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"[F] or King Willian and Queen Mary, for the defence of the protestant religion and the good of the country," Leisler's Rebellion; A study of Colonial New York and the Formation of Political and Religious Coalitions on the frontier 1620-1691

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defence of the protestant religion and the Good of the
Country,” Leisler’s Rebellion: A study of colonial
New York and the formation of political and
religious coalitions on the frontier 1620 -1691

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On May 10th, 1689 the communities of eastern Long Island assembled their militias for the overland march to New York City. The militia leaders had just signed a declaration stating their purpose to “use all lawfull endeavors for securing our head quarters of new York and Albany forts, and all other fortifications, and the same to put into the hands of those whom we can confide in, till further order from the parliament in England.”¹ These towns had been established a mere fifty years before on the East End of Long Island. The militia captains of the towns of Huntington, East Hampton and South Hampton signed the document and within days they were marching to remove Catholics and Catholic sympathizers from the military structures of New York City. These captains were representative of the largest coherent social body in the English colonies: the English Puritans. These Puritan communities were themselves part of an expanding English conclave in North America and their numbers made them a powerful group in the colonies. The Puritan communities had survived in the harsh climate of New England, overwhelmed the Native communities they encountered and had removed the outposts of opposing European empires. This particular collection of militiamen was not just an expression of a purely local rebellion against a corrupt colonial government, they were the apogee of Puritan strength and their actions would be the high water mark of the Puritan communities’ control over government, the church and the economy.

The competing of imperial structures in New York in the seventeenth-century was not limited to the invasions and reinvasions of the French, English and Dutch empires; included in this list of competing groups should be the Puritans of New England. The

¹ “The Declaration of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of Suffolk upon Long Island in the territory of New England,” John Romeyn Brodhead ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York; Procured in Holland, England and France*. (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers 1853), 2:577.

Puritans were an expansive, socially cohesive group that emerged as the strongest regional power in the English colonies. My work on the role of Puritan communities in Leisler's Rebellion seeks to analyze how religious priorities and apprehensions motivated the rebels and then shaped their policy once in power. There is a benefit to incorporating a stronger religious analysis to the body of work on Leisler's Rebellion. The culture of congregationalism within all the communities of New York was either enshrined in the Puritan ideal of the local congregation's covenant or in the de facto congregationalism imposed by the length of time between messages from the classis of Amsterdam or the Anglican establishment in England. This created a series of atomistic communities, which featured an elective Protestantism that was applied to politics as well as the church. Furthermore, small towns could not afford to attract preachers approved by the state churches in Holland, England or Scotland. The local preacher was often an elected official, a town leader beholden to the locality in a way unknown in Europe. This encouraged the development of a nascent republican spirit in the towns that would be brought to full effect during Leisler's Rebellion. The towns of New York were fearful of French Catholicism's influence in the reign of James II and the threat of invasion and because of these fears they would act behind their elected leaders to install a government they found satisfactory.

What I propose to study is the political and social impact of these towns as well as the New York colony's competing religious and political structures. Also, the question of why these disparate communities, divided by religion, ethnicity and economic interest, would coalesce into a rudimentary political union. Leisler's Rebellion offers an interesting historical moment of great change and conflict. What was the impetus that

drove the Puritan communities of Long Island to march on New York City in revolt? The long and complicated process of community formation in these areas was built around a communal undertaking of problems. When and how the presence of Catholics inside the imperial structure became the most pressing of those problems is a question that will help illustrate the formation of communities in the seventeenth century English Empire's frontier. The conflict can also be viewed through the lens of imperial politics and the changing balance of power between peripheral and central communities. The movement of the Puritan communities to exert their will upon the government in New York could be viewed as an attempt to refashion the relationship between the city and country, or as a way for the Puritan communities to return to the allegiance of Connecticut, or as a way for the Puritan communities to remake themselves into autonomous political units free of the domination of officials in remote New York City. The exchanging of loose Dutch control for the growing rigidity of the English imperial structure under the restoration monarchs contributed to the unrest of the colony. This was particularly felt in the extension and enforcement of the state religion; these structures were rarely imposed with the full power of the imperial government, but the steady pressure to conform to the Dutch or the English state churches was a source of continual friction. What were the changes each group brought to the imperial structure; how did they effect these changes, were they successful; and how did they respond to problems to implementing their designs? Through examining the revolt, I hope to develop a better understanding of the social and political structures of these competing empires, their aims and the reasoning behind their ambitious effort to turn out the imperial rulers installed in New York.

The cause of Leisler's Rebellion is to be found in the most frequent lament of the rebel documents: namely that of a "popish plot" to take the colony. Historians have reworked their analysis of the Glorious Revolution to include the religious role in recent years. Owen Stanwood recently argued that the rebellions following the Glorious Revolutions were part of a reworking of the English Empire. This new version of the empire was to be governed by a Protestant king to balance the aggressive Catholicism of Louis XIV's France.² Steven Pincus in his treatment of the English political culture prior to the Glorious Revolution questioned the role of religion as the rallying point that began the Glorious Revolution. His research revealed a positive reception for the Catholic James II and the lack of general support for the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion in England, which undermines the argument for a religious explanation for the Glorious Revolution's success. Ultimately, Pincus went down the same path as Stanwood and the Glorious Revolution is recast as part of a larger Protestant moment that galvanized the English Empire into a commercial republic as opposed to the Catholic Monarchy of Louis XIV.³ Diarmaid McCullough approached the role of religion within the context of a larger European context and she argued for a European religious culture that was understood by the vast majority of common Europeans. This common understanding of religious differences as well as similarities helped reinforce a sense of shared identity when faced with common danger.⁴ The wider European context cannot be separated from the events that took place in New York in 1689. Consideration and incorporation of

² Owen Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

³ Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University, 2008).

⁴ Diarmaid McCullough, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490 – 1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

analysis and themes from these works are essential to understanding the complex events that pushed the forces involved into Leisler's Rebellion.

The rebellion should also be analyzed within the context of the American colonies and the religious culture of the period. David Lovejoy wrote several books concerning the religious culture of the English colonies in North America. He detailed the growth of new communities and saw the complicated religious past of the myriad colonial groups as one that coalesced during the Great Awakening, which was portrayed as being the first step towards a distinctive American culture.⁵ Lovejoy saw Leisler's rebellion as being a corollary of the Glorious Revolution and, like Pincus, he too saw the revolt against legitimate authority as being driven by more than just a religious agenda and identity.⁶

Robert Ritchie focused on the laws governing trade and the different social and economic classes comprising colonial New York. Not only did he argue that Leisler may have been the legitimate authority in New York after the departure of Lieutenant Governor Nicholson, he also argued that the rebellion was an attempt to wrest control of the political economy of the state from the hands of the wealthy collaborating Dutch and into that of the competing smaller merchants.⁷ The work of David Voorhees in the Jacob Leisler archives at NYU has revealed the connections that Leisler had throughout the Atlantic World. His analysis of Leisler as a religious bigot has added clarity to the role of religion in the rebellion's leadership.⁸ Jerome Reich analyzed Leisler and the rebellion of 1689 from the viewpoint of competing ethnic groups. This thesis placed Leisler at the

⁵ David Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm and the Great Awakening* (Engelwood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1969)

David Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985)

⁶ David Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (Hannover: Wesleyan University Press, 1987)

⁷ Robert Ritchie, *The Duke's Province - A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1664 - 1691* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1977)

⁸ Voorhees, David W. "The "Fervent Zeale" of Jacob Leisler." *The William and Mary Quarterly* [Mid-Atlantic Perspectives] 51, no. 3 (1994): 451.

head of an ethnically diverse group of immigrants struggling to overthrow the tyranny of the local merchant magnates and their imperial English allies. Although Reich makes less of the role of religion as opposed to ethnic ties, he does make an interesting observation in his attention to the militias of Long Island as being the first wave of revolt in the New York colony.⁹ Reich's argument points to an interesting combination in the rebel forces, the coming together of the small Dutch and Huguenot merchants and townspeople, the Puritan communities on Long Island and the incorporation of the peasants of the Hudson Valley.

A recent book by Peter Silver forms the departure point for a reconsideration of religious culture in the formation of community in the pluralist Mid-Atlantic colonies.¹⁰ His book focused on the role that religion played in forming popular politics in the years immediately preceding the American Revolution. He argued that colonial immigrants tried to recreate their ethnic identity on the Pennsylvania frontier through intense devotion to a communal religious identity. These competing identities led to continued political and social conflict until they were subsumed in the violent rhetoric that accompanied the French and Indian War in the 1750's and 1760's. The rhetoric of the period placed the disadvantaged colonists at the center of a macabre tragedy. The poor Scottish Presbyterian immigrants gained in social standing by being the subject of bewildering and brutal native attacks during the French and Indian War. Influential Pennsylvanians attempted to create enthusiasm on the frontier for a war that would endanger the frontier most of all. They used the destruction visited on the frontier

⁹ Jerome Reich, *Leisler's Rebellion: A Study of Democracy in New York, 1664 – 1720* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1953)

¹⁰ Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008)

communities as a means of binding these consciously disparate communities of Pennsylvania to each other and the government. Silver's work on the forging of a coalition of different frontier communities, divided by ethnicity, religion and economic interest, with an urban center features several correlations with the political and religious unity found in Leisler's Rebellion.

Analyses focused on Long Island in the seventeenth-century have been rare. A recent book by Faren Siminoff considers the changing nature of Long Island in the years following the departure of a group of Puritans from Lynn, Massachusetts for a settlement on Long Island. The Puritan towns came over in tightly knit groups, with the town's composition largely planned out before settlement took place. The development of these homogenous towns within the heterogeneous New Netherlands and then New York colony happened in some isolation from each other. The distinctive ways of the Puritan communities set them apart from the Dutch inhabitants of New Netherland and occasionally led to a hostile relationship.¹¹ Atomistic and often conflicting communities are the subjects of Siminoff's study, and the first seventy years of settlement in New York followed this pattern of frontier particularism closely.

This was true until the rhetoric of religious fear that surrounded the Glorious Revolution subsumed these old divisions in a shared struggle against Catholic hegemony. The native attacks on villages put forward by Silver as the basis of a new communal identity were mirrored by anti-Native rhetoric or were replaced by a rhetoric that placed French Catholicism, a growing threat on the western frontier as well as in Europe, in the role of brutal barbarian. This reclassification of enemy from that of the local competing

¹¹ Faren Siminoff, *Crossing the Sound The Rise of Atlantic American Communities in Seventeenth Century Eastern Long Island*, (New York University Press, 2004)

communities that made up the New York Colony to that of a foreign enemy engendered Leisler's Rebellion in those years of English political upheavals in the late 1680's and early 1690's.

A month after a revolt in Puritan Boston ended the Dominion of New England the freeholders of Suffolk County followed their compatriots in Massachusetts in throwing off the yoke of James II. Citing an intended French invasion and James II's subservience to the pope, the freeholders of the East End turned out the officials appointed by the government. The first section of "The Declaration of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of Suffolk upon Long Island in the Territory of New England" dealt entirely with the religious threat that James's Catholicism produced. The second section contained a declaration that they would attempt to spread the rebellion to Calvinist Dutch New York and Albany to put them "into the hands of those we confine in." The Third section dealt with the taxes taken from them without their consent since the dissolution of the colonial Assembly in 1686.¹² Leisler's rebellion, as this uprising would become known, started here and contained elements of the religious/political mixture that had made New York.

The role of religion in fostering conflict on Long Island and New York stemmed from the interactions between the various communities that inhabited the colony. With the development of the East End there was the beginning of a willfully independent community separated by ethnicity from the Dutch on the western end of Long Island and by political form from other Puritans under Dutch rule. The East End towns were frequently at odds with the English imperial government, disapproving of its tolerance

¹² "The Declaration of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of Suffolk upon Long Island in the territory of New England" E. B. O'Callaghan ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:577.

and attempts to control the towns politically. These communities would give shape and force to Leisler's Rebellion when they felt threatened by the policies of James II and his Catholic sympathies. The social bond of religion was paramount in the struggle for political authority and it enabled the consciously Protestant Puritan communities a chance to affect the rest of the colony out of all proportion to their prestige within New York. When the imperial government eventually regained control of the colony Leisler was executed and the allied Puritan communities in Massachusetts and Connecticut chose a middle path by accepting an expanded role for the imperial government in their colonies while maintaining some of their religiously intolerant policy. Imperial rule was restored but the underlying conflicts did not immediately die away. Conceptions of the role for the state and the church continued to change and New York, with its numerous different beliefs, ethnicities and communities, continued to evolve a formula acceptable to both the imperial, enlightened desire for broad tolerance and the individual communities who sought to retain their identity through exclusion and adherence to doctrine. Neither side succeeded entirely and the imperial formula of maximum strength through growth associated with tolerance merged with the desire of each community to preserve itself inside the imperial structure. The old formulas merged and developed the one we still use, freedom of religious belief for individual communities coupled with strong political representation. The competing of the imperial will with the local developed a new path, one that emphasized the rights and freedoms of both systems.

Growth of the Dutch Communities: The Religious Culture of the Colonies and the
Search for Settlers

The Antinomian Controversy of New England started innocently enough. In 1633 a new star preacher arrived in Boston from England, John Cotton. He brought with him a more direct and engaging form of the Reformed religion.¹³ His beliefs centered on a visceral, emotionally direct connection to the divine. Anne Hutchinson, a young woman in the colony, began using her own direct connection to the almighty to begin preaching. In time she came to challenge the doctrinal supremacy of the Puritan elders. Members of the community seized upon this doctrine to break away from the doctrinal and political hold of the Puritan elders in the Massachusetts colony. The Puritan elders of the colony could not allow the spread of Antinomian beliefs, as they would undermine their authority and the laws of the young Massachusetts colony. Anne was tried before a court of Puritan elders where they determined that she considered herself indelible and untouchable by sin. She was then tried and exiled from the Bay Colony; eventually she, along with her followers, settled on the uneasy and undefined border between the outposts of English Puritans on the East End and the Dutch outposts on the West side of the island. Hutchinson re-enters the historical record only in the connection to her death: when minister Thomas Weld, a former inquisitor of Mrs. Hutchinson, remarked on the obviousness of God's judgment on her heresy after Native Americans had overrun her small village killing everyone except a few women and children.¹⁴ The settling of the

¹³ David Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 65.

¹⁴ David Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 88. Her death was taken as vindication that the Puritan elders of Massachusetts were correct to expel her and this latest tragedy to befall Anne was the clear judgment of God against her heresy. The incident is

heretical Anne by the Dutch shows that in the imperial competition over land and labor in the Americas, religious tolerance was common concession to make as it made the bitter pill of expanded political control easier to swallow.

The first settlements on New York were established with different objectives in mind for both the local community and the imperial government. In 1622 a group of around 50 – 60 French Walloon families petitioned Sir Dudley Carleton, the ambassador to the United Provinces, for inclusion in the Virginia colony.¹⁵ The Virginia Colony petition was then referred to George Calvert, Secretary to the King, but it was allowed to drop as the Walloon families had already secured passage to the Dutch colony of New Netherlands.¹⁶ The families claimed to be of the reformed religion and asked the king for his protection of their religion. The reply by the king's council is not preserved but the English king at the time, James I, was not much interested in extending the reach of the reformed religion in the American colonies. As king, James attempted to steer a moderate path between the forces of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation that were tearing Central Europe apart in the Thirty Years War. His refusal to accept and protect the reformed families may have stemmed from the desire to restrain religious extremism in the colonies. His desire to maintain a doctrinal unity in the colonies, or at least to bar the hotter sort of Protestants from entering them, contributed directly to the settling of the first families on Long Island and Manhattan. These same Walloon families

also recorded in John Winthrop's Journal. James Kendall Hosmer, ed., *Winthrop's Journal: A History of New England 1630 – 1649* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 2:138.

¹⁵ "Director Kieft's Patent to the Town of Gravesend, Anno 1645" E.B. O'Callaghan ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (New York: Weed Parsons & Co., 1853), 3:9. Walloon refers to the area that is near the borders of Belgium, the Netherlands and France. It refers to a specific ethnicity and language that has largely been subsumed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This early request for religious asylum would not be the last by French Protestants as they fled the horrors of religious warfare in seventeenth-century France.

¹⁶ "Secretary Calvert to Sir Dudley Carleton, February 7th 1621" E.B. O'Callaghan ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (New York: Weed Parsons & Co., 1853), 3:10-11.

would be the first permanent European inhabitants within the confines of modern New York; this exhibition of Dutch willingness to show tolerance on matters of faith lead directly to the peopling of the New Netherlands Colony.¹⁷

The policy of accepting exiles to grow the Dutch presence on Long Island was one that would be continued for as long as the Dutch controlled the New Netherlands Colony. In 1645 the Dutch Director of the New Netherlands granted a patent to the Lady Deborah Moody and her heirs for the town of Gravesend.¹⁸ The town was established under Dutch rule despite the fact that the majority of its inhabitants were of English and Scottish descent. The town of Gravesend was then just a large parcel of land granted to Lady Moody; and her community came with an explicit guarantee to “have and injoye the free libertie of conscience according to the costome and manner of Holland.”

Furthermore they would be free from “molestation or disturbance from any Madgistrate or Madgistrates or any other Ecclesiasticall Minister that may [pretend] jurisdiction over them.”¹⁹ This extension of toleration to a woman, albeit one of noble birth, was

uncommon at the time, though the example of Anne Hutchinson shows the Dutch willingness to overlook gender discrimination and accept colonists wherever they could.

Furthermore, unlike the town of Southold, which travelled with a learned man upon its settlement in 1640, the town of Gravesend still did not have a minister in 1658, some 14

¹⁷ The Walloon request for land had specified an area north of the Virginia Colony, What would become the Colony of Maryland, named for the Catholic wife of Charles I. The king’s secretary, George Calvert, was to secure the grant to the Maryland Colony and after his death, left it to his son who would use toleration in an effort to populate the colony.

¹⁸ “Director Kiefts Patent to the Town of Gravesend, Anno 1645” E. B. O’Callaghan ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 1:629.

¹⁹ “Director Kiefts Patent to the Town of Gravesend. Anno 1645.” E. B. O’Callaghan ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 1:630.

years after its beginning.²⁰ This lack of a guiding hand was felt most in the disjointed nature of the communities in the New Netherlands. Many communities existed in isolation, and individuals developed the communities on Long Island with little support from the government.²¹ By sacrificing the need for unity in religion, the Dutch government could continue to bolster its population while bleeding off unorthodox families from the English colonies.

The population growth of the Dutch colony of New Netherland was the first priority of the West India Company. By increasing the number of families in their jurisdiction they could increase their militia and their tax base, rendering the colony stronger vis-à-vis the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies. There was an inherent element of desperation for the Dutch trying to stem the English advance. By 1650 the Dutch had lost their early trading posts on the Connecticut River to encroaching New England colonists. The English Puritans were now threatening to overwhelm the Dutch on Long Island as well. In response to this threat the governor of New Netherland, Petrus Stuyvesant, sailed to Hartford and agreed on a treaty dividing Long Island between the Dutch and English.²² Many of the Dutch were outraged by this action and complained to the West India Company that the overbearing new governor general abandoned some “two hundred leagues” of coastline on Long Island and “divers fine islands, bays, kills

²⁰ “Revs Megapolensis and Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam, October 25, 1657” Hugh Hastings ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:411.

²¹ Nathaniel Scudder Prime, *A History of Long Island: From its First Settlement by Europeans to the Year 1845*, (New York: Robert Carter, 1845), 63.

²² “Extract of the letter written by the Select men of New Netherland to Van der Donck, Dated 26th November, 1650” E. B. O’Callaghan ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 1:459 – 461.

and places.”²³ In that same year a Swedish force had landed on the Delaware River and captured the southern extremity of New Netherland. Stuyvesant focused on dealing with the Swedish invasion and abandoned Dutch claims to New Haven and the East End to the encroaching Puritans.

While the Swedes were rapidly driven from control on the Delaware River the repercussions of the foreign incursion on Dutch soil caused a shift in the way the Dutch viewed religious tolerance. The Lutheran religion of the Swedes was forced to remain out of the public eye. When the Lutheran community in New Amsterdam petitioned Governor Stuyvesant for the right to have a preacher, and “organize separately and publicly a congregation and church” the answer was a stern refusal.²⁴ In the same letter the two learned Reverends of New Amsterdam, Megapolensis and Drisius, stated that allowing the Lutherans to publicly practice would injure the young colony. Namely that, allowing a new congregation to form would “tend to the injury or our church” and “increase the dissensions, of which we have had a sufficiency for years past.”²⁵ Some number of Lutherans had already accepted communion from the Dutch Reformed Church in the New Netherlands; therefore, to accept this new church would have lead to greater numbers forsaking the official Dutch church. This was a distinct departure by the Dutch in terms of tolerating religious differences driven by Stuyvesant who was “zealous for the [Dutch] Reformed Religion, and would rather relinquish his office than grant permission

²³ “Memoir on the boundaries of New Netherland. By Adrian van der Donck, 16th February, 1652” E. B. O’Callaghan ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 1:457.

²⁴ Revs. Megapolensis and Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam, October 6th, 1653” Hugh Hastings ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:316.

²⁵Revs. Megapolensis and Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam, October 6th, 1653” Hugh Hastings ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:316.

in this matter.”²⁶ The Dutch government in the New Netherlands had come to see the religious dissension caused by the policy of tolerance as a hindrance rather than an asset.

New light was now cast upon the earlier decisions to allow different sects to settle in the New Netherlands area. The town of Gravesend was a conspicuous example for this toleration gone awry, as they had “usurp[ed] the election and appointment of such Magistrates, as they please, without regards to their religion. Some, especially the people of Gravesend, elect libertines and Anabaptists, which is decidedly against the laws of the Netherlands.”²⁷ Members of dissenting churches were to be suppressed and the Dutch Reformed Church made paramount through government restrictions. The Dutch West India Company now sought a specific kind of settler for the New Netherland colony. Religious dissent could be carried as a private belief but there were strict limitations on the expression of unorthodox beliefs in the colony. Megapolensis and Drisius could not but hope that the Christian desire to share in the communion table would compel these secluded Lutherans to embrace the Dutch Reformed religion.

A later Dutch attempt to attract colonists was the issuance in 1661 of a call for emigrants from restoration England. The English Puritans had executed Charles I after the English Civil War in England and Scotland, ushering in the period known as the interregnum. The Puritans of England had created a Republic but the government was unstable and relied on the devotion of the army to maintain the government. Following

²⁶ Revs. Megapolensis and Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam, October 6th, 1653” Hugh Hastings ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:317.

²⁷ *Colonial Documents of New York* Volume XIV, pages 233, 235 cited by Hugh Hastings ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:318 This citing of Gravesend as a sore in the side of Dutch prosperity was well earned for the village. In 1655 when John Underhill, an English allied mercenary in the colonies, issued a manifesto calling all true Englishmen to allegiance to the Parliament and Cromwell the people of Gravesend felt empowered to declare themselves “free born English subjects” and they claimed the rights of the “Republic of England over this place, as to our persons and property.” “Published by the Village of Gravesend” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*. (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 2:152.

the death of Oliver Cromwell, the line of Stuart kings were recalled to England by the arm, ending the Puritan Republic. With Charles II about to take his place on the throne, the Dutch issued a manifesto to the English people inviting any and all emigrants to New Netherland. The company made a very specific call though, for all “Christian” people of “tender conscience in England.”²⁸ Calling for immigrants before the restoration was a sure way of enticing the Puritan population to move to the sunnier shores of Dutch controlled territory. The Puritans of England had executed Charles I and now some had good reason to fear the restoration of his son. Good Calvinist believers were to be drawn by this call and the union of Puritan dissenters with Dutch government was the goal. While the goal was to create a harmonious, doctrinally united colony, the need for settlers created spaces for dissenting religions to maintain their beliefs. While this space existed it was the hope of the Dutch leaders that they could expand the Dutch Reformed Church through conversions, but in order do so they needed more ministers.

The small, isolated communities of the American colonies were always lacking in trained ministers and besides those trained at the young Harvard College the only source was from European universities; the colonies were continually trying to draw ministers to preach on the frontier.²⁹ Compounding the Dutch problem with too few ministers was the necessity for all matters and requests to be referred back to the United Provinces so that Dutch Classis could answer them.³⁰ During this period the United Provinces were experiencing a dynamic growth in wealth and culture and few preachers desired the

²⁸ “Acts of the States General and Conditions Offered by the Dutch West India Company to Settlers in New Netherland, 14th February 1661” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*. (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:37.

²⁹ Diarmaid McCullough, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided 1490 – 1700*, (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 537.

³⁰ “Synod of North Holland, held at Enkhuizen August 24, 1624 Article 33” Hugh Hastings ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:38.

virtual banishment of work in the backwoods of the Dutch empire, even if it was where they were needed most. In 1631, the New Amsterdam church requested a new minister as their old one, Bogardus, was leaving. The letter went on to state that Reverend Bogardus had conducted a bad church government as well as condemning his “conduct and walk.”³¹ To “walk” in the way of Christ was to conduct oneself as a good Christian. The Reverend Bogardus had evidently failed the people of New Amsterdam in conducting himself in a Christian manner. Bogardus was an interesting character and example of how church life in the colonies under Dutch rule progressed. He feuded with the colony’s governor, William Kieft, principally over what he thought were debts owed to him by the West India Company. After Bogardus’ death, his widow made several demands of the company to pay his arrears in salary and these were included in a letter by another Dutch minister of New Netherland, Johannes Megapolensis.³² In the same letter, Megapolensis acknowledges that his request to return to the Netherlands was denied. A few months later, another letter was sent to the Classis requesting that the schoolmaster be allowed a stipend to return to the Netherlands after 6-7 years of service in the colony.³³ Ministers and schoolmasters continually requested to leave the colony for the wealth of the Netherlands. One Reverend Backerus wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam that he wished “to be transferred from here to a place in Holland.” The next minister would have to contend with seventeen tap houses and that it was most important to send over a new school teacher, “in order to best help the church of God here, and to

³¹ “Lubbertus van Dinklagen, April 7th, 1636” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:87.

³² “Reverend Johannes Megapolensis to the Classis of Amsterdam, August 25th 1648” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:237-239.

³³ “Reverend John Backerus to the Clasiss of Amsterdam, August 15th, 1648 and September 2nd, 1648” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:237.

resist a bad world, I think, we must begin with the children; for many of the older people are so far depraved, that they are now ashamed to learn anything good.”³⁴ It seems that the life of a Dutch minister in New Netherland was one of pecuniary trouble and regular moral battles with willfully degenerate drunks.

Furthermore, the problem of language stood in the way of working with English and French parishioners. Accordingly, the Dutch Classis requested that some ministers educated at the University of Utrecht be dispatched to England and France in order to “become expert in the use of the French and English languages” so they could “minister to the French and English churches in this land.”³⁵ Nine years later, the Reverend Megapolensis was complaining that, “we do not see how the towns will be able to obtain ministers. . . Nevertheless in New England, there are few places without a preacher, although there are many towns stretching for more than one hundred Dutch miles (equivalent to three hundred English miles).”³⁶ The need for highly trained ministers was becoming apparent if the Dutch were to achieve a religious sentiment, let alone orthodox belief, among their population in the New Netherland colony. The lack of a coherent idea of community, such as that which existed in the Puritan towns of New England and Long Island, was a decisive factor when the English government committed resources to subjugate the New Netherland colony.

³⁴ “Reverend John Backerus to the Clasiss of Amsterdam, August 15th, 1648 and September 2nd, 1648” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York*. (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:233- 237.

³⁵ “Article 37, page 10 Generalia, Extracted from the Acts of the Synod of Utrecht, 1631” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:82.

³⁶ “Revs Megapolensis and Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam, October 25, 1657” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:411.

Expansive Puritanism: The Connection between Religious Orthodoxy and Local Political Autonomy

While the Puritan towns had to be orthodox in religion, they were afforded some measure of political autonomy within their local government. Following the Puritan Way meant more than a simple adherence to a congregational church government. The towns on Long Island spun off from the settlements at Massachusetts and Connecticut were expected to remain godly people and this meant adhering to the formula decided on by the Puritan church's elders. Not infrequently, these same elders were the men who led the political establishments of Massachusetts and Connecticut. In other words, to follow the religious path was to also follow the political path as set out by the governing class of the New England colonies.

New England's burgeoning population fed by immigration and then by natural increase, meant that a political system had to be flexible enough to incorporate the new immigrants into the New England community. The strength of this community was their isolation and their faith. Their isolation reduced defections and solidified the feeling of community within the Puritan body. Their faith produced a body of people ready and willing to work together within the confines of their spiritual community. While dissension was manifested that could challenge this order the political threat of disunity was not as pressing as it was in the colonies to the south due to the diligence of the Puritan leaders to stamp out heresy. Political freedoms could therefore be afforded to the Puritan towns because of their underlying unity on religion. By contrast, the Dutch could never create a solid community of like-minded individuals and their efforts to extend

toleration to some retarded the growth of a communal identity between the isolated towns of New Netherland.

The Puritan settlements on Long Island began in the mid seventeenth century.³⁷ The people of Lynn, Massachusetts, unhappy with their ministers and their land, created the first Puritan settlement on Long Island.³⁸ After repeated attempts at relocation within the Massachusetts Colony they set out for Long Island in 1640.³⁹ Settling first on the western end of the island the Puritan families moved into territory claimed by the Dutch. They tore down the Dutch coat of arms from trees in the area that marked the forest as belonging to the Dutch. The Puritan emigrants then began clearing space for a village. When the Dutch governor of New Netherland learned of this intrusion he dispatched militia and soldiers to remove the intruders. Reprimanded for their intrusion the inhabitants of Lynn packed up their belongings and settled far beyond the reach of the Dutch authorities in Manhattan. This first English Puritan colony on Long Island was Southold, situated on its northeastern tip. By this time the number of families involved in the settlement had increased to 40 and, most notably, the community had acquired the services of “a godly learned man, and a member of the church of Boston” one Mr. Pierson.⁴⁰ This engagement of Mr. Pierson was an example of the high esteem that religious teaching was placed. While farmers and tradesmen were expected to form the

³⁷ The first settlement of Long Island came in the 1620's when the Dutch West India Company dispatched the New Netherland to place 30 families on the land scouted by Henry Hudson. The initial settlement was on Manhattan but forts and trading posts were soon erected across the East River on Long Island. E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:35. These early Dutch settlements were extremely small and liable to be destroyed if the natives they were built to trade with turned against the Dutch. Large scale Dutch colonization of the island would not begin until later and typically involved English and Dutch families.

³⁸ Faren Siminoff, *Crossing the Sound The Rise of Atlantic American Communities in Seventeenth Century Eastern Long Island*, (New York University Press, 2004), 99-100.

³⁹ James Kendall Hosmer, ed., *Winthrop's Journal: History of New England 1630 - 1649* (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1908), Volume 2:4.

⁴⁰ James Kendall Hosmer, ed., *Winthrop's Journal: History of New England 1630 - 1649* (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1908), Volume 2:5.

basis of a colonial town, the Puritans were essentially the only group to create towns with an implicit desire to include a learned man in the first settlement. Puritans placed a high value on religious instruction and many communities would not branch out to form new towns until they had secured at least a man learned in the Bible and Biblical exegesis. In June of 1649 the freeholders of the town sought the right to incorporate the town under the charter granted to the New Haven colony.⁴¹ The East End towns settled in the following years continued this pattern of creating autonomous communities following the Puritan way, especially in matters of religious orthodoxy.

East Hampton, another town established by Puritan emigrants, followed Southold's lead by amalgamating into the Connecticut colony in 1658.⁴² The freemen of East Hampton feared the actions of hostile natives and the Dutch as war between England and the United Provinces found its way to the colonies. They banded together and declared that their "Combination is to maintain & preserve the libertie and puritie of the Lord Jesus Christ which we now profess."⁴³ This first step in attaching themselves to the Connecticut Colony was a declaration of their righteous and orthodox faith that made them fitting candidates for political union with the Connecticut Colony. The document detailing the terms for East Hampton's union with Connecticut gave some indication as to the nature of the political bond. The town's freemen were to be allowed to nominate three representatives to be sent to the Connecticut legislature so that the town would be represented in the decisions of the colony. This followed the standard development of

⁴¹ "Generall Courte June 25th, 1649" Charles J. Hoadly, ed., *Records of the Colony And Plantation of New Haven from 1638 – 1649* (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Company, 1857), 463.

⁴² "Union between Connecticut and the Town of East Hampton" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:27.

⁴³ "Notes on the Town of East Hampton Long Island John Lyon Gardiner, 1798" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed Parsons & Co., 1850), 1:682.

the political structure that had taken place in Massachusetts and Connecticut up to this time. However, because the town of East Hampton was separated from Connecticut by the Long Island Sound and travel could be rendered infeasible by inclement weather the town was granted liberties that closer towns on the mainland would not have enjoyed. If members could not travel to Connecticut to vote for their representatives they could send in their votes by proxy. This seemingly innocuous provision but it allowed for a greater flexibility in voicing their political concerns than one provided to mainland freeholders. As the freeholders were not tied to the colony's capital they could continue, hunting, fishing, clearing their land, practicing a trade, and developing their fields instead of making the month long trip to and from Hartford across the sound. Religious orthodoxy on the part of the East Hampton settlers cleared the way for political concessions from Connecticut as both sides realized a practical advantage from the agreement. The political concessions for East Hampton made a stronger union between the town and the colonial government that reinforced, and was reinforced by, their common religious culture, which resulted in a community identity that the Dutch towns could not match.

In addition to this ease of political representation, the residents of East Hampton were made responsible for their own defense and the erection of fortifications of their town was left entirely to their own initiative.⁴⁴ Fortifications to defend major population centers were always a contentious topic in colonial America. The colonies were left to rely on their own resources in attempting to protect against the threat of Indian attack and raiding by other European powers. The document outlining the agreement between East Hampton and Connecticut attests to the fact that East Hampton was exempt from

⁴⁴ "Union between Connecticut and the Town of East Hampton" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:28.

maintaining the forts and other defenses specifically designed to protect the Connecticut River and the towns of New Haven and Hartford along it.⁴⁵ The massive earthworks ringed with cannon were horrendously expensive to maintain and a frequent source of graft for public officials, as they let the forts fall into disrepair pocketing the taxes collected for the purpose.⁴⁶ Taxation for the benefit of the colony's defense was one trigger for Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia and fears over the fortifications in New York would add to the instability and discrediting of the magistrates installed there when Leisler's Rebellion was in its earliest stages. Therefore, to be exempt from this heaviest form of taxation was an obvious benefit for the freeholders of East Hampton and a sure inducement to stable government. When the town of East Hampton applied for membership in the Connecticut colony they knew that attack by the Dutch was a less probable possibility than one by the Dutch allies among the natives of Long Island. In maintaining a right to refuse contributions to the defense of Hartford they ensured that the majority of their funds could go to defending themselves from their immediate enemies on Long Island. A mutually beneficial relationship with Connecticut was only possible in the context of the town's insistence on their orthodox behavior. By enshrining their own orthodox religious beliefs in the law the Puritan polities gained a greater flexibility among the competing communities in the colonies.

Political leniency was tempered by a few conditions, mainly that the colonists would continue to support the Connecticut colony and that they would obey its laws,

⁴⁵ "Union between Connecticut and the Town of East Hampton" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:28.

⁴⁶ Bacon's Rebellion was fueled by discontent over high taxes that were tied to the development of expensive fortifications, which were in turn poorly constructed by the wealthy grandees charged with constructing them so as to pocket the difference. Stephen Saunders Webb, *1676: The End of American Independence* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 17 – 20.

“according to the Word of God and right reason.”⁴⁷ Implicit in the relationship between the town and the leadership in Hartford was that the town would be a godly place in the mold of the Connecticut and Massachusetts colonies. If this relationship was damaged by religious heresy, then the Connecticut authorities reserved the right to pass judgment on the town. This was an essential feature of the Puritan colonies and their townships on Long Island. Doctrinal orthodoxy was not to be sacrificed in the interest of extending the reach of the colonial governments. Instead, orthodox interpretations of the reformed religion, orthodox for the Massachusetts and Connecticut Colonies that is, continued to be paramount in the relationship between the Long Island towns and New England colonial governments. The threats to the orthodox government of these towns came mostly from those willing to tolerate religious differences and the problem of toleration became more pronounced as more far flung towns were established and as new rulers brought their own interpretation of righteous rule.

Religious priorities and apprehensions motivated the Puritan and Dutch government and then shaped their policy once in power. While the Dutch tolerated to increase their population, the Puritans were more stringent in order to ensure orthodox relationships between the churches of the periphery and the center of the colony. The exclusion of outsiders was tied into the intimate relationship that existed between the interconnected webs of small congregations. This relationship would be challenged by the centralizing power of the restored English monarchs.

⁴⁷ “Union between Connecticut and the Town of East Hampton” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:27.

The Imperial English Monarchy Arrives: Centralized Government and Old World Churches

Like England, New York contained numerous shades of religious opinion. However, the colonies lacked the Episcopal structure favored by the state religions in Protestant England, Scotland or the Netherlands. Differing ethnic peoples were subsumed in a common faith in a lay dominated elective Protestantism in New York. Lay leaders were prominent in the running of the colonial congregational church. Church elders were frequently the leading citizens of the local area and the leadership exercised in the civil and economic sphere became leadership in the church as well. A common culture of worship developed tying together Protestants of different beliefs. New Yorkers shared a de facto congregational style of church governance that made the locality supreme in determining the style of Protestantism. As the colonies were largely a Protestant society, the specter of French Catholic absolutism, particularly where it was combined with the power of the English monarch to shape the English church as he saw fit, fed colonial fears of tyranny in government and religion. Fear of religious and political tyranny combined with a desire for a stronger local government. The outcome of these intertwined ideologies was the rebellions, which were an attempt to centralize power in the localities rather than the far afield administration of London. These small towns on the edge of European civilization found they shared a culture in the church congregation. These separate towns could unite with the strong backing of the community through the democratic election of these officials. Based on a solid foundation of consensus, the congregations of the local towns would be the most capable governments in the imperial crisis surrounding Leisler's Rebellion.

In 1664 an English frigate and six other ships were sailing through the Atlantic decimating the outposts of the Dutch West India Company.⁴⁸ The Company directors' wrote to the Amsterdam burgomasters requesting the dispatch of ships and soldiers to defend the colony of New Netherland, none were sent. By August the colony was in English hands. According to secret instructions sent by Charles II the point of the attack was to secure Long Island from the Dutch and, if they surrendered it peacefully, the Dutch would be allowed to remain in the renamed New York Colony.⁴⁹ As 600 soldiers had come with the English naval force the local Dutch authorities were quick to point out to their superiors in the Netherlands that the much larger militias of the New England colonies could be added to this number. The Dutch readily surrendered the colony without a fight pleading that, "whether we turn[ed] to the north or to the south, to the east or the west, 'tis all in vain! On all sides we are encompassed and hemmed in by our enemies"⁵⁰ The Dutch strategy of incorporating numerous communities into their political structure of New Netherland had failed. When the English arrived in overwhelming force the Dutch and their allies were too few and had too much to lose from a confrontation with the English.

The need for families to pay taxes and fill the militia would not disappear with the end of Dutch rule. Rather, when the English came to take the whole of Long Island and the New Netherland colony they would institute religious toleration as the law of the land throughout the re-christened New York colony. With the arrival of English soldiers and

⁴⁸ "West India Company to the burgomasters of Amsterdam" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 2:243.

⁴⁹ "The Secret Instructions as to Religion, to Col. R. Nicolls, Etc., In reference to New England; And New Netherland, If Conquered, April 23, 1664" Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:655.

⁵⁰ "Remonstrance of the People of New Netherland to the Director-General and the Council, September 5, 1664" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 2:248.

seamen came new laws for the colony. The Second and Third Anglo-Dutch war would see the colony of New Netherland/New York be grabbed at by both Dutch and English conquerors. Long Island was annexed from the Connecticut colony and attached to the new colony of New York after the successful English invasion of 1664. Renamed New York for James of York who was both brother to Charles II and heir presumptive, James sought to maintain a rough status quo in the colony. Religious toleration was guaranteed to the people of the colonies coming under Charles II reign and the Dutch Reformed and other churches were allowed to continue as established churches in the colonies.⁵¹

However, Richard Nicolls, the crown's representative, was to be served by an Anglican priest and carry the Anglican prayer book for him and his family.⁵² Charles expressed himself in favor of toleration as he said,

we could not imagine it probable that a confederate number of persons, who separated themselves from their own country and the religion established, principally (if not only) that they might enjoy another way of worship. . . could in so short a time be willing to return to that form of service they had forsaken.⁵³

Charles wisely sidestepped the issue of forced religious conversion but he still longed for a unified Episcopal Church structure, though he knew he could not achieve it by decree.

⁵¹ "Articles of Capitulation on the Reduction of New Netherland, August 27th (Old Style) 1664" Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:558.

⁵² "Private Instructions to Coll. R. Nicolls etc." E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:56.

⁵³ "Private Instructions to Coll. R. Nicolls etc." E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:57.

The colonies were too far away, too established, and too ready to dispute the rights of the king in determining local church policy.

Desiring to have his colonies continue to trade, grow, and make him money, Charles took a different policy than the Puritan settlers of New England as regarded the religion of the colonies. New York had a small population throughout the seventeenth century, and the desire of James Stuart to build a large tax paying population created the conditions for a polyglot society. This growth was interrupted by the re-conquest of New York by the Dutch during the Third Anglo-Dutch War. The retaking of New York, subsequently renamed New Orange, brought in a flood of petitioners requesting freedom of conscience under the new Dutch rulers. Long Island, now a part of New Orange by virtue of its annexation in 1664, petitioned for freedom of conscience and was granted that freedom. The Lutherans at Albany were also granted toleration but within limits, as the Magistrates of town had to all belong to or be favorably disposed towards the Dutch Reformed Church.⁵⁴ When the colony was handed back to the English at the bargaining table, the right of freedom of conscience was again established by the instructions to the new governor of New York, Edmund Andros.⁵⁵ Religious toleration had clearly surpassed any desire on the part of monarchs and shareholders to institute a unified religious realm in the colony. Trade and development were the order of the day and if stability came through toleration than Charles and James were pleased to grant it. There

⁵⁴ "Petitions From Albany as to their Privileges under Dutch Government, September 1st, 1673" Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:634.

⁵⁵ "Instructions From the Duke of York to Edmund Andros, for the Government of New York" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:218.

was a price to this religious tolerance for the colonies and it was of stricter political control of the colony.

James, in July of 1674, charged the governor Edmund Andros (1674 – 1681) with “permitt[ing] all persons of what religion soever, quietly to inhabitt within the precincts of your jurisdiction.”⁵⁶ Toleration created a heterogeneous community of ethnicities. Later, in February of 1687, Governor Thomas Dongan reported on the rapid growth of New York by influxes of French refugees, Dutch families and settlers from the Puritan colonies to the north noting that, “for the 7 Years last past, there has not come over into this province twenty English, Scotch or Irish familys.”⁵⁷ Families immigrating to the colony would often settle near towns made up of their countrymen in a pattern recognizable today. Small communities of like minded colonists developed. These communities of different Protestant sects would make the colony’s politics fractious when they competed with each other but would make for a remarkable coalition to develop when faced by a perceived external threat.

As colonists of differing ethnicities and Protestant sects, New Yorkers were, for the most part, congregationalists. In 1678, Andros reported on New York’s religious complexity; “there are religions of all sorts, one church of England, Several Presbiterians & Independents, Quakers & Anabaptists of Several sects, some Jews but presbiterians and Independents most numerous and Substantiall.”⁵⁸ The Presbyterian Church, the

⁵⁶“Instructions From the Duke of York to Edmund Andros, for the Government of New York” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:218.

⁵⁷“Answers of Governor Dongan to the heads of inquiry of the committee for Trade and Plantations, Respecting New York, &” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:399.

⁵⁸“Gov. Nicolls Answers to the Several Queries Relating to the Planters in the Territories of His R. H. S. The Duke of York in America” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 1:92.

Independents, Quakers and Anabaptists shared the practice of election of church elders and a belief in a parishioner's direct communion with God. The tenet of a parishioner's direct relationship with the almighty acted as leveler reducing all men to the same stature before the Lord. While a religious elite existed in the educated of a congregation—able to interpret the nuances of the bible—men existed in fundamental equality when placed before the Lord. The Episcopal Anglican and Catholic Churches, with their hierarchical structure and priestly intermediaries between commoners and the divine, constituted a manifestation of the imperial threat to the local community. The English and the French kings were expanding their authority and the Episcopal churches acted as agents of the crown's expansion and centralization of authority.

The congregational belief in lay election created a social order inimical to a reigning elite. The experience of voting for lay members of the church by the common people gave rise to a desire for participation in the political life of the towns. Religious and political liberties were therefore fused. The local congregations of New York were sensitive to the placement of preachers by the English governors, especially when the preachers followed tenets established by the Anglican Church. Pressure was exerted by the English governor for an acceptance of Anglican preachers to be incorporated into the Dutch Reformed Church. Nicholas Van Rensselaer, a Reformed minister who had been ordained into the Anglican Church, came to New York with Edmund Andros in 1672. Rensselaer began preaching at the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany, and he was granted a manor there.⁵⁹ Questions of political control in the area became fused with religious doctrines when Rensselaer angered the congregation by espousing Anglican

⁵⁹ Robert Ritchie, *The Duke's Province - A Study of New York Politics and Society 1664 - 1691* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1977), 144.

tenets. The Albany congregation split between members desiring a Reformed minister and those eager to please the Anglican sensibilities of the New York Council. The rift widened when Jacob Leisler denounced Rensselaer and the local magistrates imprisoned Rensselaer who was then released by an order of the council.⁶⁰ The message was clear that the governor would not allow the local community to turn out the domine Rensselaer over a dispute in doctrine. The episode shows the depth of hostility that existed between the congregational New Yorkers and their Episcopal English governors.⁶¹ The dispute was multi-faceted touching questions of political, economic and religious matters. When the question of political allegiance again came to the Hudson Valley new disputes would arise that questioned the legitimacy of these Protestant collaborators with the English crown.

In the months following the rebellion of 1689, Leisler again sought the allegiance of Albany. Leisler and the committee of safety were in control of New York, the administrative center of the colony. Albany, however, stood aloof from Leisler's rebellion. In the wake of the rebellion in New York Albany had erected a convention of the local magnates to maintain order. The isolated town of a few thousand inhabitants was on the colony's frontier and vulnerable to overland attack by the French and their Indian allies. Leisler used the precariousness of Albany vis-à-vis the French as a justification to take command of the fort there and extend his rebellion up the Hudson. Accordingly, Jacob Milborne embarked from New York with 50 men to take command of the fort in Albany.

⁶⁰ "At a Councill Sept. 8th, 1676" Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:689.

⁶¹ For a more detailed summary of the controversy see: Robert Ritchie, *The Duke's Province - A Study of New York Politics and Society 1664 - 1691* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1977), 145 - 147.

In the days before Milborne's arrival, the Albany convention was in session trying to determine a policy by which to meet the revolution in government effected in New York.⁶² Milborne had dispatched a letter to be read throughout the towns and manors lining the Hudson calling on a new election of magistrates and officers to replace those of James II. The tenant farmers of the area flocked to Albany to support Milborne and elect new officers to the government. A mass of people, "very much inclined to mutiny," had come to, "albany in all Speed to receive Priviledges and Libertyes."⁶³ The old families of the Hudson stopped their people from coming whenever they could but still a large number of farmers had gathered in Albany to hear Milborne. The Albany convention determined that due to the town's exposed position on the frontier a radical change in government was not desired. The committee of safety's representative should be welcomed but the authority of the Albany convention would remain, "Since by no means we can Suffer them to Turn the government of this Citty upside doune."⁶⁴ The manor lords of the Hudson could not allow their feudal subjects to revoke their authority through the election of a government.

When the fort's commanding officers met Milborne on November 9th, they refused his commission to take command of the fort. Rebuffed, Milborne brought his message directly to the tenant farmers at Albany. Milborne addressed a packed city hall and he did not mince words on where the authority of James II, or the manor lords, stood.

⁶² Richie describes the convention as being composed of the civil and military councils for the city of Albany and the county of Ulster. For the decisions of the convention see: Robert Ritchie, *The Duke's Province - A Study of New York Politics and Society 1664 - 1691* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1977), 205 – 209.

⁶³ "Hendrick Cuyler to ?, New York, November 2, 1689" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 2:67.

⁶⁴ "Proposals made by the Convention to the People" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 2:62.

No sooner was ye [said] Milborne come into ye Citty hall which was very full of People, but addressed his Discourse to ye Common People in a long oration with a high Stile & Language telling them That now it was in there powr to free themselves from [the] Yoke of arbitrary Power and Government under which they had Lyen so long in ye Reign of [it] Illegall king James, who was a Papist, Declareing all Illegall whatever was done & past in his time, yea the Charter of this Citty was null & void Since it was graunted by a Popish kings governour & that now ye Power was in the People to choose both new Civill and Military officers as they Pleased, challenging all them that had bore office in king James Time to be Illegall, therefore they must have a free Election, and much Such like Discourse.⁶⁵

The speech revealed the political and religious thought of Leisler and the committee of safety in New York. James' Catholicism was an illegal aberration in the English government and therefore his laws and officers were stripped of their authority. Milborne had indeed arrived to turn Albany "upside doune." The Albany Convention, home of the anglicized Rensselaer, rejected the radically populist Protestant argument against James', and their own, authority in favor of the status quo.⁶⁶

When Milborne painted the manor lords of the Hudson valley with the same tyrannical brush as James II, he threatened to wreck the entire structure of feudal

⁶⁵ "At a Convention &, Albany 9th day of November 1689" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 2:64.

⁶⁶ Not the same Rensselaer, but Hend: Rensselaer signs the document produced by the Albany meetings of November 5th. This long convention was still in session when Milborne arrived.

obligation.⁶⁷ It is fitting that one of the men responsible for turning back the Hudson peasants was a Rensselaer and a Justice of the Peace. The Rensselaers and other elite families of the Hudson valley had profited handsomely by exporting wheat downriver under the English administration. When Milborne came preaching the need for the common people to free themselves from tyranny, it is not difficult to imagine whom the common people knew as tyrants. Local elections had existed since the first communities in the Hudson, but what man will vote against the provider of his land, his wealth or his competence? Through the juxtaposition of Hudson manor lords and James II as tyrants, Milborne brought not just the promise of elections but perhaps the promise of land ownership. The possibility, never realized, frightened the Hudson Valley manor lords into loudly proclaiming Milborne and Leisler demagogues for their attempt to raise the rabble. The letter preceding Milborne's arrival aroused the common people and the Albany elites were forced to restrain their tenants from going to the convention and supporting him. The congregational practice of electing church officials undermined attitudes of deference to the elites needed to support old world feudalism. The support given to Milborne by the populace is evidence of a weakening in these ties of deference. No longer were the churches Episcopal hierarchies, they were led by members of the congregation. And if the Episcopal system of hierarchy was not good enough to ensure a man's soul, why should it be the mode of government on Earth?

⁶⁷ Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664 - 1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978). Sung Bok Kim outlines the growth of manor style farming communities along the Hudson River under Dutch rule. The Dutch hoped to attract a larger population through grants to wealthy landowners who could afford to import labor. What resulted was that the form of Dutch politics was kept in that elections were held but that the elections were largely a foregone conclusion where the manor lord or his family members were always elected. As to the "feudal" nature of the communities, the settlers were tied to the soil by the manor lords as a recompense to the manor lord who had paid for the trans-Atlantic voyage of the farmers.

James II and “Catholic Modernity:” The Fear of French Governance and the Rebellion to Forestall It

From the time of their detachment from the Connecticut colony the East End towns on Long Island had been clamoring for an assembly. Connecticut and Massachusetts had secured the right to have an assembly and an elected governor in their original charters handed out by James I in the first half of the seventeenth century. Charles II and James, Duke of York, had decided to wait to grant an assembly to New York. In 1681 Sir John Werden, a Parliament member created by Charles II, wrote to the lieutenant governor floating the idea for an assembly to more effectively raise taxes in the colony.⁶⁸ By 1683 the Assembly became a reality when the new English governor, Thomas Dongan, arrived with instructions to create a “General Assembly of all the Freeholders.”⁶⁹ The assembly created was to have an extremely short life span of only two years. In 1685, with the death of Charles II James ascended to the throne as James II. In his 1686 instructions to Governor Dongan he laid out that the New York Assembly was to be dissolved. The Charter of Franchises, which had been created by the Assembly as the conditions of paying taxes, was to be “repealed, determined and made void.”⁷⁰ Toleration of religion was grafted onto a policy of political repression in the hopes of making the New York Colony financially viable.

The Catholicism of James II is essential to understanding the rebellion of the New York colony. The New York elite saw past the Catholicism of James II and the

⁶⁸ “Sir John Werden to Lieutenant Brockholes, February 11th 1681/2” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:317.

⁶⁹ “Instructions for Thomas Dongan lieutenant and Governor of New York and its dependencies in America, January 27th, 1682/3” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:331.

⁷⁰ “Instructions to Governor Dongan, May 29th, 1686” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:370.

Protestants of the colony saw little else. The cosmopolitan elite worked closely with the Irish Catholic Governor Thomas Dongan to profit in conjunction with imperial trade regulations. The crown revenues derived from the Navigation Acts were used by James II to support pro-Catholic policies. While James II worked for harmony with France in Europe, colonial skirmishes began to heat up along the New York-Canadian border. The French government in the later seventeenth century was more active in military operations in Canada than it had ever been. At no other time in Canadian history would the French commit so many troops and supplies to the struggle for the Americas. Furthermore, the colony had been receiving refugees from the aftermath of the Thirty Years War. This great struggle between Catholic and Protestant was only the latest in a series of religious wars dating to the beginning of the sixteenth century. As the colony was home to a growing population of French Huguenots, who were refugees of Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the threat of Catholics became part of the political culture. These immigrant groups opened farms on the fringes of the colony often in the places most vulnerable to French Canadian attack. The colony was the front line for the struggle with the French Canadians and their Native allies. This constant threat of attack combined with the ease of imperial conquest fired the Protestants of New York to overthrow the old elite and denounce any connection to the Catholic James II or his governors.

The French frequently attacked the New York frontier in the decade preceding 1690. Thomas Dongan's administration (1682-1688) oversaw an escalating tension between French Canada, their Native allies (The Onondagas) and New York, supported

by the Five Nations of the Iroquois.⁷¹ A lengthy correspondence took place between Dongan and the French governor of Canada, Denonville. Dongan, in these letters, attempted to defuse the situation in the Indian country between the two colonies. Denonville, though, was eager for war to gain access to more lands and an expanded grip on the fur trade.⁷² Jesuit missionaries moved through central New York mapping out the land and waterways, while attempting to convert Indians to the Catholic faith. This expansive French policy fueled fears in New York of Catholic conspiracies to take the colony. When viewing the colony's history of easy occupation by competing foreign powers, this fear of Catholic conspiracy appeared tenable. Fuel for the rumors circulating about Catholic conspiracy and assaults upon New York also originated in the Council of Governor Dongan. In 1687, one Major Brokhelles is mentioned in a report by Dongan to the Lords of Trade as having made, "the debates of the council, [while he was a member of it] the subject of his Tavern discourse."⁷³ The subject of the council meeting was apparently that of allegations made against the governor of conducting a secret trade with the French in Louisbourg. An obvious affront to the sensibilities of Protestant New Yorkers as it was trading with the Catholic enemy, as well as it being an enriching trade prohibited by the Navigation Acts. The accusations lent credence to the claims of Catholic conspiracy between Governor Dongan and the French. This trade relationship was blown up into full cooperation between Dongan and an impending French attack by sea. In the aftermath of the Boston revolt in 1689, Edward Randolph, an imperial official

⁷¹ "Jean De Lamberville to Thomas Dongan September 10, 1685" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:453.

⁷² "Marquis de Denonville to Thomas Dongan August 22, 1687" Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 2:939 – 942.

⁷³ This Brokhelles is most likely a corruption of Brockholls, a long-standing militia member and interim governor or related thereto. "Governor Dongan's Report To the Committee of Trade on the Province of New York, February 22, 1687," E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 1:175.

living in Boston, also gave credence to rumors of impending French attack upon the Dominion in his report to Trade and Foreign Plantations committee.⁷⁴ Repeated claims on the loyalty of New Yorkers from competing European empires spoke to the ease of colonial acquisition. Little force was needed by the Dutch or English in their conquests, therefore the presence of a Catholic fifth column in New York constituted a real threat of Catholic French conquest. This internal threat from the appointees of Catholic James II would motivate the colonists to unite in their shared Protestantism.

The communities inhabiting New York were susceptible to a belief in Catholic oppression and terror. The recent influx of refugee French Protestants came about after Louis XIV's revocation of French citizenship for the Protestants Huguenots of France. The Huguenots spread out across England and the Netherlands. French refugees in New York would establish the community of New Rochelle.⁷⁵ The English and Dutch had historical fears of Catholic oppression as well. The English had suffered through the reign of Bloody Mary and the terror of the Spanish Armada in the 16th century. The Dutch had suffered through the occupation of the Spanish general Alva and his bloody persecution of Protestants. The United Provinces fought the Hapsburg Spanish for their freedom for eighty years, from 1572 to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.⁷⁶ Following this titanic struggle the United Provinces became one of the great powers of Europe and the entrepot of northern Europe. In the latter half of the 17th century the Dutch repeatedly

⁷⁴ The document alludes to a French attack on Boston and New England specifically as well as a general threat to "our best ports and harbours." "Mr. Edward Randolph's Report to the Committee of Trade, &, on the state, &, of New England" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3: 578 – 583.

⁷⁵ The name is suggestive in its reference to La Rochelle, a port in western France that in the 1620's, was the scene of a long Protestant revolt.

⁷⁶ For the revolt and first years of fighting see: Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: It's Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477 – 1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 155 – 261. For the second half of the war see: 450 – 536.

fought the French, further reinforcing the Dutch claims to be the bulwark of Protestant Europe. The religious identities of the English Puritans, The Dutch, and the French Huguenots were constructed as persecuted martyrs to their Protestant faith. Nowhere was the fanatical belief in this martyrdom better evident than in the leader of New York's rebellion, Jacob Leisler.

Leisler was German, not Dutch. He was born into a moderately wealthy family in the German state of Hesse. His family had strong ties to the Protestant cause of Frederick V, the Winter King of Bohemia.⁷⁷ His father was expelled from their home in Frankenthal, Germany when the Spanish expelled the three Calvinist ministers there. Leisler's abiding fear and hatred of Catholics stemmed from this expulsion that left his family homeless and wandering across Germany. The reformed church of Frankfurt-am-Main offered Leisler's father a position ministering to Huguenot refugees in the city. Leisler, at the age of twelve, entered a military school established by the House of Orange–Nassau and after his graduation the Dutch West India Company hired him. He traveled to New Amsterdam in the early 1660's, established himself as a merchant, and married into a family on the rise.⁷⁸ Leisler never lost his militancy in support of the Protestant cause. He identified with the United Provinces as the Protestant bulwark of Europe and in February of 1664 Leisler gave 250 florins (the Dutch currency) in the defense of New Amsterdam against the British attack.⁷⁹ Upon the British taking the

⁷⁷ Voorhees, David W. "The "Fervent Zeale" of Jacob Leisler." *The William and Mary Quarterly* [Mid-Atlantic Perspectives] 51, no. 3 (1994): 451. Frederick V was a German Prince and an Elector of the Holy Roman Empire. His decision to take the Bohemian crown in 1618 triggered the Thirty Years War. For a narrative of the Thirty Years War see: Cynthia Wedgewood, *The Thirty Years War* (Garden City, Anchor Books: 1961).

⁷⁸ The summary is contained in Voorhees, David W. "The "Fervent Zeale" of Jacob Leisler." *The William and Mary Quarterly* [Mid-Atlantic Perspectives] 51, no. 3 (1994): 450 – 456.

⁷⁹ "Court Minutes of New Amsterdam Subscriptions for Defense," Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 1:541.

colony, Leisler was listed as one of the many Dutch family heads that took the oath of allegiance to the English government.⁸⁰ During the years preceding the Glorious Revolution Leisler was shaped by a virulent belief that compromise or even association with Catholics was a betrayal of Protestant ideals and dangerous to Protestants everywhere. Leisler was born into a Europe fractured by religious war and then made wealthy by family connections stretching across the Atlantic and into Europe. Leisler did not identify people as national groups or ethnicities; he saw only religious beliefs or sympathies. His extreme distrust of Catholics led him to base his position as the legitimate Protestant governor on the illegality of the appointees of the Catholic James II. In the heterogeneous colony of New York, home to a bewildering number of different Protestant sects, the shared fear of French occupation would motivate Leisler and the colonists to mobilize the town militias and seize control of the government.

On April 7, 1688, the Dominion of New England was placed under the royally appointed governor of Sir Edmund Andros.⁸¹ It was hoped by James II that Andros could resist the military threat of the French and the Native tribes. The Mayor and Common Council of New York had written to James requesting that East and West Jersey, Connecticut, and parts of Pennsylvania be amalgamated into New York so that a larger colonial tax base could support the garrison and fort defenses of New York.⁸² Now all the colonies north of the Delaware were incorporated into the Dominion of New England. This mega-colony was engaged in military operations almost instantly, fighting an Indian

⁸⁰ For the entire list see: "Alphabetic Catalogue," E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:74 – 77.

⁸¹ "Commission of Sir Edmond Andros" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:537.

⁸² "Address of the Mayor and Common Council to the King" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:425 – 426. The Bayard and Van Cortlandt families held prominent seats in this council.

uprising on the Maine frontier. As Andros's government would be in the populous Boston, he appointed a Lieutenant Governor, Francis Nicholson, to preside in New York.

In March of 1689, Nicholson first received news that William of Orange had ousted James II. Nicholson and the council received the letters from the Governor of Pennsylvania, John Blackwell, and upon reviewing them and questioning the messenger the council decided to sit on the news.⁸³ In mid-April the Puritan party in Massachusetts overthrew the government of the Dominion. Rumors abounded of impending French fleets, war between England and France, and of a conspiracy by the colonial government to welcome in the Catholic French.⁸⁴ News gradually filtered down to the New York Council and on April 27, they fielded a request from the local militia captains, Leisler among them, to station more soldiers in the city fort because of the rumors of war with France.⁸⁵ Not trusting the defense of the colony to the colonial government, with their ties to the establishment of James II, the Protestant militias found a common cause in their desire to secure the fort against sudden French attack.

A revolt, begun in Boston to overthrow the Dominion, spread first to their co-religionist Puritan communities on Long Island. The "Suffolk County Freeholders Declaration" of May 3rd outlined the Puritan desire to follow "England's example for securing our English nations liberties and propertyes from Popery and Slavery, and from

⁸³ "Minutes of the Council at New York, March 1, 1689" Michael G. Hall et. All ed., *The Glorious Revolution In America: Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 102.

⁸⁴ Robert Ritchie, *The Duke's Province - A Study of New York Politics and Society 1664 - 1691* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1977), 219.

⁸⁵ "Minutes of the Council at New York, March 1, 1689" Michael G. Hall et. All ed., *The Glorious Revolution In America: Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 102.

the Intended invasion of a foreign French design.”⁸⁶ Added to this potent mix of conspiracy, both real and perceived, the New York militia had not been paid for services rendered to the departed governor Dongan. After paying off the militia, Nicholson soon found himself governing a colony in rebellion: Suffolk county towns had expelled their magistrates, along with Queens and Kings Counties. These were communities separated by language, ethnic and religious barriers but they made common cause in their fears of French Catholicism taking the colony. An ecumenical militia then marched on Manhattan; by May 15th the militias of Long Island had decided to expel the old governor’s council and to secure the Manhattan fort from the feared French invasion.⁸⁷ Nicholson, confronted by the militia captains’ refusal to leave the fort to the governor uttered fateful words stating that he would “fire the town about [the militia’s] ears.”⁸⁸ Acting on this threat, the militia took control of the fort, removing those suspected of Catholicism, and taking the keys to the fortification from the Lieutenant Governor. On June 6th Nicholson fled the colony, leaving behind a three-man council for the colony to explain the revolt to the English government.⁸⁹

In June of 1689, after seizing the fort in New York, the militia captains explained their actions to their new sovereign. They wrote,

⁸⁶ “Suffolk County Freeholders’ Declaration” Michael G. Hall et. All ed., *The Glorious Revolution In America: Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 103.

⁸⁷ “Minutes of the Council at New York, May 15, 1689” Michael G. Hall et. All, ed., *The Glorious Revolution In America: Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 106.

⁸⁸ “Address of the Militia of New York to William and Mary” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 2:962.

⁸⁹ “Minutes of the Council at New York, June 6, 1689” Michael G. Hall et. All, ed., *The Glorious Revolution In America: Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 111.

wee your Majesties dutiful loyall and obedient subjects . . .
 prostrate ourselves with all submission at your Royall feet . . . blessing the
 great God of heaven and earth who has [made] your Majesty so happy an
 instrument in our deliverance from Tyranny, popery and slavery, and to
 putt it into your Royall breasts to undertake so glorious a work towards the
 reestablishment and preservation of the true protestant religion, liberty and
 property.⁹⁰

The militia's document cited in justification of their revolt the stationing of Catholic troops in the fort and the appointment of Catholic customs collectors in the city "contrary to the known laws of England."⁹¹ The militia clearly had in mind the Test Acts. Ignored by James II when he was in power, they now cleared the way for a seizure of the colonial government. While members of the governor's council scrambled to maintain authority the militia document clearly reveals the tension between the militias and the appointees that the Catholic James II had placed in office.

The council immediately became the target of the militia's growing assertiveness. A member of the council, a colonel of the militia, and an anglicized Dutchman, Nicholas Bayard wrote about the deterioration of the government's control. On June 24, the council voted to remove the Catholic collector from the New York custom house. This act, in accordance with the commands of the proclamation of William and Mary removing all avowed Catholics from government office would not be enough to quiet the

⁹⁰ "Address of the Militia" Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 2:962.

⁹¹ "Address of the Militia" Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 2:962.

restive militias. On June 25, Bayard and John Wenham went to retrieve the custom house receipts and while inside a mob formed in the street. Leisler appeared at the head of the mob, “who all or the most part were fild up with strong drink” and proceeded to berate and threaten the council members as papists. Leisler questioned the right of the council to legally sit as the government, at which point one of the council, a Mr. Wenham, rejoined with a request for the authority by which Leisler appeared before them. Bayard wrote that Leisler responded, “that his authority was by the choice of the people of his company,” gesturing at the mob arrayed behind him. When Mr. Wenham answered that this authority did not trump the king’s, a dram seller named Joost Stool grabbed hold of Wenham and threw him into the street where the mob set on him. Stool then drew a knife and lunged at Bayard. Bayard parried the blow and he escaped to a neighboring house while the mob in the street chanted, “verraet, verraet or trayson, trayson.”⁹² The extreme diversity of New York was giving way to the crisis as Protestants took to the streets to announce their united opposition to the old council.

In the following days the old magistrates fled New York and the militia captains established a committee of safety for the management of the colony.⁹³ Leisler next dispatched Joost Stool to England with a letter addressed to William and Mary. In the letter Leisler outlined his provisions for defense of the colony and accused the former councilors of “remain[ing] still affected to the Papist, which are here in greater number then in the whole of New England.” Leisler and the committee of safety, suspecting a Catholic plot, instituted martial law after a fire at the fort church broke out, threatening to

⁹²“Extract From Nicolas Bayard’s Journal, June 25 1689” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 2:965 -966.

⁹³ Robert Ritchie, *The Duke’s Province - A Study of New York Politics and Society 1664 - 1691* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1977), 203.

detonate 6,000 pounds of powder. Under the authority of the committee, powder was requisitioned from city merchants. A system of passes was created to regulate the traffic in and out of the city. “[T]he committees of the naboring counties and of this city with all the captains being mett to advice, and order all things necessary to resist the Enemy, and to conserve this fort, City, land and Protestant Religion.”⁹⁴ The city was an armed camp fired by Protestant zeal.

In early February 1690, a force of around 150 Indians and French moved south through the colonial frontier and attacked the town of Schenectady. Sixty people were killed, 27 prisoners were taken, and it was estimated that over 80% of the community was destroyed.⁹⁵ This was the crisis that Leisler and the towns of New York had dreaded all along. It galvanized a widening of the Protestant cause as Albany appealed to Massachusetts and Leisler in New York. Leaders of the Albany Convention addressed a memorial to the Massachusetts assembly requesting troops for defense of Albany, as well as a vigorous prosecution of the war. In practical terms the Iroquois were needed for frontier defense. The French had been trying to subdue the tribes with offers of peace and therefore the only “way to secure the five nations is to joyne them in the . . . war against the French since wee cannott nor must not expect they will goe out alone as they did formerly they seeing [that] it is our war now.”⁹⁶ Leisler called a meeting of representatives from Boston, Maryland, and Virginia to discuss the possibility of taking

⁹⁴ “Jacob Leisler to William and Mary, August 20, 1689” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3: 615.

⁹⁵ “Jacob Leisler to William III March 31, 1690” Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records State of New York* (New York: James Lyon, State Printer, 1901), 2:993.

⁹⁶ “Memorial of Messrs. Livingston, Teunise, and Garton, to the Governor, Council and Representation of Massachusetts” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:696.

collective action against the French.⁹⁷ This vision of a colonial assault on Canada was not only conceived of in terms of English colonials doing battle with their French enemies, but rather as a crusade to expunge the French and their Indian allies from Canada. A multiethnic force of Protestant sects, Puritans and Dutch–Reformed joined with the Anglicans of Virginia and Maryland, marched against the Catholic French stronghold of Louisbourg.

The expedition was a failure. No important towns were taken and the fractious nature of colonial cooperation was laid bare in the undermanned and poorly led expedition. The commander selected was Major Fitz-John Winthrop, son of a Connecticut governor, grandson of founding Puritan John Winthrop, and a former British Army officer. Leisler had nominated Milborne to lead this important attack but the Connecticut delegation over ruled him.⁹⁸ When Winthrop became disheartened by the failure of Indian reinforcements to turn up in sufficient numbers he ordered a retreat. Leisler was furious, throwing him in jail until the Connecticut militia demanded his release.⁹⁹ Leisler wrote to the Connecticut governor of the “unaccountable and unchristian behaviour of Major Winthrop,” in allowing the expedition to fail.¹⁰⁰ Winthrop, according to his supporters, had retreated when a superior force had not arrived. In his judgment the militias under his command were incapable of defeating the French—a sensible military conclusion.¹⁰¹ The coalition of Protestants did not survive this defeat.

⁹⁷ “Jacob Leisler to Bishop of Salisbury, March 31, 1690” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853) 3:700.

⁹⁸ Howard Peckham, *The Colonial Wars, 1689 – 1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 33.

⁹⁹ Howard Peckham, *The Colonial Wars, 1689 – 1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 35.

¹⁰⁰ “Jacob Leisler to The Governor and Council of Massachusetts, September 30, 1690” E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1850), 2:169.

¹⁰¹ Howard Peckham, *The Colonial Wars, 1689 – 1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 35.

Leisler gave full vent to a rage born of Protestant zeal and the political realities of colonial New York. Winthrop was a member of the colonial elite who had worked closely with the Catholic James II. Leisler saw collusion with James by anyone as an admission of sympathy, if not outright support, for the Catholic cause, and he was particularly galled by the colonial elite that professed Protestantism while profiting off the relationship with the Catholic king's government. Winthrop, with his colonial elite background, was not the zealot that Leisler desired for prosecuting the colonial campaign. Leisler's son-in-law Milborne was a tried and true supporter of the rebel regime in New York and Leisler suspected Winthrop's passivity was an attack on his government. Leisler's vitriolic accusations of unchristian behavior illustrated that he knew how much was riding on this campaign. A successful conclusion would vindicate Leisler and his governorship. The colonial alliance of Protestants in opposition to the Catholic French would be strengthened and the French less likely to return to border warfare. Finally, Leisler had yet to receive a letter acknowledging him as Lieutenant Governor and he must have been anxious to secure a victory to present to William and Mary. A victory could have convinced colonial leaders to rely on their local communities rather than looking to the European empires for protection and legitimacy. Leisler turned to recriminations against the Puritans who had nominated Winthrop and at the same time cracked down on Protestant ministers who disagreed with his way of running the colony. The strongest charges of tyranny were now brought against him and into this atmosphere of distrust against Leisler and his party Governor Sloughter finally arrived in New York.

The Catholic threat in the government of New York had been overcome but Leisler's usurpation of the governorship did not last. When the new governor arrived in

March of 1691, he had already decided on the guilt of Leisler and Milborne. On April 6th, Leisler and Milborne were indicted for high treason.¹⁰² Two days later, they were condemned and sentenced to a traitor's death of hanging, beheading and quartering.¹⁰³ On May 16th Leisler and Milborne stood at the gallows. This extremely rapid turnaround apparently stemmed from Slougher's fear that a pardon would be forthcoming for Leisler and Milborne if they were given enough time to appeal to England. Leisler spoke of his efforts on behalf of "Uniting us against a Common enemy . . . & the Strengthening against all foreign attempts, of this confused City & Province." Continuing he said, "I am a dying man and do declare before god and the world that what I have done was for King William and Queen Mary, for the defence of the protestant religion and the Good of the Country."¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

In 1689 the Puritan freeholders of Suffolk County followed their compatriots in Boston in throwing off the yoke of James II. The first section of "The Declaration of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of Suffolk upon Long Island in the Territory of New England" dealt entirely with the religious threat that James's Catholicism produced. Therein they cited an intended French invasion and James II's subservience to the pope as justification to turn out the local officials appointed by the English government. The second section contained a declaration that they would attempt to spread the rebellion to

¹⁰² "Chidley Brooke to Sir Robert Southwell, Postscript, New York, April 6, 1691" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:759.

¹⁰³ "Sentences Against Milborne and Leisler, April 8, 1691" Michael G. Hall et. All, ed., *The Glorious Revolution In America: Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 118.

¹⁰⁴ "The Dying Speeches of Leisler and Milborne" E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1850), 2:213 -215.

New York and Albany to put them “into the hands of those we confine in,” or, their Calvinist Dutch and Puritan neighbors to the West. The Third section dealt with the taxes taken from their without their consent since the dissolution of the colonial Assembly in 1686.¹⁰⁵ Leisler’s rebellion, as this uprising would become known, started here and contained elements of the religious/political mixture that had made New York. The desire is evident for a doctrinally sound religious community and a stronger voice in political affairs, precisely the formula these towns first determined upon in their agreements with the Connecticut Colony in 1658. Now the desire for this system had ripped the political fabric of the colony and the rebellion was underway.

The role of religion in fostering conflict on Long Island and New York stemmed from the interactions between the various communities that inhabited the colony. With the development of the East End there was the beginning of a willfully independent community separated by ethnicity from the Dutch on the western end of Long Island and by political form from other Puritans under Dutch rule. The East End was frequently at odds with the English imperial government as well, disapproving of its tolerance and attempts to control the towns politically. These communities would give shape and force to Leisler’s Rebellion when they felt threatened by the policies of James II and his Catholic sympathies. The communities of Long Island then could have ceased to develop as independent religious communities, the East End could have inaugurated a strong, one religion state in the New York Colony if they had had the will to do so. Instead, the development of New York continued along the path of a pluralistic society with numerous voices and concerns clamoring for recognition. No one group could gain

¹⁰⁵ “The Declaration of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of Suffolk upon Long Island in the territory of New England” E. B. O’Callaghan ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1853), 3:577.

precedence for long. This development was one that was shaped in the conflicts on the frontier in Long Island and New York. The social bond of religion was paramount in the struggle for political authority and it enabled the consciously protestant Puritan communities a chance to affect the rest of the colony out of all proportion to their prestige within the imperial Atlantic world. When the imperial government eventually regained control of the colony, Leisler was executed and the allied Puritan communities in Massachusetts and Connecticut chose a middle path by accepting an expanded role for the imperial government in their colonies while maintaining some of their religiously intolerant policy. Imperial rule was restored but the underlying conflicts did not immediately die away. Conceptions of the role for the state and the church continued to change and New York, with its numerous different beliefs, ethnicities and communities, continued to evolve a formula acceptable to both the imperial, enlightened desire for broad tolerance and the individual communities who sought to retain their identity through exclusion and adherence to doctrine. Neither side succeeded entirely and the imperial formula of maximum strength through growth associated with tolerance merged with the desire of each community to preserve itself inside the imperial structure. The old formulas merged and developed the one we still use, freedom of religious belief for individual communities coupled with strong political representation. The competing of the imperial will with the local developed a new path, one that emphasized the rights and freedoms of both systems.

The legacy of the revolt was the combination of the Dutch Reformed, the French Huguenot, and the English Puritan when they shared little but the form of their confessional politics. Milborne's declaration to the Albany Convention was a clear

implication of congregational governance as it could be applied to politics. The congregational style of church elections prepared them for the possibility of elections to the civil government. New York's history of being tossed back and forth between competing Empires fed the hysteria over French conquest and unified formerly antagonistic groups. Because no avenues for venting this popular spleen existed, it erupted into mob violence. Thrown back onto its own resources the colonial middle class proved able and willing to guide the colony. Leisler became a man obsessed with the possibility of French occupation and Catholic vengeance. This obsession would cost him and his followers the control of the colony.

These disparate groups of foreigners, united in a tradition of lay election, came together in the interruption of Imperial authority to assert that they were prepared to rule themselves. The centrality of the rebellion was this common front based on the Catholic threat. When the towns, isolated and bigoted against outsiders, assumed control of the government the zealotry of their Protestantism would overwhelm their mutual suspicions. Fear became the motivating factor of the government. When this fear was dispelled by the change of administration in London and the known animosity of William of Orange to French Catholics the rebellion crumbled. The small towns fell back in on themselves and the Protestant moment in New York was over.

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