

# The Price of Freedom: Consumerism and Liberty in Secular Research and Catholic Teaching

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This article contrasts the secular and Catholic literature on consumerism and its implications for liberty. Three specific questions are considered: Is consumerism harmful to liberty? Is it a necessary consequence of a market economy? Who is responsible for consumerism? The article shows that Catholic teaching on consumerism differs markedly from secular theoretical work but corresponds closely to secular empirical research. The article concludes by offering several suggestions, based on Catholic Social Teaching, for what can be done about consumerism.

## Introduction

Consumerism—making material consumption the highest goal in life—is a serious threat to liberty because it weakens the virtue necessary for a people to govern itself. The importance of virtue to liberty, while less widely acknowledged today, was clearly understood by the Founding Fathers of the United States. Samuel Adams, in his widely quoted 1775 letter to James Warren, wrote, “It is not possible that any State should long remain free, where Virtue is not supremely honored.”<sup>1</sup> Consumerism is also a serious threat to spiritual freedom because it can turn people into “slaves of ‘possession’ and of immediate gratification.”<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this article is to contrast the secular academic literature on consumerism with Catholic theological literature on consumerism. Three specific questions are considered: Is consumerism harmful? Is it a necessary consequence of a market economy?<sup>3</sup> Who is responsible for consumerism? These questions are important with respect to liberty. If it is indeed the case that consumerism

is harmful *and* that it is a necessary consequence of a market economy, then societies face an unpleasant choice: Either accept a market economy and the weakening of virtue—and hence of liberty—that consumerism brings, or abandon the market and face the loss of economic liberty, and along with it, much political and social liberty.

Secular and theological debate on these questions appears to be polarized into either blaming the market economy entirely for consumerism or exonerating it completely. Differences among the responses to the three questions raised in this article appear not just between the Catholic and secular literatures but also within each of those literatures: in the secular literature between theoretical scholarship and empirical research and in the Catholic literature between magisterial teaching and Catholic theological scholarship. Interestingly, the greatest differences exist between secular theoretical scholarship and secular empirical research, while the greatest similarities appear to be between Catholic magisterial teaching and secular empirical research.

This analysis suggests that Catholic teaching on consumerism is the most realistic among the perspectives considered in this article in the sense that it conforms closest to empirical findings. Catholic teaching also appears to support a wider range of solutions that are more hospitable to the market economy than does the secular literature. The article concludes by offering several suggestions, based on Catholic Social Teaching, for what can be done about consumerism.<sup>4</sup>

## Is Consumerism Harmful?

Consumerism<sup>5</sup> is defined in this article to mean excessive desire for material consumption. Consumerism is different from *consumption*—the act of consuming (eating or using) material goods to sustain and enjoy life; consumerism makes consumption the ultimate goal of life, either explicitly or implicitly.<sup>6</sup>

Among secular scholars, there is some debate as to whether consumerism is a real problem. Some argue that the harmfulness of consumerism has not been proven.<sup>7</sup> Others go further. James Twitchell, in his book *Lead Us into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism*, argues that consumerism is a beneficial phenomenon because it provides a meaning for people to replace the meaning formerly provided them by religion.<sup>8</sup>

The empirical evidence, however, indicates that consumerist attitudes are associated with reduced consumer well-being. People who are more consumeristic tend to have lower satisfaction with their lives, a greater tendency to compulsive spending, higher incidences of depression, and also lower ethical standards.<sup>9</sup> Tim Kasser, in his recent book summarizing his own extensive work and that of other

researchers in this area, concludes that there are “clear and consistent findings” that people who are focused on consumerist values have “lower personal well-being and psychological health than those who believe that materialistic pursuits are relatively unimportant.”<sup>10</sup>

These findings, significant in themselves, are also important because subjective well-being, or happiness, as measured in these studies, is in turn associated with several other important variables. Research has shown that happy people are less self-centered; less hostile or abusive; less vulnerable to disease; and more loving, forgiving, trusting, energetic, decisive, creative, sociable, and helpful.<sup>11</sup>

Among Catholic scholars, there appears to be general consensus (consistent with the empirical research cited above) that consumerism is a negative thing: It is a “threat to the freedom of the human person to live according to the higher demands of love rather than to the lower pull of material desires.”<sup>12</sup> Consumerism weakens human virtue, and without virtue, human beings become slaves to their emotions and lose the self-control that is needed to live responsibly in a free society.<sup>13</sup>

Catholic teaching on consumerism is rooted deeply. General warnings against the dangers of obsession with material goods can be found from sacred Scripture onward (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:9–19). Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote that man’s apparently infinite desire for riches is disordered and wholly different from our infinite desire for God. The more we possess God, the more we know and love him; while the more we possess riches, the more we despise what we have and seek other things because when we possess them we realize their insufficiency.<sup>14</sup> Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, which is commonly credited with being the beginning of modern Catholic Social Teaching, warned against “the twin plagues of life—excessive desire for wealth and thirst for pleasure—which too often make man wretched amidst the very abundance of riches.” Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, written on the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, asked rhetorically, “[W]hat will it profit to teach them sound principles of economic life if in unbridled and sordid greed they let themselves be swept away by their passion for property, so that hearing the commandments of the Lord they do all things contrary (Judg. 2:17).” Pope Paul VI wrote that when material progress is the ultimate goal, men become self-absorbed, working cooperatively solely for reasons of self-interest rather than solidarity.<sup>15</sup>

Specific Catholic Social Teaching on consumerism is developed in the encyclical letters of Pope John Paul II, particularly in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus*.<sup>16</sup> In these encyclicals, he warns of “the treachery hidden within a development that is only quantitative, for the ‘excessive availability of every kind of material goods for the benefit of certain social groups, easily

makes people slaves of “possession” and of immediate gratification.”<sup>17</sup> Victims of consumerism are caught up in the pursuit of false or superficial gratifications at the expense of experiencing their personhood in an authentic way.<sup>18</sup> As a result, they experience a radical dissatisfaction, where the more they possess, the more they want, while their deeper aspirations remain unsatisfied and perhaps even stifled.<sup>19</sup>

According to Catholic teaching, it is not the desire for material prosperity itself that is wrong but rather the desire for having more in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself. As Pope Leo XIII taught in *Rerum Novarum*,<sup>20</sup> material prosperity can be the result of Christian morality adequately and completely practiced, “which merits the blessings of God who is the source of all blessings.” What is wrong is an orientation toward having at the expense of being, where the purpose of having is not to be more but to pursue enjoyment as an end in itself.<sup>21</sup>

## Is Consumerism a Necessary Consequence of a Market Economy?

If consumerism is a harmful thing, and the empirical evidence and Catholic teaching appear to agree that it is, then an important question to consider is whether it is an unavoidable consequence of a market economy. Among secular theorists, there is a long history of criticism of consumerism in particular and consumer culture in general. Some of the better known include Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*, Thorstein Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class* (from which comes the expression *conspicuous consumption*), and John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society*, among others.<sup>22</sup> In general, these critics tend to be hostile not just to consumerism but to the market economy itself. Perhaps as a result of this, those who have responded to these critics, such as Hayek, Friedman, and Novak, have focused on defending the more fundamental issue—the value of the market economy itself—without saying much about consumerism.<sup>23</sup>

More recently, scholars in marketing—the business discipline most often blamed for consumerism—have attempted to respond directly to the accusation that consumerism is a necessary result of marketing efforts and the market economy. Their response has typically been twofold. They argue first that it is not clear that consumerism is a consequence of corporate marketing or even of the market economy itself. Consumerism may well be an innate human characteristic that appears inevitably whenever prosperity arises, and therefore consumerism “became part of the human condition long before the first advertising executive.”<sup>24</sup>

Second, even if consumerism *is* a necessary consequence of a market economy, it is “not clear what the alternative to the consumer society is when people become relatively affluent and seek freedom of choice.”<sup>25</sup> The alternative offered by the critics of the market economy, either implicitly or explicitly, is some kind of command economy, and, therefore, on balance, consumerism would seem to be a price worth paying. The current environment is therefore something close to the best of all possible worlds where the harm of the market, including consumerism, are more than offset by the benefits of the overall market system.<sup>26</sup>

Among scholars working within the Catholic Social Teaching tradition, the debate has tended to follow along similar lines. Scholars such as Michael Budde and Father John Kavanaugh, S.J., have criticized consumerism and the market economy as a whole. Beabout and Echeverria, responding to Father Kavanaugh as well as to secular critics of the market economy, argue that consumerism is a common but not necessary consequence of the market economy. To argue that it is a *necessary* consequence, according to them, is to argue in favor of determinism—that consumers participating in the market have no free choice left.<sup>27</sup>

It is worth noting that religious concerns about consumerism are not confined to Catholicism. Islamic religious leaders, for example, have recently expressed concern about the high levels of consumerism expressed during their holy month of Ramadan. In countries such as Egypt and Dubai, the penitential period of Ramadan has become an excuse for increased advertising and rampant consumer spending, in the same way that the penitential period of Advent has in the West.<sup>28</sup>

If the market economy does indeed lead to consumerism, this would most likely be due to marketing activity and specifically to the creation and advertisement of a large number of consumer products. The empirical evidence here, though, is unclear. Consumer researchers have suggested a link between advertising and consumerism, and several empirical studies have found that people who watch more television, and television advertising in particular, tend to have higher levels of consumerism. This is particularly true in the case of children.<sup>29</sup> However, it is not clear whether there is a cause-and-effect relationship; if there is, it may just as well run in the opposite direction, from consumerism to television-viewing, because people with higher levels of consumerism would probably choose to watch more television.<sup>30</sup>

The historical evidence, though, does suggest some kind of relationship between the sophistication of marketing activity and the growth of consumer culture across a span of over three hundred years. Peter Stearns, historian and provost of George Mason University in Virginia, reviewed the extensive historical research on consumerism in his book *Consumerism in World History*. The phenomenon of consumerism has made sporadic appearances over the past two

millennia: the later Roman Republic, the Arab warriors of the tenth century, and the European nobility of the thirteenth century all exhibited what could be interpreted as consumerist phenomena. However, it is not until the mid-eighteenth century that consumerism takes on the full-blown dimensions that we associate it with today. Stearns chronicles what can be seen as the side-by-side emergence of consumer culture and development of marketing channels and methods across the eighteenth century in western Europe. He notes that fashion magazines, already in existence in France by the 1670s, were joined by loss-leader retailing techniques as early as 1747. Around the same time, retailers began using consumer credit and publicity events to attract customers, while text-based advertisements were in frequent use by the 1780s. Due to lower urbanization and greater persistence of religious values, consumerism developed somewhat later in the United States. However, by the 1850s, the United States appears to have caught up with Europe. With the development of more complex retail channels, such as department stores and catalog distributors, and more sophisticated advertising using visuals, color, and appeals to emotions, consumerism in the United States outpaced that in Europe by the 1880s in some areas. By 1900, many companies had research departments focused on introducing modifications to products, while the practice of annual model changes in cars, often largely cosmetic, began in the 1920s. From then on, the intensity of marketing continued to accelerate.<sup>31</sup>

We do not have data on the actual levels of consumerism across this entire time period, so we cannot say definitively that consumerism arose in tandem with growing marketing sophistication. Nevertheless, there is a strong indication that it did. The time period covered, particularly from the mid-1800s to the present, does coincide with what is generally agreed to be the widespread growth of consumerism. As a proxy for the growth of consumerism, we can look at the periodic (and persistent) criticism of the phenomenon. We have already mentioned Marx and Veblen as early examples. By 1933, Dorothy Sayers, in her detective novel *Murder Must Advertise*, was criticizing the effect of advertising on “the comparatively poor, ... those who, aching for a luxury beyond their reach and for a leisure ever denied them, could be bullied or wheedled into spending their few hardly won shillings on whatever might give them, if only for a moment, a leisured and luxurious illusion.”<sup>32</sup>

This is followed in turn by Galbraith (1969), Baudrillard (1981), Bourdieu (1984), Schwartz (1994), Schor (1998), and Frank (1999). The increased frequency of these critiques suggests that interest in the condition, if not the condition itself, continued to grow in strength across this time period.<sup>33</sup>

Existing research, therefore, does not resolve the question of whether consumerism is a necessary consequence of the market economy. The empirical

evidence indicates a correlation between marketing activity and consumerism, but the cause and effect relationship could reasonably run in either direction. The historical evidence similarly suggests a strong association between the growth of marketing activity and consumerism over a period in excess of three hundred years, but, again, this does not prove a necessary relationship.

Do the negative effects of consumerism require us to abandon the market economy itself, according to Catholic teaching? In *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II provides a qualified endorsement of the market economy alongside his condemnation of consumerism. It would not seem reasonable for him to have endorsed markets if they *necessarily* led to consumerism, which he simultaneously condemned. In fact, Catholic Social Teaching appears to conclude quite clearly that consumerism is a regrettable but not necessary consequence of the market economy<sup>34</sup>—not just in the writings of Pope John Paul II but across the whole of the modern Catholic Social Teaching tradition. Consider the following comment:

Some may expect that this catalog of opportunities for immorality offered by a capitalist economy would be followed by a request for the elimination of such occasions in the simplest way possible—the extinction of such an economy. “Nothing of the sort follows ... [to the pope] it is clear that inordinate human passion will find weak spots and gaps in *any* economy and that all opportunities cannot be eliminated.”

The author of this passage, Father Nell-Breuning, S.J., is writing here, in 1936, about Pope Pius XI and *Quadragesimo Anno*.<sup>35</sup> Father Rodger Charles, S.J., in his comprehensive, two-volume synthesis of Catholic Social Teaching, summarizes the one hundred years of social encyclicals from *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus Annus* on the purpose of the economy as follows: “The economic system must be based on private enterprise and be innovative, improving the economic agencies through which it works and which engine progress, meeting human needs through the markets in accordance with its own methods and laws but also according to the moral law.”<sup>36</sup>

The issue for Catholic teaching, therefore, does not appear to be with the market economy itself but how to promote adherence to the moral law within it.

## Who Is Responsible for Consumerism?

Some have argued that consumerism is primarily a cultural, not an economic, problem and therefore that responsibility for addressing it lies with consumers themselves and their attitudes toward consumption. Others have argued that corporate advertising causes consumerism and therefore the solution lies in the

hands of business. Still others have argued that government regulation is required to address consumerism.

The empirical evidence here suggests that parental guidance and family structure play an important role in the presence or absence of consumerism in the next generation. The levels of consumerism that children are exposed to typically predict their own levels of consumerism when they grow up. Mothers' levels of consumerism are particularly important because their children tend to have the same levels. Children who regularly shopped with their mothers tend to be less consumeristic; while this may seem paradoxical, it is perhaps because in doing so their mothers help them become educated and discerning consumers. Indeed, levels of consumerism tend to be lower in families that teach children to think for themselves, and higher among children who communicate very freely with their peers. Given the importance of parental guidance on children's levels of consumerism, a strong family structure would seem to be important—which it is: Young adults raised in disrupted families (i.e., families with divorced or separated parents) tend to be significantly more consumeristic.<sup>37</sup>

The secular critics of consumerism, however, tend to place the responsibility on individual consumers themselves and on the government. Juliet Schor of Boston College, in *The Overspent American*, provides an extensive list of suggestions for consumer action, including: becoming conscious of the role of material desire and exerting greater control over it; encouraging voluntary neighborhood agreements to specific spending limits, for example, on athletic shoes for children; greater use of sharing of tools and appliances among neighbors; and decommercializing holidays such as Christmas and Halloween. She also argues that the peer pressure of consumerism is too great for individual consumers to handle alone, and therefore government intervention is also required. She proposes high consumption taxes on the "high-end, status versions of certain commodities;" higher income taxes and subsidies in an attempt to redistribute income; and making advertising expenditure ineligible as a business expense—hence making firms pay for advertising out of after-tax dollars. Robert Frank also recommends government action, including steeply graduated income taxes with high (80 percent) marginal rates, as a disincentive to consumption.<sup>38</sup>

Among Catholic writers, there appears to be a consensus on the role of culture—an important sphere that is separate from, although related to, the economic sphere—in dealing with consumerism. According to Father Neuhaus, consumerism is not primarily an issue about markets—it is "first and foremost a cultural and moral problem requiring a cultural and moral remedy."<sup>39</sup> From this perspective, the peer pressure is to be handled not by government action but through cultural institutions such as churches, civic organizations, and—most



importantly—families. Educator and author James Stenson places the responsibility squarely on parents:

Consumerist parents ... make life mostly a steady series of pleasant diversions ... [centering] around leisurely enjoyment, fun-filled entertainment—a seamless array of sports, abundant food and drink, TV shows, computer games, movies, music, parties, shopping.... In consumerist homes, therefore, children are steadily apprenticed through childhood as consumers, not producers.... Kids raised to see life as play will treat the automobile as a toy, and so will be prone to kill or cripple ... they see sex as a toy ... and so fall headlong into promiscuity, co-habitational “relationships,” unwanted pregnancies, abortions, and disastrous marriages. This is no exaggeration. It happens literally every day.<sup>40</sup>

Where there appears to be less consensus among scholars working within a faith-based perspective is on the relative importance that should be assigned to culture versus government regulation. For example, Gregory Gronbacher argues that the burden lies exclusively on culture change, while Daniel Finn counters that “a whole host of vices are already discouraged in the United States by laws that penalize their occurrence in the market,” and, by implication, government intervention should also be considered for addressing consumerism. Similarly, Patricia Donohue-White argues that market interactions appear to lead to consumerism, and, therefore, it is appropriate to consider regulatory restrictions on those interactions, while Eric Schansberg responds that it should not be presumed that the consequences of government intervention are necessarily benign, and that in fact the contrary may be the case where both consumerism and liberty more broadly are concerned.<sup>41</sup>

According to Catholic Social Teaching, the general solution to consumerism is to promote ways of living where the search for truth, beauty, goodness, and communion with others, for the sake of our common growth, are the bases for making consumer choices and business investments.<sup>42</sup> In terms of who is responsible for such promotion, Pope John Paul II is clear that, left alone, the market will not sort out the issue for itself, because “an economic system does not possess criteria for correctly distinguishing new and higher forms of satisfying human needs from artificial new needs which hinder the formation of a mature personality.”<sup>43</sup> According to John Paul II, the answer to the question of who is responsible for avoiding consumerism is, in effect, all of the above—individual consumers themselves, business decision-makers, and the public authorities:

a great deal of educational and cultural work is urgently needed, including the education of consumers in the responsible use of their power of choice, the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers and among people in the mass media in particular, as well as the necessary intervention by public authorities.<sup>44</sup>

The Second Vatican Council affirmed the unity of the Christian life, asserting that the “split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age,”<sup>45</sup> and, therefore, it seems reasonable that all Christians involved in the market should bear some responsibility for combating consumerism—be they consumers, producers, or regulators.

## Dealing with Consumerism

The rest of this article builds on Catholic Social Teaching to offer suggestions for what each of the participants in the market can do to fight consumerism, considering in turn: persons and families, other cultural institutions, government, and business firms.

### Persons and Families

Consumers need to understand the radical nature of the Church’s critique of consumerism and the depth of change in lifestyles that may be required to address it. In particular, they should consider limiting or reducing waste of environmental and human resources.<sup>46</sup> As part of the formation of their children, parents could ensure that they teach their children a proper relationship with material things. The witness of large families, who sacrifice material comfort in favor of more children, can also be very powerful.<sup>47</sup>

### Other Cultural Institutions

While not, strictly speaking, participants in the market themselves, churches, fraternal organizations, and other not-for-profit institutions can play a very important role in educating consumers. They can draw from church teaching on consumerism and also from the empirical research reviewed above, which has demonstrated the harm of consumerism convincingly. If consumers appear to choose excessive material consumption, perhaps it is because they are unaware that such behavior does not lead to greater levels of satisfaction. Increased efforts at consumer education may be able to correct this and lead to significant changes in consumer behavior.<sup>48</sup> Consider the dramatic reduction in smoking over the

past few decades, driven by the extensive efforts to publicize scientific findings about the harmful effects of smoking. Might not similar results be achieved for consumerism?

## Government

According to John Paul II, intervention by public authorities in the market may be required to address this problem of consumerism.<sup>49</sup> The principle of subsidiarity suggests that government regulation, especially by centralized governments, should be a last resort. Given the power and the frequency and force of the unintended consequences of government regulation, it would also seem prudent to be very wary about resorting to such means—a wariness that is more evident among some Catholic scholars than others. Two areas where government intervention appears to be prudent for combating consumerism are singled out in *Centesimus Annus*: drug abuse and pornography. Enacting new laws, and/or stronger enforcement of existing laws, would seem to be appropriate here. Government might also be able to assist in the educational effort about the dangers of consumerism, cited above.

The use of tax policy advocated by secular theorists, however, would seem to be risky. Higher-income taxes reduce disposable income and therefore, while they may reduce consumption, they may also just increase the percent of income spent on consumption, at the expense of savings.<sup>50</sup> Even if consumption is reduced, there is no evidence that this would in turn lead to reduced consumerism, which is the excessive desire for consumption, and not consumption itself. Consumption taxes on high-end versions of products are likely to cause increased bureaucracy to address questions of what the boundaries between low- and high-end prices should be. They also risk exacerbating consumerism by promoting more frequent consumption of lower priced and potentially lower quality goods, in place of less-frequent consumption of higher quality but more expensive goods.

## Business Firms

Finally, there appears to be a very important role to be played by business leaders themselves, a role that is highlighted in the teaching of Pope John Paul II but that seems to have been overlooked by Catholic scholars to date. John Paul II was quite clear about the personal responsibility of executives calling for “the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers and among people in the mass media in particular.”<sup>51</sup> He also saw certain kinds of marketing activity as a cause of consumerism, such as advertising designed to appeal to man’s instincts. Direct appeals to man’s instincts rather than his reason can

create attitudes and lifestyles that are both spiritually and physically harmful.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, business decision-makers, in identifying which consumer needs to serve, cannot consider all consumer needs to be equally valid, nor should they serve a need merely because it exists. In selecting which needs to serve, they should be guided by a comprehensive view of the human person that places his interior, spiritual needs over his material and instinctive ones.<sup>53</sup> The goal of production, according to the Second Vatican Council, “is not the mere increase of products nor profit or control but rather the service of man, and indeed of the whole man with regard for the full range of his material needs and the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life.”<sup>54</sup> It is clear that the Holy Father here, and the council before him, recognize the importance of profit but do not allow it to be treated as the highest good.<sup>55</sup>

The pope asks business leaders to avoid serving spurious needs and to avoid advertising that appeals solely to man’s instincts. They must avoid using appeals to instinct against reason, or to serve needs—desires—that if filled will be morally, physically, or socially harmful, but there can be a certain tension between Catholic Social Teaching and the pursuit of profits<sup>56</sup> that, with respect to consumerism, is manifested in any situation where refusing to promote consumerism may result in lower profits for the firm. Such situations call for the greatest prudence, particularly where the decision-maker is not the sole owner of the company, or even an owner at all, because the profits that will be foregone are not the decision-maker’s own. In these situations, a utilitarian calculus, trading off the benefits of higher profits against the potential harms of consumerism, is not acceptable because “one may never do evil so that good may result from it.”<sup>57</sup>

Does this mean that any business leader striving to follow Catholic teaching at work must accept lower profits in such situations?<sup>58</sup> Not necessarily. Inspired by a “comprehensive view of the human person,”<sup>59</sup> the decision-maker involved should make every effort to identify other alternative promotional approaches or needs to serve. It is not unreasonable to hope that such an approach will lead to superior results, if not in the short-term at least in the long-term. Christian virtue is not incompatible with material success; as Pope Leo XIII wrote, “When Christian morals are completely observed, they yield of themselves a certain measure of prosperity to material existence.”<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has examined the issue of consumerism in the light of Catholic Social Teaching. Its main conclusions are that consumerism is harmful to liberty and human fulfillment; that consumerism is a frequent but not necessary consequence

of the market economy; and that consumers, government, and business leaders all have a role to play in reducing consumerism.

Consumerism is a serious threat to liberty and should be tackled vigorously. The words of Samuel Adams, which opened this article, can serve also to close it:

If ye love wealth greater than liberty, the tranquility of servitude greater than the animating contest for freedom, go home from us in peace. We seek not your counsel, nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you; May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen.<sup>61</sup>

## Notes

1. Harry Alonzo Cushing, ed., *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, vol. 3 (New York: Putnam's, 1908), 235.
2. John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987), § 28.
3. The term *market economy* is used in this article to indicate an economy that allocates resources primarily through the interactions of individuals and households, as opposed to a “command economy,” where allocation occurs primarily through state control. Government regulation exists in almost any conceivable market economy, but the economy remains market driven so long as individual interactions are the primary cause of resource allocation.
4. Catholic social teaching contains doctrinal, dogmatic, and prudential teachings, as does the rest of the deposit of faith. The level of assent required by Catholics for each teaching will vary according to the type of teaching; see *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Professio Fidei*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1998).
5. The word *consumerism* is sometimes also used to mean consumer activism, but that is not the meaning used in this article. Roger Swagler, “Evolution and Applications of the Term Consumerism: Theme and Variations,” *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 28, no. 2 (1994), provides an account of the development of the two different—and largely opposed—meanings of consumerism; he cites Pope John Paul II’s encyclical letter *Centesimus Annus* as an example of the use of the term *consumerism* in the sense used in this article—that is, excessive focus on consumption.
6. Parts of the following discussion on these first two questions are based on Andrew V. Abela, “Marketing and Consumerism: A Response to O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy,” *European Journal of Marketing* 40, no. 1/2 (2006).

7. For example, John O'Shaughnessy and Nicholas Jackson O'Shaughnessy, "Marketing, the Consumer Society and Hedonism," *European Journal of Marketing* 36, no. 5/6 (2002).
8. James B. Twitchell, *Lead Us into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); see also a critical review of Twitchell's book by Samuel Gregg, "Tempted by Affluence?" *Religion & Liberty* (March/April 2001).
9. See Russell W. Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," *Journal of Consumer Research* 12 (1985); Russell W. Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism: Reliability, Validity and Relationship to Measures of Happiness," *Advances in Consumer Research* 11 (1983); Scott Dawson and G. Bamossy, "If We Are What We Have, What Are We When We Don't Have?" *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality* 6 (1991); Aaron C. Ahuvia and Nancy Y. Wong, "Materialism: Origins and Implications for Personal Well-Being," in *European Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. F. Hansen (Copenhagen, Denmark: Association for Consumer Research, 1995); Tim Kasser and R. M. Ryan, "A Dark Side of the American Dream: Correlates of Financial Success as a Central Life Aspiration," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65 (1993); James A. Muncy and Jacqueline K. Eastman, "Materialism and Consumer Ethics: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, no. 2 (1998); Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation," *Journal of Consumer Research* 19 (1992); Aric Rindfleisch, James E. Burroughs, and Frank Denton, "Family Structure, Materialism and Compulsive Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 23, no. 4 (1997); James A. Roberts, Chris Manolis, and John F. Tanner, "Family Structure, Materialism, and Compulsive Buying: A Reinquiry and Extension," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 31, no. 3 (2003); Newell D. Wright and Val Larsen, "Materialism and Life Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Complaining Behavior* 6 (1993). The findings from these U.S. studies are replicated in Europe (Western and Eastern), Asia, and Australia: R. Chan and C. Joseph, "Dimensions of Personality, Domains of Aspiration, and Subjective Well-Being," *Personality and Individual Differences* 28 (2000); Edward Diener and S. Oishi, "Money and Happiness: Income and Subjective Well-Being across Nations," in *Subjective Well-Being across Cultures*, ed. Edward Diener and E. M. Suh (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000); Tim Kasser and Aaron C. Ahuvia, "Materialistic Values and Well-Being in Business Students," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 32 (2002); K. A. Keng et al., "The Influence of Materialistic Inclination on Values, Life Satisfaction and Aspirations: An Empirical Analysis," *Social Indicators Research* 49 (2000); Lisa Ryan and Suzanne Dziurawiec, "Materialism and Its Relationship to Life Satisfaction," *Social Indicators Research* 55, no. 2 (2001); R. M. Ryan et al., "The American Dream in Russia: Extrinsic Aspirations and Well-Being in Two Cultures," *Personality and*

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