Our session on February 2, 2009, will focus on leadership in late colonial British North America (roughly 1730 to 1765). Our session will focus on the following leaders and issues:

1. William Shirley, Governor of Massachusetts from 1741-1759: political leadership
2. Pontiac, Ottawa leader who played a prominent role in "Pontiac's Rebellion": Native American leadership
3. Eliza Lucas Pinckney, member of a prominent South Carolina plantation: economic leadership
4. John Woolman, Quaker antislavery activist & Venture Smith, Connecticut slave who buys his freedom: leading voices responding to slavery
5. Benjamin Franklin: cultural leaders

This pdf has two readings. The first is chapter 2 of Edward Countryman's 1999 book *Americans: A Collision of Histories*. This is a general introduction to eighteenth century British North America. Here are some general questions to guide your reading:

1. What is the meaning of the chapter title?
2. In part I, Countryman argues that the old idea of colonial America as a westward moving frontier is not the most accurate way to think about it; why not?
3. In part II, he argues that all Americans faced the contradiction of valuing personal autonomy, but having to be subordinate to someone else. How did that contradiction play out for different groups of colonial Americans?
4. In part III, how does Countryman define "liberty" in the eighteenth century context?
5. In part V, what role did "custom" play in legal and economic terms?

The second part of the pdf includes an excerpt from Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. As you read the section, think about the following:

1. What words would you use to describe Franklin?
2. What was Franklin's plan?
3. How does Franklin explain his failure to keep to the plan?
4. Despite his inability to keep to this plan, why does he recommend it to others?
5. How do we explain the popularity of this work?
BRAUDEL'S AMERICAN MOSAIC

WRITING from "the perspective of the world," the great French historian Fernand Braudel once pictured colonized America as "a mosaic." Within it glittered "a hundred different colours: modern, archaic, primitive, or curious mixtures of all these." The "modern" was commercial capitalism. The "archaic" was a mélange of European, African, and Native customs that fit ill with capitalist development or imperial needs. The "primitive" was how Europeans organized other people's lives for their own benefit, without regard to the others' goals or interests.

Eighteenth-century colonial society included all the pieces of Braudel's mosaic, fitted into a pattern that was uniquely their own. The shocks of collision had mostly passed and a way of life without historical precedent had taken shape. America partook of both the European ancien régime and the American situation at the edge of empire. It was a place that Europeans were remaking in their own images, not just along the east coast but well into the interior. Already it was profoundly shaped by its Africans. Yet most of it remained firmly possessed by Native Americans, on terms that they negotiated with the invaders or that they simply imposed. This mosaic society was entirely American, but it was not what the Indians had made when they still ruled the continent. Nor was it what triumphant white people would shape when they became a separate nation and began driving toward complete mastery of that same continent.
and storage places for grain. Early in the sixteenth century the people of the Arizona and New Mexico pueblos numbered perhaps 248,000, "residing in 134 or more towns and villages." Most of the High Plains, Rocky Mountains, Great Basin, and Sierra Nevada/Cascades were still "unexplored" by whites, but these, too, were or had been densely inhabited. In 1620 a Spanish Franciscan estimated the Apaches of the southern High Plains at "400,000 souls." However accurate his count, the figure gives a sense of magnitude.

If we looked at the maps the Europeans drew we would see two lines that were new in 1763. One, running the length of the Mississippi, divided "Spanish" territory from "English." Linguistically and culturally, the French remained. Juridically and politically, however, they were gone. While the peace negotiators in Paris were working out the end of French rule, someone in England was drawing another line from Chaleur Bay on the New Brunswick coast to the crest of the Appalachians and then south to Spanish Florida. Supposedly, it separated Indians from the whites and Africans. In fact, it did nothing of the sort.

At the Mississippi's mouth and well upstream was a three-race community, whose people spoke Spanish, metropolitan French, African Creole French, Acadian (Cajun) French, and a mélangé of African and Native tongues. They hunted, trapped, farmed, traded, slept, and cooked together. Among their historical monuments is the region's rich cuisine, "creole" in every sense of the term.

South of the Great Lakes, was a "village world," just as mixed as the lower Mississippi and just as full of tensions. In 1763 conflict within it came to war, as Pontiac's Rebellion. The war was an attempt to bring all Indians together, not for the impossible dream of driving the whites completely back, but for the more realistic goal of securing regional Indian control against English pressure. It was linked to a religious revival inspired by Pontiac's brother, the "Delaware Prophet" Neolin. None of its goals was achieved. Projects for tribal unity failed to jell. Despite being besieged, the English at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), Detroit, and Niagara held fast. Defeat left the northwestern Indians only one more card to play, the possibility of an alliance with the British against the colonists. From the Iroquois to the Kickapoos, most Indians came to understand that fact. Many had long been part of the French imperial system; now they would be part of the British, full participants in trade and politics that reached all the way to London.

West of the coastal provinces, then, lay nations, cultures, and races that were rubbing against each other and sliding into each other's ways.

Turning east, and raising our perspective across the Atlantic, we would see still more of the mid-eighteenth century's continent- and ocean-spanning turmoil.

The peace of 1763 ended half a century of war among the European powers. Merchant vessels were safe against capture, and the Western Hemisphere wanted slaves. Among Britain's possessions, the southern mainland colonies wanted them most. Between 1761 and 1770, Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland imported more than 69,000 slaves, compared with Jamaica's 62,300, the 33,000 who went to Barbados, and the 68,000 who were taken to all the other British provinces combined.

These enslaved people were the product of another enormous world of tension and violence, where Europeans met Africans and Africans met one another. Within Africa, Muslims confronted "infidel" animists. Members of various speech groups and nations faced one another down. Just as different Native Americans responded to the Europeans in terms of their own needs, so did Africans. A Gola from Upper Guinea who was dragged onto a ship for Charleston might have been captured by Muslim Mandingos, who regarded war against pagans as a holy war, a jihad. That slave might also have been sold by an African ruler who wanted "the best cloth ... the most alcohol and ... the widest collection of durable goods for prestige purposes." If alcohol was the price, it might have been New England rum distilled from West Indies molasses that other enslaved Africans had produced. If the price was cloth, it might have been dyed with South Carolina indigo. Should such a great man be enslaved, "Europeans made every effort" to "rectify the situation [both from] fear of retaliation ... and a desire to protect trading interests."

African involvement in no sense excuses the European and white American shipmasters and merchants who took and sold the slaves, or the colonial planters, farmers, artisans, preachers, and politicians who presumed to buy other people's whole lives and progeny. Nonetheless, African cooperation happened.

Looking straight east, our perspective would show emigrant ships setting sail from Germany, Britain, and Ireland. Even when relations between colonies and metropolis were in tatters and war looked imminent, they kept coming. September 1775 was the last month when emigration was possible, and 1,115 people departed from British ports. The vast majority of them were Scots.

The numbers arriving in Philadelphia give a sense of the migration's scale. During the Seven Years' War, migrants numbered only in the hundreds and in 1756 there were only 85 altogether. After the peace
there were only two years, 1764 and 1768, when Philadelphia received fewer than 1,000 British migrants. In 1771 there were nearly 2,000. Migrants from Germany had fallen to almost nil during the Seven Years' War, after a period that had seen one annual migration of 8,778 (1749) and three others higher than 4,000. After 1763 there were two years when German migration approached 2,000; in all the rest it continued to number in the hundreds.  

Migrants leave one place because of reasons that "push." They go elsewhere for reasons that "pull." Different people's reasons for doing the same thing can vary, and within this westward flow there were many variations. From London and the south of England came single young men. Many were indentured servants, though not in the seventeenth-century Virginia sense. Servants came to work in Philadelphia's shops, in the iron foundries of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, and on farms in the wheat-growing hinterland. Migrants from the north of England, Scotland, and Ireland were different. They traveled in whole families, leaving places that they could bear no longer. Highland Scots, particularly, were refugees, fleeing drastic changes as Anglicized lairds evicted smallholding crofters and substituted herding for agriculture on their huge estates. In America these people went inland, settling in an arc from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, through the interior of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, as far south as the Carolinas. Most north country people were Evangelical Protestants but some Highland Scots were Catholics. The "Irish" were the Protestant descendants of Lowland Scots whom the English had resettled in northern Ireland. All these had learned to regard others—as enemies, almost automatically. It was with people of this sort that the land between the settled English provinces and the mixed-race, mixed-culture interior now began to fill.

Along the southern Atlantic coast planters liked to pretend that they were simply English gentlemen who happened to live across the Atlantic. They read English books and journals, copied English fashions, imported English goods. They imitated the practices of Britain's House of Commons in Virginia's House of Burgesses and South Carolina's Commons House of Assembly. Nonetheless, a southern plantation never was an American version of an English manor. Enslaved labor and staple-crop production made the tobacco plantations of Virginia and the rice and indigo plantations of South Carolina wholly American institutions.

Consider the South Carolina plantation known as Mulberry, built in 1714 near Charleston. From the front, Mulberry is a superb example of provincial elegance, a sign of its builder's cultural debt to the British metropolis and his commitment to South Carolina. Eventually it would be the home of Mary Boykin Chesnut, the Confederacy's great diarist. A view survives, however, that shows Mulberry as it looked in 1770 from the rear. Between the house and where artist Thomas Coram placed himself stood eight slave dwellings in African style. These and the great house vie to define the plantation's human space. Such clashes, rather than mere provincial mimesis, shaped the world that planters and slaves alike inhabited.

North of the Chesapeake, both society and the economy were more complex. By 1700, Boston's 7,000 inhabitants lived in a miniature London. Its artisans ranged from Benjamin Franklin's candlemaker father to shipwrights and goldsmiths. Harvard College linked both clergymen and the worldly elite to European learning. Printing presses spread the good news of Christian salvation, Puritan style. After 1707 newspapers brought worldly information that Bostonians needed. Boston vessels cruised the whole Atlantic Ocean. The need to finance voyages and insure ships and cargoes was creating a money market. Boston had become an entrepôt, a complex node of information, production, and exchange within the broad Atlantic web. By 1760 the same was true of New York and Philadelphia.

Early northern commerce had begun with furs, linking the Indians directly to Europe. By the eighteenth century, commerce linked all three American races to one another and to Europe as well. To this day the cuisines of New England, the West Indies, and southern France bear the mark of colonial trade in the form of salt cod. Yankees enjoy it as codfish cakes; Jamaicans like it fried with onions, tomatoes, and the tropical fruit called ackee; Provence knows it as morue. Until overfishing exhausted St. George's Bank and the Grand Banks, almost all of it came from American waters. By 1700 much of it was caught and salted by New England fishermen, packed in barrels made by New England cooperers, and shipped in New England-built vessels with New England crews. Those ships carried New England rum to Africa, slaves from Africa to the plantations, and plantation products to market, including the molasses that New Englanders distilled into more rum. Ships needed sails and rope, so a shipyard would generate sail lofts and rope walks. They needed metalware, despite the fact that in 1750 Parliament forbade the manufacture of colonial iron beyond the crudest stage of smelting. The southern colonies were economically and socially simple. The northern ones were complex.
Consider Benjamin Franklin, spending his youth in Boston. Harvard was not for him, but his father showed him each of the town's trades. Franklin had choices. When he became an apprentice in his brother James's printshop, he entered a world whose chief commodity was information, just as surely as for privileged students at the college across the Charles River. For Harvard students and apprentice printers alike, that world already spanned the Atlantic. However, Franklin found both James's printshop and the town of Boston stifling. Otherwise he would not have left for Philadelphia in 1723.

When Franklin arrived in Philadelphia, it was not much more than a shipping point, where the products of forests and fields changed hands. Franklin's career there was not a sign of what any American boy might do, because he was not any American boy. It does show what an emerging commercial center made possible. Philadelphia offered opportunities and for Franklin the biggest was the opportunity to create himself. Although he had not finished his apprenticeship, he began his new life at the higher level of journeyman printer. He formed connections that reached to the provincial governor. He tried his lot in London in 1725 and 1726, not with the idea of migrating permanently but to see the world. When he returned to Pennsylvania and became a master printer, his *Pennsylvania Gazette* and *Poor Richard's Almanack*, his job printing business, and his government contracts made him rich. He retired at forty-two.

While still an active printer Franklin organized a "junto" of rising men like himself, to share what they knew. After retiring he could afford to call himself a gentleman and live in cultured leisure. His electrical experiments won him world fame. He helped found Philadelphia's Library Company, the American Philosophical Society, and the city's hospital and college. He organized a militia and became its colonel. He challenged the Penn family, seeking to have the province's government transferred from them to the Crown. His honorary degrees from St. Andrews, Oxford, and eventually Harvard and his political success on the world stage all stemmed from leaving active business behind. Nonetheless, a deep continuity binds Franklin the printer, Franklin the civic builder, and the Franklin of world repute together: his own ability to use and distribute information for the world's benefit and for his own. Knowledge could be increased, exchanged, and used, rather than simply preserved and passed on. Franklin had begun to appreciate that point in his Boston youth, but Philadelphia offered a spectacular site for putting it to work.

Had Franklin gone farther south, settling, perhaps, in Charleston, South Carolina, he might have found far less chance to use his talents and far less reason for others to notice him. Charleston became rich in the eighteenth century, but its economy remained simple. It shipped rice and indigo to a market that was virtually guaranteed and it imported goods and slaves. Pennsylvanians faced greater challenges. Franklin's readers were farmers, millers, and bakers marketing grain, flour, and bread, shippers seeking cargoes, and craftsmen fending off competition. Franklin's self-appointed job as a printer and publisher was to give them information they needed. The gentleman Franklin of later years did much the same, but now philosophy, politics, high policy, and speculation in western land replaced prices current as the subjects of his interest.

[II]

By the third quarter of the eighteenth century parts of the east coast could have passed for Britain. Boston's lanes resembled London's Cheapside. Philadelphia's broad streets, Georgian buildings, and open squares looked much like London's newer areas, Bloomsbury, and the West End. The De Lancey family's rural Manhattan retreat included a stone monument. Lanes were cut through the woods to show the monument off, just as on a rich Englishman's lands. Philipse Manor in the lower Hudson Valley included a deer park. The lord of the manor sat beneath an ornate ceiling crafted by an English plasterer. George Washington had the wooden beams of Mount Vernon beveled to resemble the stone blocks of an English manor house.

Washington failed to enter the large transatlantic world. As a brash young militia colonel he found that his advice was rebuffed and that he ranked below the most junior British regular captain. He never got over it. But other colonialists made themselves at home in the big world. Staats Long Morris of New York rose to lieutenant general in the regular army, entered Parliament, and married a widowed duchess. Susannah De Lancey became Lady Susannah Warren and the mother-in-law of three peers. Benjamin Franklin returned to London as a major figure in culture and politics. A colonial sailor could feel just as at home on Liverpool's waterfront as on New York's.\(^{14}\)

Yet the colonies and their people were not really English at all. Though Indians went to London on business, Philadelphia and Charleston saw them far more often. England had roughly 10,000 black people
in 1770, but these were only one sixtieth the number in the colonies. Most of the American blacks were growing crops that British soil would never yield. The hills of Britain stood largely bare, stripped by centuries of tree cutting and sheep raising, their soil held in place by moorland and tussock. The Appalachians, about as tall as the British peaks, were still thickly forested. In England hunting was a gentleman’s privilege or a poacher’s crime. For the most part, it still is. In America it became virtually any man’s right. Mount Vernon was built of Virginia wood, not English stone.

In terms of race and class, freedom and slavery, religion and culture, gender and region, colonial people differed enormously. Yet they faced one contradiction running through their lives. Every colonial learned about a social ideal that put enormous stress upon personal autonomy. All of them lived, however, within a social reality of subordination to someone else. All were subject in some way to the will and purposes of another.

Natives came closest to living out the ideal that every single person should stand free. Woodland Indian children learned about respecting their community and conforming to its customs; they did not learn to submit to restraint or accept subordination. What the ancestors taught or the community required, an Indian might feel compelled to do. But nobody, not a chief or war leader or shaman or parent or spouse, could force the Indian to do it. European notions of political or even parental power are virtually useless for understanding how woodland Native communities worked. Both sides adopted the image of fatherhood to convey the relationship between European monarchies that were moving toward continental dominance and the Indian communities that filled most of the continent, but the image conveyed misunderstanding as much as it did agreement. To the Europeans, fatherhood, patriarchy, and power went together. It seemed to them that by accepting the imagery Indians were also accepting subordination. To Indians, however, a biological father was a kind and loving figure who exercised no power over his children. If that had to be done, their mother’s brother was the appropriate person. European and white colonial generals and politicians misunderstood time after time what Indians would do, and why. Nonetheless, the meanings fused in a creative process based as much on mutual misunderstanding as on actual agreement. Within this “process of mutual invention” each side acquired means for dealing with the other.

To Indians, personal autonomy was not an absolute human right, incapable of alienation. It went with belonging to a family, village, and clan. Belonging was one thing, however. Subjection in the sense that Europeans understood it was another. For Indians, only captives in war were truly subject, and even captives might be adopted into the community and restored to control of their lives. Yet once the invasion of America was complete the power of the great European monarchies did loom over them all.

Whites agreed that autonomy was good and that a person found it within society. The great majority could read the Bible, learning about the freedom of individuals from sin and the freedom of ancient Israel from its captivity in Egypt and Babylon. They could “know the truth” that would make them free; they were “called unto liberty” by no less a Summoner than the Lord. Nonetheless, their Christian freedom was tempered by commandments and injunctions: “servants, obey your masters . . . render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s . . . the Powers that be are ordained of God.” Only Quakers carried the notion of equality among all souls to its logical conclusion, regardless of worldly condition. In mid-century they were caught between their teaching, which pointed toward pacifism and hostility to slavery, and their situation, which pointed toward submission to authority and retreat from the world, as a peculiar people.

A would-be lawyer or magistrate who studied the English common law learned how its arcane procedures protected individuals and communities against the power of a ruler. For the male elite, there was college education: at Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale by the end of the seventeenth century, joined by the College of Rhode Island (Brown), King’s College (Columbia), the College of New Jersey (Princeton), and the College of Philadelphia (the University of Pennsylvania) in the mid-eighteenth. Anyone who went to college learned about “civic humanism,” a tradition of political thought that ran back to the seventeenth-century English Commonwealth, the city-states of Renaissance Italy, and classical antiquity. History books, dramas such as Joseph Addison’s Cato, political pamphleteering by both British and colonial authors, more abstract commentary by respected European thinkers: all these drove the same point home. In the good life a man stood free. He stood free, however, as the head of a family, not as an individual on his own, and the good life was easily lost.

For anyone who was black, or for a white who was born female, autonomy was visible, but it was also almost beyond reach. By the mid-eighteenth century virtually every black person in America was a slave, for life. This was as true in Boston, Albany, and Philadelphia as in
Williamsburg, Norfolk, and Charleston. In 1776 there were perhaps 6,000 black people in the whole Chesapeake whom no one claimed to own, a bare 2 percent of the area’s black population. Their example offered virtually no hope. Slaves who heard talk about liberty might have raged among themselves against what the whites had done to their lives. But slavery’s realm was everywhere and the North Star did not yet point toward freedom. Dishonored outsiders, captives of society rather than members of it, they had little basis for claiming the liberty that the masters enjoyed.

For single white women the situation was significantly better. They could hold property, make contracts, bring lawsuits, bear witness in court, administer estates, or run businesses. Unlike a black woman, a white’s body enjoyed the law’s protection; a man who raped her could hang for it. But full autonomy was almost as impossible a dream as for slaves. Being young and female meant being someone’s daughter, or dependent sister, or niece. Adulthood meant becoming a wife. Only a few women had any sense that they could control their own sexuality or fertility. Married adulthood meant submerging legal personhood into one’s husband’s. If a woman wanted to protect or control the property she brought to her marriage, male “trustees” had to do it for her. A white woman did count as a person at law, but when she married and became a femme coeuree, her personhood could virtually disappear.

Even white males experienced subordination, as dependent sons, apprentices, indentured servants, common sailors, or militia privates. Only when a man reached mastery—over land as a freeholder or over a trade as an independent craftsman—did he approach autonomy. Then he was ready to control someone else, as husband, father, master of apprentices, purchaser of indentured labor, or owner of slaves. Such a man valued what he enjoyed. It had cost him a high price and taken him over a long road. The course of his life and the visible example of black men and women, white females, and younger or poorer white men showed him daily what liberty was not.

The colonial world’s understanding of its key term—liberty—differed radically from ours. Its white men organized their sense of what was right as much around subjection as around liberty or autonomy. A precursor of Thomas Jefferson, formulating the colonial social creed, might have affirmed the self-evident truths that no person is equal to any other, that the rights people enjoy vary with their social stations, and that the foremost right of any person is to the protection that a more powerful person can offer. The distant British Crown offered a metaphor for the entire social order. Every wife, son, daughter, apprentice, and slave stood in subjection to the father of the household just as all subjects from servants to royal princes stood below the king. Their liberties sprang directly from their subjection. A subject in need could claim the king’s protection. The use of the same word—court—to describe the place in Westminster where the king encountered his subjects and the places throughout the realm and dominions where his subjects encountered the law is not accidental. Even in the distant colonies, people seeking justice approached a Court “of King’s Bench.”

In this sense, a slave’s situation was different in degree, not in kind, from that of anyone else. A slave’s “liberty” under the Crown was little more than the formal right to life. Deliberately killing a slave was murder, and the king’s justice could punish the guilty. In reality, punishment was nearly impossible, even if the murder was rumored to be particularly brutal, since slaves and free black people could not bear witness against whites. But just as “loyal” subjects could invoke the king’s protection by “humble petition,” slaves who accepted their situation could invoke their masters against virtually anybody else. So, at least, the half-articulated theory ran. Whether slaves actually accepted their situation and whether masters actually extended protection was another matter.

Whatever value Indians placed on autonomy, they understood that the weak needed the strong. The power of the six Iroquois nations was derived from the claim that their “Covenant Chain” could protect lesser tribes. They understood that the chain reached beyond them to the governor in New York City and the British Crown. For the Delawares, Iroquois protection meant becoming symbolic “women” and losing the right to conduct diplomacy and make war. The Delawares even had to submit when the Iroquois gave away their land at the fraudulent Pennsylvania “Walking Treaty” of 1736. The Delawares discarded their symbolic womanhood as soon as they were able.

In Indian-white relations womanhood was a metaphor as well as a biological fact. Mastery was a metaphor too. It had different meanings between owner and slave on a Carolina plantation, between proprietor and apprentices in a New York City printshop, and between fathers and dependent sons on rock-strewn New England farms. But the meanings were close enough so that any person involved in any of those situations could understand what the metaphor meant in the others. Mastery was good, even if most people would never enjoy it. Red, black, and white, male and female, rich and poor, “highe and eminent in power and dig-
nitie . . . meane and in subjection," all the people of colonial America understood that within their common situation, mastery of some sort offered the only road to freedom. The time for an Abraham Lincoln to meditate that "as I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master" was still far off.38

The colonials lived in a tough, unequal, violent world which is not to be romanticized. But given the realities of conflict and power and the premise of fundamental human inequality, that world did make sense. When the Massachusetts woman Mary Rowlandson fell into the hands of warring Indians in 1676, she turned without difficulty to the language of mastery and enslavement to describe her plight. She and her minister husband may well have held a slave or two of their own. If so, the tables had been turned. She did not like what had happened—who would?—but she submitted to it, as the will of an inscrutable God.29 The wonder, perhaps, is that the notion of equal human rights under the laws of nature and nature's comprehensible God could have emerged from a world so remote from any such idea as this.

[ III ]

For coastal white males, social conditions did reinforce the ideal of a person standing on his own. Yeoman farmers from New England to the deepest South wanted their own land, and they wanted to be certain that nobody could dispossess them. A man might endure tenancy, but most saw it only as a way station between poverty and possession. The Hudson Valley was lined by the middle of the eighteenth century with great tenanted estates. George Washington was beginning to replace slavery with tenancy, thanks to his decision about 1761 to shift his main crop from tobacco to wheat. In Old England tenancy could mean real prosperity. The tenant would hold a sizable tract under a titled aristocrat or county gentleman and could hire the "strolling poor" to labor when the need arose.30

In America, however, the idea developed that farming someone else's land, erecting fences around someone else's fields, planting fruit trees and building houses and barns that someone else would inherit, should hardly be a permanent situation. Where the landlord was benevolent, cohesive estate communities did develop. Tenants on Philipse Manor in the Hudson Valley or Sir William Johnson's Kingsborough straddling the Mohawk knew their leases would run for three lives, or ninety-nine years.

Following occasional English practice, some leases ran for 999 years. Both Frederick Philipse and Sir William conscientiously played the good landlord. Nonetheless, any American farmer wanted "his own vine and fig tree," in an image from the Book of Micah that they often invoked.31

Many white men did achieve that goal, particularly in New England and on the rich wheat-producing soil of eastern Pennsylvania. The latter became known as "the best poor man's country" in the world. But a young Yankee coming of age in eastern Massachusetts around 1760 might remain under his father's dominion well into adulthood if he wanted to stay in the village. When he finally acquired his patrimony it might not be enough to support a family. Almost certainly, it would not provide in turn for the next generation.32

Nor was this problem unique to New England. Since the discovery that Chesapeake Bay area soil could produce fine tobacco, Virginia and southern Maryland had thrived under a land system that required constant expansion. Tobacco exhausts the soil that grows it. The Chesapeake coastal plain is broad, and the rich piedmont that stretches behind the fall line where rivers tumble down to sea level was not hard to enter. Plantation culture spread across that whole huge area, both because of soil exhaustion and because prosperous Virginians wanted all their children to benefit by inheritance, not just the eldest son who would maintain the home estate. By the time New England's eastern towns were growing overcrowded, however, the Blue Ridge loomed in the way of Chesapeake society's further expansion. The limit was not absolute in either place; fertile, open land did remain. Nonetheless, both societies had to expand in order to continue to prosper. Their other choice was to change how they lived. With his large investments west of the Blue Ridge and his decision about 1761 to shift Mount Vernon from tobacco to grain, George Washington demonstrated that he understood the dilemma his society faced.33

To any white male in the countryside, independence meant land, whether the man was a Yankee village, a Pennsylvania wheat farmer, a Chesapeake "cropmaster" who took great pride in the leaf his plantation produced, or a Carolina rice planter who, when the sickly season came each summer, fled the swamps and the slaves that made him wealthy. For townsman, the road to personal independence was different. Though the merchant sector dominated urban economic life, few could hope to enter it, even at its lower levels. On the eve of independence Philadelphia's merchant community comprised barely more than 300 men, out of an urban population that was approaching 30,000.34 If a townsman
was to stand upon his own feet, it would be as an artisan or mechanic, the master not of a freehold farm but rather of a craft.

Except for a few trades, colonial cities did not develop the rigid, exclusionary guilds of their European counterparts. Nonetheless, to enter urban apprenticeship was to become both a student of one’s chosen craft and a legally bound unpaid laborer.\textsuperscript{35} It was also to enter the master’s household, subordinated just like a natural son to whatever the master required. After apprenticeship and acquiring skills came the status of journeyman, which meant being an employee. Only when an artisan acquired his own shop was he truly a master in his own right. Now he controlled the skills of his trade, his tools, raw materials on their way to being finished goods, his family, and the apprentices who joined his household in turn. Like a freeholder farmer, a master artisan would be a workingman producing goods, a businessman in the world of exchange, and a patriarch, dominating others because of their youth or their sex or because he had purchased them.

Master artisans varied enormously in their wealth, their sophistication, and their emplacement in the larger world. Benjamin Franklin’s rise from runaway apprentice to master printer to scientist, gentleman, and politician became famous. Few could expect to follow that course, no matter how well they read his Autobiography or Poor Richard’s Almanack. But a successful practitioner of a luxury trade—a painter like Boston’s John Singleton Copley or a silversmith like the same town’s Paul Revere—could hope to do well and live comfortably. Most artisans lived below that level: bakers, bricklayers, weavers, candlemakers, butchers, and carpenters. For these, even mastery of a trade and a shop might offer only a lifelong struggle to hold on in good times and survive during bad ones. Careful quantitative studies of the distribution of urban property have shown it becoming considerably more skewed toward the rich. In 1687 the top 5 percent of Bostonians controlled 30 percent of the town’s taxable wealth. By 1771 they held almost half.\textsuperscript{36}

For men who entered some trades—shipbuilding, sail or rope making, iron work, or seafaring—mastery was unlikely to be achieved. Even in the eighteenth century these trades required more capital than most men would ever see. Moreover, almost anyone with maritime skills—a merchant seaman, a harbor boatman, a fisherman—had to face the real danger of being impressed into the royal navy during wartime. Going to sea voluntarily during times of peace was bad enough, since a merchant captain could have a sailor flogged. The navy meant conditions of legalized violence, danger, and squalor that rivaled slavery. Yet seamen valued their independence as much as did any Paul Revere or Benjamin Franklin. They too were “freeborn Englishmen.”\textsuperscript{37} American seafarers knew that within the boundaries of a colonial port a naval officer could order an impressment only with the permission of the local government. Even then, a press was likely to provoke a riot. It happened in Boston in 1747 and again in New York City in 1764.

White colonials claimed the historic liberties that went with being English. In the words of one common-law dictionary, a liberty was a particular “privilege held by grant of prescription, whereby men enjoy some benefit or favour beyond the ordinary subject.” In these terms, the city of New York enjoyed the liberty of the “benefit of ye market” or “privileges of market and fairs” that gave it control over its own commerce. The College of William and Mary enjoyed the liberty of being directly represented in Virginia’s House of Burgesses, just as the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were represented in the unreformed House of Commons. Britons and colonials had the liberty of being taxed only by their own representatives. In some ways, colonials enjoyed broader liberties than the English. White males had wider access to property in America and through property they enjoyed far more political participation. The three New York manors that sent their own representatives to the provincial assembly offered an analogy to the “rotten boroughs” whose owners possessed what amounted to personal seats in Parliament. But most colonial political practices were far more open than those in England. In other ways, most notably the automatic condemnation of an entire race to slavery, colonial liberties were far more narrow. Colonial liberties were like those of England, not the same as those in England. There lay a huge problem.

[IV]

The emergence of merchants whose home and commitment lay in the northern ports distinguished those towns from Charleston, South Carolina, or Kingston, Jamaica. Northern ports contained the seeds of self-driving capitalist development; the South did not. The distinction is not absolute. Northern colonial merchants did not form a coherent group. One line among them separated transatlantic operators from intra-American traders; often the former either were immigrants or had close ties of family and friendship with British merchant houses. Like a British trader who went to the West Indies or a Spaniard who sojourned a while
in Cartagena, these served the metropolis, not the colony. Another line separated general “sedentary” merchants who brought manufactured goods in and shipped agricultural products out from traders who dealt in provincial manufactures, particularly iron. A third line distinguished the well-connected traders who could expect lucrative military contracts from the rest who did not have the government’s favor.

Nonetheless, the northern merchants created the economic web that emerged by the mid-eighteenth century. Some merchant fortunes were truly huge; claims for upward of £100,000 were filed in London by New York loyalists who lost their estates during the Revolution. One common theme in the genesis of truly great colonial merchant fortunes is how wartime gains could turn modest beginnings into monumental wealth. The intermarried De Lancy, Watts, and Franks families of New York City established a consortium that won large supply contracts during the Seven Years’ War, when the city was the main funnel for British troops and supplies. They realized total profits of about £1,700,000.\[36\]

These greatest winners in American commerce were not getting their wealth from production. In the sociologist Max Weber’s terms, they were “capitalistic adventurers” who aimed at “the acquisition of booty, whether directly in war or” by using “slaves, or directly or indirectly forced labour.”\[39\] They invested their money safely, in notes of hand, bonds, and land, including massive speculations in land taken from the Indians. Hardly any put what they had into projects that led to future American development. Only one of New York’s great loyalist traders was involved in the province’s flourishing iron sector. As in the southern plantation economy, the great northern merchants’ use of their investment capital demonstrated the limits of the colonial world in which they lived.

\[ V \]

Early merchant capitalism arrived in the New World in the first English ships, of course, but it was not all that the Europeans brought. The settlers removed as much as they could of the strands of European society that they had broken when they left, and their web proved thick and strong. Trying to escape from the modern world, Puritan villagers imported “English local law and custom,” however archaic. Anxious about their place in that same world, colonial assemblymen mimicked the House of Commons. The imagined cosmos of English witchcraft reappeared in many instances besides the famous outbreak at Salem. Remnants of feudalism flourished in the Hudson Valley and appeared in many other places. There were echoes of European charivari (or “rough music” or “skimmington”) whenever crowds harassed violators of community norms.\[40\]

Consider just two instances, the neo-feudal estates of the Hudson Valley and the quasi-legitimate crowd uprisings that might appear anywhere from New Hampshire to Georgia. New York’s land system was not unique in early America. Tenanted estates appeared as far south as Virginia and the Carolinas. Two provinces, Pennsylvania and Maryland, were granted on feudal terms to single families, the Penns and the Calverts, respectively. Until the end of the colonial period both the vast bulk of Pennsylvania’s land and its powerful governorship passed from Penn father to Penn son, much like an earldom or a duchy. Though the Penns were never ennobled, they enjoyed a great deal more political power in their American province than any British peer who sat in the House of Lords.

Nonetheless, the Hudson Valley seems most reminiscent of the European old order. The first of its great estates began with a grant by the Dutch West India Company to Killiaen Van Rensselaer of a tract forty miles on a side surrounding modern Albany. With the grant went the hereditary title of patroon. The English conquered Holland’s colony in 1664. After a briefly renewed period of Dutch rule a decade later, they made their possession permanent. During their first decades, well-placed men acquired tracts of land on a similar grand scale, with formal titles and rights. Some lordly rights, such as judicial power over the tenants in a medieval-style “court leet” and a “court baron,” were never exercised despite being granted on paper. Others, such as direct representation for their manors in the provincial assembly, were valued and used.\[41\]

Such rights were empty unless tenants gave value to the land. During the eighteenth century New York was a less attractive destination than Pennsylvania, partly because its frontiers were less peaceful, partly because of its considerable population of conquered Dutch, and partly because of its land system. Landlords did offer free rent to beginners and aid in setting up farms. In return, tenants built fences and roads, cleared forests to create fields and orchards, and erected barns and houses. What they built, cleared, planted, and erected would never be theirs. They could sell their “improvements.” But the landowner had first option to buy and could claim some of the sale price in any case.
On some estates this produced friction and outright rebellion. By the mid-eighteenth century Rensselaerswyck and neighboring Livingston Manor were alive with unrest. The Livingston family used its rights aggressively and was not inclined to grant long leases. Livingston Manor's eastern reaches were disputed land, claimed both by New York and the family and by Massachusetts and its westernmost towns. A map of 1774 showed both sets of claims, including a line that extended the manor into both Massachusetts and Connecticut. The boundary uncertainty was one reason for unrest, but the issue ran deeper. In mid-century tenants began pulling down the landlord's fences, cutting his forests, and disrupting his ironworks. Once they kidnapped the sheriff of Albany County. The conflict that was beginning would not cease until the 1840s. But although the third lord of Philipse Manor raised the rents when he succeeded to his seat in 1750, he also announced that he would never do it again. His estate went untroubled. He chose loyalism when the Revolution came and so did most of his tenants.42

Uprisings in colonial cities enjoyed a legitimacy that no modern rioting could have. In good part this was because colonial cities took on the legal privileges and responsibilities of their English counterparts. The royal charters of Philadelphia, New York, and Albany made them corporate entities, enjoined to control the local economy. Though legally it was only a town, Boston did the same. Local economic needs came first, including affordable necessities and an avoidance of monopolizing. Violating market customs was a criminal offense. An "assize of bread" regulated the price, size, and quality of ordinary brown loaves. But there was no police force or bureaucracy to enforce the authorities' will. Raising the "hue and cry" in London or a posse in New York amounted to little more than drawing a crowd into ranks and giving it official sanction. In a crisis crowds might set and enforce a "just price" for what the populace needed. The Massachusetts politician Thomas Hutchinson said in 1768 that "mobs, a sort of them at least, are constitutional." Custom, not law, made them so.43

Red, black, or white, colonial Americans lived in a world where local custom and the interplay of racially defined groups provided much of the texture of life. Whites who wanted to deal with Indians learned Indian customs, until the balance of power shifted and Indians had to learn white ways. The Natives became a symbol of what was most American. When Bostonians disguised themselves before they dumped tea into Boston Harbor in 1773, they were invoking a deep European heritage. But by donning "Mohawk" costumes they were proclaiming their own Americanness. By the eighteenth century any white enjoyed privileges denied to every black. But from the Chesapeake to Georgia whites and blacks lived within a shared southerness that expressed itself in speech, food, dance, and a profound sense of place and family.

Among whites, custom often enjoyed a status in law and public affairs that it does not have today. Notions of "positive" enacted law were only beginning to take form. Parliament and the colonial assemblies did legislate in the modern sense, declaring the will of the highest authority. But their major purpose was to decide and announce what had "always" been right. Parliament itself existed because of custom that reached back to the Middle Ages. So did the English "liberties, privileges, franchises, and immunities" which the colonists claimed for themselves.

Custom was often intensely local. "Constitutional" mobs in both America and England operated in the belief that small communities ought to regulate themselves, as the primary units of both production and consumption. There were times when long-distance trade was legitimate; there also were times when the community should cut itself off, whether because of a government embargo or by the action of a crowd. Such "persistent localism" could spill into formal legal practice. Courts acted in terms of the local community's interests and perceptions, not in terms of a "supreme law of the land." Even long-distance trade proceeded according to the informal lex mercatoria, which meant the law and customs of the merchant community. English common law rested on custom and precedent. As late as 1786 "A Citizen" in Albany, New York, felt free to protest a rise in local mill tolls in the name of "immemorial custom . . . a law not written, established by long usage and consent." "Particular customs," he wrote, "are always to be taken for law" even if they were "against the general custom of the Kingdom and the maxims of [written] law."44

In these terms custom could be profoundly static, particularly regarding the legitimate use of property. Nonetheless, for prerevolutionary white Americans the most privileged form of property was productive land, and its ideal use was "quiet enjoyment" without disturbance to the rights of heirs or neighbors. Owning land meant having a badge of community membership, not possessing a commodity for trade. Trade itself often meant exchange among neighbors, carried on to satisfy mutual needs. Community meant local networks of obligation. The "public good" meant keeping those networks in repair. This was the white version. For Indians, community meant keeping alive all that was possible of their world despite the irrevocable changes that began when the first
Europeans arrived. For slaves it meant protecting themselves against a situation that tried to deny them any form of self-protection at all, beyond a master’s goodwill. For the three races, it meant the presence of the others, in their streets, stores, houses, beds, and lives, whether they liked it or not.  

[ VI ]

This was the complex world into which British policymakers blundered after 1763 with their attempts to tax, their writs of assistance, their juryless courts, their petty functionaries, their assertions that they were supreme. Colonial subjects were hardly a united people, and John Adams once likened their response to thirteen clocks striking as one. His metaphor meant more in an age of crude mechanical clockwork than it does in an age that tells time by the vibrations of crystals and atoms. Adams was thinking of whites. For Indians and Africans, the metaphor fails, not because it is too complex but because it is not complex enough. Yet if we would understand the American Revolution and how it ended the colonial order, we must see it in terms of the different peoples involved, not just the whites who began it with their grievances and resolved it in their own interests.

CHAPTER 3
COLONIAL REVOLTS,
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

THE American Revolution began because Britain’s rulers decided to reform their empire. In 1763 Britain stood supreme from Bengal to Mexico, but it also stood exhausted. For both administrative and financial reasons, the ministry proposed to make white colonials pay for their protection and governance, on terms that ministers, not colonials, would set.

They laid bare the empire’s ambiguities instead, as the colonials began thinking about their situations, rights, identities, and relationships. The Revolution began as no more than revolt against unwanted change. British history is full of such events, from the peasant rising of 1385 to the Scottish Jacobite rebellion of 1745. But what began with protest became the first modern revolution. It spread from white men to many other peoples. It abolished what had made its own development possible. It created a society without precedent, whether we speak of that society’s achievements or dwell upon what it failed to do.

[ I ]

The narrative need only be sketched. A series of parliamentary acts tried to secure a permanent revenue for North American defense and government. These were the Sugar (or Revenue) Act of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765, and the Townshend taxes of 1767. All shared the premise that Parliament could tax the colonists for revenue, despite never having done so. The colonists protested against the Sugar Act but they accepted it in practice. They defeated the Stamp Act by hard argument, direct resistance, and support from sympathetic Britons, including many in Parliament. The Townshend taxes brought further protest, both in print and
Franklin's Plan (1730s)

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was America's first true national figure, known throughout North America and famous in Europe as an exemplar of American simplicity and genius. Franklin was the classic American self-made man, and also a masterful self-promoter. In his Autobiography, Franklin laid out his plan of self-improvement. He was meticulous and systematic, but it is worth noting the limits of his success. The Autobiography, first published posthumously in 1793, immediately became the centerpiece of American education and self-perception. Generations of schoolchildren faced the task of organizing their day into discreet tasks and laying out charts for self-improvement. Like Franklin, few of them probably made it very far down the list. The following section was written in Passy, France, in 1784 and refers to the late 1730s, when Franklin lived in Philadelphia.

Questions to Consider

- Was Franklin's plan for moral perfection based on ethical ideals or practical considerations?
- Why did he abandon his effort?

It was about this time I conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish'd to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employed in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative

conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct. For this purpose I therefore contrived the following method.

In the various enumerations of the moral virtues I had met with in my reading, I found the catalogue more or less numerous, as different writers included more or fewer ideas under the same name. Temperance, for example, was by some confined to eating and drinking, while by others it was extended to mean the moderating every other pleasure, appetite, inclination, or passion, bodily or mental, even to our avarice and ambition. I propos’d to myself, for the sake of clearness, to use rather more names, with fewer ideas annex’d to each, than a few names with more ideas; and I included under thirteen names of virtues all that at that time occur’d to me as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept, which fully express’d the extent I gave to its meaning.

These names of virtues, with their precepts, were:

1. TEMPERANCE.
   Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

2. SILENCE.
   Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.

3. ORDER.
   Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

4. RESOLUTION.
   Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

5. FRUGALITY.
   Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.

6. INDUSTRY.
   Lose no time; be always employ’d in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. SINCERITY.
   Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8. JUSTICE.
   Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. MODERATION.
   Avoid extremities; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10. CLEANLINESS.
    Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, cloaths, or habitation.

11. TRANQUILLITY.
    Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

12. CHASTITY.
    Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation.

13. HUMILITY.
    Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

My intention being to acquire the habit of all these virtues, I judg’d it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone thro’ the thirteen; and, as the previous acquisition of some might facilitate the acquisition of certain others, I arrang’d them with that view, as they stand above. Temperance first, as it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits, and the force of perpetual temptations. This being acquir’d and establish’d, Silence would be more easy; and my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improv’d in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtain’d rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into of prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling company, I gave Silence the second place. This and the next, Order, I expected would allow me more time for attending to my project and my studies. Resolution, once become habitual, would keep me firm in my endeavors to obtain all the subsequent virtues; Frugality and Industry freeing me from my remaining debt, and producing affluence and independence, would make more easy the practice of Sincerity and Justice, etc., etc. Conceiving then, that, agreeably to the advice of Pythagoras in his Golden Verses, daily examination would be necessary, I contrived the following method for conducting that examination.

I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues. I rul’d each page with red ink, so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the day. I cross’d these columns with thirteen red lines, marking the beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the virtues, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark, by a little black spot, every fault I found upon ex-
amination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.
Form of the pages.

TEMPERANCE

EAT NOT TO DULNESS;
DRINK NOT TO ELEVATION.

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I determined to give a week’s strict attention to each of the virtues successively. Thus, in the first week, my great guard was to avoid every least offence against Temperance, leaving the other virtues to their ordinary chance, only marking every evening the faults of the day. Thus, if in the first week I could keep my first line, marked T, clear of spots, I suppos’d the habit of that virtue so much strengthen’d and its opposite weaken’d, that I might venture extending my attention to include the next, and for the following week keep both lines clear of spots. Proceeding thus to the last, I could go thro’ a course compleat in thirteen weeks, and four courses in a year. And like him who, having a garden to weed, does not attempt to eradicate all the bad herbs at once, which would exceed his reach and his strength, but works on one of the beds at a time, and, having accomplish’d the first, proceeds to a second, so I should have, I hoped, the encouraging pleasure of seeing on my pages the progress I made in virtue, by clearing successively my lines of their spots, till in the end, by a number of courses, I should be happy in viewing a clean book, after a thirteen weeks’ daily examination....

The precept of Order requiring that every part of my business should have its allotted time, one page in my little book contain’d the following scheme of employment for the twenty-four hours of a natural day:

- **The Morning**
  - Question, What Good shall I do this Day?

- **Rise, wash, and address Powerful Goodness; Controve Day’s Business and take the Resolution of the Day; prosecute the present Study: and breakfast?**

- **Work.**

- **Read, or overlook my Accounts, and dine.**

- **Work.**

- **Put Things in their Places, Supper, Musick, or Diversion, or Conversation, Examination of the Day.**

- **Evening**
  - Question, What Good have I done to day?

- **Sleep.**

I enter’d upon the execution of this plan for self-examination, and continu’d it with occasional intermissions for some time. I was surpris’d to find myself so much fuller of faults than I had imagined; but I had the satisfaction of seeing them diminish. To avoid the trouble of renewing now and then my little book, by scraping out the marks on the paper of old faults to make room for new ones in a new course, became full of holes, I transferr’d my tables and precepts to the ivory leaves of a memorandum book, on which the lines were drawn with red ink, that made a durable stain, and on those lines I mark’d my faults with a black-lead pencil, which marks I could easily wipe out with a wet sponge. After awhile I went thro’ one course only in a year, and afterward only one in several years, till at length I omit’ted them entirely, being employ’d in voyages and business abroad, with a multiplicity of affairs that interfered; but I always carried my little book with me.

My scheme of ORDER gave me the most trouble; and I found that, tho’ it might be practicable where a man’s business was such as to leave him the disposition of his time, that of a journeyman printer, for instance, it was not possible to be exactly observed by a master, who must mix with the world, and often receive people of business at their own hours. Order, too, with regard to places for things, papers, etc., I found extreamly difficult to acquire. I had not been early accustomed to it, and, having an exceeding good memory, I was not so sensible of the inconvenience attending want of method. This article, therefore, cost me so much painful attention, and my faults in it vexed me so much, and I made so little progress in amendment, and had such frequent relapses, that I was almost ready to give up the
attempt, and content myself with a faulty character in that respect, like the man who, in buying an ax of a smith, my neighbour, desired to have the whole of its surface as bright as the edge. The smith consented to grind it bright for him if he would turn the wheel; he turn'd, while the smith press'd the broad face of the ax hard and heavily on the stone, which made the turning of it very fatiguing. The man came every now and then from the wheel to see how the work went on, and at length would take his ax as it was, without farther grinding. "No," said the smith, "turn on, turn on; we shall have it bright by-and-by; as yet, it is only speckled." "Yes," said the man, "but I think I like a speckled ax best." And I believe this may have been the case with many, who, having, for want of some such means as I employ'd, found the difficulty of obtaining good and breaking bad habits in other points of virtue and vice, have given up the struggle, and concluded that "a speckled ax was best"; for something, that pretended to be reason, was every now and then suggesting to me that such extream nicety as I exacted of myself might be a kind of folly in morals, which, if it were known, would make me ridiculous; that a perfect character might be attended with the inconvenience of being envied and hated; and that a benevolent man should allow a few faults in himself, to keep his friends in countenance.

In truth, I found myself incorrigible with respect to Order; and now I am grown old, and my memory bad, I feel very sensibly the want of it. But, on the whole, tho' I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was, by the endeavour, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it; as those who aim at perfect writing by imitating the engraved copies, tho' they never reach the wish'd-for excellence of those copies, their hand is mended by the endeavor, and is tolerable while it continues fair and legible.

It may be well my posterity should be informed that to this little artifice, with the blessing of God, their ancestor ow'd the constant felicity of his life, down to his 79th year, in which this is written. What reverses may attend the remainder is in the hand of Providence; but, if they arrive, the reflection on past happiness enjoy'd ought to help his bearing them with more resignation. To Temperance he ascribes his long-continued health, and what is still left to him of a good constitution; to Industry and Frugality, the early easiness of his circumstances and acquisition of his fortune, with all that knowledge that enabled him to be a useful citizen, and obtained for him some degree of reputation among the learned; to Sincerity and Justice, the confidence of his country, and the honorable employs it conferred upon him; and to the joint influence of the whole mass of the virtues, even in the imperfect state he was able to acquire them, all that evenness of temper, and that cheerfulness in conversation, which makes his company still sought for, and agreeable even to his younger acquaintance. I hope, therefore, that some of my descendants may follow the example and reap the benefit.

It will be remark'd that, tho' my scheme was not wholly without religion, there was in it no mark of any of the distinguishing tenets of any particular sect. I had purposely avoided them; for, being fully persuaded of the utility and excellency of my method, and that it might be serviceable to people in all religions, and intending some time or other to publish it, I would not have anything in it that should prejudice any one, of any sect, against it. I purposely writing a little comment on each virtue, in which I would have shown the advantages of possessing it, and the mischiefs attending its opposite vice; and I should have called my book THE ART OF VIRTUE, because it would have shown the means and manner of obtaining virtue, which would have distinguished it from the mere exhortation to be good, that does not instruct and indicate the means, but is like the apostle's man of verbal charity, who only without showing to the naked and hungry how or where they might get clothes or victuals, exhorted them to be fed and clothed.—James ii. 15, 16.

But it so happened that my intention of writing and publishing this comment was never fulfilled. I did, indeed, from time to time, put down short hints of the sentiments, reasonings, etc., to be made use of in it, some of which I have still by me; but the necessary close attention to private business in the earlier part of my life, and public business since, have occasioned my postponing it; for, it being connected in my mind with a great and extensive project, that required the whole man to execute, and which an unforeseen succession of employ's prevented my attending to, it has hitherto remain'd unfinished.

In this piece it was my design to explain and enforce this doctrine, that vicious actions are not hurtful because they are forbidden, but forbidden because they are hurtful, the nature of man alone considered; that it

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1 Nothing so likely to make a man's fortune as virtue. — [Franklin's marginal note].
2 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"
was, therefore, every one's interest to be virtuous who wish'd to be happy even in this world; and I should, from this circumstance (there being always in the world a number of rich merchants, nobility, states, and princes, who have need of honest instruments for the management of their affairs, and such being so rare), have endeavored to convince young persons that no qualities were so likely to make a poor man's fortune as those of probity and integrity.

My list of virtues contain'd at first but twelve; but a Quaker friend having kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud; that my pride show'd itself frequently in conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather insolent, of which he convinc'd me by mentioning several instances; I determined endeavoring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly among the rest, and I added Humility to my list, giving an extensive meaning to the word.

I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the reality of this virtue, but I had a good deal with regard to the appearance of it. I made it a rule to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiments of others, and all positive assertion of my own. I even forbid myself, agreeably to the old laws of our Junto, the use of every word or expression in the language that import'd a fix'd opinion, such as certainly, undoubtedly, etc., and I adopted, instead of them, I conceive, I apprehend, or I imagine a thing to be so or so; or it so appears to me at present. When another asserted something that I thought an error, I deny'd myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition; and in answering I began by observing that in certain cases or circumstances his opinion would be right, but in the present case there appear'd or seem'd to me some difference, etc.

I soon found the advantage of this change in my manner; the conversations I engag'd in went on more pleasantly. The modest way in which I propos'd my opinions procur'd them a readier reception and less contradiction; I had less mortification when I was found to be in the wrong, and I more easily prevail'd with others to give up their mistakes and join with me when I happen'd to be in the right.

And this mode, which I at first put on with some violence to natural inclination, became at length so easy, and so habitual to me, that perhaps for these fifty years past no one has ever heard a dogmatical expression escape me. And to this habit (after my character of integrity) I think it principally owing that I had early so much weight with my fellow-citizens when I proposed new institutions, or alterations in the old, and so much influence in public councils when I became a member; for I was but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in language, and yet I generally carried my points.

In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as you please, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for, even if I could conceive that I had compleatly overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.