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The Protestant Moment: Antipopery, the Revolution of 1688–1689, and the Making of an Anglo-American Empire

Owen Stanwood

On 18 April 1689 two rival conceptions of empire faced off on the streets of Boston. The royal governor of the Dominion of New England, Sir Edmund Andros, represented one vision. He dreamed of a centralized empire in America: an institution that would project the king's power throughout the world and bring riches and glory to the imperial center. But between Andros and his vision stood thousands of angry New Englanders, armed with swords and clubs and represented by a group of local elites who demanded that the governor relinquish his command. These people advocated another kind of empire centered on religious ideology: a loose combination of territories defined by their common Protestantism and allegiance to an English, Protestant monarch and united in their opposition to Catholic France—a diabolical enemy whom they believed to be plotting against them. Leaders of this movement, like Congregational minister Cotton Mather, wanted English imperialism to be a tool for spreading true religion across the world, perhaps in anticipation of Christ's return. On this day, Mather's side won the battle. Governor Andros surrendered to the newly formed "Committee of Safety," initiating the first in a series of rebellions that eventually removed four colonial governors from power and inaugurated a new debate over the nature of empire.¹

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¹ The "Glorious Revolution in America" has attracted many historians over the years. The best overviews are Richard S. Dunn, "The Glorious Revolution and America," in *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 1 of *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford, 1998), 445–66; Stephen Saunders Webb, *Lord Churchill's Coup: The Anglo-American Empire and the Glorious Revolution Reconsidered* (New York, 1995),

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It was through the clash of these two visions that an English imperial order came into being in North America during the late seventeenth century. Before that time England's overseas presence consisted of a collection of trading posts and scattered settlements, possessing neither the political coordination nor the ideological coherence to be called an empire. By the eighteenth century, however, Britons on both sides of the Atlantic considered themselves to be subjects of a global polity, ruled by a single monarch and united by common religious, political, and economic beliefs.²

More than anything else, the events of 1688–89 brought about this imperial transformation. Preoccupied with the later dissolution of the empire and the development of a distinctive American “identity,” most historians have viewed the rebellions as simple conflicts between imperial authorities and local elites and thus as markers on the road to the more important revolution a century later.³ Moreover, scholars of the revolts that took place in different parts of North America have resisted examining them in combination, preferring to privilege local explanations, like the collapse of the old Puritan oligarchy in New England, Anglo-Dutch tensions in New York, or Protestant opposition to the Catholic proprietor in Maryland.⁴ This tendency to look for local and North American causes for the rebellions has essentially split apart the empire a century too early, imagining the Atlantic as an impassable barrier that somehow changed Europeans into Americans.

When placed in a wider context, the conflict that peaked in 1689 was far more than a contest between imperial overlords and local elites. Rather, it represented a struggle between two different visions of empire, both in reaction to the perceived resurgence of global Catholicism under the banner of the French king, Louis XIV. When the Sun King began his program to reform the French state and expand his influence in Europe during the 1670s, he inspired various responses from his neighbors. Some monarchs, like the Stuart kings of England, wanted to emulate

171–225; Richard R. Johnson, “The Revolution of 1688–89 in the American Colonies,” in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact*, ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge, 1991), 215–40; and David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (New York, 1972).

² The most recent works on the beginnings of English imperialism have all placed it in the context of state building in the early eighteenth century; see esp. David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000); and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 1992), 101–45. For a sense of the nature of the earliest English “imperial” efforts, see Alison Games, “Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63, no. 4 (October 2006): 675–92.

³ See esp. Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607–1788* (Athens, GA, 1986). Attempts to explicitly compare the two revolutions include David Lovejoy, “Two American Revolutions, 1689 and 1776,” in *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Princeton, NJ, 1980), 244–57; Theodore B. Lewis, “A Revolutionary Tradition, 1689–1774: ‘There was a Revolution here as well as in England,’” *New England Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (September 1973): 424–38.

⁴ On New England, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA, 1953); on New York, John M. Murrin, “English Rights as Ethnic Aggression: The English Conquest, the Charter of Liberties of 1683, and Leisler’s Rebellion in New York,” in *Authority and Resistance in Early New York*, ed. William Pencak and Conrad Edick Wright (New York, 1988), 56–94; and on Maryland, Lois Green Carr and David W. Jordan, *Maryland’s Revolution of Government, 1689–1692* (Ithaca, NY, 1974).

parts of the French monarch's program, building an absolutist state that could compete with France on its own terms. In England's American colonies as well as in the home islands, administrators in Whitehall looked to the French model as they attempted to build a more efficient imperial state.⁵ In both Europe and America, however, members of the radical Protestant fringe viewed Louis not as another secular ruler but as an agent of the Antichrist who needed to be resisted at all costs. While these radicals often found themselves on the margins of European political debate, they enjoyed positions of prominence in the North American plantations, thanks to the Calvinist heritage of places like Massachusetts and New York. The rebellions of 1689 thus represented peculiar variations of the Atlantic political and religious rifts of the time, as imperial rulers and colonial subjects attempted to sort out their places in a changing world system.⁶

This approach to the origins of empire differs from past scholarship in two important respects. First, I adopt a broadly comparative approach that not only attends to the close links between England and the colonies but also places imperial politics in a global context, recognizing that events in France and the Netherlands often had just as much impact on American attitudes as happenings in the British Isles.⁷ Second, I pay particular attention to the importance of religious networks in the seventeenth-century Atlantic, viewing the making of an imperial system as a chapter not just in political history but in the history of Christianity as well. Colonists saw themselves not simply as English subjects but as partners in an international Protestant brotherhood, fighting against a resurgent Catholic enemy.⁸ By understanding the importance of confessional networks in the creation of political communities, we come closer to realizing one of the key ambitions of the

⁵ The absolutist motives of the later Stuarts have inspired much debate, with some protesting that the kings had neither the ability nor the inclination to build an absolute state; see John Miller, "The Potential for 'Absolutism' in Later Stuart England," *History* 69 (1984): 187–207. In recent years, however, most later Stuart scholars agree that Charles II and James II had some absolutist pretensions, even if circumstances were very different from those in France; see John Morrill, "The Sensible Revolution," in Israel, *Anglo-Dutch Moment*, 76–81; Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London, 2005), 211–59, and *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685–1720* (London, 2006), 182–236; Steve Pincus, "The European Catholic Context of the Revolution of 1688–89: Gallicanism, Innocent XI, and Catholic Opposition," in *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603–1714: The Atlantic Connection*, ed. Allan I. Macinnes and Arthur H. Williamson (Leiden, 2006), 93–98.

⁶ On the place of such radicals in England, see esp. Melinda S. Zook, *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (University Park, PA, 1999); Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688–89* (Stanford, CA, 1992).

⁷ Many scholars of seventeenth-century England and Europe have argued for this more holistic approach; see esp. the essays in Israel, *Anglo-Dutch Moment*; and Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁸ Scholarship on the "Protestant International" has begun to paint a picture of this transnational confessional community; see W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992); J. F. Bosher, "Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant International in the Seventeenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 52, no. 1 (January 1995): 77–102; Robin Gwynn, "The Huguenots of Britain, the 'Protestant International' and the Defeat of Louis XIV," in *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland, and Colonial America, 1550–1750*, ed. Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton (Brighton, 2001), 412–24; Mark A. Peterson, "The Selling of Joseph: Bostonians, Antislavery, and the Protestant International, 1689–1733," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (2002): 1–22.

paradigm of “Atlantic history,” which is to break free of the nation-state as an organizing unit in historical study.⁹



When New England’s revolutionaries of 1689 reflected on the crisis that pushed them toward rebellion, they placed its origins over a decade earlier, in 1678. In that year, revelations of a “horrid *Popish Plot*” circulated around the English world.¹⁰ According to reports from a former Jesuit novice named Titus Oates, “the bloody *Devotoes of Rome*” intended to destroy the Protestant faith by infiltrating the English state. Before they were done, Oates warned, papists would kill the king, burn the city of London, and monopolize political power, on the way brutalizing any Protestants who refused to abjure their faith. The plot initiated a period of judicial terror in which many English Catholics lost their lives and also inspired a period of political strife in the kingdom as the political nation divided on the question of how best to deal with the popish threat.¹¹

As several scholars have observed, the Popish Plot was a domestic manifestation of a panic that was international in scope. During the 1670s, Protestants became increasingly fearful that Louis XIV intended to build a Catholic “universal monarchy.” In 1672, the Sun King nearly overran the Netherlands, and Protestants worried that he possessed an unnatural degree of influence in the English court, especially over King Charles II’s Catholic brother James, the duke of York. By the eve of the plot, Francophobia easily surpassed the anti-Dutch sentiment that had predominated the previous decade, and anti-French polemicists combined religious, political, and economic arguments to present Louis XIV as a threat to both English national interests and the global Protestant cause. Doing this required some intellectual sleight of hand, since the Sun King’s actual position in the Catholic world was more complicated than most Protestants realized, but as the world’s most powerful Catholic, Louis easily filled the role that English and Dutch pamphleteers created for him.¹²

A brief glance at the anti-Catholic press reveals the international context of English political disputes. In the early 1680s, as Whig activists clamored for the exclusion of the duke of York from the throne, they printed several newspapers that functioned above all as chronicles of popish intrigue around the world. The vast majority of the dispatches concerned the misdeeds of the French king. In

⁹ On this note, see Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke, 2002), 11–27.

¹⁰ *The Declaration of the Gentlemen, Merchants, and Inhabitants of Boston, and the Country Adjacent, April 18, 1689* (Boston, 1689), repr. in *The Glorious Revolution in Massachusetts: Selected Documents, 1689–1692*, ed. Robert Earle Moody and Richard Clive Simmons (Boston, 1988), 45.

¹¹ The fullest account of the plot remains John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London, 1972); but see also Scott, *England’s Troubles*, 182–204; Harris, *Restoration*, 136–202. The crisis that followed the plot is covered in Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678–81* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹² Steven C. A. Pincus, “From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes: The Shift in English Popular Sentiment from Anti-Dutch to Anti-French in the 1670s,” *Historical Journal* 38, no. 2 (June 1995): 333–61; J. F. Bosher, “The Franco-Catholic Danger, 1660–1715,” *History* 79, no. 255 (February 1994): 5–30. For a useful summary of Louis XIV’s ambiguous political and religious beliefs, see William Doyle, “Politics: Louis XIV,” in *Old Regime France, 1648–1788*, ed. William Doyle (Oxford, 2001), 169–94.

Benjamin Harris's *Domestick Intelligence*, for example, readers learned of Louis XIV's domination of the German city of Bremen, where French invaders levied exorbitant taxes and threatened to fire the town.¹³ Richard Janeway's *Impartial Protestant Mercury*, meanwhile, focused on French pretensions in the Low Countries and the Sun King's persecution of his Protestant subjects, which grew very intense in the early 1680s. In September 1681 Janeway noted that "every Post brings us in fresh accounts of the Persecution of the Protestants," and many of the refugees arrived in London, where they reported enduring cruelties "which seem almost Incredible, had we not seen and *Examined* these poor Soules just upon their Landing, not being then Cured of some of the Wounds occasioned by their Tortures."¹⁴

While most reports came from the European continent, Whig publishers also recognized that the plot stretched across the ocean. Harris reported on a suspicious fire in Boston in 1679 that destroyed several hundred houses and ships in the harbor. Naturally, the fire was no accident but "was done by Treachery and Design, and there is a *Frenchman* in Prison upon the same account."¹⁵ In 1681 Janeway reported on alarms in Maryland, where neighboring Indians made "great preparations for War." Because they declined to grow any corn, witnesses believed that the natives enjoyed the assistance of "some Ill Neighbours, especially some that are Papists not far off, which supposition is encreased for that the said *Indians* already take the Boldness to Kill the Cattle of the Protestant Planters before their faces, and threaten every day to fall upon their persons, whereas they offer no such outrages to any Plantations of the Papists."¹⁶

The purpose of Whig propaganda was to shame the Stuart court—who many believed to be secret partisans of the French—into action against Louis's perceived plans for universal monarchy. Charles II and his brother did forge periodic alliances with France to obtain needed revenue, but many of their royalist advisers actually agreed with their Whig rivals about the necessity of challenging French pretensions. Unlike the opposition, however, royalists believed that the best way to match the French was to emulate them by building a centralized state that more easily conformed to the royal will. While they rarely made explicit connections between their own program and that of Louis XIV, the overall goal was the same: to strengthen the central government and limit local prerogatives. In the management of overseas territories, Stuart officials proved especially eager to imitate the French example, which they often praised in glowing terms.¹⁷

¹³ *Domestick Intelligence; Or, News both from City and Country*, no. 8, 31 July 1679, no. 9, 5 August 1679.

¹⁴ *Impartial Protestant Mercury*, no. 43, 16–20 September 1681, no. 48, 4–7 October 1681.

¹⁵ *Domestick Intelligence*, no. 43, 2 December 1679.

¹⁶ *Impartial Protestant Mercury*, no. 34, 16–19 August 1681.

¹⁷ On the campaign against local authority in England, see Paul D. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England's Towns, 1650–1730* (Cambridge, 1998). Few scholars have made explicit connections between the English and French campaigns against local corporations, but contemporary political writers did; see, e.g., *Popery and Tyranny: Or, the Present State of France, In relation to Its Government, Trade, Manners of the People, and Nature of the Countrey* (London, 1679), 7. French absolutism depended more on local collaboration than its critics realized; see William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge, 1985). For a useful summary of French colonial theory, see Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique française* (Paris, 2006), 146–71.

Circumstances in the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean serve to illustrate how this fear and admiration of the French influenced governance in the colonies. In 1679 the French fleet began ranging around the Antilles, threatening European neighbors in the region, even earning mention in Harris's *Domestick Intelligence*.¹⁸ Not only zealous Protestants worried about French attack: the Leewards' Catholic Tory governor, Sir William Stapleton, watched his French neighbors become more powerful during the 1670s and warned that they had "the strength to conquer all" and become masters of the islands and the entire sugar trade. In order to save the colonies Stapleton advised the king to devote the same attention that the Sun King gave his overseas possessions, especially by providing ammunition for the poorly provisioned regiments stationed there, sending "A good Squadron of Warr Ships," and making a "resolution to aggress and attack first if a Warr be designed."¹⁹

Stapleton believed that only a strong military establishment would preserve the king's sovereignty in the Leeward Islands, but he hinted that his policy reflected public opinion on the islands as well. As they watched the French fleet travel around the region, islanders became positively terrified by the prospect of an invasion by the French and the few Carib Indians who remained on the nearby island of St. Vincent, and they demanded action on the part of their governor to deal with the threat. In one desperate missive, Stapleton suggested that the king should turn more attention to the islands "not only to preserve Your Ma[jes]ty's Sovereignty, but to quiet the minds of Your Subjects, who ought to live in beleefe that they are in a state of security." When such aid did not prove forthcoming, Stapleton advocated signing a peace treaty with the French, pledging that any war in Europe would not spill over to the Leeward Islands, but he presented the treaty as a matter of necessity rather than as a positive outcome. His preference was for an English empire that matched the French in troop strength and aggression, one that could conquer the French islands and master the sugar trade.²⁰

The same anti-French orientation appeared in the policies of another Irish Catholic governor, Thomas Dongan of New York. While he shared the political and religious predilections of his employer, the duke of York, Dongan proved to be the most determined opponent of the French in North America during the 1680s. His main goal was to preserve and expand New York's hold on the backcountry because he believed that the French were trying to hurt English interests by establishing trade connections and missions among the Indians of the Iroquois Confederation, longtime allies of the Dutch and English. His response to the crisis,

¹⁸ *Domestick Intelligence*, no. 19, 9 September 1679.

¹⁹ Proposals regarding Leeward Islands, The National Archives (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), CO 1/42/65; The past and present state of the Leeward Charibee Islands, 15 March 1678, TNA: PRO, CO 1/42/38. For background on Stapleton's rule, see C. S. S. Higham, *The Development of the Leeward Islands under the Restoration, 1660–1688: A Study of the Foundations of the Old Colonial System* (Cambridge, 1921), 99–121; Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1972), 117–33.

²⁰ Proposals regarding Leeward Islands, TNA: PRO, CO 1/42/65; Stapleton to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 14 June 1678, TNA: PRO, CO 1/42/75; Stapleton to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 29 June 1678, TNA: PRO, CO 1/42/98.

like Stapleton's in the Leeward Islands, was to propose that the English build a backcountry empire that would more closely resemble that of their French rivals.²¹

Dongan's plan had three major components. First, he proposed building a series of forts in Iroquois country in order to assert English claims to the region and show native subjects that the king would provide protection against their enemies. Second, he advocated that more English youths be trained in the beaver trade, claiming it to be "very necessary for us to encourage our young Men to goe a Beaver hunting as the French doe" and become better acquainted with the backcountry. Finally, he accepted the claims of Dutch merchants in Albany that the French had used the "pretence of propogating the Christian faith among the Indians" to gain advantages in trade, especially by tempting hundreds of Mohawks to settle in mission towns near New France. To counter these measures, Dongan insisted that all French Jesuits leave Iroquois country, proposing to replace them with English priests. In a speech to Iroquois sachems, Dongan promised to send "one of our Fathers" to learn the language, and several English Jesuits did visit Albany during his tenure.²²

Despite the official peace between the crowns, Dongan did not shy away from confrontation. He welcomed several arrivals from New France, both Catholic and Protestant—discontented soldiers who Canadian governor Jacques Brisay de Denonville denounced as "rogues" who "boast of sharing [Dongan's] table."²³ In addition to welcoming these fugitives, Dongan also authorized trading expeditions into territories that the French claimed as their own, including one into Ottawa country in the fall of 1686. French authorities captured and imprisoned the group, which included one of the "rogues" Denonville mentioned—a man named Abell Marion who had relocated from New France to New England years earlier without leave from authorities. The governor executed Marion "because hee was a Frenchman born, altho a subject of his Majesty of England and having a passe from his Excell[en]cy with the rest of the troop." Probably Denonville intended to send a message to other deserters, but he may have sent a very different kind of message to New Yorkers. Marion had likely become a Protestant either before or after his desertion, since he reportedly received a "welcome reception" in New England, a jurisdiction that never allowed Catholics to become naturalized subjects. Accordingly, the episode demonstrated how the French threatened not just English economic and political interests but Protestant liberties as well.²⁴

²¹ These plans are detailed in Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992), 148–61; Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies* (New York, 1984), 172–94.

²² Dongan's report on the state of the province, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* (NYCD), ed. Edmund B. O'Callaghan and Berthold Fernow (Albany, NY, 1853–87), 3:394–96; Petition of the Commissaries of Albany, 9 May 1687, NYCD, 3:418; Speech of Governor Dongan to Iroquois Sachems, in *The Dongan Papers, 1683–1688*, ed. Peter R. Christoph (Syracuse, NY, 1996), 202–3.

²³ Denonville's remarks on Dongan's letter, 22 August 1687, NYCD, 3:471; Denonville to Seignelay, 8 June 1687, NYCD, 9:326. For the Huguenot identity of some of these newcomers, see "A Memorial on Salt Ponds," Lambeth Palace Library, Fulham Papers, 6:175 (microfilm, Library of Congress).

²⁴ Information furnished by Nanning Hartense and others, 7 October 1687, NYCD, 3:437; Dongan to Lord President, NYCD, 3:430; "Coxe's Account of the English in the Mississippi Valley in the Seventeenth Century," in *The First Explorations of the Trans-Allegheny Region by the Virginians*,

The imperial program espoused by Stapleton and Dongan found its fullest expression in New England. From the mid-1670s onward, Massachusetts and its neighbors became embroiled in controversy as imperial administrators—led by the irascible royal agent Edward Randolph—waged a legal campaign against the old charter and laid the foundations for royal government in the region. The end result was the revocation of the charter and the establishment of the Dominion of New England, a union of all the colonies from Maine to New Jersey under a single governor and council, appointed by the king and ruling without an assembly. Historians have rightly seen the dominion as a milestone in the history of New England and the empire, representing a bolder exercise in imperial absolutism than any before or after in the region.²⁵ What they have not recognized is the role that the neighboring French presence played in providing both an impetus and a model for centralization.

When Stuart officials looked at English America in the late 1600s, they saw disorder and confusion. In one observation from the 1690s—allegedly taken from Mohawk Indians—an English observer claimed that the many separate governments in the region made the English weaker than their numbers, being “divided into so many petit, and separate governments; who minding themselves so much, let the publiq. Interest sink.” New France, on the other hand, was much less populous but more efficiently run. Despite living in “a Cold, & Desert Country, where they canot subsist, without anuall supplys from france,” the king’s viceroy kept his few subjects “in due order, & obedience,” and therefore made the region an economic and military powerhouse. The framers of the dominion hoped to build a similar system across the woods in New England. When William Blathwayt described the proposed union of colonies, he noted it “will be terrible to the French and make them proceed with more caution than they have lately done.”²⁶ Edward Randolph concurred with this vision and connected it with a hemispheric struggle against the French. Knowing that the French fleet had taken aim at the Spanish West Indies, he believed that Louis XIV might also “engage the Indians on the backside of New Eng[lan]d to make another incursion,” thus monopolizing the fur trade in the north as he had sugar production in the south. A strong, coordinated colony in New England would serve to foil this plan, as Randolph

1650–1674, ed. Clarence Walworth Alvord and Lee Bidgood (Cleveland, 1912), 237–38. Marion’s distinctive first name, taken from the Old Testament, also suggests Protestant heritage.

²⁵ Useful studies of the dominion include Viola Barnes, *The Dominion of New England: A Study in British Colonial Policy* (New Haven, CT, 1923); T. H. Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler: Puritan Political Thought in New England, 1630–1730* (New Haven, CT, 1970), 134–50; Richard R. Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire: The New England Colonies, 1675–1715* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1981), 50–96. On Randolph, see Michael Garibaldi Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies, 1676–1703* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1960).

²⁶ The Present State of New England by R[ichard] D[aniel], 23 December 1695, Blathwayt Papers, vol. 6, folder 5, John D. Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg [CW]; Blathwayt to Randolph, 10 March 1688, in *Edward Randolph: Including His Letters and Official Papers from the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies in America, and the West Indies, 1676–1703 (Randolph Letters)*, ed. Robert N. Toppan and Alfred T. S. Goodrick (Boston, 1898–1909), 4:216. Needless to say, the English portrait of New France was much rosier than the reality; French colonial officials made very similar arguments to their own king that the English colonies were better supported.

did not doubt that subjects there would be zealous opponents of the French interest if properly governed.²⁷

So the push for empire came specifically out of a fear of the French, a fear that many colonists shared with their brethren in England. But the imperial program did not progress as smoothly as Randolph believed it would, because devoted Protestants in the colonies viewed the French threat in very different terms. For all their talk of divine right, English Tories espoused a global political vision that was essentially secular: they feared the French not because they were Catholic but because they were accumulating power and riches that could belong to England. Religion mattered, to be sure, in that rival monarchs could use faith to strengthen their authority, but the Tories did not believe that theology was at the heart of the dispute.²⁸ At the same time, many Protestants interpreted the French threat as a new manifestation of the popish Antichrist that had been battling the true church for centuries. For militant Protestants the fight with France was not just a competition for resources—though they thought the expansion of trade could benefit their cause—but a continuation of the cosmic struggle between good and evil that would end with Christ's return. Emulating the enemy was not an option; rather, true Protestants had to strive to be as unlike their popish rivals as possible, whether in forms of worship or politics. Both sides had the same goal, namely, vanquishing the French and building a strong English empire, but their outlooks and methods could not have been more different.²⁹

The religious interpretation enjoyed particular prominence in the plantations thanks to a network of radical Calvinist refugees. Since the founding of New England by Puritan dissidents in the 1630s, America had attracted more than its share of displaced Protestants from around Europe, and the restrictions on dissent by Stuart authorities in the 1670s and 1680s increased the flow. As Edward Randolph noted, "persons of dangerous principles from England, Ireland, and other Places, are here received and highly encouraged."³⁰ One example was the Scottish Presbyterian Francis Borland, a theologically inclined young man who found few opportunities at home for those who would not "conform to Prelacy & take the Test." He followed his merchant brother to New England in 1682—a clear indication of how commerce and religion could become intertwined—where he made the acquaintance of the Reverend Increase Mather and found employment as a schoolmaster in Barnstable and Boston for several years before moving to the

²⁷ Randolph to Sir Leoline Jenkins, 30 April 1681, in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1681–85*, ed. J. W. Fortescue (London, 1897), entry no. 91.

²⁸ This is not to say that Tories did not care about religion or Whigs about commerce; they each combined religious and economic arguments in distinctive ways, though the links between these different kinds of arguments remain to be explored. For a discussion of Tory beliefs on political economy, see Steven C. A. Pincus, "Revolution in Political Economy and the Atlantic World" (paper presented at "Transformations: The Atlantic World in the Late Seventeenth Century," Harvard University, 1 April 2006).

²⁹ The uses of antipopery among these late seventeenth-century radicals resembled that of their forebears in early Stuart England, on whom see Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice," in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London, 1989), 72–97.

³⁰ Randolph to Lord Treasurer, 23 August 1686, *Randolph Letters*, 4:113.

Dutch colony of Suriname in 1685.³¹ Borland was just one of many migrants encouraged to cross the Atlantic by the restrictions on dissent at home. When the Whig bookseller John Dunton traveled to Boston in 1686, he met a number of people who “fled hither on the account of conscience,” including “two Divines” from Limerick, the brothers John and Thomas Bailey, the latter of whom became minister in Watertown. Some time later the printer Benjamin Harris himself traveled to Boston, where he opened a coffeehouse and became one of the leading publicists of the Williamite revolution.³²

Ministers like Borland and the Baileys and printers like Harris helped to establish New England, and America more generally, as a Protestant refuge during dark times. The most famous statements of America’s place in Protestant history came from the Boston minister Cotton Mather, who observed of New England, “tho it be in the same Latitude with *Italy*, [it] is yet amongst the sincerest of its *Antipodes*.”³³ While most historians have read Mather’s statements as evidence of a “New England way” that separated the region from the larger world, he intended to forge closer ties with Protestants outside of North America. By claiming a special role for their remote homeland, Reformed leaders in Massachusetts and other plantations attempted to become full partners in an imperial struggle for true religion against the forces of global Catholicism.³⁴

This contest intensified in the years after 1685. Two events of that year sent shock waves through the Protestant world and proved particularly distressing to radicals in English territories. First, in February the Catholic duke of York became King James II, and, while most subjects accepted his accession with little objection, Cotton Mather experienced great distress. He spent the day “in Humiliations, and Supplications . . . to deprecate the Confusions with which the Protestant Religion and Interest, were threatned by the Accession of that Prince unto the Throne.”³⁵ Months later, in October, an even more ominous event occurred. After years of increasing persecution, Louis XIV repealed the Edict of Nantes that had guaranteed limited toleration to French Protestants, causing an exodus of Huguenot refugees. Protestant leaders in America had long paid attention to the persecutions in France, fearing that such a fate could await them if they fell into the hands of a popish monarch. Now they opened their ports to boatloads of refugees. In 1686, for instance, two small barks arrived in Boston from Ireland carrying French Protestant newcomers, who formed towns in central Massachusetts and on Narragansett Bay. Larger numbers came to the new proprietary colony of South Carolina, while the New York merchant Jacob Leisler—himself the son of a former pastor to Frankfurt’s French Reformed congregation—purchased land in Westchester County and

³¹ Diary of Francis Borland, Edinburgh University Library, 7–15 (microfilm, Massachusetts Historical Society [MHS], Boston).

³² John Dunton, *Letters written from New-England, A.D. 1686*, ed. W. H. Whitmore (Boston, 1867), 63, 76, 144. On Harris, see J. G. Muddiman, *The King’s Journalist, 1659–1689: Studies in the Reign of Charles II* (London, 1923), 215–50.

³³ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, bks. 1–2, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock, with Elizabeth W. Miller (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 91.

³⁴ Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York, 1986), esp. 55–82; Miller, *New England Mind*, 149–90.

³⁵ “Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681–1708,” MHS, *Collections*, ser. 7, vol. 7 (1911), 113.

founded the settlement of New Rochelle.³⁶ These refugees, while few in number, provided a human face to French persecution. As Cotton Mather preached in 1686, “the furnace of persecution” had “heated seven times hotter,” and “The cup is going round the world: Tis come into America.”³⁷ No longer could North American Protestants remain complacent in their isolation; they had to join the international struggle against Louis XIV and popery.

Seen in this international context, it is not surprising that the creation of the dominion of New England led to a showdown between imperial officials and radical Calvinist elites. Dominion leaders aimed at New England’s religious establishment as well as its political autonomy, even forcing one of Boston’s Congregational churches to provide space and time for Anglican services.³⁸ But despite scattered acts of resistance, the region did not erupt into civil strife when Andros, the new governor, arrived in 1686. Indeed, “a great Concoarse of People” honored the new governor on his arrival and “Expressed themselves as satisfied & well disposed for His Maj[es]t[ie]s service.”³⁹ Even the new Anglican worship services, while they scandalized some, proved attractive to others; John Dunton noted that the Anglican service was “so great a Novelty to the Bostonians” that it attracted “a very large Audience.” Indeed, when the Mathers published a blistering attack on common prayer worship, equating it with popery, they did so in part to dissuade their flock from trying out the new religion, which tempted many New Englanders.⁴⁰

At the start of 1688, therefore, two rival factions attempted to pursue their own visions of empire. Stuart officials wanted an imperial system that rivaled the French in wealth and power, while Calvinists sought to make America a bastion of the Protestant cause. For all the bluster on both sides, however, the vast majority of American subjects seemed unmoved by the debate—unmoved, that is, until settlers began to turn up dead on New England’s frontier and the French Catholic menace became more than an abstraction.



The crisis that ultimately destroyed royal government in New England began as a dispute over external policy, specifically regarding neighboring Indians. Fears

³⁶ On the Huguenot migration, see esp. Jon Butler, *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society* (Cambridge, MA, 1983); Bertrand van Ruymbeke, *From New Babylon to Eden: The Huguenots and Their Migration to Colonial South Carolina* (Columbia, SC, 2006). The arrival of the refugees in Boston comes from Richard Wharton to William Blathwayt, 14 October 1686, Blathwayt Papers, vol. 6, folder 4, CW. On Leisler, see David William Voorhees, “Hearing . . . What Great Success the Dragonnades in France Had”: Jacob Leisler’s Huguenot Connections,” *de Halve Maen* 67, no. 1 (January 1994): 15–20.

³⁷ Cotton Mather, Notes of Sermons, 1686, Cotton Mather Papers, HM15212, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

³⁸ On the dominion’s religious program, see M. Halsey Thomas, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Sewall* (New York, 1973), 1:116, 135, 139, 163; Mark A. Peterson, *The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England* (Stanford, CA, 1997), 177–78.

³⁹ Edmund Andros to William Blathwayt, 23 December 1686, Blathwayt Papers, vol. 3, folder 2, CW.

⁴⁰ Dunton, *Letters written from New-England*, 137; [Increase Mather], *A Brief Discourse Concerning the unlawfulness of the Common Prayer Worship* (Cambridge, MA, 1686).

of native attack were not new, but the rise of France as a regional threat in the 1680s led Americans to view Indians in a new way. English leaders and ordinary colonists both feared that the natives could become auxiliaries in a French Catholic invasion, but competing interpretations of the French threat led to various Indian policies, and it was this dispute over what to do about the Indians that prompted ordinary colonists to join what had been an elite debate over the nature of empire.

The first widespread fears of a Catholic-Indian conspiracy appeared in Maryland in the 1640s. Ironically, the first purveyor of such paranoia was the Catholic proprietor Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore, who believed that Jesuits who resented his neutral policy regarding Maryland's religious establishment might arm Indian converts and use them as a kind of popish army.⁴¹ In later years discontented Protestants used identical language against the proprietor himself, charging Baltimore with hiring Indians to cut off the colony's Protestant population. This language was remarkably effective in building opposition to the proprietary government, as it connected colonists' everyday fears of Indians with their inherited fears of Catholicism, and it worked especially well in the colony ruled by a Catholic minority who had unusually tranquil relations with local natives.⁴²

Tensions between Indians and Europeans in the 1670s led to renewed and widespread fears of Catholic-Indian conspiracies. While Nathaniel Bacon's rebels in Virginia avoided religious rhetoric in their denunciations of Governor Sir William Berkeley's Indian policy, neighbors in Maryland were not so cautious. In one petition to the king, a group of Marylanders outlined a vast conspiracy that included Baltimore, Berkeley, the Susquehanna Indians, and roaming Jesuits who intended "to overterne Engl[an]d with feyer, sword, and distractions . . . with the help of French spirits from Canada."⁴³ Around the same time in New England, after a union of natives under the Wampanoag leader King Philip devastated the colonies, some colonists used similar language to explain their own Indian troubles. While most of the region's religious leaders blamed backsliding and sin for the assault, a minority claimed that "vagrant and Jesuitical Priests" had worked for years "to exasperate the Indians against the English, and to bring them into a confederacy, and that they were promised supplies from France, and other parts, to extirpate the English Nation out of the Continent of America."⁴⁴ When two Dutch travelers circulated through the colonies at the end of the decade, they found such fears of a popish-Indian design not just in Maryland but in Boston as

⁴¹ John D. Krugler, *English and Catholic: The Lords Baltimore in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, 2004), 176.

⁴² Leonard Strong, *Babylon's Fall in Maryland* (London, 1655). See Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 35–37, 152–54.

⁴³ "Complaint from Heaven with a Huy and crye and a petition out of Virginia and Maryland, 1676," in *Archives of Maryland (Arch. Md.)*, ed. W. H. Browne, Clayton Hall, and Bernard Steiner (Baltimore and Annapolis, 1883–), 5:134–35.

⁴⁴ Edward Randolph, "Present State of New England," *Randolph Letters*, 2:243. Especially during the war's later stages, Massachusetts leaders feared that French agents were smuggling arms to Philip, but they also believed that Dutch merchants in Albany might be aiding the enemy; see Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Early New England* (Philadelphia, 2005), 207–37.

well, where frightened townspeople believed the strange newcomers to be Jesuits in disguise and proved reluctant to provide them lodging.⁴⁵

During the 1680s these fears of a Catholic-Indian design became most acute in the borderlands between New England and New France. Refugees of King Philip's War settled just beyond the bounds of English settlement, both in the Saint Lawrence Valley and among the nations of the Abenaki Confederacy north of the Maine and New Hampshire settlements. Colonists feared these malcontents could cause a new Indian war, this time with French assistance, and a number of incidents seemed to confirm these fears. In 1688, just after James II added New York to the dominion, Indians conducted several small-scale raids in western Massachusetts and the province of Maine. The attacks disturbed colonists because, even though England and France were officially at peace, the Indians showed clear indications that they had received French assistance. A friendly Indian who spoke to the raiders reported that they had come by order of "the Governour of Canida who told us the Maquaes [Mohawks] had done great mischief in Canada, therefore gow yow revenge the same, either on Christians or Indians." Another report claimed that the raiding party traveled with a French priest.⁴⁶

The escalating violence convinced almost everyone that the French Catholic plot had finally arrived in America. Even dominion officials were not immune to fears of popery. When Edward Randolph, now the dominion secretary, described the violence to an English correspondent, he blamed the French for seducing away the Indians from their allegiance "by their Jesuites [who] strangely allure them with their beads crucifixes and little painted images, gaining many new converts."⁴⁷ Clearly something had to be done to meet the threat, and Governor Andros was not one to shy away from a fight. His response to the crisis, however, was far different from what many New Englanders expected and brought about a new conversation about how to best protect the colonies from external enemies.

Like his predecessor Dongan, Andros adopted a pragmatic approach toward native and French enemies that combined threats with offers of aid and protection. His primary goal was to increase the king's wealth and power, and he understood that by winning erstwhile enemies to the English side he could expand his master's dominions with little effort. Accordingly, he responded to the attacks by conducting a raid on the trading post of Jean-Vincent d'Abbadie, baron of Saint-Castin, an eccentric trader who lived in the contested region between New England and Acadia. Andros and his men confiscated the baron's trading goods but were careful to pay him no personal insult—they even carefully preserved the small Catholic chapel at his post—and they offered him the protection of the English crown if he would change sides.⁴⁸ The governor behaved similarly when subor-

⁴⁵ Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin Jameson, eds., *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679–1680* (New York, 1913), 44, 65, 79, 137, 250, 268–70.

⁴⁶ Examination of Magsipen, *NYCD*, 3:562; Massachusetts Archives Collection (Mass. Arch.), Columbia Point, Boston, 30:310; Edward Randolph to Sir James Hayes, 6 January 1689, *Randolph Letters*, 6:284.

⁴⁷ Randolph to Hayes, 6 January 1689, *Randolph Letters*, 6:284. Randolph also claimed that the Jesuits tricked Governor Dongan into prohibiting the Iroquois from attacking French forts.

⁴⁸ On the raid, see Edward Randolph to Thomas Povey, 21 June 1688, *Randolph Letters*, 4:225; *Rose* logs, TNA: PRO, ADM 51/3955/152, fol. 120. On Saint-Castin more generally, see Owen Stanwood, "Unlikely Imperialist: The Baron of Saint-Castin and the Transformation of the Northeastern Borderlands," *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 43–62.

dinates in Maine imprisoned several Abenaki chiefs and sent them to Boston in irons in retaliation for native incursions. Andros believed that such rash actions would alienate the Abenaki, who could be valuable allies, and bring about a needless Indian war. He ordered their release—a sensible piece of Indian policy but one that rankled many New Englanders.⁴⁹

By the end of the summer, the level of fear in the northeastern colonies had reached new heights, and it had begun to undermine Andros's imperial mission. The governor sent his lieutenant Francis Nicholson on a mission through Massachusetts to assure inhabitants that they lived "under the protection of a greate King, who protects all his Subjects both in their lives and fortunes." But frightened settlers could not be dissuaded from taking refuge in garrison houses.⁵⁰ In August of 1688 a New Englander underscored just how ineffective the governor's public relations campaign had been. In an anonymous letter, an excerpt of which was sent to the Lords of Trade in a bundle of miscellaneous material from New England, he lamented "the alarum of war & Garments rolled in blood" since God had "brought the sword of the Indians againe upon us." After recounting the litany of Indian attacks, the author pointed his finger toward dominion officials. "I do heartily wish," he wrote, "that some of our own Gent[leme]n have not had too much of a hand in this evil designe, For I have been informed by Credible p[er]sons that some in power have said that it is not for the King's Interest that this people should enjoy [New England], & if another people had it would be more for the King's Interest."⁵¹ Before they heard anything about the impending troubles in England itself, some colonists were already beginning to suspect that their purported imperial protectors were actually enemies.

When Andros finally began a focused military campaign against the Abenaki, he became even less popular. In the fall of 1688, he impressed hundreds of young men from Massachusetts towns and sent them to Maine, where they endured a tough winter under the command of strangers with foreign ideas about military discipline. Soon some of these men began sending reports back to Massachusetts of strange incidents in the camp. One soldier witnessed the governor selling ammunition to the wife of the baron of Saint-Castin himself, despite his status as "an enemy to the Interest of the Kings subjects." Others reported on cruel treatment and untoward comments by Andros's officers, some of whom were Catholics. When one Massachusetts soldier expressed hope that they would soon find some of the enemy, who eluded them all winter, an officer responded "that he had rather there were a thousand or Two Indians on Roxbury neck to [fight] against the Boston Bores."⁵² By April 1689, according to a militia commander in Newbury,

⁴⁹ Randolph to the Lords of Trade, 8 October 1688, *Randolph Letters*, 4:240–43; Sir Edmund Andros's Report of his Administration, *NYCD*, 3:722. Andros's most recent biographer has praised the governor's approach to Indian relations; Mary Lou Lustig, *The Imperial Executive in America: Sir Edmund Andros, 1637–1714* (Madison, NJ, 2002).

⁵⁰ Francis Nicholson to [Thomas Povey?], 31 August 1688, *NYCD*, 3:552; Francis Nicholson to [William Blathwayt], [October] 1688, Blathwayt Papers, vol. 15, folder 1, CW.

⁵¹ Abstract of a letter dated Boston New England, 20 August 1688, Plymouth Papers, 2:100, Frederick Lewis Gay Transcripts, MHS.

⁵² Isaac Miller's Testimony, 21 December 1689, in James Phinney Baxter, ed., *Documentary History of the State of Maine (DHSM)* (Portland, ME, 1869–1916), 5:22–23; Deposition of Edward Taylor, 27 January 1690, *DHSM*, 5:35.

“The great cry among the people” in his town was “concerning the Sick and week Souldiers to the Eastward.” The commander advised the governor to bring the men home “to Quiet thease tumults.”⁵³

During the first months of 1689, “Ill Spirrits” in New England were “Scattering & publishing Seditious & Rebellious Libells” that blamed the governor for the region’s Indian troubles.⁵⁴ While none of these libels survive, one appeared in a February 1689 court case, after Joseph Bayley of Newbury found a “paper” by the side of the highway warning New England to “rise and be armed” and “let not Papist you charme.” The anonymous author claimed the war against the Abenaki was a ruse to drain New England towns of their young men, leaving them vulnerable to an attack by “Indians french and papist[s].” When a magistrate named Caleb Moodey brought the tract to the attention of authorities, they promptly imprisoned Moodey for “publishing a Scandelous & Seditious Lybell,” thus reinforcing the belief that dominion officials did not have the country’s best interests at heart.⁵⁵

An Indian’s testimony added new details to the plot. In January 1689 a Christian Indian from Natick named Solomon Thomas visited some neighbors in Sudbury and detailed a recent encounter with Governor Andros. Thomas claimed that the governor visited the praying Indians of Natick and told them of a plan for a Catholic and Indian force to overtake New England. If the English army proved victorious against the Abenakis, the governor claimed, “in the spring french and Irish would Com to Boston” with a large number of Indians. After destroying the capital the popish army would continue to “the Countrey townes.” To remove any doubt of his motives, Andros gave the Indian “a booke that was better than the bible” that contained pictures of the Virgin Mary and the twelve apostles, and claimed that “all that would not turn to the governor[’s] reledgon and owne that booke should be destroyed.” According to this Indian informer, the governor was a confirmed Catholic, and his impending plan to invade New England reflected his religious goals. Another Indian in Sudbury claimed that Andros distributed gifts to Abenaki leaders as “commissions” to fight the colonists.⁵⁶

These rumors took on new meaning once colonists began learning about the momentous changes in Europe. In January dominion officials knew that William of Orange—the Dutch stadholder and champion of the Protestant cause—was planning an expedition against England, where James II had become increasingly unpopular. Not until 11 February did New Yorkers receive “a flying reporte from Virginia; that the Prince of Orange was landed in Tarrbay”—an event that had occurred on 5 November. By the end of March several reliable reports confirmed that William and Mary had forced James II to flee the throne, but still no official word came from Whitehall instructing officials to declare the new monarchs. As a result, Andros and his counterparts remained cautious; they attempted to suppress

⁵³ Daniel Davison to Edmund Andros, April 1689, *DHSM*, 6:472.

⁵⁴ John West to Fitz John Winthrop, 23 February 1689, Winthrop Family Papers, MHS.

⁵⁵ Deposition of Caleb Moody, 9 January 1690, *DHSM*, 5:28–29; Deposition of Joseph Bayley, 9 January 1690, *Mass. Arch.*, 35:166.

⁵⁶ Testimonies of Joseph Graves, Mary Graves, and John Rutter, 3 January 1689, *DHSM*, 4:446–47; Depositions of Thomas Browne, John Grout, Sr., John Goodenow, Jonathan Stanhope, and John Parmenter, 22 March 1689, *DHSM*, 4:448–49; Deposition of William Bond, 23 January 1689, *Mass. Arch.*, 35:179a.

unofficial reports of William's victory, even imprisoning a man who spread Orangist propaganda in Boston. Andros was merely being careful, lest the early reports of William's victory turned out to be untrue, but his actions fed the growing anxiety, especially after colonists heard the "surprizing news of K. *James* his being retired into *France*," where he enjoyed the protection of Louis XIV himself.⁵⁷

In the early months of 1689, the crisis moved beyond New England. In New York, for instance, settlers circulated reports that resembled those of their northern neighbors in both general inspiration and particular charges against the governor. A local sachem in Westchester County told a Dutch colonist named Barent Witt that Andros "did promise him a bribe of twelf pounds to be ready with a Company of Indians so many as he could get at Manhatans Island in the month of April." In addition, Witt also spoke to some Frenchmen who passed through the region and confirmed that "some ships were arrived" in Canada that would soon set out to conquer New York. When Witt brought his concerns to the leading landowner in the region, a prominent merchant and member of the dominion's council named Frederick Philipse, the councilor laughed and said "it was foolish to be afraid," which led Witt and his neighbors to suspect Philipse as well. They also connected their anxieties with the larger Protestant resistance to popery. Witt's wife believed that "she would be the first which should be burnt in case the French should take the place," probably because she was a French Protestant. New York had a significant Huguenot population, and these recent refugees from Louis XIV's regime feared that the Sun King would deal with them cruelly if he gained control of the colony. New Yorkers had shown little resistance to imperial reforms in the years immediately before 1689, but revelations of a popish plot caused some of them to develop new suspicions about their leaders.⁵⁸

Then in March the rumors of a Catholic-Indian design traveled back to the Potomac River Valley, the crucible of Catholic-Indian intrigue in North America. Residents of Stafford County, Virginia, began to hear "some discourse that was talked by the Indians" regarding a plot hatched by Maryland Catholics and Seneca Indians to "kill the protestants" before definite word of William of Orange's victory arrived from England. Two Virginians, including the local Anglican minister in Stafford County, spread the rumors both north and south, and within weeks residents of both Maryland and Virginia clamored for action.⁵⁹ In Charles and

⁵⁷ Francis Nicholson to Fitz John Winthrop, 16 February 1690, Winthrop Family Papers, MHS; Affidavits of Greveraet and Brewerton, 13 December 1689, *NYCD*, 3:660; Deposition of John Winslow, Mass. Arch., 35:216; "A Vindication of New England (Prepared Chiefly by Increase Mather,) and Containing the Petition of the Episcopalians of Boston to the King," in William H. Whitmore, ed., *The Andros Tracts: Being a Collection of Pamphlets and Official Papers of the Andros Government and the Establishment of the Second Charter of Massachusetts* (New York, 1868–74), 2:52. For analysis of how word of the revolution traveled to the colonies, see Ian K. Steele, "Communicating an English Revolution to the Colonies, 1688–89," *Journal of British Studies* 24, no. 3 (July 1985): 333–57.

⁵⁸ Affidavits concerning the agreement of Andros with the Indians, *NYCD*, 3:659; TNA: PRO, CO 5/1081/41. New Yorkers had good reason to be afraid, as Louis XIV did propose an invasion of New York, after which all Protestants would be deported from the colony, and all French Protestants would be sent to prison in France; see Marcel Trudel, "Au programme de la Nouvelle-France en 1689: Déporter la population du New-York," in *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec* (Montreal, 2001), 125–38.

⁵⁹ Examination of Burr Harrison, *Arch. Md.*, 8:77–78, 84–86; Nicholas Spencer, Richard Lee, and Isaac Allerton to William Joseph, 22 March 1689, *Arch. Md.*, 8:82; Nicholas Spencer to William Blathwayt, 27 April 1689, Blathwayt Papers, vol. 16, folder 5, CW; H. R. McIlwaine, *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia* (Richmond, VA, 1925), 1:104–5.

Calvert Counties, colonists “Assembled in Armes” under the militia commander Henry Jowles, becoming the first colonists to take the law into their own hands during the crisis. In Maryland, they demanded that Lord Baltimore’s government do more to defend the country against papists and Indians, while angry crowds in Virginia attempted to plunder the house of a leading Catholic planter, believing him to be hiding a cache of weapons. Officials viewed the rebels as “ill minded persons” of “the meanest quality” looking for an excuse to plunder their betters, but they met most of the crowd’s demands. Virginia officials calmed the people by becoming the first to declare William and Mary on 27 April, while proprietary rulers in Maryland proved the groundlessness of the plot and increased patrols in the backcountry.⁶⁰

Despite the temporary respite in the Chesapeake, the rumors of 1689 did irreparable damage to the imperial mission in North America. Andros and his allies believed that only a centralized empire could protect the colonies from the French, but by April 1689 few subjects agreed. They viewed Andros as an arbitrary ruler who could not protect the people from attack and insisted on serving a monarch that had probably defected to the enemy. At best, the governor was ineffectual; at worst, he was conspiring against his own people. To some in New England and New York, the governor’s program was primarily a religious threat; others resented his economic policies, while others still simply wanted security from Indian attack. Whatever their motivations, these opponents of the regime formed a powerful front that threatened to turn back most of the late Stuart imperial program.

Fear flowered into open rebellion in Boston on 18 April. The events of that day are difficult to recover due to the partisan nature of most reports, but the crisis probably began when a group of deserting soldiers began to march from Maine to Boston. Worried that the troops would “make a great Stir and produce a bloody Revolution,” a group of Boston’s leading citizens decided to “appear in the Head of what Action should be done; and a Declaration was prepared accordingly.” A disgruntled carpenter on the royal frigate *Rose* determined the exact timing of the revolt when he spread a rumor that his captain and the governor “intended to fire the Towne” and then escape “in the smoake, designeing for France.” By noon on the 18th, hundreds of people had assembled in arms, demanding that Andros and other dominion officials be put in prison. By the end of the day, power rested in the hands of a “Committee of Safety” that included officials of the last charter government, some members of Andros’s council, and leading merchants.⁶¹

Within weeks, the “seed of sedition” blew from Boston to outlying counties of

⁶⁰ Henry Jowles to William Digges, 24 March 1689, *Arch. Md.*, 8:70–71; Jowles to William Joseph and Deputy Governors, 24 March 1689, *Arch. Md.*, 8:72; William Digges to Hanslap et al., *Arch. Md.*, 8:79–80; Proclamation against the plot, 27 March 1689, *Arch. Md.*, 8:86; “The Randolph Manuscript: Memoranda from Virginia Records, 1688–90,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 20 (1912): 5; Spencer to Blathwayt, 10 June 1689, Blathwayt Papers, vol. 18, folder 3, CW.

⁶¹ Report of Samuel Mather, in *The Glorious Revolution in America: Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689*, ed. Michael G. Hall, Lawrence H. Leder, and Michael G. Kammen (Chapel Hill, NC, 1964), 39–40; Information of the crew of the *Rose* Frigate, 29 April 1689, Mass. Arch., 107:4; Information of the *Rose* Frigate, 1 May 1689, Mass. Arch., 107:9–10. The fullest contemporary account is John Riggs, “A Narrative of the Proceedings at Boston in New England upon the Inhabts seizing the Governmt there,” TNA: PRO, CO 5/905/85–87.

New York. Residents of Long Island and Westchester County turned out officials of the dominion government, and some of the Long Island militia marched toward New York City to demand that Lieutenant Governor Nicholson strengthen fortifications. Over the next month, rumors circulated that questioned Nicholson's commitment to Protestantism and warned of new Catholic plots against the city. Then on 31 May, facing shrill demands from militia commanders, Nicholson shouted that if the militia did not become more obedient, he would turn the fort's guns on New York and "set the town a fire." The fort soon filled with burghers, "armed and enraged," who declared that they were "sold, betrayed and to be murdered, [and] it was time to look for themselves." Nicholson and his council decided to hand power to the militia "to prevent bloodshed," and soon the German-born merchant Jacob Leisler emerged as a leader of the movement.⁶²

The final act of rebellion occurred in Maryland in August 1689.⁶³ While no evidence suggests that Protestants in Maryland had knowledge of events to the north, the rebellion played out in familiar fashion. First, rumors of a Catholic-Indian design circulated around the colony suggesting "that the Papists had invited the Northern Indians to come down and cutt off the Protestants and that their descent was to be about the latter end of August." To save the colony from this plot, the Charles County militia under John Coode marched to the capital at St. Mary's to place local government in Protestant hands and to search the colony's records for evidence of plotting. Proprietary officials could find few people willing to fight to defend St. Mary's, and they retreated to the proprietor's house at Mattapany. Soon the rebels surrounded them there as well, and they handed over power on 1 August, agreeing in their capitulation that "noe papist in this Province" would occupy "any Office Military or Civil."⁶⁴

Advocates of a centralized empire viewed these rebellions as major setbacks for the imperial cause. One disgruntled merchant declared "Now Each Tub stands upon his own Bottome," meaning that "each Colony or Governm[en]t" looked out for its own affairs without considering the welfare of the mother country or its empire.⁶⁵ But what royal officials—and many subsequent historians—failed to realize was that the rebels of 1689 did not merely intend to dismantle the empire. They had an imperial plan of their own, but one that would have taken North America in a fundamentally different direction. And with the Stuart imperialists temporarily out of power, they had a chance to test their vision. These were no

⁶² Nicholson and Council to the Board of Trade, 15 May 1689, *NYCD*, 3:575; Affidavits against Francis Nicholson, in *The Documentary History of the State of New-York (DHNY)*, ed. Edmund B. O'Callaghan (Albany, NY, 1849–51), 2:27; Depositions of Henrick Jacobse and Albert Bosch, 10 June 1689, *DHNY*, 2:12–13; Stephanus van Cortlandt to Andros, 9 July 1689, *NYCD*, 3:594; "Documents Relating to the Administration of Leisler," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society* 1 (1868): 268, 288. On Leisler's background see David William Voorhees, "The 'fervent Zeale' of Jacob Leisler," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 51, no. 3 (July 1994): 447–72.

⁶³ Richard S. Dunn ("The Glorious Revolution and America," 445, 457) identifies a fourth rebellion in the Leeward Islands, where Governor Nathaniel Johnson resigned under pressure in July 1689. Though there are interesting parallels with events on the mainland, I have omitted an in-depth analysis because the rebellion against Johnson did not have a significant popular component, and Johnson's enemies never defined themselves as partners in an international Protestant cause.

⁶⁴ The Narrative of Barbarah wife of Richd Smith, 30 December 1689, *Arch. Md.*, 8:153; Narrative of Henry Darnall, 31 December 1689, *Arch. Md.*, 8:156; Articles of Surrender, *Arch. Md.*, 8:107.

⁶⁵ James Lloyd to Francis Brinley, 10 July 1689 (abstract), TNA: PRO, CO 5/855/29.

reluctant revolutionaries: the events of 1688–89 presented an opportunity to remake North America and the empire.⁶⁶



The Revolution of 1688–89 has long been understood as a critical event in the making of the British Empire. If nothing else, the massive expansion of the English state after the accession of William and Mary had profound consequences for colonial affairs, assuring in the long term that the imperial plans of the later Stuarts would continue under the new monarchs.⁶⁷ In terms of ideology, the revolution enshrined the Whig political language that would predominate in eighteenth-century America: the celebration of English liberties, property rights, and local control within an imperial system.⁶⁸ But in the short term, the implications of the revolution in the colonies were far more radical. To the people who seized control of New England, New York, and Maryland in 1689, the change of government in England provided an opportunity to reimagine English imperialism as a tool for expanding and propagating the Protestant faith.

At first glance the rebellions appeared to have little to do with religion. True, hysterical fears of Catholics provided an impetus for revolt, but the written justifications of the colonists' actions tended to downplay religious factors, using the same secular language that defined the revolution in England. In New England, the place where one would expect religious rhetoric, justifications of the rebellion focused instead on dominion officials' lack of respect for colonial subjects' "English liberties," with special attention to violations of property rights. New England propagandists billed their rebellion as a mirror to the English one and called only for a "Share in that Universal Restoration of Charters, and English Liberties" that all good subjects expected after William and Mary's accession. "Under the Shadow of Your Imperial Crown," wrote the minister and colonial agent Increase Mather in a characteristic passage, "We may again be made to flourish in the Enjoyment of our former Rights and Privileges."⁶⁹ In other words, New Englanders used innovative rhetoric to seek a restoration of the old charter government, thus dividing historians over whether the rebellion was the final chapter of Puritan rule or the first stirrings of secularization and modernization. But whatever they were fighting for, scholars have agreed that the colonists fought against the pretensions of an overbearing empire.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ The phrase is from W. A. Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Englishmen and the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford, 1988).

⁶⁷ See John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the British State, 1688–1783* (Cambridge, MA, 1988).

⁶⁸ H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1977); Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York, 1967), 3–58.

⁶⁹ Address of the Governor and Council to William and Mary, in Moody and Simmons, *Glorious Revolution in Massachusetts*, 78.

⁷⁰ Breen (*Character of the Good Ruler*, 136–37) argued against Viola Barnes and earlier scholars that "by the time of the Glorious Revolution, property—more than godliness—served as the basis for political leadership and participation." In a broader analysis, Jack Greene believes the revolution was a first step in the rise to power of colonial assemblies; see "The Glorious Revolution and the British Empire, 1688–1783," in *The Revolution of 1688–89: New Perspectives*, ed. Lois G. Schworer (Cambridge, 1992), 260–71; Craig Yirush, "From the Perspective of Empire: The Common Law, Natural Rights,

A look beyond the pamphlet literature, however, reveals a very different picture of the revolution in North America. Cotton Mather, for example, penned several pamphlets justifying the rebellion to outsiders, but his fullest treatment appeared in a thanksgiving sermon preached to Massachusetts leaders in December 1689 and later printed.⁷¹ The sermon contradicts the secular interpretation favored by many scholars; Mather viewed the revolution as an act of providence. But it also counters the vision of New Englanders as isolated actors trying to rid themselves of worldly pollution. Indeed, most of the sermon related New England's struggles to events in the larger world. In line with apocalyptic scholarship in Europe at the time, Mather interpreted recent political disturbances as signs that the tide was turning in the longtime struggle between Christ (the true church) and the Antichrist (the pope). While the papists had enjoyed a surge of power in recent years, "*The Late Revolutions in England*" promised "*to begin the Deliverance of the Church of God.*"⁷²

Mather's exhortation to his countrymen ranged far beyond the bounds of New England. While he offered praise to the colony's founders, he focused most of his discourse on events on the other side of the Atlantic. It was there that the greatest battles between good and evil raged, but American Protestants needed to understand that their own struggles against the Antichrist belonged to this larger context. In Hungary and Germany, for instance, the Protestant interest languished, while French Protestantism had been all but exterminated, and Irish Protestants feared "having sharp *Skeins* ready for throats" and "lay at the mercy of a *Wild Irish* Rabble." Mather was careful to note that New Englanders had only narrowly avoided such a fate. Certainly, the "Swarm of Lew'd *Souldiers*" that forced French Protestants to abjure their faith was not dissimilar to Andros's hated redcoats. "Imagine them Hanging of You by the Hair of your Heads and then half Choaking of you with *Smoke*," Mather appealed, "or half Roasting of you with *Fire*." But if much of the sermon dwelt on European events, the minister also called on New Englanders to act as partners in the common cause, mostly by staying true to their God. "*I beseech you by the Mercies of God,*" he thundered near the sermon's conclusion, "that as we profess the *Protestant Religion* with the most exalted Purity, so we may *practice* it in such an Exemplary manner, that A *New-England man*, may be a Term of Honour in the world."⁷³

Mather's vision of America within a larger Protestant world responded to an upsurge in apocalyptic speculation on both sides of the Atlantic. During much of the 1680s, leading Reformed theologians believed that the rising level of persecution presaged the second coming of Christ. Calvinists in New England followed this news with both anticipation and worry, because the leading authority on the millennium, the early seventeenth-century Cambridge scholar Joseph Mede, theorized that after the second coming America would become the resting place of

and the Formation of American Political Theory, 1688–1775" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2004), 121–56.

⁷¹ Cotton Mather, *The Wonderful Works of God Commemorated* (Boston, 1690). In viewing William as a providential savior of Protestantism, Mather echoed the religious justifications of the revolution advanced by Gilbert Burnet and other English divines; see Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁷² Mather, *Wonderful Works of God*, 38.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 46–48, 50.

Gog and Magog and the army of the Antichrist. Mather believed that New England's service to the global Protestant cause—in welcoming Huguenot refugees, in converting Indians, and especially in saving the continent from Louis XIV—meant that his country folk would share in the benefits of Christ's thousand-year reign on earth.⁷⁴ His friend and fellow scholar Samuel Sewall went even further. Noting that Christianity was nearly extinct in Africa and Asia and was “choaked with Thorns of worldly Hypocritical Interests” in Europe, Sewall wondered if “possibly this place that was lately none at all; and is still last of all, may in time, be made the first.”⁷⁵ The role of such rhetoric in late-seventeenth-century politics has been hotly contested. According to some scholars, defenders of the revolution in England viewed national interests as more important than religious causes, while others believe that the apocalyptic language used to talk about politics was more metaphorical than real. This may have been the case in England, but there is no doubt that a powerful minority on the other side of the Atlantic saw things differently. For them, the transatlantic revolution was part of a cosmic drama that would end with Christ's return.⁷⁶

The apocalyptic worldview of these Reformed leaders was overtly imperialistic, but in a very different way from the Stuart elites that had ruled the colonies. The Reformed leaders shared the goal of expanding the king's dominions to the farthest reaches of the world, but they did so primarily because William and Mary served as agents of true religion. Indeed, even before becoming king, William had promoted himself as the continent's foremost defender of Protestantism, and his rise to royal status only reinforced this reputation. Mather described William as “A KING, whose unparallel'd zeal for the Church of the Lord Jesus at the *Lowest Ebb*, hath made him the *Phenix* of this Age.” The minister expressed his imperial goals by posing the question “Whether the Day is not at Hand, when the *Kingdoms of the World, shall be the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ!*” With a godly monarch on the “British Throne,” English state power could now serve as a vehicle to promote true religion against the papists. The main end would be “that the Chains with which the Tyrannous and Treacherous *Grand Seigniour of France* had Fetter'd *Europe*” would be broken, “and that the most monstrous *Tygre* in the world, having the forces of Three Kingdoms let loose upon him . . . must

⁷⁴ “A Conjecture concerning Gog and Magog,” in Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation, Searched and demonstrated out of the Naturall and Proper Characters of the Visions* (London, 1650); for Mather's disputation, see *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 123; Evan Haefeli and Owen Stanwood, “Jesuits, Huguenots, and the Apocalypse: The Origins of America's First French Book,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 116, pt. 1 (April 2006): 59–120.

⁷⁵ Sewall to John Wise, 12 April 1698, MHS, *Collections*, 6th ser., 1 (1886):197; Sewall to Nehemiah Walter, 4 December 1703, *ibid.*, 287. On the upsurge in apocalyptic speculation and its relation to imperial politics, see Mark Peterson, “Boston Pays Tribute: Autonomy and Empire in the Atlantic World, 1630–1714,” in Macinnes and Williamson, *Shaping the Stuart World*, 331. Sewall published many of his apocalyptic theories as *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica Ad Aspectum Novi Orbis configurata* (Boston, 1697).

⁷⁶ For the most passionately secular interpretation of the Glorious Revolution, see Steve Pincus, “‘To Protect English Liberties’: The English Nationalist Revolution of 1688–89,” in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850*, ed. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (Cambridge, 1998), 75–104; but compare with Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution*, and Warren Johnston, “Revelation and the Revolution of 1688–89,” *Historical Journal* 48, no. 2 (June 2005): 351–89.

quickly either perish, or proclaim *Liberty for that Religion* which he has out done all that ever Liv'd, for the Persecution of.”⁷⁷

For Reformed leaders, this Protestant empire, unlike its French counterpart, would guarantee the liberties and property rights of its subjects. This in turn would ensure its success in defeating France and preserving Protestantism. Defenders of the rebellion in Massachusetts argued that people who had their property protected by a benevolent monarch would willingly act to preserve the king's interests, but if they lost the advantages that had been guaranteed in their old charter, “the discouragement of the People will be so great and General, as that they will be in danger of becoming a Prey to the *French*, and to be utterly ruined.” Increase Mather bragged in William's court of the bravery of New England's militia, who would allow the king “to enlarge his Dominions, and to bring the French Neighbours into an intire Subjection to the Crown of *England*.” Mather told William “Hee might by the Assistance of New England become Emperor of America when Hee pleased”—but only if he restored his subjects' charter rights.⁷⁸

This was a peculiar kind of empire, more like a union of semiautonomous territories sharing the same ruler and interests than a centralized state. In its broad contours, the Calvinist empire looked very much like the “empire of liberty” later imagined by Thomas Jefferson, in which industrious farmers, rather than an overbearing state, ensured the expansion of American values. This comparison cannot be taken very far, however, because the Calvinist vision rested on religious concerns. These radicals favored a decentralized empire because they felt that local control would best preserve the true church, while still understanding the necessity of unity in the face of such danger. Essentially they attempted to translate their approach to church governance to the state, calling for godly people to adopt the role that lay leaders played in the Reformed churches, with the king as a distant figurehead. Rather than Jefferson, the best synopsis of this vision came from the Roxbury minister and missionary John Eliot, who in a letter to the English Presbyterian divine Richard Baxter advocated “to advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which shall be extended over all the Kingdoms and Nations of the Earth . . . Not by the personal Presence of Christ, but by putting Power and Rule into the Hands of the Godly, [and] Learned in all Nations.”⁷⁹

Revolutionaries beyond New England shared the same imperial goals and ex-

⁷⁷ Mather, *Wonderful Works of God*, 32–33, 37–38. On William of Orange's promotion of himself as a Protestant hero in the years before the revolution, see Tony Claydon, *William III* (London, 2002), 18–19.

⁷⁸ “New England Vindicated From the Unjust Aspersions cast on the former Government there, by some late Considerations Pretending to Shew That the Charters in those Colonies were Taken from them on Account of their Destroying the Manufactures and Navigation of England,” *Andros Tracts*, 2:119–20; *A Brief Relation of the State of New England, From the Beginning of that Plantation To this Present Year, 1689* (London, 1689), *Andros Tracts*, 2:159; M. G. Hall, ed., “The Autobiography of Increase Mather,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 71 (1962): 333.

⁷⁹ Eliot to Baxter, 6 July 1663, in *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ed. N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall (Oxford, 1991), 2:39–40. For an interesting analysis of the relationship between Reformed and Republican thought, see Michael P. Winship, “Godly Republicanism and the Origins of the Massachusetts Polity,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63, no. 3 (July 2006): 427–62. On Jefferson, see Peter Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, VA, 2000), though the idea of an “empire of liberty” based on commerce originated in the mid-1700s; Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 195.

pressed them in very similar rhetoric. In New York, for instance, leaders of the rebellion did not use the language of “English liberties” to the same extent as most of them were not even English, but they called on the same aspects of Calvinist resistance theory to advocate an imperial system that reserved power for local magistrates and militia officers. Jacob Leisler, the militia captain who came to personify the rebellion, took cues from contemporary Dutch political culture as well as older French Huguenot philosophies, arguing that New Yorkers had the right and indeed a duty to seize power from a corrupt oligarchy that was threatening to bring in the forces of popery.⁸⁰

The radical possibilities of this philosophy appeared most prominently in Leisler’s confrontation with the merchants who ran the outpost of Albany. Leisler sent his lieutenant, Jacob Milborne, to the town in early 1690 to break the economic and political monopoly of a group of leading fur traders, many of whom had been appointed by Stuart officials and refused to acknowledge Leisler’s authority. On arriving in Albany, Milborne declared that since the people had overthrown their old rulers, the old city charter was invalid and “now the Power was in the People to choose both new Civill and Military officers as they Pleased.”⁸¹ Like their brethren in New England, New Yorkers were not interested in breaking free of England. Instead, they believed that only by preserving “their Laws and Religion, their Properties and their Souls” could they preserve the country for its rightful, Protestant monarchs. Leisler’s battle with Albany’s leaders lasted several months before they surrendered to his authority out of a need for protection from the common enemy. It was a curious revolution—an outsider imposing his authority on an independent corporation but justifying his conduct with the rhetoric of local liberties.⁸²

The final rebellion in Maryland appears as something of an outlier, since the rebels overthrew an independent proprietor and requested a royal government, but there too colonists used the language of local autonomy to challenge arbitrary power. Most of the rebels were lesser magistrates excluded from the highest rungs of government, and their grievances included the same charges of tyranny and “arbitrary” practices lodged against leaders of the Dominion of New England.⁸³ What’s more, Maryland’s rebels adopted some of the most radical imagery from the recent struggle against popery. The group that seized power in early August called itself the “Protestant Association,” a name that beckoned back to Eliza-

⁸⁰ The best analysis of Leislerian political thought is David William Voorhees, “‘The World Turned Upside Down’: The Foundations of Leislerian Political Thought,” in *The Atlantic World in the Later Seventeenth Century: Essays on Jacob Leisler, Trade, and Networks*, ed. Hermann Wellenreuther (Göttingen, forthcoming), which supplements and partially supplants John M. Murrin, “The Menacing Shadow of Louis XIV and the Rage of Jacob Leisler: The Constitutional Ordeal of Seventeenth-Century New York,” in *New York and the Union: Contributions to the American Constitutional Experience*, ed. Stephen L. Schechter and Richard B. Bernstein (Albany, 1990), 29–71. On the roots of Calvinist resistance theory, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1977), 2:239–348.

⁸¹ Albany Council Records, 9 November 1689, *DHNY*, 2:114.

⁸² *Loyalty Vindicated from the Reflections of a Virulent Pamphlet . . .* (London, 1698), in *Narratives of the Insurrections, 1675–1690*, ed. Charles McLean Andrews (New York, 1915), 389.

⁸³ *The Declaration of the Reasons and Motives For the Present Appearance in Arms of Their Majesties Protestant Subjects In the Province of Maryland* (St. Mary’s, 1689), in Andrews, *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 305–14; Carr and Jordan, *Maryland’s Revolution of Government*, 46–83.

bethan times when members of Parliament pledged to avenge themselves on Catholics if the queen should happen to meet a violent end. In the wake of the Popish Plot, opponents of the duke of York's succession to the throne renewed calls for a Protestant association that would have effectively altered the succession and handed power to a group of Protestant magistrates if papists succeeded in killing Charles II. The association called on local officials and even ordinary subjects to take responsibility to preserve the country from foreign intrusion, and it also prompted charges of treason from Tories who believed that the association usurped the crown's God-given authority.⁸⁴

The radical Protestants who seized power in 1689 understood how their actions fit into the global struggle against popery. As a result, they quickly began forging ties with one another to better combat a popish conspiracy they knew to be global in scope. Maryland's John Coode saw the continental implications of the rebellions as well as anyone; in an early letter to Jacob Leisler he asserted that "we have still the same reasonable & just apprehensions with yors & the N. England governmt of a great designe that was on foot to betray and ruine their Maties & the Protestant interest through all these northern parts."⁸⁵ Leisler and his allies agreed, referring to the late Stuart conspiracy ominously as "the Combinations of the Forces of hell itselfe."⁸⁶ Both men imagined the empire as a network of godly magistrates who helped each other by sending word on the whereabouts of popish plotters. So when Leisler captured two Irish "rogues" who expressed sympathy for the deposed king, he contacted the governor of Barbados, where the two men had originated, to warn him of their machinations.⁸⁷

The need to coordinate became even more pressing when England and France went to war in the fall of 1689. Even before the official start of the war, Indian allies of the French struck northern New England, and on 9 February 1690 the French and Indians devastated the Dutch village of Schenectady, a few miles from Albany. As fear of attack spread from the front lines in the north as far south as Maryland and Virginia, colonial leaders began to understand that they could only hold onto power if they concocted some plan to defeat the enemy. One approach was to lobby the king for assistance. Massachusetts agents in William and Mary's court spoke of "the utter Inconsistence that there is between the very being of this Plantation and the mischievous aims and practices of the French King."⁸⁸ But they also knew that they had to take some action on their own, if only to prove to detractors like Edward Randolph that a decentralized empire really could defend the king's interest in the New World.

Revolutionary leaders in the colonies attempted to prove their mettle by planning an ambitious assault on the center of French power in Quebec. One of the first

⁸⁴ On the association, see Gilbert Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, pt. 1, *The Reign of Charles the Second* (Oxford, 1897), 2:264–65; *The History of the Association, Containing all the Debates in the Last House of Commons At Westminster: Concerning an Association, for the Preservation of the King's Person, and the Security of the Protestant Religion* (London, 1682).

⁸⁵ Coode to Leisler, 26 November 1689, *DHNY*, 2:42.

⁸⁶ Leisler et al. to Major Wildman, Postmaster General, 20 October 1690, Blathwayt Papers, vol. 8, folder 1, CW.

⁸⁷ Leisler to Edwin Stede, 23 November 1689, *DHNY*, 2:40–41.

⁸⁸ Instructions for the Agents of the Colonie of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 24 January 1690, *Andros Tracts*, 3:59.

promoters of the assault was the Albany merchant and magistrate Robert Livingston, who traveled around New England in the spring of 1690 seeking support for a coordinated plan against French Canada, arguing that the “French worse than Heathens will be disturbers of our peace” but that once they were conquered “all Indians in America must submit and pay homage to the English Crowne.” Despite being a moderate Protestant himself, Livingston couched his appeal in the language of militant anti-Catholicism, claiming that “all true protestant subjects” had an obligation to fight the enemy and even noting that “there are diverse good omens that God Almighty has determined the downfall of Anti-Christ, in our days this is the only means in all probability to effect itt in America.”⁸⁹ The idea proved popular in both New England and New York, though in the end it was Livingston’s rival Jacob Leisler who took the lead in organizing the assault. On 1 May representatives from several colonies met in New York City, where they planned a massive expedition against the enemy, with New Englanders taking Quebec by sea while a land force drawn from New York, Connecticut, and the Iroquois attacked Montreal by land.⁹⁰

In the summer of 1690 it appeared that Cotton Mather’s and Jacob Leisler’s dreams of a Protestant American empire could come true. An expedition led by Sir William Phips easily conquered the Acadian capital of Port Royal, striking a small victory for Protestantism and King William, and Phips departed for Quebec in August with great fanfare, while Fitz John Winthrop, scion of New England’s leading family, took charge of the land expedition.⁹¹ As one optimistic pamphleteer predicted, “the wheel of Divine Vengeance is now Turning apace, upon the French Papists for their late Bloody and Matchless Persecutions,” and it seemed that New Englanders would be “the Executioners of Gods wrath upon them.”⁹² Unfortunately it was not to be. Smallpox devastated the land forces, and Iroquois allies failed to come through, while Phips’s fleet took so long to reach Quebec that the French governor had ample time to prepare a defense. In 1690 French Catholics consecrated a new church, Notre Dame de la Victoire, while New England Protestants returned home in disgrace.⁹³



The failed assault on French Canada ended any hopes of a decentralized, Protestant empire in America. The disaster demonstrated that Calvinist leaders, for all their bluster, could not defend the colonies from enemy attacks. Public support for revolutionary governments in both New England and New York declined, as

⁸⁹ Memorial of the Agents from Albany to the Government of Massachusetts, 20 March 1690, *NYCD*, 3:697–98. For background on Livingston, see Lawrence H. Leder, *Robert Livingston, 1654–1728, and the Politics of Colonial New York* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1961).

⁹⁰ Meeting of the Commissioners at New York, 1 May 1689, *DHSM*, 5:94; Instructions to William Stoughton and Samuel Sewall, 17 April 1690, *Mass. Arch.*, 36:8–9. Sewall left only a passing reference to the meeting in his diary, 1:257.

⁹¹ The assault has not received much attention from recent historians, but see Emerson W. Baker and John G. Reid, *The New England Knight: Sir William Phips, 1651–1695* (Toronto, 1998), 86–109; Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630–1717* (Princeton, NJ., 1962), 290–94.

⁹² “Further Quaeries upon the Present State of the New-English Affairs,” *Andros Tracts*, 1:200–201.

⁹³ For a nearly complete collection of French and English accounts of the expedition, see Ernest Myrand, ed., *Sir William Phips devant Québec: Histoire d’un siège* (Quebec, 1893).

angry returning soldiers demanded pay and ordinary people protested paying taxes to support a war effort that was not making them any safer. By the end of 1691, Massachusetts accepted a new royal charter that, while not as bad as the old dominion government, reduced many of the colonists' cherished liberties.⁹⁴ In New York, meanwhile, the new royal governor tried Jacob Leisler for treason and ultimately executed him, condemning as a traitor the man who had most zealously advanced the Orangist Revolution in the province.⁹⁵

The Calvinists failed because they espoused an outdated brand of anti-Catholicism that viewed the world in terms of the ongoing, apocalyptic struggle between papists and Protestants. In Jacob Leisler's world, there were only two types of people: orthodox Protestants who battled popery in all its forms and members of the "popish party" in league with the devil. Leisler proved unwilling to cooperate with Robert Livingston and other Albany merchants, even though they shared his anti-French goals, because they had held commissions from James II's Catholic government and opposed some aspects of Leisler's political program. After the failure of the Canada expedition, he turned on Fitz John Winthrop as well, calling him a traitor for holding correspondence with Livingston and throwing him in jail. When Connecticut's leaders protested Leisler's treatment of Winthrop, he branded them as traitors to the cause as well, claiming that their actions "astonishe[d] all the protestant world."⁹⁶ After alienating his allies, Leisler turned his ire against a retinue of royal troops who arrived just ahead of the new royal governor but lacked a proper commission. Leisler viewed them as enemies to the king because their commander sympathized with Leisler's political rivals, and he refused to surrender the fort. Several men died in the ensuing confrontation, and by the time the new governor arrived Leisler's fate was sealed. On his execution, he insisted he acted only "to maintaine against popery or any schism or heresy whatever the interest of our Sovereign Lord & Lady . . . and the reformed Protestant Churches."⁹⁷

As the war unfolded it became clear that most inhabitants of English America simply did not see the Catholic threat in the same terms as Leisler and Cotton Mather. For such radicals, religious goals predominated, and the imperial state properly served as the guardian of the Protestant interest. The vast majority of Protestants in the colonies shared this anti-Catholic outlook, but there is little evidence that they spent much time theorizing about the coming apocalypse—indeed, millennialism seems to have been a pursuit of the educated classes. For ordinary colonists, the Catholic menace was the one portrayed in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and other propaganda: a violent enemy that endeavored to burn towns and butcher children. The imperial state did have a role in guarding against Catholics, but not by encouraging a "further Reformation" or doctrinal purity. Rather, it needed to provide guns or soldiers to keep the papists at bay. In 1689 most ordinary people in the colonies turned against Andros when they believed he could no longer protect them from the enemy. The following year they reacted in a similar fashion when revolutionary leaders failed in the Canada expedition. It

⁹⁴ Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 183–241.

⁹⁵ David William Voorhees, "In behalf of the true Protestants religion: The Glorious Revolution in New York," (PhD diss., New York University, 1988), 338–83; Robert C. Ritchie, *The Duke's Province: A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1664–1691* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1977), 227–31.

⁹⁶ Leisler to Robert Treat, 1 January 1691, *DHNY*, 2:317–19.

⁹⁷ Dying speeches of Leisler and Milborne, 16 May 1691, *DHNY*, 2:378.

was not that the colonists lacked political beliefs or religious convictions; they merely put personal safety ahead of principle. Fear of death or captivity at the hands of “Popish Indians” proved the most powerful motivator.⁹⁸

In the years after 1690, officials got another chance to build a streamlined imperial system that would challenge French pretensions in America. The task was not easy, and colonists never stopped arguing with their governors over the proper scope of royal power. But compared with the earlier period, the years between 1690 and 1765 marked a golden age for the British American empire, which expanded in power and riches and enjoyed broad support from the colonial public. This success reflected lessons learned in 1689. Never again, for instance, would imperial officials attempt to rule without an assembly. But the empire also worked because its rulers learned to use religious rhetoric to support state power. Governor Richard Coote, Lord Bellomont, who ruled Massachusetts and New York in the late 1690s, promoted William III as the savior of Protestant America, the scourge of “Popery and Tyranny.”⁹⁹ On the king’s death, a Congregational minister in Boston agreed. When the colonies were “quite depriv’d of *Liberty* and *Property*,” and “sinking under *Arbitrary Power* and *Tyranny*; almost overwhelmed with *Popery* and *Slavery*,” the Reverend Benjamin Wadsworth preached, “This Illustrious and Noble Prince . . . did venture his person for their relief, and came over the sea to help them.”¹⁰⁰

This combination of patriotism and religious zeal remained through much of the eighteenth century. By the outbreak of the next imperial war with France in 1702, American subjects had solidified their contention that the British monarch was the primary defender of global Protestantism, a sentiment only strengthened by the Hanoverian succession in 1714. At the same time, Americans never lost their zeal for the international Protestant cause. The first Boston newspapers allowed readers to follow events throughout the Protestant world, while popular celebrations like Pope’s Day adapted anti-Catholic traditions to the new imperial environment. Overall, the eighteenth century brought no signs of declension or relaxing of religious zeal but rather a new kind of faith, tailored to the imperial age.¹⁰¹



It has become fashionable in recent years to view empires as “negotiated systems,” created as much on the peripheries as in the metropole.¹⁰² This study

⁹⁸ The phrase comes from Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (Boston, 1699), in *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675–1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln (New York, 1913), 230.

⁹⁹ Bellomont’s Speech to the Massachusetts General Court, 2 June 1699, Mass. Arch., Court Records, 7:6.

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin Wadsworth, *King William Lamented in America; Or, A Sermon occasion’d by the very Sorrowful tidings, of the Death of William III* (Boston, 1702). The argument here parallels one that Tony Claydon has made for England, claiming that William was able to build a centralized state where his Stuart predecessors failed because he used antipopery to foster national allegiance; Claydon, *William III*, 136–38.

¹⁰¹ Brendan McConville, *The King’s Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688–1776* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); Thomas Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England after Puritanism* (New Haven, CT, 2004). For a similar analysis that places British politics in European context, see Andrew Thompson, *Britain, Hanover, and the Protestant Interest, 1688–1756* (Woodbridge, 2006).

¹⁰² Jack P. Greene, “Negotiated Authorities: The Problem of Governance in the Extended Politics of the Early Modern Atlantic World,” in his *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville, VA, 1994), 1–24; Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colo-*

confirms that perspective but suggests that the process of negotiation was far more complex than previous historians have realized. Far from a simple dispute between periphery and center, the struggle for authority in late seventeenth-century America represented a clash between two anti-French visions, both transatlantic in scope, divided on the proper relationship between church and state, religion and politics, in a changing world. Only after considerable debate, and some bloodshed, did the two interest groups unite to build an empire that combined Protestant zeal with expansion of English national interests.

This reinterpretation of the origins of empire has enormous consequences for the study of both Britain and America in the early modern era. The main lesson is that historians must place their subjects in the broadest possible context and resist drawing artificial boundaries that constrict understanding of the past. For colonial America, this means following the networks that linked North American settlements to the rest of the world—whether the Caribbean Islands, Britain, continental Europe, or beyond. Reconstructing these connections not only allows us to see the world as early modern people did but also shows how American settlements played central roles in some of the most important dramas of the early modern era, from the building of the modern state to the development of religious radicalism. The colonies mattered, but not as exemplars of liberty. Rather, they represented peculiar variations on European patterns, revealing both the persistence and the adaptability of the early modern Christian worldview.¹⁰³

This broad perspective has the potential to “revolutionize” the study of late seventeenth-century Britain and its world. By understanding the close relationship between the political upheaval of the later Stuart era and the development of a Protestant empire, we see a different kind of revolution in 1688–89, one that appears much less rational and secular, much less “sensible” than it once did.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, the empire itself takes on a different hue: less colored by commerce, and more by common fears of the Catholic enemy, with commercial aspirations serving a cause that many people understood in religious terms. Most of the actors in 1688–89 saw their struggle not as English, Dutch, or British but as global and universal, a key moment in the age-old struggle between Protestantism and popery. It is time for historians to do the same.

nialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673–1800 (Cambridge, 1997); Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820* (New York, 2002).

¹⁰³ In many ways this article heeds the call in Nicholas Canny (“Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World,” *Historical Journal* 46, no. 3 [September 2003]: 746–47) to examine early modern history in its broadest possible context.

¹⁰⁴ Morrill, “Sensible Revolution,” calling on G. M. Trevelyan, *The English Revolution* (Oxford, 1938). This Atlantic perspective on the Revolution tends to reinforce the conclusions of Tim Harris and Tony Claydon, who have emphasized popular and religious explanations.