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## A Stranger in the Land?: Reassessing the Political Writings of Gershom Bulkeley

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A Stranger in the Land?: Reassessing The Political Writings of Gershom Bulkeley

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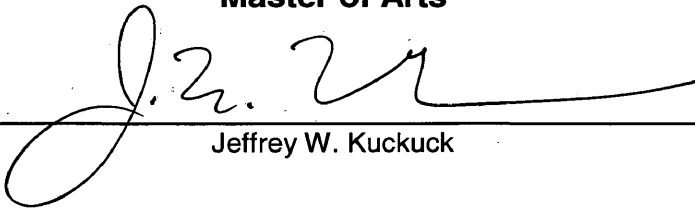
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# APPROVAL PAGE

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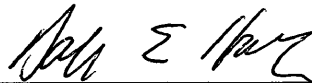
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## ABSTRACT PAGE

Gershom Bulkeley was an important late-seventeenth-century political theorist who spent most of his life in Wethersfield, Connecticut. In this thesis I problematize earlier studies that have either explicitly or implicitly depicted the polemically royalist Bulkeley as an inherent "outsider" in post-Glorious Revolution New England.

A Stranger in the Land?: Reassessing the Political Writings of Gershom Bulkeley

In 1694, the political leaders of Connecticut probably reacted with considerable frustration—and perhaps a measure of anger—to a particularly nasty political pamphlet that had recently been published in neighboring New York. Entitled *Some Seasonable Considerations for the Good People of Connecticut*, the document’s opening lines are smug:

I Remember there was Advice given us in the Year 1689 [,] when we were about to make our Revolution, (as ‘tis called) and for ought I know it had been good for us that we had taken it. But we are so unwilling to be advised, as so ill affected to any that tell us the Truth, that there is little Encouragement for any to expose themselves in that kind for the future.<sup>1</sup>

The “Advice given” in 1689 was offered by Gershom Bulkeley, long-time resident of Wethersfield, Connecticut and the same author of the *Seasonable Considerations* itself. The nature of Bulkeley’s advice: at a time when nearly everyone in Connecticut was calling for “Revolution,” Bulkeley demanded that the people of the colony maintain the highly unpopular government that had been imposed on them by the crown in 1686.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of the time in which he wrote, Bulkeley’s contrarian stance was out of step with popular sentiment and perhaps somewhat out of step with the political realities on the ground. In 1688, James II was forced to flee England. As soon as the news of the accession of William and Mary reached America, Sir Edmund Andros, the heavy-handed leader of the Dominion of New England, was forced out of office and

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<sup>1</sup> [Gershom Bulkeley], *Some Seasonable Considerations for the Good People of Connecticut* (New York, 1694), 1. Hereafter cited as *Seasonable Considerations*.

<sup>2</sup> *Seasonable Considerations* was published anonymously, though the authorship of the pamphlet would not have been difficult for the leaders of Connecticut to discern. For the historical background on this pamphlet, see Thomas Jodziewicz, “A Stranger in the Land: Gershom Bulkeley of Connecticut.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 78, pt. 2, 1988, 44, 59-61.

even briefly imprisoned in Boston. The “Glorious Revolution” and the subsequent political upheavals in North America gave most of the residents of Connecticut the hope that they could turn back the clock to a period of greater self-government.

Over twenty years earlier, in 1662, Connecticut had been granted a charter from the crown that allowed the leaders of the tiny colony an extraordinary degree of political autonomy. It also awarded the ability to establish a religiously-oriented society based on puritan values similar to those of neighboring Massachusetts. For over two decades, residents of Connecticut could elect their own governor and generally benefited from the fact that the English government was relatively unconcerned about the activities of what was essentially a small, agrarian backwater of little value to the overall maintenance of imperial commerce.<sup>3</sup>

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, however, officials at Whitehall increasingly came to the conclusion that all colonies, including Connecticut, needed to be placed under greater royal supervision. The Stuart monarchs of the period agreed: Charles II and James II were both committed to extending their prerogative beyond the conventional limits of royal authority in both England and America. The charter privileges of Connecticut were inimical to this project and soon fell under royal attack. After a protracted period of stalling, the leaders of the Connecticut government finally surrendered their colony’s charter to Edmund Andros in 1687 and accepted entry along

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<sup>3</sup> Overviews of seventeenth-century Connecticut history are scattered in a number of secondary sources. Robert Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History* (Milwood, NY, 1979) remains a helpful starting place, esp. Chapters 1-4.

with Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Plymouth into the newly-consolidated Dominion of New England.<sup>4</sup>

Under Andros, local politics in Connecticut was severely curtailed. Town meetings could only be held once a year for the single purpose of electing local officials (no other agenda was acceptable). Furthermore, the Dominion council ended the favoring of “approved churches”—which meant, in turn, the end of preferential tax support for puritan congregations. But if the Andros regime brought unfortunate changes to most of the colony’s population, these changes were short-lived. The Dominion of New England lasted for only eighteen months in Connecticut.<sup>5</sup>

The end of the Andros regime would have been cause for initial celebration for most residents of the colony. Gershom Bulkeley, however, was far from pleased—and he wasted no time in making his displeasure known.

Bulkeley is one of the most compelling figures in colonial American history. Born in 1636 in Concord, Massachusetts to a distinguished early New England family, Bulkeley was privileged from an early age with a strong education. In 1658, he received a master’s degree in divinity from Harvard College and then subsequently moved to Connecticut, where he served as a pastor first in New London and later in Wethersfield, the town where he would live for the rest of his life. Walter Woodward

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<sup>4</sup> For a concise analysis of the ways in which British colonial policy changed over the course of the seventeenth century, see Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (Athens, Ga., 1986), 7-18. Accounts of Connecticut’s entry into the Dominion of New England can be found in the following sources: Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 85-86; David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (New York, 1972), 203-208; Richard Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire: The New England Colonies, 1675-1715* (Leicester, Eng., 1981), 60-62; and Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty in New England, 1630-1717* (Princeton, 1962), 235-7, 241.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 86-7; Lovejoy, *Glorious Revolution in America*, 240

claims that Bulkeley was a “rising young star among Connecticut divines” who, over the course of only three years in his job as pastor of Wethersfield, managed to bring in “nearly 350 new members, all in a town of only 600 people.” Bulkeley’s religious stance is difficult for contemporary scholars to discern. The available evidence suggests that he leaned toward presbyterian, rather than congregationist, positions on questions of church organization, although he seems to have been relatively flexible on this issue: in 1668, Bulkeley was one of four Connecticut ministers chosen to resolve a series of disputes between the two ecclesiastical camps; partly as a result of his efforts, the Connecticut government came to allow both presbyterianism and congregationalism within the colony after 1669. Despite these actions, Bulkeley’s specific theological positions are unknown.<sup>6</sup>

After serving for twenty years as a well-respected pastor, Bulkeley dedicated most of the rest of his life to two very different pursuits. The first of these pursuits was medicine: Bulkeley very quickly developed a reputation as a physician, and at one point even maintained a correspondence with John Winthrop, Jr. on anatomy and other matters of science—including alchemy. The second pursuit is more difficult to define: political commentator? polemicist? naysayer? Today, Gershom Bulkeley is perhaps best known—if he is known at all—among scholars of early America for three political pamphlets which all share at least one common theme: a deep hatred for the post-1688 Connecticut government.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Jodziewicz, “Stranger in the Land,” esp. Chapter 2; and also Walter William Woodward, “Prospero’s America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture” (PhD Diss., University of Connecticut, 2001), 237, 299-300.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



Bulkeley's three political tracts were all written in the decade following the Glorious Revolution. *The Peoples Right to Election, Or Alteration of Government in Connecticut, Argued in a Letter* (1689) and *Some Seasonable Considerations for the Good People of Connecticut* (1694) were published in Philadelphia and New York, respectively. Bulkeley's third and most famous political tract, *Will and Doom, or the Miseries of Connecticut by and under an Usurped and Arbitrary Power* (1692?), is a somewhat less cohesive piece than the other two: this work is at least in part a compilation of writings that Bulkeley composed over the course of his correspondence with the governor of New York. More significantly, *Will and Doom* was never published during Bulkeley's lifetime, even though it does seem to have circulated in manuscript form in at least some circles both in America and abroad.<sup>8</sup>

Historians ranging from Perry Miller to Timothy Breen have had a difficult time assessing Bulkeley's life and work. Because his writings seem so unapologetically royalist, scholars have generally asserted that Bulkeley was essentially an outsider among Connecticut loyalists. Furthermore, many of the same scholars seem also to imply that Bulkeley was a man ahead of his times—an individual, perhaps, who would

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<sup>8</sup> Facsimiles of *Peoples Right* and *Seasonable Considerations* are now available on-line. *Will and Doom* has been reproduced—presumably with typographical modernization—in *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, Vol. 3 (Hartford, 1895), 79-271 (Hereafter cited as *CHS*, III). For the historical background on these pamphlets, see Charles J. Hoadly's introduction to *Will and Doom* in *Ibid.*, 69-79; and Jodziewicz, "A Stranger in the Land," 28, 33, 59-60. While Dunn points out that "*Will and Doom* had no immediate effect for it remained in manuscript and was not even presented to the home government until 1704," he also points out that a few members of the Board of Trade had seen the document. One member of the Board commented that "one Mr Bukly...has sent a large ffolio book...wherein he mightily commends Sir Edmund Andrews's Government, and says all the malicious things he can invent with great cunning and Art"—a less than nuanced interpretation. By this point, the Board of Trade was already in the process of bringing up charges against Connecticut and Rhode Island for various alleged charter infractions (see p.43-44 of this essay), though it does not seem likely that Bulkeley's writings had any great effect on a Board that was already being swamped by depositions from Connecticut over land disputes. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 287-288, 297, 301, 347-348.

have been more at home in the increasingly Anglicized and more tolerantly secular eighteenth century than in the relatively rustic and more uniformly religious seventeenth. While assessments that focus on Bulkeley's outsider status are not without a measure of truth, they are nevertheless oversimplifications. The very fact that Bulkeley was at one stage in his life a highly successful minister who maintained a correspondence—and probable friendship—with no less a figure than the governor of the colony suggests that he was probably never too much of a social outsider. Furthermore, there is certainly no evidence to suggest that Bulkeley managed in any way to alienate himself from a large segment of the Connecticut population between his time as pastor and his time as pamphleteer, even though Richard Dunn does demonstrate that Bulkeley frequently aligned himself with losing factions in Connecticut politics and that this may have contributed to some of the vehemence of his prose.<sup>9</sup>

And yet, Bulkeley's writings do not suggest political positions that are as radically polemical as some scholars have asserted. His pamphlets may appear outside of or even ahead of their time in certain respects. In other, more important respects, however, Bulkeley's overall views about the ultimate *ends* of good government do not radically depart from those of the more conventional political and religious figures of the time. Indeed, Bulkeley may have held strong views on some specific political matters, but his pamphlets by no means assert or even imply that Bulkeley wished to fundamentally alter Connecticut's social and religious culture: his gripes, at root, were

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. 287-289. I think that Dunn considerably exaggerates the degree to which Bulkeley's political rhetoric was shaped by his experience as a political outsider, as I shall attempt to demonstrate throughout this essay.

linked to what he saw as long term abuses of charter authority. By failing to fully recognize the more restrained elements of Bulkeley's governmental critique, as well as by failing to examine Bulkeley's ideas within the larger context of changing Anglo-American conceptions of authority, the scant existing scholarship on Bulkeley presents a somewhat skewed—or, at the very least, underdeveloped—interpretation of one of the most interesting seventeenth-century political theorists.<sup>10</sup>

Before looking more closely at the works of Gershom Bulkeley, however, it will first be necessary to examine in somewhat greater detail a few of the historical and historiographical trends that have framed the larger context of the era in which he lived. Over the past few decades, there have been a number of studies of seventeenth-century New England political ideology and political culture. Unfortunately, there have been very few studies that have specifically examined the experience of seventeenth-century Connecticut. Indeed, Massachusetts has frequently been at the center of most of the scholarship produced on the topics above, and this emphasis in the historiography has in some respects hindered fuller understandings of the Bay Colony's southern neighbor. Furthermore, current scholarly understandings of *both* Connecticut and Massachusetts have been hampered by a surprising lack of new scholarship covering the topic of

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<sup>10</sup> For the varying ways in which Bulkeley has been interpreted by scholars, see Jodziewicz, "A Stranger in the Land," 3-5. Jodziewicz's long article is the only scholarly work focused entirely on Bulkeley. The article provides a very helpful overview of the biographical aspects of his life, but Jodziewicz's reading of Bulkeley's pamphlets is formulaic, and the scholar's conclusions do not adequately situate Bulkeley within the wider context of late-seventeenth-century New England political history, even as they do begin the process of examining Bulkeley's ideas within a trans-Atlantic perspective.

political ideology and political culture in the second half of the seventeenth century and the opening decades of the eighteenth.

All of the existing scholarship clearly suggests that religion and politics remained joint and powerful concerns for the New England colonists until well into the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. What is significantly less clear is the degree to which politics by the period in which Bulkeley wrote had moved away from the original Calvinist political theories that came across the Atlantic with the first puritan settlers—and, for that matter, the degree to which ideals of godly puritan government had *ever* been rigorously practiced from the very beginning of New England's history. These interrelated issues warrant an extended examination of the existing scholarship on the period to determine the extent to which Bulkeley's thought could have been accommodated within the range of political discourse circulating in New England during the time in which he wrote.

A number of historical studies over the years have debated both the basis of puritan political beliefs as well as the salience of their application in early Massachusetts. While the scholarship on such topics is immense, we can nevertheless assert that the basis of puritan political theology arose from two very broad principles. The first, and perhaps most basic, principle of puritan political theory was the idea that church and state should function as separate entities. In early Massachusetts, John Cotton and other clergymen very quickly established the principle that active clergymen should not be eligible to hold civil office—even though, in many respects, guiding religious principles clearly cast a strong influence over the tenor of the government, as

is evidenced by early legislation that restricted the power of the franchise in Massachusetts to church members and which established capital crimes on the basis of biblical injunction (rather than common law precedent); as well as by a number of early banishments of religious leaders who deviated from rapidly evolving standards of “orthodox” Christian theology and practice. The second major principle of puritan religious thought was, in the words of David Hall, the “assumption that government owed its authority to the ‘people’ and their informed ‘consent’.” New England divines such as Cotton and Connecticut’s founder, Thomas Hooker, preached important early sermons that explicitly pointed to the centrality of the people in government, and which further argued that any proper Christian polity should aim to prevent arbitrary excesses of power. Lest we be inclined to see in early puritan societies significant stirrings of proto-democracy, however, many scholars have demonstrated that the early religious and political leaders of New England were at the same time generally committed to early modern English notions of social hierarchy, in addition to also believing that the best center of authority would be godly magistrates who would take on the role of holding together a commonwealth that was covenanted by God. In practice, magistrates such as John Winthrop could be quite forceful in exerting authority on behalf of the supposed best interest of the people.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The clearest distillation of puritan political philosophy can be found in two very good anthologies and Morgan’s still exemplary early biography of John Winthrop: David D. Hall, ed. *Puritan Political Ideas: A Critical Anthology* (Princeton, N.J., 2004), esp. 157-164 (quote above on 161) and Edmund Morgan, ed. *Puritan Political Ideas* (Indianapolis, 1965) and Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Glenview, Ill., 1958) Also useful is Stephen Foster, *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in New England* (New Haven, 1971). Both Morgan and Foster effectively balance interpretation of puritan political ideals and puritan political practice. More recent studies that look more explicitly at puritan political practice tend to cast the actions of Winthrop and other early New England leaders in what might be described as a more scheming and secular light. See, for example, Darren

Perry Miller's monumental contribution to early New England intellectual history still serves as a necessary starting point for any study of puritan political ideology. Above all, Miller argues that the puritans' religious worldview, rather than more directly pragmatic concerns, shaped how the early New England settlers thought about politics. In addressing the topic in *The New England Mind*, Miller contends that the puritans developed a covenant-based vision of government structured around their larger Calvinist ideas about both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, although he is at the same time quick to point out that covenant ideology, when applied to the social and civil sphere, allowed both possibilities and potential tensions. On the one hand, Miller examines puritan ideas which stated "that magistrates were limited by the compact, that government should be by laws and not by men, that the covenant was annulled by any serious violation of the terms, and that the people reserved the right to resist all such infringements" and sees principles "declared no less emphatically in Puritan theory than in the Declaration of Independence."<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, despite the strong strand of voluntarism inherent in puritan political ideology, Miller also recognizes the extent to which early New England religious leaders sought to impose religious "orthodoxy" on the population. Overall, the story of the first volume of *The New England Mind* follows the path by which John Winthrop and other puritan leaders effectively managed to steer the religious course of

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Staloff, *The Making of an American Thinking Class: Intellectuals and Intelligentsia in Puritan Massachusetts* (New York, 1998); and Michael P. Winship, *Making Protestants: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton, NJ., 2002).

<sup>12</sup> See Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), 407-431. (Quotes on 407-408, 409).

the colony between the Scylla and Charybdis of various Antinomian and Arminian crises in the first decades of Massachusetts' history. Not surprisingly, a relatively stable (and at times, perhaps, coercive) government structure was ultimately necessary to ensure that Massachusetts did not stray from the godly path that the colony's elite envisioned. The seeds for potential tension in New England political life were therefore sown from an early period, and Miller does an effective job of laying out the basic fault lines: "theology demanded predestination, but contemporaneous social and economic conflict demanded freedom; freedom was essential for resistance to the Stuarts, but too much freedom might lead men to forget theological and social orthodoxies, might give rise to Antinomians, democratical spirits, and Levellers."<sup>13</sup>

Over the past few decades there have been a number of other studies of puritan political ideology that have added further nuance to our understandings of the topic by breaking away from Miller's overly monolithic interpretation of early puritan political ideals, and by questioning the subsequent "declension" from such earlier ideals in the mid-to-late seventeenth century that Miller outlines in the second volume of *The Puritan Mind*. Arguably the first major important attempt to integrate New England political ideology and political practice is *The Character of the Good Ruler*, T.H. Breen's bold and creative analysis of government in Massachusetts and Connecticut over the one hundred year period between 1630 and 1730.

Breen essentially splits the seventeenth century into two halves. In the first part of the century, Breen argues that New Englanders "tended to discuss the character of the good ruler in spiritual [if not necessarily Calvinist] language": thus, for example,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Quote on 430.

when writing against Massachusetts' patriarch, Breen claims that "Winthrop's opponents disagreed with him on many details, but they accepted his basic premise about the divine nature of magisterial office." By the end of the second half of the seventeenth century, however, Breen argues that the rhetoric had changed. During this period, the Glorious Revolution "was the crucial event in the transformation of Puritan ideals about civic leadership." If in the first half of the century New Englanders were inclined to think about government in religious terms, Breen argues that in the wake of the Dominion of New England "the good ruler in Massachusetts and Connecticut was first and foremost a defender of civil right and only secondarily a defender of the Congregational faith."<sup>14</sup>

While all parts of his argument provide new insights into early New England political ideas, the claims that Breen lays out in the second half of his study are perhaps most significant for the purposes of this essay. There are certainly shades of Miller in this section of the book: Breen (at least) implicitly suggests that the second half of the seventeenth century might best be characterized as a period of "declension." Nevertheless, he is ultimately somewhat less interested in this concept than Miller. In this section of his study, Breen is particularly drawn to three figures—William Hubbard, Samuel Nowell, and Joseph Dudley—who he claims "brought fresh ideas to the ongoing discussion on civil government; and [who] each attempted in his own way to demonstrate that one did not have to be a Nehemiah, or even a Moses, to qualify as a good ruler." In looking at Hubbard, for example, Breen sees a man who genuinely

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<sup>14</sup> T.H. Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler: Puritan Political Ideas in New England, 1630-1730* (New Haven, 1970), xi-xii.



believed that religious ideals of godly government could be tied to more pragmatic concerns related to the running of a successful polity: thus, for example, Hubbard was a supporter of voluntary government who was nevertheless nervous about the degree to which democracy could lead to disorder; Hubbard recognized the need for godly rule, but believed that non-Congregationalists should be tolerated within society as well. While Breen points out that Hubbard's writings were attacked as "apostacy" by many magistrates, he also claims that there were other "important leaders" who supported his "prudent" political positions. By stressing the need for functional government over more traditional puritan political ideals, it would probably not be too much of a stretch to assert that Hubbard was a figure who resembled Bulkeley for the very simple reason that he, like Bulkeley, was willing to offer an interpretation of politics that went against the views of the status quo.<sup>15</sup>

While Breen does a fine job of analyzing a group that other scholars have examined and labeled "moderates," his depiction of the effects that the Glorious Revolution and the Dominion of New England had on the political ideology of the region is somewhat less successful. Like other scholars both before and after him, Breen persuasively argues that the Dominion of New England was a wildly unpopular form of government for most of the people of Massachusetts (and, presumably, Connecticut). Furthermore, Breen persuasively demonstrates that the political

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 110-133. For the classic "declension" narrative, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), 17-146. More discussion on the Massachusetts "moderates" can be found in Michael G. Hall's study of Edmund Randolph, though Hall's focus is centered less on religious and political ideology than on a broader narrative of social change. See Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies* (Chapel Hill, 1960), 58-60, 84; and also Bernard Bailyn. *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955).

pamphlets produced in the years after the Glorious Revolution were almost universally anti-Dominion tracts—and often quite vehemently so.<sup>16</sup>

And yet, Breen is less successful at actually proving that “after the Glorious Revolution, the Puritan’s definition of the good ruler never returned to what it had been before 1686.” In some respects, this is not an unreasonable claim given the widespread unpopularity of the Andros regime, though Breen seems nevertheless to exaggerate the degree to which the Dominion of New England and the Glorious Revolution marked a turning point from one period to another. Moderates such as Hubbard who had earlier advocated a balanced form of government both in terms of religious toleration and democratic moderation seem to disappear in Breen’s narrative in the wake of figures such as Increase Mather, who Breen argues could appeal “directly to Puritan pocket books [by] claiming that the 1691 patent protected both liberties and property.” Mather was almost certainly a shrewd political figure, but by casting his jockeying for support of the new charter too heavily in terms of the non-religious benefit it would provide to the people of Massachusetts, Breen is almost certainly oversimplifying early-eighteenth-century New England political ideology. In the last chapters of Breen’s book, older Calvinist ideas that had been extremely important to New Englanders before the Glorious Revolution fall quickly into the background of a narrative that emphasizes the gradual development of political ideologies that increasingly broke along familiar “court” and “country” lines.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 134-179.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 134-202.

Furthermore Breen does not adequately account for Gershom Bulkeley in any truly nuanced way. His claim that “Bulkeley’s writings challenged the very core of Puritan political theory, the people’s right to determine who would be their rulers” is generally accurate; nevertheless, it is not a particularly meaningful conclusion when one considers the degree to which New England society had changed from the time of Winthrop to the era of the Glorious Revolution. Breen goes on to argue that Bulkeley believed that “local rulers had abrogated their patent by submitting to Andros’ authority and therefore had no right to reestablish Connecticut’s General Assembly as if nothing had happened to the foundation of their government”: a claim that is also largely true. And yet, perhaps because Breen’s argument is structured so heavily around the thesis that the Glorious Revolution led to a major change in political thinking along whiggish lines, he does not dedicate sufficient attention to important theorists like Bulkeley who do not fall neatly into his overall narrative.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, while Breen’s study certainly posed some important new questions about early New England political ideas, the narrative he traces is ultimately too simplistic—or at least too neat—to be entirely useful. While Breen does a generally good job of complicating scholarly understandings of the mid-to-late seventeenth century, his analysis of early-eighteenth-century political ideology and political culture suggests that the author may have framed some of his arguments all too consciously with an eye toward the eventual coming of the American Revolution—a common sin in the historiography of the colonial period. In more recent decades, other scholars of New England political ideology during the colonial era have looked more closely at the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-179.

opening decades of the eighteenth century and seen somewhat greater continuities with earlier periods in New England's history.

One such study is *The New England Soul*, Harry Stout's remarkably bold and wide-ranging reassessment of New England religious sermons across roughly the same chronological period that Breen analyzes. As the very title of his study suggests, Stout's book is clearly a response to Miller's scholarship. Unlike the earlier scholar, Stout does not view the late seventeenth century as a period defined inherently by a narrative of declension: instead of examining jeremiads and other "occasional" sermons that would have been preached on special occasions, Stout is more concerned with analyzing the wide range of "regular" sermons that have been overlooked by earlier scholars. This shift in focus has considerable implications: as Stout points out in the introduction to his study, occasional sermons "occurred only six or seven times a year in the life of any particular church—a figure representing less than 10 percent of the total sermons preached."<sup>19</sup>

To his credit, Stout is generally careful to avoid overextending his argument. He certainly does not deny that during the third quarter of the seventeenth century religious rhetoric took on a somewhat more urgent tone of concern for New England's salvation as the region became a more generally socially and religiously fragmented place. Furthermore, he would almost certainly agree with Miller that the jeremiads and other discourse from the period at times suggests a narrative of declension. As Stout points out, New Englanders of the mid-to-late seventeenth century faced a number of

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<sup>19</sup> Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York, 1986), 3-10. (Quotes on 4, 5).

challenges—not least of which the devastating King Philips’ War—that collectively served to increase anxieties and cause doubts among members of the second generation about the degree to which they remained in God’s favor. And yet, in analyzing the language of the common sermons of this period, Stout does not notice the same tone of despair that is so striking in the more famous jeremiads. Instead, Stout more frequently sees a discourse of hope rather than one of doom and gloom, arguing that “regular preaching...remained constantly attuned to the question of the soul’s salvation” and that “in the regular pulpit, second-generation ministers demonstrated, over careers that completed the seventeenth century, that they were indeed the equals of the founders.” For every sermon that suggested to second-generation New Englanders that they were beginning to lose sight of the holy vision of their eminent ancestors, many others encouraged the faithful in Massachusetts to continue aspiring toward personal salvation and other spiritual goals—no matter how distant these and other aims might at times appear. Stout ultimately comes to the conclusion that “through hearing regular sermons, joining the churches, and renewing covenant oaths, many colonists found the inner resources and cohesion that allowed them to face corporate crisis as a united front”—even during the struggle with imperial authorities that ultimately led to the revocation of the Massachusetts charter in 1684.<sup>20</sup>

The aspect of Stout’s book that is most significant is not so much Stout’s reassessment of New England sermons in the broad sense, but rather Stout’s analysis of the ways in which religion shaped New Englanders’ understanding of politics. One of the bold arguments that informs Stout’s overall study is his claim that “the more one

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 67-105. (Quotes on 85, 104).

reads [New England] sermons the more one finds unsatisfactory the suggestion that ideas of secular ‘republicanism,’ ‘civil milleniumism,’ or class-conscious ‘popular ideology’ were the primary ideological triggers of radical resistance and violence in the [American] Revolution.” While such motivations may have influenced British colonists in other parts of America to rebel, Stout argues that at least in the former puritan colonies “the idea of a national covenant supplied the ‘liberties’ New Englanders would die protecting, as well as the ‘conditions’ that promised deliverance and victory over all enemies.” This guiding idea, Stout further suggests, “provided the innermost impulsion toward radical thought and violent resistance to British ‘tyranny’” once relations between the colonies and the metropole began to sour.<sup>21</sup>

With these claims, Stout argues somewhat more forcefully than Breen for the perseverance of religious rhetoric in the political struggles of the eighteenth century. Stated very briefly, from the end of the Glorious Revolution to the moment of Independence and beyond, Stout claims that New England religious leaders integrated increasingly anglicized political structures into a theological timeline that emphasized the region’s new position as a land that had moved from an era in which “God spoke directly through his inspired prophets and miraculously intervened in the course of nature” to a moment characterized by “‘Israel’s constitution,’ or the civil laws and human instruments that God used to uphold his people without recourse to miraculous interventions.” In the decades to come, New England religious leaders would increasingly compare English laws to Old Testament dictates in order to establish points of unison and deviance, and thus the functions of constitutional interpretation and

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7.

religious/millenarian interpretation for these men became increasingly intertwined. As Stout points out, the implications of this shift suggested that “if their new constitutional rights and liberties could be presented as *sacred* principles, enjoined by Scripture as well as by their own past, New Englanders could retain their historic identity as a unique people of the Word who did not depend exclusively on England for guidance and direction.” In the short term, Stout argues that New England sermons from the early eighteenth century demonstrate that the region had achieved something of a balance between “an enlightened age” and “a New Israel.” In the longer term, such a balance would not hold up in the wake of the destabilizing effects of the Great Awakening and the imperial crises: both these events would force New England divines to go back to the Bible and once again try to find new scriptural meanings for the challenges that they faced.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, one could perhaps criticize Stout for all too easily collapsing one hundred and fifty years of New England intellectual and religious history into a relatively compact—if extraordinarily complex—story of *sola scriptura*. Unfortunately, Stout’s heavy focus on sermons is essentially top-down, and thus it is difficult to assess the degree to which the sermons that Stout looks at had an effect on those who actually listened to them (always a potential problem for historians who write intellectual history). Furthermore, Stout does not always allow the reader adequate insight into the ways in which the language of the sermons overlapped with more secular forms of whiggish ideology—and thus, again, the author misses an opportunity to add further nuance to an argument that might apply somewhat too heavily to the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. See esp. 166-181 (Quotes on 161, 181).

rather narrow sphere of the pulpit. And yet, while Stout's argument does not necessarily cover all of the ground that it could (or perhaps should) have, this is nevertheless an extremely important contribution to the scholarship on New England political ideology due to the fact that it focuses attention back on the degree to which religious debates about proper political order in the region lasted well beyond the initial disputes that engaged the first English settlers. At the same time, Stout's study also presents a somewhat more measured—and ultimately more persuasive—story of transition from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century than the narrative Breen provides.

While Stout's work still stands as somewhat of a highpoint in puritan studies, two other more recent works warrant attention: Michael Winship's article on "godly republicanism" and David Weir's recent exhaustive overview of early New England covenants. In different ways, both works suggest the persistence of overarching pragmatic trends in the larger history of seventeenth-century New England political thought.

Rather than seeing the rise of republicanism as a phenomenon that emerges in America in the mid-to-late seventeenth century, Winship identifies republican trends that stretch back to the English presbyterians of the late sixteenth century and which he sees as crossing the Atlantic with the first settlers to Massachusetts. Lest we be inclined to see in this argument a rather extreme form of Whiggish history, Winship claims that while early puritan leaders in New England believed in "government accountability" and rejected "hereditary rule," "there is no evidence that Winthrop and his associates



either imagined or had any reason to imagine that they were doing anything as grandiose as making a new government and creating a covenant from scratch” when they made the early decision to expand the franchise.<sup>23</sup>

Instead, Winship argues that Winthrop and other early leaders of the Massachusetts Bay colony “were proposing to add what amounted at most to a new nonshareholding category of freemen to the company while accordingly changing the voting procedures for the magistrates to be consistent with what they argued was the charter’s intentions.” The end result of this process was a government that Winship argues possessed the attributes of republicanism, especially when one further considers the mere lip-service that the colony paid to obedience to the crown in the first decades of its existence. And yet, Winship is careful to point out that by attaching political participation to church membership, Winthrop and his associates ensured that they would be able to exert a significant measure of control over the early colony on both secular and religious matters. Not surprisingly, a number of Winthrop’s contemporary critics claimed that this decision was achieved at the expense of the Calvinist principle that church and state should be fully separated.<sup>24</sup>

As a whole, Winship’s argument serves to further remove the early puritans from the lofty pedestal on which they still sometimes stand by pointing out the inherently pragmatic nature of the early Massachusetts political arrangement, though his argument is by no means irreconcilable with those of Breen and Stout. In Winship’s view, John Winthrop and others “put the bulk of their mental labor into theorizing their

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<sup>23</sup> Michael P. Winship, “Godly Republicanism and the Origins of the Massachusetts Polity.” *William and Mary Quarterly* (July 2006): 427-462. (Quote on 447).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 444.

church order, not their government.” While he unfortunately does not carry his argument very far beyond the 1640s, Winship does at least briefly suggest that the republican strain of the Massachusetts colony lay dormant for a period during the crises mid-to-late seventeenth century, before emerging once again with significant force after the Glorious Revolution.<sup>25</sup>

Weir’s recent study of early New England covenant practices in many respects enhances earlier scholarly efforts simply by virtue of the legwork research the author has clearly done. If Weir does not provide an overly compelling thesis to suit the documents he examines—except to somewhat casually and vaguely assert that “the content of the early New England church and civil covenants reflected a counterpoint of unity and diversity over the seventeenth century”—his findings nevertheless further call into question the degree to which puritan political ideals actively shaped seventeenth-century New England governance.

Above all, Weir persuasively demonstrates that from the beginning of the seventeenth century onward, there was always a substantial difference between church covenants and civil covenants. Whereas church covenanting was frequently a protracted process that could sometimes take the better part of a year to accomplish, Weir argues that the civil covenanting process was somewhat more of a “mundane affair.” This assessment should not imply that the New England settlers did not take religious concerns very seriously when they engaged in matters relating to the civil sphere. But what Weir does persuasively suggest is that “civil covenants of the second half of the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

seventeenth century more often assume an implicit Christian commitment rather than an explicit dedication to God or Christ.”<sup>26</sup>

In looking at the early charter of Massachusetts Bay, Weir argues that the language of this document in many respects mirrors that of similar Anglo-American civil compacts. Regardless of the particular site of a charter’s creation, Weir argues that nearly all charters adopted a rather loose and formulaic religious tone, rather than strict religious guidelines for practice. While the Massachusetts charter of 1629 makes clear that one of the major goals of the new colony will be to convert the Indians, and further provides the implicit underpinnings for a society in which the freemen in the colony will be only those men who are communing Christians, there are no grand statements in the document that suggest that the Massachusetts colony will have a distinctly Calvinist bent. This absence of specific theological viewpoints in the charter language is often overlooked by much of the existing scholarship.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, a veritable mountain of works about the early Massachusetts colony suggest that the actions of the colonists ultimately failed to live up to the ideal of converting Indians on the one hand, and that the leaders of the Massachusetts colony worked to insure quasi-official Congregationalist orthodoxy on the other. Furthermore, as Weir points out, the omission of religious matters in some respects simply made practical sense in that it prevented the crown from placing itself in the position of condoning religious polities practicing forms of Christianity that would not have been tolerated in Stuart England.

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<sup>26</sup> David A. Weir, *Early New England: A Covenanted Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2005).  
Quotes on 3-4, 9,

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-72.

Still, the very looseness of these charters throughout the seventeenth century on matters of religion that Weir repeatedly points to—and which was even more marked in the 1660 Connecticut charter than it had been in Massachusetts charter of a few decades prior—may have had some ramifications for Bulkeley (or other political critics for that matter). It may be reasonable to at least tentatively assume that charter critique could at least in theory have been open in Massachusetts and Connecticut to a wider range of potential topics than would have been acceptable had these documents laid out clearer dictates on matters of religion. This argument needs to be cautiously posed. Freedom of speech was never a guarantee in early New England, and one wonders whether Bulkeley would have avoided severe chastisement and forced repentance (or worse) had he written similarly royalist political tracts in the early decades of the Massachusetts colony, when both religious and secular leaders were committed to establishing a stringent—if not down-right repressive—godly commonwealth. And yet, there is no evidence to suggest that political censorship was especially strong in either mid-to-late seventeenth century Connecticut or Massachusetts, despite the fact that these two colonies remained at least generally committed to retaining long-term religious principles of one form or another. In other words, the fact that Bulkeley was arguing against the reinstatement of the Connecticut charter might have offended traditionalists who may have thought that he was by extension attacking older ideals about the puritan separation of church and state (a separation that neither Charles II nor Edmund Andros took seriously), or in other respects disrespecting the idea of a godly commonwealth. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that his political language—laced as it was

with convincing religious justifications—would have been viewed by most of the political establishment as truly shocking. Certainly no legal actions or other form of censure were ever taken against Bulkeley.

In writing about the puritan tradition and its connections to the later rise of democracy in America, Stephen Foster once claimed (somewhat caustically) that such a link is possible because, at root, “the witch’s brew that went under the name of Puritan social thought could have spawned almost anything.” While Foster does not present a overall chronology of seventeenth-century New England to fully illustrate this conclusion, the basic arguments the scholar lays out in *Their Solitary Way* (1971) are nevertheless generally compelling: in looking at the period between the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution (and beyond), Foster argues that while shades of the puritan political and social ideals certainly did not disappear, it is nevertheless difficult to claim a strong line of connection to the earliest days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Indeed, even during the period of New England’s founding, Foster argues that the original settlers of Massachusetts were by no means consistent when it came to adhering to the principles of separation of church and state and rule by the people.<sup>28</sup>

In some sense, it would be fairly easy to argue that all of the above scholarly works fall within Foster’s purview. Scholars who study social and political trends in New England during the last third of the seventeenth century paint a muddy picture. While Miller laid out the basic contours of puritan political ideals, subsequent scholars have effectively challenged, or at least problematized, the degree to which such ideals

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<sup>28</sup> See Foster, *Their Solitary Way*, 67-98.

reflected actual political practice. Winship and Weir—and, to a lesser degree, Breen and Stout—all point out that the leaders of colonial New England were somewhat more pragmatic on issues of governance than Miller’s pioneering work, rooted as it is so heavily in intellectual history, would lead us to believe. Secondly, all of the scholars above—with the slight exceptions of Miller—are careful to point out the degree to which studies of political ideas in colonial New England need to be rigorously historicized and contextualized. In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, New Englanders may in fact have adapted to new forms of contractual government that still maintained at least some allegiance to earlier Calvinist belief systems (as Stout and Breen would largely claim), though Breen and others also point out that New England writers such as William Hubbard were suggesting forms of government as early as the 1660s that would have almost certainly riled the passions of Winthrop and Cotton in an earlier period. On the most basic level, Bulkeley can be viewed as just another political theorist adding to long-running debates about the proper form that government should take, rather than the outsider that the scholarship either explicitly or implicitly claims him to be.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that Bulkeley was a resident of Connecticut, rather than Massachusetts, almost certainly further influenced his political stances—as well as the reception of his

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<sup>29</sup> The omission or scant notice of Bulkeley in much secondary work in many respects contributes to his marginalization. As I have suggested above, Jodziewicz is to be commended for examining Bulkeley on his own terms and for beginning to place the pamphleteer within a trans-Atlantic context. On the other hand, Jodziewicz is somewhat less successful at adequately placing Bulkeley within his American context—as well as within a historiographic context that still seeks to understand late-seventeenth-century New England political ideology and political practice with one eye firmly fixed on “puritan” beginnings.

message. In order to better understand the local aspects of Bulkeley's political thought, however, we must first take a closer look at what he wrote.

*The Peoples Right to Election* was Bulkeley's first political piece and was written during a critical period in the political history of early Connecticut. Andros was gone, and the colony was left with the question of what would happen next. The most basic issue that needed to be resolved was whether Connecticut would maintain the government that had been established by Andros until further word came from Britain—the option that Bulkeley supported—or whether the colony would revert to the government of the 1662 charter. The second choice—by far the majority opinion—was complicated by a number of subordinate options: some supporters of the charter option favored a return to power of the same rulers who had held power on the day the charter had been ceded to Andros; others favored new elections; and still others wanted to establish a temporary, provisional government.<sup>30</sup>

Bulkeley was certainly not a disinterested party: he had been appointed a justice of the peace during the Andros regime, and therefore stood to lose his position of authority if the leaders of Connecticut chose to reinstate an electoral system. Nevertheless, the basic arguments that Bulkeley concisely lays out in the thirteen pages of *The People's Right to Election* are logical and compelling—if, perhaps, not entirely realistic. In contrast to the more famous *Will and Doom*, however, the tone of Bulkeley's first political tract is surprisingly restrained.

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<sup>30</sup> Lovejoy, *Glorious Revolution*, 248-250.

Bulkeley begins *The People's Right to Election* by modestly stating that he “never was, nor am an Enemy to [Connecticut’s] ancient Charter-priviledges, and could they now be regularly Recovered, I should rejoice in it, and if I knew any thing whereby to justify the present proceeding, I should not conceal it....”<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Bulkeley does not know any immediate way by which to justify the reinstatement of Connecticut’s charter privileges; instead of seeking such justifications, Bulkeley goes on to lay out very concisely nine reasons why the people of Connecticut cannot legally restore the government they had enjoyed before the coming of Andros. While each of these reasons is systematically presented and elaborated upon, Bulkeley’s overall argument is relatively simple. In his view, the leaders of Connecticut cannot lawfully hold elections because they are without a charter that grants them the authority to do so: after all, they had willingly ceded their charter to Andros in 1687. Any government that would result from such elections must, in Bulkeley’s view, be considered illegitimate.

Taken as a whole, *The People's Right to Election* is not what the leaders of Connecticut would have wanted to hear, but it is by no means a scathing political rant. Of course, polite discourse can conceal very strong and biting critiques. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the language in *People's Right to Election* is by no means uniformly tactful: at one point, Bulkeley suggests that by holding elections, the leaders of Connecticut could not reinstate the charter government “without Lawlesse Usurpation and Tyrannie.” At another point Bulkeley implies that any independent action taken by the Connecticut government might even be viewed by the crown as an act of treason—at the very least, the residents of the colony could perhaps expect yet

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<sup>31</sup> Bulkeley, *People's Right*, 2.



another round of lengthy legal proceedings. Nevertheless, the occasional harsh language of Bulkeley's pamphlet is always tempered by more modest, sensible prose.<sup>32</sup>

For the purposes of this essay, the most important aspect of *People's Right* is Bulkeley's overall desire to see Connecticut remain a stable and religious society. This is perhaps not entirely surprising—after all, Bulkeley had been a minister—but it bears emphasis here because none of the secondary sources thoroughly addresses this aspect of Bulkeley's work. There is not as much religious rhetoric in this pamphlet as there is in Bulkeley's other published effort. Nevertheless, spiritual language is certainly a major component of the tract. Furthermore, when religious rhetoric does appear in the text, Bulkeley utilizes it in a particularly forceful manner: in one especially illustrative passage, he argues that because the government established under Andros is still the legitimate government until the colony hears otherwise, it is therefore the duty of the residents of Connecticut to remain “*subject to [the pre-1688] Principalities and powers (because they are of God)*” and to “*submit our selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake...for so is the will of God.*” In another paragraph, Bulkeley warns that as long as Connecticut remains divided by the various pro-charter “Factions,” the colony would remain weak and vulnerable to attack: the Protestant residents of Connecticut would thereby be in perpetual danger of falling victim to either the French or a “Pagan-Force.” Bulkeley ends his pamphlet with a poignant final remark: “Peace is the Tranquility of Order, therefore Order is the onely right Way to Peace.” Taken together, Bulkeley's religious rhetoric enhances the argument that the people of Connecticut should respect the last-known will of the crown until the leaders of the colony hear

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

further news from the new monarchs—the highest authority. To do otherwise is to disrespect the natural order of power that is headed by the king—and, by extension, to disrespect the will of the God who grants authority to the monarch in the first place.<sup>33</sup>

In comparison to *People's Right*, Bulkeley's second published work, *Some Seasonable Considerations for the Good People of Connecticut*, is neither as well-written nor as tightly constructed. In fact, in many respects, *Seasonable Considerations* is somewhat of a rambling effort: even though it covers essentially the same broad themes present in *People's Right*, it is a much longer and less focused political tract. Nevertheless, despite its stylistic shortcomings and overly indulgent excesses, *Seasonable Considerations* is still, on the whole, a pamphlet of considerable intellectual vigor. More importantly, it is also a work positively *steeped* in religious calls for order.

As Thomas Jodziewicz has accurately pointed out, in terms of severity the “tone of *Some Seasonable Considerations* is midway between that of [Bulkeley's] other two efforts.” This is clearly a less cordially worded pamphlet than *People's Right*, though ultimately not as sternly worded as *Will and Doom*. At the same time, there is also, to quote Jodziewicz once again, a tone “almost of pleading” in Bulkeley's pamphlet. Given the historical context in which *Seasonable Considerations* was written, these assessments are not surprising. By 1694, Bulkeley had essentially lost the battle against the supporters of resuming charter government in Connecticut. Robert Treat, the governor of the colony before the coming of Andros, once again held the leading position of political power. In fact, by the mid-1690s, the people of Connecticut were exercising practically all of the charter privileges they had known before the Dominion

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11, 13. Italics in original.

period. And yet, while the charter controversy had been basically resolved in favor of the status quo ante-Dominion, a new political crisis soon took its place: Governor Fletcher of New York claimed that he had been granted royal authority to take control of the Connecticut militia. Most of the political leaders of Connecticut disagreed with this claim of sovereignty over their military force; Bulkeley, however, argued for Fletcher's cause.<sup>34</sup>

By the time Bulkeley set out to write *Seasonable Considerations*, he had already developed a friendly rapport with Fletcher—indeed, Fletcher was often the intermediary that Bulkeley used to let his various gripes be known to officials in England. Despite any personal affinity Bulkeley had for Fletcher, however, the arguments that Bulkeley lays out on behalf of the New York governor rest on solid ground. In May of 1693 the Lords of Trade had explicitly sent a message to the Connecticut government informing them that Fletcher was to take over the role that Governor William Phips of Massachusetts had up to that point held as commander over Connecticut's militia and fortifications. The fear in the minds of most of the Connecticut leaders was that Fletcher would use his newly-granted authority to effectively annex Connecticut to New York, and this may very well have been the intention of the Board of Trade all along—and an intention that Bulkeley, by this point disillusioned with Connecticut government and assured of Fletcher's friendship, probably would have welcomed. Still, on the narrowest point of debate, the intention of the crown seems to have been fairly clear—

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<sup>34</sup> Jodziewicz, "A Stranger in the Land," 60, Lovejoy, *Glorious Revolution in America*, 248-249.

and, anyway, frontier defense in New York was a major concern now that tensions were beginning to emerge once again between England and France.<sup>35</sup>

In essence, the assertions in *Some Considerations* are rooted in simple questions of sovereignty. In Bulkeley's view, the sovereignty of William and Mary takes precedence over the sovereignty of Connecticut's charter government—particularly on issues that do not merely affect Connecticut—because the charter government of Connecticut is a corporate entity which exists only by virtue of the continual pleasure of the crown. If William and Mary have chosen Fletcher to be the leader over Connecticut's military forces for the sake not only of Connecticut's security, but for that of the overall defense of the northeastern colonies as well, then Connecticut must obey the will of the British monarchs.<sup>36</sup>

The aspect of *Seasonable Considerations* that is most striking is not Bulkeley's straightforward defense of Fletcher, but the almost overbearing religious content of the pamphlet. Bulkeley quotes from an extraordinary range of biblical passages from both the Old and New Testaments on page after page of the pamphlet—indeed, so much so, that the arguments Bulkeley makes in defense of Fletcher are almost secondary to the litany of scriptural injunctions. When examined as a whole, *Seasonable Considerations* clearly demonstrates that Bulkeley was a religious man who used a heavily religious rhetoric to communicate with fellow members of a strongly religious society: while in some sense this is not surprising given the era in which Bulkeley wrote, the heavily religious nature of his writing is worth emphasizing because much of the scholarship

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<sup>35</sup> Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 297-307.

<sup>36</sup> For a more extensive overview of Bulkeley's arguments, see Jodziewicz's satisfactory analysis in *Ibid.*, 60-64.

makes little mention of the rigorously spiritual depth of Bulkeley's writings. Taken together, the scriptural content of the pamphlet almost exudes the tone of a sermon, with Bulkeley taking on the (familiar) role of minister preaching spiritual obedience to authority. Many of the biblical passages that Bulkeley cites strengthen the author's overall argument ("*Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's,*" or "*Fear God, honour the King*"); others are prophetic ("*In the latter days perilous Times shall come, for men shall be Traitorous, High-minded, etc.*"); and still others are merely aphoristic ("*If a Man seem to be Religious and bridles not his Tongue, he deceives his own heart...*").<sup>37</sup>

In addition to emphasizing Scripture, Bulkeley repeatedly stresses, in both spiritual and secular language, the importance of order. If Connecticut fails to heed his recommendations, the colony will inevitably become militarily vulnerable to both the Indians and the French. Furthermore, Bulkeley claims that if the leaders of Connecticut do not maintain a proper obedience to the crown, they set a very bad example for the people of the colony: "If we renounce the King and his Government, we destroy our own...and how can we demand or expect that others should obey us, if we will not obey the King?"<sup>38</sup>

If *Seasonable Considerations* is a mostly prosaic pamphlet, *Will and Doom, or the Miseries of Connecticut by and under an Usurped and Arbitrary Power*, is a truly powerful—if somewhat enigmatic—achievement: Perry Miller once labeled it "a minor

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted portions from Bulkeley, *Seasonable Considerations*, 13, 16. Italics in original.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

masterpiece” as well as “one of the most vigorous and best written productions of the era.”<sup>39</sup> The entire pamphlet may not have been written solely by Bulkeley: at the very least, it is an amplification of a multitude of grievances against the Connecticut government that Bulkeley, working in conjunction with two other disaffected associates, Edward Palmes and William Rosewell, had earlier brought to Fletcher in the summer months of 1692. Because *Will and Doom* was never published, it is difficult for historians to discern when exactly the pamphlet was written, although the date of the preface seems to indicate that the tract was probably either partially or entirely completed before the publication of *Some Seasonable Considerations*.<sup>40</sup>

Much of *Will and Doom* is a response to two pamphlets written by James Fitch. These political tracts are, unfortunately, no longer extant. Nevertheless, historians know a fair amount about Fitch’s life and reputation: like Gershom Bulkeley, he seems to have been a colorful character. Fitz-John Winthrop once dubbed Fitch “Black James” because of the dubious means by which he had laid claim to millions of acres of land from the Mohegan Indians in the early 1680s. Fitch also held a reputation in the eyes of most members of the Connecticut elite for being a political troublemaker. With the coming of Andros to Connecticut, Fitz-John Winthrop, Robert Treat, and John Allyn (former secretary of the colony) knew that they would all receive seats on the Dominion council: they had shrewdly made gestures toward Andros before his arrival in America. Fitch, on the other hand, quickly realized that he was far enough out of the

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<sup>39</sup> Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, 152, 153. (Quoted in Jodziewicz, “A Stranger in the Land,” 33).

<sup>40</sup> *CHS*, III, 71-78. *Will and Doom* may, in fact, have been first published by the Connecticut Historical Society in 1895: the source from which I cite.

loop that he would receive nothing from Andros and thus was in a perfect position to act as the most vocal opponent of Dominion rule. After the collapse of the Andros regime, Fitch was the loudest voice calling for completely new elections under the terms of the 1662 charter: in such a manner, he hoped to turn the people of Connecticut against men like Treat and Allyn, who in his view had sold out the colony years before. The pamphlets of Fitch to which Bulkeley refers were apparently angry responses to *The People's Right to Election*. That Fitch would have been opposed to this pamphlet in the first place is entirely consistent with his political views, which were, for the most part, diametrically in opposition to those of Bulkeley.<sup>41</sup>

*Will and Doom* has been described as a “Tory” text, and this assessment is not far off the mark. Bulkeley expresses his hatred very early on in the document for what he sees as a “levelling, independent, democratical principle and spirit” gradually emerging in Connecticut. The opening preface of *Will and Doom* is particularly grim (perhaps appropriately so for a pamphlet with such a provocative title). For Bulkeley, James Fitch’s “scurrilous libels” represent only one manifestation of a much larger problem. Far more troubling, in the author’s opinion, is the fact that by illegitimately reinstating the old charter government, the people of Connecticut are acting in rebellion to the crown.<sup>42</sup>

On a purely thematic level, the preface of *Will and Doom* clearly illustrates that the pamphlet as a whole will be covering much of the same ground as both *People's*

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<sup>41</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 89-91; James M. Poteet, “More Yankee than Puritan: James Fitch of Connecticut.” *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 133 (Apr. 1979), esp. 102-3

<sup>42</sup> *CHS*, III, 81-97. (quotes on 83, 97).

*Right and Seasonable Considerations*. What distinguishes *Will and Doom* from Bulkeley's other two efforts is the extraordinary thoroughness of this political tract as well as the overall historical scope of Bulkeley's argument. The author of *Will and Doom* is not merely concerned with the state of politics as they stood in the 1690s (though this decade receives the closest consideration in this political tract). Instead, Bulkeley broadens his focus to analyze the legal history of Connecticut from the very beginning of the charter period (1662) up to time in which he is writing. Bulkeley's ultimate conclusion is that the leaders of Connecticut have been practicing illegal politics and overstepping their rightful authority from the very beginning of the colony's chartered existence.

For Bulkeley, the most important stipulation of the 1662 charter is the injunction which forbids the Connecticut government from passing any laws either contrary to, or "repugnant" to, the laws of England. Somewhat predictably, Bulkeley takes a very narrow and almost literalist stance on the issue of conformity to British laws: the first half of *Will and Doom* is dominated by a long narrative in which Bulkeley points out a whole slew of laws passed in Connecticut in the two decades before Andros that were in opposition to those of England. The list of complaints is long and highly legalistic—Bulkeley is not opposed to attacking even relatively minor statutes for being out of step with English law. For example, Bulkeley finds particularly galling a statute that requires the members of the Connecticut government to take an "Oath of Fidelity" to serve the colony rather than the crown. If the Lord Mayor of London (a chartered corporation) swears "to be true to the king and his government," why should the leaders



of Connecticut be exempt from such an oath? Even more seriously, Bulkeley is shocked that there have been men and women in Connecticut who have been “try’d, judged, and condemned to die, not upon the King’s law, but...by the laws of the Colony.”<sup>43</sup>

Bulkeley’s standards are extraordinarily high. The author of *Will and Doom* is angry not only with Connecticut laws that actually contradict English statutes; he is also troubled by colonial laws that have absolutely no English antecedents. Bulkeley concisely sums up his views at one point in the document:

...[T]he charter neither doth nor can invest the general court with the supreme power of King and parliament; nor is there any clause in it whereby the officers of this corporation are made Lords of Parliament, Justices of the King’s Bench, of Oyer and Terminer, of Assize, of Gaol Delivery, or so much as Justices of the Peace, or have any lawful power to make any such who may give judgment of life, limb or banishment: much less had they a supreme legislation to dispose of the life, limb, liberty and estate of the subject, as they see cause.<sup>44</sup>

This is a sweeping critique. Under Bulkeley’s conception of legal conformity, the political leaders of Connecticut would have possessed almost no power to write any laws of their own. It would thus be difficult to argue that a chartered colony such as Connecticut could survive in any practical manner under the standards that Bulkeley sets.

With great style and wit, Bulkeley ultimately posits a *reductio ad absurdum* argument in *Will and Doom* aimed at the full dismantling of the Connecticut government. Had it been published in New England, *Will and Doom* would have created an outcry in Connecticut. But *Will and Doom* was not ultimately addressed to

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<sup>43</sup> See, especially, *Ibid.*, 99-120. (quotes on 109, 120)

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

any one clear audience in particular. On the one hand, much of the political tract is a response to James Fitch's various critiques of *People's Right* and other topics; on the other hand, there are significant portions of *Will and Doom* that seem to also be addressed to the entirely different audience of government officials in Whitehall who held the power to revoke Connecticut's charter. The variations in style and focus are occasionally jarring, and perhaps further explain why the document was circulated in manuscript form rather than published.<sup>45</sup>

After tracing the history of Connecticut's legal practices, Bulkeley goes on to demonstrate the abuses of authority that have plagued the colony's politics since the fall of Andros. This section of the pamphlet does not need to be analyzed here: most of the broad arguments Bulkeley makes in the latter half of *Will and Doom* are fairly consistent with many of the arguments that he lays out in his two published works. What is most significant about *Will and Doom* for the purposes of this essay is once again the overwhelming rhetoric of obedience and order that pervades the entire work.

Throughout the pamphlet, Bulkeley bases many of his assertions on two major principles: "monarchy is the best form or kind of civil government" and the "King is the minister of God for our good, and the fountain of all lawful civil authority within all his domains." By passing laws contrary to those of England and by insisting on reestablishing a charter government and holding elections without the permission of the crown, the leaders of Connecticut "assume and exercise government without [the king's] authority, contemn and renounce his laws...and oppress his loyalty subjects...." For Bulkeley, "a democracy within a monarchy is an intestine enemy, and will always

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<sup>45</sup> Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 287-288, 297, 301, 347-348.

be minting and making necessities to quarrel with the crown.” Democracies, furthermore, are fluid entities that can be continually changed and reshaped by the will of popular leaders who seek to abuse their power. In Bulkeley’s view, the Connecticut government as it stands in the early 1690s is moving toward democracy. The turning point for the colony had been 1689: “When the king’s authority and government lay at the stake, and was bely’d and revil’d to the dirt, they [Fitch and others] were as tame as sheep and had no spirit to defend or uphold it, but with their own hands pull it down and subvert it.” In Bulkeley’s view, James Fitch is essentially a tyrant. But, as the entirety of *Will and Doom* is meant to suggest, Fitch only represents the latest and more visible manifestation of Connecticut’s long descent from legitimate government.<sup>46</sup>

When examined within a broader context, Bulkeley’s arguments in *Will and Doom* and his other pamphlets can be seen as merely yet another contribution to a larger Anglo-American discourse on the topics of law and charter authority that had emerged with special force during the late Stuart period and which continued in the post-Glorious Revolution period.

Once Charles II and James II became committed to extending strong royal authority throughout England during the 1680s, one of the major means by which these monarchs carried out their will was by discrediting charters that had in many cases long granted corporate bodies (particularly towns) semi-autonomous political and legal authority. The legal tool that agents of the crown used to achieve this goal was the writ of *quo warranto*. As originally conceived, *quo warranto* proceedings were meant to put

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<sup>46</sup> Bulkeley, *Will and Doom*, 199, 212.

in place a process by which, in the words of Blackstone, the “the law judges that the body politic has broken the condition upon which it is incorporated, and thereupon the incorporation is void,” though, as Paul Halliday has demonstrated, the writ of quo warranto could at the same time be used as a political weapon that allowed agents of the crown to forcefully question “by what warrant” a corporate entity was entitled to function as such.<sup>47</sup>

The most famous quo warranto case in England was leveled against London in 1683. During the proceedings that followed, the King’s attorneys argued that the city voided its charter privileges by allegedly engaging in a series of illegal actions that included leveling an unsanctioned market toll and sending an inflammatory petition to the King—not extraordinarily grave crimes, and debatable charges at that. While the ultimate ruling in the case was not a complete victory for the crown (the London charter was seized rather than dissolved), the case nevertheless was enough of a victory for Charles II to set the precedent that charters were subordinate to the ultimate will of the sovereign. In the years that followed, agents of Charles II and James II “went about inspecting, seizing, adjusting, and regranting corporate privileges with a vigor never before seen.” While wealthy and powerful London may have been able to make a stand against the King, most other corporations either lacked the ability or the will to do the same: after “the spring of 1683, the mere rumor of a quo warranto would suffice in nearly all cases to compel a corporation to surrender its charter without further fuss.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Paul D. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England’s Towns, 1650-1730* (Cambridge, 1998), 26-27 (Blackstone quoted on 26).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-212.

Unfortunately for the crown, the mere rumor of a quo warranto proceeding was *not* enough to force Connecticut government to cede their charter. When Edmund Randolph, acting in his role as royal customs agent in Massachusetts, wrote to the leaders of Connecticut in 1685 to inform them that the English government intended to bring “all of New England under one government” and that it would be in the best interest of the colony to simply surrender the document, the leaders in Hartford decided instead to bide their time. When Randolph later claimed that he held writs of quo warranto against the colony, the leaders of Connecticut called his bluff by claiming that such writs had expired between the time in which Randolph had attained them and the point at which he presented them to the Connecticut colonists. And yet, while the writs themselves were probably in fact void, the arguments that Randolph leveled against Connecticut—that the colony was guilty of drafting legislation “contrary to the laws of England” and of denying to its inhabitants “the exercise of the religion of the church of England”—were critiques that had considerable basis in fact. The Connecticut government sent an envoy to England to plead its case and continued to stall in the face of Randolph’s threats before finally submitting to the Dominion of New England once Andros and his “large retinue” arrived in Hartford on October 31, 1687.<sup>49</sup>

Claims similar to those made by Randolph about the ways in which Connecticut overstepped its charter authority also appear, of course, in *Will and Doom*. Bulkeley’s other major claim, made most forcefully in *The People’s Right to Election*, that the people of Connecticut could not regain charter privileges they had willingly submitted

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<sup>49</sup> For a documentary account of these events, see *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*. (Hartford, Conn., 1850-1890), vol. 3: 353, 347-349, 377-378.

to Andros in 1687, perhaps rests on somewhat slipperier ground. If we consider the fact that legal action was never taken against the Connecticut charter, or if we choose to believe the folksy legend that suggests that the colony's leaders hid the *physical* copy of their 1662 charter in a massive oak tree rather than hand it over to Andros, should we subsequently be led to conclude that Bulkeley does not grant sufficient credence to arguments made in favor of restating the charter after the Glorious Revolution swept Andros from power?<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps. And yet, lest we be inclined to view Bulkeley as a reactionary legal theorist who would have been willing to countenance some of the most extreme forms of Stuart overreach, it is important to keep in mind the fact that Bulkeley's broader views on issues of law and authority—while by no means broadly popular in Connecticut—would not have seemed unusual within the wider context of Anglo-American thought at the beginning of the eighteenth century. William and Mary did not use writs of quo warranto as political weapons to extend their authority, though the practice and principle of quo warranto certainly did not disappear under the new monarchs. Indeed, as Halliday points out, “quo warranto remained good law after 1688” and thus “corporation members everywhere began to pay better attention to how they followed the terms of their charters in order to avoid losing their places or privileges.” And while William and Mary were willing to turn back the clock and to

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<sup>50</sup> For the earliest written account of the Charter Oak legend, see Benjamin Trumbell, *A Complete History of Connecticut: Civil and Ecclesiastical*. Vol. 1 (New London, 1898), 313.

restore pre-1688 charter conditions to many corporations, the process was far from consistent or—due to the legal nightmares involved—neat.<sup>51</sup>

For its part, Connecticut did ultimately receive a legal ruling from England that effectively reestablished charter rule in 1693. Nevertheless, from the last decade of the seventeenth century onward, the Connecticut government was increasingly cautious about carrying out policies that might expose the colony to future legal attacks—and with good reason. Already by 1701 a complicated legal dispute over land rights caused a few disaffected parties to appeal their case to the Privy Council. While the English body ultimately ruled against the Connecticut plaintiffs, the case set a precedent that would have been cause for concern among members of the Court of Assistants who claimed that appeal to the Privy Council violated the charter by virtue of the fact that the document makes no mention of such a right. A few years later, yet another challenge to Connecticut's chartered autonomy emerged when the crown disallowed a 1702 law against heretics: once again, critics pointed out that the right of royal oversight was not mentioned in the charter, though the Connecticut government did not protest the crown's decision. And thus, while the charter remained a source of Connecticut pride until well into the eighteenth century, the leaders of the colony could no longer maintain the illusion that their corporate autonomy could be maintained to the extent that it had been in the first twenty years of Connecticut's chartered existence.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic*, 265-341. (Quote on 27).

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 194-199.

On broader questions of political authority, Bulkeley's writings are somewhat more difficult to categorize. The pro-monarchy rhetoric that Bulkeley employs may have been largely representative of the author's more general political positions, although it would be misleading to simply characterize Bulkeley as *merely* a royalist—we must again remember that Bulkeley's pamphlets fundamentally represent a series of responses to current political crises rather than detailed blueprints for future government. In his brief consideration of Bulkeley's political pamphlets, Richard Dunn generally suggests that his polemics were rooted fundamentally in the fact that he had been alienated from most of the Connecticut political establishment (the relatively liberal John Winthrop, Jr. notwithstanding). While this is not an unreasonable conclusion, Dunn's assessment is ultimately too simplistic and slighting to be entirely persuasive: it is difficult to imagine that Bulkeley would have gone to the effort of writing such sophisticated political tracts solely out of spite or political opportunism.<sup>53</sup>

Neither Jodziewicz nor any other author seems able to fully account for why a man who had served as a minister and supported the government of Connecticut for so many years would suddenly write such bold and provocative pamphlets in the 1690s, though Jodziewicz does provide a useful—if similarly broad—counterweight to Dunn's assessment by arguing that “the primary reason for Gershom Bulkeley's dissent was his principles, a series of inter-connected propositions that obligated him to proceed as he

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<sup>53</sup> See Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 286-299. For more on Bulkeley's background, see Jodziewicz, “A Stranger in the Land,” 24-25. Jodziewicz here, and in subsequent passages, is slightly more willing than I am to suggest Bulkeley's inherent outsider status.



did after 1687 when he first became aware of the apparent errors of Connecticut's ways."<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, Jodziewicz's analysis of Bulkeley's royalist sentiments is overdrawn. In Jodziewicz's view, Bulkeley's "deafening silence as to any contract or covenant basis for the civil state" is suggestive of his royalist preference. But Jodziewicz is also quick to point out that there is almost no evidence to suggest that Bulkeley was particularly familiar with the most famous English royalist apologists of the time—no major political theorist is cited by name in any of his tracts. Jodziewicz is probably correct when he claims that most seventeenth-century Englishmen—aside, perhaps, from some of the sterner early puritans—would have accepted royalist thought to at least some degree. But while Bulkeley's texts occasionally exhibit the kind of strong royalist rhetoric that would have offended many of his fellow New Englanders, the language that he employs is not as extreme as it initially appears.<sup>55</sup>

To be sure, Bulkeley's political thought is similar to that of other royal apologists of the period in the sense that his writings suggest that political authority on earth is ultimately bestowed by God in the person of the monarch. In this respect, Bulkeley's political thought goes somewhat against early puritan political *ideals*, which stressed a firm break between affairs of religion and affairs of state. But royalism in seventeenth-century England came in many stripes, and Bulkeley's adherence to royalist thought was by no means even close to as strong as that of some of the English writers of the time. While royal apologists such as Robert Filmer, George Hickes, and

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<sup>54</sup> It should be pointed out that Jodziewicz by no means ignores personalities and opportunism. Jodziewicz, "A Stranger in the Land," 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 39.

John Spelman were arguing for a form of subservience to the monarch that was authoritarian to the point of suggesting that the only thing good and loyal subjects could do if faced with a bad monarch would be to pray for deliverance, Bulkeley's views were somewhat less extreme. While Bulkeley was generally opposed to resistance to royal authority—which is what he clearly saw in Connecticut on the part of the leaders of the colony who were willing to reassume their authority without any word from the crown—he nevertheless argues in *Will and Doom* that “unlawful authority, or authority usurped without right, may be resisted: for we may resist the devil.”<sup>56</sup>

By the time he wrote *Will and Doom* and *Seasonable Considerations* Bulkeley was no doubt frustrated by the fact that very few readers in Connecticut were willing to take his ideas seriously—and, as a result, these texts employ a nastier and more exaggerated prose than what is seen in *Peoples' Right to Election*. Nevertheless, Bulkeley remains throughout his writings generally optimistic about Connecticut's future prospects should the colony receive a new charter granted by the crown. As Bulkeley asserts in *Seasonable Considerations*:

it is well known to the World what their Majesties have done, and how they have exposed themselves for the benefit of the whole *English Nation*, of which we are a part, for the securing of all their *Rights*, civil and sacred, their *Religion, Lives, Liberty and Property*, and the continual and unspeakable Labour and Hazards which his sacred Majesty condescends from Year to Year to undergo, for that end.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.; Bulkeley, “Will and Doom,” 95. For further background on political theory and political practice in seventeenth-century Britain, see Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain, 1603-1714* (New York, 1996), 34-65; as well as Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), 212, 377-388.

<sup>57</sup> Bulkeley, *Seasonable Considerations*, 32-33.

Above all, stability and security remained Bulkeley's primary concerns, and he was confident that a royalist government could achieve such ends without compromising "civil and sacred" rights.

Across the Atlantic, English politics stabilized in the wake of the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent war in Ireland. The events of 1688 heralded the eighteenth-century ascendancy of Parliament over monarchy—or, at the very least, the ascendancy of a shared principle of sovereignty based on the concept of the King-in-Parliament. Because Bulkeley does not directly address British political developments in his pamphlets, it is difficult to assess how he would have understood this important moment in the political reshaping of Britain. Bulkeley's pamphlets clearly do not exude overt whiggism in either tone or content—at least, that is, as whiggism would have been understood in general terms before the whig faction in Britain split along court and country lines during the opening decades of the eighteenth century. At the same time, however, we need to be careful about applying the term "tory" to Bulkeley. While appeals to traditional models of royal authority are strong themes throughout Bulkeley's writing, there is no evidence to suggest that he was in any respect dispirited by the ascension of William and Mary to the throne or that he worried about future problems of succession. Furthermore, it might be reasonable to assume that the provincial-yet-cosmopolitan Bulkeley—who avidly kept abreast of the latest European developments in chemistry and medicine—would have (almost by necessity) supported broader and

more robust networks of maritime trade and exchange than most British tories of the period would have initially supported.<sup>58</sup>

Ultimately, the political labels of whig and tory probably held limited meaning for a man living thousands of miles from the metropole. Even in England itself party identities and alignments became increasingly fluid and complex in the early decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

Within the narrower context of New England, Bulkeley's political stance looks less out of the norm when we examine the political maneuverings of Increase Mather in the neighboring colony of Massachusetts. Mather, of course, was one of the most prominent and important religious figures of seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century Massachusetts: one would therefore suspect that the New England divine—who claimed to hold firm to many of the values of the founding generations of Massachusetts settlers (diverse as such values had been)—would have been opposed to a form of government having the effect of hindering the colony's ability to exercise complete and autonomous control over its own affairs. And yet, as is well known, Mather was instrumental in securing and subsequently supporting a charter for Massachusetts that clearly established the colony's position as a subordinate polity within the English empire.

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<sup>58</sup> Numerous scholars and other authors, beginning with Benjamin Trumbell, have characterized Bulkeley as either "tory" or "tory-minded." Jodziewicz briefly questions this assessment, "Stranger in the Land," 38-39. For an overview of politics in the immediate post-Glorious Revolution period, see Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Oxford, 1999), esp. 63-105.

<sup>59</sup> Scholars over the past few decades have increasingly problematized straightforwardly whiggish narratives of eighteenth-century English politics. For two early revisionist works that emphasize continuities between the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century and grant extensive attention to the often ignored tory party of the Georgian era, see J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985) and Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party, 1714-1760* (Cambridge, 1982). See also Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 63-95.

. As was the case in Connecticut, the Massachusetts charter as it stood in the early 1680s granted the residents of the colony an extraordinary degree of self-government. And yet, in at least one major respect, the religious nature of the Bay Colony's charter was slightly more pronounced than Connecticut's: whereas the 1660 Connecticut patent granted all freeholders the right to vote, the Massachusetts charter only extended that privilege to church members. By the time Connecticut's charter had been granted some thirty years later, the religious situation in New England was considerably more fractured than it had been in the days of Winthrop. The region that would become the colony of Connecticut was in large part initially founded in the 1630s by followers of Thomas Hooker, a well-respected Newtown, Massachusetts divine who believed in liberal standards for church membership and political participation compared to what many of the other most prominent Massachusetts religious leaders of the time would have accepted. Under the governmental requirements of the Connecticut Fundamental Orders, church membership was not considered a prerequisite for political participation, and this stipulation was reaffirmed some twenty years later when the colony received formal recognition and legal status from the crown.<sup>60</sup>

While it would be perhaps be tempting to claim that because Connecticut was from the start committed to suffrage based on freeholder requirements, and because most of the colony's churches had accepted the basic tenets of the Half Way covenant by the early 1680s, that Connecticut was, on the whole, always an inherently more religiously liberal colony than Massachusetts. This assertion, however, must remain

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<sup>60</sup> On Massachusetts' first charter, see, once again, Weir, *Early New England*, 24-72. The best overview of Connecticut's early history is Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 3-20.

speculative. What does seem certain, however, is the fact that Massachusetts by the early 1680s was a considerably more diverse society than its southern neighbor. This was no doubt a reflection of the fact that Massachusetts was a larger, more populous, more cosmopolitan, and ultimately more commercially successful colony than the comparatively rural and local setting of Connecticut. On the one hand, in the 1680s all of the most famous New England political and religious figures still lived in Massachusetts, and while these men held quite a wide range of theological positions, it is possible to identify a small but highly vocal and influential group, comprised of individuals such as Increase Mather, John Leverett, and Thomas Danforth who stressed the need for Massachusetts to remain true to the original vision of the first New England settlers. In Connecticut at this time, it is impossible to find evidence of a prominent group of men who held hardline views comparable to those of these men. On the other hand, it is also impossible to find examples of wealthy merchants like Thomas Breedon and Thomas Deane for whom religion was probably a less important aspect of their lives than more directly secular concerns, and who wanted Massachusetts to develop closer ties with England for largely commercial reasons.<sup>61</sup>

The struggle over charter government in Massachusetts was considerably more tumultuous than anything that was experienced in neighboring Connecticut, though the decision of the English government to revoke the colony's charter would perhaps have lasted longer—or, perhaps, the colony would have been better able to fend off the imperial challenge entirely—had Massachusetts decided to send more moderate

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<sup>61</sup> On the situation in Massachusetts, see Lovejoy, *Glorious Revolution in America*, 136-139; and also Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 28-29, 39-42.

representatives to London. When agents of the New England colony supported by conservative elements in Massachusetts were summoned to Britain in 1677 to explain why their merchants consistently ignored the Navigation Acts, the colonial representatives offered few apologies and were subsequently chastised by British officials for acting more like ambassadors than like humble subjects. Charles II gave the leaders of Massachusetts ample time to reconsider their insubordination and to accept a “supplementary charter,” but the hardliners in Boston were unwilling to agree to any compromise that would undermine the autonomy of their government. In the end, the advice of the more moderate colonists within Massachusetts went unheeded by the religious hardliners of the colony, and the Crown eventually lost patience: the colony’s charter was finally revoked in 1684.<sup>62</sup>

A few years later, after leaders in Massachusetts had imprisoned Andros and were looking to reestablish charter rule, the vast majority of the colony turned to Increase Mather for support. Mather had already been in London for some time when he heard the news that Dominion rule had ended and that William and Mary had ascended to the throne. Throughout 1689, the New England divine was busy meeting with political officials throughout Great Britain who he hoped would be instrumental in reestablishing the Massachusetts charter. And yet, during this hectic period, Mather found time to publish a political tract in London that he hoped would help him to achieve his goals.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> On Mather’s years in England, see Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown, Conn., 1988), 211-254.

Entitled *A Brief Relation of the State of New England* this short document lays out Mather's interpretation of the first decades of Massachusetts history and his hopes for the future success of the colony. For the most part, the text of this short document is a fairly conventional plea to royal authorities, although Mather is nevertheless careful to assert that he hopes for nothing less than a return to the privileges that Massachusetts had enjoyed prior to the arrival of Andros. As Mather is quick to point out, while quo warranto proceedings were begun against the colony, formal judgments were never rendered against the Massachusetts charter. The New England minister is therefore led to conclude that that the government of Massachusetts should be returned to the pre-Andros status quo: thus, unlike Bulkeley, Mather is unwilling to accept the principle that the people of Massachusetts surrendered their charter privileges when they accepted Andros as their governor. Instead, Mather's argument rests on the reasonable claim that both Randolph and Andros subverted due process of law—a position with which the majority of political leaders in both Massachusetts and Connecticut no doubt would have agreed. While he proclaims respect for the royal prerogative, Mather ends the *Brief Relation* by expressing the hope that the monarchs will restore to the people of Massachusetts “the right to choose their own Governors, and to make their own Laws.”<sup>64</sup>

The crown was not willing to listen to Mather's pleas. In the months to come, Mather met with a number of friends in London who he believed could help his case, although in the end Mather was not able to receive recognition for the old Massachusetts charter. Instead, officials in Whitehall quickly let Mather know that the

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<sup>64</sup> Increase Mather, *A Brief Relation of the State of New England* (London, 1689). Quote on 14.



best deal they would be willing to offer the New England divine was a new charter that would guarantee the right of the crown to appoint the governors of the Bay Colony and which would no longer tie voting rights to church membership, but rather to the standard “forty-shilling” rule that was increasingly common elsewhere in the Anglo-Atlantic world. Despite these disappointing developments, William III nevertheless graciously allowed both Mather and the other Massachusetts representatives of the time to have a say in the appointment of the first governor under what would soon be affirmed as the colony’s 1691 charter.<sup>65</sup>

We can perhaps imagine a thoroughly disillusioned Mather refusing to take any action that would legitimate a new form of government tied to Great Britain that only a few years before the New England minister would have railed against as proof of Massachusetts’ fall from Zion. And yet, this was not the case. Mather recommended that William Phips be appointed the new governor of the colony (a less than ideal choice, as he and others would later learn), and in the years to come Mather did not back away from his support for the 1691 charter. In fact, Mather even went so far as to praise a document that he had been adamantly against only a few months before, claiming that under the new charter “no Person shall have a Penny of their Estates taken from them; nor any Laws imposed on them, without their own Consent by Representatives chosen by themselves.” Mather also seems to have taken some solace in the fact that appointed governors would in theory be bound to accept the advice and consent of an elected council. And yet, while the subsequent history of the next couple of decades would serve to demonstrate that Mather’s overall optimism was by no means

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<sup>65</sup> Hall, *Last American Puritan*, 249-254;

entirely unfounded, there was certainly no guarantee in the charter language to justify his strangely rosy assessments of 1691.<sup>66</sup>

Discerning Mather's motivations is difficult. Robert Middlekauf dedicates almost no attention to the topic of Mather's time in London and his support for the charter in the course of his otherwise excellent study of Increase and the rest of the Mather family. Michael G. Hall, by contrast, dedicates considerably more attention to this topic; nevertheless, his conclusion—that Increase Mather was essentially pragmatic about the fact that he could expect no better deal—while by no means implausible, is nevertheless surprising. In the end, while he remained dogmatic on many other issues throughout his life, Mather was nevertheless willing in the span of half a year to accept a charter that allowed a crown-appointed governor to assume executive authority over Massachusetts affairs—an action that clearly compromised the ideals of his forefathers.<sup>67</sup>

Ultimately, it might not be too much of a stretch to compare Mather to Bulkeley. Both men seem to have realized that the days of New England's isolation from the metropole were nearing an end. And while on the surface Bulkeley's actively royal rhetoric appears somewhat more jarring than Mather's assessment of a royal government he ultimately felt compelled to accept, at the most basic level both men wanted to see stable and legitimate government return to New England in the wake of the Glorious Revolution. In order to achieve this end, both men were willing to

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<sup>66</sup> Mather, *A Brief Account Concerning Several of the Agents of New-England* (London, 1691), cited in *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>67</sup> Hall, *Last American Puritan*, 212-254; Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (Oxford, 1971), 213.

recommend forms of government in New England that they knew would have the effect of changing the political structures of a region that had long been accustomed to near autonomy in matters of government. Among their fellow colonists, both Bulkeley and Mather faced criticism for their words and actions—but nothing else. For his part, Mather resumed preaching once he arrived back in America; his distinguished reputation almost certainly helped to shield him from overly harsh criticism for the decisions he made while in London.<sup>68</sup>

In contrast to the mild criticisms Mather faced, the leaders of Connecticut in the 1690s were not inclined to listen politely while Bulkeley attacked their authority. At one point, some of them even responded to Bulkeley with a bitter political tract of their own after the publication of *Seasonable Considerations*. Entitled *Their Majesties Colony of Connecticut in New England Vindicated...*, and written by Connecticut assistants John Allyn and William Pitkin, this pamphlet attacks not only Bulkeley's argument but also his overall character: in addition to pointing out flaws in some of the specific claims of *Seasonable Considerations*, the authors of *Their Majesties Colony Vindicated* assert more generally that Bulkeley misrepresents the facts, misrepresents

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<sup>68</sup> Cotton Mather was initially upset with his father for accepting the new charter, though he came to defend the new document on the grounds that it guaranteed the principle of religious toleration. In the years to come, Cotton Mather gradually proved to be somewhat pragmatic on matters of government even as he maintained stern religious values. Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 213-214; Hall, *Last American Puritan*, 255. The Salem witchcraft trials, which began very shortly after Mather's return to Boston, probably distracted many other potential critics—especially since Mather ultimately proved to be a voice of reason in that affair.

their own lack of loyalty to the crown, and even misrepresents Scripture. Bulkeley, in the view of Allyn and Pitkin, was not merely a “meddler”—he was a liar as well.<sup>69</sup>

But while Bulkeley may not have been liked by most of the political establishment, his pamphlets are not as quite as outside the norm as they initially appear. Bulkeley’s political theories might not have been compatible with Calvinist ideals of governance, but, then again, the mentality—or at least the actions—of the actual political leaders of Connecticut in the 1690s certainly did not correspond to Calvinist ideals either. T.H. Breen has argued that “Bulkeley’s writings challenged the very core of Puritan political theory, the people’s right to determine who would be their rulers.” This statement may be largely true, but if the people’s right to choose their leaders was considered an ideal puritan political tenet, this political dictum did not seem to hold much actual force for the leaders of Connecticut. Men like Robert Treat and John Allyn did not appear to feel a moral obligation “to replace bad or ineffective magistrates with better ones” by leading the colony into principled revolt against Andros: they acted only *after* they had heard that James II had been deposed and Andros was imprisoned in Boston. In fact, Treat, Allyn, and Fitz-John Winthrop—all three communing church-members, regardless of the actual (unknown) vigor of their individual faiths—ultimately accepted seats in Andros’s Dominion council.<sup>70</sup>

Bulkeley may have fundamentally angered some of the sterner divines by appearing at times to argue in support of the continuance of a government that had been

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<sup>69</sup> Jodziewicz, “A Stranger in the Land,” 65-68. Unfortunately, this political tract has not been preserved.

<sup>70</sup> Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler*, xix, 177; Lovejoy, *Glorious Revolution in America*, 203-208, 248-249.

largely unfriendly to congregationalism. And yet, Bulkeley does not argue in *People's Right* for the *indefinite* continuance of Dominion government; instead, he argues that the people of Connecticut must await instructions from the crown before they can *legally* change the government. To be sure, Bulkeley almost certainly wanted a royalist government of some sort in Connecticut—his arguments in *Will and Doom* make this very plain. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that once the crown granted Connecticut formal recognition of its charter privileges in 1694, Bulkeley never penned another political tract.<sup>71</sup>

Regardless of Bulkeley's specific political arguments, both puritan political theorists and other, more mainstream Anglican political theorists on both sides of the Atlantic agreed on a fundamental level that disorder was a horrific social sin. For their parts, Treat, Allyn, and Winthrop certainly would not have disagreed with Bulkeley on this point: that they did not rebel against Andros and were essentially in favor of reestablishing the status quo ante-Dominion after his fall suggests their agreement with Bulkeley on this basic level. By the early 1690s, Treat, Allyn, and Winthrop had further managed to out-manuever James Fitch, a man who they probably feared and disliked even more than Bulkeley. Fitch's populist stance, after all, represented the greater immediate threat to the authority of Treat and Allyn and the most immediate danger to the overall stability of the colony.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Jodziewicz, "A Stranger in the Land," 68

<sup>72</sup> For overlap in puritan and Anglican fears of social disorder, see Breen, *Character of a Good Ruler*, 4-14. On Fitch and the post-1688 political struggles in Connecticut, see Lovejoy, *Glorious Revolution in America*, 248-249.

In sum, while Bulkeley did not hold a traditional puritan political stance, he at least spoke to a fear of disorder that transcended the puritan political ethos—and perhaps always had. Furthermore, he was able to justify his stance using strong religious language that his fellow Connecticut peers could relate to, regardless of whether they wanted to hear what he had to say or whether they agreed with his interpretation of Scripture.

Bulkeley was a “stranger in the land”<sup>73</sup> in the sense that very few people in Connecticut were willing to listen to his advice: there is no way to argue around this point. Nevertheless, it is an oversimplification to emphasize Bulkeley’s inherent outsider status at the expense of analyzing with proper nuance the degree to which Bulkeley was also a man very much of his times. Perry Miller once claimed that “[I]t is not fantastic to see in Gershom Bulkeley the last of the theocrats.” In T.H. Breen’s view, Bulkeley was “the most articulate and most extreme spokesman” for those who were suspicious of “popular participation” in politics. Neither of these assessments is inaccurate, just as neither of these assessments is fully satisfactory. Generalizations fall particularly short in any analysis of a man whose life in many respects mirrors the complexity of the tumultuous times in which he lived.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See Jodziewicz, “Stranger in the Land,” vi for the origins of this phrase (Exodus 2:22)

<sup>74</sup> Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, 171; and Breen, *The Character of a Good Ruler*, 177 (quoted in Jodziewicz, “A Stranger in the Land,” 4).

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