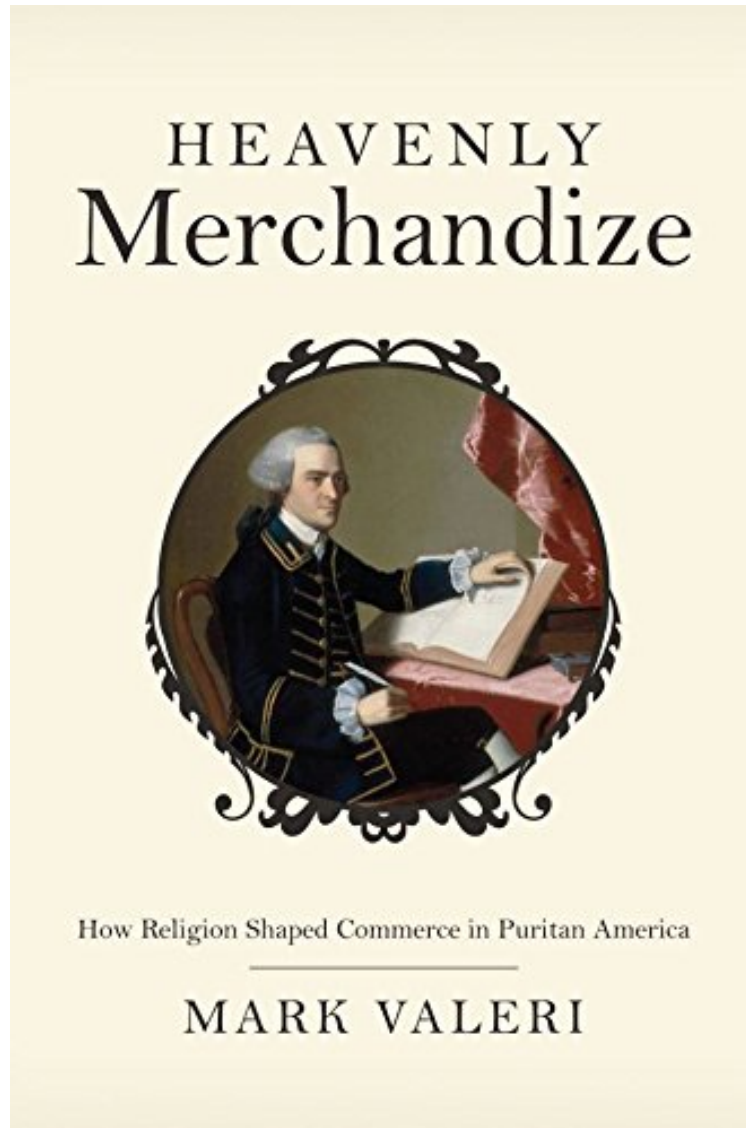


(Free pdf) Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America

# Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America

Mark Valeri

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**Mark Valeri : Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A detailed complex account of early American market cultureBy Jonathan AndersenMark Valeri provided readers a summary of his book in the opening line of the preface where he stated that, "This book explains how transformations in religious thought contributed to the creation of a market

culture in early America." Valeri grounded this story of transformation by employing the biographies of prominent New England merchants and ministers throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. During these hundred years, America experienced a drastic shift in religious and public understanding of a market economy. This understanding had its foundations long before this period and extends to today. Valeri proceeded chronologically through this period and detailed how ministers' shifting views regarding church discipline, providence, and the political sphere influenced views of markets by merchants in their congregations and the wider culture. Early Puritan ministers sought to teach merchants the faith and ensure that their work conformed to the church's teachings on usury, greed, and other sins connected with money. However, as the political situation changed alongside the ministers' views of providence, government began exercising moral supervision over economic affairs. This supervision, which was deeply influenced by a desire for hegemony over Catholic countries, legitimated market ideas and practices that had previously been condemned and led to a shift in moral thinking among ministers and merchants. The combination of all of these developments led to the establishment of the market economy used by all and questioned by few. The strengths and weaknesses of the book lie with Valeri's vast knowledge of economic, political, and religious history. His knowledge enabled him to paint a complex, nuanced, and detailed picture of the transformations during this period. However, at times this complex and nuanced picture that he filled with details of names, dates, and details obscured the larger themes Valeri sought to relay. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very Nice. By Customer Very Nice. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. an insightful and important book. By Douglas A. Hicks Mark Valeri takes his readers on an engaging and entertaining ride through Puritan thought on the economy, showing how Christian leaders shifted their perspective in critical dialogue with commercial developments. It's a complicated, and fascinating story, and Valeri is the person to tell it. An essential book for anyone interested in the relationship of faith and economics.

Heavenly Merchandize offers a critical reexamination of religion's role in the creation of a market economy in early America. Focusing on the economic culture of New England, it views commerce through the eyes of four generations of Boston merchants, drawing upon their personal letters, diaries, business records, and sermon notes to reveal how merchants built a modern form of exchange out of profound transitions in the puritan understanding of discipline, providence, and the meaning of New England. Mark Valeri traces the careers of men like Robert Keayne, a London immigrant punished by his church for aggressive business practices; John Hull, a silversmith-turned-trader who helped to establish commercial networks in the West Indies; and Hugh Hall, one of New England's first slave traders. He explores how Boston ministers reconstituted their moral languages over the course of a century, from a scriptural discourse against many market practices to a providential worldview that justified England's commercial hegemony and legitimated the market as a divine construct. Valeri moves beyond simplistic readings that reduce commercial activity to secular mind-sets, and refutes the popular notion of an inherent affinity between puritanism and capitalism. He shows how changing ideas about what it meant to be pious and puritan informed the business practices of Boston's merchants, who filled their private notebooks with meditations on scripture and the natural order, founded and led churches, and inscribed spiritual reflections in their letters and diaries. Unprecedented in scope and rich with insights, Heavenly Merchandize illuminates the history behind the continuing American dilemma over morality and the marketplace.

Winner of the 2011 Philip Schaff Prize, American Society of Church History Shortlisted for the 2011 American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence in the Historical Study of Religion One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 2010 "Valeri's reading of theological sources is so satisfying because he is a subtle, careful reader; he resists the temptation to smooth away contradictions, or to oversimplify; indeed, he seems allergic to polemic it is thus not surprising when, at the end of the book--just when the author might be expected to tip his hand about what all this market accommodation means--Valeri is maddeningly even-handed."--Lauren F. Winner, Books Culture "I found this book to be an outstanding contribution to our understanding of the working out of the Protestant ethic in colonial New England. Therefore, it is a major contribution to our understanding of American economic morality."--Donald E. Frey, EH.Net "Students of early New England will find this indispensable; it should also appeal to anyone interested in the relationship between religion and the larger culture."--Choice "[T]he effectiveness with which Valeri utilizes the small-scale cultural world of Puritan Massachusetts in the colonial era in order to examine developments that have wider ramifications, indicates that, as with Perry Miller and so many others, that time and place is still a fruitful laboratory for thick analysis of religiocultural change."--Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., Interpretation "Valeri's well-written case studies bring many rewards to the reader. They forcefully demonstrate that no one can understand the changing culture of early America without paying attention to religion."--R. Laurence Moore, Journal of Church History "The book is noteworthy as much for its method as for its conclusions. Valeri's inferences rise convincingly from his methodology, analysis, and rhetoric. . . . [H]andled artfully in an elegant narrative."--Barry Levy, American Historical "This book will certainly change the way both Puritan theology and economics are viewed and is highly recommended."--Suzanne Geissler, Anglican and Episcopal History "An important study. . . . [T]his stellar work breaks important new ground on

the complex drama of economics and religion in early modern America."--Robert E. Brown, *Religious Studies From the Back Cover*"Heavenly Merchandize is a compelling original exploration of moral conviction and commercial culture in early New England. Boldly challenging the view that the demise of piety was a condition for the rise of opportunistic market behavior, Valeri finds that New England's ministers and merchants were neither traditionalists eclipsed by a secularizing Atlantic world nor easy protocapitalists rushing into modernity. He discloses a commercial community that was intent upon righteous trading and pious living."--Cathy Matson, University of Delaware"Heavenly Merchandize is a magisterial account of the interplay of economics and religion in early America. In place of abstract theories of 'modernization' or 'the spirit of capitalism,' Valeri engages representative figures on the ground, and through their stories narrates the ways in which transformations in religious thought actually shaped a premodern market culture. Students of early American religion, economics, and imperialism will have to consult this seminal work."--Harry S. Stout, Yale University"Heavenly Merchandize treats the interconnected transformations of theology and the market in New England from earliest settlement in the 1620s to the mid-eighteenth century. The brilliance of Valeri's presentation is that he grounds it in the biographies and extensive testimonies of Boston merchants. In thoroughness, depth, scope, and significance, I rank this among a very elite group of truly seminal books."--Mark A. Noll, University of Notre Dame"An important and powerfully argued narrative. This work is large in scope and ambition. It assesses more than a century of change in the complex relationship between religious beliefs, practices, and disciplinary standards and the evolution of commercial and market behavior in colonial New England. Valeri takes his subject head-on and in full, knowing the pitfalls and the controversies that lie along the path."--Mark Peterson, University of California, Berkeley

About the Author Mark Valeri is the Ernest Trice Thompson Professor of Church History at the Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Virginia. His books include *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy's New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* and *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 17: Sermons and Discourses, 1730-1733*.