

**“Religion, the Economy, and the Moravians:
New Perspectives on an Old Problem”**

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In October 1766, Bethlehem's Moravians successfully defended themselves against a lawsuit from a former member, Jacob Musch, in which the cobbler attempted to receive compensation for unpaid wages in the years before his 1759 ejection from their communitarian town. Although the Moravians had dissolved their communal labor arrangement in 1762, three years after Musch's departure, they argued that they should be exempt from such complaints based in individual interest because their shared housekeeping had had at its heart the purpose of religious outreach—specifically to Pennsylvania's Indian population—rather than the economic benefit of its members. Likewise, Benjamin Chew, the Moravians' lawyer, argued that they had followed the dictates of necessity, as determined by their religious purpose, when they had established their communal endeavor in 1741: “they had no other funds from which to cover the necessary expenses[;] they saw it as necessary to erect their housekeeping so that they would not need to become burdensome to anyone, and [so that] the good purpose would not be hindered by anything.” They chose, Chew continued, “to handle everything in common, to put their income in an account from which each was to be cared for with what he needed for his physical necessities and board, as well as the sending of messengers for ... Godly purposes.” In sum, as their advocate claimed, the Moravians “relinquished thereby all advantage and the profits, which one ordinarily has to enjoy from his labors[.]”¹ Musch's lawsuit ultimately came to nothing—his

¹ “Da sie nun keinen andern *fond* hätten woraus die bestreitung, der dabey erforderlichen Ausgaben hätten können besorgt werden, so sahen sie sich genöthigt, ihre Haushaltung so einzurichten, daß sie nicht nöthig hätten jemand beschwerlich zu seyn, u. der gute Vorsatz durch nichts gehindert werden möge.”; “alles gemeinschaftlich zu behandeln, u. ihre Einkünfte in eine *Cassa* zu legen daraus so wol dasjenige was sie zu ihres leibes Nothdurft u. Unterhalt brauchten, als auch die Versendung derer Boten zu oberwehnten Gottseligen Zweck u. ihre Unterhaltung besorgt werden solle. Sie entäußerten sich dabey aller derer Vortheile u. das *Profits*, welchen man *ordinair* von seiner Bemühung zu geniessen hat.” Nachricht vom Muschischen Procez in Pensylvania 1766, UVC X 143a, Unitätsarchiv, Herrnhut (hereafter UAH). Recent works on the Moravians include Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005) and *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763 – 1840* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998); S. Scott Rohrer, *Hope's Promise: Religion and Acculturation in the Southern Backcountry* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 2005); Craig D. Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park, Penn.,

record of bad behavior spoke for itself in the court's eyes—but the terms in which the lawsuit was argued point to difficulties of trying to separate out the religious and the economic in early America. Since their effort was “religious,” the Moravians argued, they should not, in this internal matter, be held to rules that governed strictly economic relationships. Simultaneously, however, the essentially economic nature of their project—in Chew's discussion of funds, income, and accounts—inevitable also came into the discussion. Separating out what was religious and what was simply economic, in other words, was impossible.

If eighteenth-century Americans were confounded by the exchange between the religious and the economic, scholars in the years since have been no different. The subject was, for many decades, simultaneously one of the most heavily studied and one of the most bedeviling of those engaged by early Americanists. Yet this discussion has made surprisingly little headway. Haunted by the theories of Max Weber and Perry Miller, and a century after the publication of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, widespread historical perceptions of the interplay between the religious and the economic still reflect the assumption that the two were at loggerheads and engaged in an epic struggle marking the turn from a communal pre-modern to an individualistic and acquisitive modern.² Undoubtedly, the works of Weber and Miller inspire

2004); Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians & Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2003); Elisabeth W. Sommer, *Serving Two Masters: Moravian Brethren in Germany and North Carolina, 1727-1801* (Lexington, Ky., 2000); Aaron Spencer Fogleman, “Jesus is Female: The Moravian Challenge in the German Communities of British North America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 60 (April 2003), 295-332; and Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-century Northeast* (Ithaca, NY., 2008).

² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London and New York, 1992; orig. pub. 1930); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953). Weber's thesis was originally published in essay form in 1904-5. For an assessment of Weber's thesis for New England, see James A. Henretta, “The Protestant Ethic and the Reality of Capitalism in Colonial America,” in Hartmut Lehmann and Guenther Roth, eds., *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts* (Cambridge, 1993), 327-346. Miller's work has been more directly influential than Weber's for the study of the intersection between religion and economic life in early America. Other highly influential works that have dealt with the intersection of religion and economic life include R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2000,

strong allegiance in few currently working historians, yet their waning has left a theoretical void, rather than a new paradigm, so that newer trends of historical scholarship have not been brought to bear fully on the way religion motivated economic action in early America.³ For example, in the study of Puritan New England, the area that has received the most attention and the place where Miller's influence was particularly strong, ample evidence that religious belief and economic activity, even innovation, coexisted has led to the simple severing of the religious and the economic, rather than to more complex theories of how the two intersected.⁴

Yet the idea that religion and the economy were truly separated in the hearts and minds of early Americans beggars belief. Recent historiographical, methodological, and theoretical turns

orig. pub. 1926); and E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966, orig. pub. 1963).

³ For historiographical surveys on the subject, see Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York, 2002), 3-29; Robert Wuthnow and Tracy L. Scott, "Protestants and Economic Behavior" in Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart, eds., *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York, 1997), 260-295; and Michael Zuckerman, "Holy Wars, Civil Wars: Religion and Economics in Nineteenth-Century America," *Prospects*, 16 (1991), 205-40. For a recent historiographical appraisal of Miller's idea of declension in the context of religious history, see Charles L. Cohen, "The Post-Puritan Paradigm of Early American Religious History," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 54 (1997), 695-722. For Weber's influence historiographically, see also Jon Butler, "Theory and God in Gotham," *History and Theory* 45 (December 2006), 47-61; and the forum on "American Religion and Class," in *Religion and American Culture* 15 (Winter 2005), 1-29, particularly the contributions by David G. Hackett and Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp.

⁴ The persistence of the "declension model" explains why so much vigorous effort continues to go into establishing how Puritans encouraged rather than rejected seventeenth-century market innovation, a body of work that has become prominent in recent years. Stephen Innes argued that the "civic ecology" of the Bay Colony encouraged economic innovation while still maintaining a religious value system. [Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York, 1995)]. Mark Peterson used a longer sweep of time to assert that Puritan spirituality demanded access to wealth, an argument that reprises Barry Levy's findings for Quaker Pennsylvania. [Mark A. Peterson, *The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England* (Stanford, Calif., 1997); and Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (New York, 1988)]. John Frederick Martin placed entrepreneurialship at the heart of the New England endeavor [John Frederick Martin, *Profits in the Wilderness: Entrepreneurship and the Founding of New England Towns in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991)]; and Louise Breen recently argued that although the Puritans were deeply divided in their views on society, even those orthodox personages who were uncomfortable with the vagaries of the transatlantic economy "positively encouraged the kind of individualism and hard work necessary to build productive family farms and trading networks." [Louise Breen, *Transgressing the Bounds: Subversive Enterprises among the Puritan Elite in Massachusetts, 1630-1692* (New York, 2001), 52.] For survey treatments that divide the Puritans' economic acumen and religious spirit, see, for example, Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York, 2001), 174-186.

in other time periods, in other subfields of early American history, and in religious studies, however, have created new opportunities for investigation of the complex relationship between religious belief and economic action, and provide the opportunity for a systematic reinvestigation of this important topic. After a brief survey of the new terrain upon which historians of early American religion now find themselves, this article will return to the Moravians—a group long viewed as the proof text for older secularization models, and conveniently also at the crossroads of more recent historiographical interpretations—to argue that by focusing on the changing and historically contingent nature of the concept of “religion,” a much more nuanced picture of the intersection between the two is revealed.

The core insight of Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* was both seductive and fascinating. In the early modern era, the Reformed Protestant nations of northern and western Europe provided the hearth for modern capitalism, and the colonies they settled followed suit to become economic leaders. Ultimately, Weber argued, religion became unnecessary in a modern, capitalistic economy, but in the meantime it was the essential midwife. This startlingly succinct theory of how two of the most significant aspects of the human experience related in history has bequeathed historians of religion some of their most basic assumptions. Key among them, as stated recently by David Gary Shaw, is the idea that “religion within our grand historical stories was an anti-modern element, and discussions of early modern, modern, and postmodern history tend to assume religion’s attenuation, compartmentalization, or decline.”⁵ Early American historians of the middle decades of the twentieth century, who (like the vast majority of the discipline’s practitioners) preferred investigations of the specific to explicit interrogations of

⁵ David Gary Shaw, “Modernity Between Us and Them: The Place of Religion within History,” *History and Theory* 45 (December 2006), 1-9, quotation p. 4. See also Butler, “Theory and God in Gotham,” esp. 53-54.

theory, elaborated Weber's theory by demonstrating that key elements of the transition from the early modern to the modern occurred within their allotted terrain of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then set to the task of determining exactly when religion participated in the birth of the modern economy and then faded away. Two core questions account for most of the discussion: when and how did religion give way to economic innovation,⁶ and, for those who doubt the former, how did religious belief actually aid in the growth of the modern economy.⁷

⁶ Pivotal works emphasizing the relationship between religion and economic life which have argued for (or assume) the corrosive influence of capitalism on religion include Miller, *New England Mind: From Colony to Province*. Miller's nuanced arguments avoided many of the pitfalls ascribed to his work by subsequent generations, yet on balance he sought to explain "how economics might dilute religion," a classic formulation setting the religious and the material at odds. For further statements of economics as the causal force behind the decline, see especially pps. 44, 49, and 51. Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years* (New York, 1970); and Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967). Stephen Foster altered the locus of the conflict, but concurred in the ultimate erosion of the "Protestant ethic" [*Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England* (New Haven, 1971), 99-126]. Notable for its uncritical adoption of Miller's ideas in recent years is Phyllis Whitman Hunter's *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World: Massachusetts Merchants, 1670-1780* (Ithaca, NY, 2001). For Quaker Pennsylvania, see Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1948).

⁷ Significant works arguing for a conjuncture of religion and economic development include Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth*, Peterson, *The Price of Redemption*, Martin, *Profits in the Wilderness* and Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*. T. H. Breen and Timothy Hall argue for the mutually reinforcing influences of expanding commercial networks and expanding religious networks during the 1740s in "Structuring Provincial Imagination: The Rhetoric and Experience of Social Change in Eighteenth-Century New England," *American Historical Review* 103 (December 1998): 1411-1439. Many scholars looking to connect ongoing religious belief with economic innovation have emphasized the key role of individualistic evangelicalism or revivalism. See, for example, Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, and Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Culture of Puritan New England* (New York, 1995), though the two emphasize substantially different dynamics. See also Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York, 1991). Seller's interpretation of religion, particularly his categories of "arminian" and "antinomian" has been debated widely. See Daniel Walker Howe, "Charles Sellers, the Market Revolution, and the Shaping of Identity in Whig-Jacksonian America," and Richard Carwardine, "Charles Sellers's 'Antinomians' and 'Arminians': Methodists and the Market Revolution," both reprinted in Mark Noll, *God and Mammon*, 54-74; 75-98. Mark Valeri has challenged the idea that evangelicalism rested comfortably with capitalism. See Mark Valeri, "The Economic Thought of Jonathan Edwards," *Church History*, 60 (March 1991), 37-54. Valeri has also made similar arguments for Edwards' Puritan and Calvinist predecessors. See his "Religion, Discipline, and the Economy in Calvin's Geneva," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28 (Spring 1997), 123-42; and "Religious Discipline and the Market: Puritans and the Issue of Usury," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 54 (October 1997), 747-68. For a succinct summary of this

Of course, the idea of a fundamental transition from the early modern to the modern has exerted influence far beyond religious history. Social, economic, and legal historians of early America in particular have looked for a shift from a communal before to an atomistic after, and while their treatments usually assume rather than demonstrate the decline of religion, these works add weight to the general belief that religion mattered more in earlier historical periods than it would later.⁸

For historians operating under Weber's broad theoretical rubric, religion was therefore a thing of the past, belonging to a kind of society that no longer exists. Stated as it is here, in its baldest form, few active historians would subscribe explicitly to such a narrative. Obviously, religion continues to matter. Additionally, the form of investigation such an argument requires, looking for typologies and drawing broad based assumptions about "society," have fallen from vogue for historians. Whether the divide proposed is chronological (between early and recent American history) or geographic (between New England and the Chesapeake) it sounds like a caricature. Nonetheless, the effort to label some times and places as "religious" (carrying with it the reciprocal assumption that religion did not matter in other places), has shaped the broad

literature, see Carla Gardina Pestana, "Cultures of Colonial Settlement," in Karen Halttunen, *A Companion to American Cultural History*, 20-21.

⁸ For discussions of a transition from a cohesive to an atomistic society, the concepts of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, have been instrumental. In the context of early American history, they are most closely associated with Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1978). For the impact of these concepts and social science approaches to society more generally, see the pieces by James T. Lemon, Gary B. Nash, and especially Joyce Appleby in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, Md., 1984). In the 1980s and early 1990s, a different form of the same question was asked in the "transition" debate. For the historiography of this moment, see Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 46 (January 1989), 120-144; for a recent sophisticated treatment of the question, see Naomi Lamoreaux, "Rethinking the Transition to Capitalism in the Early American Northeast," *Journal of American History* 90 (September 2003), 437-461. Legal historians who have labored on similar terrain include Bruce H. Mann, *Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1987); and Deborah A. Rosen, *Courts and Commerce: Gender, law, and the Market Economy in Colonial New York* (Columbus, OH., 1997). It should be noted, however, that few of these works deal explicitly or intensively with religion, looking instead at more generalized conceptions of "community."

outlines of early American religious historiography, even if it now feels hollow in the specific application.⁹ This discomfort is a positive sign, however, for it reflects the methodological innovations that have come in the last decades in other aspects of early American history, and history more generally, and these innovations pave the way for renewed, critical attention to religion as a motivating force in economic choice.

Three methodological innovations in particular have opened the way for new theories. The first comes from scholars of religious studies and modern America, who have directly addressed the assumption that religion would die out in the modern age far more directly than early Americanists have. The reason is obvious: religion has quite evidently not disappeared in the present, nor, arguably, even waned in influence. Neither is its role in America in any way simple or unifaceted. As Jon Butler recently wrote, the central problem for historians of modern religion is “religion’s surprising adaptability to modernity’s conditions, certainly outside Europe, as well as the adaptability of modernity to tolerate or absorb religiosity.”¹⁰ In other words, as religion adjusted to modern (and postmodern) social, cultural, and economic circumstances, it

⁹ That some places (particularly Massachusetts) are depicted by historians as “religious” and others as “non-religious” can be seen in Jack P. Greene’s highly influential *Pursuits of Happiness*, 7-27. When Greene (p. 28) challenges the foregoing paradigm, he seeks to unseat New England’s normative power, not reevaluate the role of religion in Virginia. Rather, Virginia is characterized as a place where social institutions are weak and religion develops only because social elites see it will be useful, despite the religious intents of the original Virginia company organizers (p. 11-12, 16-17). David Konig argues that while Virginia showed initial Puritan influence, and while Virginia and Massachusetts had similar legal cultures through the seventeenth century, they diverged substantially after that. David Thomas Konig, “The Virgin and the Virgin’s Sister: Virginia, Massachusetts, and the Contested Legacy of Colonial Law” in Russell K. Osgood, ed., *The History of the Law in Massachusetts: The Supreme Judicial Court, 1692-1992* (Boston, Mass., 1992), 81-115. For recent scholarship that challenges the traditional depiction of Virginia as without faith, see Rebecca Anne Goetz, “From Potential Christians to Hereditary Heathens: Religion and Race in the Early Chesapeake, 1590-1740,” (Harvard University, PhD Dissertation, 2006); Edward Bond, *Damned Souls in a Tobacco Colony: Religion in Seventeenth-Century Virginia* (Macon, Ga., 2000); James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1994), 391-418. Perry Miller argued for the importance of religion in Virginia more than a half century ago. Perry Miller, “Religion and Society in the Early Literature: The Religious Impulse of the Founding of Virginia,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 6(1949), 24-41.

¹⁰ Butler, “Theory and God in Gotham,” 53.

changed forms without necessarily declining in influence.¹¹ This realization has led to two insights for scholars of modern religion, each separately useful to early Americanists. First, a diverse and vital religious environment quite evidently exists in tandem with complex economic structures, fundamentally undercutting the old Weberian paradigm. The second conclusion grows from the first: if religion exists where it ought not, what scholars mean by “religion” has to be interrogated in much more nuanced ways than hitherto has been the case.¹²

Freed from teleological expectations of religion’s decline, scholars of modern religion have found myriad intersections between the religious and the economic. They have also

¹¹ Studies of the religious and the economic after 1860 abound, and many are refreshingly free of the early Americanists’ preoccupation with, as Mark Noll recently described analyses of the period before 1860, religion’s “role in either retarding or accelerating the turn to markets.” Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York, 2002), 16. Noll proposed the thesis that “[m]oney in the first decades of the new American nation was everywhere on the minds of church leaders and many of their followers,” yet he goes on to note that this flourishing of narrow studies has not led to a reappraisal of the grand narrative in the period before the Civil War, *God and Mammon*, 7-8. Examples of this work include the essays in Noll’s collection, particularly in Part II; the subject of religion and economy also appeared prominently in a recent reassessment of the early republic: Stewart Davenport, “Liberal America/Christian America: Another Conflict or Consensus?”; Amy Dru Stanley, “Wages, Sin, and Slavery: Some Thoughts on Free Will and Commodity Relations,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (Summer 2004), 279-288. Scholarship on the nineteenth century also includes a significant number of works relying on a conflict model to explain the interplay between religion and economic life. See, for example, Kenneth Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens, Georgia, 1997); William R. Sutton, *Journeymen for Jesus: Evangelical Artisans Confront Capitalism in Jacksonian Baltimore* (University Park, Penn., 1998); Stewart Davenport, *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon: Northern Christians and Market Capitalism, 1815-1860* (Chicago, 2008), and Mark Y. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protest Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1994). An older, still influential work is Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). For an overall historiographical survey of this literature that emphasizes the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Robert Wuthnow and Tracy L. Scott, “Protestants and Economic Behavior.”

¹² For theoretical works that address the historically contingent nature of the category of religion, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, 2003), and *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, Md., 1993); Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, 2007); Tisa Wenger, “‘We are Guaranteed Freedom’: Pueblo Indians and the Category of Religion in the 1920s,” *History of Religions* 45 (November 2005), 89-113; Susan Rosa and Dale Van Kley, “Religion and the Historical Discipline: A Reply to Mack Holt and Henry Heller,” *French Historical Studies* 21 (Autumn 1998), 611-629; David Chidester, “The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlach of Rock ‘n’ Roll: Theoretical Methods for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (Winter 1996), 743-765.

elaborated the idea that the opposing concepts of “religious” and “secular” are deeply problematic and historically contingent, and they set an agenda of complicating, rather than generalizing, the ways that religion and economic action come to bear on one another. Nor is eschewing broad generalizations about the role of a unitary “religion” in a unitary “economy” a dodge of a central question. It uncovers a rich territory of religious life, of lived religion, that played an important role in the creation of American culture even as it defied easy categorization. Leigh Eric Schmidt, for example, has explored the complex relationship between “commerce, Christianity, and consumption” in American holidays, while assuming neither that commercialization has drained the American religious festival of its spiritual content nor that development of the mass market had no effect on the practice of piety. His words about the thorny relationship between Christianity and the consumer culture of holidays apply equally well to the broader subject. It “was, by turns, symbiotic and conflictual, complementary and contested.”¹³ Following this model, historians of early American religion can take a cue from those who work in the present and unbind their narratives from the assumptions implicit the grand narrative of modernity without losing track of the central question of how the religious influenced the economic. In short, by looking for many manifestations of religion in economic choice, a much wider spectrum of interactions becomes clear.¹⁴

¹³ Historians of modern America also lament the lack of attention to the question of religion and economic life, though it receives much more attention in recent history than it does in the earlier period. See the recent forum in *Religion and American Culture* on “American Religion and Class,” especially the contribution from Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp. Schmidt, *Consumer Rites*, 13-14.

¹⁴ See, for example, Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying & Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton, 1995); Larry Eskridge and Mark A. Noll, eds., *More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2000); T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York, 1981); R. Laurence Moore, *American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York, 1994); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, 1995).

The idea that religion itself was a malleable concept, constantly being redefined in relation to new cultural circumstances and encounters fits neatly with one of the most important methodological innovations in early American history in recent decades. Often called the cultural or linguistic turn, the trend has been so widespread as to become almost invisible.¹⁵ Cultural historians seek, in Rhys Isaac's words, "to decipher important beliefs, values, and aspirations in a society." Scholars working in this vein have demonstrated that society's most basic elements, such as race, gender, and national identity, were the subject of continued cultural construction, rather than existing as transhistorical constants. Although Carla Gardina Pestana has recently asserted that these methodological developments have "had less influence on historians of early America than on those working in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," the dominant trends among early Americanists reflect the influence of cultural history. Two avenues of research have been especially influential: the study of cultural exchange among the white, black, and native residents of the American continent (as Pestana highlights); and the complicated interplay between cultural encounter, race, gender, and power—a central concern of cultural historians and now a major thrust in early American historiography more generally.¹⁶

¹⁵ For a succinct summary of these historiographical developments, particularly from the perspective of a religious historian, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), esp. 63-85 and 130-155. For considerations closer to early American history, see Philip J. Deloria, "What is the Middle Ground, Anyway?" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 63 (January 2006), 15-22, esp. 18-19; and Pestana, "Cultures of Colonial Settlement."

¹⁶ Any discussion of cultural history in early America must also include mention of Rhys Isaac's *The Transformation of Virginian 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). Unfortunately for this study, however, Isaac explicitly rejects the idea that his is a religious history. Quotation, p.6. Pestana, "Cultures of Colonial Settlement," quotation p. 17. Prominent works emphasizing race, gender, and cross-cultural contact include, for example, Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, & Anxious Patriarchs* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996); Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006); Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York, 2004); Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca, NY., 2002). This field of inquiry has been pursued less thoroughly by scholars interested in religion, but there are important exceptions. See, for example, Jane Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians & Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2003);

The seminal works in these lines of inquiry, while not generally concerned with religion, offer methodological innovations of significant utility to the study of religion. Richard White's 1991 work, *Middle Ground*, for example, described the process of cultural encounter in the Great Lakes region as a process by which whites and Indians "constructed a common, mutually comprehensible world." White's "middle ground" was a place where different groups engaged in "a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings," a cycle that gave birth to "new meanings and through them new practices." Cross cultural engagement, in this paradigm, was neither linear nor peaceful, and never uncomplicated. Quite the opposite, it was a complex process of negotiation carried out through everyday encounters as well as high level diplomacy.¹⁷ Religious encounters too take on more complicated characters when cast in this light. What it meant to be Christian, or to be saved, emerged not from cut-and-dried theologies but through the shared experiences of those who embraced and rejected those beliefs. What White did for studies of the white-Indian relations, Kathleen Brown did for the field of gender history, introducing the notion of a "gender frontier." She elaborated this notion through the study of transformations in the historically-contingent discourse of gender.¹⁸ In both these cases, categories that were seen as concrete were reconfigured as processes undergoing constant regeneration. White's and Brown's insights, along with the many others who work in these fields, have transformed the methods used by early Americanists, so that the idea that religion

Rebecca Anne Goetz, "From Potential Christians to Hereditary Heathens"; Sarah Rivett, "Empirical Desire: Conversion, Ethnography, and the New Science of the Praying Indian," *Early American Studies* 4 (Spring 2006), 16-45. Aaron Fogleman has argued that violence against the Moravians reflected their violation of the early modern "gender order." Aaron Fogleman, *Jesus is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2007).

¹⁷ Richard White, *Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ix-x. See also Philip J. Deloria, "What is the Middle Ground, Anyway?"

¹⁸ Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, esp. p. 5-6.

was not a static category is hardly revolutionary, though its implications have only barely begun to receive attention.

Matching their colleagues' emphasis on the changing constructions of meaning, early American religious historians have incorporated the cultural turn and related movements as a call to shift their analyses from examinations of religious authorities, theologies, and institutions to an invigorated study of "lived religion." "Religion," in other words, was not merely the formal institutions of churches, but the many kinds of religious experience that early Americans embraced. As with so much in the field, it was a scholar of Puritans, David Hall, who led the way, but many others have followed, privileging the widespread experience of the "spiritual" (taken to include witchcraft, the occult, and folk belief as well as more traditional Christianity) over religion as defined by church attendance or formal theologies.¹⁹ In addition, those interested in the intersection of race and religion have investigated how religious discourses shaped cross-cultural encounter.²⁰ Yet relatively few have interpreted this shift as a call to look at the role of economic life in lived religion, a lacuna that surprises given that so much of ordinary life was concerned with the procuring of one's daily bread and so many of the field's dominant works from an earlier generation addressed it directly.²¹ Despite this inattention, however, the shift towards cultural history has already offered a few promising contributions.

¹⁹ Formative early studies of lived religion in early America include David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Ma., 1989), Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Ma., 1992). See also Leigh E. Schmidt, "Religious History and the Cultural Turn," in Karen Halttunen, *A Companion to American Cultural History*, 406-415.

²⁰ Jane Merritt, *At the Crossroads*; Rebecca Anne Goetz, "From Potential Christians to Hereditary Heathens"; Sarah Rivett, "Empirical Desire: Conversion, Ethnography, and the New Science of the Praying Indian." See also Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²¹ Key exceptions to this trend are Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth* and Mark Peterson, *Price of Redemption*, though they both speak explicitly to a Weber/Miller paradigm. For a particularly interesting blending of material culture, religion, and economics, see Mark A. Peterson, "Puritanism and Refinement in Early New England: Reflections on Communion Silver," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser.58 (April 2001): 307-346.

Cynthia Van Zandt, for example, provided a fascinating portrait of Isaac Allerton, which recasts financial disputes often depicted as moral transgressions into examples of cross-cultural encounter between the Plymouth colonists and the more Dutch-influenced Allerton. Michael McGiffert pondered the spiritual condition of the same man in a highly contemplative piece that relishes in the complicated nature of the intersection between religious belief and economic action in people's lives. Notably, each of these articles takes a microhistorical approach, privileging finely-nuanced readings over sweeping generalizations.²² This tactic differentiates their arguments sharply from earlier efforts concerned with finding the essential religious character of a place using broad, social measures. Rather than seeking to determine whether a society was "religious" or "acquisitive," as if the terms themselves had a timeless and fixed meaning, the methods of the new cultural history encourage scholars to interrogate the meaning of religion or economic action in a particular historical moment.²³

Work in recent American religious history and early American historiography stemming from the cultural turn each point to the utility of focusing on religion as a shifting historical category, and also viewing the intersection between religion and economic action in historically contingent ways. The variety of potential interactions such investigations would uncover comes to the fore through work done in the third trend relevant for the present subject, that of Atlantic

²² Cynthia J. Van Zandt, "The Dutch Connection: Isaac Allerton and the Dynamics of English Cultural Anxiety in the *Golden Eeuw*," in Rosemarijn Hoefte and Johanna Kardux, eds., *Connecting Cultures: The Netherlands in Five Centuries of Transatlantic Exchange* (Amsterdam, 1994), 51-76; Michael McGiffert, "Religion and Profit Jump Together," *Early American Literature*, 40 (2005), 145-161. Microhistories of the intersection between religion and economic life in early American account for a significant portion of the work produced in this area in recent years. See, for example, Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (New York, 1994). Works focusing on early modern Britain include Margaret C. Jacob, and Matthew Kadane, "Missing, Now Found in the Eighteenth Century: Weber's Protestant Capitalist," *American Historical Review* 108 (February 2003): 20-49 and Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, Ca., 1985).

²³ For a particularly insightful example from Latin American history, see Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

history, an area of research now so pervasive it led David Armitage to quip that “we are all Atlanticists now.”²⁴ Atlantic history has forced early Americanists to confront the myriad ties that linked early American culture, economy, population, and government to other parts of the world. The principal result of this for religious historians has been to place narrow early American religious trends into larger narratives, such as the international Puritan movement of the seventeenth century or the rise of evangelicalism throughout the Atlantic world in the eighteenth, but it has also carried with it the recognition that early American religious communities, as all other forms of community, were far less homogenous, and certainly less closed, than we had previously assumed.²⁵

The historical reality of religion was as messy as the present is, albeit in markedly different and essentially important ways. It was as often a source of conflict as it was one of community, and even Protestant Christians lived in a world populated by the reality and the specter of religious outsiders.²⁶ Moreover, the early American population was undeniably diverse in backgrounds, beliefs, and outlooks. Religion therefore did not serve as the essential cement for a cohesive communal experience. On the contrary, it was often a source of division,

²⁴ There is a large and burgeoning literature on the Atlantic World. For key works, see David Armitage “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York, 2002), 11-27. Quotation, p. 11; and Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Ma., 2005).

²⁵ See, for example, Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570-1700* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991); Frank Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening”* (Princeton, 1999); Carla Gardina Pestana, “Religion,” in Armitage and Braddick, *The British Atlantic World*, 69-89.

²⁶ William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654-1800* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2005); Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York, 1999). Good examples of reconfiguring traditional religious historiography to account for the impact of ethnic and racial diversity is Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002); and Rachel M. Wheeler, “‘Friends to you Souls’: Jonathan Edwards’ Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin,” *Church History* 72 (December 2003): 736-765.

discord and violence.²⁷ Colonial settlements were never isolated from the racial, ethnic, or religious “others,” and their communities consequently had to confront the essential elements of religious difference and religious choice in much the same way modern religious communities do. Throughout the colonial period, Baptists, Catholics, Jews, and Indians, to name only a few, served as theoretical and actual “others” against whom majority groups defined themselves and the idea of “religion.” A “marketplace of religion,” albeit much more pronounced after the Revolution era, also existed before the penning of the Constitution, and the tendency for religious groups to splinter certainly predated the settlement of Virginia. Few if any residents of British North America could claim to live in communities where their values were seamlessly or uniformly shared by all their neighbors and their governments.²⁸

The consequences of Atlantic and cross-cultural paradigms for the study of the intersection of religion and the economy have been fruitful, indeed the majority of recent works that have touched on the subject emerge from this literature. Working in Atlantic contexts, several historians have begun to acknowledge the spectrum of ways that the religious and the economic intersected, a fact that comes as no surprise, given that both religious historians and economic historians would easily acknowledge the transatlantic nature of their fields. The diversity of their examples is enticing, suggesting that religious actors employed their beliefs frequently, and yet in situationally-specific ways. April Hatfield found an important role for Protestant identity in the trading networks based in early Virginia. Renate Wilson traced the role of Halle Pietist money in two very different ventures: the communalistic settlement of Protestant

²⁷ Aaron Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*; Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2007), esp. 14-21.

²⁸ The idea of a marketplace of American religion is elaborated (though not originated) in Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churched of America: 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992), esp. 17-21. For a treatment that takes this analysis before the revolution, see Boyd Schlenker, “Religious Faith and Commercial Empire” in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), 128-50.

Salzburger refugees in Ebenezer, Georgia, and the role of the pharmaceutical trade in supporting Halle's pietist missionaries. A. Gregg Roeber argued that German immigrants to North America used innovative economic tools to protect and nourish their religious and ethnic communities. Frank Lambert chronicled the easy relationship between evangelical itinerant George Whitefield and the commerce of print culture, an international venture from the start, while Boyd Schlenker has argued for the intertwined nature of the British commercial and religious empires.²⁹

For the most part, these scholars, each speaking to a different audience with different aims, have not seen themselves as part of a single methodological innovation, neither have they argued that they have collectively offered a new paradigm for understanding the intersection between the religious and the economic. Yet such disparate works do show much. Each investigates the interdependence of religious and economic action in a setting where their subjects had to contend with and negotiate larger social and economic forces they could not hope to control. This is, I would argue, the central insight of Atlantic history for those studying the religious and the economic in early America: individuals constantly defined and redefined what "religion" meant as they engaged the economy, yet their choices were always constrained by practical realities and they rarely had the privilege of dealing only with others who shared their beliefs. If each such moment could be lined up next to each other by an omniscient historian, the diversity of religious beliefs and of economic situations would render it impossible to reduce them to an equation or causal relationship of the sort so neatly espoused by Weber. Nor is one

²⁹ April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2004); Frank Lambert, *"Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton, 1994); Harry S. Stout, *Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, 1991); Renate Wilson, *Pious Traders in Medicine*; Renate Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, Agriculture, and Commerce in Colonial America" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1988); A. G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore, Md., 1993); A. G. Roeber, "'Troublesome Riches': Protestant and Catholic Stewardship of a Capitalist World," *Amerikastudien*, 42 (1997), 357-375; Schlenker, "Religious Faith and Commercial Empire."

required, as it is the negotiation between these aspects of life, rather than any imagined stable relationship, that preoccupied the residents of early America.

The Moravians provide a good avenue for the conscious reexamination of the interplay of religion and the economy along these lines because they lie at the nexus of the trends outlined above. They were, perhaps, the quintessential Atlantic community, extending from central Europe to the Caribbean and from Greenland to South America. Because of their missionary work, and because they were always a minority in any society in which they lived, they dealt explicitly with the religious diversity of British North America. Just as important, they left an abundance of records, both narrative and financial, allowing a rich and textured examination of their religious and economic choices. Last, they provide a good case study because they have often been just that. Scholars since Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch have used the small group to illustrate how religion influenced economic choices, and vice versa.³⁰ The following attempts to apply the methodological approach outlined above: first, it draws on the work of scholars of recent religious history by looking for many, varied intersections between religion and economic action freed from the teleological burden of proving or disproving religion's decline in a market economy; second, it incorporates the practices of cultural history, specifically close attention to

³⁰ The Moravians' engagement in the market economy was overlooked by two of the leading figures of the study of how religion influenced economic development, Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch. Neither interpretation represents the Moravians' economic engagement with a great deal of accuracy, however. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1930; London: Routledge, 1992), 96, 134-36; Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (1931; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 719-21, 788-90. Bethlehem's religious and economic history has been the subject of four monographs. Most significant are Beverly Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (Philadelphia, Penn., 1988) which argued that the demise of the communal system led to secularization in the town, and Gillian Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York, 1967) which compared Bethlehem to the central European Moravian town of Herrnhut. See also Jacob John Sessler, *Communal Pietism among Early American Moravians* (New York, 1933) and Helmuth Erbe, *Bethlehem, Pa.: Eine kommunistische Herrnhuter-kolonie der 18-jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1933). For a similar study focusing on Winston Salem, see Michael Shirley, *From Congregation Town to Industrial City: Culture and Social Change in a Southern Community* (New York, 1994).

historically-contingent categories of “religion” and “economic action” and the process of negotiation that characterized their intersection; and, last, from Atlantic history, it assumes a diversity of experience in the early American religious landscape, rather than any uniformity, even within a specific denomination. A detailed examination of the Moravians that pays attention to how the group defined its own religious and economic actions suggests the value of reopening research into this vital area of religious experience.

William Penn’s “Holy Experiment” drew widely diverse people to Pennsylvania for varied reasons, but few visitors were as colorful as Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. The count, also known as Louis Thurnstein when he wished to shed his aristocratic titles, was a Saxon nobleman, theologian, and religious enthusiast who had had the good fortune to lead his own religious community. His followers, who came to be known in English as the Moravians, traced their roots to the pre-Reformation Protestant followers of Czech martyr Jan Hus. Within a short time of taking refuge on Zinzendorf’s Saxon estate in 1722, however, the group took on a new form heavily influenced by German Pietism. In under two decades, Zinzendorf’s combination of exuberance, wealth, and connections helped the Moravians grow from a small band of refugees into a major force in the spread of early evangelicalism throughout the Atlantic world. The Count’s belief that the experience of rebirth need not be a painful one differentiated him and his followers from mainstream Pietists, and the distinctively joyous piety embraced by the Moravians proved attractive to spiritual seekers in Europe, Great Britain, and North America.³¹

³¹ For a general overview of the early Moravian history, see Craig Atwood, *Community of the Cross*, J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas*

Zinzendorf's "blood and wounds" theology emphasized Christ's sufferings on the cross and the sinner's ability to commune directly with the Savior. His language was filled with graphic metaphors of Jesus' physicality, but the nurturing image of the Savior's lap was more indicative of the Moravians' relationship to Christ than the emphasis on blood might imply. Typical of their daily piety was the record left by the Swedish Moravian Sven Roseen, who lived in northeastern Pennsylvania in the 1740s: "After I had been in the woods also, reflecting on the Wounds, I preached to the people here, at eleven o'clock, on the words (1Cor. 5:20) 'Be ye reconciled to God.'"³² For Roseen and his colleagues, personal reflection led directly to evangelism, and both centered on a message of redemption offered by Christ's death. Indeed, according to the 1740 General Synod in Gotha, held just before Bethlehem's founding, the "Plan" of the Renewed Moravian Church was "to preach Jesus the crucified to the hearts" of all people, and "to make the word of the merits of the wounds of Jesus [the Moravian Church's] first and last thing and the motivation of all its doings from this hour until [its] end."³³ In less than two decades, the small community grew to encompass a network of thousands, attesting to the movement's appeal and its effective missionizing.

Moravian expansion around the Atlantic, and the subsequent interplay in the group's religious and economic lives, depended on two contradictory facets of Moravian development.

Fratrum, 1727-1957 (Bethlehem, Penn., 1967); and Dietrich Meyer, *Zinzendorf und die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine, 1700 - 2000* (Göttingen, 2000). For Moravianism in the context of the German Pietist movement, see Dietrich Meyer, "Zinzendorf und Herrnhut" in Martin Brecht, ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus, Bd. 2, Der Pietismus im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1995), 5-106.

³² Craig D. Atwood, *Community of the Cross*. For Roseen's narrative, see William N. Schwarze and Ralf Ridgway Hillman, *The Dansbury Diaries: Moravian Travel Diaries, 1748-1755* (Camden, Me., 1994), quotation p. 7.

³³"ans Hertz zu predigen Jesum den Gekreuzigten, und zu machen, daß das Wort vom Verdienst der Wunden Jesu ihre erste und letzte Sache, und das Triebwerk aller ihrer Handlungen von der Stunde an bis an ihr Ende wird." Computerized transcription of the Gotha Synod Protocol, 1740, File 4, p. 18, R.2.A.3.A1, UAH. For German pietism and missionary work, see Hermann Wellenreuther, "Pietismus und Mission. Vom 17. bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts" in Hartmut Lehmann, ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus, Bd. 4* (Göttingen, 2004), 166-193

First, members embraced the egalitarian and ecumenical tendencies within early evangelicalism wholeheartedly and found within that style of faith a seemingly bottomless drive for missionary work. They eschewed sectarian division and definition in favor of communion with a broad range of Christians, and became some of the most active evangelists of the eighteenth century. Yet the Moravians simultaneously offered no challenge to the economic and social hierarchies of the day. Quite the contrary, they worked pragmatically within the worlds they found at hand, from the aristocratic society of Saxony to the merchant capitalism of London and Amsterdam and the plantation economies of the Caribbean. A natural tension thus existed within the community between egalitarian evangelicalism and social hierarchy, but with characteristic energy the Moravians avoided being hamstrung by the issue (primarily by simply ignoring it) and used the varied economic environments in which they found themselves to promote spiritual awakening.³⁴

Religious zeal repeatedly invited economic innovation. The Moravians made the most of their connections by using Zinzendorf's noble status and the privileges it afforded to gain access to places such as the Danish West Indies, which would otherwise have been unreachable. Once there, they purchased a sugar plantation, and the slaves to work it, in order to support their mission. The plight of the enslaved drew their energies, but they avoided any message of earthly freedom and therefore did not present an ideological challenge to the slave economy of the islands. Instead, the gaze of Moravian missionaries remained squarely on the redemptive message of Christ's sufferings to the exclusion of nearly all else. The Caribbean story was replicated, a decade later, in Pennsylvania, where, as the arguments in the Musch case

³⁴ Evangelicalism's challenge to the social and racial hierarchies of eighteenth century America is discussed in Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 161-177 and *passim*. See also Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, Ill., 2003), 172-177.

demonstrate, the desire to spread the Gospel led the Moravians to found a communitarian settlement at Bethlehem. The exigencies of survival in the backcountry alongside the expenses of missionary work dictated that economic endeavor be a central part of the project. Two intertwining drives thus propelled the Moravians. Their desire to share the gospel energized them to move throughout the globe and connected them with peoples far from the hills of eastern Saxony. Their need to pay for those expensive activities engaged them directly in the Atlantic economy.³⁵

Moravian religious and economic lives were deeply interconnected, but such statements need not be the end of analysis of how their religious and economic choices and priorities influenced and shaped each other. By examining how religion motivated the Moravians to act in the economy and by asking what economic actions they viewed in religious terms, a subtle engagement between the religious and the economic emerges. Three examples bear mentioning here. First, the distinctly pragmatic communalism erected at the Moravians' Pennsylvania base of Bethlehem provided the format for the Moravians' most active form of religion, their missions, and also their most striking and unique economic choice, the decision to pool their labor in Pennsylvania into a collective whole. Second, in the experiences of a single individual, a second and very different set of negotiations appear. Merchant Henry Van Vleck made a fortune off his Moravian ties, but he interpreted his actions as a form of religious devotion and sacrifice. Last, by returning to the example with which we began, Jacob Musch, interdependent nature of "religion" and "economy" for the Moravians becomes clear. In each of these cases, the role the Moravians conceived of for "religion" in economic choice differed, even to the extent that it was not uniformly shared by all members of the community. Looked at together, they suggest that religion influenced economic choices in widely divergent ways.

³⁵ Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival and A Separate Canaan*.

The decision to build a communitarian settlement in Bethlehem resulted directly from that town's role in the Moravians' international plan: to support missionary work in eastern Pennsylvania and, more broadly, the western Atlantic world. Indeed, the town's intimate relationship to missionary work, and thus to the economics of evangelism, differentiated it from other large Moravian communities precisely because it provided the impetus for communalism. Missionary work also became the core of religious expression for Bethlehem. Although those living in the tightly-regulated community followed a detailed plan of worship services and participated in the near constant celebration of rituals, the same was true in any number of Moravian communities. Only in Bethlehem, however, were the earthly labors of everyone explicitly linked to the support of missionary work. In this sense, the religious value of Moravian communalism existed solely in its effectiveness as a basis for evangelization, and religion, in the form of missionary work, was a motivating force for economic action for residents.³⁶

Although its justification can be found in missionary projects, the economic flexibility that marked Moravian communalism drew on a variety of precedents. An Atlantic perspective

³⁶ In general, Moravian settlements were not economically communitarian. The German towns of Herrnhut and Herrnhag, for example, and others in Great Britain and the Netherlands, were termed *ortsgemeinen* [congregation towns], exclusive Moravian towns designed to nurture the piety and spirituality of those living within them. These settlements had in common close communal governance and an intensely coordinated pietist lifestyle, but they presented no challenge to the economic environments in which they existed. Just as Zinzendorf never renounced his aristocratic privileges, residents of the *ortsgemeinen* did not live in a community of goods. On the contrary, the 1727 "Manorial Injunctions" governing Herrnhut stated explicitly that "Each inhabitant of Herrnhut shall work and eat his own bread. If he is old, sick, or incapacitated, however, the community will sustain him." Thus, while Herrnhuters and residents of other *ortsgemeinen* submitted to church authorities in almost all matters, they retained independent households and pursued their own fortunes. For discussion of the *ortsgemeine* ideal, see Sommer, *Serving Two Masters*, 10-32. Beverly Smaby also gives a schema for the distinction amongst the various Moravian communities in *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 25. The Brotherly Agreement and Manorial Injunctions appear in Hans-Christoph Hahn and Hellmut Reichel, *Zinzendorf und die Herrnhuter Brüder: Quellen zur Geschichte der Brüder-Unitat von 1722 bis 1760* (Hamburg: Wittig, 1977), 68-80.

points to the example set by the August Hermann Francke's Halle Pietists. That group, in conjunction with the Georgia Trustees and the Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, blended commercial and religious goals when they designed the settlement of Ebenezer, Georgia. The Ebenezer group even employed a limited communitarian system for a time. European Moravians had also been highly creative when it came to economic endeavor, again building on the Halle model to meet their own specific needs. Moravian textile firms in Saxony demonstrated the community's deep engagement in the market economy, and mission sites around the globe sported commercial establishments alongside their more obviously "religious" efforts. In other words, a willingness to bend and blend economic forms in order to support religious goals was, in itself, not innovative, and it had proven highly useful in a variety of settings before Bethlehem was founded. Moravian communalism in Bethlehem must therefore be placed within a context of diverse economic action on the part of the Moravians and their peers.³⁷

³⁷ For Halle's financial organization, see Renate Wilson, *Pious Traders in Medicine: a German Pharmaceutical Network in Eighteenth-Century North America* (University Park, Penn., 2000); Renate Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, Agriculture, and Commerce in Colonial America." One of the more remarkable artifacts of American historiographical paradigms on religion and the economy is American scholars have emphasized the communal (and putatively anti-market) nature of Bethlehem and Salem, while European scholars have long assumed a deep level of market engagement by the Moravians. For a recent survey of Moravian economic ethics, see Peter Vogt, "Des Heilands Ökonomie: Wirtschaftsethik bei Zinzendorf," *Unitas Fratrum*, 49-50 (2002), 157-172. Works on Moravian economic history emphasizing Europe include, most importantly, Otto Uttendörfer's two books: *Alt-Herrnhut: Wirtschaftsgeschichte und Religionssoziologie während seiner ersten zwanzig Jahre, 1722-1742* (Herrnhut, 1925); and *Wirtschaftsgeist und Wirtschaftsorganisation Herrnhuts und der Brüdergemeine von 1743 bis zum Ende des Jahrhunderts* (Herrnhut, 1926). See also Gisela Mettela, "Kommerz und Fromme Demut: Wirtschaftsethik und Wirtschaftspraxis im 'Gefühlpietismus'," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 92 (2005), 301-321; Gutram Phillipp, "Wirtschaftsethik und Wirtschaftspraxis in der Geschichte der Herrnhuter Brüderemeine," in Mari P. Buijtenen, Cornelis Dekker, and Huib Leeuwenberg, eds., *Unitas Fratrum: Herrnhuter Studien/Moravian Studies* (Utrecht, 1975); Ilse Tönnies, "Die Arbeitswelt von Pietismus: Erweckungsbewegung und Brüdergemeine; Ideen und Institutionen: Zur religiös-sozialen Vorgeschichte des Industrialisierungszeitalters in Berlin und Mitteldeutschland," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel und Ostdeutschland*, 20 (1971), 89-133, and 21 (1972), 140-183; Hans-Jürgen Schrader, "Unleugbare Sympathien: Roentgen/Schreibtische, Magnetismus und Politik in Goethes *Unterhaltungen deutscher*

Also significant for understanding Bethlehem's economic structure is the fact that nowhere in the Moravian world is there significant evidence of ideological resistance to market exchange, provided it was carried out in a moral fashion. Bethlehem was never a utopian experiment. Quite the contrary, the Moravians understood they worked in a larger market economy over which the little band of missionaries had no legal influence. They attended to its many possibilities, as well as to the financial hazards of resisting its common practices. Indeed, Count Zinzendorf reportedly said that all trade must be carried out in the names of individuals because to trade in the name of the *Gemeine* as a whole created the appearance of a community of goods. This, he continued, "was in all ways to be avoided, in order to silence other inconveniences." Avoiding even the suggestion of an ideological or theological commitment to communalism, the Moravians' intellectual approach to that particular economic form was thus both wary and functional.³⁸ In 1747, Bethlehem's leaders stated outright that their collective economy served practical ends: "Our communal housekeeping is only out of need. It is no point of religion, much less of blessedness." It was useful because "it is advantageous for the servants and maids of Jesus that many a one can be used [for religious work] who otherwise, through [the need to pursue] his own economy, would be hindered." Economic efficiency, necessitated by the central importance of missionary work, was the primary reason for Moravian communalism.³⁹

Ausgewanderten" in Andreas Härter, et al. eds., *Dazwischen: Zum Transitorischen Denken in Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft* (Göttingen, 2003), 41-68; W. W. Ward, "Zinzendorf and Money," in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, eds., *The Church and Wealth* (Oxford, UK and New York, 1987); Hans Wagner, *Abraham Dürninger & Co., 1747-1939* (Herrnhut, 1940); Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds*, deals with both Europe and America.

³⁸ "das hat einen Schein der Gemeinschaft der Güter, welchen man auf alle Weise meiden soll; anderer *inconvenienzen* zu geschweigen." R.2.B.45.2.a, UAH.

³⁹ "Unsere Gemeinschaftl. Haußhaltung ist nur aus Noth, Es ist kein punct der Religion, viel weniger der Seligkeit. Aber es ist vortheilhaftig vor die Knecht u. Mädge Jesu, daß mancher kan gebraucht worden, welcher sonst durch seine eigner Haußhaltung würde daran verhindert worden." Helfer Conferenz Minutes, May 6, 1746, MAB. I am grateful to Vernon Nelson, retired archivist of the Moravian Church, Northern Province, for bringing this quotation to my attention, and for his translation, which I have used here with minor alterations.

Members donated all of their labor to the community and gave over the right to choose occupations or marriage partners, as the latter choice was seen as intimately connected to the former. They lived in communal dormitories, ate in shared dining rooms, and wore clothes made in communal shops. Certainly, shared religious practice united them as well, as they gathered for a constant stream of prayer, sermons, and song-services. Yet these activities did not demand communalism, while missionary work, they believed, did.

The pervasiveness of religious justifications for economic activity in Bethlehem defined the category of “economic” for the Moravians as a profit-driven series of market engagements. When Bethlehem’s leaders agreed that their primary religious goal was the support of missionary work, they then turned a coolly calculating eye on the town’s economy. The broad outlines of the Oeconomy suggest remarkably little concern for the moral implications of economic engagement *per se*. Businesses were founded and then eliminated based on financial opportunity. Moravian storekeepers and artisans entered into business relationships with co-religionists and also with whoever offered the best price. Work performed for the community itself was quantified alongside work that brought in much-needed cash. Balance sheets, produced at the end of a regular fiscal year, allowed for the careful monitoring of the project’s financial health. Bethlehem’s religious commitment to missionary work simultaneously validated economic activities and justified the conduct of those activities in ways that seemingly prioritized the bottom line above all. It also, over time, facilitated the development of increasingly complicated economic forms, such as corporate structures, insofar as they too earned funds for missionary work.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), chapters 2 and 4.

Moravian communalism both resembled and differed from other early American communalisms, and a comparative perspective highlights the range of ways that the religious and economic could come together to produce even as distinctive a form as communalism. Although all such “intentional communities” had some purpose that mirrored the Moravians commitment to missionary work, the varied relationship between that purpose and economic action is notable. Because Bethlehem was not economically utopian, its communal structure was never driven primarily by the desire to reject or reform market relationships or the belief that changing economic relationships would improve the nature of community. The Moravians theorized on none of these issues, and did not require members of the Oeconomy to sign over their assets, merely to donate their labor. In this sense, it differed from many, better known, nineteenth-century communitarian experiments. Both the Shakers and the New Harmonists, for example, required that members give their wealth to the community, a transfer that made leaving those communities very difficult and furthermore reflected a belief that relationships free of economic content would be more spiritual. Though the Moravians shared a certain financial acumen with these communitarian groups, both of which were known for successful businesses, in those cases religious commitment necessitated the *rejection* of the economic self, an action never required of the Oeconomy’s members, and thus underlying attitudes towards the market economy differed considerably.⁴¹

⁴¹ The Moravians’ unity of purpose and religious devotion bore some resemblance to other eighteenth-century communitarian groups, although caution should prevent generalizations about such varied communities. Geographically, ethnically, and temporally, the Moravians were most closely related to the seventeenth-century Women of the Wilderness and to Conrad Beissel’s Ephrata Commune, both of which settled in southeastern Pennsylvania. The same vibrant religious environment in central Europe that produced the Moravians gave rise to all these groups, including George Rapp’s early nineteenth-century Harmony Society, but the Moravians differed from their compatriot communalists in several significant ways. First, the personal influence of Beissel, Rapp, and Johannes Kelpius on their respective communities was undeniable, and, in the former two cases, led to significant conflict within the communities. Zinzendorf’s central position in the Moravian church notwithstanding, Bethlehem lacked a

Bethlehem's communal structure represents one very distinctive intersection between the religious and the economic among the Moravians. Members of the community living outside Bethlehem, who were excluded from the Oeconomy, had available to them very different understandings of how religion influenced or justified their economic choices. A notable example is New York merchant Henry Van Vleck, who made his fortune from his links to the Moravian church. Van Vleck's business career reflected the lofty potential of the Atlantic economy in the mid-eighteenth century, and also the power of evangelical religion to shape an

single, charismatic leader for the majority of this period. Zinzendorf resided far away and was in constant motion, two factors that prevented the Moravian church from depending wholly on his will or personality. Spangenberg was on the spot in Pennsylvania, but his personal deference to authority from Herrnhut, particularly Zinzendorf's, kept him from assuming the sort of pivotal leadership role one often finds in communitarian groups. Second, the Moravians did little more than flirt with millennialism. While Beissel, Rapp and Kelpius felt the end times were imminent—even calculable—Spangenberg, Zinzendorf, and the Moravians emphasized instead Christ's role in this world and their nearness to him. The sense of urgency and anticipation that accompanied deeply millennial movements was subdued among the Bethlehem community. Third, unlike other German groups and the Shakers, the Moravians never embraced celibacy, avoiding what can only be described as a source of serious stress in those societies. Last, Moravian spirituality was not limited to its communitarian towns. A member could be a full and equal member and yet not live in a common household. This diversity of living arrangements, which, like the limitations on Zinzendorf's influence, also resulted from the size and geographical diversity of the church, militated against the idea that a truly religious life necessitated forsaking the wider world. The Shakers followed the principle of "joint interest," wherein members gave over their assets to the community when they joined. Believing this transfer to be a religious duty and therefore irrevocable, members were not able to reclaim their goods if they chose to leave the Shakers. George Rapp's Harmonists also adopted communalism after migrating to America. Combining their assets provided the group with economic stability and protection while they established their first town of Harmony in western Pennsylvania, and, according to the 1805 Articles of Association, members surrendered their assets to a common treasury. Like the Shakers, however, Rapp believed that an individual's commitment to the commune was permanent. As early as 1808 the return of property to dissenting members became a problem, one that continued to plague the community until after George Rapp died in 1847. The literature on communal movements, particularly in the nineteenth century, is vast. For a good overview of early American communitarian groups, see Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), especially the articles by Donald Durnbaugh and Karl J.R. Arndt. For works that explore communal movements related by religious groups related to the Moravians, see also Stephen L. Longenecker, *Piety and Tolerance: Pennsylvania German Religion, 1700-1850* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1994); and E. G. Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1985). For the Shakers, see Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), esp. 40-49, 92-93; and Priscilla J. Brewer, "The Shakers of Mother Ann Lee," and Karl J. R. Arndt, "George Rapp's Harmony Society," in Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias*.

individual's life and economic choices. He was born in 1722 in New York to a Dutch Reformed family. As an adolescent he was apprenticed to a devout merchant, Thomas Noble, and through his master's connections he came to know both spiritual awakening and the Moravians. When, as a newly-wed, he inherited Noble's business, he had already become a cornerstone of the small but pivotal New York Moravian community. He and his wife requested the privilege of moving to Bethlehem, but "The Brethren advised me, however, to remain in New York and serve the Savior there." The decision proved fortunate for Van Vleck financially, as "Not long after, we were consigned goods by a merchant in England, who was in business with the blessed Noble." Once again, Moravian leaders in Bethlehem encouraged him to pursue his business. "I was doubtful about accepting [the goods]," Van Vleck later wrote, "but the Brethren said to me I should accept this opportunity from the hand of the Savior for my outward success. I did it and was happy, and the said merchant as well as others trusted me all the more, whereby the Savior evidently blessed me, so that my credit was established in a short time."⁴²

Van Vleck never abandoned his desire to remove to Bethlehem, and he ultimately did so in 1773, nearly thirty years after his initial request. In the meantime, however, he became the Moravians' principal agent in New York, managed the western end of their Atlantic trade, and performed numerous other duties that relied on his fortune and his position. He also placed his children in the Bethlehem schools, and continued to submit his life to the oversight provided by Moravian leaders. His close ties to the community notwithstanding, his dealings with the Moravians were only a small portion of his business. He owned part of four different transatlantic vessels, imported dry goods on a number of other ships, and maintained a store on

⁴² Van Vleck's Lebenslauf, MAB.

the city's docks. He rose to a position of prominence in New York City, and eventually served two terms as Dock Ward's City Assessor.⁴³

Quite the picture of the merchant capitalist, Van Vleck's spiritual life shaped his economic choices in radically different ways than would have unfolded if he had moved to Bethlehem. Indeed, based on his spiritual autobiography, the presence of the "religious" in his economic life probably had a great deal more to do with his personal sacrifice in remaining in New York than it did with missionary work directly, as would have been more characteristic of someone in the Oeconomy. He certainly knew of and supported the Moravian community's religious work. He helped out missionaries when it was needed, and he purchased shares in the international Unity's Commercial Society, a joint-stock venture designed to support evangelical outreach. But his personal labors did not go to aid missionary work in the way they would have if he worked, wage-free, in one of Bethlehem's shops. Yet while "religion" may have meant personal sacrifice to Van Vleck, it nonetheless helped him become a very wealthy individual, even as the community's approbation of and reliance on his international business efforts validated his work and justified what had been for him the less desirable path.

It is also worth noting that just as Moravian commitment to missionary work as a religious expression defined Bethlehem's economic sector, so Van Vleck's religious commitments, in the form of his work for the Moravian Church, may have enabled him to act more freely as an apparently "secular" businessman in other contexts. Individual motivations are

⁴³ For Van Vleck's business, see, for example, advertisements and notices, *New York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post Boy*, 9/11/1749, 9/18/1749, 6/18/1750, 12/5/1757, 12/19/1757; *New York Mercury*, 9/19/1757 (pp. 3, 4), 9/26/1757, 10/3/1757, 7/21/1760 (supplement). The ships are the *Irene*; *Hope*; *Two Brothers* (*New York Gazette*, 1/17/1757); *Concord* (*New York Mercury*, Supplement, 7/21/1760); *Charming Rachel* (*New York Gazette*, 6/18/1750); *Prince of Wales*, and *Lamb* (*New York Gazette*, 12/5/1757). For business connections, see Henry Van Vleck Receipt Book, NYHS; Joseph A. Scoville, *The Old Merchants of New York City*, Third Series (New York: Carleton, 1865), 182-83; Virginia D. Harrington, *The New York Merchant on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 185.

notoriously difficult to tease out absent direct statement by the person involved, but the fact that most of Van Vleck's activities on behalf of the Moravians were mirrored by activities with non-Moravian counterparts is suggestive. It is quite possible that the former provided implicit sanction for the latter, and that merchant Van Vleck did not worry his actions transgressed moral barriers, even when his trading partners were not Moravian, because he knew his actions met with church approval.⁴⁴ If he imported goods on the Moravian community ship for which he was trustee, what harm could arise from engaging in the dry goods trade for a reasonable profit for himself? Moravian economic ethics, crystallized in Zinzendorf's belief that what mattered was the spirit behind an action rather than the action itself, relied on self- and community-regulation. This outlook was perfectly suited for international commerce, as it demanded nothing of one's counterpart and everything of the Moravian, and yet it still permitted the Moravian to act in the world when it came to what they called "outward" or worldly affairs.⁴⁵

Van Vleck made his fortune in no small part through the Moravians, so for him, religion and profit did jump together. The same can not be said of Johann Jacob Musch, the young man who sued the community in 1766 for what amounted to breach of contract. The disagreement between Musch and the Moravians revolved around differing definitions of how the religious and the economic intertwined, and a careful reading of his story indicates that despite the Moravians' comfort with economic engagement, for them and for their fellow Pennsylvanians

⁴⁴ For treatments of religion and merchants communities, see Thomas Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986); Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*; Bernard Bailyn, *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*; Nuala Zahedieh, "Making Mercantilism Work: London Merchants and Atlantic Trade in the Seventeenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 9 (1999), 143-158; J. F. Bosher, "Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant International in the Seventeenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., 52 (1995), 77-101; and Jonathan Howes Webster, "The Merchants of Bordeaux in Trade to the French West Indies, 1664-1717" (Ph.D. diss. University of Minnesota, 1972).

⁴⁵ For Zinzendorf's attitude towards commerce, see Uttendörfer, *Wirtschaftsgeist*, 48. For a broader Moravian outlook on the subject, see Commerce Committee Minutes, R.4.A.51.1b, UAH.

economic action nonetheless provided a measure of religious authenticity. In short, economic actions were used to define religion, the reverse of what was evident with Van Vleck's career or Bethlehem's communalism.

The two sides offered very different descriptions of Musch's time in Bethlehem at the trial, without disagreeing much about the underlying facts. Each side claimed the other was corrupt, acting out of selfishness and greed, rather than in a spirit of honesty. Musch argued that he had struck a fair bargain. He had promised to work for the Moravians without wages, and they had promised to care for him in perpetuity. "It was said to him that in Bethlehem there would a common housekeeping," claimed Ross, Musch's lawyer, in his opening statement, and that "every person who belonged to this society had his own personal share in the common property, in so far as he contributed to the common good through the work of his hands." According to Musch, these were the conditions under which he agreed to come to America and join the Bethlehem system. When the Moravians asked him to leave, after having held him in a state of dire poverty for years, they violated the contract. "After he had spent the best years of his life for the advantage of this Society, had lived in the hope that in his old age he would be able to enjoy peacefully the equal measure of his work and effort, only then did the Brethren give him to know that he could not longer live with them, and he was *de facto* sent away and excluded from further contact with the community." Musch felt that if the Moravians did not provide him with a lifetime of support, then they should have to pay him as if he had worked outside of the Moravian community all those years—a total of £500 in his calculation. His case, which painted in detail what he viewed as the Moravians' greed and perfidy, effectively asked jurors to punish the Moravians for their sins and deny them the reputation of having respectable religion.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Nachricht vom Muschischen Procez in Pensylvania 1766, UVC X 143a, UAB.

The Moravians had an easier job in defining Musch's behavior as sinful, and theirs as representing authentic religion. In court, witnesses for the Moravians argued that Musch was of low moral character, unworthy of participating in a religious endeavor. They testified to his being a difficult and even whiney co-worker, but the most damning evidence came from Andreas Weber, who had served on the committee that ejected Musch. "He started to treat his co-workers despotically, and caused real discord, which for us is the greatest vice," reported Weber. In other words, Musch failed to act the part of the willing laborer, making it harder for others to do their service with a cheerful heart. Though this may well have been viewed as an "economic" sin within the Oeconomy, he also reportedly joined it with other, more straightforward examples of greed. "He secretly bought himself Strong beer, Rum, ham and other things out of the money that had been entrusted to him [in the cobblers shop]," Weber continued, "he also got for himself a fine shirt, fine stockings, a beaver hat, and other clothes. ...When he was asked about it, he claimed it was from his own money, that he had received from Germany, and everyone knew that he had received nothing." Weber got angry as he described Musch's behavior, saying that if Musch were honest, he would have to confess right then that he had never had any hope of money from Germany. But even that was not the end of Musch's transgressions. "He did not use his time well, and instead of working, and keeping an eye on the workshop, he went hunting and fishing all too often, and he even did this on holy Sunday." On these grounds, Musch lost the case. His wayward character ultimately served, through the public venue of the trial, to reinforce the Moravians' reputation as missionaries and as Christians, and to reify for the public at large the fact that one who committed economic sins was not authentically religious. Of course, such a fact was hardly news to early American Christians, but the Musch trial gave cultural saliency to otherwise abstract belief.

One final observation arises from the Musch case. Economic actions defined “the religious” on much smaller levels as well. That benighted cobbler may have viewed the Oeconomy in purely self-interested terms, at least according to his lawsuit, but during his time in Bethlehem he must also have known how to create the impression that he was dedicated to the community. He lived in Bethlehem for nine years before being ejected, and during that time he had to have participated in a great number of religious services, and he would have had to submit his life to the close organization and monitoring of church leaders. Although there is no way to know for sure, it seems likely that he viewed these performances as economic choices too—as specific costs—made worth it by facilitating the ends he wanted: a life of relative comfort. His choices offer the mirror image of Van Vleck’s. Economic goals demanded religious sacrifice in the form of unwanted religious performance. For him religion existed in economic terms.

Religion motivated Moravian economic activity in a variety of ways. That very variety suggests several conclusions. First, the religious and the economic did not, for the Moravians, exist primarily as separate categories. Priorities derived from religious beliefs, such as the desire to sacrifice for the community or the drive to spread the Gospel, had a direct impact on what sort of economic choices were possible. Bethlehem’s leaders could not allow unprofitable businesses to survive, even if they viewed the work in them as having a spiritual component, because they needed cash for the higher goal of missionary work. Likewise, Van Vleck’s commitment to community obedience, certainly a religious value for him, delayed his desire to move to Bethlehem by decades, indeed beyond the life-span of the Oeconomy. Because his first choice of economic pursuit was not available, he became a successful international dry goods merchant. Moreover, in the case of both the Oeconomy and Van Vleck’s business, the calculated pursuit of

profit—the fundamental shape of economic activity for each—was enabled by its relationship to a larger religious framework. Religious commitments both motivated and defined the realm of the economic. Economic actions motivated and validated what passed for “religious.” Yet the boundaries between the two were never stable. Individuals like Musch, and the wide diversity they represented, demonstrate that the religious and the economic were not merely interdependent, they were in a constant process of engagement and reengagement.

Second, and equally important to understanding any larger picture of the interplay of religion and economic life in early America, is the diversity of contexts in which individuals and groups negotiated the religious in their economic choices. That a surprising number of such moments (including that of the Moravians) emerges from scholarship on the Atlantic world, and from related work on cross-cultural encounter between various peoples in North America, suggests that early Americans may have been pushed towards conscious assessment of both their religious values and their economic choices by the myriad of cross-cultural encounters that marked three centuries of early modern exchange. Merchants working in international finance were often dealing with counterparts who did not share their own cultural frameworks. This fact undoubtedly accounted for the preference, noted by many scholars and shared by the Moravians, for intra-religious trade over extra-religious contact. Yet religious frameworks developed by those who engaged in trade despite the reality that it meant dealing with religious “others” may well have provided new platforms for economic exchange.

Last, the diversity of experiences regarding the relationship of the religious to the economic to emerge from even as small and tightly coordinated group as the Moravians suggests the difficulty of drawing community or even denomination-wide conclusions about attitudes towards developments as historically complicated as the rise of the market economy. Individuals

may well have entertained deeply personal or unique views about economic action, and while some may have met the approval of religious leaders, as Van Vleck's did, others, like Musch, may not have. That diversity should not render the role of the religious in the economic just so much background noise; however, it should make scholars attentive to religion as one of the contexts that framed economic choices in a myriad of historically specific ways. A systematic reassessment of how religion motivated economic activity in early America is unlikely to result in a single theory or generalization. It will, however, provide a valuable new lens for understanding a rich aspect of lived religion.