C. Bowles, 1848), 4.

¹¹³ Dorr, *Discourse on the Life and Character of Reverend Jason Whitman*, 10-23.

¹¹⁴ Dorr, *Discourse on the Life and Character of Reverend Jason Whitman*, 17.

¹¹⁵ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Charles Bowen, *The American Almanac And Repository Of Useful Knowledge For The Year 1839*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Charles Bowen, 1839), Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=87cTAAAYAAJ&pg=PR3&dq=the+american+almanac+and+repository+of+useful+knowledge+for+the+year+1838&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0

On May 14, 1837, Peabody delivered a sermon to his congregation at South Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire titled “*Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*,” which echoed Whitman’s sermon delivered only four months earlier. Peabody noted that, “the commercial world is at present undergoing a tremendous and unprecedented convulsion. In our larger cities, the foundations of credit are undermined; the operations of business are suspended.” In his sermon, Peabody offered solutions for limiting the scope of the crisis largely by attempting to restore his parishioners’ confidence both in the strength of the market and in each other. In particular, he endeavored to bolster the reputations of merchants (many of whom comprised his congregation as noted in Chapter Two). Like Whitman, Peabody emphasized the importance of frugality, repression of ambition, and argued that speculation should be restrained.¹¹⁷ Peabody was clearly focused on individual responses to rectify the financial crisis rather than communal ones. He followed Whitman in urging his congregation toward solutions that required a focus on their individual behavior in the marketplace rather than ones, which prescribed philanthropic efforts to alleviate the suffering of others.

As it did for Whitman, the Panic of 1837 tested South Church’s endurance and influenced Peabody’s theological expressions. Born March 19, 1811, in Beverly, Massachusetts, Peabody was a precocious child who learned to read by the age of three (and could read a book upside down) and memorized a significant portion of the Bible including the entire first chapter of Genesis by the time he was seven.¹¹⁸ His graduation from Harvard in 1826 at the age of fifteen,

[&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjY5OnOkcDmAhUrZN8KHf_fCfU4ChDoATAGegQIABAC#v=onepage&q=weather&f=false](#), 134-135. Temperatures were averaged from 1833-1838.

¹¹⁷ Peabody, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*, 3-4, 6-8, 12-13.

¹¹⁸ Edward J. Young, *Andrew P. Peabody, D.D., LL.D; A Memoir*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; John Wilson And Son, University Press, 1896), Google Books,

one of the two youngest graduates in the institution's history at that time, seemed to confirm the early signs of his mental acuity.¹¹⁹ Following his education at Harvard, Peabody attended the Divinity School at Cambridge and filled in occasionally at various pulpits. In 1833, Dr. Parker of South Church was quite ill, and the Standing Committee invited Peabody to assist him in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.¹²⁰

Peabody was highly concerned with his financial stability and the impact on this career in the future. In his correspondence with John Foster of the Standing Committee, Peabody indicated he was weighing his job prospects and demonstrated a shrewd ability to negotiate. On June 21, 1833, Peabody wrote that he would be happy to assist Parker but also mentioned that he received a job offer from a church in Haverhill. Peabody noted he was considering the offer from Haverhill, "if they should find themselves able to settle a minister, (i.e. if a fund of 12000 dollars which is contested remains in their hands)." Peabody expressed concern about the permanency of a position, indicating that he desired to be ordained if he was at South Church more than a year, given the societal prejudice against unsettled ministers. In other words, Peabody did not want his assistance at South Church to hurt his future career prospects should the appointment turn out to be temporary in nature.¹²¹

Peabody was well aware of the impact financial difficulties had on parishes. He wrote to Foster in July 1833 that the Haverhill church "lost their house" and "are not in a situation to

https://books.google.com/books?id=QQcVAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=memoir+andrew+p+peabody&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwifxqz13vTIAhVow1kKHbqoC7AQ6AEwAHoECAEQAg#v=onepage&q=memoir%20andrew%20p%20peabody&f=false, 3-4.

¹¹⁹ Young, *Andrew P. Peabody*, 7.

¹²⁰ Young, *Andrew P. Peabody*, 8; South Church Collection, Andrew Peabody Correspondence, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16.

¹²¹ South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, May 27, 1833, Box 1, Folder 4; Andrew Peabody Correspondence, 1833, June 21, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16.

settle a minister.” Peabody informed Foster that he had several other opportunities to preach at Fall River and Framingham, but if he did not have a permanent settlement by September he would agree to assist Parker.¹²² South Church responded with an offer for a yearly salary of six hundred dollars, and indicated that if Parker’s health continued to decline Peabody would be invited to take his place.¹²³ The offer was clearly not enticing for Peabody, and he manipulated a sense of urgency into the situation. In his response, Peabody wrote, “I am tired of the uncertainty & perplexity about my own prospects in life” and “I fear that the situation of a day labourer in the vineyard might insensibly dispirit me, repress my energies, & diminish my usefulness.” Peabody desired not only a permanent settlement, but also a better salary, which he attempted to obtain by informing South Church that he expected a formal offer imminently from Fall River for one thousand dollars a year and another from Framingham for eight hundred.¹²⁴

The South Church committee was finding it difficult to offer Peabody a sufficient salary given that they were in debt and already supporting one minister. The committee replied they felt “driven into a corner, at which you know human nature always kicks.” Expressing a desire to hear Peabody speak in order to make a better decision, and obtain “breathing time,” the committee invited Peabody to preach if Framingham did not make an offer.¹²⁵ Peabody was negotiating with the church at Framingham simultaneously, and wrote to South Church that when he informed Framingham of the Portsmouth offer, Framingham immediately responded with an offer of eight hundred dollars a year. Peabody outlined his dilemma to South Church as

¹²² South Church Collection, Andrew Peabody Correspondence, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16, July 8, 1833.

¹²³ South Church Collection, Andrew Peabody Correspondence, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16, July 13, 1833.

¹²⁴ South Church Collection, Andrew Peabody Correspondence, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16, July 16, 1833.

¹²⁵ South Church Collection, Andrew Peabody Correspondence, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16, August 10, 1833.

such, “The case lies this. I have two invitations to settle as pastor, both of them in a pecuniary point of view, one of them as regards the mental, moral & social character of the people, very tempting to me,-indeed the last of them so satisfactory that, had no other invitation been pending, I should have given an affirmative answer the very day of my receiving it.” Peabody noted that he would almost be willing to make a “pecuniary sacrifice” by coming to Portsmouth but stated that Framingham offers a “compensation which would support a family,-a compensation which I have calculated would go as far as twelve hundred dollars at Portsmouth. If I go to Portsmouth, I go with the prospect at present, of a bare subsistence for myself.”¹²⁶ Peabody may have been slightly exaggerating his characterization of South Church’s offer of six hundred dollars as “bare subsistence” when he calculated living expenses. After all, the average unskilled laborer in the Early Republic had to survive on a dollar a day (or less) and the salary offered to Peabody was almost double that amount.¹²⁷ Regardless, personal financial sustainability was the determining factor for what offer Peabody accepted.

It is unclear whether South Church could not find another minister or specifically desired Peabody, but the result was the same. Although Parker expressed concern about the ability of the church to sustain two ministers, the need for assistance prevailed.¹²⁸ In the end, South Church, “driven into a corner,” capitulated and offered Peabody a salary of \$1000 annually.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ South Church Collection, Andrew Peabody Correspondence, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16, August 14, 1833.

¹²⁷ Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 98, 156, 159, 269.

¹²⁸ Henry Ware Jr., D.D., *Memoir Of The Rev. Nathan Parker, D.D.: Late Pastor Of The South Church and Parish In Portsmouth, N.H.* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: J.W. Foster And J.F. Shores; Boston, Massachusetts, James Munroe And Company, 1835), lxiv.

¹²⁹ South Church Collection, Account Book, 1826-1845, 71.

South Church was now committed to an annual payment of \$2060 for the salaries of both Parker and Peabody.¹³⁰

Peabody's financial stability was entirely dependent on the ability of the church to sustain economic shocks. In this, Peabody found cause to be worried. As detailed in Chapter Two, the population growth rate of New Hampshire was decreasing, yet sectarian competition was increasing, resulting in fewer potential converts. As historian Nathan O. Hatch has aptly illustrated, by the time Peabody began his ministry at South Church, Methodists, Baptists, Mormons, Christians, and black churches were exploding in growth. Hatch argues these "insurgent groups had the upper hand" due in part to their "visions of individual self-respect and collective self-confidence" they offered to the poor. Although Unitarianism had once been considered a dissenting sect, by the late 1830s it was competing with "a different and decidedly more evangelical notion of biblicism." Methodists, Baptists, Mormons, Christians, and black churches offered an egalitarian worldview, worship through religious ecstasy and the opportunity for ordinary people to think for themselves.¹³¹

Peabody was clearly worried about sustaining the church financially by maintaining the number of congregants. In 1833, he witnessed how the church at Haverhill, which previously offered him a position, lost their building due to "an irruption [sic] of Universalists."¹³² Peabody frequently inveighed against "insurgent groups" such as those outlined above. On September 6, 1835, Peabody delivered a sermon in which he cautioned his parishioners against religious ecstasy (a characteristic of many egalitarian sects such as Methodists and Baptists). Peabody

¹³⁰ South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, May 27, 1833.

¹³¹ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989), 4, 9-11, 182.

¹³² South Church Collection, Peabody Correspondence, 1833, Box 10, Folder 16, July 8, 1833.

encouraged his listeners to be led by principles and virtue rather than feelings and passion.¹³³ In February 1837, Peabody continued to rail against man's "susceptibility of being excited." He specifically referenced "Mountain Matthias," a former carpenter named Robert Matthews, who in the 1830s attracted followers in New York and was at the center of a scandalous murder trial in 1834. As Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz note, many contemporaries believed Matthias "seemed to exemplify a species of disorder that Jacksonian Americans had begun to label 'fanaticism' ...an overheating of the emotions that led otherwise normal people to entertain strange and enthusiastic doctrines." Peabody believed Matthias was a blatant fraud and expressed surprise that with "his bold assumption of divine authority" he "completely overawed a considerable amount of intelligent & highly respectable people." For Peabody, reason remained the most viable solution to "such mummery."¹³⁴

In addition to sectarian competition, in the 1830s public ire was directed in part at the Second Bank of the United States (BUS). In part, this anger at the Second BUS was encouraged by the Presidency of Andrew Jackson who believed the Second BUS gave undue influence to "a few Monied Capitalists."¹³⁵ This of course compounded the problem caused by the egalitarian impulses of competing religious sects. This was problematic for South Church due to the fact that at least five of the bank's officers were also proprietors of South Church.¹³⁶

¹³³ South Church Collection, Peabody Sermons 1834-1840, Box 10, Folder 21, September 6, 1835; Hatch, 35-36.

¹³⁴ South Church Collection, Peabody Sermons 1834-1840, Box 10, Folder 21, February 26, 1837; Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 150-151.

¹³⁵ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States And Its World In An Age Of Civil Wars, 1830-1910*, (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 99.

¹³⁶ *The Portsmouth Register And Directory, Containing The Names Of The Inhabitants, Their Occupations, Places Of Business and Residence; Lists Of The Streets, Lanes And Wharves; The Town Officers; The Public Offices And Banks. Also a list of the Shipping belonging To The*

Discontent in Portsmouth quickly turned to violence, as it did across the nation. In April 1834, protestors in Portsmouth attacked the local branch of the Second BUS. John Quincy Adams remarking on the multitude of riots in 1834 wrote that, “My hopes of the long continuance of this Union are extinct. The people must go the way of all the world, and split up into an uncertain number of rival communities....the ‘universal cry of distress,’ ...stretched from Portsmouth to Charleston...with no appearance of a disposition to afford relief.”¹³⁷ Riots were commonplace in Jacksonian America and as Daniel Walker Howe notes, party politics along with “ethnic, racial, and religious animosities provided the most frequent provocation to riot.” In the case of the 1834 sack of the Portsmouth bank, party politics were largely to blame as the Bank War was climaxing and the Democratic crowd targeted the bank as a symbol of Whiggism.¹³⁸ Religious animosity may have played a role as well, given the number of officers who were also members of South Church.

Historian Charles Sellers argues that, “the first Bank of the United States epitomized the elitist developmentalism that Republicans challenged in driving the Federalists from power.” This controversy led to the defeat of the Bank’s renewal charter in 1811, but the need for credit to finance the War of 1812 and internal improvements led to the creation of the Second BUS in 1816.¹³⁹ The renewal of the Bank’s charter was due in 1836. President Andrew Jackson, elected in 1828, was a vehement opponent of mixed corporations, those that combined public and private

District; And Other Useful Information, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Joseph M. Edmonds, 1834), 80-81; South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, Membership Lists 1758-1850s, Box 7, Folder 1, Meeting Records 1831-1842, Box 9, Folder 2.

¹³⁷ Carl E. Prince, “The Great “Riot Year”: Jacksonian Democracy and Patterns of Violence in 1834,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), 3, 13, 18.

¹³⁸ Prince, “The Great “Riot Year,” 13; Daniel Walker Howe, *What God Hath Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 430-431;

¹³⁹ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 59, 72; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 85-87.

interests, and he eventually directed his hostility toward the Second BUS, “the largest corporation in the country,” after his election. A hard-money man who distrusted banks, Jackson attacked the Second BUS’s use of paper tender and criticized what he viewed as its unchecked influence and privileges. Jackson’s view of this “artificial monopoly unresponsive to government or public” led to his nicknaming the Bank, “the Monster.” Nicholas Biddle, the Bank President, applied for an early renewal of the charter in 1832, optimistic that Jackson would avoid a major conflict in an election year. However, on July 10, 1832, Jackson issued what Daniel Walker Howe called “the most important presidential veto in American history.” Although the charter’s early renewal seemed unattainable in 1832, it could still be renewed when it expired in 1836. To force the issue, Jackson ordered the removal of federal deposits from the Second BUS in October 1833.¹⁴⁰ According to Sellers, Biddle, “resolved on such a severe contraction that general prostration would stampede Congress into restoring the deposits and rechartering the Bank over Jackson’s veto.”¹⁴¹ Although Biddle intended to prove the Bank’s necessity, he instead aroused the ire of American citizens unduly affected by the restraint of credit. By the time the Democratic mob attacked the Portsmouth branch in April 1834, the likelihood for a legislative renewal of the Bank’s recharter was rapidly diminishing.¹⁴²

Although the Bank War ended in 1834, the effects likely reverberated throughout the late 1830s. Class divisions may not have solely caused the Bank War but it certainly worsened them.¹⁴³ Although Jackson framed the attack in political rather than economic terms and gained support from farmers as well as businessmen, he took advantage of class-based anger in his war on the Bank. Scholar Sean Wilentz argues the Bank War helped the Jacksonians develop a

¹⁴⁰ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 366, 374-379, 388.

¹⁴¹ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 336-337.

¹⁴² Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 391-392.

¹⁴³ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 386.

political identity based in part on “a distrust of what Jackson called the corrupting power of ‘associated wealth.’”¹⁴⁴ In New Hampshire, Peabody must have been worried about the effect this would have on the ability of South Church to recruit new members. Steven P. McGiffen notes that New Hampshire Whigs “feared that their opponents had succeeded in making the Bank a divisive, class-oriented issue. *The Portsmouth Journal* noted that the Democrats used “the Bank for a further purpose, that of exciting the feelings of the poor against the rich.” While the Whig Party gained numerous followers throughout New England, New Hampshire remained decidedly Democrat. Although Portsmouth, a commercial center, remained largely supportive of Whig policies until 1838, Whig success in elections there significantly decreased in the following years.¹⁴⁵ The association of many of South Church’s prominent members with the Bank and Whig politics, at a time of Democrat ascendancy, likely caused difficulties attracting new converts.

Sectarian competition and the Bank War were problematic for South Church for several reasons. Many of the competing religious sects espoused an egalitarian nature, not something for which South Church was known. Sellers argues that Unitarian congregations in New England, such as the Second Unitarian Church and South Church, were comprised of “enterprising merchant princes” who “increasingly dominated Yankee elite culture.”¹⁴⁶ Of the fifty-four males admitted to South Church membership between 1790 and 1837 at least sixteen were merchants, almost 30%. Another twelve were in elite professions working as physicians, attorneys, grocers, or booksellers. Of the proprietors listed in 1844, at least eleven were merchants. The 1834

¹⁴⁴ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 380, 382; Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson*, (New York, New York: Henry Holt And Company, 2005), 112.

¹⁴⁵ Steven P. McGiffen, “Ideology and the Failure of the Whig Party,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3, (Sep., 1986), 388, 392, 400.

¹⁴⁶ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 202.

Portsmouth city directory lists at least seven South Church members and/or proprietors serving as town officers and a striking twenty-six members and/or proprietors as serving on a board for one of Portsmouth's eight banks.¹⁴⁷ In 1837, South Church was most certainly filled with "Yankee elite." The composition of the congregation posed a unique problem in that if the mercantile industry was threatened in any way South Church would undoubtedly suffer as well. Peabody was no doubt aware of ire against the mercantile population, necessitating their defense in his response to the Panic of 1837.

Additionally, only proprietors could vote and thus wielded a disproportionate amount of influence. During the 1830s "Jacksonian Democracy," blossomed, characterized by political egalitarianism embodied in the form of Andrew Jackson, who as Howe notes, believed "in the philosophy of majority rule." In the context of Jackson's politics, which emphasized "popular virtue," it is quite likely that the voting structure of South Church caused tension. Such elitism, both in terms of the composition of the congregation and the voting structure likely alienated to some degree, the poor and middling classes of Portsmouth, making it difficult for South Church to increase its congregation, and thus its revenue.

By 1837, in addition to the problems outlined above, like the Second Unitarian Church, South Church had to deal with significant debt, which prohibited a larger philanthropic effort following

¹⁴⁷ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records 1808-1887, Box 7, Folder 1, Box 9, Folder 2 Meeting Records, 1831-1842; *Portsmouth Directory, Containing The Names Of The Inhabitants, Their Occupations, Places Of Business And Dwelling Houses, With Lists Of The Streets, Lanes And Wharves; The Town Officers, Public Offices And Banks, And Other Useful Information*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Wibird Penhallow, 1821); *The Portsmouth Directory, Containing Names Of The Inhabitants, Their Occupations, Places Of Business, And Dwelling Houses; Lists Of The Streets, Lanes, And Wharves; The Town Officers, The Public Offices And Banks; And Other Useful Information*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Wibird Penhallow, 1827); *Portsmouth Register*, 1834; *Edmonds' Town Directory; Containing The Names Of The Inhabitants; Their Occupations, Places Of Business And Residence, With Lists Of The Streets, Lanes, And Wharves, The Town Officers, Public Offices, And Banks, And Other Useful Information*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Joseph M. Edmonds, 1839).

the financial crisis. It simply was not feasible. As detailed in Chapter Two, South Church expended a great deal of funds in the 1820s building a new church and funding various outreach efforts. By 1826, the Standing Committee was considering selling the “Parsonage Land” likely on Pleasant Street. In 1827, the church formulated a plan to assess additional taxes on pews beyond current operating expenses, in order to pay the interest on the Parish debt and reduce the principal by \$200 each year. In April 1828, the interest alone on the debt was \$140 and it was voted to sell the “Parsonage land” (consisting of fifteen acres) and to use the proceeds toward the principal amount still owed. In addition to selling the land, the Standing Committee also decided to raise \$1000 by subscription in order to “alter the present shape of the Parish debt.” The Standing Committee undertook to collect all debts due to the parish, rent out spare seats in the building, and collect taxes for vacant pews. By 1830, the subscription for \$1000 was successful and when added to the funds from the sale of the land, the Standing Committee noted that the Parish debt was now in a “favorable situation.”¹⁴⁸

It appears that not all was well with the South Church accounts however. In 1830 the Standing Committee voted to sell another “parcel of land in Rochester.” Additionally, as noted in Chapter Two, the church took out a loan for \$200 to procure a new bell in 1832.¹⁴⁹ In August 1833, poll and estate taxes were raised to obtain \$700 needed for parish expenses.¹⁵⁰ At this point, the Standing Committee embarked on discussions to auction any pews with unpaid taxes at public auction and sell the old meetinghouse, considering either the sale of the building or parceling out the materials. The Standing Committee had previously resisted such actions, as

¹⁴⁸ South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, April 24, 1826, May 28, 1827, April 1828, April 27, 1829, May 19, 1829.

¹⁴⁹ South Church Collection, Record Book 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, December 6, 1830, April 26, 1831.

¹⁵⁰ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1833-1876, Box 7, Folder 2.

they wanted to avoid upsetting wealthy parishioners, given the presence of tombs under the building. However, to procure much-needed funds, the building and land were sold in 1834 for \$800 to the Free-will Baptist Society. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, Parker's health was failing which necessitated extra funding to supply the pulpit. In October 1832, the Committee decided to raise \$500 by subscription in order to sustain additional ministers.¹⁵¹

By 1833 South Church was once again in debt in part because operating expenses rose at an alarming rate throughout the 1830s. Expenses totaled \$1350 in 1831, \$1450 in 1832, and \$1630 in 1833. Expenses decreased slightly following the death of Parker, as the church was no longer required to pay the salary for two ministers. This reprieve was short lived however as expenses crept back up toward the end of the decade to accommodate an increase in Peabody's annual salary. Expenses averaged \$1500 from 1834 to 1837 (still above 1831 totals), but jumped by \$200 in 1838.¹⁵²

Although Parker's death alleviated the expense of an additional ministerial salary, it necessitated other expenditures. The Standing Committee obtained funds through subscription for a monument to be erected in Parker's memory. They also decided to pay Parker's salary to his wife through the end of the parochial year, until April 1834. Additionally, the Standing Committee gave Mrs. Parker their share in the residence owned by the Parish that she still occupied.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, April 24, 1826, April 26, 1831, April 30, 1832, June 26, 1832; South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1833-1876, Box 7, Folder 2, July 7, 1834.

¹⁵² South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1833-1876, Box 7 Folder 2, June 9, 1834, April 27, 1835, April 25, 1836, June 26, 1837, April 30, 1838.

¹⁵³ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1833-1876, Box 7, Folder 2, Dec. 21, 1833, April 28, 1834.

South Church was in debt but equally concerning was the unwillingness or inability of its parishioners to continue expending their own funds for the parish. Parishioners paid pew taxes, poll taxes, and estate taxes to cover annual operating expenses. Throughout the 1820s they also supported various charitable outreach and recruitment efforts such as the Ladies Missionary Society and the Charity Fund. A Sunday school was funded through subscriptions and donations, and a new church was built, paid for by individual subscribers. Purchase of an organ, bell, and stove also required additional financial contributions. By 1834 several parishioners had empty pockets. The Building Committee for the new church (paid for through individual pledges to buy pews) owed Piscataqua Bank \$522.17. They offered five pews in their possession to the Parish, which were valued at almost \$900 in exchange for the assumption of the debt. Personal debt may also have prompted the sale of the old meetinghouse, even against the wishes of some parishioners since the proceeds of the building itself were distributed amongst pew owners in the new building.¹⁵⁴

In 1834, the Standing Committee authorized the wardens to obtain a loan for a period of six years in order to pay the parish debt with the condition that the principal be reduced by \$100 annually. Yet by 1837 they were only covering the interest of \$50 each year. In part, this was because the Standing Committee continued to spend rather than reduce expenditures. Efforts to make church services more appealing continued throughout the 1830s even as charitable efforts waned. In 1835 the church spent \$75 to replace the hymnals with ones that reflected “the

¹⁵⁴ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1833-1876, Box 7, Folder 2, April 28, 1834, June 9, 1834.

improved taste of the age.” The church also sent individuals to Boston to see about “any better methods to warm the Church” and later installed two hot air furnaces.¹⁵⁵

Like the Second Unitarian Church, South Church had difficulty collecting pew taxes from parishioners. In 1831 outstanding taxes totaled \$347.69 and the following year they totaled \$694.¹⁵⁶ This problem likely continued as the Standing Committee eventually formed a committee to report on the best method for collecting taxes. In June 1837, pew owners were offered a six percent discount if they paid their pew taxes within two months and a four percent discount if they were paid within four months. However, the discount was somewhat of a double-edged sword as the annual operating budget now had to add fifty dollars for abatements and discounts.¹⁵⁷

Even when parishioners did pay their taxes they were beginning to resent doing so. One can sense that the spending habits of South Church in the 1820s and early 1830s had stretched the resources of its congregation. In 1836, at the quarterly meeting of the brethren in October, a committee was formed to look into communion contributions. The contributions were used to pay for the expenses of the table (wine, bread, cloth, etc.), provide relief for the poor, and support the Charity Fund. It is not exactly clear what some objected to as the meeting minutes suggested the costs of the table should not be covered by communion contributions while the report examined abolishing them altogether. The report noted that objections were based on the view of communion contributions as “a mode of taxation peculiar to larger Cities...evidently an expedient to draw money from the pockets of the Stranger.” Poll, pew, and estate taxes were

¹⁵⁵ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1833-1876, Box 7, Folder 2, June 9, 1834, April 27, 1835.

¹⁵⁶ South Church Collection, Record Book, 1749-1833, Box 1, Folder 4, April 26, 1831, April 30, 1832.

¹⁵⁷ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1833-1876, Box 7, Folder 2, June 26, 1837.

paid by town residents, but communion contributions could be collected from any that happened to attend worship that day. The committee argued that if contributions only went to aid the poor, then concerns about the contributions as a form of revenue connecting “spiritual and secular concerns” could be alleviated.¹⁵⁸ It is more than possible that this was simply a way to justify eliminating one of the various forms of taxation.

Parishioners, particularly wealthy ones were likely expressing discontent about taxes informally by 1837 given that complaints were noted formally in the warden’s report by 1842. The report acknowledged that alteration of the taxation system might negatively affect the church, yet recommended a change nonetheless. Church revenue derived primarily from taxation on pews, polls, and estates. The report argued that “the practical operation has not been uniform” because estate taxes (which not everybody paid) were larger than pew and poll taxes. The report cited the original by-laws, noting that the taxes on pews are supposed to cover the minister’s salary (the largest budget expenditure) but did not, which necessitated greater poll and estate taxes. One solution offered in the report was to develop a different method of compelling the taxes on pews (which were becoming difficult to collect), thus largely avoiding the need for additional taxes. The wealthy, whose estates would be taxed to make up the deficiency of pew taxes, were clearly worried given the state of the church’s debt. In 1842 the church needed to obtain a loan for repairs, the servicing of which would make annual taxes even higher and therefore difficult to collect.¹⁵⁹ Given the struggle collecting taxes and communion contributions, the rising operating costs of the church, and the current debt, Peabody’s sermon in 1837 (like Whitman’s) was poised at a time when financial change became a necessity.

¹⁵⁸ South Church Collection, Annual Meeting Records, 1808-1887, Box 7, Folder 1, October 10, 1836, Communion Contribution Statement, Box 18 Folder 37.

¹⁵⁹ South Church Collection, Meeting Records, 1831-1842, Box 9, Folder 2, May 1842 Warden’s Report.

Peabody clearly knew expenditures needed to be reduced and this meant less focus on philanthropy following the Panic of 1837. Peabody was familiar with institutional retrenchment of finances, while at Harvard he witnessed the restructuring of the university's expenditures. In 1823, as Tamara Plankins Thornton notes, what came to be known as the "Great Rebellion" precipitated a crisis at Harvard in funding. In that year, "most of the graduating class...was expelled for behavior" which led in part to a vote by the Massachusetts Legislature to allow public funding for the institution to expire. Combined with low enrollment in the following year, the result was a budget deficit by 1825. Financial reforms were therefore crucial to the institution's survival.¹⁶⁰

One method of reform was to place men with business experience at the helm of the college. Josiah Quincy, the first layman to be appointed as President of Harvard was employed due to the desire "that a man largely versed in the management of funds and of material interests should be put at the head of the college." Another mechanism was modernization of record keeping. Thornton explains that in the 1820s, "Bookkeeping practices were...surprisingly unbusinesslike, rarely approaching the textbook ideal of double entry and regular balancing, let alone external auditing."¹⁶¹ To this end, Harvard "employed Benjamin R. Nichols, ...for a full year, in examining the accounts of preceding years, ascertaining accurately the financial condition of the college, and starting a set of books which have since been kept as those of every corporation should be kept."¹⁶² Peabody noted how Harvard also hired Benjamin Peirce as the college

¹⁶⁰ Tamara Plankins Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers: How a Nineteenth-Century Man of Business, Science, and the Sea Changed American Life*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 195.

¹⁶¹ Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 166.

¹⁶² Andrew P. Peabody D.D., LL.D., *Harvard Reminiscences*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Ticknor And Company, 1888), Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=maDbOJfUP-IC&pg=PA28&dq=harvard+reminiscences&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2

librarian, viewing him as “a man who could at once give academic dignity to the office of librarian, and bring to it the accurate business habits which the increase of the library demanded.”¹⁶³ Charles Sanders, brother-in-law to Peirce was hired as steward of the college “with the view of establishing a rigid financial system in the details of college expenditure.”¹⁶⁴ Along with the hiring of laymen and modernization of record keeping, financial restructuring also required reduction of expenditures and this resulted in the loss of positions for some, including professors George Otis and James Hayward.¹⁶⁵

Witnessing the financial retrenchment at Harvard likely pushed Peabody to favor frugality over wasteful and lavish habits. Peabody admired Reverend John Snelling Popkin, College Professor of Greek, for “his inexpensive habits” which enabled him to acquire “a competent provision for his remaining years.”¹⁶⁶ Likewise, Peabody noted that Sanders, while steward of Harvard, “practised [sic] in full the penny-wise, without being ever betrayed into the pound-foolish, policy, in behalf of the college.”¹⁶⁷ This perhaps later contributed to his view that moral failings were to blame for poverty.

The budget difficulties at Harvard certainly influenced Peabody’s direction of South Church. Another likely influence in shaping his sympathies toward merchants was his relationships with professors and classmates who suffered significant mercantile losses. Stephen Higginson became a director of the Theological School while Peabody was a student after suffering heavy

[ahUKEwjIpoiMrMDmAhWko1kKHYZJDW0Q6AEwAXoECAUQA#v=onepage&q=harvard%20reminiscences&f=false](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044010317600&view=1up&seq=9), 24.

¹⁶³ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 68.

¹⁶⁴ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 68-69.

¹⁶⁵ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 106, 136.

¹⁶⁶ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 47; *Catalog Of The Officers And Students Of The University Of Cambridge*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; University Press--Hilliard and Metcalf, 1871), HathiTrust,

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044010317600&view=1up&seq=9>, 5.

¹⁶⁷ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 69.

financial losses as a merchant.¹⁶⁸ Peirce had also been a merchant in Salem until “reverses of fortune” necessitated a change in careers.¹⁶⁹ Peabody noted how a professor in the Divinity School, John Gorham Palfrey was forced to rely on his own industry and merits after his father similarly suffered losses in business.¹⁷⁰

In his reminiscences of Harvard, Peabody’s admiration for the mercantile aristocracy is clear. Some were simply born to be elite. Equality, economic or otherwise, was not quite conceivable or perhaps even desirable. Peabody noted Higginson was “behind his time...in the courtliness and refinement which belonged to the born aristocracy of an earlier generation.” It is not entirely surprising that Peabody pined for the aristocracy of an age long gone, given that he was “brought up in the heart of Essex County Federalism.”¹⁷¹ As Gordon Wood notes, most Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton during the First Party System in the United States, “were strongly committed to the traditional view of society as a hierarchy of degrees and ranks with people held together by vertical ties.”¹⁷² Peabody expressed a slight preference for aristocratic rule over a democracy noting that Quincy “was by nature and by hereditary right, of the genuine aristocracy, born to rule; and could the world’s governing and care-taking be in the hands of men of his type, there would be no yearning for democratic institutions.”¹⁷³ Worth and ability, according to

¹⁶⁸ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 17; *Catalog Of The Officers And Students Of The University Of Cambridge*, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 68.

¹⁷⁰ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 108.

¹⁷¹ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 56.

¹⁷² Gordon Wood, *Empire Of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105.

¹⁷³ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 19, 20.

Peabody, were inherited, as in the case of Asahel Stearns, a professor of law and Oliver Sparhawk who kept books for the college treasurer.¹⁷⁴

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, South Church attempted throughout the 1820s and early 1830s to compete with other churches through charitable outreach. As late as 1835, Peabody was still adhering to this paradigm, encouraging his parishioners to “cultivate a warmer philanthropy” and exhibit “disinterested kindness.” With the Panic of 1837 however, Peabody’s exhortations radically transformed. Peabody encouraged the congregation of South Church to transform communal responsibility to individual responsibility as the best solution to the current economic crisis in his sermon on May 14, 1837.

Peabody’s reaction to speculation and pecuniary difficulties was quite similar to that of Whitman and this is of little surprise. Historians have missed the close connections between Whitman and Peabody. Peabody studied with Bernard Whitman, Jason’s brother.¹⁷⁵ Peabody and Whitman also attended Harvard University at the same time and as they were only one year apart it is difficult to believe they did not know each other while there.¹⁷⁶ Peabody also owned some of Whitman’s writings.¹⁷⁷ Whitman, then minister of the Unitarian Church in Saco, Maine, even attended Peabody’s ordination and led the introductory prayer and reading of the Scriptures.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, like the Second Church of Portland, South Church in Portsmouth was a speculation in and of itself as proprietors stood to lose or gain through their purchase of pews. Financial troubles were piling up which could only be relieved by ensuring that

¹⁷⁴ Peabody, *Harvard Reminiscences*, 51, 128; The Walden Woods Project, The Thoreau Institute At Walden Woods, “The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau,” <https://www.walden.org/our-collections/the-correspondence-of-henry-david-thoreau/>.

¹⁷⁵ Young, *Andrew P. Peabody, D.D., L.L.D.*, 6-7.

¹⁷⁶ *Catalog of the officers and students of the University in Cambridge*, 114-115.

¹⁷⁷ Whitman, *Sermons of Rev. Jason Whitman*.

¹⁷⁸ South Church Collection, Box 9, Folder 2 Meeting Records, 1831-1842, October 24, 1833.

parishioners remained financially stable. When Peabody wrote his sermon, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*, he likely had Whitman's sermon, *The Hard Times*, delivered four months prior, in mind.

Like Whitman, Peabody acknowledged his parishioners' anxiety in regard to the recent pecuniary difficulties, which he likened to a "disease." Peabody identified what he believed the causes of the panic were, in order to prevent future occurrences. Similar to Whitman, he emphasized the influence of rampant speculation in particular, arguing that, "the excessive credit of recent times has indeed shot up without a sufficiently solid basis." Peabody also cited unrealistic ambition as a cause of the panic, noting that too many men desired to become merchants rather than laborers which disrupted the balance of the economy. He advised parents to prepare their children "for the humbler walks of honest industry" rather than fuel impractical or lofty aspirations.

Along with speculation and ambition, Peabody echoed Whitman in citing lack of frugality as a cause of the economic difficulties. Peabody noted that "if our consumption keep pace with our production....we are in that case adding nothing to the general wealth, are providing no surer basis for unstable credit, and are leaving as wide an opening for commercial distress and disaster, as if we were a nation of idlers."¹⁷⁹ While some contemporaries focused on the speculative behavior of businessmen as a primary cause of the panic others focused more on domestic choices. Novels written by authors in the 1830s expressed in popular culture the fears of excessive consumption. Such literature frequently included characters that lived beyond their means only to suffer pecuniary embarrassment when their liabilities exceeded their assets. As Lepler has noted, Hannah Farnham Sawyer Lee, author of an immensely popular novel titled

¹⁷⁹ Peabody, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*, 3, 7, 11-12, 13.

Three Experiments of Living: Living Within the Means, Living Up To the Means, Living Beyond the Means, emphasized the collective moral failings of families as the cause of the financial crisis.¹⁸⁰

Peabody astutely recognized the role played by fear and lack of confidence in economic panics. In order to prevent the current crisis from worsening, Peabody advised his congregation to “trust each other’s ability and honesty” since “credit, a mere creature of public faith...is undermined and crushed.” Like Whitman, Peabody’s sermon urged his listeners to trust in promises to pay rather than immediately calling in debts. If creditors demanded “immediate payment where usage and honour would prompt the extension of credit,” Peabody believed the crisis would escalate, resulting in the further decline of market prices and widespread poverty and bankruptcy.¹⁸¹

As discussed in Chapter One, trust was an increasingly complicated issue in the Early Republic. The expansion of capitalism from 1790-1850 required that people place their trust in strangers, whereas before they made economic exchanges in a system based on personal relationships. Christopher Clark, notes how “transactions governed by the rules of local exchange now occurred over a wider geographical range, blurring the distinctions between local and long distance exchange.” Collecting debts from individuals became more difficult when it could not be done face to face and when the debtor was not known as a friend, neighbor, or relative.¹⁸² In cities such as Portsmouth and Portland, it was particularly difficult to know whom

¹⁸⁰ Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 188-189; Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, And The Creation Of A Transatlantic Financial Crisis*, (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 77, 79.

¹⁸¹ Peabody, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*, 3-5.

¹⁸² Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalism, Con Men and the Making of the United States*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 24, 373;

to trust. As Karen Halttunen points out, “the period between 1820 and 1860 demonstrated the fastest rate of urban growth in all American history.” Cities with high residential mobility likely “reinforced the impact of anonymity” which probably “contributed to popular awareness of the city as a world of strangers.” Halttunen argues that “preindustrial methods of coding the urban stranger” such as by appearance had broken down but had not yet been replaced by new methods which made trust a scarce commodity.¹⁸³ As mentioned earlier, Portsmouth, with a 22% increase in population between 1820 and 1840 did not have the population growth comparable to New York or Boston. Nevertheless, contemporaries such as Charles W. Brewster, who worked for the *Portsmouth Journal*, felt the impact of the increase and the transformation of Portsmouth from a town to a city in that time period.¹⁸⁴ While anonymity might not have been as much of a troubling phenomenon in Portsmouth as it was in New York, it still likely influenced economic behavior as individuals would have been increasingly ensnared in long distance interactions with strangers as well as transactions at home with people they did not know.

Peabody encouraged trust particularly in the mercantile population, which meant refraining from calling in their debts. Peabody’s sermon was quite explicit in his attempt to bolster the reputation and financial situation of Portsmouth’s merchants, no doubt because he was concerned about the survival of his church should the mercantile community continue to suffer pecuniary losses. Whitman had expressed similar concerns in regard to the mercantile community that sustained his church in Portland. South Church was already in debt, parishioners were unwilling or unable to pay, public anger over the Bank War targeted prominent members of

Christopher Clark, *The Roots Of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990,) 26, 167.

¹⁸³ Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study Of Middle-Class Culture In America, 1830-1870*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982,) 35, 37, 42.

¹⁸⁴ Russell M. Lawson, *Portsmouth: An Old Town By The Sea*, (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 117-118, 137.

his congregation, and sectarian competition was rife. Given that many members of South Church were merchants, the future of the parish depended heavily on their fortunes.

Some personal interest likely played a role as well, as Peabody was married to Catherine Whipple Peabody, the daughter of a prominent merchant family. Catherine's father was Captain Edmund Roberts of Portsmouth, who rose from a merchant, to "supercargo" (manager of the cargo on a ship for the owner), to ship owner himself. According to Robert Hopkins Miller, Captain Roberts lost his fortune "by a series of misfortunes," although by 1823 he established a career with the United States government, later holding diplomatic posts in Africa and Asia.¹⁸⁵ It is likely that the Panic of 1819 was at least a partial cause of Robert's losses, something Peabody likely remembered as he lectured his parishioners on how to treat merchants during the Panic of 1837.

Peabody attempted to restore his congregants' confidence in the productivity of the economy and in the honest nature of men, but he specifically focused on the restoration of confidence in the mercantile community. In his sermon, Peabody argued about merchants, "It is they, who have to bear the brunt of every storm. It is upon them, that the pressure first falls, and only through them, upon the public at large." Citing all of the philanthropic efforts of merchants including the endowment of hospitals and support of public charities, Peabody argued that merchants deserved trust and support in the current crisis. In case previous efforts were not enough to induce faith and goodwill, Peabody added another argument in support of the mercantile community. Arguing that if merchants "fall, they fall not alone,-they bury in their

¹⁸⁵ Robert Hopkins Miller, *The United States and Vietnam, 1787-1941*, (Washington, D.C: National Defense University Press, 1990), Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=6VROpoZsMzYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=edmund+roberts+and+robert+hopkins+miller&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi12Pby4MTmAhXvtlkKHSS3DbkQ6AEwAHoECAEQAg#v=onepage&q&f=false, 23.

own ruin shattered capital and crippled industry.” Citizens of Portsmouth, and South Church specifically, would best help themselves by helping merchants.¹⁸⁶

Along with the social duties outlined above, Peabody also suggested several religious duties in response to the Panic. Peabody encouraged his listeners to be thankful the “mania of overtrading and reckless speculation” was not as rampant in Portsmouth as elsewhere. Additionally, he urged his parishioners to be sympathetic rather than judgmental toward people who suffered losses, although Peabody did not explicitly extend this sympathy to financial charity.¹⁸⁷ The Panic was not yet over, at least according to Peabody, and so he recommended that his listeners “hope for the best” but “be prepared for the worst.” Lastly, like Whitman, Peabody argued that his congregation should see the current financial difficulties as a “dispensation of Providence for our admonition and discipline, as a nation.”¹⁸⁸ For both Peabody and Whitman, this Panic was a lesson given by God to aid in the correction of moral failings. If the Panic was not wholly man made, perhaps it did not require man made solutions to restructure the economic system.

In 1844, Peabody delivered a lecture to the Portsmouth Lyceum in which he continued to express his admiration and sympathy for the mercantile community. In his analysis of the economy of Portsmouth, Peabody credited the merchant and maritime industry with contributing the most wealth to the town. However, his speech indicated that he was worried about the financial future of the town, which by extension, would affect his church. Peabody noted that railroads were diverting trade away from Portsmouth to Boston and that the shipping trade in cotton was threatened by Great Britain.

¹⁸⁶ Peabody, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*, 6-8, 9-10.

¹⁸⁷ Peabody, *Views Of Duty Adapted To The Times*, 13-14.

¹⁸⁸ Peabody, *Views of Duty Adapted To The Times*, 14-15.

To bolster the economy of Portsmouth, Peabody presented economic advice, which required the mitigation of risk, the balance of industry, economic investment, and further exploitation of the laboring poor. Peabody recommended the development of more manufacturing establishments, specifically those owned by joint stock companies, which could mitigate risk by limiting liability. Peabody encouraged the wealthy to invest in manufacturing endeavors, for even if there were no direct returns, they would profit indirectly from rents and the purchases of workers. Clearly still remembering the Panic of 1837, Peabody promoted smaller establishments over larger ones given their decreased dependence on government protection (tariffs) and increased ability to liquidate assets and reduce expenditures in the case of a financial crisis. Small manufacturers could also “employ for the most part, members of regular families, living in their own homes.”¹⁸⁹

In 1837, both Whitman and Peabody promoted the interests of the merchants, the wealthy citizens of Portsmouth, rather than the laboring poor. In 1844, Peabody continued to defend the interests of the wealthy and encouraged the development of the putting-out system, pointing to the boot and shoe industry in Massachusetts as an example of the benefits such a system had to offer. Peabody encouraged the employment of all members of a family and noted that farmers could also be manufacturers.¹⁹⁰ The putting-out system however, was highly advantageous only for the business owners not the laborers.

Christopher Clark and Seth Rockman both highlight the exploitation of laboring families through the putting out system. This system essentially split the construction of goods such as clothing, shoes, and hats. Workers could work out of their home, which alleviated the need for

¹⁸⁹ Rev. A.P. Peabody, *The Wealth, Industry, and Resources of Portsmouth; A Lecture Delivered Before The Portsmouth Lyceum, Nov. 12, 1844*, (C.W. Brewster, 1844), New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire, 4-5, 7, 9-10.

¹⁹⁰ Peabody, *The Wealth, Industry, and Resources of Portsmouth*, 8.

factories, and since most jobs were “deskilled” workers could be paid substantially less.¹⁹¹ Clark argues that the “retail trade and outwork enabled successful merchants to accumulate capital with which to further the concentration of manufacturing in the 1840s and 1850s.”¹⁹² Women were particularly vulnerable to the abuses of the putting out system. Rockman points out that female wages were “fixed at sub-subsistence levels by women’s presumed dependence on a male provider” and that most women could not support themselves on piece rates. Employers assumed that women were not the primary breadwinner, and used this to justify lower wages.¹⁹³

Peabody had to be aware of the exploitation of the putting-out system yet he encouraged its further development. In 1835, the *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics* reported on the seamstress strike in Philadelphia and the bookbinder’s girls strike in New York City.¹⁹⁴ In Portland, Maine, home of the Second Unitarian Church, artisans in the Charitable Mechanic Association, including printers, tailors, and hatters among others, held a parade in October 1841 to promote their trades. Boot and shoemakers carried a banner that read “He that will not pay the SHOE-MAKER is not worthy of a SOLE.”¹⁹⁵ The *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* reported in 1843 on the “oppression and misery in the state of female laborers in Boston, which is shocking to every human mind, and disgraceful to the country.”¹⁹⁶ In spite of these public reports, strikes, and protests, Peabody supported the capitalists rather than the laborers in part because he believed their wealth and investments would stimulate the economy, resulting in benefits for all.

¹⁹¹ Rockman, *Scraping By*, 132.

¹⁹² Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism*, 167, 177.

¹⁹³ Rockman, *Scraping By*, 133-134.

¹⁹⁴ *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, June 27, 1835.

¹⁹⁵ Boot and Shoe Makers Trade Banner, 1841, *Maine Memory Network*, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine, <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/36588>.

¹⁹⁶ *New Hampshire Patriot and Gazette*, Concord, New Hampshire, October 12, 1843.

Defense and promotion of capitalists became easier as sympathies shifted away from the poor in part due to evolving societal perceptions of the causes of poverty. By the late 1810s, clergymen were undertaking analyses of the connection between intemperance and other societal ills such as poverty and gambling. In 1817, Nathaniel Appleton Haven Jr., and Parker, both of South Church made a report to the Board of Council of the Portsmouth Society for the Suppression of Vice in which they noted the connection between intemperance and idleness. As support they noted the number of residents at the alms-house and argued that “intemperance is the parent of almost every vice” including rape, riots, robbery, murder, and adultery. The report encouraged compassion for the poor, limiting the number of drinking shops, working toward stricter legislation, and opening savings banks so the poor could improve their condition and thus avoid turning to alcohol.¹⁹⁷ As reformers switched from believing poverty caused alcoholism to accepting the reverse, efforts shifted toward total abstinence instead of alleviating impoverished conditions.

The late 1830s completed the shift from notions of communal responsibility and aiding the poor to individual responsibilities. The concerns about alcohol did not change, the connections between intemperance and poverty and vice were still accepted, but the suggested causes and therefore solutions were different. Rather than establishing savings banks or showing compassion for the poor, advocates of temperance encouraged individuals to take the pledge to abstain. In a July 1833 quarterly meeting at South Church about temperance, brethren noted the importance of “forming an association for the suppression of Intemperance.” The purpose of such an association was to promote the common good, through encouraging individuals to take

¹⁹⁷ Nathaniel Appleton Haven, Jr. and Nathan Parker, *Extracts From A Report, Made To The Board Of Council Of The Portsmouth Society For The Suppression Of Vice, At Their Monthly Meeting In February, 1817*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Charles Turell, 1817), New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire, 3-6, 8, 11.

the pledge of abstinence and working to reduce the availability of liquor.¹⁹⁸ Alcoholism, by the 1830s was seen more as a personal choice than an outside force over which there was no control. Seth Rockman notes that connecting poverty to temperance allowed religious reformers to “make poverty curable” while obscuring “the structural causes.”¹⁹⁹ W.J Rorabaugh’s research corresponds with Rockman’s, as he notes that many alcoholics were those most affected by the “market revolution” which, “caused a loss of social autonomy and social cohesion.”²⁰⁰ Unfortunately, contemporaries were largely unable to perceive of the outside forces of capitalism as a cause for alcoholism. They believed drunkards were in such a condition because of their own moral failings, rather than as a result of their impoverished condition.

Research on the Second Unitarian Church and South Church helps illustrate how societal perceptions of charitable responsibilities developed during the Early Republic and the influence of Unitarianism on that shift. Historian Andrew Browning argues the Second Great Awakening and the Panic of 1819 precipitated the transformation of public opinion regarding philanthropic efforts. Browning argues that beginning in 1816, “the distinction between the deserving and underserving poor began to evaporate if poverty, like damnation, could be avoided by a conversion of the heart. Soon, contrary to republican tradition, poverty was no longer “a corporate moral obligation but an individual moral deficiency. Simply put, poor people lacked spiritual and moral direction.”²⁰¹ Yet scholar Kyle B. Roberts notes that “the year 1816 was a watershed for the formation of evangelical voluntary associations in New York.” Roberts

¹⁹⁸ South Church Collection, Meeting Records, 1831-1842, Box 9, Folder 2, July 1833 Report, 2-3.

¹⁹⁹ Seth Rockman, *Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History With Documents*, (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2003), 16.

²⁰⁰ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 189.

²⁰¹ Andrew H. Browning, *The Panic of 1819: The First Great Depression*, (Columbia, Missouri: The University of Missouri Press, 2019), 277.

certainly notes a growing acceptance among some New York charitable organizations that the poor were responsible for their own condition yet this did not hold true for evangelicals.

According to Roberts, “evangelicals shared a common vision and refused to see gender, age, or class as an impediment to their benevolent efforts. For them, evangelical’s emphasis on soul equality applied as much to their efficacy as activists as to their ability to achieve conversion.”²⁰²

Thus, evangelicals in New York, *beginning* in 1816, attempted to ameliorate the condition of the poor rather than blame them for it.

This study adds to Roberts’s analysis, as it suggests that disestablishment was a third factor in shifting attitudes, in that it led to stretched religious resources in competition for converts. While it does not necessarily directly contradict Browning’s research, my research does suggest that the transformation in religious attitudes was not fully complete until after the Panic of 1837, and that the 1820s was actually a period of religious charitable outreach in an attempt to compete with dissenting sects. Analysis of New England Unitarianism also illuminates that the distinction Browning notes between the rich and the poor was not quite as clear-cut for everyone.

Sympathy for the poor did not completely evaporate for Unitarians, rather it was reserved for the mercantile community. Simply put, Unitarians came to believe by the late 1830s that those who were passive in regard to their poverty were morally deficient. Those who exemplified commercial ambition but failed were victims of outside forces. This view of course, was largely influenced by the composition of Unitarian congregations.

Unitarian ministers throughout New England were responsible for helping to construct this worldview, which argued people could control their social and economic destiny, and failures were largely a result of poor decision-making. Reverend Nathaniel Frothingham of the Unitarian

²⁰² Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making Of New York City, 1783-1860*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 91-92.

First Church in Boston, Massachusetts, addressed the current economic crisis in April 1837 and concluded, “in the instance now before us, the question is not how we shall make the times better; -that were a hopeless undertaking;-but how we shall make ourselves better by reason of the time.”²⁰³ Like Frothingham, Whitman encouraged active personal improvement, noting “if individuals...are equally devoted to personal improvement, and to the good of the community, then in a moral point of view, they are equally respectable.”²⁰⁴ Similarly, Peabody urged his parishioners to improve themselves in order to subsequently improve society. On June 18, 1837, and then again on April 4, 1841, Peabody directed his congregation to look at their inward failings. Peabody argued that his parishioners would reap what they sow, and stated, “no peace saith, the Lord unto the wicked.”²⁰⁵ Thus, he did not encourage charitable acts or attempt to develop benevolent associations to aid the poor. While he did not discourage such efforts, they were not his primary focus. Instead, he urged correction of moral deficiencies as an individual responsibility that would benefit the entire society.

1837 was a critical moment in deciding Unitarianism’s place in the “benevolent empire.” During the Early Republic many voluntary Protestant reform organizations developed, establishing a network devoted to reform, in areas including temperance, abolition, prostitution, education, and distribution of religious publications.²⁰⁶ Whereas previously South Church

²⁰³ N.L. Frothingham, *The Duties Of Hard Times. A Sermon Preached To The First Church On Sunday Morning, April 23, 1837*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Munroe & Francis, 1837), Google books https://books.google.com/books?id=KyVdAAAACAAJ&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=nathaniel+frothingham+duties+of+hard+times&source=bl&ots=1aDZGnloFA&sig=ACfU3U39rV_uCkvz_RCLJxRxxw4HB6SVR2A&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjgnNCav9rjAhUjUt8KHc-ADNYQ6AEwAnoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=nathaniel%20frothingham%20duties%20of%20hard%20times&f=false, 8-9.

²⁰⁴ Whitman, *The Hard Times*, 7.

²⁰⁵ South Church Collection, Peabody Sermons 1834-1880, Box 10, Folder 21, June 18, 1837.

²⁰⁶ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 192-193.

encouraged charitable efforts and sympathy for the poor, consecutive financial crises and disestablishment necessitated that sympathy be shifted to the wealthy. For Peabody, South Church was a speculation, currently faltering, and it was the wealthy who sustained the church through pew, poll, and estate taxes. Rich merchants subscribed to build new churches with heat and modern hymnals. Peabody clearly believed that their support would aid the church in competing for converts and that South Church could only engage in charitable efforts if it first focused on buttressing the base of its revenue. Although Peabody seems to have believed that moral deficiencies were the cause of most financial failures, he did not apply this to merchants. According to his sermon, merchants were insolvent due to outside forces rather than their own making and were thus more deserved objects of sympathy. Perhaps, Peabody believed that merchants failed in spite of their hard work, rather than a lack of it. Perhaps he believed that merchants' financial success was indicative of hard work, which meant that financial failure could only be caused by outside forces. Or, perhaps he believed that his church only had enough resources to help one group, and so he chose to help those whom the church relied upon for financial revenue in the past in order to secure its future.

The collective actions of 1819 to aid the community were absent and in their place was an exhortation to develop the virtues of one's self. Pre-disestablishment reactions to a pecuniary crisis were far different from those in the post-disestablishment era. Taking Peabody or Whitman's sermons solely at face value obscures an important truth; that the proactive measures taken following the sectarian crisis and the economic difficulties of the Panic of 1819 helped contribute to churches' weakened financial state in 1837. After a proactive spending frenzy, churches such as South Church could only react to the pecuniary difficulties in 1837 by urging individual actions. Collective actions funded by the church were simply not financially

sustainable or appropriate given that South Church and the Second Unitarian Church were now largely speculations themselves. In both economic crises, ministers recommended to parishioners solutions of a practical nature, which would best serve the church. In putting these sermons in context, historians may see that time, place, and circumstance made more of an impact than theology.

Chapter Four

“Ambition’s Airy Hall”: Black Abolitionists, God, and Mammon in 19th Century Portland, Maine

Jason Easton refused to be relegated to the “negro pew,” a place where he could hear but not see the preacher, in the Orthodox Church in Boston in the early 1800s. After being driven out from the church for his refusal to sit in his assigned location, he purchased a pew at the Baptist Church. Some of the white members of the congregation protested the purchase but to no avail. Unable to reverse the sale, the protestors turned to more subversive means. One Sunday morning Easton and his family walked into church only to find their pew covered with tar. One can imagine the willpower it took Easton, a man who fought racism with stubborn defiance, to deprive those responsible of a reaction. In grim determination, Easton and his family resolved to carry their own seats to church and entered the following Sunday, their arms burdened with carriage seats. Although Easton struggled admirably to overcome such blatant prejudice, he eventually conceded defeat and left the church.¹

This is not a story about Easton or the Boston Baptist Church. It is however, a story of “negro pews,” and of a people in Portland, Maine who struggled, much like Easton, to rise above the racist individuals who attempted to hold them back during the early nineteenth century. Unlike Easton, who struggled to change white congregations from within, African Americans in Portland created their own church in 1828 in order to work toward economic betterment and

¹ James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*, (New York, NY: Homes and Meier Publishers, 1999), 41-42.

political enfranchisement. This church, the third oldest standing African American church in the nation, was known as the Abyssinian Church and remained in operation until 1917.²

Many general narratives about Portland or Maine offer only brief descriptions of the Abyssinian Church, otherwise known as the Fourth Congregational Church. Accounts that do include the Abyssinian Church reveal obvious racial bias.³ Scholarship regarding African American history in Maine, especially that of the nineteenth century, is fairly recent with several major works published in the last twenty years.⁴ None of those works focus specifically on the Abyssinian or its interconnections with nineteenth-century market capitalism. This chapter attempts to fill the gap in scholarship by connecting the Abyssinian to the broader narrative of the market revolution and identifying the role of economic liberalism in shaping religious actions and doctrine. Answers to questions about how early Black churches such as the Abyssinian operated, what actions members took and what meaning they ascribed to these actions may also

² H.H Price and Gerald E. Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History: The First Chronicle of Its People*, (Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House Publishers, 2006), 144-145.

³ For works which briefly mention the Abyssinian Church specifically see William Willis, *The History of Portland*, (Somersworth, New Hampshire: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1972; John F. Bauman, *Gateway to Vacationland: The Making of Portland, Maine*, (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012); Joseph A. Conforti ed., *Creating Portland: History and Place in Northern New England*, (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire, 2005). Also see Calvin Montague Clark D.D., *History of the Congregational Churches in Maine Vol. 1: History of the Maine Missionary Society*, (Portland, Maine: The Southworth Press, 1926), 131 which described the church as having a “devious career” without offering any explanation or supporting evidence.

⁴ For recent published scholarship regarding African American history in Maine see Price and Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History*; Shoshana Hoose and Karin Odlin, *An Anchor of the Soul: A Documentary Video About Black History in Maine*, (Bucksport, Maine: Northeast Historic Film, 1994); Randolph Stakeman, “Black Population in Maine: 1764-1900,” *New England Journal of Black Studies* 8 (1989); and Maureen Elgersman Lee, *Black Bangor: African Americans in a Maine Community, 1880-1950*, (Lebanon, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2005). Initial scholarship also includes the unpublished work by Randolph P. Dominic Jr., *Down From the Balcony: The Abyssinian Congregational Church of Portland, Maine*, (Unpublished, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine, 1982).

illuminate larger questions on a national scale of the African American quest for freedom and identity formation.

Local case studies such as this one are crucial given the lack of aggregate religious data for the early American period. As mentioned in Chapter Three, historian Mark A. Noll has argued that an increase in the study of different local circumstances is crucial for the field of American religious history.⁵ Historians do well to examine the influence of variables such as race and class on individual churches, even those which are spatially and temporally similar. Congregational churches were not homogenous and neither were the churches of free blacks. The situation of free African Americans in Portland, Maine and the origins of the Abyssinian were unique when compared to other free Black communities in the North during the antebellum period.⁶

The story of the Abyssinian and its social activism is situated squarely in the midst of the historiographical controversy regarding the relationship between abolitionism and capitalism. Although there are several interpretations of this relationship, the dominant positions, as identified by James L. Huston, involve the evangelical and the neomarxist interpretations. As Huston explains, neo-marxists, including Amy Dru Stanley, “argue that abolitionism was the key movement that legitimated market social relations” while those who adhere to the evangelical Christian interpretation insist that abolitionists “were opposed to capitalism either because

⁵ Mark A. Noll, *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.

⁶ For studies of free Black communities in the North during the antebellum period see James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians*; Shane White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002); Graham Russell Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865*, (Madison, Wisconsin: Madison House Publishers, 1997); Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Robert Cottrol, *The Afro-Yankees: Providence's Black Community in the Antebellum Era*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982).

morality superseded the economic process or because they would not place the worship of mammon above the worship of the deity.”⁷ As Thomas Haskell notes, the challenge to this historiographical dilemma is to “find a way to establish the connection [between capitalism and humanitarianism] without reducing humane values and acts to epiphenomena in the process.”⁸ Historians need to understand how some individuals and organizations viewed accumulation of private property as a means to effect change rather than an end in and of itself.

The expansion of the market into religious realms in the first half of the 1800s created a new cognitive style, which prompted a wave of humanitarianism that served specific class interests *and* demonstrated a sense of moral responsibility.⁹ The story of the Abyssinian illustrates that economic liberalism and biblical political thought coalesced in the origins of that church and its abolitionist activity. Economic liberalism, characterized by self-ownership, contractual wage labor, and a bourgeois ethos formed the sword with which Abyssinian members attacked the

⁷ James L. Huston, “Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 2000), 487-488. For more on the debate regarding the relationship of capitalism, Christianity, and abolitionism see: Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation*, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Thomas Bender ed., *The Anti-Slavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolition as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992); Thomas L. Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (Apr., 1985), 339-361; John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches: 1830-1865*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009). For information on the British equivalent of the debate regarding capitalism and slavery see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1994) and Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁸ Haskell, *Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility*, 342.

⁹ Haskell, *Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility*, 342-344.

institution of slavery and the existence of racial discrimination, while Christian virtues and morals provided the shield with which they defended themselves.¹⁰

In 1826, six men wrote a letter to the *Eastern Argus*, “respectfully” addressing themselves to the citizens of Portland. While the authors acknowledged the white churches at which they could worship, they noted that the “privilege granted us is associated with such circumstances, as are calculated to repel rather than to invite our attendance.”¹¹ What the authors were referring to, in part, were the “negro pews” to which they were relegated. These pews were sometimes referred to as “nigger heaven” by the white members of the church and were the least desirable seats, being in the back of the gallery.¹² The men requested formal dismissal from their current house of worship in order to establish a church of their own. In 1828 the Abyssinian Religious Society was formed with the intent of building a house of worship for the African American population of Portland.¹³ For the next seven years the Abyssinian Religious Society worked to organize, raise funds to construct the meeting house, obtain incorporated status, and drum up popular support.¹⁴ In 1835, twenty-two members requested formal dismissal from the Second Congregational Church in order to form their own “Church of Christ.” An ecclesiastical council was convened which unanimously voted to organize the Abyssinian Congregational Church of Portland.¹⁵ The members of the Abyssinian Church thereafter worshipped in the Abyssinian

¹⁰ Huston, *Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism*, 488.

¹¹ *Eastern Argus*, September 19, 1826.

¹² Dominic Jr., *Down From the Balcony*, 3-5.

¹³ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 7, African American Collection of Maine, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Libraries, Portland, Maine.

¹⁴ Dominic Jr., *Down From the Balcony*, 6-8.

¹⁵ Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records, 1835-1876, August 7, 1835, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

meeting house, which had a brick foundation, white clapboards, a fan doorway, and “connecting pews and platforms.” It was located on Sumner Street, now Newbury Street, close to Munjoy Hill where most of the city’s Black population resided.¹⁶ Although desire for personal advancement was frequently discouraged in early nineteenth century popular culture, the founders of the Abyssinian determined that the church would function as “ambition’s airy hall,” a place where individuals could work toward improvement on multiple levels in order to increase opportunities for all.¹⁷

African American activists in the northeastern United States mobilized the Black community in the 1830s and 1840s to abolish racial oppression. Richard Newman argues that between the 1820s and 1840s Black activists shed “deferential politics” for tactics that emphasized collective action.¹⁸ African Americans in New England established their own newspapers, took action to help fugitive slaves, and made efforts toward political enfranchisement. In the wake of such actions, numerous Black churches were founded as a means to escape continued racial subordination and to create a distinct African American identity.¹⁹ Historians James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton note that the “black church arose in Boston partly as a response to the

¹⁶ Dominic Jr., *Down From the Balcony*, 6; Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folders 7 and 18; Price and Talbot, *Maine’s Visible Black History*, 147.

¹⁷ Poetry and editorials published in the *Eastern Argus* often referred to ambition (usually equated with pride) as a pejorative. For examples of such writing see: *Eastern Argus*, August 12, 1823, March 28, 1825, March 28, 1826, June 6, 1826, July 4, 1826, February 16, 1827, and March 23, 1827.

¹⁸ Richard Newman, “Protest in Black and White: The Formation and Transformation of an African American Political Community during the Early Republic,” in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*, eds. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 191-192.

¹⁹ David E. Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane, eds., *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 10-13.

discrimination faced by blacks in white churches and partly in response to the needs for self-expression which originated in the culture and experience of the black community.”²⁰ The Abyssinian was only one of the African American churches established across the antebellum North including those in Hartford, New Haven, Middletown, Boston, and Philadelphia.²¹ However, the Abyssinian was unique in regards to the composition of its members and their liberal economic values.

Most scholars of African American history in Maine have accepted the “negro pews” as the impetus for the new church. While physical segregation within the church was certainly a major factor, it was likely not the only one. In addition to requiring segregated seating, the Second Congregational Church utilized discriminatory practice in regard to moral discipline. When Black members of the congregation, such as Rhoda Williams and Caroline Niles, were accused of such sins as “fornication” and “lying,” they were immediately excommunicated.²² In contrast, when white members of the congregation, such as Francis Bray and Joseph Lane, were charged with moral crimes such as “intemperance” an investigation ensued and the accused had an opportunity to defend themselves. In some cases, they were restored to the church after being excommunicated.²³ African Americans certainly would have resented such preferential treatment based on race.

Historians have also neglected to identify the potential economic factors that led to the creation of the Abyssinian Church. Situated on a protected, ice-free harbor of the Atlantic Ocean

²⁰ Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*, 42.

²¹ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 180; Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*, 42; Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *A Fragile Freedom: African American Women and Emancipation in the Antebellum City*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008), 55.

²² Second Congregational Church Records, 1788-1888, July 3, 1833 and March 30, 1835, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

²³ Second Congregational Church Records, 1788-1888, June 3, 1831, July 29, 1833, March 17, 1834, and December 29, 1834.

and the mouths of two rivers (Fore River and Stroudwater River), Portland developed an economy primarily based on trade with Europe and the West Indies.²⁴ African Americans played an important role in the shipping industry and during the early 1800s they comprised twenty percent of all sailors.²⁵ Henry Longfellow, who spent his youth in Portland, recalled the hypnotic chants of Black longshoremen which so often filled the air near the wharves.²⁶ Some Black mariners were ambitious men who strove for economic betterment; choosing seafaring was the most likely route to capital accumulation. Elite Black families in the North who desired a better future for their sons encouraged them to seek employment on the ocean.²⁷

Many of the men who advocated for the creation of an independent Black church, including the six men who sent the letter to the *Eastern Argus*, or served on the Abyssinian Religious Society in leadership positions, were mariners. Of those thirty-two men whose occupations I was able to ascertain, almost one-half were mariners, including Caleb Johnson, James Davis, and Benjamin Joseph.²⁸ When compared to mariners in other free Black communities, such as Baltimore or New York, these men lived in somewhat exceptional circumstances. As W. Jeffrey

²⁴ Charles Calhoun, "Longfellow's Portland," in *Creating Portland: History and Place in Northern New England*, ed. Joseph A. Conforti, (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005), 74.

²⁵ W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 2.

²⁶ Bauman, *Gateway to Vacationland*, 31.

²⁷ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 160-161.

²⁸ The thirty seven names were taken from the letter which appeared in the *Eastern Argus*, September 19, 1826, the committee names in the Abyssinian Congregational Church Minutes of Meetings, 1830-1832, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine, and the Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records, 1835-1876, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine. In order to ascertain occupation and home ownership I utilized a variety of sources including Price and Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History* and *The Portland Directory and Register, Containing The Names, Professions And Residences, Of All The Heads Of Families And Persons of Business; With Other Useful Information. Accompanied With A New And Correct Plan Of The Town*. (Portland, Maine: Todd & Smith, 1823, 1827, 1831, 1834, 1837, 1841, and 1844), Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine. Of these initial founders and leaders I was unable to confirm the occupations for five men.

Bolster, a preeminent historian of early African American sailors explains, “black sailors in Portland, Maine, had a degree of residential and occupational stability atypical in larger cities.” The Portland City Directory of 1830 lists thirty-three Black seamen, of whom two decades later almost one-third remained at the same address and were still mariners.²⁹ Many of these men (twenty-seven total) also owned their own homes, a factor which certainly contributed to residential stability (see Table 1).³⁰ Property ownership and self-employment were desired by many free Blacks in the early 1800s. Through the purchase of real estate and self-employment, Blacks not only attained elite status within the community but were also able to function independently from the shifting whims of white landlords and bosses. Both were marks of ambition, steps toward economic betterment, as well as ways to limit racial discrimination.³¹ The free Black population in Portland purchased homes primarily near Mountfort and Hancock Streets, an area known as Munjoy Hill which would later be home to the Abyssinian.³²

Those men who were not mariners represented occupations of similar standing within the community. Of the remaining seventeen men who were not mariners, no less than seven were barbers including Christopher Manuel, Charles W. Green, and Richard Dickson. Barbers, secondhand clothes dealers, and other Black entrepreneurs gained an elevated status within the African American community as a result of their self-employment.³³ Christopher Manuel, like many members of the early Abyssinian congregation, recognized the value of Portland property. In addition to owning a barber shop on Exchange Street he also purchased a large plot of land

²⁹ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 164.

³⁰ Amos G. Beman Scrapbook Vol. II, James Weldon Johnson Collection in the American Literature Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, 136.

³¹ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 147-148; Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom*, 190.

³² Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1 Folder 7.

³³ Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*, 8.

adjacent to the Abyssinian meeting house which he later split and sold to four individuals. Like his brother-in-law Manuel, Reuben Ruby was a founder of the church and similarly economically situated. Ruby owned his own hack business and also speculated in Portland real estate.³⁴ Among the remaining men were a cordwainer, a truckman, a cartman, a joiner, a trader, and a clothes cleaner. Only three of the twenty-three men were listed as laborers (see Table 1).³⁵ The founders of the Abyssinian, overwhelmingly represented by respected occupations, were elite, ambitious men who had achieved a measure of social mobility.

³⁴ Price and Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History*, 43-44.

³⁵ *Eastern Argus*, September 19, 1826; Abyssinian Congregational Church Minutes of Meetings, 1830-1832; Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records, 1835-1876; Price and Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History*, and *The Portland Directory and Register*, 1823, 1827, 1831, 1834, 1837, 1841, 1844, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

Table 1: Founders/Leaders of the Abyssinian Religious Society, Occupation, and Homeownership: (1830-August 22, 1840)

<u>Member Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Homeowner</u>
Titus Skillings	Laborer	Washington Street
George H. Black	Clothes Cleaner	Union Street
James Davis	Mariner	Washington Street
*Reuben Ruby	Hack Driver	Preble Street
*John Siggs	Laborer	Washington Street
Osgood Noyes	Cordwainer	Mountfort Street
Ephraim Small	Cartman	Oxford Street
Charles W. Green(Greene)	Barber	
George Williams	Hairdresser	Congress Street
Franklin G. Pierre (Pier)	?	
Richard Dickson (Dixon)	Barber	Federal Street
Prince Shapleigh	Joiner	Hancock Street
Benjamin Joseph	Mariner	Washington Street
Antonio (Antoine) Wilson	Mariner	Congress Street
Calvin D. Manuel	Barber	
Jacob C. Dickson (Dixon)	Barber	Middle Street
Isaiah Watts	?	
*Christopher C. Manuel	Barber	Hampshire Street
Jeremiah H. Rogers	?	
James B. White unknown)	Hairdresser	Homeowner (location
James F. Murray	?	
Abraham W. Niles	Mariner	Hancock Street
George Jones	?	
Richard Bradley	Mariner	Hancock Street
Braxton (Blackstone) Driver	Mariner	Sumner Street
Isaac Johnson	Mariner	East of Hancock Street
Thomas Clark	Mariner	Hancock Street
Peter (le) Pierre (Pier)	Truckman	Middle and Hampshire
William Hammett	Mariner	58 Oxford Street
John Wright	Mariner	
William Fortune (Forchen)	Mariner	Hancock Street
William H. Jones	Mariner	East of Hancock Street
William Scott	Trader	Hancock Street
James Eason	Mariner	Hancock Street
*Caleb Johnson	Mariner	Hancock Street
*Clement Thomson (Thompson)	Mariner	
*Job L. Wentworth	Laborer	

<u>Totals 37 Men</u>		<u>*27 homeowners</u>	
Mariner	15	Cartman	1
Hairdresser/Barber	7	Cordwainer(shoemaker)	1
Undetermined	5	Hack Driver	1
Laborer	3	Clothes Cleaner	1
Trader	1	Truckman	1
Joiner	1		

*Asterisk for Table 1 indicates that the individual was a signatory to the letter written to the *Eastern Argus* on September 19, 1826, requesting a separate church.

Tax assessments for the city of Portland provide further evidence that the initial founders of the Abyssinian were ambitious and elite men of the free Black community in Portland. From 1826 through 1831 the men of the Abyssinian paid taxes (on property and income) that were substantially higher than that of other “people of color” who resided in the city (see Table 2).³⁶ As measured by occupation, property ownership, and income, these individuals were clearly men who had improved their economic and social status and likely desired to continue doing so, aided by the establishment of an independent Black organization.

Table 2: Tax Assessments for “People of Color” in Portland Maine, 1826-1831: Abyssinian Religious Society Members as Compared to Non Members

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Paid by Abyssinian Members</u>	<u>Average Paid by Non Members</u>
1826	\$3.03	\$2.24
1827	\$3.61	\$2.93
1828	\$3.18	\$2.28
1829	\$3.17	\$1.89
1830	\$4.39	\$2.35
1831	\$2.62	\$1.81

*The tax records for 1832-1843 are unavailable.

The Abyssinian was initially made possible through funding from Reuben Ruby, a man of substantial financial means. Following the American Revolution, the national social

³⁶ Tax Assessments, Portland, Maine, 1800-1831, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

environment was altered to promote ambition and economic mobility rather than contentment with an inherited social station, the result of which was the legitimization of the self-made man.³⁷ It was into this environment, pregnant with opportunities, that Ruby was born. A waiter turned entrepreneur, Ruby saved enough money to purchase two hacks, after which he opened his own coach business in Portland. He later tried his hand panning gold on the Stanislaus River in California. An indication of his aggressive stance toward self-improvement is that at the onset of the Gold Rush in 1849, Ruby rushed to catch a ship from Panama to California in order that he might arrive early. Ruby's haste and quick departure appears to have paid off. Within a month's time in California, Ruby made six hundred dollars and four months later when he left he had a fortune of three thousand dollars.³⁸ Ruby was one of the six men who wrote to the *Eastern Argus* in 1826 requesting the formation of a new Black church.³⁹ He was also one of the twenty-two members who requested dismissal from the Second Congregational Church in Portland to form the Abyssinian Congregational Church.⁴⁰ Ruby was the primary creditor for the church and loaned the funds for both the purchase of the property, which was \$250, and the construction of the meeting house.⁴¹

Property ownership and a relative degree of economic stability were unusual characteristics for a free Black community in the antebellum period. African Americans in New York in the 1830s had difficulty obtaining employment that provided more than the basic necessities and the

³⁷ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 189-190; J. M. Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

³⁸ Harry Gratwick, *Hidden History of Maine*, (Charlestown, South Carolina: The History Press, 2010), 76; Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1 Folder 18; Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977), 14.

³⁹ *Eastern Argus*, September 19, 1826.

⁴⁰ Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records, 1835-1876, August 7, 1835.

⁴¹ Gratwick, *Hidden History of Maine*, 76; Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 18.

number of unemployed and underemployed Black people was significant.⁴² Further south, toward the mid-Atlantic, economic opportunities were similarly scarce. Black entrepreneurship in Monmouth County, New Jersey was largely nonexistent; the majority of free Black people in 1830 were agricultural workers who resided with-and depended on-white farmers.⁴³ In Philadelphia African Americans faced increasing economic difficulty after the turn of the century due to industrial reliance on immigrant whites for labor and a decline in maritime wages following Jefferson's Embargo of 1807. As Gary B. Nash explains, lack of more favorable employment caused many Philadelphian Black people to take jobs as "common laborers-loading ships, digging wells, graves and house foundations, and toiling as sawyers, sweepers, porters, ashmen, chimney sweeps, and bootblacks."⁴⁴ One should not assume however, that Black entrepreneurs, skilled workers, or professionals were completely absent within these Black communities. While the majority of African Americans in the north often teetered precariously on the precipice of poverty, there were those who managed to make a comfortable living as independent doctors, hairdressers, or carpenters. In Philadelphia, during the early nineteenth century, a substantial number of free Black people started their own businesses or sought employment in professional occupations.⁴⁵ While the Abyssinian Congregation certainly had widows, widowers, and impoverished individuals, the sheer number of Black elite it attracted is notable.⁴⁶ Portland likely attracted ambitious Black people due in part to the economic opportunities as well as political suffrage guaranteed by the Maine state constitution adopted in 1820. The initial congregation of the Abyssinian, seems to have been relatively prosperous, as

⁴² White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York*, 34.

⁴³ Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 161, 180.

⁴⁴ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 145-146.

⁴⁵ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 147-148.

⁴⁶ Amos G. Beman, *Scrapbook Vol. II*, 123.

indicated by property ownership and occupation, with a significant degree of stability in terms of employment and residence. The early church founders in Portland were men who listened to the language of economic liberalism, and took to heart the notions of private property, ambition, and voluntary economic arrangements.

African Americans responded in great numbers to the appeal of Baptist and Methodist denominations during the first half of the 1800s.⁴⁷ Richard Allen, founder of the African American Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, explained that “other denominations preached so high-flown that we were not able to comprehend their doctrine” but with Methodism “the unlearned can understand.” Allen gave credit to the Methodists for being “the first people that brought glad tidings to the colored people.”⁴⁸ Although the Baptist and Methodist sects were overwhelmingly appealing to African Americans, the Abyssinian was established within the Congregational denomination.

There are several possibilities, or a combination thereof, which may explain why the founders of the Abyssinian Church chose to remain in the Congregational fold. To begin with, they may have simply agreed with Congregational dogma. That this is a likely possibility is evident by the Abyssinian adoption of the Second Congregational covenant, that of the church which they had broken from.⁴⁹ Congregationalism was also a well established tradition in the city of Portland. Long after the disestablishment of religion in the northeast (1818 in Connecticut, 1819 in New Hampshire, 1820 in Maine, and 1833 in Massachusetts) caused the exponential growth of Methodists, Baptists and Episcopalians, Portland still remained overwhelmingly

⁴⁷ Noll, *America's God*, 177.

⁴⁸ Nathan A. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989), 104.

⁴⁹ Dominic Jr., *Down From the Balcony*, 8.

Congregationalist.⁵⁰ In fact, in 1864 Portland had twenty-eight religious societies, over half of which were Congregationalist.⁵¹ Founders of the Abyssinian were surely aware from the beginning that their new church would rely, at least initially, on liberal funding from local white churches. Most Black institutions in the early 1800s relied on white patronage in order to sustain themselves.⁵² Whites often contributed to the establishment of Black churches in the hopes that such churches would improve moral virtues and knowledge among poor Black people.⁵³ Such help was not always given with altruistic motives. As Benjamin Rush noted, “It will be much cheaper to build churches for them than jails.”⁵⁴ Given that most of the churches in Portland were of the Congregational order, remaining within that denomination would have increased the likelihood of monetary assistance.

Another intriguing possibility is that the men who founded the Abyssinian Church chose Congregationalism as a sign of their ambition. As David E. Swift explains, in the early 1800s, “white Presbyterian and Congregational churches were, or aimed to be, churches of the middle or upper class.”⁵⁵ As noted, the men who provided the impetus for the creation of the Abyssinian and served in initial leadership capacities were men who, in comparison to their peers, were relatively prosperous and economically independent. Perhaps this explains why not all African Americans in Portland chose to join the Abyssinian congregation. Given the scarcity of such independent Black organizations in Portland in the early 1800s, one would imagine that the Abyssinian would have had tremendous appeal in the African American community. And yet some Black people chose not to join the Abyssinian Congregation. In 1850, long after the Black

⁵⁰ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 180.

⁵¹ Willis, *The History of Portland*, 681.

⁵² Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 16-17.

⁵³ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 9.

⁵⁴ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 21.

⁵⁵ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 15.

church was organized, some African Americans were still attending the Second Congregational Church, the mostly white, parent church of the Abyssinian.⁵⁶ In 1859, approximately four hundred African Americans lived in Portland; fifty residents belonged to the Christian church but only thirty-nine of them belonged to the Abyssinian Congregation.⁵⁷ Perhaps the elitism espoused by the initial founders of the Abyssinian dissuaded other, lower-class Black people, from joining the congregation. To assume that all free Black people were united solely based on their race is to ignore the impact of economic status on human relations. Other Black communities also experienced divisions based on class. In Philadelphia, for example, the Black elite self-imposed segregation from lower class Black people. Although wealthy Black Philadelphians lived in close proximity to those who were black and impoverished, they attended separate churches and had limited social contact.⁵⁸ As they ambitiously worked to improve their own opportunities as well as raise the status of the race as a whole, they simultaneously avoided association with those that might endanger chances of economic success.

Evidence that ambition and economic liberalism were at the heart of the creation of the Abyssinian is provided in the sermons of Reverend Edward Payson of the Second Congregational Church and the subsequent deviation from such doctrine in the Abyssinian. As late as the 1820s, Congregationalism was a religious denomination largely based on tradition, order, and authority, and Congregationalists viewed self-exertion, ambition, and personal desire with skepticism. This descendant of Puritanism promoted the idea that individuals should be content with their inherited stations in life in deference to God's providential design.⁵⁹ Reverend Edward Payson was the leading minister at the Second Congregational Church for over twenty

⁵⁶ Price and Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History*, 145.

⁵⁷ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 123.

⁵⁸ Dunbar, *A Fragile Freedom*, 92.

⁵⁹ Noll, *America's God*, 19.

years, from 1811 (when Reverend Elijah Kellogg was dismissed-discussed in Chapter One) to his death in 1827. Payson's sermons frequently railed against excessive economic ambition and personal aspiration.⁶⁰ For his sermon titled "A Dissuasive From Ambition," Payson used as the proof-text, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not; for behold I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord; but thy life I will give unto thee for a prey.- Jeremiah XLV. 5."⁶¹

Throughout the sermon Payson admonished his parishioners that "we are not allowed to wish for or seek a higher station than that which the providence of God allots us." Free African Americans, like hack driver Reuben Ruby and mariners Richard B. Bradley and Caleb Johnson, heard Payson remind them to be content with "food and raiment" because "God has forbidden" the desire for anything more.⁶² In other sermons, Payson argued that the Scriptures do "not subserve the purposes of avarice and ambition" and that parents, through wrongly directed praise, often "foster a spirit of envy and false ambition."⁶³

Although Congregationalists were well known to be opposed to slavery, particularly those Congregationalists in the north, a curious remark in Payson's sermon regarding slaves and

⁶⁰ Ann Louisa Payson, *A Memoir of the Rev. Edward Payson, D.D.*, (London: R.B. Seeley & W. Burnside, 1830), Google Books
https://books.google.com/books?id=kXMBAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA237&dq=a+memoir+of+the+rev+edward+payson+ann+louisa+payson&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiuu9iaxJLnAhVBmeAKHb6mBgoQ6AEwBH0ECAUQA#v=onepage&q=a%20memoir%20of%20the%20rev%20edward%20payson%20ann%20louisa%20payson&f=false, 454.

⁶¹ Rev. Edward Payson, D.D., *Memoir, Select Thoughts, and Sermons of the Late Rev. Edward Payson, D.D., Pastor of the Second Church in Portland*, (Portland, Maine: Hyde, Lord & Duren, 1846), Google Books
https://books.google.com/books?id=HdDfaKPmLfgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=memoir+select+thoughts+and+sermons+of+the+late+rev+edward+payson&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiqid7lw5LnAhUumuAKHQVFDHQ6AEwAXoECAUQA#v=onepage&q=memoir%20select%20thoughts%20and%20sermons%20of%20the%20late%20rev%20edward%20payson&f=false, 503.

⁶² Rev. Edward Payson, *Memoir*, 506-508.

⁶³ Rev. Edward Payson, *Memoir*, 16, 315.

discontent is worth noting.⁶⁴ In his sermon against ambition, Payson harked back to the time of the apostles when “every servant was a slave.” Although Payson expressed the belief that slaves should take advantage of the opportunity to be free (albeit only in a legal manner) if God provides it, in the meantime they should regard their station with “holy indifference” and as a “matter of no consequence.”⁶⁵ For men like Ruby, an avid abolitionist who would later encourage Abyssinian members to join the fight against slavery, such an idea must have seemed preposterous.⁶⁶ Such a passive view of abolition, coupled with the rise of economically liberal values and continued existence of the “negro pews” may have prompted Ruby and others to form their own religious society.

The construction of the Abyssinian Church reveals the rift between Congregational “Old Lights” and “Moderate Lights” caused by the Second Great Awakening and the expansion of market relations. Moderate light theology was first espoused by Jonathan Edwards in Connecticut and later by Samuel Hopkins and Charles Finney. Hopkins and others transformed Edward’s theology into what became known as “New Divinity” in the second half of the eighteenth century. Although New Divinity initially promoted “disinterested benevolence” as a weapon to fight the quest for material gain, the unintended consequence was that it sanctioned market behavior. Hopkins predicted the approaching Millennium and saw within industrial technology the ability to create an altruistic paradise in which the standard of living was raised for all and greed and selfishness was non-existent. As Hopkins encouraged individuals to act altruistically he simultaneously promoted the desire for infinite wealth and capitalist ventures as

⁶⁴ Frederick Louis Fagley, *The Congregational Churches: An Outline of the History, Beliefs, and Organization of Congregational Churches in the United States*, (Boston, Massachusetts: The Pilgrim Press, 1925), 36-37.

⁶⁵ Rev. Edward Payson, *Memoir, Select Thoughts, and Sermons*, 506.

⁶⁶ Price and Talbot, *Maine’s Visible Black History*, 254-255.

a means to an end. Across New England, conservative evangelicals, especially the elite, found such religious doctrine appealing.⁶⁷ New Divinity later became what Charles Sellers described as fully “arminianized,” a doctrine which emphasized free will and “sanctioned competitive individualism” by Reverend Nathaniel W. Taylor. Taylor was a protege of Timothy Dwight, who interpreted capitalist discipline as Christian behavior leading to salvation.⁶⁸ As Mark A. Noll explains, “arminians” often “promoted efficiency, production, the enterprising spirit, individualistic competition, and banks.”⁶⁹ New Divinity advocate Charles Finney, followed Taylor’s lead and preached that capital was the businessmen’s “tool with which he serves God and his generation.”⁷⁰ Finney was a student of George Washington Gale, who founded the Oneida Institute in 1827. Two Abyssinian ministers, Rev. Amos Noe Freeman and Amos Gerry Beman, were among the four African Americans educated at the Oneida Institute in 1836.⁷¹ These two ministers would later encourage the Abyssinian Congregation to exercise *interested* benevolence toward the abolition of slavery through capitalist striving.

That Moderate Light, or New Divinity followers, such as Freeman and Beman were invited to preach at the Abyssinian is a reflection of the congregation’s theological and political leanings. Beman noted in his writings that the majority of Black people in Portland exercised their right to suffrage and largely voted for the Whig party.⁷² “Arminians,” like the members of the Abyssinian, tended to be supporters of the Whig Party and were often members of Unitarian,

⁶⁷ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 203-208.

⁶⁸ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 31, 210.

⁶⁹ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 16.

⁷⁰ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 230.

⁷¹ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 178.

⁷² Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 23.

Congregational, and New Light Presbyterian churches.⁷³ Given that the church was later involved in abolitionist activities, it is also likely that they embraced a “liberation theology,” as many Black Christians did, in addition to New Divinity tendencies.⁷⁴ During Freeman’s ordination at the Abyssinian in 1841 there were repeated references to Zion. As scholar David E. Swift explains, Black clergy often preached a liberation theology based in part on Exodus in the Old Testament, which recounts the escape of Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and their search for the promised land, also known as Zion.⁷⁵ The concluding prayer at the ordination began with “Daughter of Zion, awake from thy sadness Awake, for thy foes shall oppress thee no more.”⁷⁶ Beman’s writings frequently employed similar tropes of liberty; he described free Black people in the Abyssinian Congregation as undertaking their “pilgrim march to mount Zion.”⁷⁷ Beman also referred to the free Black population in Portland as the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” in an attempt to link the suffering and oppression of African Americans with that of the Hebrews in Egypt.⁷⁸ With this type of theology, one that linked free market economies with equal civil liberties for all, Abyssinian members could pursue individual wealth while simultaneously promoting the common good.⁷⁹

The sermons preached at the Abyssinian have all been washed away with the sands of time. While many of the actions of Abyssinian members are clear, the meaning those people ascribed to them is less so. The scrapbooks of Beman are extremely useful for providing insight into the

⁷³ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 16.

⁷⁴ Noll, *America’s God*, 147.

⁷⁵ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 7.

⁷⁶ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 58.

⁷⁷ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 24.

⁷⁸ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 123.

⁷⁹ Noll, *America’s God*, 11, 215.

mind of a minister who played a significant role in the development of the Abyssinian. There is scarce evidence regarding Freeman's ministry at the Abyssinian, but by reviewing Beman's scrapbook we can receive a glimpse into Freeman's mind as well. Beman and Freeman attended the Oneida Institute together; Beman was an admirer of Freeman's and had commended his work.⁸⁰ During Freeman's ordination in 1841 at the Abyssinian, his close friend Beman delivered the sermon.⁸¹ Beman ministered to the Abyssinian Congregation during several different periods of its existence; his first appointment began in November 1839 and lasted until 1840. It is likely that Beman was influential in Freeman's appointment as minister, as Freeman was ordained in the Abyssinian in 1841 and remained there until 1852. Beman returned in 1853 for a period of time and then again for a more permanent stay from 1857 until 1860.⁸² Given their close relationship and similar experiences, there is a high likelihood that Beman and Freeman shared common beliefs.

⁸⁰ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 178; Price and Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History*, 160.

⁸¹ *The Emancipator*, October 21, 1841; Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, Yale University, 23.

⁸² Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records, 1835-1876, November 1839; Price and Talbot, *Maine's Visible Black History*, 160, 366.

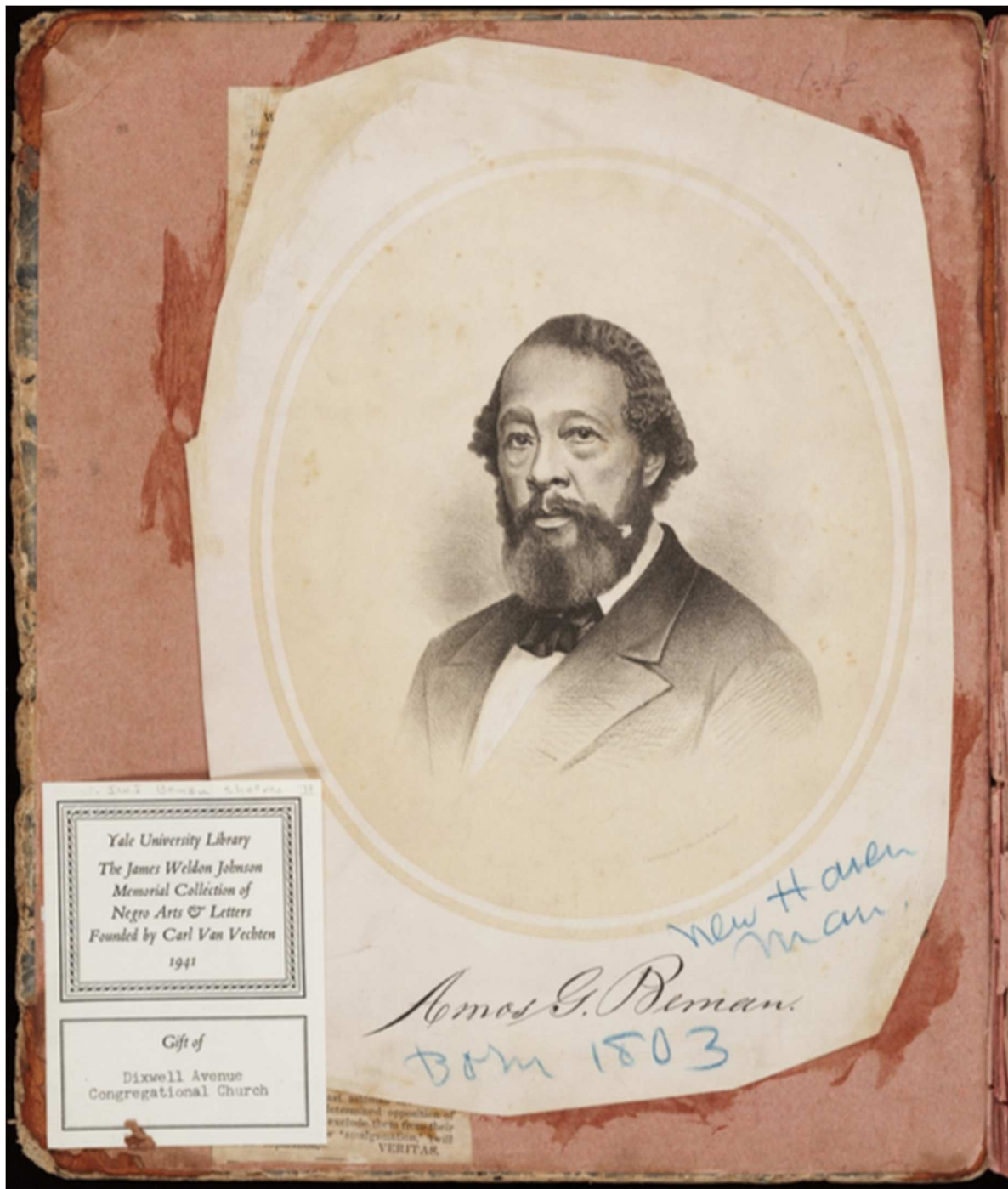


Photo of Amos G. Beman from Amos G. Beman Scrapbook, Vol. II, James Weldon Johnson Collection in the American Literature Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

During Freeman's ministry economic forces dictated the enforcement of moral codes within the church. The church established guidelines regarding acceptable behavior noting in the minutes for November 11, 1848 that "this Church deem [sic] it sinful to visit dancis [sic] theaters and sirkices [sic]" and voted "that if any goes to any of these places they shall be delt [sic] with."⁸³ The church experienced a revival in the 1840s, and membership apparently peaked with around seventy-eight adult members in 1848.⁸⁴ As a result of increased membership, and thus increased financial contributions to the church, moral discipline could be more strictly enforced. From 1842 to 1852 the church excommunicated twenty-one members in most cases for "immoral conduct" which included intemperance. Women were disproportionately targeted. Although women composed sixty percent of the members admitted between 1835 and 1852, they represented over eighty percent of excommunications during that time. This was likely due to their lack of economic power, which meant their dismissal was not a hindrance to the society's finances, as well as their lack of voting power. In contrast to this period of moral discipline, during the rest of the church's existence, approximately seventy years, there is not one record of an excommunication. While it is possible that a more conservative committee was in charge between 1842 and 1852, it seems more than a coincidence that multiple excommunications were timed with a significant increase in membership. This becomes all the more clear when the church's financial records are examined.⁸⁵

The church was in financial trouble for most of its existence and could not afford to excommunicate members, and thus lose pew rents or subscriptions, except during the flush years

⁸³ Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records 1835-1876, November 11, 1848.

⁸⁴ Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records 1835-1876, membership list; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, February 10, 1843.

⁸⁵ Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records 1835-1876, membership lists and meeting minutes.

of the 1840s. Court documents and newspaper reports reveal two lawsuits against the church in the 1830s by Samuel W. Chase for libel, and Reuben Ruby for failure to repay loans. These lawsuits, which found for the plaintiffs in both cases, resulted in significant damage to the church's coffers.⁸⁶ Church meeting minutes record measures to address debts including, the sale of pews, the closing of the church temporarily, the procurement of loans, the collection of donations both from members as well as from surrounding white churches, and the collection of back pew rents.⁸⁷ The church appears several times in local newspapers due to its "pecuniary embarrassments" including its inability to pay the mortgage on the meeting house and involvement in sheriff's sales.⁸⁸ As of June 1854, only forty-six adult members were left, and by 1866 discussion ensued about selling the church, although members decided against it.⁸⁹ Like the Abyssinian, most Black churches were beset by financial troubles due to the economic barriers which their congregations faced.⁹⁰

The church attempted to improve the economic opportunities for its members at every turn, which they believed would contribute toward the elevation of the race as a whole while creating financial stability for the church. Most Black churches functioned as an economic resource for their members in one way or another. Black churches, including the Abyssinian, saw education as one of the primary means of advancement in a capitalistic society, one which would also aid

⁸⁶ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folders 7 and 18; *Ruby v. Abyssinian Religious Soc.*, 15 Me. 306, 1839 Me. LEXIS 26 (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine, County of Cumberland April, 1839, Decided).

⁸⁷ Abyssinian Congregational Church Minutes of Meetings, 1830-1832, February 7, 1831; Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records, 1835-1876, May 16, 1831, June 3, 1839, and November 9, 1839.

⁸⁸ *Eastern Argus*, December 15, 1835 and June 4, 1839; *The Emancipator*, October 21, 1841.

⁸⁹ Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society Records, 1835-1876, June 1854 and May 2, 1866.

⁹⁰ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 21.

in eliminating prejudice.⁹¹ Writing for the *Colored American* in 1840, Beman noted that “an ignorant mind must, of necessity, occupy a comparatively degraded situation in human society...what is true of an individual, is true of a whole class.”⁹² Noting the power of knowledge, Beman expressed his hopes that African Americans would “listen and read and think” in order to hasten “the day of their elevation and advancement...in all the fullness of permanent prosperity.”⁹³ Reuben Ruby, a vice president of the American Moral Reform Society, likely helped infuse the *Abyssinian* with ideas regarding the value of education. The minutes of the American Moral Reform Society of August 8, 1836 recorded the society’s gratitude to those communities offering equal education to African Americans and called on young people to take full advantage of such opportunities.⁹⁴ Echoing such views, the *Abyssinian*, under the direction of Reverend Freeman, opened a school for Black children in the basement of the meeting house. In 1851 around seventy-five students were enrolled in the school “with an average attendance of 55.” The school continued successfully until 1856 when African American children began to attend the white schools of the city, from which they had been barred before.⁹⁵ While white abolitionists believed that education was the most appropriate and efficient way to promote industry and morality among African Americans, Black abolitionists of the *Abyssinian* believed

⁹¹ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 42.

⁹² Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 19; *Colored American*, November 21, 1840.

⁹³ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 136.

⁹⁴ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 18.

⁹⁵ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 8; Willis, *History of Portland*, 680.

it was an avenue to wealth and prosperity.⁹⁶ Education could give the free Black community the skills and knowledge needed to rise above their current station and prove their economic worth.⁹⁷

While Freeman and Beman often referred to education as the primary tool for economic advancement they also recognized the usefulness of education in developing character and Christian virtues. Beman expressed his hope that the students of the Abyssinian school would develop “mental and moral powers” in order to become “the ornaments of society, an honor to their parents-and pillars in the Church of God.”⁹⁸ Elevation, then was not just economic, but incorporated another purpose, to make a “higher and nobler Christian civilization,” one that surely included the abolition of slavery.⁹⁹

Although Beman embraced liberal economic values including that of private property and ambition as a way to end slavery, he still held onto Christian virtues. Capitalist adaptation was a gradual process and Beman still retained what Mark A. Noll called “a great deal of hereditary Protestant nervousness about the accumulation of wealth, suspicion about the seductive power of money, and caution about the corrupting influences of economic power.”¹⁰⁰ Even though Beman praised the ownership of property by African Americans in Portland, he was careful to note that it was the result of “hard and honest toil” rather than “the gift of ancestors...or successful

⁹⁶ Robert E. Desrochers, Jr., “Not Fade Away”: The Narrative of Venture Smith, an African American in the Early Republic,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (Jun., 1997), 47.

⁹⁷ Not all Blacks in the Early Republic accepted that “moral elevation” was the proper method to eradicate racism. Ibram X. Kendi argues that not only did “uplift suasion” fail to improve race relations but it is also a form of integrationist racism. See Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped From The Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, (New York, New York: Nation Books, 2016), 75, 172, 179, 231, 240.

⁹⁸ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 24.

⁹⁹ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 136.

¹⁰⁰ Noll, *America's God*, 223.

speculation.”¹⁰¹ Beman provided instruction on the means to wealth but also gave advice on how wealth should be used. Rather than wasting money on gambling, drink, or luxuries, Beman advised African Americans to “lay up money for a ‘wet day’ and for all the noble purposes of human development and advancement.”¹⁰² The attainment of wealth, in order to advance the African American race, was a communal responsibility that should incorporate Christian virtues while simultaneously embracing economic liberalism.

In arguing for the supremacy of the evangelical Christian interpretation of the relationship between capitalism and abolitionism, James Huston states that abolitionists “disliked the power property had over individuals” and “feared wealth.”¹⁰³ If the founders and leaders of the Abyssinian were truly critical of a capitalist ethos then they would not have encouraged members to immerse themselves in it. Beman frequently encouraged ownership of property and collected reports on the value of real estate owned by African Americans in various cities.¹⁰⁴ That Beman condoned wealth and property ownership is evidence of his economic liberalism. That he encouraged members to use their wealth (acquired through hard work) to create a Christian utopia is illustrative of his vision of a biblical political economy. In fighting the institution of slavery, Beman utilized both mammon and morals.

Along with education and property ownership, the Abyssinian, under the leadership of Reverends Beman and Freeman, promoted temperance as a means to economic success and eventually, abolition of slavery. As David E. Swift notes, temperance was an economic necessity as “only with sobriety could money be saved; families fed, clothed, housed, and

¹⁰¹ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 136.

¹⁰² Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 137.

¹⁰³ Huston, *Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism*, 510.

¹⁰⁴ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II.

educated; and church responsibilities taken seriously.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, temperance was considered a crucial factor in encouraging moral uplift. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter Three, alcohol was closely tied to slavery; molasses produced by slave labor in the Caribbean was used to make rum in Portland distilleries. In writing for the *Maine Temperance Journal*, Beman referred to intemperance as “Leviathan” and called for “the utter, the entire annihilation of the rum traffic and of the use of intoxicating liquors.” Beman described the “burning tears of mothers” which are “falling over the wretched course of sons” and reminded readers of children who “need that money which is spent for rum, to buy bread.”¹⁰⁶ In 1844, Beman praised the Temperance Society in Portland and noted that “its influence has done wonders, as the increase of property, the improvement of morals, the advance in intelligence and respectability abundantly show.”¹⁰⁷ In the absence of sermons, the letters which Beman and Freeman wrote to the *Colored American* provide an indication of the religious doctrine preached at the Abyssinian. Both were tireless supporters of temperance and attempted to educate members of the Abyssinian of “the awful magnitude of the tremendous evils of intemperance by which they are surrounded.” Beman reminded parishioners of temperance’s “relation to their elevation in society” and admonished that the only solution was total abstinence.¹⁰⁸ With temperance, the members of the congregation could achieve economic success. In addition, through the economic elevation of free Black people, the worth of *all*, chained or unfettered could be proven.

The Abyssinian used market mechanisms in order to hasten emancipation. In 1832 William Lloyd Garrison visited Portland, and Reuben Ruby offered to take him on a tour of the city. The

¹⁰⁵ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 187.

¹⁰⁶ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 81.

¹⁰⁸ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 24, 123; Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 19; *Colored American*, June 26, 1841.

friendship they established prompted Ruby to become actively involved in the nation's abolition movement.¹⁰⁹ As a member of the American Moral Reform Society, Ruby encouraged African Americans to boycott all products produced with slave labor.¹¹⁰ The church held anti-slavery lectures by individuals such as Reverend D. Green, a fugitive slave who recounted his experience of being flogged, stealing sweet potatoes, and of being "betrayed by his sweet-heart for two hundred dollars."¹¹¹ In an effort to encourage sympathy for the victims of slavery and emphasize the right of self-ownership, antislavery advocates often recounted stories of horrendous physical pain and suffering.¹¹² Those who came to hear Green's lecture and his memories of floggings were asked to pay a small fee "for the benefit of the Church."¹¹³ Beman encouraged free Black people to improve their individual worth, presumably measured in part by the economic agenda he promoted, in order to end the institution of slavery.¹¹⁴

The members of the Abyssinian were likely influenced to end slavery by *both* a sense of moral responsibility and a conscious class interest. Knowing what we do about them, neither motivation alone seems sufficient. While some historians, including David Brion Davis, argue that nineteenth century reformers served their own class interest subconsciously, this does not seem to hold entirely true for the members of the Abyssinian.¹¹⁵ With some issues, such as temperance, which was a means to keep labor working, church members certainly attempted to serve their own class interests. However, the origins of the church, spurred by a relatively elite group of Black property owners, and records left by Beman illustrate awareness that the end of

¹⁰⁹ Gratwick, *Hidden History of Maine*, 76.

¹¹⁰ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 18; *National Enquirer*, August 24, 1836.

¹¹¹ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 7.

¹¹² Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, 22.

¹¹³ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 7.

¹¹⁴ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 186.

¹¹⁵ Haskell, *Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part I*, 346.

slavery (achieved through *interested* benevolence) would benefit all. Abyssinian members were immersed in a capitalistic society, in which self-interest played as much of a role as altruism or benevolence.¹¹⁶

Although Beman and members of the Abyssinian employed economic liberalism in their fight against slavery it was not the only tool they used. Self-interest was combined with Christian virtues and a sense of moral responsibility as a way to encourage abolitionist activity. Beman frequently employed biblical tropes in his denunciation of slavery. Christian abolitionists who promoted a biblical political economy tended to argue that slaves did not receive a just reward for their labor and used the biblical example of St. Paul who encouraged employers to pay their employees fair wages.¹¹⁷ Beman referred to the Bible when he argued “that which a man soweth *that* also shall he reap.”¹¹⁸ Beman even employed that argument to free Black people who were not “able to reap a golden harvest as the result of their toil” due to racial discrimination.¹¹⁹ While speaking to Hartford’s Black community in August 1839, Beman referred to the biblical example of Samson and urged the crowd “to grasp the pillars of despotism, and to bow themselves till they fell, though they died with the Philistines.”¹²⁰ The use of biblical language helps to explain why Beman and others within the Abyssinian found slavery to be immoral. The economic liberalism they employed is demonstrative of how they chose to attack it.

Members of the Abyssinian frequently attended, and often hosted, “Colored Conventions” in order to discuss critical issues facing the African American population. At the Convention of Colored People for Maine and New Hampshire held at the Abyssinian in September 1842, at

¹¹⁶ Huston, *Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism*, 490.

¹¹⁷ Huston, *Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism*, 499.

¹¹⁸ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 31.

¹¹⁹ Amos G. Beman, Scrapbook Vol. II, 137.

¹²⁰ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 186.

least ten members of the Abyssinian were in attendance (including Reverend Freeman, A.W. Niles, and Ephraim Small), many of them in leadership positions.¹²¹ These meetings clearly had a religious connotation and frequently drew on biblical language and Christian virtues to explain the unethical nature of slavery. The convention in 1850 attacked prejudice on the grounds that it was “unchristian” and resolved to recognize the “God-like principle of a universal brotherhood.”¹²²

Market forces and images of a Christian utopia marked by equality and freedom created the Abyssinian and both would dictate its history. Ambition was not viewed as negative, was not discouraged, and was not used as a pejorative. Instead, it was promoted as a communal responsibility in order to encourage personal improvement *and* the demise of slavery. Free Black people, through improving their social and economic status could prove that all members of the race deserved freedom. The end of slavery would benefit all. In addition to economic liberalism the Abyssinian congregation employed biblical arguments to explain the immorality of slavery. God, mammon, and abolitionism were clearly closely connected in the Abyssinian Congregational Church of Portland, Maine.

¹²¹ Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 18.

¹²² Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, Folder 18.

Chapter Five Financial Operations of Religious Corporations in the Early Republic

As religious scholar Mark A. Noll notes, “money in the first decades of the new American nation was everywhere on the minds of church leaders and many of their followers.”¹

Disestablishment--that is, the abolishment of state funding for churches-- occurred in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire between 1819 and 1833. As a result, religious societies had no other choice but to pay attention to finances in order to survive.

During this period, religious societies functioned as a corporation which meant its members were essentially shareholders with financial interests, both their own as well as that of the congregation, to protect. These investors thus tended to be preoccupied with matters of money, rather than matters of religion. Disagreements over the financial management of the society were frequent and significant. Members of the society benefited economically in substantial ways and ran the society more like a business to serve private interests than an institution designed to serve the common good. The more the religious society was run as a business the more its very survival was at risk.

In terms of finances, the church (as opposed to the religious society) generally focused on raising money for charitable purposes. Collections were taken on fast days, Thanksgiving, and during Communion, which occurred once a month.² Usually these funds were disbursed to the poor, particularly widows, after the costs of the communion table were deducted.³ Costs

¹ Mark A. Noll, *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

² Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, September 16, 1821, May 30, 1824, December 11, 1831, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 11, 22, 31.

³ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, February 28, 1836, 4-5; Second Church Records, Cash Book, 1813-1895, Vol. 13.

included Malaga wine, bread, candles, cleaning the plate, and mending the candle molds.⁴ At other times, collections were taken to fund philanthropic efforts toward specific groups. In 1829, the Mayor of Boston wrote the Second Church about a fire in Augusta, Georgia which destroyed the town and \$98 was raised for relief efforts.⁵ Other collections supported the Evangelical Treasury, famine relief for the Cape Verde Islands, churches that were in debt, and free religious instruction for the poor.⁶

The focus of this chapter however is not on the humanitarian efforts of the church. Rather, this chapter analyzes the day-to-day operations of the church, as administered and funded by the religious society. Religious societies kept pace with technological innovations, purchased elegant items to lure worshippers and bolster their own sense of refinement, protected their investments, and established an organizational structure. However, all of this cost money and the sources of revenue were not inexhaustible. Ultimately, the problem stemmed from the fact that religious societies applied a business model to a corporation that was in essence, not a business as revenue could not be increased to match costs. It seemed by the end of the Early Republic that perhaps the spiritual and secular world were not as compatible as some had imagined.

Expenses

Primarily, the society was responsible for maintaining a minister and the building which were the two most significant expenses. Other expenses included costs associated with music, a parish library, legal counsel, and printing. Of course, the goal was always that revenue matched or

⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, Box 3, Folder 4 General Accounts, 1809.

⁵ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, May 10, 1829, 26.

⁶ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, June 14, 1829, June 15, 1829, November 1, 1829, October 1832, Thanksgiving Collections 1830-1840, 26-28, 31, 47.

exceeded expenses. Generally, the corporation seemed fairly successful at managing fixed costs, those that remained constant regardless of output, such as the minister's salary, taxes, and insurance. Variable costs, including labor and materials for repairs, utilities, and purchases of items for aesthetics were less well managed and when costs in this category increased significantly the society went into debt.

Supplying a minister was a significant and unavoidable expense. However, to a large degree it was a fixed cost, meaning it remained the same regardless of the amount of work the minister performed. Additionally, this cost remained in the control of the society and could be increased or decreased when a new minister was ordained. In the beginning of the Early Republic, the society of the Second Church paid a salary in addition to covering rent and supplying wood for the minister. In 1791 Reverend Lathrop was paid an annual salary of \$624.00 but this increased to \$832 in 1795.⁷ By 1804, Lathrop was complaining that his salary was "Insufficient to support his Family with That decency that his Situation requires." The society approved a one time payment of \$250, garnered from the sale of pews to accommodate Lathrop, but the following year voted to increase his salary to \$1040.⁸

In 1816 when the society voted to settle Henry Ware Jr. as minister his salary was set at \$25 per week, a total of \$1200 per year.⁹ However, receipts indicate that in 1817 Ware was receiving an annual salary of \$1300, indicating that he may have negotiated an increase in his salary prior to his ordination.¹⁰ Such a salary can be seen as significant when compared to the wages of most urban workers which at the time totaled roughly \$365 if they were lucky enough to have constant

⁷ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, May 8, 1791, May 5, 1795.

⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1804, May 19, 1805, 1-2, 5-8.

⁹ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 17, 1816, 2-3.

¹⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A, 1817.

work.¹¹ Although salaries varied for ministers according to denomination, Ware's salary was comparable to that which other Unitarians received, generally in the range of \$700 and \$2000.¹² Yet even though Ware was likely making considerably more than most manual laborers in Boston, by 1825 his salary increased to \$1800, a 38.5% increase in 9 years.¹³ Ware became ill in 1829 and Reverend Ralph Waldo Emerson, the famous transcendentalist was hired as a colleague pastor to assist him. At that point, the society agreed to pay Emerson an annual salary of \$1200 and if Ware resigned, to pay him \$1800 which in fact occurred several months later.¹⁴ Emerson's ministry did not last long, he resigned in 1832 following a theological dispute over communion.¹⁵ Reverend Chandler Robbins was ordained in 1833 to replace Emerson. The proprietors initially voted to reduce the minister's salary to \$1500, probably in light of the recently approved repairs estimated to cost over \$2300, as well as Robbins's lack of experience. However, the committee eventually decided on \$1600.¹⁶ Robbins's salary remained constant until 1838 when it was increased to \$2000 annually.¹⁷ Although likely due for a raise in order to keep pace with inflation, it is interesting that Robbins's salary was raised by eleven percent during the economic crisis caused by the Panic of 1837.

¹¹ Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 72.

¹² Bruce Kimball, *The "True Professional Ideal" in America: A History*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995), 169.

¹³ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1825.

¹⁴ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1823, June 25, 1826, June 8, 1828, September 21, 1828, December 28, 1828, January 4, 1829, January 11, 1829, March 11, 1829, March 29, 1829, July 5, 1829, 49, 83, 95-118; Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1830.

¹⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, September 16, 1832, 135-137; Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, June 1832, 31-33.

¹⁶ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 21, 1832, May 12, 1833, October 20, 1833, 137-138, 144-148; Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1833-1838.

¹⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9A.

The society also provided wood for their ministers until the ordination of Emerson in 1830. This was also a fixed cost as the ministers were allotted a certain amount of wood per year, it remained up to them to ration it appropriately. As the society paid for the cost to heat their home, Lathrop and Ware's salary was actually considerably more. The society was able to purchase the wood in bulk, which as scholar Seth Rockman notes, was cheaper, but only an option for those who had enough money to buy a cord at a time and available space for storage.¹⁸ In 1791 thirty cords of wood for Reverend Lathrop cost fifty pounds, three shilling, and eight pence (roughly equivalent to \$228) while in 1806, a year's worth of firewood for Lathrop, including the cost of carting, was \$172.50.¹⁹ Adding the cost of wood to Lathrop's salary for 1806 thus increased it from \$832 to \$1004.50. The cost for the heating of Lathrop's house stayed fairly constant averaging \$178.08 per year for the next four years. Of interest is that fact that the society began soliciting bids for wood, an apparent effort to receive the lowest possible cost.²⁰ Twenty five cords of wood for Reverend Lathrop in 1811 totaled \$166.66 which included a charge of \$16.66 for sawing.²¹ As historian Sean Patrick Adams notes, cities like Boston were plagued with wood shortages well into the Early Republic which led to significantly higher prices. The cost of hardwood skyrocketed in the 1790s and one cord of wood could cost as much

¹⁸ Rockman, *Scraping By*, 173-174; Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1806-1808, Box 3, Folder 3.

¹⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, May 8, 1791, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A, July 1806; Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Computing 'Real Value' Over Time With a Conversion Between U.K. Pounds and U.S. Dollars, 1791 to Present", MeasuringWorth, 2020, www.measuringworth.com/exchange/.

²⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1808. See receipts for 1807-1810.

²¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5.

as ten dollars, a cost of well over \$200 annually for an average home.²² When Ware was installed the Second Church voted to supply him with a maximum of thirty cords of wood per year although this benefit appears to have been eliminated following Ware's resignation.²³ It is unclear why the society eliminated this benefit but one can surmise the fluctuating price of wood and the transition to coal likely played a role.

Rent was an additional benefit for Lathrop. The society of the Second Church absorbed this fixed cost for Lathrop's house rent which from 1796 through 1804 was \$150 annually.²⁴ Lathrop was afforded a house and likely a substantially sized one given the amount of his rent. This can be deduced in part by examining the rent collected for a house owned by the society on Ann Street which was \$120 annually in 1825.²⁵ By 1805 this expense was \$200 and by 1809 increased to \$300.²⁶ During the beginning of the Early Republic, fixed costs such as the minister's salary and rent made up the bulk of the society's budget which made financial management easier. This remained true until the 1820s when the expense of gentrification and other variable costs began to comprise the majority of expenditures. In 1804-1805 the fixed cost of the minister's salary and rent comprised an average of approximately 70% of the society's budget yet by 1822-1824 it comprised approximately 28%.²⁷

²² Sean Patrick Adams, *Home Fires: How Americans Kept Warm in the Nineteenth Century*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), Kindle, 477.

²³ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 17, 1816, 2-3.

²⁴ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, May 2, 1796, May 8, 1803.

²⁵ Second Church, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, 1825.

²⁶ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, May 2, 1796, May 8, 1803; Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1805-1808 and 1810,

²⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Treasurer's Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3 Folder 2, 1822, Box 3 Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3 Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3 Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4 Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4 Folder 2, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

The corporation employed several salaried employees aside from the minister one of which was the sexton who was in charge of daily maintenance of the meeting house. In this role Joseph Edmunds was paid \$75.00 in 1798.²⁸ Sextons often had other full time positions and supplemented their income through employment with the society. For example, Nathaniel Bell replaced Edmunds as sexton in 1807; he also labored as a mason.²⁹ By 1826, the sexton's salary increased to \$100 annually, around the same time that the minister's salary was also significantly increased. In 1811, the sexton's salary accounted for less than five percent of weekly expenditures.³⁰ John Bridge was also paid a salary of \$50 beginning in 1817 and increased to \$75 annually in 1822 but it is unclear what services he provided. The position appears to have been terminated by 1823.³¹ These salaries also represented fixed costs and remained fairly constant, never averaging more than 4 ½ % of the annual budget.³²

In addition to the minister's salary other fixed costs included insurance and taxes. Beginning in 1825, the religious society of the Second Church of Boston began protecting its investments

²⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, May 12, 1793, May 2, 1796, May 1798.

²⁹ *The Boston Directory; Containing Names Of The Inhabitants; Their Occupations, Places Of Business And Dwelling Houses; With Lists Of The Streets, Lanes, And Wharves; The Town Officers, Public Offices, And Banks, And Other Useful Information*, (Boston, Massachusetts: John H.A. Frost and Charles Stimpson, Jr., 1820), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2020, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Boston_Directory/KvVZAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=boston+directory+1820&pg=PP2&printsec=frontcover, 41.

³⁰ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 12, 1811, 23-24.

³¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1817-1822.

³² Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Treasurer's Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, 1841 Box 5, Folder 8, 1842, Box 5, Folder 9, 1843, Box 5, Folder 10, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

by purchasing insurance. They initially purchased a policy from Globe Fire and Marine Insurance Company in Boston, but later obtained a policy from Franklin Insurance Company from 1826 through 1845. In 1825, the society paid an annual premium of \$9.82 on one policy for two buildings they rented out. The society also paid a \$45.00 premium for a separate policy which covered the organ (insured for \$1700), the meeting house (insured for \$8000) and the chandelier (insured for \$300). Likewise, when the meeting house was altered and a new steeple constructed in 1823 the repairs alone cost over \$7200 making it unlikely the society could have rebuilt the same structure for under \$8000. Premiums stayed fairly constant although the society increased the insured value on the two buildings they rented to \$1400 in 1828 which raised the premium to \$11.20 annually. In 1831, the society sold one of the houses they rented, which dropped the premium on that policy to \$4.20 but they added another policy following the construction of the vestry. The vestry was valued at \$700 along with \$300 dollars worth of “Settees, and other Furniture, and Books,” and the premium was set at \$4.00. Although the society initially purchased a \$5000 policy on the new building no extant copies of insurance policies after 1845 exist, perhaps given the pecuniary troubles described in the beginning of this chapter, insurance was deemed an unnecessary expense.³³ Insurance was an easily managed fixed cost, never representing more than two percent of the annual budget.³⁴

³³ Second Church Records, Insurance Policies, 1825-1835, Box 17 Folder 6.

³⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, 1841, Box 5, Folder 8, 1842, Box 5, Folder 9, 1843, Box 5, Folder 10, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, Insurance Policies, 1825-1835, Box 17, Folder 6.

Taxes were also a relatively small fixed expense comparatively. In 1805 taxes for the parish meeting house were \$3.12.³⁵ This is because Massachusetts, like other states in the nation allowed tax exemptions for religious organizations. All personal property, the house of worship, and the parsonage were exempt from taxes, however the other real estate owned by the society, houses on Ann Street and Hanover Street, which were rented, were eligible for taxation.³⁶ Taxes varied slightly throughout the next few years, averaging between three and four dollars from 1816 through 1821. A major increase occurred in 1825 when taxes jumped to \$7.00 and by 1831 taxes were \$11.06 for the two rental properties.³⁷ By 1832, the property on Ann Street was sold, in part because it was deemed unproductive, and so taxes decreased to \$6.56.³⁸ Taxes always represented less than .05% of the budget.³⁹

When a minister became ill, aged, or requested a leave of absence, the expense on the society was often a significant burden as it necessitated a temporary supply for the pulpit or the settlement of a junior pastor for assistance. In either case, the society was now responsible for paying the salaries of two ministers. This was a variable cost and one not well managed by the

³⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2.

³⁶ The General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, General Laws, accessed December 16, 2020, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleIX/Chapter59/Section5>.

³⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8 1820, Box 3, Folder 12, 1825, Box 4, Folder 3, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9.

³⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 21, 1831, May 31, 1831, June 3 1832, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1832 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 10.

³⁹ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Treasurer's Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, 1841 Box 5, Folder 8, 1842, Box 5, Folder 9, 1843, Box 5, Folder 10, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

society of the Second Church in part because it was always unclear how long such an expense would need to be borne. Ware Jr. was ill in 1823 and the society granted him an additional one time compensation of \$300 for expenses. They also paid to supply the pulpit while he was away in 1826 and continued to pay his salary as well. In June of 1828 the society again incurred the expense of supplying the pulpit in Ware's absence. Ware wrote in September that he was ill and unsure when he would return, although he offered to resign, the Standing Committee decided to wait to see if he would return.⁴⁰ Emerson and one other minister (it is unclear who) supplied the pulpit in Ware's absence at a varying rate of \$15 to \$20 per Sabbath.⁴¹ Unfortunately, this coincided with other variable costs (discussed later in this chapter) and the society was forced to borrow at least once a year from 1824 through 1830, at notes ranging from \$100-\$900, all to be paid with interest, and totaling \$4400.⁴² In 1831, a report on the state of the treasury noted that the "Society has been in debt, ever since the ill health of the former minister made it necessary to supply the pulpit at the expense of the Society, and, for a time, to pay two salaries; and that, during that time, interest has been paid on money borrowed by the Treasurer."⁴³ Variable costs such as these often led the society toward economic dependence which was difficult to recover from given the fixed annual income.

⁴⁰ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1823, June 25, 1826, June 8, 1828, September 21, 1828, December 28, 1828, January 4, 1829, 49.

⁴¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1823, June 25, 1826, June 8, 1828, September 21, 1828, December 28, 1828, January 4, 1829, January 11, 1829, March 11, 1829, March 29, 1829, July 5, 1829, 49, 83, 95-118; Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1829-1830.

⁴² Second Church Records, Treasurer Records, 1711-1968 Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1823 (January-July) Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December) Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 1, 1824(July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1825 Box 4, Folder 3, 1826 Box 4, Folder 4, 1827, Box 4, Folder 5, 1828 Box 4, Folder 6, 1829 Box 4, Folder 7, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8.

⁴³ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1831-1840, Box 12, Folder 4, November 13, 1831.

When Robbins became the settled minister he also fell ill in April 1839 and required a three month leave of absence, but as the society had no money to pay another minister they were forced to obtain a loan of \$150.⁴⁴ To improve his health Robbins took an “Atlantic voyage,” which apparently lasted longer than the initial three month request as the money to supply the pulpit ran out by September. The treasurer was authorized to borrow more.⁴⁵ In 1843, Robbins received another month off “during the warm Season” and again in 1844.⁴⁶ Ultimately religious societies tended to be hit particularly hard by the additional expense of supporting two ministers, in part because the society did not adequately plan for such an expense by laying money aside to account for variable costs.

Another variable cost borne by the religious society was funeral expenses when the minister passed away. When Reverend Lathrop died in 1816 the society purchased silk, ribbon, bombazet (a thin woolen cloth), sewing cotton, hose, gloves, and shoes presumably to adorn Lathrop’s body and coffin. Although the eighteenth century practice of giving gloves at funerals, detailed by historians Steven C. Bullock and Sheila McIntyre had largely disappeared by the Early Republic, perhaps the purchase of gloves for Lathrop were still meant to symbolize “honor and genteel status.”⁴⁷ Proprietors also purchased a “Mahogany Coffin with Furniture” (generally referring to handles and decorative symbols) for Lathrop at a cost of \$40.⁴⁸ Historian Jennifer Anderson notes the increasing use of mahogany as it was associated with ideals of refinement

⁴⁴ Second Church Records, Proprietor’s Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, April 21, 1839, 177.

⁴⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor’s Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 1, 1839, September 8, 1839, 178-182.

⁴⁶ Second Church Records, Proprietor’s Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, August 6, 1843, August 6, 1844, 204, 222-224.

⁴⁷ Steven C. Bullock and Sheila McIntyre, “The Handsome Tokens of a Funeral: Glove-Giving and the Large Funeral in Eighteenth Century New England,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April 2012), 310-311.

⁴⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8.

and gentility, mahogany coffins became typical in the second half of the eighteenth century, whereas previously they were made out of walnut or pine.⁴⁹ The society also paid the sexton of the church to open the meeting house, complete work in the tomb, ring the bells, and shovel the path to the building. The Board of Health authorized charges to Nathaniel Bell, the sexton, who also served as the undertaker in this case, to place Lathrop's corpse in the coffin, carry the coffin into the church and from there into the tomb, to open and close the tomb, and attend the services in the meeting house. The society also paid to have four hundred copies of the services at Lathrop's interment and three hundred copies of the sermon at his funeral printed. All told, the expenses for Lathrop's funeral reached upward of \$186.00.⁵⁰ It was clear that Lathrop's funeral was meant to reflect both the genteel nature of the deceased as well as that of the congregation.

The minister's family also received special consideration. When Lathrop died, the society voted to continue paying his salary to his two daughters for a period of six weeks.⁵¹ In 1824, when Reverend Ware's wife died, the society helped to cover her funeral expenses. The society paid \$25.00 for her coffin and also covered the expenses for the undertaker which amounted to \$11.00.⁵² The coffin for Ware's wife was significantly less than the coffin purchased for Reverend Lathrop in 1816, suggesting that her coffin was constructed of wood much cheaper than mahogany. The society perhaps felt less responsibility to provide as a refined funeral for the minister's wife as they did for their minister. Or perhaps costs needed to be reduced given

⁴⁹ Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 13, 45.

⁵⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8.

⁵¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, January 14, 1816, 32.

⁵² Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1.

the amount of money the society had already borrowed beginning with Ware's illness in 1823 which coincided with major repairs of the meeting house.

Ordinations of ministers provided an opportunity to showcase the religious society and to bolster denominations but they were costly. This was another variable expense and was difficult to plan for given the unpredictability of needing to replace a minister. Yet such an event presented an opportunity for the society to showcase itself. Delegations from other churches were invited to the ordination and it was customary to host a dinner celebrating the event, one certainly designed to reflect the refined nature of the society. When Henry Ware Jr. was settled as the minister of the Second Church in Boston, eight churches were invited to his ordination, each represented by their respective pastor and two additional delegates. The delegations were invited to dine along with Reverend Henry Ware Jr., the ordination committee of the Second Church which included five committee members, eight marshalls, and two constables if needed. Other voting members (males) of the society could attend the dinner as well after purchasing tickets for two dollars apiece. Assuming the cost of the dinner was two dollars per person, the total of the society's share would have been eighty dollars for this ordination.⁵³ Quite a fine dinner it must have been, each ticket representing the cost of two days worth of wages for an average working man.⁵⁴ The ordination dinner for Reverend Emerson in 1829 cost the society \$197.50, including 153 dinners, wine, and refreshments for the choir.⁵⁵

⁵³ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, December 7, 1816, 1821, 5-7. I am assuming the ticket price of two dollars reflected the cost of an individual dinner. However, it is possible that the ticket prices were inflated in part to subsidize the cost of the dinner for the nonpaying individuals.

⁵⁴ Rockman, *Scraping By*, 72.

⁵⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1829, Box 4 Folder 7.

Printing was another cost associated with ordinations, another means to take advantage of the opportunity to present the church and the society in an appealing manner. For the ordination of Ware in 1817 the society printed sixty circulars, fifty-two cards, and three hundred copies of the order of services which collectively cost eight dollars.⁵⁶ In some ways, it served as advertising for the religious society, a means to draw in worshippers and preserve historical memory. Similarly, when Reverend Emerson was ordained, in 1829, the society paid to have cards, tickets for the ordination dinner, and six hundred copies of the order of services printed. Far more copies were printed for this ordination resulting in a cost of \$25.62. Sexton Henry Davis was also paid to deliver the ordination dinner tickets.⁵⁷ Over nine hundred copies of the order of services were printed for Robbins's ordination in 1833, six hundred copies more than the ordination of Ware in 1817.⁵⁸ In the 1820s, the society of the Second Church increasingly borrowed money in order to fund variable costs including supply of the pulpit, ordinations, and funeral expenses.

Establishing relationships with other churches and religious societies was beneficial but also costly. Such endeavors promised mutual aid, a bulwark against competing sects, and perhaps provided a sense of legitimacy. Proprietors elected individuals to represent the parish at the ordinations of nearby ministers. The Second Church of Boston was invited to the ordination of Thomas Prentiss at the Second Congregational Church in Charlestown and Deacon Samuel Parkman was elected as the chosen delegate. Although deacons usually represented the parish at

⁵⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8; Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8.

⁵⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1829, Box 4, Folder 7; Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1829, Box 4, Folder 7.

⁵⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1829, Box 4, Folder 12.

such celebrations, people in unofficial capacities were also selected. The ordination of Prentiss never occurred and a year later the Second Congregational Church finally settled on a replacement. On March 12, 1818 Francis Greene was chosen in place of Deacon Parkman to attend the ordination of James Walker in Charlestown on account of Parkman being ill.⁵⁹ As there were travel expenses associated with attendance at ordinations typically one delegate (sometimes just the pastor) from the Second Church was sent to those at a further distance while up to three delegates would be sent to ordinations in or near Boston. For example, only Reverend Henry Ware Jr. attended an ordination in New York City while three delegates from the Second Church attended the ordination of John Pierpont at the Hollis Street Church in Boston.⁶⁰ In one instance, travel costs for the delegation to attend an ordination in Northfield, Massachusetts in 1825 totaled \$19.88.⁶¹

It appears that the church paid for travel expenses associated with attendance at ordinations until September 1825 when they requested that the society pay the expenses. The church justified this request by the fact that the income from a property on Ann Street, left to the church in trust for charitable purposes, had been combined with the accounts of the society.⁶² In 1828, the society established that the proceeds of the fund, \$1270.30, be paid to the church each year for the benefit of the poor. Essentially, the society kept the principal and paid the interest each year at a rate of 5%.⁶³

⁵⁹ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, March 23, 1817 and March 12, 1818, 9.

⁶⁰ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, April 11, 1819, December 2, 1821, 10, 13.

⁶¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1825, Box 4, Folder 3.

⁶² Second Church Records, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, September 1825, May 1828, 23-25.

⁶³ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, February 28, 1836, 4.

The society also helped to fund a dinner for an annual convention of ministers in Boston. The first mention is in 1817 when the society paid \$19 for their share of the cost. This cost averaged \$22.91 for the next six years and decreased beginning in 1826. From 1826 through 1828 the average cost of the share for the dinner was \$16.33 per year.⁶⁴ These costs were variable but never comprised a significant amount of the annual budget.

The greatest variable costs, but also the one with the most significant degree of control were those associated with the repair, alteration, and maintenance of the meeting house which included both labor and materials. Some of these expenses were unavoidable and necessary to preserve the actual structure while others were more decorative in nature. Those that were essential included repairs of the roof, windows, and doors, fireplace and chimney work, and repairs to the porch and steps.⁶⁵ Materials most often associated with repairs to the house included lumber, shingles, hinges, and nails. In terms of lumber, the society of the Second Church paid for pine joice, clear boards, weather boards, saddle boards and timber as well as the cost to cart such materials.⁶⁶ The society also periodically replaced cracked or broken window panes and had the windows puttied.⁶⁷

Simple maintenance of the house also included cleaning and emptying the vault. Prior to 1823 the society had a private sewage system, called a vault. The society had to hire someone to

⁶⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1817-1828.

⁶⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, General Accounts, 1806-1808, Box 3, Folder 3.

⁶⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, General Accounts, 1806-1808, Box 3, Folder 3, General Accounts, 1809, Box 3, Folder 4.

⁶⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5.

empty the vault toilets, both at the meeting house and at their rental properties.⁶⁸ In 1823 the society installed forty seven feet of pipe from the meeting house to the city drain for access to the common sewer at a cost of \$111.60.⁶⁹ However, as Morris Mandel Cohn notes, it was not until 1833 that “Boston legally permitted the discharge of excreta into” the city sewage system after completing the “first great interceptor sewer project” in the country.⁷⁰ Prior to that, the society likely used the drain for storm run-off. Repairs to the sewage system were occasionally needed and the city of Boston assessed the society its proportion of the cost such as in 1838 when they charged Second Church \$23.75.⁷¹ Maintenance also included periodic cleaning which required payment for labor and supplies such as sand and soap.⁷² Significant cleaning occurred in 1816 in conjunction with a major painting job. The singing hall was whitewashed, the windows were cleaned, and the sexton spent six days cleaning the building for a total of \$11.32.⁷³ In 1832, the windows, chandelier, clock, and hall were all cleaned for a total of \$69.36.⁷⁴ Repairs made up a greater portion of the budget from 1810 through 1832. In 1804-1805 repairs were less than 8% of the budget but from 1822-1824 they made up more than 34%. Repairs as a percentage of the

⁶⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, General Accounts, 1806-1808, Box 3, Folder 3.

⁶⁹ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15.

⁷⁰ Morris Mandel Cohn, *Sewers for Growing America: How to Plan, Design, Finance, and Build Modern Sewer Systems*, (Ambler?, Pennsylvania: Certain-Teed Products, 1966), 44, 47.

⁷¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1838, Box 5, Folder 5.

⁷² Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1809, Box 3, Folder 4.

⁷³ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8.

⁷⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8.

budget dropped again by the early 1840s but of course this was only the precursor to the construction of the new edifice.⁷⁵

Major repairs and alterations appear to have been undertaken approximately every ten years, occurring in 1810, 1823-1824, and 1832.⁷⁶ In 1841, significant repairs were discussed once again but the committee which investigated the condition of the building deemed it “inexpedient to make many repairs upon the house.” Instead, the society began to consider the construction of a new edifice.⁷⁷ Alterations of pews and repair of the steeple in 1823 was particularly expensive. Ads were placed in various newspapers including the *Boston Commercial Gazette* and the *Columbian Centinel* to solicit proposals for a total of \$9.87 and a survey of the steeple was completed. Alexander Parris completed a survey of the old steeple and provided an estimate of a new one and charged for his services.⁷⁸ Plans for the new church were printed for the proprietors along with new deeds for the pews which were reappraised and renumbered following the alterations. Levi Whitcomb was hired to remove the old steeple and men were hired for “keeping away the boys,” presumably to avoid accidents. The society purchased treats and punch for the workmen to celebrate the raising of the steeple. Pews were altered, carpet installed, a platform installed at the pulpit, and work completed in the cellar. Repairs, cleaning,

⁷⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, 1841 Box 5, Folder 8, 1842, Box 5, Folder 9, 1843, Box 5, Folder 10, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

⁷⁶ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 6, 1810, June 16, 1823, October 21, 1832, 19-20, 54-55, 137-138.

⁷⁷ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 4, 1841, 197.

⁷⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823 January-July, Box 3, Folder 15.

and alterations cost at least \$7224.⁷⁹ As mentioned earlier, these repairs coincided with Ware's declining health, the funeral of his wife, and were followed by the ordination of Emerson, all of which caused the society to go into debt. It should be noted however, that while the steeple had been condemned and needed to be removed for safety, and pews were added to the gallery to increase revenue, some of the other expenditures were made to increase convenience, comfort, and aesthetics.⁸⁰ Silk curtains, carpet, and "gilding" the "chrisning [sic] stand" were certainly superfluous.⁸¹

The society of the Second Church purchased luxury items such as carpets, chandeliers, organs, and mahogany furniture, in an attempt to claim gentility, the varying costs of which drove them toward economic dependence. Gentility was extremely important to merchants in the Early Republic. Tom Cutterham notes that "as the transatlantic consumer economy developed, even those who did not get their income from landed estates-or, like the gentlemen of the southern colonies, from slave plantations-could purchase the kinds of fashionable clothes, furniture, and accoutrements that were needed to make a performance of of gentility." For merchants, attaining gentility was particularly important, as it could be translated into economic relationships which would then generate the income necessary to fund the performance.⁸² The society of the Second Church had a significant number of merchants. Out of eighty proprietors in 1823 whose occupations could be confirmed, twenty-nine were merchants, which represented

⁷⁹ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823 January-July, Box 3, Folder 15, General Accounts, 1823 August-December, Box 3, Folder 16.

⁸⁰ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, June 1, 1823, June 16, 1823, 52-55.

⁸¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823(January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16.

⁸² Tom Cutterham, *Gentleman Revolutionaries: Power And Justice In The New Republic*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 2.

over 36% of the pew owners.⁸³ These merchants were perhaps motivated by self-interest to imbue the society with a sense of refinement.

The society spent an enormous amount of money on aesthetic improvements. Painting the meeting house for the Second Church was a frequent endeavor throughout the Early Republic and was an effort intended both to preserve the wood and reflect gentility. As historian Richard Bushman notes, exterior paint on buildings was minimal prior to the middle of the eighteenth century but that “all the best frame houses in prosperous regions such as the Connecticut Valley, were painted by the first decade of the nineteenth century.”⁸⁴ In 1810, the society spent upward of \$750 on painting and associated staging, although some of the staging may have been used to repair the tower. The materials were quite expensive, one bill noted \$191.08 for yellow and white paint, brushes, tools, buckets, and trucking costs.⁸⁵ In 1816 the society paid to have the meeting house painted again for a total of \$290.⁸⁶

Various sundries were also purchased for decorative purposes and to imbue the building and by default the society, with a sense of sophistication. The society frequently purchased items made out of mahogany as in the case of Lathrop’s coffin. Mahogany was generally more expensive than other types of wood, for example, in 1759, to construct a desk from mahogany

⁸³ Second Church Records, Pew Deeds, Box 9, Folder 5; *The Boston Directory; Containing Names Of The Inhabitants; Their Occupations, Places Of Business And Dwelling Houses; With Lists Of The Streets, Lanes, And Wharves; The Town Officers, Public Offices, And Banks, And Other Useful Information*, (Boston, Massachusetts: John H.A. Frost and Charles Stimpson, Jr., 1823), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2020, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Boston_Directory/nY4vAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=boston+directory+1823&printsec=frontcover.

⁸⁴ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 133-134.

⁸⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5.

⁸⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8.

cost almost twice the amount maple did.⁸⁷ The society clearly valued the aesthetics and sense of elegance of mahogany indicated by their purchases. Seventy-five mahogany buttons for the pew doors were purchased in 1816 at a cost of \$4.50.⁸⁸ Anderson notes that mahogany was relatively expensive prior to the 1820s. Not until the development of the “steam-powered veneer saw” which could squeeze “more usable wood out of each log” did mahogany become “more widely available in a range of price points.”⁸⁹ During alterations of the church in 1823 mahogany standards were purchased.⁹⁰ As the society transitioned to using lamps in the 1820s, they commissioned Augustus Kepple to construct two mahogany stands for them at a total of \$8.50.⁹¹ Two Bible cases made of mahogany were also purchased in 1832.⁹²

The society of the Second Church was certainly concerned with the aesthetics of the building. As Bushman noted, many religious buildings began to change in New England after 1800 as proprietors “wanted tasteful churches in keeping with the growing refinement of the worshippers.”⁹³ In 1821 the society purchased \$111 dollars worth of Venetian blinds and in 1823 silk curtains. Bushman notes that silk was the subject of sumptuary legislation in the eighteenth century and its use restricted to the gentry, an effect the high price probably had

⁸⁷ Anderson, *Mahogany*, 19, 43.

⁸⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8.

⁸⁹ Anderson, *Mahogany*, 250.

⁹⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823 August-December, Box 3, Folder 16.

⁹¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1824 (August-December) Box 4, Folder 2.

⁹² Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11.

⁹³ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 339.

regardless. According to Bushman, “aristocratic dress was traditionally characterized by smoothness” and silk “linked smooth fabric with well-finished personal qualities.”⁹⁴

Yet as Joanna Cohen argues, many people in the Early Republic shared anxiety about the economic dependence that could result from the consumption of luxurious items. As Cohen states, “Colonial elites including the lesser gentry and the professionals of American society, understood that the correct display of luxury goods could ensure access to networks of political and commercial power, prosperous alliances, and the enjoyments of genteel society.” However, during the Early Republic, tension developed between the value placed on “consumer liberties” and the feared connection “between economic dependence and the collapse of their republican experiment.” According to Cohen, by the end of the Early Republic, most of society concluded “that American citizens are free to consume without being asked to restrict their choice or alter their desires, that indulging in the world of goods is a positive civic good.”⁹⁵ The society of the Second Church seems to have widely accepted this view by the early 1820s as purchases of luxury goods increased exponentially. In addition to the silk curtains and Venetian blinds mentioned earlier, velvet binding, damask cloth, silk fringe, and cushions were also purchased and carpet installed in the meeting house in 1823.⁹⁶ In 1832, fourteen sets of window blinds were purchased and painted at a cost of \$92.75 along with silk damask curtains for \$285.00.⁹⁷ In 1837, even though the nation was in the midst of an economic panic, the committee authorized purchase of new carpets and approved alteration of curtains in addition to painting the galleries.

⁹⁴ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 71-72.

⁹⁵ Joanna Cohen, *Luxurious Citizens: The Politics of Consumption in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 2-3, 19, 32-35.

⁹⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1821, Box 3, Folder 13, General Accounts 1823 January-July, Box 3, Folder 15, General Accounts 1823 August-December, Box 3, Folder 16.

⁹⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1832, (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11.

Debt increased to almost \$800 in 1839 and the society was forced to collect subscriptions to pay it off, yet another instance in which the society could not manage variable costs.⁹⁸

In order to reduce expenditures associated with repairs or upgrades the society attempted to reuse what materials they could and sell what they could not. When the steeple of the Second Church needed to be replaced in 1823, the society contracted with Levi Whitcomb to remove the old structure and agreed he could keep any of the wood that could not be used in building the new tower. However, the society requested that Whitcomb give all “Iron Copper & Lead” as well as “the weather cock” to the committee.⁹⁹ When major repairs were undertaken in 1832 the committee approved the sale of “the Gallery Curtains” and all other materials.¹⁰⁰

Sounds were as important as sight in churches during the antebellum period and music proved to be a costly expense. As scholar William L. Hooper notes, music in colonial New England churches was fairly simple as Puritans believed instrumental accompaniment “resembled ‘popery’” and singing was generally limited to psalmody by the congregation. Eighteenth century singing appears to have been “unemotional” and without proper direction. Congregants sung in various keys and tempos with little harmonizing. By the late eighteenth-century, Congregational and Unitarian attitudes toward religious music changed significantly, partly as a result of hymns utilized by Methodists which incorporated popular music. As Edward Dickinson notes in his *Music In The History Of The Church*, John Wesley, the leader of Methodism in England, directed singing so it “enjoined accuracy in notes and time, heartiness, moderation, unanimity, and spiritual as with the aim of pleasing God rather than one’s self.” While

⁹⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1837, May 2, 1838, May 20, 1839, September 23, 1838, 168-174.

⁹⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, June 1, 1823, 52-53.

¹⁰⁰ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 2, 1833, 143.

Dickinson noted that Congregational music lacks “the hymn-singing enthusiasm” of the Methodists, he pointed toward a shift toward popular music and “the growth of higher standards of taste in religious verse and music.”¹⁰¹

As the composition of music changed, religious societies also began establishing choirs by 1800, in an attempt to improve singing through direction.¹⁰² In the beginning of the Early Republic the society of the Second Church paid individual singers for their services, such as Sullivan Ball and later James Coolidge who received a quarterly salary from 1805-1810 amounting to \$125 annually.¹⁰³ By 1812 a singing society was established at a cost of \$120 per year but increased to \$150 the following year.¹⁰⁴ A choir director was hired in 1822 and by 1824 had an annual salary of \$250.¹⁰⁵ Hymnals were also purchased, for the choir only. Two dozen of “Belknap’s Psalms” were purchased in 1817 at a cost of \$15 and in 1821 two dozen “Village Harmony” books were bought. Hymnals were purchased for the choir roughly every two to three years. In 1840, the choir was disbanded and 110 copies of the “Social Hymn Book” were

¹⁰¹ Edward Dickinson, *Music In The History Of The Western Church With An Introduction On Religious Music Among Primitive And Ancient Peoples*, (New York, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1902), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2020, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Music_in_the_History_of_the_Western_Chur/qAAAtAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=church+music+history&printsec=frontcover, 378-380, 385.

¹⁰² William L. Hooper, *Congregational Song in the Worship of the Church: Examining the Roots of American Traditions*, (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2020), 190-191, 199.

¹⁰³ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1805-1810.

¹⁰⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1812-1813.

¹⁰⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2.

purchased for parishioners at a cost of \$45.40, an expense far cheaper than maintaining a choir.¹⁰⁶

Many of the shifts in Congregational and Unitarian music can likely be attributed as a form of denominational competition. Religious scholar Nathan O. Hatch has documented the rise of religious folk music among Methodists, Baptists, black churches, Mormons, and Adventists, from 1780-1830. The timing of these dissenting sects and changes in Unitarian and Congregational music is more than a coincidence, particularly as the first wave of religious folk music originated in New England in the second half of the eighteenth-century. Songs of dissenting sects were “set to rousing popular music,” and were easy to remember. Spontaneity in music was encouraged and ordinary people became active in composing religious music. Hatch argues that “official literary hymns had difficulty competing with lively gospel music” which offered a wide appeal.¹⁰⁷ For Congregationalists and Unitarians to continue to attract converts, music needed to be upgraded in the form of new hymns, choirs, and instrumental accompaniment.

Prior to the Early Republic churches sometimes utilized pitch pipes and tuning forks to regulate pitch but bass viols, also known as violoncellos were “the grand entering-wedge that opened that way for all other instruments.”¹⁰⁸ In 1810, the society of the Second Church hired

¹⁰⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1817, Box 3, Folder 9, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, Box 4, Folder 11, 1840. See receipts for 1806-1840.

¹⁰⁷ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989), 146-147, 150-153, 160.

¹⁰⁸ Nathaniel D. Gould, *History Of Church Music In America; Treating Of Its Peculiarities At Different Periods; Its Legitimate Use And Its Abuse; With Criticisms, Cursory Remarks And Notices Related to Composers, Teachers, Schools, Choirs, Societies, Conventions, Books, Etc.*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Gould and Lincoln, 1853), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2020,

someone to play the bass viol at a cost of \$40 annually but this was a short-lived expense only lasting until 1814. Occasionally, broken strings added to this cost as well at one dollar per string.¹⁰⁹ The bass viol was adequate but an organ was the real sign of extravagance.¹¹⁰

As mentioned in Chapter Two, few churches had organs in the early 1800s. Writing in 1853, Nathaniel Gould noted that the first organs in Boston were “one of the principal curiosities of the city.”¹¹¹ Where a bass viol cost \$35 with a case and bow in 1817, an organ in 1822 cost \$2000.¹¹² As Hooper notes, prior to 1800 organs were rarely found in churches in New England due to theological opposition. Later, expense proved the major obstacle.¹¹³ Of course, the purchase of an organ required paying the salary of an organ blower and an organist and tuning the organ. An organist was hired in 1823 initially at a salary of \$200 annually but increased to \$300 annually in 1825.¹¹⁴ It is likely that the high salary was due to the shortage of competent organists.¹¹⁵ The organ blower usually received a salary of \$12 annually and tuning of the organ cost between \$15 and \$25.¹¹⁶

As mentioned earlier the choir master Daniel Newhall received an annual salary of \$250. The organist, Silas Allen received \$300. Ann Woodward was also employed in the singing

https://www.google.com/books/edition/History_of_Church_Music_in_America/KyQQAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, 170.

¹⁰⁹ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1810-1814.

¹¹⁰ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 339.

¹¹¹ Gould, *History Of Church Music In America*, 178.

¹¹² Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1817, Box 3, Folder 9, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14.

¹¹³ Hooper, *Congregational Song in the Worship of the Church*, 199.

¹¹⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823, Box 3, Folder 15, 1825, Box 4, Folder 3.

¹¹⁵ Gould, *History Of Church Music In America*, 180.

¹¹⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832, Box 4, Folder 10.

department yet her salary was far less, initially set at \$100 a year in 1824 and increased to \$150 in 1826. Woodward was the only female regularly employed by the church until at least 1832 and the religious society apparently held to contemporary societal standards that women did not need to be paid as much as men.¹¹⁷ In his study of the working class in Baltimore, Seth Rockman notes that female “wages were fixed at sub-subsistence levels” due to a “presumed dependence on a male provider.”¹¹⁸

From 1810-1812, weekly expenses for music accounted for less than nine percent of expenditures.¹¹⁹ Yet by 1837 the total spent on music including the salary of the organist and several singers was a staggering \$915.00 representing roughly 25% of the expenditures for that year.¹²⁰ After paying off their debt the same year, the treasurer emphasized the importance of balancing expenditures with income and proprietors discussed the possibility of a volunteer choir as a measure to reduce expenditures. A voluntary singing choir was established successfully by April 28, 1841.¹²¹

If music is considered a luxury and is added to the expense of silk curtains, carpeting, and blinds as discussed earlier, one can see the growing impact on the society’s annual budget. Music and luxury items represented less than 5% of the budget from 1804-1805. From 1810-1812 they increased to 9.74% and by 1822-1824 expenditures on music and luxury items accounted for an 28.30% of the budget on average. Of course the numbers for 1822-1824 are

¹¹⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1824, (June-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1826, Box 4, Folder 4.

¹¹⁸ Rockman, *Scraping By*, 133.

¹¹⁹ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

¹²⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1837, Box 5, Folder 4; Treasurer Records 1832-1895, Vol. 33, 50-58.

¹²¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 1, 1839, May 5, 1839, April 28, 1841, 178-181, 194-195.

inflated due to the purchase of the organ, but even from 1830-1832 expenditures remained high at 17.52%. What can be concluded from these numbers is that the society spent liberally on unnecessary items beginning primarily in the 1820s and lasting into the 1830s. Although they tried to reduce costs on music in the 1840s, they were simply not in a favorable position to build an extravagant new building in part because they had spent beyond their means in the previous decades.¹²² “Indulging in the world of goods” could certainly lead to economic dependence. The society of the Second Church painfully reckoned with that fact by the mid-1840s.

The library was perhaps another unnecessary expenditure but certainly one which contributed to the society’s sense of sophistication. Beginning in 1824, ten dollars a year was allotted to purchase books for the parish library.¹²³ Occasionally, large quantities of books were purchased, such as in 1809 when the society spent \$64.46 ¹/₆ to acquire books such as the *Guide to Eternal Happiness* by Reverend Jeremy Taylor for the sum of one dollar. The society also purchased *New England’s Memorial*, by Nathaniel Morton, which told the narrative of God’s providence in the establishment of Plymouth Colony and was originally published in 1669. A survey of the books purchased that year reveals that although all were religious in nature, there existed a variety of memoirs, sermons, lectures, biographies, and even books aimed at children.¹²⁴ The society also purchased labels for the library books and paid to have a desk built for the librarian.

¹²² Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, 1841 Box 5, Folder 8, 1842, Box 5, Folder 9, 1843, Box 5, Folder 10, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

¹²³ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1824.

¹²⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1810, Box 3, Folder 5.

The labels were deemed necessary to help ensure that books borrowed by congregants were returned. Additionally, paper was purchased for use in the library and three hundred copies of the library catalogue were printed at a cost of \$11.00.¹²⁵ Another substantial purchase of books was made in 1827 at a cost of \$83.05 ½.¹²⁶ In 1831, the society purchased another 272 books for \$154.53.¹²⁷

In addition to structural repairs, purchases to improve aesthetics, the establishment of a library and the addition of music, the society of the Second Church also made technological upgrades for comfort. The Second Church initially relied on candles for lighting. In 1809, the society reimbursed the sexton for fifty candles, at a little over sixteen cents apiece.¹²⁸ The cost of candles remained fairly constant and prior to 1812 never accounted for more than one percent of the budget.¹²⁹ Candlesticks sometimes required repair or replacement, which was an additional cost, fixing “Seven Brass Candlesticks” cost the society \$1.62 in 1810.¹³⁰ The average annual cost for candles and candlesticks from 1809-1818 was approximately \$20.30.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2.

¹²⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1827, Box 4, Folder 5.

¹²⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9; Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, May 1822, 14-15.

¹²⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1809, Box 3, Folder 4.

¹²⁹ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

¹³⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5.

¹³¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, General Accounts 1809, Box 3, Folder 4, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813 Box 3, Folder 6, 1814-1815, Box 3, Folder 7, 1816 Box 3, Folder 8, 1817, Box 3, Folder 9, 1818, Box 3, Folder 10.

When lamps and oil were used, the costs associated with lighting increased. Bills for lamps and oil first appeared in 1819 with the purchase of three lanterns and three lamps for \$5.10. Use of lamps necessitated the purchase of wicks, glass, as well as oil which ranged from one dollar to \$1.25 per gallon.¹³² Oil was likely either kerosene or whale oil. At least eighteen more lamps were purchased in 1820 from the New England Glass Company some of which were “cut to pattern” for a cost of \$27.00. The society also purchased a glass chandelier from the same company which was installed for a cost of \$495.¹³³ Bushman notes a study by William Thomas O’Dea in which O’Dea concludes that the technological innovations in lighting, such as chandeliers, developed less out of practical need and more from the desire for “entertainment and display.”¹³⁴ Gentility however, came at a cost as annual expenditures on lighting tripled from 1804-1805 to 1830-1832.¹³⁵ Although lamps likely cast a greater light, the cost was greater than candles due to charges for cleaning and replacing the glass. As Cowan noted, it was necessary to remove the soot from the glass daily.¹³⁶

By 1837 the society installed gas light fixtures in the meeting house and began purchasing gas from the Boston Gas Light Company. Historian Ruth Schwartz Cowan noted that “the first American company to manufacture inflammable gas (by controlled combustion of coal-hence

¹³² Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1819, Box 3, Folder 11.

¹³³ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1820, Box 3, Folder 12.

¹³⁴ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 126.

¹³⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, 1841 Box 5, Folder 8, 1842, Box 5, Folder 9, 1843, Box 5, Folder 10, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

¹³⁶ Cowan, *More Work For Mother*, 65.

‘coal gas’ was formed in Baltimore in 1816 and similar organizations appeared in other cities within a decade after that.”¹³⁷ Gas fixtures cost \$75.00 and from December 23, 1837 through April 1, 1838 the society used 1700 cubic feet of gas for which they were charged ½ cent per foot for a total of \$8.50. They also had to rent the meter at a cost of \$.50 quarterly. Gas usage tended to be higher from October to January, when daylight was shorter. From 1838 through 1841 the average cost of gas was \$24.50 annually. When the cost of gas fixtures were factored in, the overall annual cost was slightly less than using lamps fueled by oil to light the meeting house.¹³⁸

In addition to light, heating was another area in which the society made expenditures to increase comfort. Like most Americans in the beginning of the Early Republic, the society of the Second Church heated the building with wood burned in a fireplace. As Sean Patrick Adams notes however, fireplaces were incredibly inefficient and heated rooms unevenly. The price of wood was also high due to scarcity.¹³⁹ It appears that these factors may have prevented the society from using the fireplace all that often. Perhaps the cost of fuel outweighed the benefits of what little heat the fireplace would give off. In 1804-1805 and 1810-1812 the expenditures on heat amounted to less than one percent of the budget.¹⁴⁰ Although there was what Adams calls a “cultural preference” for fireplaces, prices of stoves began to drop after improvements in

¹³⁷ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work For Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology From the Open Hearth To the Microwave*, (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1985), 89.

¹³⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1837, Box 5, Folder 4, 1838, Box 5, Folder 5, 1839, Box 5, Folder 6, 1840, Box 5, Folder 7, 1841, Box 5, Folder 8.

¹³⁹ Adams, *Home Fires*, 125, 141, 146

¹⁴⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

transportation made the shipping costs of stove plates cheaper.¹⁴¹ Bushman notes that in church buildings “the coming of stoves after 1815 warmed an atmosphere that previously was mercilessly cold when temperatures dropped below freezing.”¹⁴² Stoves initially burned firewood and later coal. Both the use of stoves and the use of coal were changes which “spread from wealthy households to less affluent ones.” Both afforded a greater deal of “comfort” which as Adams explains “was a relatively new concept in the early nineteenth century, and in elite circles its rise merged with notions of upper-class respectability.”¹⁴³ Such comfort was embraced, as evident by the increased expenditures on stoves, grates, and coal. From 1804-1805 to 1830-1832 the percentage of the budget for heat was more than quadrupled.¹⁴⁴ Fire fueled by coal was threaded with the silk curtains, the organ, the mahogany lamp stands, and the Venetian blinds to indicate the status of the society’s proprietors.

Other variable costs the society struggled to manage included those associated with operational expenses. The more the religious society functioned as a corporation, and less an institution for the common good, the more costs rose. Costs associated with printing expanded beyond the need for ordinations. The society had to pay to print tax bills and bought multiple quires (sheets of paper) to use as receipts.¹⁴⁵ By 1821 the society was paying to have tax bills

¹⁴¹ Adams, *Home Fires*, 555, 565.

¹⁴² Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 339.

¹⁴³ Adams, *Home Fires*, 2014, 807, 984.

¹⁴⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

¹⁴⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1819, Box 3, Folder 11.

printed and in 1822 they paid to have labels printed for the library books.¹⁴⁶ By 1823 notifications for proprietor meetings were printed each year as well.¹⁴⁷ The society also began printing delinquent notices for unpaid pew taxes by 1832.¹⁴⁸ Each time bylaws or pew deeds were altered it was necessary to reprint the revised versions. When pews were renumbered and auctioned in 1823, new deeds were printed at a cost of \$7.22, a week's worth of wages for a manual laborer.¹⁴⁹ In May 1840, the clerk was authorized to obtain five hundred blank pew deeds, half of which were to be bound in a volume, as well as two hundred copies of the recently altered bylaws to be given to each proprietor. Printing of the revised charters and bylaws that same year cost \$27.50.¹⁵⁰

Some of the above mentioned costs were surely necessary regardless of whether the society functioned as a corporation for private interests or for the common good. For example, paper to use for receipts or labels for the library books were likely essential for the basic functions of the society. However, if the church was funded primarily by voluntary contribution rather than pew rents, printing tax bills would have been unnecessary. Similarly, as will be detailed in Chapter Six, pew deeds, charters, and by-laws were frequently revised to address collection of pew taxes and the voting rights conferred by pew ownership. Such revisions necessitated reprinting and distribution to all proprietors.

¹⁴⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1821, Box 3, Folder 13, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14.

¹⁴⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823, Box 3, Folder 15.

¹⁴⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1832, Box 4, Folder 10.

¹⁴⁹ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823, Box 3, Folder 15.

¹⁵⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1840, Box 5, Folder 7; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 4, 1840, 193.

The society also began to pay the Treasurer whose responsibilities likely increased during the Early Republic. From 1825 through 1828, the society of the Second Church tried to provide Treasurer James Burditt \$100 each year although he continually declined this offer. Unwilling to completely accept Burditt's altruism, in 1828 the society approved a purchase of plate not to exceed \$100 in recognition of his services.¹⁵¹ Eventually, beginning in 1833, the Treasurer was paid a salary of \$100 annually.¹⁵²

Other costs associated with the operations of the corporation included advertising for pews sold at auction. Auctioneers were typically paid a fee to advertise as well as a commission on pews sold.¹⁵³ Sometimes, the society oversaw the advertising, such as in 1825 when they paid to advertise in several papers and had nine hundred advertisements (presumably flyers to pass out) printed for a total cost of six dollars.¹⁵⁴ The society also occasionally paid to advertise in newspapers such as in 1823 when they paid for ads in at least four newspapers soliciting for proposals to build a new steeple. Ads ran between \$1.50 and \$4.25.¹⁵⁵ The society also purchased record books, such as those needed to keep track of tax collection and a "Black Leather Trunk for the Treasurer" with a "Brass Plate & Engraving" as well as a lock.¹⁵⁶

The corporation also sought legal counsel in order to protect its investments and collect its debts. In 1811, the society commissioned Peter Thatcher to collect unpaid pew taxes from James

¹⁵¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1825, May 8, 1825, May 3, 1827, May 1, 1828, May 4, 1828, 80-81, 87, 90.

¹⁵² Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 12, 1833, 144.

¹⁵³ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1820, Box 3, Folder 12, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14.

¹⁵⁴ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1825, Box 4, Folder 3.

¹⁵⁵ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15.

¹⁵⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1825, Box 4, Folder 3.

Washburn. Thatcher was successful in collecting \$173.09 from Washburn and charged the society a commission fee of \$4.32 on the collected amount and another \$5 for services rendered in preparing for a lawsuit.¹⁵⁷ In 1826, the Standing Committee paid an attorney \$10.00 for “examining records and by laws” and for “Consultation & advice on power of corporation To assess & collect taxes in a particular mode.”¹⁵⁸ As the religious society was dissolving due to debt in 1849, the Standing Committee and the treasurer were authorized to seek legal counsel as necessary. Additionally, unpaid demands were turned over to an attorney for collection.¹⁵⁹

Expenses which were associated with bookkeeping, printing standardized forms, collecting taxes, obtaining legal counsel, advertising, and other corporate activities expanded greatly for the society of the Second Church during the Early Republic. From 1804-1805 such operating expenses were a negligible component of the budget, well below one percent. Yet by 1841-1843 these expenses grew to represent over seven percent of the budget.¹⁶⁰ Corporate efficiency certainly came with a cost, although some of this expense was likely recovered through increases in the collection of pew rents.

¹⁵⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5.

¹⁵⁸ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1826, Box 4, Folder 4.

¹⁵⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, October 4, 1849, May 4, 1850, August 23, 1850.

¹⁶⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer’s Records 1711-1968, Loose Papers 1718-1964, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15, 1823 (August-December), Box 3, Folder 16, 1824 (January-June), Box 4, Folder 1, 1824 (July-December), Box 4, Folder 2, 1830, Box 4, Folder 8, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9, 1832 (January-June) Box 4, Folder 10, 1832 (June-December), Box 4, Folder 11, 1841 Box 5, Folder 8, 1842, Box 5, Folder 9, 1843, Box 5, Folder 10, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26, Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19.

The society of the Second Church of Boston made little attempt to be frugal in the Early Republic. If the years where major repairs occurred, 1810, 1823-1824, and 1832, are exempted from calculation, one can still see a substantial increase in annual expenditures. From 1811-1818 expenditures increased over thirty percent from the previous decade. From 1825-1830, expenditures increased another seventy percent. The society did economize slightly from 1833-1843, decreasing costs a little less than four percent, no doubt due to the economic crisis caused by the Panic of 1837. Perhaps, had they continued on the path of retrenchment, the society might have avoided the disaster caused with the construction of the new building in 1845.¹⁶¹

Expenditures rose primarily due to variable costs which were not managed well by the corporation. As demonstrated above, the desire to project an air of gentility as well as the costs associated with operating a clockwork corporation (an organization which functioned with consistency and standardized business practices) were the primary causes of such expense. In many ways, projecting gentility was perceived as key to the corporation's success. Imbuing the society with a sense of sophistication was a form of advertising, one which could potentially draw in proprietors and provide the business endeavor with a greater sense of legitimacy.

Revenue

Variable costs and subsequent debt proved troublesome to religious societies. Revenue was mostly fixed and raising additional monies relied primarily on voluntarism; ultimately this

¹⁶¹ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book 1805-1842 Vol. 9A, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26; Treasurer Records 1806-1822 Vol. 27; Treasurer Account Book 1832-1895, Vol. 33; Treasurer's Records 1711-1968 Loose Papers 1718-1964 General Accounts 1718-1860, 1804-1805, Box 3, Folder 2, 1806-1808, Box 3, Folder 3, 1809, Box 3, Folder 4, 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813-Box 3, Folder 6, 1814-1815, Box 3, Folder 7, 1817, Box 3, Folder 9, 1819, Box 3, Folder 11, 1820, Box 3, Folder 12, 1821, Box 3, Folder 13, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14; Proprietor Records 1804-1845, Vol. 19. The Treasurer's annual reports from 1806-1822 have significant water damage. I arrived at the expenditures for these years by examining the proprietor records and the loose receipts from the Treasurer.

proved a poor business model for the society of the Second Church. The bulk of the society's revenue was derived through the sale of pews and associated taxes with a small portion coming from subscriptions, rent, occasional contributions, and investment dividends. Lacking any real diversification in revenue sources, societies thus found themselves in trouble when pew sales plummeted, proprietors failed to pay taxes or resisted a rate increase, or when pews were valued below what was necessary to cover expenses.

When variable costs increased the society had few options to increase revenue. Some societies derived revenue from glebe lands and less frequently from lotteries. As Noll explains, "the glebe system, in which land was provided to ministers or church agents as a source of revenue, was a direct carryover of old-world patterns. At first, many ministers farmed or managed the land allotted to them, and churches often rented out their additional properties for income from pasturage, woodcutting, and farming. Later, many of these holdings were sold."¹⁶² Glebe land was distributed by colonial governments. Lotteries were another method of fundraising, which Noll argues "appeared briefly in the early republic, but memory of which may have been suppressed." It is possible that disputes over winnings led churches to abolish this method of raising revenue.¹⁶³ The society of the Second Church had no glebe lands and there is no evidence of lotteries in the extant records.

One method the society of the Second Church did utilize was subscriptions which were generally collected for specific purposes. Noll writes, "some churches called for voluntary subscriptions, which represented an early form of the pledge system that has come into common use among many churches in the twentieth century."¹⁶⁴ When Lathrop died in 1816,

¹⁶² Noll, *God and Mammon*, 8-9.

¹⁶³ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 10.

¹⁶⁴ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 9.

subscriptions were collected to defray costs associated with his funeral discussed earlier.¹⁶⁵ Sometimes these lists were made public which as Noll argues, was “a means of encouraging (or shaming) all into doing their part.”¹⁶⁶ In 1822, a subscription was undertaken to purchase an organ and the Standing Committee agreed to match a subscription of \$500.¹⁶⁷ When the religious society faced significant debt in 1847, a committee was formed to collect subscriptions. They reported that some proprietors subscribed “liberal and handsome sums, others gave slight encouragement of something, and some to whom your committee had looked with hope declined positively to assist the cause.” Ultimately, the committee reported it would not be possible to collect even half of what was needed by subscription.¹⁶⁸

Contributions were another method of raising funds. Noll states, “Free-will offerings also became more important early in the national period, often as a supplement to pew rentals.”¹⁶⁹ In the beginning of the Early Republic, these offerings were collected weekly, along with pew taxes. In 1816 however, proprietors complained that “the Custom of Carrying round the Box to Collect the Taxes, has become disagreeable to many of the Proprietors.” As a result, the decision was made to collect taxes and additional contributions quarterly instead. Contributions appeared to have added \$800-\$1000 to the society’s revenue annually, however they disappear from the records beginning in 1829, only noted afterward for specific philanthropic causes.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps rising pew rents, discussed later, led to a decrease in voluntary donations.

¹⁶⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, January 14, 1816, 32.

¹⁶⁶ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 14, 1822, 46.

¹⁶⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, October 17, 1847.

¹⁶⁹ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Second Church Records, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26; Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27; Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31; Treasurer Account Book, 1832-1895, Vol. 33; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 8, 1816, 33.

The society functioned as a landlord and rented several properties which added to revenue. In 1811, rent from the building owned by the society and use of the yard amounted to \$3.54 weekly, which represented a little more than thirteen percent of the revenue.¹⁷¹ The society also rented the cellar of the meeting house with rent ranging between \$75 and \$100 annually during the Early Republic. The two properties owned on Ann Street and Hanover Street brought in \$120 each annually, although the revenue from Ann Street was earmarked for philanthropic purposes by the church as part of a trust. In 1827, the society voted to build a shop on the corner of the Hanover Street property, which was rented by the sexton, Henry Davis, at a rate of between \$40 and \$52 annually. When a vestry was built in 1830, the society rented that out as well to various groups including the city of Boston, the Northern Debating Society, and the Mutual Improvement Society. Rent of the vestry in 1835 produced an additional \$188 in revenue. However, revenue from rentals was not all profit given the cost of insurance, taxes, and repairs. For example, building the shop cost \$158.50 and between 1816 and 1825 at least \$169.54 was spent to repair the cellar including \$23.74 in 1816 alone to fix the locks on the cellar door. Given this, it can be safely estimated that rentals never accounted for more than ten percent of the society's annual revenue.¹⁷²

In some cases, religious societies drew revenue from financial investments. The society of the Second Church did not invest often but did own a federal bond (referred to in the records as "stock") which was sold in 1825. The society received seven percent interest on the bond which was bought from the government of the United States. It is unclear when the bond was

¹⁷¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 12, 1811, 23-24.

¹⁷² Second Church Records, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31; Treasurer Account Book, 1832-1895, Vol. 33; Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1816, Box 3, Folder 8; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1827, November 11, 1827, November 12, 1830, December 23, 1838, 175.

purchased. The value of the bond however was five hundred dollars, resulting in quarterly interest payments of \$8.75.¹⁷³ It is likely that the bond was sold to liquidate some of the debt acquired in 1823-1824 as a result of the alterations of the building.

Pews were always the primary source of income for the society of the Second Church. The pews were first sold, or sometimes rented, and taxed weekly and later quarterly. Noll notes, “The collection of annual rents for pews seems to have become the first widely used substitute for state subsidies once establishment came to an end.”¹⁷⁴ As expenditures rose throughout the Early Republic, many societies like that of the Second Church, eliminated free seating in favor of pews that would increase revenue. In 1817 the society replaced seats in the East Gallery with pews and in 1818 did the same for the West Gallery.¹⁷⁵ In 1823, only nine out of 143 pews were available as free seating.¹⁷⁶

Pew rents made up the bulk of the society’s revenue, usually totaling 87% or more.¹⁷⁷ When the society could not balance the books, taxes were adjusted to make up the difference. Rates were raised in 1789, 1791, 1795, 1806, 1811, 1815, 1823, and 1829.¹⁷⁸ A one time additional tax was also levied in 1826, 1828, 1831, and 1848. In 1826, an additional tax of 25% was levied in

¹⁷³ Second Church Records, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, January 13, 1825, 79.

¹⁷⁴ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 9.

¹⁷⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 6, 1817, January 25, 1818, 34, 37.

¹⁷⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol 31.

¹⁷⁷ Second Church Records, Second Church Records, Account Book, 1791-1806, Vol. 26; Treasurer Records, 1806-1822, Vol. 27; Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31; Treasurer Account Book, 1832-1895, Vol. 33; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 12, 1811, 23-24.

¹⁷⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, May 9, 1789, May 8, 1791, May 5, 1795; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 1806, May 7, 1811, May 12, 1811, May 2, 1815, July 10, 1823, January 11, 1829, 9-12, 21-25, 31, 38-39, 57-60, 104-105.

order to help the society liquidate its debts.¹⁷⁹ In 1827, when repairs were necessary for the building that the society rented out and for the church's furnace, the society voted once again to levy a tax in order to raise \$396.72.¹⁸⁰

When significant alterations to the building were made in 1823, the society of the Second Church paid for them in part by reappraising the pews. After alterations were completed all pews were sold at auction at the new valuation. Prior to 1823, pews ranged from \$30 to \$280. Those same pews were valued after 1823 from \$120 to \$280. At auction, former proprietors were given first preference although they paid a fee to be able to bid on the pew of their choice. The value of their former pew was deducted from their current pew and the difference paid in addition to the aforementioned fee. Bids for pews ranged from \$10 to \$54.¹⁸¹

The majority of proprietors had to pay for the new pew, whether because it was valued at a higher rate or for the fee to bid on their choice. The average paid for the eighty-one pews or half-pews in 1823 by former owners, above the initial cost of the pew was \$61.94. Even if the value of the pew did not change, which was true for at least eighteen pews, proprietors generally paid a fee to bid and acquire the pew of their choice. In at least three cases, new pews were valued less than the old pews, but after accounting for bids only three pew owners received a refund. The society paid Gedney King \$37, Charles Brown \$8, and Samuel Parker \$55. Pews

¹⁷⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 1, 1826, November 11, 1827, November 13, 1831, 84, 89, 130; Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, March 28, 1848.

¹⁸⁰ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 11, 1827, 89.

¹⁸¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 6, 1823, 65; Pew Deeds, 1812-1823, Vol. 28, Pew Deeds, 1823-1828, Vol. 29, Pew Deeds, Vol. 30, 1828-1840, Pew Deeds A-F, Box 9 Folders 5-16, Pew Deeds G-N, Box 10, Pew Deeds P-W, Box 11.

were also added to the North and South Galleries which brought in an additional \$1720 in sales.¹⁸²

Of course, higher valuations meant higher taxes. Pew appraisals seem to have been highly subjective. Pews in the same general location were valued similarly but there is no apparent formula for determining how location correlated to value. Bylaws in 1824 for the Second Church society include a vague proviso that, “all taxes for the support of Public Worship, and other incidental charges, and all assessments for repairs and alterations of the Meeting House shall be apportioned by a vote per centum on the relative value of the Pew, regard being had to their situation and convenience.” The Standing Committee, officers elected annually by proprietors, were deemed “permanent assessors of taxes.”¹⁸³ It appears that pew values may have been artificially inflated in 1823, in part because the pew values were completely open to interpretation. Assessors were likely motivated to increase the value of pews beyond their actual worth to pay for the costly repairs and alterations. What I am calling a “pew bubble” developed as reflected in declining pew sale prices after 1823 which never recovered during the Early Republic. Many deeds simply recorded the sale price of private transactions as one dollar, likely the cost of the transfer of the deed paid to the society rather than the sale price. However, the deeds that did record the sale price are instructive and serve as evidence that the values in 1823 were artificially high. For example, pew number eight was valued at \$200 in 1823 but sold for \$125 in 1830. Likewise, pew number thirty-seven was valued at \$70 in 1819 but sold for \$19 in

¹⁸² Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 10, 1823, 57-60; Pew Deeds, 1812-1823, Vol. 28, Pew Deeds, 1823-1828, Vol. 29, Pew Deeds, Vol. 30, 1828-1840, Pew Deeds A-F, Box 9 Folders 5-16, Pew Deeds G-N, Box 10, Pew Deeds P-W, Box 11.

¹⁸³ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 76.

1834. Pew number forty-five was valued at \$200 but sold for \$50 in 1844. Of all the sale amounts recorded after 1823, none reflect an increase in value.¹⁸⁴

Interestingly, the range of pew values and tax rates seemed to correlate with the widening economic gap in society. In his study of four of the largest cities in America during the Early Republic, historian Edward Pessen found evidence of significant stratification. In Boston, Pessen noted that in 1771 the wealthiest three percent owned thirty-four percent of the property. This gap widened by 1848 when the top four percent owned sixty-four percent of the property.¹⁸⁵ As society became more stratified throughout the Early Republic so did pew values. In 1806, pew taxes ranged from \$14.56 to \$21.84 annually, a difference of \$7.28 in taxes. In 1811, pew rates ranged from \$18.20-\$26.00, a difference of \$7.80.¹⁸⁶ By 1822, the difference between the highest and lowest taxes was \$17.20, by 1824, the difference increased again to \$20.80. In 1827 the difference was \$21.84 and by 1842, pew rates had a range of \$24.02 annually.¹⁸⁷ Essentially, the span between the highest and lowest pew rate from 1806-1842 more than tripled.

The society often had trouble collecting taxes on pews on time or at all but this was not exceptional. In their study of the First Church in Albany, New York, a Dutch Reformed Church, scholars Robin Klay and John Lunn argue that “it is clear that both the church’s operating budget and its facilities were strongly affected by changes in the local and national economy, such as

¹⁸⁴ Second Church Records, Pew Deeds, 1795-1822 Vol. 12B, Pew Deeds 1812-1823, Vol. 28, Pew Deeds 1823-1828, Vol. 29, Pew Deeds 1828-1840, Vol. 30, Pew Deeds, A-F, Box 9, Folders 5-16, Pew Deeds, G-N, Box 10, Pew Deeds, P-W, Box 11.

¹⁸⁵ Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class, and Power: America Before The Civil War*, (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1973), 32, 39.

¹⁸⁶ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 1806, May 12, 1811, 11-12, 23-24.

¹⁸⁷ Second Church Records, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31, Pew Accounts, 1840-1844, Box 8 Folder 11.

population growth, expanding business, depressions, and inflation.”¹⁸⁸ In 1810, the records of the society of the Second Church noted \$66.77 overdue from persons either deceased or moved away.¹⁸⁹ Beginning in 1829, the society paid sexton Henry Davis a commission of two percent on all taxes he collected, likely an incentive to increase collections. Prior to 1829 Davis was paid a flat fee for his services. Of note is that Davis’s commission was increased to 3% during the economic crisis caused by the Panic of 1837.¹⁹⁰ Klay and Lunn note that for the First Church in Albany, from 1834 and 1837 “income from pew rents only doubled when the rate increased threefold, [leading] to the conclusion that the national economic crisis made it difficult to collect the full increase in rental.”¹⁹¹ The same proved to be true in the case of the Second Church, uncollected taxes amounted to \$537.52 in 1842 and \$479.59 in 1843. By 1844 the records noted that one hundred dollars were borrowed, “whereas, the proprietors of pews have been less punctual than usual in the payment of their taxes, and whereas the Treasurer has been obliged to negotiate[sic] a loan of One Hundred Dollars to enable him to meet the claims.”¹⁹²

As pew rents represented the majority of the society’s revenue, pew deeds and bylaws became increasingly scrutinized particularly when annual expenditures outpaced revenue. These documents were occasionally altered in order to incentivize payment of taxes on time. In 1812, facing a deficit, the society approved an alteration of the pew deeds, noting “some

¹⁸⁸ Robin Klay and John Lunn, “Protestants and the American Economy in the Postcolonial Period: An Overview,” in *God and Mammon*, Noll ed., 49.

¹⁸⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 29, 1810, 20.

¹⁹⁰ Second Church Records, Treasurer Receipt Book, 1805-1842, Vol. 9 A. See receipts for 1828-1837.

¹⁹¹ Klay and Lunn, “Protestants and the American Economy in the Postcolonial Period,” in *God and Mammon*, Noll, ed., 46.

¹⁹² Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, April 27, 1842, April 26, 1843, August 6, 1844, 199-200, 202-203, 222-224.

Inconvenience...at former periods.”¹⁹³ Significant changes included an addition regarding unpaid taxes. The committee approved a provision which allowed for the pew to be seized and sold at auction for unpaid taxes when they amounted to half of the original purchase price. There is no evidence that seizures of pews sparked any discussion of moral or spiritual implications. After deducting unpaid taxes and associated charges the original proprietor would be refunded the balance.¹⁹⁴ Following several years of deficits, in 1822 the society changed the deed to authorize seizure of the pew when twelve months of taxes were unpaid (rather than a sum of half the purchase price).¹⁹⁵ In 1833, the society of the Second Church added an article to the bylaws which stated that unpaid taxes over three months would accrue interest at 5% retroactively applied to the date of the bill.¹⁹⁶ In 1840, the society was borrowing money to supply the pulpit in Robbins’s absence and revised pew deeds once again. Pew deeds were altered to require the purchase be paid in full within fifteen days instead of the previous forty.¹⁹⁷

Religious societies also made money by serving as de facto creditors for proprietors. In 1823, when the building was altered and pews were reappraised and auctioned, proprietors could give a note for up to half of the appraisal value. Records of the society of the Second Church stated that for purchases of pews, “The advance with one half the appraisal to be paid down, in Current money. The Balance to be Settled by a Note payable in six months in Boston money, on Interest. The deed to be given when the Note is paid. If the Note is not paid when due, the Pews to be

¹⁹³ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1812, 25.

¹⁹⁴ Second Church Records, Pew Deeds, B (Brown to Bryant), Box 9 Folder 10, October 9, 1793, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1812.

¹⁹⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 6, 1822.

¹⁹⁶ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 3, 1833, 153-158.

¹⁹⁷ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, September 8, 1839, May 4, 1840, 182, 193.

Sold Again & after paying the Note, & all charges, the Balance to be paid to the purchaser.”¹⁹⁸

The terms of nonpayment were thus skewed heavily in favor of the society.

Owning a pew in the Second Church in Boston certainly had its pecuniary perks. Pews functioned as investments which proprietors could profit from by selling on a secondary market. The society had the first right of refusal for pew sales, similar to a stock buyback.¹⁹⁹ If the society did not choose to purchase the pew, the owner was free to sell it to another individual and record the transfer with the treasurer of the society. David Stanwood purchased pew number thirty-eight in 1807 for \$40 and sold it five years later in 1812 to Joseph Steadmen for \$120. Likewise, Benjamin Coates bought pew number four for \$20 in 1801 and sold it in 1823 for \$200. Appreciation was not guaranteed however, sometimes pews sold for less than their purchase price. Silas Penniman purchased pew number ten in 1805 for \$100 and sold it to Edward Holbrook for \$80 in 1817. The purchase of a pew in the Early Republic, like any business venture, was always a risk.²⁰⁰

In addition to the possibility that a pew could later be sold for a profit, the purchase also gave buyers a voice in church affairs. Influence for members of the church was restricted to theological and philanthropic matters only and generally limited. Only those who owned a pew were considered members of the society and therefore entitled to a vote in the operating decisions of the church. At times, some proprietors argued individuals should have the deed in hand in order to vote.²⁰¹ Since the society paid the salary of the minister rather than the church,

¹⁹⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 13, 1823, 66.

¹⁹⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1812, 26-27.

²⁰⁰ Second Church Records, Pew Deeds, 1795-1822 Vol. 12B, Pew Deeds 1812-1823, Vol. 28, Pew Deeds 1823-1828, Vol. 29, Pew Deeds 1828-1840, Vol. 30, Pew Deeds, A-F, Box 9, Folders 5-16, Pew Deeds, G-N, Box 10, Pew Deeds, P-W, Box 11.

²⁰¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 20, 1833, 148.

the proprietors decided which minister to settle. As demonstrated in Chapter One, proprietors tended to ordain those ministers whose religious views aligned with the economic views of the proprietors. This form of self-government was entirely plutocratic, based solely on wealth and in essence often used to restrict the freedom of the pulpit.

Additionally, religious societies clearly preferred to hire proprietors for necessary services. In 1808, when the society began accepting bids to supply Lathrop with wood, they solicited bids from members only.²⁰² The society of the Second Church of Boston generally contracted with proprietors for work or purchased materials for them. Proprietors Jedidiah Lincoln and Levi Whitcomb were frequently hired to do carpentry and repair work on the meeting house as well as for lumber. The society contracted with Thomas Appleton, another proprietor for an organ at a cost of \$2000 in 1822. The silk curtains and rods purchased in 1823 were bought from proprietor Rufus Baxter Jr. who owned an “Upholstery & Paper Hangings” shop. Likewise, heating elements such as an “Iron Funnell” were bought from pew owner Thomas Dewhurst. Treasurer and proprietor James W. Burditt fulfilled the society’s printing needs.²⁰³ In his study of the “burned-over district” of Rochester, New York during the religious revivals led by Charles G. Finney in the early nineteenth century, scholar Paul E. Johnson noted a similar phenomenon. Johnson argued that church attendance was beneficial to employment, noting that businessmen dispensed patronage to “men seeking jobs and credit” based in part on “membership in a church

²⁰² Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1808, 15-16.

²⁰³ Second Church Records, Pew Deeds, 1823-1828, Vol. 29; Pew Deeds, A-F, Box 9, Folders 8B and 10, Pew Deeds, G-N, Box 10; Pew Deeds, P-W, Box 11; Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1809, Box 3, Folder 4 1810-1811, Box 3, Folder 5, 1812-1813, Box 3, Folder 6, 1819, Box 3, Folder 11, 1822, Box 3, Folder 14, 1823 (January-July), Box 3, Folder 15; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 1, 1828, 90.

and participation in its crusades.”²⁰⁴ Such was no less true for nonevangelical churches such as the Second Church.

Besides profiting from pews, economic connections, and influence over the minister, proprietors also made money functioning as de facto creditors to the society. Proprietors often lent money to societies to resolve their debt and charged interest for the service. In some cases, generous proprietors did not demand repayment and returned the note as a donation to the society although it does not appear this was a frequent occurrence.²⁰⁵ Most, however, profited from lending money to the society, including proprietors Gedney King, Enoch Patterson, George Sampson, and Thomas Boardman, all of whom charged interest on the notes given to them by the society.²⁰⁶ For the society, borrowing provided short term relief, but proved a financial burden in the long run as the loans needed to be repaid with interest. In some cases, the society obtained loans to pay other loans. On May 4, 1840, the treasurer was authorized to borrow \$200 at a maximum interest rate of six percent and to use the money to pay two previously held notes.²⁰⁷

Religious societies like the Second Church with no glebe land relied primarily on pew rentals for revenue which was problematic for several reasons. First, revenue was clearly not diversified which meant that a significant surrender of pews or failure to pay taxes resulted in debt. Secondly, in a normal business model, a rise in variable costs could be passed onto the consumers. In this case, the proprietors functioned as both the owners and the customers and

²⁰⁴ Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837*, (New York, New York: Hillard and Wang, 1978), 168.

²⁰⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, May 14, 1846, 148.

²⁰⁶ Second Church Records, Treasurer's Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1826, Box 4, Folder 4, 1827, Box 4, Folder 5, 1828, Box 4, Folder 6, 1831, Box 4, Folder 9; Pew Deeds A-F, Box 9, Folder 8B; Pew Deeds G-N, Box 10; Pew Deeds, P-W, Box 11.

²⁰⁷ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 4, 1840, 193.

rejected an increase in taxes when they deemed it against their personal interest, such as in 1836 when a tax hike on pews was determined to be “inexpedient.”²⁰⁸

The society proved unable to manage variable costs such as labor and material for repairs, funerals, and the obligation to supply the pulpit when the minister was ill. The corporation competed with other churches through improvements for both aesthetics and comfort which resulted in borrowing money from proprietors which in turn caused more debt in the form of accrued interest. The society of the Second Church was run much like a business, with operating expenses including salaried employees. The more they standardized operations the more costs expanded as they printed pew deeds and tax bills, sought legal counsel, and obtained insurance. Proprietors were motivated to run the society as a business as they economically benefited by obtaining work through the society, serving as creditors and supporting their economic interests through their influence on the church. Ultimately, this business model failed for the society of the Second Church, as their revenue was dependent on the income from pew sales and taxes. When pew sales faltered, proprietors failed to pay taxes or opposed a rate increase, or pews were undervalued, the society proved unable to meet its obligations.

The decision to construct a new edifice for the Second Church in Boston illustrates the difficulty religious societies faced in managing variable costs with fixed sources of revenue. The debate over whether to build a new church was contentious from the beginning. On October 10, 1843, the proprietors of the Second Church voted “that the best interests of this Society require, that we should put at rest this long agitated question of building a new house.” Although the

²⁰⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, September 4, 1836, 167.

initial decision was to rebuild in the current location on Hanover Street, proprietors from other areas of the city argued for a more central location and the building committee endeavored to investigate the feasibility of alternative sites.²⁰⁹ On December 20, 1843, the proprietors met to vote for construction on the present site and while nineteen proprietors assented, eighteen expressed disapproval. At the following meeting, John Snelling, who later dissolved his connection with the church, motioned to reconsider the vote approving construction at the current location. This time proxies were present, to vote for absent proprietors in their stead, and the motion to reconsider the building site was defeated forty-eight to thirty-one.²¹⁰ Although the vote resolved the dispute over the location site, it did not resolve the controversy over the new building which worsened over the course of the decade.

Proprietors approved plans for the new building, drawn by Minard Lafever, an architect from New York and author of several books highlighting the Greek revival style. As scholar Richard Bushman notes, after 1825 in New England, “a Greek Revival version” of church buildings emerged “with more elaborate classical columns and an entablature on the portico,” perhaps an effort to meet expectations of refinement.²¹¹ Subsequent to acceptance of the plans, the treasurer was authorized to borrow \$35,000 at a rate of no more than six percent interest. Additionally, the Building Committee was empowered “to sell all the fixtures and furniture...with the

²⁰⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 10, 1843, December 6, 1843, March 6, 1844, 210, 212, 216-218; Second Church Records, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, 1848, 20.

²¹⁰ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, December 20, 1843, December 26, 1843, 212-216.

²¹¹ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 338.

exception of the Vane, Bell, Clocks and Piano Forte” of the old building.²¹² By September 1845, the Building Committee advanced \$15,000 for construction costs and estimated that \$20,000 more was necessary for completion, still within the amount authorized by the proprietors in March 1844.²¹³ Later that month, the Treasurer “submitted a sealed document the appraisal of pews in the old house” and was asked to “furnish the committee on appraisals the gross amount of the old valuation.”²¹⁴ The society was responsible for compensating the owners of pews in the old house, but the fact that the report was sealed perhaps indicates fears the valuations of the pews would cause controversy. A public auction of the pews in the new building occurred on September 25, 1845, yet many remained unsold. This left the society in significant debt as the sale of pews was intended in part to finance the construction costs.²¹⁵ The net cost of the church was \$59,935.43 yet the Building Committee had only been authorized initially to spend \$35,000. After accounting for the purchase of an organ, iron fence, gas fixtures, cushions, carpeting and finance charges, as well as deducting the sale of old materials and the proceeds of the “Ladies Fair” the total cost was an astounding \$67,984.63.²¹⁶ Costs seem to have been significantly higher than for other church buildings constructed during that time in Boston; a survey of several other religious edifices reveals an average cost of under \$29,000.²¹⁷

²¹² Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, December 26, 1843, March 6, 1844, 214-218; Joan Marter, ed., *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art, Vol. 1 Aalto-Cutrone*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93.

²¹³ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, September 3, 1845.

²¹⁴ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, September 19, 1845.

²¹⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, September 19, 1845, February 3, 1846.

²¹⁶ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, April 29, 1846; Second Church Records, Standing Committee Records, 1845, Box 13, Folder 15, September 1845.

²¹⁷ John Corrigan, *Business of the Heart: Religion and Emotion in the Nineteenth Century*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002), 109.

In addition to the \$15,000 already advanced, the proprietors authorized the treasurer to borrow \$5000 payable in six months and \$25,000 payable in five years from Joseph Coolidge, secured by the property belonging to the corporation. It is unclear why the society did not secure a longer term, perhaps Coolidge was unwilling to have such a significant sum tied up for more than five years. As interest was due on the note for \$25,000 half yearly, servicing the debt of the society became a major expense.²¹⁸ Several means to resolve the increasing debt were proposed including drafting a list of proprietors willing to act as creditors, the formation of a committee to collect voluntary pledges, a proposal to sell unsold pews at auction, and the assessment of an additional tax on pews upward of 87% of the original valuation. Ultimately, few were willing to lend money to what was clearly a sinking enterprise and collecting the amount needed by subscription proved to be an “utter impossibility.”²¹⁹ When the Standing Committee made the decision to assess an 80% tax on the pews based on their original valuation at least twenty three proprietors were unwilling to pay and their pews were auctioned.²²⁰ With few prospects for addressing the worsening financial situation, the building was sold to First Methodist Episcopal Church on October 4, 1849.²²¹

The survival of the church seemed doomed from the beginning based on the controversy over the proposed location of the church yet other problems perpetuated the dissension. As noted earlier, the cost of construction greatly exceeded initial estimates and the new pews, the sale of which was meant to finance a majority of the cost, were significantly undervalued. The valuation of pews was based on \$50,000, rather than the actual net cost of \$67,984.63, due to the

²¹⁸ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, April 29, 1846.

²¹⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, June 14, 1846, September 20, 1846, May 2, 1847, October 1, 1847, October 17, 1847, October 24, 1847.

²²⁰ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, March 28, 1848.

²²¹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, September 6, 1849, October 4, 1849.

opinion that “had the appraisalment been made on the whole cost...it would of necessity make the Pews so costly, as to place them beyond the means of purchase of many valuable members.” One hundred and forty-six pews were thus valued between \$60 and \$650 depending on location.²²² On September 25, 1845 the Finance Committee determined that even if all the pews were sold, a debt of \$16,954.63 would remain.²²³ A statement likely made by Reverend Chandler Robbins, noted the general “dissatisfaction on account of the unauthorized expense incurred by the building committee, and also on account of the appraisalment of the pews at a price which even in case the whole had been sold would still have left a deficit of many thousand dollars.”²²⁴

The congregation ultimately divided over financial issues rather than theological ones. Specifically, the inability of the religious society to balance variable costs with revenue caused many proprietors to dissolve their connection with the society. Prior to construction in 1843, a report on the state of the church observed the general harmony within the congregation and noted a lack of dissension in regard to theological matters.²²⁵ Yet between July 13, 1844 and August 3, 1844 at least sixteen proprietors sold their pews and left the church.²²⁶ The Building Committee, in a report likely meant to extricate themselves from any negligence noted that “unfounded” fears of “individual liability...had the effect to determine some of the subscribers to refuse

²²² Second Church Records, Standing Committee Records, 1845, Box 13, Folder 15, September 1845.

²²³ Second Church Records, Standing Committee Records, 1845, Box 13, Folder 15, September 25, 1845.

²²⁴ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, 1848, 19-20.

²²⁵ Second Church Records, Standing Committee Records 1843, Box 13, Folder 13, April 26, 1843.

²²⁶ Second Church Records, Standing Committee Records, 1844, Box 13, Folder 14.

payment and signify their intention to secede.”²²⁷ Essentially, many proprietors had no interest in investing in a corporation they predicted would go bankrupt. Those who did purchase pews in September 1845 apparently had no idea the appraisal on the pews was far below the amount due on the house and when they learned of proposed taxes over 80% of the original valuation in 1848 many surrendered their pews which then became “unsaleable.”²²⁸ Arguments over the location of the new building as well as financial mismanagement, rather than religious disagreement, eventually led to the dissolution of the church.

Prior to the construction of the new edifice, Reverend Chandler Robbins tried to warn the proprietors to avoid building a church beyond their means. In a private letter to the society, Robbins wrote, “I can never look without approbation upon the too common practice of religious societies to vie with each other in building showy & extravagant places of worship....the more so, when, as is usually the case, the society to accomplish their purpose must run in debt.” Robbins also noted that “such churches drive out the poor & those too who are in moderate circumstances, & draw in the fashionable & others, whose motives in selecting their place of worship are anything but purely religious.”²²⁹ The proprietors paid little heed to Robbins’s letter. Later, Robbins appeared hypocritical when in an address to mark the beginning of construction of the new building, he publicly supported the proprietors’ plans. He noted,

But we ought to be aware that, in so important a matter as the building of a church in such a city as Boston,-a church, which is to stand for centuries, and be suited to the wants and tastes not only of ourselves but our children,-there are many most weighty considerations to be urged in favor of doing the work thoroughly, substantially, and beautifully. Whilst, on the one hand, we are

²²⁷ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1842-1848, Box 12, Folder 5, September 3, 1845.

²²⁸ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, 1848.

²²⁹ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1842-1848, Box 12, Folder 5, Letter 1842.

bound to avoid extravagance, we are equally obligated to avoid parsimony on the other.²³⁰

The Second Church society was not the only religious corporation to experience crushing debt in the 1840s. Reverend Chandler Robbins noted in 1849, “how many churches at the present time, were more or less involved in debt.”²³¹ Following the sale of their extravagant and costly new building in 1849, the remaining proprietors agreed to purchase a building from the Church of the Disciples, a Unitarian church, “provided it may be done without involving the present proprietors of the Second Church in any pecuniary liabilities.” At least two proprietors protested the decision “as irregular and illegal” but the purchase went through as planned and a bond with the Church of the Disciples was executed in February 1851.²³² The Second Church was able to achieve a sense of stability in 1854 by uniting with the congregation of the Church of the Savior in Bedford Street. Individuals from the Church of the Savior contributed \$20,000 and proprietors from the Second Church contributed \$20,000 either in notes (with interest) or cash in order to complete the purchase of the Church of the Disciples. They continued to be known as the Second Church with Robbins remaining at the pulpit.

Reflecting on the loss of the building in 1852, Robbins blamed a “want of unanimity” rather than economic dependence. Yet, he also noted that those proprietors who purchased pews and

²³⁰ Chandler Robbins, *Address Delivered At The Laying Of The Corner-Stone Of The Second Church, On Tuesday Morning, May 30, 1844*, (Boston, Massachusetts: I.R. Butts, 1844). Google Books, accessed January 10, 2021,

https://books.google.com/books?id=vj9NGbUC0qUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=address+delivered+at+the+laying+of+the+corner+stone+robbins&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiF-OjxifDnAhXQB80KHZH_DfIQ6AEwAHoECAMQA#v=onepage&q=address%20delivered%20at%20the%20laying%20of%20the%20corner%20stone%20robbins&f=false, 8.

²³¹ Second Church Records, Record Book, 1844-1899, Vol. 14, October 26, 1849, 19.

²³² Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, September 27, 1850, December 30, 1850, February 6, 1851.

paid the exorbitant tax assessment later, “did it, we know, at a pecuniary cost they were ill able to bear.” Robbins also argued, “how small the debt religion owes....to those who, to provide splendid accommodations...entangle her hallowed interests with pecuniary embarrassments and disputes, and connect her sacred name with obloquy, by involving it with debts, mortgages, and financial schemes.”²³³ Although Robbins was clearly aware of the role the consumption of luxury and economic dependence had in the loss of the building, he was unwilling to fully admit it. Perhaps he was concerned how society might judge his flock, given antebellum concerns over the connection between personal and national debt. Or perhaps he was embarrassed, realizing that “indulging in the world of goods” was not “a positive civic good” after all.²³⁴ Robbins was also likely wary of pointing fingers at the proprietors, given that they had the power to dismiss him. At least this time, the remaining proprietors appear to have learned a valuable financial lesson and appraised the pews at the full cost of the building.²³⁵

²³³ Chandler Robbins, *A History of the Second Church, Or Old North, In Boston. To Which Is Added, A History Of The New Brick Church. With Engravings*, (Boston, Massachusetts: John Wilson & Son, 1852), Google Books, accessed January 25, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_History_of_the_Second_Church_Or_Old_No/eYYRAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=a+history+of+the+second+church&printsec=frontcover, 156-157, 159.

²³⁴ Cohen, *Luxurious Citizens*, 32-35.

²³⁵ Second Church Records, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, December 24, 1853, December 25, 1853, March 16, 1854.

Table 1.1 Expenditures as a percentage of total budget

	<u>1804-05</u>	<u>1810-12</u>	<u>1822-24</u>	<u>1830-32</u>	<u>1841-42</u>
Supply of the pulpit	69.94	67.38	27.77	55.22	69.35
Heat	.84	.72	1.21	3.42	2.04
Light	.51	.95	1.10	1.71	.78
Music	4.39	8.37	25.37	12.66	8.96
Repairs/Alterations	7.80	13.09	34.53	12.77	2.79
Taxes	.19	.16	.06	.30	.38
Operational Expenses	.32	.49	.57	9.81	7.25
Sexton's Salary	4.24	3.77	1.85	3.07	3.42
Other	7.4	.38	1.69	.58	2.44
Luxury	.20	1.37	2.93	4.86	1.23
Insurance	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.69	1.82

*Luxury items were those deemed to be largely unnecessary and primarily used for decorative purposes. Examples include carpets, curtains, gilding of items such as the christening stand or the weathervane, blinds, mahogany furniture, chandeliers, and silk.

Chapter Six Religious Societies as Corporations in the Early Republic

In 1823, the owner of pew #58, in the Second Church of Boston, had every intention of keeping their front row seat in the broad aisle of the church, which served as a visual reminder of prominence in the social hierarchial order. Thomas Lewis, acting as agent for his widowed mother Sarah Lewis, wrote a letter to the Standing Committee of the Second Church Society on June 21, 1823 fiercely protesting proposed alterations. According to Lewis, his father purchased pew #58, “the largest and best pew” in 1795, at “the highest price” of twenty nine pounds.¹ Parishioners paid a one time purchase price and then annual taxes assessed on the value of the pew. It appears that in 1795, pew #58 was indeed the most expensive.² The proposed alterations, if approved, required a reappraisal of pews and a public auction with bids for a choice of seating. Lewis likely anticipated that retaining the best seat in the house would necessitate not only a significant bid for the choice, but also an additional amount for the probable increase in valuation.³

Lewis first contended the alterations were unnecessary given the building was “in perfect good repair.” Secondly, Lewis claimed that “the pews in the house were personal property,-and as it was not an Incorporated Society, the majority had not power, nor could not, take away the property, or rights, of the manoriety[sic].” Lewis also pointed to the pew deed and his history of paying taxes on the pew to the society as additional evidence to bolster his argument. Lewis only conceded to the alterations provided the society would furnish him with “an other[sic] pew

¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1822-1824, Box 12, Folder 2, June 21, 1823, Massachusetts Historical Collection, Boston, Massachusetts.

² Second Church Collection, Pew Deeds, 1795-1822, Vol. 12B.

³ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, Jun 16, 1823, July 6, 1823, October 29, 1823, November 6, 1823, 54-60, 65.

of equal goodness/free of Expence[sic] situated to the satisfaction of the subscriber.”

Interestingly, Lewis threatened to hold the members of the Standing Committee who signed the pew deed, personally liable for any “damage” given that they served at the time in a “private capacity.”⁴

Lewis was not the only proprietor to register discontent at the proposed alterations. David Stanwood, who purchased pew #60 for \$150 in the decade prior, stated in July of 1823, that he had “made my ideas so obvious on the subject of altering the meeting House & especially as I cannot consider myself any longer a proprietor.” Although a member of the Standing Committee, Stanwood was aggrieved enough to withdraw from the church.⁵ Stanwood was compensated for the valuation of his pew, \$280, which was then sold at auction to William Sturgis for the same.⁶

Pews caused consistent conflict during the Early Republic, largely due to valuations and subsequently assessed taxes. In the case of the Second Church of Boston, proprietors voted to apply for an Act of Incorporation just five months after receiving Stanwood’s letter. The Second Church obtained incorporated status on February 4, 1824.⁷ Incorporated status conferred upon the society the legal right to “hold and acquire real estate” and also gave power to the majority which Lewis contended they did not possess prior.

This chapter focuses on how religious societies, as distinct from churches or parishes, increasingly employed legal mechanisms and market instruments during the Early Republic to

⁴ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1822-1824, Box 12, Folder 2; Pew Deeds, Vol. 1795-1822, 12B.

⁵ Second Church Collection, Pew Deeds, 1812-1823, Vol. 28, Proprietor Records, 1822-1824, Box 12, Folder 2, July 22, 1823, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, May 5, 1823, 48-49.

⁶ Second Church Collection, Pew Deeds, 1823-1828, Vol. 29.

⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 10, 1823, May 6, 1824, July 24, 1824, 64-71, 76.

manage their affairs. Religious societies not only sought to become incorporated but produced various iterations of bylaws and deeds which were manipulated to benefit them according to circumstance. With legal status, they were able to sue and be sued and frequently sought legal counsel. Proprietors muddled through the legal quagmire created by charitable trusts and altered preservation accordingly. They embraced entrepreneurial behavior, entering into contracts, conducting audits, purchasing insurance, and inventorying property in order to mitigate risk. They sold and purchased property which they often leased or rented, putting them in the position of landlord. Religious societies also increasingly standardized their business practices, producing blank printed forms, utilizing double entry bookkeeping, and developing more consistent and logical methods of record keeping.

Legal scholar Morton Horwitz analyzed the legal changes in the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War and as historian Joyce Oldham Appleby notes, his analysis “detailed how the judiciary took the lead in shaping the law into an instrument of economic advancement cutting against the desires of most American men and women.”⁸ This chapter underscores earlier attempts by economic elites to preserve and expand their influence through their vested interest in religious corporations. To understand how capitalists exercised their power in the religious sphere in the Early Republic, historians must consider the pecuniary activities of religious societies as separate from the church body. Such studies are rare, as Mark A. Noll notes “even basic questions about the economic dimensions of the Protestant churches...remain

⁸ Joyce Oldham Appleby, “The Vexed Story of Capitalism Told by American Historians,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Spring 2001, Vol. 21, No. 1, 6. See also Morton Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law, 1780-1860*, (New York, New York: Harvard University Press, 1977). For a different view, see J. Willard Hurst, *Law and the Conditions of Freedom in Nineteenth-Century United States*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956). Hurst argues that individuals in the Early Republic employed legal mechanisms to enhance their economic liberty.

unanswered.”⁹ While focus on the ministers of respective churches, and analysis of their sermons and letters is useful, the practical workings of religious societies must also be considered. The socio-economic aspect of religion, often illuminates how American Protestants were confronting financial dilemmas during the Early Republic. Did they try to avoid becoming ensnared in capitalism, which Max Weber famously likened to “an iron cage,” or did they fervently embrace it? Or perhaps, like Weber, they simply realized capitalism was “the unalterable order of things.”¹⁰

Based on the language Unitarians and Congregationalists used to frame their arguments and the legal and financial mechanisms employed in daily operations, it can be concluded that in northern new England seaport towns those denominations were largely champions of economic modernization even when their ministers were not. Shareholders in religious societies embraced the market evolution, transition to an industrial economy, and capital accumulation which resulted in the promotion of individualism, ambition, and entrepreneurship. Evidence of Christain ethics and religious doctrine are largely nonexistent in the records of proprietor’s meetings and related correspondence. In essence, during the Early Republic, religious societies were private corporations, of a nature more akin to a for-profit business than a charitable public institution.

The rise of private corporations during the Early Republic is a notable phenomenon. As scholar Daniel Walker Howe explains, states increasingly conferred incorporated status on philanthropic, civic, and business organizations which needed to pool capital, among other

⁹ Mark A. Noll ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translate. Talcott Parsons, (New York, New York: Scribner), 1958, 181.

reasons.¹¹ Incorporation was initially reserved for nonprofit organizations, which included religious organizations.¹² Edward Buck notes that in Massachusetts, “prior to 1700 no acts were passed incorporating any literary, benevolent, or religious institution whatever, excepting Harvard College” yet after “1780 incorporations for every conceivable institution incidental to the church were granted freely.”¹³ Regardless of the type of corporation, Tamara Plankins Thorton, notes that the “legal foundation” of all corporations in the Early Republic was the same, “understood to in some way benefit the public good, a goal seen as compatible with and even promoted by private profit.”¹⁴ Religious societies were granted incorporated status based on the understanding that their business activities would improve the general welfare of the nascent country.

Yet despite what often seems the teleological rise of the corporation, it “was the focus of fierce political controversy in antebellum America.” Political parties often split on the debate over private corporations as “Democrats were quick to see the granting of special legal privileges by such charters as a source of both political corruption and economic inequality” and “Whigs argued that corporations were models of how commerce and virtue could be linked by involving

¹¹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation Of America, 1815, 1848*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 558.

¹² David Paul Nord, “Benevolent Capital: Financing Evangelical Book Publishing in Early Nineteenth-century America,” in *God and Mammon*, Mark A. Noll, ed., 149.

¹³ Edward Buck, *Massachusetts Ecclesiastical Law*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Gould and Lincoln, 1866). Google Books https://books.google.com/books?id=8qoOAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA249&dq=massachusetts+statutes+1786+parish&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj1o7y544roAhUSKqwKHZggDXQQ6AEwA3oECAYQAg#v=onepage&q=massachusetts%20statutes%201786%20parish&f=false, 117.

¹⁴ Tamara Plankins Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers: How a Nineteenth-Century Man of Business, Science, and the Sea Changed American Life*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 190.

citizens in mutual projects for the public good.”¹⁵ This chapter focuses on those denominations which tended to associate themselves with the Whig Party, including Congregationalists and Unitarians.¹⁶

Although Whigs likely characterized their religious societies as public corporations, given their equation of “commerce and virtue”, they were far more comparable to a private corporation. Whereas public corporations in the Early Republic were often designed to serve the common good, private corporations were formed to benefit individuals. Carl Zollman, argues that religious organizations cannot be public corporations due to separation of church and state established by the First Amendment. Zollman also notes that public corporations are “not created for any limited period and are “dissolved, not by an act of its own, but by the action of the state when its usefulness is considered to be at an end. Religious corporations, on the other hand, though they may in some states be created in perpetuity, are quite frequently incorporated for only limited periods.”¹⁷

Even contemporaneous legal scholars such as Justice Joseph Story, agreed that churches were private corporations, indicating perhaps a focus on personal gain. The decision of the Supreme Court in *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* in 1819 had significant impacts on the transformation of colonial institutions from mixed private-public into completely private establishments. Legal scholar Mark Douglas McGarvie, argues that the importance of the case was that it “expressed the Court’s perception of distinct realms of public and private action, and the role of the courts in

¹⁵ “Incorporating the Republic: The Corporation in Antebellum Political Culture,” *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 102, No. 8 (Jun., 1989), 1883, 1892-1893.

¹⁶ Noll, *God and Mammon*, 12; Daniel Walker Howe, “Charles Sellers, the Market Revolution, and the Shaping of Identity in Whig-Jacksonian America,” in *God and Mammon*, Noll ed., 56; Daniel Walker Howe, “Afterword,” in *God and Mammon*, Noll ed., 297.

¹⁷ Carl Zollman, “Nature of American Religious Corporations,” *Michigan Law Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Nov., 1915), 38, 42.

the protection of private action from public action.”¹⁸ As Thornton notes, Justice Joseph Story, in his opinion on the case, noted that the difference between private and public corporations was not their purpose but “the source of their capital stock.” Therefore, “municipal corporations-towns and cities-were public and everything else was private.” Religious societies, funded through individual contributions were thus considered private corporations.¹⁹

It is of great significance to view church societies as private corporations during the Early Republic. In her study of Nathaniel Bowditch, Tamara Plakins Thornton argues that “that if we are to understand the ways in which capitalist elites exerted and experienced their power, we should look for new perspectives on their entire range of enterprises.”²⁰ Historians might do well to consider religious societies, as private corporations, within the realm of capitalist enterprises during the Early Republic. Capitalist elites, as members of these societies, brought with them mercantile traditions and French Enlightenment ideals, transforming religious societies into highly impersonal bureaucracies which eschewed both Christian doctrine and personal associations.²¹ James Willard Hurst argues that charters for corporations began to extend beyond the “public-utility-type” in the 1830s.²² Thus, the practical workings of religious societies, as an example of corporations during the formative period of 1790-1830, are key to understanding syncretism between the religious and secular worlds, in the form of religious societies and corporations. Thornton notes that, in the Early Republic corporations “promoted the notion that their ways were as natural, immutable, and removed from human concerns as the

¹⁸ Mark Douglas McGarvie, *One Nation Under Law: America's Early Struggles to Separate Church and State*, (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 2005), 175.

¹⁹ Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 191.

²⁰ Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 253.

²¹ Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 253, 255.

²² James Willard Hurst, *The Legitimacy of the Business Corporation in the Law of the United States, 1780-1970*, (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 18.

solar system itself.”²³ Religious societies embodied this notion by infusing secular concerns with spiritual ones. Such syncretism ultimately *both* hastened the rise of the modern corporation and fundamentally altered the nature of religious societies and churches.

Elites in the Early Republic exercised power by forming corporations and becoming shareholders in those corporations. The first step in the transformation of a religious society into a corporation was to obtain a charter from the state legislature. Acts of Incorporation for religious societies varied between Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. Statutes often differed in regard to limits on annual income, legal power necessary to call a meeting, and at what point a pew could be sold for unpaid taxes.²⁴ Regardless of variations, all state statutes

²³ Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 3.

²⁴ For more information on the statutes of Maine regarding religious incorporation see Francis O. J. Smith, *Laws Of The State Of Maine, Volumes 1 and 2; With The Constitution Of The U. States And Of Said State, Prefixed. Also, Notes And References, Delineating the additions and modifications thereof, Which Have Been Enacted By The Legislature Of The State, From 1821 to 1834. To Which Are Appended, In Notes And Comments, A Full Synopsis Of the Decisions relating thereto, contained in the 17 volumes of Massachusetts Reports; 10 volumes Pickering’s Reports, and 7 volumes of Greenleaf’s Reports, Vol. II*, (Portland, Maine: Thomas Todd and Colman, Holden & Co.,) 1834. Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=UDIFAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA546&dq=francis+o+j+smith+laws+of+the+state+of+maine&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiNIJeu8b_oAhWHW80KHZ0BDHoQ6AEwAHoECAyQAg#v=onepage&q=parish&f=false, 704-710 and *Laws Of The State Of Maine, Vol. III, Published According To A Resolve Of The State, Passed March 30th, 1831*, (Portland, Maine: Thomas Todd, 1831), Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=-NNGAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA294&dq=public+acts+maine&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjoo6DiitvmAhVHUs0KHczBDwsQ6AEwA3oECAyQAg#v=onepage&q=parish&f=false, 134-135, 82-85. For information on New Hampshire statutes see *The Compiled Statutes Of The State Of New Hampshire: To Which Are Prefixed The Constitutions Of The United States And Of The State Of New Hampshire*, (Concord, New Hampshire: Butterfield & Hill), 1853, Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=8cFGAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA613&dq=new+hampshire+statutes+1840&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjNI_O2itvmAhVbOs0KHS

essentially defined religious corporations as “a legal person” and gave them the power to “own property, make contracts, borrow money, and file suit in court.”²⁵ It enabled them to “sue & be sued,” “hold and acquire real estate,” enter into contracts, and create bylaws which stipulated the method of tax collection and election of officers along with other measures necessary for maintaining day-to-day operations.²⁶ If a religious society desired to change its name a petition was made to the Legislature, such as in 1845 when the Second Church and Society changed its corporate name to “Second Church.”²⁷ As Carl Zollman notes, after re-incorporation “the new corporation, though it may have assumed a different name, will take the property of the old

[ibBQgQ6AEwAHoECAYQAg#v=onepage&q=church&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?ibBQgQ6AEwAHoECAYQAg#v=onepage&q=church&f=false), 367-370. For information on Massachusetts statutes see Edward Buck, *Massachusetts Ecclesiastical Law*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Gould and Lincoln, 1866), Google Books https://books.google.com/books?id=8qoOAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA249&dq=massachusetts+statutes+1786+parish&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj1o7y544roAhUSKqwKHZggDXQQ6AEwA3oECAYQAg#v=onepage&q=massachusetts%20statutes%201786%20parish&f=false, 249-252 and Horace Mann and Theron Metcalf, *The Revised Statutes Of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed November 4, 1835; To Which Are Subjoined, An Act In Amendment Thereof, And An Act Expressly To Repeal The Acts Which Are Consolidated Therein, Both Passes In February 1836; And To Which Are Prefixed, The Conditions Of The United States and of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Dutton & Wentworth, 1836), Google Books, https://books.google.com/books?id=UA5HAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+revised+statutes+of+the+commonwealth&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjQkJTQzMLoAhXTVc0KHVE7AqAQ6AEwAHoECAMQAg#v=onepage&q=the%20revised%20statutes%20of%20the%20commonwealth&f=false, 200-206. For information on the inconsistency in granting incorporated status to religious societies in New England during the Early Republic and its effect on dissenting sects see Shelby M. Balik, *Rally the Scattered Believers: Northern New England's Religious Geography*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014), and Zollman, “Nature of American Religious Corporations.” For more information on the contemporary legal debates regarding religious incorporation see John Witte Jr., *No Establishment of Religion: America's Original Contribution to Religious Liberty*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁵ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 558.

²⁶ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 6, 1824, 69-71.

²⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, January 26, 1845, 226; Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, February 21, 1845, 2.

corporation and assume all its obligations.”²⁸ A religious society could not therefore escape its liability simply by changing its name.

The timing for when some religious societies applied for incorporation is notable. Incorporated status was in some cases obtained as a legal solution to disputes among parishioners. As noted earlier, in June of 1823 the society of the Second Church of Boston approved alterations on the church building which included the construction of new galleries. These alterations immediately necessitated a reappraisal of pews and a public auction as well as a new iteration of pew deeds. Subsequent to these events, the society voted to apply to the Legislature for incorporation on November 10, 1823, an effort to ease management of finances.²⁹ The Act of Incorporation was obtained and read at the annual meeting of proprietors on May 6, 1824.³⁰

Incorporation granted religious societies the power to approve bylaws governing administration of the corporation.³¹ Bylaws were not inviolable and were often altered depending on circumstance, to serve the needs of the corporation. Following their incorporation in 1824, the religious society of the Second Church of Boston devised a set of bylaws which outlined election of officers, notification of meetings, possession of pews, powers of the Standing Committee, and procedures for managing the financial affairs of the corporation.³² Annually elected by the proprietors, the Standing Committee essentially served as officers of the corporation. On January 13, 1825, the Standing Committee made a slight alteration to the

²⁸ Zollman, “Nature of American Religious Corporations,” 43.

²⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records 1804-1845, Vol. 19, June 16, 1823, July 6, 1823, July 10, 1823, October 29, 1823, November 6, 1823, November 10, 1823, November 13, 1823, 54-66.

³⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 6, 1824, 69.

³¹ Mann and Metcalf, *The Revised Statutes Of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed November 4, 1835*, 201.

³² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 74-77.

bylaws, allowing for an announcement of proprietor meetings from the pulpit, with the clerk's entry in the records to preserve legality. This seemed to be largely for the purpose of convenience as previously the clerk had to leave written or printed notices either in the proprietor's pew or at their residence.³³

On November 3, 1833, the corporation again approved alteration of its bylaws. Among notable changes were an addendum to article three which allowed for meetings to be called by the Standing Committee or by five proprietors if they submitted the request in writing to the clerk. This may indicate that proprietors not on the Standing Committee felt a need to assert power. Changes in 1833 also included an addition to article five in order to improve the corporation's bottom line. The bylaws now allowed for interest to be charged at a rate of five percent on all taxes which remained unpaid after three months. Article six was also revised to remove the stipulation that the Standing Committee serve as permanent assessors of taxes. As there was no discussion of hiring a clerk to reduce the workload this was obviously an effort to incorporate a wider range of voices in determining tax rates. In the first nine years of its existence as a corporation, major alterations of bylaws focused on pews and related taxes, an indication of their ability to create conflict.³⁴

Bylaws were occasionally revised in order to comply with recent state legislation. On April 12, 1840, the Society of the Second Church of Boston voted to change the annual meeting to the "last Wednesday of April" (formerly set as the first Wednesday of May) in order to comply with

³³ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, January 13, 1825, 79.

³⁴ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 3, 1833, 153-158.

new legislation in Massachusetts. The revised bylaws were adopted and two hundred printed copies were made, with one copy distributed to each pew.³⁵

In August of 1844, the proprietors altered the bylaws once again, this time making changes to article one which outlined the composition of the Standing Committee. The proprietors voted to remove the two senior deacons of the church from the committee, perhaps an indication of the strife between the spiritual and secular concerns of the society resulting from the construction of a new edifice.³⁶ The bylaws were changed again just prior to occupying the new structure in 1845. Significant changes included an addition to article one requiring that the oldest member (in terms of years of service) of the Standing Committee resign each year if there were no other resignations. This obviously served a purpose similar to that of term limits in that it prevented individuals from amassing too much power within the corporation. Article nine was also revised to affirm the validity of tax assessments and to clarify that extra assessments would be determined by a set rate on the taxes.³⁷ The frequent revisions of bylaws indicates an increasing desire to protect both the property rights invested in pews and the political power associated with proprietorship.

In 1847, faced with increasing debt and conflict over proposed solutions, consideration was made of another alteration to the bylaws, this time requiring that any proposed tax be approved by a vote of proprietors.³⁸ It appears that although this was not formally adopted, proposed taxes were put to a vote by proprietors three times between October and November that year.

Eventually, however, the Standing Committee reasserted their power to assess taxes when the

³⁵ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, April 5, 1840, April 12, 1840, April 29, 1840, 182-193.

³⁶ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, August 6, 1844, 222-224.

³⁷ Second Church Society, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, September ?, 1845, 6.

³⁸ Second Church Society, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, April 28, 1847, May 2, 1847.

proprietors could not agree on a proposed rate. In March 1848 the Standing Committee authorized an assessment of a whopping eighty percent tax rate on the valuation of the pews to pay the corporation's debt. It is likely that many proprietors were unwilling or unable to pay as numerous pews were subsequently sold at auction.³⁹

The pecuniary difficulties of the corporation resulted in an unwillingness of individuals to serve in leadership capacity. Clearly, few desired to take on fiduciary responsibilities of the floundering institution which the records reflect in the declining of appointments. In April 1848, the bylaws were altered to allow for a Standing Committee of no less than two (whereas it had previously been composed of ten) and stipulated that three people now constituted a quorum.⁴⁰

The discussions about the incorporation of religious societies and alterations of their bylaws are instructive for what they include as well as what they leave out. Throughout the meeting records of the proprietors of the Second Church and Society of Boston, there is no evidence that Christian doctrine or values were a determining factor in decision making. In contrast, Methodists often voiced concern over such matters, even as they became entangled in them especially during the schism which occurred between Northern and Southern Methodists beginning in 1844 over abolitionism. Religious scholar Richard Carwardine notes that even though Methodists argued over financial interests during the schism, "there was within Methodism a continuing and pronounced strain of concern over the dissipating, enervating effects of wealth on church activity and moral integrity." Methodist ministers worried about the

³⁹ Second Church Society, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, October 24, 1847, October 31, 1847, November 7, 1847, March 28, 1848.

⁴⁰ Second Church Society, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, April 26, 1848, Standing Committee Records, 1845, Box 13, Folder 15, May 10, 1845, May 15, 1845.

effect of the business corporation on Christian morality.⁴¹ Additionally, Methodists worried about the effects of plutocracy, attacking the practice of pew rents because they believed it privileged the rich.⁴² It is unclear to what extent, if any, individual proprietors of the Second Church and Society of Boston wrestled with these moral contradictions but based on meeting minutes and other documents contained in the records, it is clear that the group never formally discussed it.

Bylaws stipulated how the officers of the corporation should be chosen and outlined their respective roles. Each religious society chose its own officers at the annual meeting of proprietors. Scholar David Keith Stott compares these officers or trustees “to directors of present-day corporations, trustees were managing officers responsible for the temporal affairs of the church.”⁴³ Generally, the moderator (chair) was chosen first, since he, in the absence of a Justice of the Peace, could administer the oath of office to the clerk according to the act of incorporation.⁴⁴ The clerk, who recorded the minutes of the meeting, was generally chosen next. When necessary, a clerk was chosen “pro tem,” the shortened version of the Latin phrase, *pro tempore*, indicating a temporary appointment to the office.⁴⁵ The Standing Committee, similar to a Board of Trustees, generally ranging from ten to fourteen members and often including the deacons, who were appointed by the church, was also chosen at the annual meetings. Bylaws generally stipulated that members of the Standing Committee other than the deacons be

⁴¹ Richard Carwardine, “Trauma in Methodism: Property, Church Schism, and Sectional Polarization in Antebellum America,” in *God and Mammon*, Noll, ed., 211.

⁴² Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 245.

⁴³ David Keith Stott, “Legal Insights into the Organization of the Church in 1830,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Conference Proceedings: Inquiry, Scholarship, and Learning and Teaching in Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Universities, (2010), 123-124.

⁴⁴ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 17, 1816, 2; Buck, *Massachusetts Ecclesiastical Law*, 251.

⁴⁵ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 17, 1816, 2.

proprietors.⁴⁶ This had the effect of limiting the bulk of directive power to those who had a financial interest in the corporation. Deacons were elected at church meetings rather than by the proprietors at society meetings.⁴⁷ Treasurers were also elected by vote of the proprietors at the annual meetings. In some cases, such as the Second Church of Boston, bylaws indicated that the office of treasurer and clerk could be held by the same individual.⁴⁸ There were apparently no guidelines as to what qualified one person to hold both offices. At the Second Church and Society in Boston, the office was sometimes combined in one person and at other times split with no recorded justification.⁴⁹ In an apparent attempt for legitimacy, committees were occasionally formed to collect and count the votes for the election of officers.⁵⁰ Once elected, the Standing Committee could appoint the sexton and individuals to fill vacancies on the Standing Committee until the following election.⁵¹

Only proprietors who owned a pew or a half-pew could vote at corporation meetings, another method to limit power to those who had financial ownership in the society. Proprietors received a number of votes proportionate to the number of pews they owned. Ownership of more pews resulted in more control over the corporation's (and by default the church's) affairs. In his study of class dimensions evident in Rhode Island churches in the Early Republic, Mark S. Schantz notes that, "especially among merchants, manufacturers, and master craftsmen, multiple pew ownership became a passion. In the early national period it was not uncommon for members of the merchant elite to own more than one pew." In this way, wealthy individuals were able to

⁴⁶ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 19, 1805, July 15, 1824, 6, 75.

⁴⁷ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, May 30, 1824, 19; Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 7, 1811, 21.

⁴⁸ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 75.

⁴⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 10, 1829, 117.

⁵⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1804, 2.

⁵¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 76-77.

“exert extensive personal control within the denominations they funded.” As demonstrated in Chapter One, such influence included control over the minister. Involvement in the corporation was thus based on “economic criteria for membership” rather than religious convictions.⁵²

Modern corporate voting is based on the proportion of shares, and religious societies in the Early Republic were likely a forerunner of this concept. Corporations in the Early Republic typically allowed each shareholder one vote, regardless of how significant their investment was. Religious societies were thus an anomaly in antebellum America, even within the business world, in that they afforded more control based on the number of pews an individual owned.⁵³ Wealthier individuals thus had tremendous influence in selecting a new minister, electing officers of the corporation, and in decisions regarding the purchase and sale of any real estate.

Religious societies allowed the use of proxies, a person with the authority to cast a vote for another, during proprietor meetings. Although modern corporations allow for the use of proxies, corporations in the Early Republic did not. Antebellum corporations expected that “each shareholder had contracted for the individual advice and judgement of his fellow members at election,” a process which could not happen with the use of proxies.⁵⁴ Religious societies seemed to have operated apart from this belief. The use of proxies is one example that illustrates how corporate development was likely influenced by the business practices of religious societies.

Proxies likely came into use as a simple matter of convenience, necessary as a substitute for the proprietor who could not attend due to illness or distance but still wished to vote. It is likely the pew owner directed the proxy as to how his vote should be cast. The Second Church and

⁵² Mark S. Schantz, *Piety in Providence: Class Dimensions of Religious Experience in Antebellum Rhode Island*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 17, 129.

⁵³ “Irrevocable Proxy and Voting Control of Small Business,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Vol. 98 Issue 3, 1950, 401.

⁵⁴ “Irrevocable Proxy and Voting Control of Small Business,” 401.

Society specifically stated the permissible use of proxies during the choice of a new minister in November 1816.⁵⁵ It appears from the extant records that 1816 was possibly the first year in which the use of proxies was permissible although the associated legal documents were not collected and preserved until 1823. After 1823, the preservation of documents identifying proxies seems to have been quite haphazard. There exists extant records of the use of proxies for 1823, 1829, 1831, 1833, and 1843. Given that proxies were employed thirty-two times in 1831 and thirty-three times in 1843, it is difficult to imagine that no proxies were used in the years in between.

The poor record keeping makes it difficult therefore, to assert with any degree of certainty whether the use of proxies became more frequent or at what point. However, three individuals appear to have employed proxies in 1823 compared to twenty-six individuals (some used a proxy more than once) in 1831. Permission for proxies to vote in a proprietor's stead was sometimes written on the back of the printed notice for proprietor's meetings, other times on a separate piece of paper.⁵⁶

Proxies for proprietors were also authorized to purchase pews at auction. Following the alterations of the Second Church of Boston and subsequent auction of all pews at the reappraised value, proxies were empowered to bid for a choice on pews at a pre-sale limited to former proprietors.⁵⁷ Occasionally, a particularly contentious issue would prompt the formation of a committee to examine proxies, presumably for legitimacy. In October of 1843, when voting on

⁵⁵ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 3, 1816, 1.

⁵⁶ Second Church Collection, Proxies, 1816, Box 17 Folder 8, Proxies 1823-1843, Box 17, Folder 9.

⁵⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor's Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 6, 1823, 65.

the “long agitated question of building a new house” the Society of the Second Church of Boston formed such a committee.⁵⁸

Proxies were often instrumental in deciding controversial issues. In 1847, proprietors of the Second Church of Boston were divided in regard to substantial tax assessments on the original valuation of their pews. A vote for an 87% tax was soundly rejected on October 24, 1847 by a vote of forty to ten. Several days later, a proposal for a 75% tax was narrowly accepted twenty four to twenty two on October 31, 1847. The clerk proposed reconsideration of the approved tax which was tabled until the following meeting. It is quite likely that the clerk felt enough proprietors were missing to affect the outcome of the vote. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that proprietors were notified of the upcoming meeting to reconsider the 75% tax in writing. Notification of the October 31st meeting was given from the pulpit, presumably reaching fewer proprietors. On November 7, “a number” of proxies were present to reconsider the 75% tax. The tax was reconsidered and rejected, by a vote of thirty to twenty-three. Votes in the negative increased by eight from the October 31st meeting, which in all likelihood were largely due to the seven additional new voters. At this point, proposals of taxes appear to have been tabled in favor of possible subscriptions.⁵⁹

How shareholders were to be notified about corporate meetings was strictly outlined in legal documents. Acts of Incorporation required that shareholders of a corporation be “warned” about the first meeting following incorporation to draft and approve bylaws in order for the meeting to be considered legal. The state of Massachusetts required that notice of the first meeting “be posted up at the door of said meeting house at least seven days before the said meeting shall be

⁵⁸ Second Church Collection, Proprietor’s Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 10, 1843, 209-210.

⁵⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, October 24, 1847, October 31, 1847, November 7, 1847.

holden.”⁶⁰ The bylaws of each religious society determined how proprietors were to be notified of all future meetings. “Warnings” of such meetings sometimes included printed notifications sent to each proprietor (left either at the residence or placed in their pew as long as the Sabbath occurred prior to the meeting) such as when the Second Church of Boston planned a meeting to select a new minister in November of 1816.⁶¹ Another method which certified the meeting as legal was for the minister to announce the meeting from the pulpit. The annual meeting for the proprietors of the Society of the Second Church of Boston on May 5, 1812 was thus considered warned after Reverend Lathrop (also spelled Lothrop) gave “public notice.”⁶² The bylaws revised in 1824 required three days prior notice to any meeting of the proprietors.⁶³ Records were often inconsistent in noting the method of warning, often simply stating “agreeable to legal notice.”⁶⁴ Meetings were generally required to be held at the meeting house but could be held elsewhere as determined by the Standing Committee.⁶⁵

Meetings tended to follow the rules of debate, with motions being made and seconded prior to most votes. During the meeting to select a new minister for the Second Church in Boston in 1816, a motion was made to cast votes by ballot and the motion was seconded. Ballots were brought up by order of pew number. Following the voting process, it was voted to form a committee to count the votes. Votes seemed to have always been accepted following majority rule, as it was with the selection of a new minister in 1816. Henry Ware Jr. received thirty-six

⁶⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 6, 1824, 71.

⁶¹ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 3, 1816, 1; Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 75.

⁶² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1812, 25.

⁶³ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 75.

⁶⁴ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 4, 1813, 28.

⁶⁵ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 75.

out of forty-six votes and a committee was formed to inform him of the vote and the terms of his contract should he choose to accept.⁶⁶

Voting took several forms dependent on the importance of the decision and potential for conflict. As noted in Chapter Five, although females could be proprietors, they were excluded from voting. Sometimes votes were submitted orally, with the records noting approval, likely by a simple majority. This was usually the case at annual meetings regarding the compensation for the Treasurer, the minister's salary, or taxes on pews.⁶⁷ Other times, voting took place by ballot, such as for the election of officers, the choice of a minister, or for accepting the resignation of one.⁶⁸ Occasionally, societies required that proprietors of pews needed to have the deed in hand as a qualification for voting, such as when the Society of the Second Church of Boston voted on a new minister on October 20, 1833. An exception was made however for those who had purchased pews but had not yet received a transfer deed.⁶⁹ In June 1823, when alterations for the building of the Second Church of Boston were proposed, the records noted that each proprietor received an opportunity to inspect the plans and assented to the changes "in writing." Pews were reappraised following the alterations and valuations increased significantly. For example, pew number 107 was formerly valued at thirty dollars but following the alterations was valued at \$280. The pews were put up for auction and all former pew owners were invited to bid for their choice of pews. Purchase was granted once the bid and price of appraisal was paid. Reappraisal of course, also meant an increase in annual taxes. Written approval of alterations

⁶⁶ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 17, 1816, 2-3.

⁶⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 7, 1834, December 14, 1834, May ? 1835, 159, 161, 162-163.

⁶⁸ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, January 11, 1829, October 25, 1832, May 7, 1834, 105, 139, 158.

⁶⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 20, 1833, 148.

was likely a security measure against legal action, should any of the proprietors be upset about the reappraisal.⁷⁰

Records were kept of the proprietor's meetings, church meetings, treasurer's reports etc. Ministers typically maintained marriage records. However, upon the dissolution of religious corporations, attempts were usually made to preserve records. When the Second Church of Boston closed in 1849 due to crushing debt, marital records were deposited in Boston's archives while some "books and papers" likely relating to the affairs of the corporation were given to Henry Hooper, a member of the corporation for safekeeping.

During the Early Republic, religious societies increasingly sought incorporation as a means to protect their property rights and employ legal mechanisms necessary to settle disputes.

Proprietors championed the corporate structure and often prioritized secular over theological concerns. When necessary, religious societies adapted, revising bylaws to protect individual investment in pews as well as the political power those pews conferred. Additionally, religious societies set important precedents for the modern corporation including the use of proxies and a voting system that proportioned political power to the amount of the investment.

Pew owners, or proprietors, were entitled to both a voice in decision-making as well as profits, although these were qualified. For example, when the Second Church of Boston closed in 1849 proprietors received dividends amounting to 38% "upon the assessment of Eighty six and one half per cent [sic], levied upon the respective valuation of their pews." However, pew owners, still liable for the corporation's debt, albeit for a limited amount, were under the

⁷⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor's Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, June 16, 1823, July 10, 1823, November 6, 1823, 54, 57-60, 65.

obligation to return the money if demands for payment were submitted.⁷¹ When the committee later considered purchasing Freeman Place Chapel for \$20,000 in 1850, it was authorized “provided it may be done without involving the present proprietors of the Second Church in any pecuniary liabilities.” At least two members of the corporation wanted their protest on record that the approval of the purchase was “irregular and illegal.”⁷²

As shareholders, pew owners were also liable for the debts of the society, up to the value of their pew. When the Second Church began construction on a costly new edifice in 1845 (eventually costing \$53,480 although the initial estimate was \$40,000), rumors spread “with regard to the cost of the structure and individual liability.” As a result, some subscribers refused to pay and signified “their intention to secede from the society.”⁷³

Pews were sold as real estate in Boston, but the sale usually excluded “books & furniture” in the pew as those were considered “private property.” Societies incorporated a provision into pew deeds which guaranteed first right of refusal should the owner choose to sell, similar to a stock buy back option. If the society declined to purchase, the owner was then allowed to conduct a private sale, creating in effect a secondary market.⁷⁴ Private sales do not appear to have been restricted, pew owners were free to sell their pew to the person of their choosing. Pews that were seized by the society for nonpayment of taxes or pews that were newly constructed or altered were often sold at public auction where prospective proprietors made a bid for their choice of pew which was added to the purchase price. In the case of a reappraisal of

⁷¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, August 23, 1850, September 20, 1850.

⁷² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, September 27, 1850.

⁷³ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, 20, Proprietor Records, 1842-1848, Box 12, Folder 5, September 3, 1845, Standing Committee Records, 1845, Box 13, Folder 15, September 1845.

⁷⁴ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1812, 26-27.

pews, such as occurred in 1823 in the Second Church of Boston, the auction was limited initially to current proprietors and their proxies. Proprietors paid their bid and the difference between the valuation of their former pew and the newly acquired one. Half of the purchase amount was to be paid immediately while the other half could be paid with a note payable in six months. Interest, of course, accrued on the note. Pew owners were limited to purchasing the number of pews formerly owned, an apparent attempt at equity, although half pew owners were allowed to purchase a whole pew as long as both agreed to do so.⁷⁵ Generally, old deeds were surrendered at the time of compensation.⁷⁶ While the new owner could take possession of the pew immediately, they could not hold the deed until the entire purchase amount was paid.⁷⁷ Conditions of sale varied according to the iteration of pew deed. Purchase of a pew during the sale in 1821 for the Second Church of Boston required 25% down with the other 75% to be given as “a Note on Intrest[sic] Payable in one year.” If the purchaser failed to repay the note plus interest in one year 2% was to be “deducted from the last payment for Cash.”⁷⁸

Pews were a frequent cause of conflict in the Early Republic. The bylaws of the Second Church and Society in Boston in 1824 stated that “All taxes for the support of Public Worship, and other incidental charges, and all assessments for repairs and alterations of the Meeting House shall be apportioned by a vote per centum on the relative value of the Pew, regard being had to their situation and convenience.”⁷⁹ Taxes varied according to the valuation of the pew, those

⁷⁵ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 6, 1823, November 13, 1823, 65-66.

⁷⁶ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, Loose Papers, 1822-1824, Box 12, Folder 2.

⁷⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor's Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 13, 1823, 66.

⁷⁸ Second Church Collection, Pew Accounts, 1820-1821, Box 8 Folder 3.

⁷⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 76.

positioned with a better view or proximity for hearing were worth more and thus taxed at a higher rate.⁸⁰

Appraisal of pews and assessments of taxes often caused controversy and legal conflicts. In December of 1823, following the completion of alterations in the Second Church and public auction of all pews, many proprietors who owned gallery pews requested that they be granted permission to cut the front of the galleries down for a better line of sight.⁸¹ Henry K. May owned four pews in the Second Church in 1823, at least two of which were located in one of the galleries (#114 in the South gallery and #139 in the North gallery).⁸² Several days after the December meeting, May penned a letter to Samuel Parkman, a member of some standing as he was chosen moderator at the annual meeting in 1823. May's agitation was largely due to what he perceived as an imbalance of power within the society. Owners of the gallery pews requested that the Standing Committee pass a vote to alter the gallery pews but the Committee claimed such a vote required a meeting of all proprietors. A meeting of all proprietors was called and the vote to alter the gallery pews was passed. May expressed anger that following the vote, a member of the Standing Committee, Robert W. Barnard, "would not consent to its execution-but can now find authority which was wanting before, to raise the Pews." According to May, Barnard claimed initially that only the proprietors could approve a plan to alter the pews, yet when they did so and he did not approve of their plan, he sanctioned his own. May characterized

⁸⁰ Second Church Collection, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31. This source contains tax rates for each pew as well as a diagram inserted in between pages 61-62 indicating value and relative position of pews.

⁸¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, December 23, 1823, Proprietor Records, 1822-1824, Box 12, Folder 2, December 23, 1823, 67-68.

⁸² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 10, 1823, December, 23, 1823, Pew Deeds, 1823-1828, Vol. 29, 57-60, 67-68.

Barnard's control as "despotic" and argued that "his intent is to put down the old proprietors, and form a Government for our church of which he can be sole dictator."⁸³

In July 1824, May became embroiled with the Standing Committee of the Second Church once again. May opposed the taxation system on the pews for the "inequity of the system" and "its insufficiency to support itself." As described earlier, a significant alteration of pews and subsequent reappraisals took place in 1823, prior to the Act of Incorporation which was obtained in 1824. May referenced the "Articles of Agreement" which was signed by proprietors indicating that an increase in taxes would be borne equally by all pew owners. However, May claimed proprietors such as himself, "sacrificed larger and better pews than any other class of proprietors" were now paying proportionally higher taxes. May portrayed the taxes as creating "an Unequal, invidious[sic] and ideal distinction." As he did in 1823, May argued that this was another attempt to drive out the old proprietors. Of particular note is that May framed his argument in legal terms, stating that the Act of Incorporation and subsequent bylaws (which allowed for a disproportionate tax increase) did not annul previous contracts such as the one signed in 1823 regarding the alterations. Adding to his argument of illegality, May reiterated his opposition (previously expressed in 1823) to article five of the bylaws which authorized taxes based on the valuation of the pew. May's opposition to the bylaw was predicated on the fact that no method was identified for arriving at the pew valuation. As the value was always arbitrary, May claimed "a door is always open for dissension[sic]." Warning that their "Bye[sic] Laws will prove a Rope of Sand," May suggested a permanent valuation by a

⁸³ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 5, 1823; Proprietor Records, 1822-1824, Box 12, Folder 2, December 27, 1823, 48-47.

committee of twelve proprietors in addition to the Standing Committee.⁸⁴ When the Standing Committee declined to take action on May's letter, he offered his three pews for sale to the Society. Even though they were collectively appraised at \$520, May's price tag of five thousand each clearly reflected his indignation.⁸⁵

The controversy continued with each additional tax assessment. In September 1826, May penned another letter, this time to James W. Burditt, Treasurer of the Society. Whereas in 1823 he claimed Barnard was trying to create a dictatorship, this time he identified the "Triumverates[sic]" which included Abel Adams, Gedney King, along with Barnard. May attempted to persuade Burditt that he had been "cajoled" into performing his office without pay by those who were "venders[sic] of rectified spirits, newtral[sic] rum, imitation Brandy and shipping Gun powder[sic]."⁸⁶ May's reference to the economic pursuits of the threesome was an indication he believed they lacked moral scruples in their economic dealings outside the society as well. On October 1, 1826, proprietors approved a tax on pews "equal to one quarters taxes" in order to diminish the corporation's debt.⁸⁷ In protest, May enclosed a partial payment of his taxes due on pew #104 which Burditt promptly returned claiming he could only accept full payment.

This was clearly another tactic by May to protest the legality of the taxation system. May once again framed his argument in legal terms, noting that the refusal to accept partial payment was "high-ground" which neither "the bye-laws[sic] or conditions of the deed will support."

⁸⁴ Second Church Collection, Standing Committee Records, 1821-1825, Box 13, Folder 7, July 31, 1824; Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 76.

⁸⁵ Second Church Collection, Standing Committee Records, 1821-1825, Box 13, Folder 7, September 13, 1824, September 27, 1824, Pew Deeds 1823-1828, Vol. 29.

⁸⁶ Second Church Collection, Standing Committee Records, 1821-1825, Box 13, Folder 7, September 2, 1826, November 25, 1826, December 2, 1826.

⁸⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 1, 1826, 84.

Aside from violating the bylaws and conditions set forth in the pew deed, May also charged that Barnard, Adams, and King spent more than they were authorized to on the alterations in 1823 and failed to adhere to the plan approved by the proprietors. Declaring that “individuals have rights, as well as corporations and altho:[sic] I have surrendered those rights which I bought, into the Parish-regardless of loss; those which I have inherited it is my purpose to defend” May eventually paid one quarter tax on pew #104. However, he qualified that the payment was not “justly due” but acknowledged he had “made myself legally liable.”⁸⁸ To resolve the controversy, May and the Standing Committee each chose two referees who would collectively choose a fifth. That committee, while noting that May acted out of “the sincere, but erroneous belief that he was the aggrieved party,” found “no evidence” that the Standing Committee intended “to violate the rights, or wound the feelings of Mr [sic] May.” The committee refrained from comment on the merits of either system of taxation and instead simply concluded that May had a “mistaken view of the affair” and needed to pay his taxes, which he did in May 1827.⁸⁹

When a pew tax was proposed of twenty five percent “on the original valuation” of each pew in May of 1847, another proposal was made to request that the Standing Committee consider “passing a By-law requiring a vote of the Proprietors in all cases to authorize collections in the church except the usual annual collection for the poor.”⁹⁰ At least some proprietors wanted a voice in all potential pew taxes, an indication that the issue was causing controversy. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the society experienced steadily increasing pecuniary difficulties by October of 1847 which led to a proposed tax of 87% on the original valuation of

⁸⁸ Second Church Collection, Standing Committee Records, 1821-1825, Box 13, Folder 7, September 2, 1826, November 25, 1826, December 2, 1826.

⁸⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, October 1, 1826, April 22, 1827, May 6, 1827; Standing Committee Records, 1826-1827, Box 13, Folder 8, May 8, 1827, 84, 86-88.

⁹⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, May 2, 1847.

each pew. The motion was soundly defeated forty to ten. At this point, pew owners were asked to voluntarily relinquish their pew “for the benefit of the Society.” Perhaps understanding that substantial taxes were inevitable, seventy proprietors (out of one hundred that were called upon) agreed to relinquish their pews. A subsequent proposal was made to assess the pews at 75% the original valuation which narrowly passed, twenty-four to twenty-two, suggestive of a deep division within the society.⁹¹ The pew rental system served to divide the congregation, particularly when individuals perceived their personal rights conflicted with that of the corporation.

The bulk of the corporation’s investment was always in property. As the church building and land belonged to the society rather than the church itself, pew owners as the shareholders, determined geographical location, alterations, maintenance and use. When Rev. Henry Ware of the Second Church in Boston wanted to build a vestry in order to be able to deliver “expository lectures” in the winter of 1830, he first needed to obtain permission from the proprietors to use the land in the rear of the church. The proprietors agreed with the understanding that the vestry, when completed, would be the property of the society.⁹² Often, other local organizations would request temporary use of the house for celebrations or annual meetings. Temporary occupation was beneficial to the corporation as it provided revenue in the form of rent money.⁹³ This was, of course, subject to the whim of the proprietors who sometimes denied permission based upon

⁹¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, October 24, 1847, October 31, 1847.

⁹² Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 8, 1830, November 12, 1830, November 17, 1830, 29-30; Second Church Collection, Proprietor’s Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, November 14, 1830, 124.

⁹³ Second Church of Boston, Standing Committee Records, 1831-1835, Box 13, Folder 10, January 23, 1834.

their own economic interests. In March 1825 the Massachusetts Temperance Society asked permission of the corporation to use the church. The request was denied.⁹⁴ The corporation previously denied use on the basis that the building was only to be used “for religious purposes or for the promotion of objects which religion strictly contemplates,” yet it is difficult to imagine how the advancement of temperance did not fulfill the requirements.⁹⁵ As Kyle G. Volk has demonstrated, and as demonstrated in Chapter One, temperance was an extremely divisive issue, on a local and national level and one that often crossed party lines.⁹⁶ Although it is difficult to determine if any of the proprietors who denied the request were involved with alcohol production or sales, there seems to be no sufficient basis for denial other than a conflict with individual economic interests.

As religious societies owned property, it was necessary to keep record of all legal deeds. Deeds recorded not only geographical boundaries of property but also specified legal owners. In 1828 the proprietors of the Second Church of Boston formed a committee to examine deeds related to the estate on Ann Street in order to determine whether the property was owned by the church or the society. Also in question was the purpose of the income from the property, also known as the Scarlett Donation. Examination of the deeds proved that the property belonged to the church, not the society, and that the “income of the Scarlett Estate was originally designed for the relief of the poor.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Second Church of Boston, Standing Committee Records, 1831-1835, Box 13, Folder 10, March 25, 1835, March 29, 1835.

⁹⁵ Second Church of Boston, Standing Committee Records, 1831-1835, Box 13, Folder 10, May 27, 1834.

⁹⁶ Kyle G. Volk, *Moral Minorities and the Making of American Democracy*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 70, 171.

⁹⁷ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, May 1828, February 8, 1829, 24-25.

While disputes over property ownership sometimes occurred between the Society and the Church or Parish, disputes also arose between towns and religious societies largely due to poor recordkeeping. Sometime after 1810, Reverend Lathrop of the Second Church of Boston recounted details relating to ownership of the land the meeting house was on. The church apparently had no deed or title to the land but claimed it “by long possession” of 130 years. According to Lathrop’s examination of the Society’s records, the land was originally granted by the town of Boston to Major Clarke, which he later donated to the church. Lathrop noted that the town had record of the grant to Clarke, but that the Society had no record of the subsequent gift to the church. There also was no indication that the Society purchased the land from Clarke. Although there is no record of a lawsuit between the town and the church over the property, it is possible that with his account Lathrop was attempting to ward off potential claims by the town to the property. This defense is implied by Lathrop’s statement that although disputes later developed regarding ownership of land adjacent to the meeting house those disputes “were between the Heirs of Major Clarke, and the Society, in which the Town never was a party!”⁹⁸

Agreements with neighboring property owners were often recorded in the records of religious societies as well. The proprietors of the Second Church of Boston owned a piece of land which was adjacent to the meeting house and bordered by property owned by Manassah Marston. No fence was erected between the properties and Marston was using the well located on the Society’s land, having gone so far as to install a pump. The Society recorded an agreement in which Marston agreed to pay one shilling annually and maintain the pump so long as he could continue to use it and the land remained unfenced. The signing of the document on November 24, 1795, was witnessed by three individuals, executed in front of a Justice of the Peace, and

⁹⁸ Second Church Collection, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, Box 3 Folder 5.

registered with Suffolk County deeds. Copies of legal actions such as this one were often recorded in the records of religious societies.⁹⁹

Religious principles were sometimes secondary concerns when dealing with neighbors. In January 1845, Elizabeth and Letitia Johnson, who purchased the Ann Street Estate from the corporation in 1832, wrote a letter expressing their distress. The Ann Street Estate bordered the property owned by the corporation and the Johnsons were dismayed that the gate which allowed access to their backyard had recently been closed. As the Johnsons acknowledged they had “no legal right to a gate” they constructed their framework in biblical terms. The sisters referenced the Golden Rule, arguing that a religious society should operate on the precept to “do as we would wish to be done by.” Additionally, the Johnsons contended that when they purchased the house they were given verbal assurance the gate would remain open as long as the corporation owned the adjoining property. The Johnsons also attempted to appeal to the proprietors’ sense of compassion, noting that they were both “feeble in health” and had no other entrance to access the backyard. On January 21, 1845 the society responded that a fence was needed “along the Southerly Side of the Church to prevent the accumulation of unsightly and filthy deposits.”¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, aesthetics, in a probable attempt to preserve the financial value of the church building, proved to be the guiding assumption for the denial. No record was made of a discussion to include a gate in the fence.

Often, religious societies invested in property which adjoined the meeting house. Acquisition of additional property served as long-term investment which could also be used to raise funds in the short-term through renting or leasing. Committees were sometimes formed to determine the

⁹⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, March 15, 1796.

¹⁰⁰ Second Church Collection, Standing Committee Records, 1844, Box 13, Folder 14,, December 16, 1844, Standing Committee Records, 1845, Box 13, Folder 15, January 21, 1845.

expediency of purchasing such property such as when the religious society of the Second Church of Boston was considering the purchase of “the Shute & Marston Estates, on the North side of the Meeting House.” Although this purchase was initially rejected, the society did approve the purchase of “the Williams Estate” which abutted the church building the following year.¹⁰¹ The Shute estate was eventually purchased in September of 1843. In order to purchase the property, the Society of the Second Church of Boston borrowed \$5000 from the National Insurance Company with a maturation date of three years, providing the meeting house as collateral.¹⁰²

G. W. Robinson made an offer “for the unoccupied lot of land in the rear of the church” committee authorized to sell “not less than Two Dollars pr [sic] square foot” and voted that “the committee require of the purchaser of the lot of land that a substantial blank brick wall shall be put up on the line which shall divide the two estates at his own expense.”¹⁰³ However, difficulty selling that particular plot of land and increasing debt led the Standing Committee to “reconsider” requiring the erection of a brick wall as a condition of sale the following year.¹⁰⁴

When building new churches, societies sometimes took out mortgages and authorized notes to individuals in order to finance the construction and purchase the property. In October of 1847, the Society of the Second Church of Boston owed \$30,000 on a mortgage and \$2000 in notes to individuals for the new edifice built in 1845.¹⁰⁵ Churches and societies were also able to sign leases for building. After building the new house in 1845, the Second Church of Boston was

¹⁰¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 8, 1825, June 1826, 80, 83.

¹⁰² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, September 5, 1843, 206.

¹⁰³ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, January 12, 1846.

¹⁰⁴ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, April 28, 1847.

¹⁰⁵ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, October 17, 1847, note in between pages 20 and 21.

heavily indebted and lost the building which led the church to lease the Masonic Temple for one year in order to hold religious services.¹⁰⁶

Loans were often secured by using the church building as collateral. In April of 1846 the Society of the Second Church of Boston authorized S.W. Robinson to borrow thirty thousand dollars from Joseph Coolidge, who was not a member of the corporation, “secured by mortgage of all the Real Estate belonging to the Corporation.”¹⁰⁷ It appears that loans were obtained both from proprietors as well as from individuals not affiliated with the church. After procuring the loan from Coolidge, the Standing Committee proposed the collection of names of proprietors who were “disposed to loan the society, taking the treasurers [sic] Notes on interest.” Within a few days, \$1546.00 in loans was collected although this proved to be an insufficient amount.¹⁰⁸

Sales of any property owned by the society needed to be approved by the proprietors. When the society of the Second Church of Boston sold the property on the corner of Richmond and Hanover for \$1600, proprietors voted to “approve confirm and ratify the Sale.”¹⁰⁹ In some cases, written consent was required of all proprietors regarding sale of land and property.¹¹⁰

Once incorporated, religious societies could legally hold property and often functioned as landlords as well. As early as July 5, 1789, the Second Church of Boston was renting out the cellar space of the meeting house as indicated by a discussion of how to appropriate the

¹⁰⁶ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, August 1849, 24.

¹⁰⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, April 29, 1846, October 4, 1849.

¹⁰⁸ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, June 14 1846, June 18, 1846.

¹⁰⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, June 3, 1832, 134.

¹¹⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, July 5, 1848.

revenue.¹¹¹ Toward the end of 1838, the same society leased the cellar for a term of five years at an annual rent of \$75 to Fisher & Co.¹¹² The society of the Second Church also owned several homes which they rented and collected revenue from on a quarterly basis.¹¹³ Proprietors also rented out their meeting houses, often to other religious societies who were in the process of repairing or rebuilding theirs, suggestive of how religious concerns often dovetailed with economic ones.¹¹⁴

During the Early Republic, religious corporations increasingly adopted the mechanisms necessary to function as an efficient corporation. Strategies to mitigate risk, resolve legal predicaments, standardize recording, and increase efficiency became crucial to surviving the competition caused by disestablishment. Of primary importance was risk management which evolved as elites searched for the means to protect their financial investment and ultimately the society itself both of which secured status and influence. As Jonathan Levy has argued, the evolution of capitalism, characterized by “radical uncertainty” made risk management, in the form of “insurance policies, savings accounts, government debt markets, mortgaged-backed securities markets” and other financial instruments more of a necessity in the early nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ Ministers including Elijah Kellogg of the Second Congregational Church of Portland, Maine, addressed a similar susceptibility in the religious arena as well and noted, “to be liable to great and certain evils; and to have no security against the continuance of them... is so

¹¹¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, July 5, 1789.

¹¹² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, December 23, 1838, 175.

¹¹³ Second Church Collection, Treasurer Records, 1822-1857, Vol. 31.

¹¹⁴ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, June 20, 1802.

¹¹⁵ Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Harvard University Press, 2012, 1, 4.

melancholy a thought.”¹¹⁶ For Kellogg, God was a necessary insurance against such evils but for many proprietors, secular means of protection provided more assurance.

As the bulk of a religious society’s investment was in the meeting house, it became increasingly common during the antebellum period to insure the building against potential loss by fire. Committees were specifically formed on insurance and made reports during the annual meetings.¹¹⁷ Thornton notes that insurance companies were relatively new business organizations in the Early Republic. Previously fire insurance policies were purchased from fire mutuals.¹¹⁸ The Second Church began insuring their property as early as 1825, purchasing annual policies from the Franklin Insurance Company of Boston. One policy was purchased for the church building, the organ and the chandelier, for \$10,000 varying between thirty-five and forty-five dollars. A second policy was purchased for the dwelling house and building (functioning as a store) which were also owned by the corporation. These buildings were insured initially for \$1200, increasing in 1828 to \$1400, with an annual premium ranging between \$9.82 to \$11.20. When the new vestry was completed, a third policy was purchased to insure the building and the “Settees, and other Furniture, and books.” When the church building was being repaired or altered, additional monies were paid to the insurance company to cover associated risks. In 1832, the corporation paid four dollars to cover one month of construction.¹¹⁹ Insurance was also purchased for estates owned by religious societies which were mortgaged. The Society of the Second Church of Boston, after purchasing the Shute estate in 1843 authorized the Standing

¹¹⁶ Sermon, October 1803, Box 1, Folder 25, Kellogg Family Collection, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, 33-34.

¹¹⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, April 28, 1841, April 27, 1842, 195, 199-200.

¹¹⁸ Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 86.

¹¹⁹ Second Church Collection, Insurance Policies, 1825-1835, Box 17, Folder 6.

Committee “to make such changes in the Policies of Insurance as will secure to the National Insurance Company the amount of their loan in case of loss.”¹²⁰

Churches as well as religious societies purchased insurance policies for the property they owned, although this was limited in the case of the Second Church to plate and some furniture. However, it appears that churches were less concerned with protecting themselves with loss than corporations were, perhaps given that church property involved no personal liability. From extant records, it appears the corporation purchased insurance policies at least twenty years before the church. In October 1845, Second Church first obtained an insurance policy for the plate, baptismal font, two tables, and two chairs valued at \$1000. The annual premium was five dollars.¹²¹ Prior to disestablishment the parish ultimately assumed the risk associated with the meetinghouse. The pew rental system and disestablishment effectively placed liability on religious societies, comprised of proprietors with a keen interest in protecting their investments. Investments were in the form of pews, the sale of which funded the construction or purchase of the meetinghouse. Ultimately, those pews were worthless if the meetinghouse was damaged. Mitigating such risk was necessary precisely due to the evolving nature of religious societies in the Early Republic.

Contracts served as another form of insurance and risk mitigation. As a legal entity incorporated religious societies often contracted out work, particularly for the construction of a new edifice. The right to enter into such contracts was guaranteed by an Act of Incorporation.¹²² Ultimately, contracts served to mitigate risks. They provided assurance to all parties involved that work would be completed and paid for as promised. For the design of a new building in

¹²⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, September 5, 1843, 206.

¹²¹ Second Church Collection, Insurance Policies, 1835-1856, Box 17, Folder 7.

¹²² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1824, 70-71.

1844, the Second Church of Boston agreed to pay M. Lafever (likely Minard LaFever) \$1350 to create the plans and oversee construction. Masons were engaged for \$18,900 and the grant of “the old materials which were on the premises.” These contracts were “signed by the treasurer” and noted as “approved and confirmed” presumably by the Standing Committee. This particular record was among loose papers categorized as “General Accounts” which included receipts, bills, redeemed notes, and accounting of financial transactions.¹²³ Contracts made for work with somewhat intangible results necessitated a written form of evidence that the contract was fulfilled. In April 1820 James Burditt and Francis Green wrote a letter to the Standing Committee of the Second Church of Boston to certify that Luke Eastman taught singing school for fifty-two nights “agreeable to contract” and should therefore receive payment.¹²⁴

In some cases, religious societies took bids for work prior to entering into a contract in order to receive the lowest price. Records of the Second Church of Boston indicate that in May of 1808 the society received bids for wood which was to be supplied to the minister. Any member of the society was free to submit a proposal to the Treasurer by the deadline set as May 16, 1808.¹²⁵ When possible, it appears that churches in the Early Republic generally attempted to hire from within, offering economic benefits to its parishioners.

Religious societies entered into contracts to ensure the work was completed as expected, but also to protect from potential risk associated with the project. In June of 1823, the Second Church of Boston was concerned that strong winds might take down the steeple due to its “decayed State.” Reduction of risk appears to have motivated a desire for quick completion of

¹²³ Second Church Collection, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, General Accounts, 1844 (Jan.-May), Box 5, Folder 11, April 24, 1844.

¹²⁴ Second Church Collection, Standing Committee Records, 1805-1850, Box 13, Folder 4, April 21, 1820.

¹²⁵ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1808, 15-16.

the project, as the society, “fearing some accident might happen from delay,” hired a workman to dismantle the steeple with the provision that the work begin “immediately.” The society contracted the work with Levi Whitcomb and recorded the contract in the minutes of the proprietor’s meetings. For \$200, Whitcomb agreed “to take down said Steeple or Spire in a safe & workmanlike manner to the foundation at the roof of said Church and further agree to make good any damages which may happen to said Church or any of the neighbouring buildings from the performance of this Job.” Indicating the seriousness of such concern, the society included in the contract a clause by which Whitcomb bound himself to the agreement with a sum of one thousand dollars.¹²⁶

Another way to mitigate risk was to audit financial accounts. This obviously provided a check against negligence and obfuscation for the purpose of embezzlement. Theft by a trusted officer in a religious corporation was not unknown. In the 1820s, North Church in Albany, New York, discovered that the church treasurer was guilty of fraud.¹²⁷ Both church accounts and accounts of religious societies were increasingly monitored during the Early Republic. The bylaws of the Society of the Second Church of Boston in 1824 stated that the Treasurer was required to “keep an account with the Society and each Proprietor of Pews and permit the Standing Committee to examine his Books and accounts at any time and likewise give them any information they may request in regard to the funds of the corporation, or the accounts of any of the Proprietors.”¹²⁸ Second Church in Boston appears to have first discussed appointing a person

¹²⁶ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, June 1, 1823, 52-53.

¹²⁷ Robin Klay and John Lunn, “Protestants and the American Economy in the Postcolonial Period: An Overview,” in Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 46.

¹²⁸ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, July 15, 1824, 76-77.

to audit the church accounts on November 26, 1829.¹²⁹ It appears that the Society's accounts were audited annually, often by a committee chosen at the annual meeting of proprietors. As early as May 1, 1787, the Society of the Second Church chose a committee of three people (one of whom was a deacon), to examine the accounts.¹³⁰ By at least May 3, 1808, the proprietors added an additional measure by which the report of the auditing committee was read and its acceptance voted on.¹³¹ Of note is that extant records only show evidence of internal audits, which likely reduced potential for fraud and improved efficiency but lacked the credibility of external audits.¹³²

Conflict surrounding religious corporations was increasingly resolved in legal suits. During the Colonial Era, Puritans utilized the court system but mostly to address issues of immorality.¹³³ Scholar Peter Charles Hoffer notes that disputes among Puritan congregants was usually resolved through "arbitration of the elders of the church."¹³⁴ Disestablishment, a corporate structure, and individual property rights in churches during the Early Republic necessitated new modes of operation. To protect shareholders from loss, record preservation was increased, accounting made more detailed, and legal counsel occasionally sought. Legal conflicts were often caused by trusts which were not a common economic instrument utilized during the Early Republic. Trusts were a legal mechanism by which one party granted funds to another to be held in trust for a third party. Thornton notes that during the antebellum period trusts were "politically

¹²⁹ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, November 26, 1829, 28.

¹³⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1719-1803, Vol. 12, May 1, 1787.

¹³¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1808, 15.

¹³² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 3, 1808, May 5, 1812, May 6, 1829, May 7, 1834, April 26, 1843, 15, 25, 115-116, 158, 202.

¹³³ See Monica D. Fitzgerald, *Puritans Behaving Badly: Gender, Punishment, and Religion in Early America*, (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

¹³⁴ Peter Charles Hoffer, *Law And People In Colonial America, Second Edition*, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2019), 92.

controversial,” and lacked “the legal infrastructure necessary for enforcement.” Additionally, Justice Joseph Story noted there was “no way to compel the trustees to act in the interest of the beneficiaries.”¹³⁵ The rules governing trusts were murky and haphazard bookkeeping, lost documents, and vague provisos attached to the donations in question often contributed to a legal quagmire. In August 1793 Deacon John Tudor of the Second Church of Boston donated \$500 for the “promotion of Psalmody & Instrumental music.” Tudor composed a document indicating that half of the interest from the fund was to promote music during worship; it is unclear what the other half of the interest was meant for as the instrument indicating the conditions of the donation was lost. Tudor was apparently convinced by August 1793 to appropriate the entire amount of interest for music and created a new document indicating as such (he also noted the conditions of the first instrument). An additional proviso specified that if the Second Church dissolved, the funds were to be given to North Church, also known as Christ Church. Contributing to the murky situation was the fact that the Society of the Second Church did not keep the funds in a separate account. Although the Society claimed “the income has regularly passed into the Treasury and been expended in common with its other receipts, to defray the whole expense of Public Worship, in which that of the Singing department is included,” an accurate audit would have been difficult given the intermingling of funds.¹³⁶

The trust created by Captain Samuel Scarlett for the Second Church of Boston was likewise fraught with accounting difficulties. At the annual meeting of proprietors on May 1, 1828, a committee was formed to examine all records relating to the estate on Ann Street, income of which was willed to the Second Church by Scarlett in 1675. In their report, delivered on May

¹³⁵ Thornton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 139-140.

¹³⁶ Second Church Collection, Treasurer’s Records, 1711-1968, Loose Papers, 1718-1964, Box 3, Folder 1, Tudor Donation, August 1793.

18, 1828, the committee referenced Scarlett's will, on file at the "Probate Office," which bequeathed "To the Second Church in Boston and poor thereof Twelve pounds per annum." In 1709, a committee was formed to obtain that donation which "had not been paid for very many years." The society considered legal action but it is unclear whether it was necessary. Perhaps the threat of a lawsuit was motivating enough to prompt the heirs of the estate to pay the Second Church their portion of profits in property upon which the Society later erected two tenements. In October of 1733, the society decided to combine all donations to the poor into one account. This included the legacy from Scarlett's estate as well as a one hundred pound donation from Major Richards and another from Madam Foster. However, Richard designated that the interest from his donation be applied toward the welfare of the poor and as such, should have had its own account. Records from March 5, 1736 indicate that as the donations were spread out over time and in small amounts, they have "been almost insensibly mixed with the Church Stock," and were not utilized for the benefit of the poor as the donors intended. To rectify the situation, the Society resolved to rent the tenements on Ann Street to the poor in perpetuity and to charge as low a rent as possible. All profits from the tenements were to be distributed to the poor and the Deacons of the Church were to keep all accounts. The society also added one hundred pounds to "the lands and buildings" reserved for the use of the poor in order to come closer to the amount initially designated for their welfare. The fund was not mentioned again in the records until 1799 when the Standing Committee was asked to collect the rents from the tenements and the profits were "applied to the uses of the Society until 1828. The committee formed in 1828 to investigate the origins and instructions of these trusts thus recommended that all future income

from the tenements on Ann Street be “appropriated to the relief of the poor” and overseen by the Deacons of the Church.¹³⁷

Despite the investigation and resulting recommendation, the issue was still being addressed as late as May 1833. The society sold the property on Ann Street rather than maintaining it and reserving the rents for distribution among the poor as voted on in May of 1828. Interestingly enough, although the society acknowledged the proceeds rightly belonged to the poor, they decided to keep the proceeds and sign a promissory note “for the net sum bearing interest @ five percent per annum payable semiannually.” The interest was to be utilized by the Deacons of the church for the benefit of the poor as was intended with the original donation. No maturity date for the note was noted in the records. In essence, the society was borrowing money from the church and no indication is given that this was a bilateral decision.¹³⁸ It is quite possible that the society was in some financial distress and diverted the funds from the trusts for their own purposes. Evidence of monetary troubles from 1829 through 1833 can be seen in letter from Reverend Henry Ware written in January 1829 noting that “the Society is suffering all the inconveniences of a destitute condition,” the lack of funds for new hymnals, an additional assessment on pews, the sale of an estate to fund necessary repairs on the meeting house, and a reduction of the salary for the minister by three hundred dollars.¹³⁹ The note was renewed under the same terms on May 7, 1834.¹⁴⁰ Interest payments, but not principal payments, were made annually until March 5, 1844. On June 2, 1851, the Secretary of the Church recorded a statement

¹³⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 1, 1828, May 18, 1828, 90-93.

¹³⁸ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 2, 1833, 143.

¹³⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, January 11, 1829, October 23, 1831, November 13, 1831, April 15, 1832, May 2, 1833, May 12, 1833, 104, 130, 132, 141-142, 144.

¹⁴⁰ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 7, 1834, 158.

on the back of the note, indicating that the corporation “made no provision for its payment when settling up their affairs” during the dissolution of the society. The church resolved to use its own funds to assist the poor in an attempt to fulfill the original terms of the trust.¹⁴¹ Ultimately, for many years, the income from various trusts held by the Second Church of Boston were not kept in separate accounts and were often diverted from their original purpose. Thus, trusts were often the source of conflict within religious corporations which sometimes necessitated resolution through the courts. Additionally, the distinct legal division between the church and the religious society often contributed to the murky situation of trusts and sometimes caused funds to be diverted from their original purpose.

Although the issues with the Tudor and Scarlett donations did not need to be resolved in court, other religious societies found themselves litigants due to similar issues involving trusts. Sometimes, the legality of the donation itself was questioned. In March 1830, the Massachusetts Supreme Court heard a case brought by Joseph Hawes, in which he contested the will of John Hawes. John Hawes died on January 22, 1829 and left a legacy to build and/or support a Congregational church in South Boston. Joseph Hawes contended that the witnesses to the signing of the will, dated October 23, 1813 “were not competent and credible...being inhabitants of South Boston and interested in the devises [sic] of the will.” The court found in favor of the church, stating that because the donation was only to be given after the testator’s wife passed the witnesses lacked a “present vested interest” at the time the will was made. The Hawes Place

¹⁴¹ Second Church Collection, Standing Committee Reports, 1832-1835, Box 13, Folder 10, April 16, 1835.

Congregational Society, incorporated on February 19, 1818, was thus able to construct a meeting house in 1832.¹⁴²

Trusts became especially murky in cases where the donor died insolvent. In April 1837 the Maine Supreme Court heard a case brought by the Second Unitarian Society in Portland, Maine against the estate of Captain Samuel Winter. The pecuniary affairs of this society are discussed in great detail in Chapter Three. The society argued that in March 1835 Winter contributed to a joint note to finance the purchase of the meeting house prior to the society's incorporation.

Although there was no written evidence that the deed was held in trust, the society argued that there was sufficient verbal evidence. According to the society, the holders of the deed were to be repaid by the sale of pews. Winter died insolvent on September 15, 1835 and creditors encouraged the sale of the property to recoup their losses. The society brought the suit to request enforcement of the trust. Winter's heirs did not contest that the deed was held in trust but argued that Winter was not repaid. The court upheld the trust on the condition that the society repay Winter's estate the amount of his initial contribution.¹⁴³

In other cases, the management and distribution of the donation in trust was challenged. As noted in Chapter One, conflicts between the society of the Hollis Street Meeting House and the church occurred frequently during the ministry of Reverend John Pierpont. One such conflict involved the management of a trust by the church with a vague proviso that the funds be utilized, as Judge Lemuel Shaw opined, "for the purposes of defraying the expenses to be incurred by the church in celebrating the ordinance of the lord's supper, in sending their pastor and delegates to attend ordinations, and in some other inconsiderable matters of expense ordinarily incurred by

¹⁴² Hawes v. Humphrey, 26 Mass. 350, 1830 Mass. LEXIS 23, 9 Pick. 350 (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Suffolk and Nantucket March, 1830, Decided).

¹⁴³ Second Unitarian Soc. v. Woodbury, 14 Me. 281, 1837 Me. LEXIS 28 (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine, County of Cumberland April, 1837, Decided).

churches similarly situated.” In March 1850 the Massachusetts Supreme Court heard the case brought by Daniel Weld and other proprietors against Samuel May, Eleazer Nichols, John Pierpont, and President, directors, and co. of New England Bank. Judge Shaw noted that May and Nichols, acting as deacons of the church, wanted to give Pierpont, the former pastor of the church, “twenty shares in the New England bank and thirty shares in the Atlantic bank, amounting in value to \$ 5000” currently invested as part of the fund, “ as an expression of their unabated confidence, respect, and attachment.” Weld argued this was essentially a misappropriation of funds. The court however, dismissed the bill, noting that the society had no vested interest in the funds as it was a separate corporate body and the funds were held in trust by the church. Additionally, the court argued that if the church body disagreed with the distribution of funds they could rectify the situation themselves by removing the deacons or holding them to account. In this light, a legal judgment was entirely unnecessary.¹⁴⁴

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, pews were a constant source of conflict and this often led to litigation as well. Although Henry May’s conflict with the society of the Second Church of Boston over alteration of pews was resolved without legal intervention others were not. In Rowley, Massachusetts the Second Congregational Society altered their pews in 1832. John Kimball, owner of a pew in the meeting house, argued that the society illegally seized his property. Although the society offered financial compensation to Kimball, he refused to accept it. Judge J. Putnam, writing the opinion of the court, noted that property in pews, “is only a qualified property, subject to the paramount right of the parish. And they, in their general dominion and superintendence, may remove or change the form of the pews for the purpose of making repairs or rendering the interior more convenient, or they may destroy them altogether,

¹⁴⁴ Parker v. May, 59 Mass. 336, 1850 Mass. LEXIS 10, 5 Cush. 336 (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Suffolk and Nantucket March, 1850, Decided).

for the purpose of erecting or substituting a more commodious or elegant edifice.” Thus, the court found in favor of the defendants and judged the original appraisal value of the pew to Kimball to be reasonable compensation.¹⁴⁵

Religious corporations sometimes found bylaws and pew deeds to be valuable sources of protection in a legal suit, which no doubt encouraged the usage of such documents as well as alterations in the favor of the corporation as necessary. In March 1848, Benjamin B. Mussey brought a suit against the Bulfinch Street Society in Boston for \$128, which he paid in order to prevent pews he owned from being sold at auction. Mussey refused to pay taxes on his pews following the settlement of Reverend Gray, a Unitarian minister, in 1839. Mussey contended that the settlement of Gray was illegal and therefore taxes used to pay his salary were likewise illegal. When Mussey’s pews were seized and presented for auction, Mussey paid his taxes plus interest and fees to prevent the sale and subsequently filed his legal suit. The court, after inspecting the corporation’s bylaws and pew deeds found that the legality of both the taxes and seizure for nonpayment was without question. Additionally, the court argued they had no power to try the legality of Gray’s settlement. The case was found in favor of the defendants. Of particular note here is the claim by the defendants that the records of the corporation had been altered. Mussey claimed the settlement of Gray was made by a 19-11 decision while the defendants claimed the vote was actually 19-1 and the records altered after the fact.¹⁴⁶ While that particular note of contention proved irrelevant to the case, it is instructive as to how members of religious corporations in the Early Republic viewed corporate records as a legal mechanism.

¹⁴⁵ Kimball v. Second Congregational Parish, 41 Mass. 347, 1833 Mass. LEXIS 221, 24 Pick. 347 (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Essex 1833, Decided).

¹⁴⁶ Mussey v. Bulfinch St. Soc'y, 55 Mass. 148, 1848 Mass. LEXIS 23, 1 Cush. 148 (Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Suffolk and Nantucket March, 1848, Decided).

Religious corporations functioned primarily to serve the interests of their shareholders. As interestingly, when the corporation was settling its affairs, it appears that they approved payment to certain creditors before others, a common yet controversial practice in the Early Republic as discussed in Chapter Three. As Edward Balleisen notes in *Navigating Failure*, “failing proprietors habitually drafted voluntary assignments that benefited some creditors far more than others....After the assignee or assignees had converted enough property to declare a dividend, a preferential assignment instructed them to pay certain creditors in full before other claimants received a penny.” Although federal bankruptcy legislation was enacted in 1841, it was repealed in 1843 prior to the dissolution of the corporation of the Second Church of Boston.¹⁴⁷

At a proprietor’s meeting in September 1849, the society authorized the sale of the newly-constructed, costly edifice (including the organ, land, and furniture) to the First Methodist Episcopal Church for \$10,000, subject to a \$30,000 mortgage held by Joseph Coolidge. From the proceeds, the Treasurer was authorized to “discharge the attachment now existing in the suit brought by Nath (Nathaniel) C. Poor against said church.” Following payment of the debt to Poor, the Treasurer was directed to pay Daniel Bartlett first and then other debts if there is enough money and “if not to pay the same pro rata.” Bartlett was given a mortgage on the personal property owned by the corporation on February 16, 1849, for the money he previously loaned the society and for any future advancement to help pay the society’s debts. Poor was formerly a member of the corporation while Bartlett was a current member.¹⁴⁸ After paying Poor

¹⁴⁷ Edward J. Balleisen, *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy And Commercial Society In Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 90-91, 123, 144.

¹⁴⁸ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, February 16, 1849, September 6, 1849, October 4, 1849.

and Bartlett, the proprietors proceeded to pay themselves with a 38% dividend on the valuation of their pews.¹⁴⁹

To improve efficiency religious societies also utilized standard forms, a practice which became increasingly common in the Early Republic in the business world. Religious societies appear to have been at the forefront of the use of this corporate tool. Thorton notes that in the early 1800s, “the systematic, standardized recording of information, epitomized by the use of printed blank forms was rare.”¹⁵⁰ In May of 1840, the Society of the Second Church of Boston authorized the printing of five hundred blank pew deeds. Half of these were reserved for purchasers with the other half to be placed in a bound volume for the society’s records.¹⁵¹ Standardized printed forms for proxies were also in use by 1849 in the Second Church of Boston.¹⁵²

During the Early Republic churches also began tracking and marking their property for identification. In May 1822, a report for the Second Church in Boston on the state of the parish library indicated significant mismanagement. The report notes that 123 books were accounted for but “many books have been lost in times past.” The committee for the church library also noted the possession of books unrelated to theology and suggested that these books be replaced with theological works currently for sale by Harvard College. To prevent future loss of books, the committee recommended maintaining the collection by fixing books in need of repair and placing “printed labels...in each, signifying that it is the property of this Church.”¹⁵³ Hymnals purchased by the Society of the Second Church of Boston in 1843 were similarly marked with a

¹⁴⁹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1845-1873, Vol. 20, August 23, 1850, September 20, 1850.

¹⁵⁰ Thorton, *Nathaniel Bowditch and the Power of Numbers*, 93, 169.

¹⁵¹ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, May 4, 1840, 193.

¹⁵² Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1849-1854, Box 12, Folder 6, April 23, 1849.

¹⁵³ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1775-1833, Vol. 9, May 1822, 14-15.

stamp on “the cover ‘Vestry Second Church.’”¹⁵⁴ Inventorying property was also necessary in other situations, such as the closing of a religious building. When the Second Church of Boston closed their building due to debt acquired from construction costs in 1848, a committee was appointed to inventory the property.¹⁵⁵ Inventory in this case would have been necessary to properly liquidate holdings and pay any outstanding debt. Other assets, such as plate, were periodically inventoried, likely due to the high value of such assets. In 1825 and again in 1836, the Second Church of Boston listed all silver cups, dishes, baptismal fonts, spoons, and flagons along with any corresponding inscriptions which usually noted the donor of the plate. The inventory also noted “One silver Knife-both blade and handle” as well as “One large Damask linen Table Cloth.”¹⁵⁶

Toward the end of the Early Republic, religious societies, such as that of the Second Church, realized they needed to appoint someone to keep track of inventoried property. Like plate, books were valuable property. In 1842 a committee was appointed to look into the state of the library and discovered that sixty-nine volumes were missing out of the 264 they owned. Only a portion of borrower names were recorded and it was noted that some of the books may have been returned and then loaned to others without recording it. The committee recommended appointing a Librarian to “have sole care” of the books.¹⁵⁷

Ultimately, entrepreneurs in the Early Republic brought the market instruments and legal mechanisms they employed in their private affairs to public institutions designed to serve the common good. Additionally, proprietors of religious societies also innovated and developed new practices not yet utilized by corporations. Through incorporation, these economic elites created

¹⁵⁴ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1804-1845, Vol. 19, April 26, 1843, 202-203.

¹⁵⁵ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, July 10, 1848, 21-22.

¹⁵⁶ Second Church Collection, Record Book, 1833-1872, Vol. 10, June 1825, February 28, 1836.

¹⁵⁷ Second Church Collection, Proprietor Records, 1842-1848, Box 12, Folder 5, 1842.

private institutions associated but not united with the church body. They created bylaws that limited most decision making to pew owners and thus solidified an economic hierarchy within churches. By purchasing pews, these capitalists became shareholders in religious corporations and used their economic buying power to serve their own financial interests in the spiritual arena. Proprietors then employed their entrepreneurial behavior to effectively turn religious societies into corporations.

Conclusion

During the Early Republic, pew proprietorship created a plutocracy, which resulted in the development of a corporate character for Protestant churches and a prioritization of secular over theological concerns. In the antebellum period, wealthy Protestant elites in Portland, Maine, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boston, Massachusetts consolidated their power through the purchase of pews, which provided them proportional control over religious societies. In some cases, proprietors used such influence to oust ministers with competing economic or political views. For African Americans, the inability to purchase pews and wield control led some to create their own churches where they could express their ambition and work toward economic betterment. Proprietors applied a corporate model to the pecuniary affairs of the society and this led to increased expenditures in the search for gentility and for competitive efforts. Such expenditures and concern over the debt pew owners were individually accumulating negatively affected a church's ability to respond to national economic crises. Additionally, as pew ownership and the plutocratic nature of religious societies caused increasing conflict, religious societies increasingly employed legal and market mechanisms to regulate their financial affairs. However, the business model which proprietors applied was often inefficient due to variable costs and a revenue base, which could not be expanded or diversified. Ultimately, proprietors in the Early Republic tended to be champions of economic modernization, individualism, and ambition, which shaped the theological expression of Protestant churches and religious societies.

In the 1850s, Protestantism and the business world became even more closely merged. From 1857-1858, a “businessman’s revival” occurred. The revival was centered in New York but spread throughout New England as well as other parts of the country, impacted greatly by the Panic of 1857. Characterized by noon prayer meetings, attended by businessmen, the revival captured national attention largely through its commercialization by the secular press. Historian Kathryn T. Long argues that the revival is particularly notable for “the increased eagerness to market the revival as news and the deeper involvement of commercial values in the practices of the revival.” Newspapers such as the *Herald* and the *Tribune* in New York City commodified the revivals, although this in and of itself was nothing new.¹ Organizations including the American Tract Society and American Bible Society certainly employed market mechanisms in their efforts to distribute religious writings beginning in the 1820s but rejected the values of the market.² However, what made the 1857-1858 revival unique according to Long, is that “the methods of business were used to further the revival and Protestantism in general” and “little thought seems to have been given to harmful associations.”³

Religious scholars including Mark A. Noll argue that prior to the “businessman’s revival,” “the effect of commerce on religious thinking seems slight.”⁴ This is likely true for analysis of ministers’ sermons, correspondence and published writings. What about religious action? How were parishioners hearing the sermons given by their minister? Analysis of society records, as

¹ Kathryn T. Long, “Turning...Piety into Hard Cash’: The Marketing of Nineteenth-century Revivalism,” in *God and Mammon*, Mark A. Noll, ed., 241, 240.

² David Paul Nord, “Benevolent Capital: Financing Evangelical Book Publishing in Early Nineteenth-century America,” in *God and Mammon*, Mark A. Noll, ed., 163-164.

³ Long, “Turning...Piety into Hard Cash,” in *God and Mammon*, Mark A. Noll, ed., 253.

⁴ Mark A. Noll, “Protestant Reasoning about Money and the Economy, 1790-1860: A Preliminary Probe,” in *God and Mammon*, Mark A. Noll, ed., 277.

distinguished from church records, offers a different view. Businessmen, through their proprietorship of pews, used market values and mechanisms to direct and regulate the financial *and* theological affairs of the society and church. They dismissed ministers with contradictory economic and political leanings, applied a business model to the society's operations, and adopted corporate forms. Money spent to achieve a sense of gentility, which enhanced the reputation of proprietors, and competition with other denominations resulted in debt that necessitated a change in theological expression. As demonstrated by this study, the influence of market reasoning on religious societies was much earlier than the "businessman's revival" as some historians suggest.⁵

As Protestant churches in northern New England entered the 1850s, theological expression became increasingly determined by sectional divisions. In particular, the Bible was frequently utilized in the argument over abolition. As Mark A. Noll explains, "amid America's post-Revolutionary tide of antiformalism, antitraditionalism, democratization, and decentralization, trust in the Bible did not weaken but became immeasurably stronger." The problem in the debate over slavery was that readers had been encouraged for the previous half century to read and the Bible and interpret it for themselves, usually in a literal sense. Literal readings of the Bible were problematic for abolitionists because to many readers, Scripture appeared to explicitly sanction slavery. For Congregationalist and Unitarian ministers to oppose slavery from the pulpit thus required modification of individual interpretive liberty. As Noll states, "because of the way Reformed and literal interpretations of the Bible had empowered ordinary

⁵ For more on the "businessmen's revival" see Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press), 211-218 and Kathryn T. Long, "The Power of Interpretation: The Revival of 1857-58 and the Historiography of Revivalism in America," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Winter, 1994, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter, 1994), 77-105.

people and their leaders in creating a Christian civilization, that hermeneutic enjoyed immense implicit authority.”⁶ For ministers in northern New England to preach in favor of abolition necessitated a reclamation of some of their interpretive Scriptural authority.

Largely until the 1850s, many northern Congregational and Unitarian ministers were silent on the subject of slavery, particularly in cities, perhaps fearful of riling merchant proprietors with connections to trade with the South and the West Indies.⁷ For most of the Early Republic, the liberty of ministers to speak out was always somewhat qualified by the economic and political views of the proprietors who maintained the power to dismiss the minister at will. However, in the decade prior to the Civil War, and then through the war itself, ministers increasingly promoted and extolled the freedom of the pulpit and publicly condemned methods of intimidation by members of their congregation.⁸ Ministers advocated for abolition, even when it

⁶ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 368, 371, 379, 387-388, 395-396.

⁷ *Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade In The United States Of North America; Being Replies To Questions Transmitted By The Committee Of The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, For The Abolition Of Slavery And The Slave Trade Throughout The World. Presented To The General Anti-Slavery Convention Held In London, June, 1840. By The Executive Committee Of The American Anti-Slavery Society*, (London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1841), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021,

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Slavery_and_the_Internal_Slave_Trade_in/cm7Q-nLr4Q8C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=northern+clergy+and+slavery&pg=PA157&printsec=frontcover, 156; Sydney E. Ahlstrom also notes that northern “churches were slow in joining the antislavery cause.” See Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History Of The American People*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1972), 657.

⁸ J.G. Forman, *The Spirit of Jesus and Paul: The Liberty Of The Pulpit, Two Sermons By J. G. Forman, Pastor of the Universalist Church In Dover, N.H., Delivered On the 19th and 26th of April, 1848*, (Boston, Massachusetts: J.M. Usher, 1848), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021,

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Spirit_of_Jesus_and_Paul_The_Liberty/B7QcU-Zx_9MC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=j+g+forman+the+spirit+of+jesus+and+paul&pg=PP1&printsec=frontcover. See page 32 for Forman’s condemnation of newspaper attacks on him by a member of his congregation; George Harmon, “The Northern Clergy and the Impending Crisis, 1850-1860,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Apr., 1941), 193; Leonard Bacon, *Pastor of the First Church in New Haven*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Tuttle,

upset members of their congregation.⁹ Other ministers, such as Henry Ward Beecher, minister of Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn made freedom of speech a condition of his settlement there in 1847.¹⁰ Perhaps in light of the Compromise of 1850, which included a stronger Fugitive Slave Law particularly egregious to northerners, the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott Case, and indeed the bloodshed beginning in 1861, compelled more ministers to speak about abolition, even if it risked alienating members of their congregation. Additionally, perhaps parishoners began to see the impending crisis as inevitable in the 1850s, rendering abolition a less divisive topic than it had been previously. Reverend William T. Dwight publicly acknowledged the power of the pulpit on moral issues and pointed to “the frequent attempts to define and restrict the minister’s range of subjects in the pulpit; and especially, to debar him absolutely from what is often termed, with very confusing notions of the import of the words-‘Political Preaching.’” Dwight argued that political issues like temperance and slavery, had a bearing on religion and morality, and were therefore solidly within a minister’s purview.¹¹

During the Civil War, northern New England Congregational and Unitarian ministers largely demonstrated unity in regard to abolition. During the war, ministers served as chaplains and encouraged their parishioners to assist with efforts on the homefront. While some denominations

Morehouse & Taylor, 1882), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Leonard_Bacon_Pastor_of_the_First_Church/yoANAQAAlAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, 47; Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham*, 214-215.

⁹ Thomas Starr King, *Christianity and Humanity: A Series of Sermons By Thomas Starr King, Edited, With A Memoir By Edwin P. Whipple, Third Edition*, (Boston, Massachusetts: James R Osgood and Company, 1878), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Christianity_and_Humanity/0T5Aw5riDKEC?hl=en&gbpv=1, xxiii-xxv.

¹⁰ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History Of The American People*, 787.

¹¹ William T. Dwight, *The Pulpit, In Its Relations to Politics. A Discourse, Delivered In The Third Congregational Church, Portland, November 20, 1856, AND January 18, 1857*, (Portland, Maine: Francis Blake, 1857), Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine, 5, 26-27

experienced regional schisms, most notably the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, Congregational and Unitarian churches avoided such a disruptive impact because they were largely confined to the North.¹²

That freedom of the pulpit expanded in regard to abolition should not be interpreted as a sign that economics became less powerful following the Civil War. In fact, Long argues that urban revivalism became “both entertainment and a business” and the income afforded revivalists indicates that “the tension between proselytizing and profit making had diminished appreciably since the early years of the century.”¹³ Whereas Elijah Kellogg’s land speculations were viewed with suspicion in the Early Republic, revivalists were able to boast of their significant wealth without reprobation in the second half of the century.¹⁴ Mark A. Noll concurs with Long, arguing that the market evolution increasingly affected Protestant writings rather than less. Noll notes that “the Panic of 1857-1858 elicited a weaker dose of Protestant moralism than had the Panic of 1837; the Businessmen’s Revival of 1857-1858 scrupulously avoided the kind of stern injunction about the misuse of money that had once been more common; and by the 1850s market-savvy treatises on “Systemic Benevolence” revealed the growing influence of commercial reasoning on church practice.”¹⁵ It is likely that the pew rental system, the resulting plutocracy, and the corporate structure of religious societies were compelling factors in the gradual accommodation of Protestant churches to the commercialization of American society.

After the Civil War, during Reconstruction, a new cadre of ministers was ushered in to lead Congregational and Unitarian churches in the northeast. In Portsmouth, Reverend George

¹² Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 666, 674-675.

¹³ Long, “The Power of Interpretation,” 244-245.

¹⁴ Long, “The Power of Interpretation,” 245.

¹⁵ Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 223.

Adams led the North Church from 1863-1871 and Reverend James deNormandie ministered for South Church from 1862-1883.¹⁶ In Boston, Reverend George Leonard Chaney was settled as the minister of Hollis Street Church from 1862-1877 and Reverend Robert Laird Collier was ordained at the Second Congregational Church in 1876, replacing Reverend Chandler Robbins who had preached there for over forty years.¹⁷ Portland's Second Congregational Church was led by Reverend John J. Carruthers from 1846-1886 while the Second Unitarian Church was ministered to by Reverend Charles Buck beginning in 1868.¹⁸ The Abyssinian Church in Portland struggled to keep a permanent minister, from 1856-1872 seven ministers attended the pulpit at various times.¹⁹

These new ministers tended to focus their attentions on domestic problems associated with urbanization and industrialization while simultaneously promoting foreign missions as a Christian responsibility. Ahlstrom notes that these ministers defended Christianity against emerging scientific theories (most notably Darwinism) and “contributed to the ‘inner revolution’ of the epoch by transforming Christianity into a benign and genteel form of religious humanism.” These ministers were largely quite liberal and “forced a confrontation between traditional orthodoxies and the new grounds for religious skepticism exposed during the

¹⁶ South Church Collection, Box 11, Folders 8-11; North Church Collection, Correspondence, 1863-1890, Box 18, Folder 34, Portsmouth Athenaeum, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

¹⁷ Second Church Records, Standing Committee Records, 1872-1897, Vol. 17A, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts; Hollis Street Church Records, Standing Committee Reports, 1862-1879, Box 3 Folder 5, Andover Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

¹⁸ Second Church Records, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine; Edward H. Elwell, *Portland and Vicinity*, (Portland, Maine: Loring, Short & Harmon and W.S. Jones, 1876), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021,

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Portland_and_Vicinity/_B41AAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, 60.

¹⁹ Anchor of the Soul Collection, “Centennial Celebration of Portland, Maine 1786-1886,” Box 1, Folder 7, African American Collection of Maine, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Libraries, Portland, Maine.

nineteenth century.”²⁰ Even after Reconstruction however, discussions regarding freedom of the pulpit persisted, indicating the issue had never fully been resolved. As one example, in 1954, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas introduced a bill to amend the tax code in order to prevent non-profit organizations, including churches, from endorsing or opposing political candidates. Opponents of the provision argue it restricts the freedom of the pulpit; in 2008 the group Alliance Defending Freedom organized Pulpit Free Sunday, an annual event designed to encourage ministers to engage in acts of civil disobedience.²¹

Pew rents were slowly abolished in Congregational and Unitarian churches after the Civil War, perhaps in part because of the myriad of controversies they caused during the Early Republic. Some churches eliminated pew rents in favor of free seating as early as the 1840s in Boston, although many churches maintained the practice until the middle of the twentieth century.²² However, by the turn of the twentieth century, pew rents were increasingly coming under attack. Critics of pew rents typically charged that the system was “unchristian,” in that it denied the poor equal seating, as well as inefficient, arguing that more money could be raised by voluntary pledges rather than pew taxes.²³ By the turn of the century, analysis of church finances

²⁰ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 733, 736, 738, 740, 764, 783.

²¹ For more information on the Johnson Amendment and subsequent protests see Philip Hamburger, *“Liberal Suppression: Section 501(C) (3) And The Taxation Of Speech, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).*

²² Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 630.

²³ G. Walter Fiske, “A Page of Methods: Practical Pointers on Church Problems,” *The Congregationalist and Christian World*, Vol. 93, Issue 2, January 11, 1908, Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Congregationalist_and_Christian_Worl/WbsznK3EAikC?hl=en&gbpv=1, 58; “Editorial” *The Pacific Unitarian*, Vol. 2, No. 8, June 1894, Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Pacific_Unitarian/P4UfAAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=pew+rentals&pg=PA227&printsec=frontcover, 227; Albert Franklin McGarrah, *Modern Church Finance: Its Principles and Practice*, (New York, New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1916), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021,

necessitated a new approach, rather than applying a business model to an organization that had no ability to expand its revenue to deal with variable costs. Although pew rents were abolished, many of the corporate structures of religious societies remain in place today, including for example the adoption of by-laws.

Religious societies could not meet expenses, which often resulted from the application of a corporate business model to religious organizations. Some churches in the period following the Civil War either dissolved or merged with other churches in order to ensure survival. In Portland the Abyssinian Church sold their building in 1917 following a decline in the African American population in the city. It was purchased by the Abyssinian Restoration Committee in 2003 and is currently being restored. Today, the Abyssinian Church is currently the only building in Maine officially recognized as part of the Underground Railroad.²⁴

The building of the Second Congregational Church in Portland burned in the Great Fire of 1866 but was rebuilt by 1875. However, the building was sold in 1964 when the upkeep became too much of an expense to bear. The congregation relocated at that time to Neal Street in

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Modern_Church_Finance/U6YTAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, 298; Reverend Thomas Simms, "Free Pews in Connecticut," *The Congregationalist*, Vol. LXXX, No. 14, April 4, 1895, Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Congregationalist/ZXJPAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=pew+rentals&pg=PA518&printsec=frontcover, 518; Reverend George Whitefield Mead, *Modern Methods In Church Work: The Gospel Renaissance*, (New York, New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1897), Google Books, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Modern_Methods_in_Church_Work/bjU3AAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=pew+rentals&pg=PA311&printsec=frontcover, 311.

²⁴ Although the Abyssinian Church was one of the few buildings to survive the Great Fire of 1866 its membership declined following the sinking of the *Portland* off Cape Cod in 1898 and the loss of several members and a deacon on board. African American mariners were also increasingly displaced from the wharves at the turn of the century by Irish and Italian immigrant longshoremen. Anchor of the Soul Collection, The Abyssinian Restoration Project Executive Summary, July 1, 2005; Portland Press Herald 6/22/13.

Portland.²⁵ The Second Unitarian Church, also in Portland, dissolved by 1880 largely due to financial difficulties.²⁶

Both Boston churches included in this study were forced into mergers following the Early Republic. The Second Congregational Church merged with the Church of Our Savior in 1854, following the sale of their building, the construction of which resulted in massive debt. Hollis Street Church also merged in 1887 with the South Congregational Society.²⁷ Mergers were in some cases a sign of economic failure, yet other cases indicate the ability to adapt to rapidly changing economic situations.

In Portsmouth, South Church became federated with the Universalist Church in 1945 and fully merged in 1947.²⁸ North Church was the only church in this study to escape dissolution or merger. In 1854, North Church moved to its present site in Market Square.²⁹ Reverend Joseph Buckminster died in 1812 and therefore did not witness many of the changes to North Church during the Early Republic. After Buckminster's death, the religious society increasingly adopted market and legal mechanisms. Proprietors purchased insurance, advertised, entered into contracts, dealt with trusts, and revised by-laws. They established a Sunday School in 1818 for competitive outreach and built a new edifice in 1854 complete with carpet, granite, stained glass windows, and an organ in an attempt to claim gentility. Like many churches during the Early Republic, the pew rental system, a plutocratic government, and the application of a business model undoubtedly altered North Church in ways that would have made it almost unrecognizable to those like Buckminster who once presided over the pulpit there

²⁵ "Second Parish Presbyterian Church, 1895," Maine Memory Network, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/14309>.

²⁶ Second Unitarian Records, 1835-1880, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

²⁷ Hollis Street Church Records, 1787-1879.

²⁸ South Church Collection.

²⁹ North Church Collection.

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