

ABSTRACT

MILLER, DENNIS TODD. *God Save the King: The Concept of Monarchical Authority in Colonial America.* (Under the direction of Holly Brewer.)

In April 1586, Queen Elizabeth I of England acquired a now-obscure title that helped establish English societal values over the New World. This title, “Weroanza,” meant “Big Chief” in the Native American language. Elizabeth’s new imperial status established the central authority of the monarch and her government over the untamed land and “savage” people of America. By the 18th century, royal government prevailed over the entire colonial population.

Some historians contend that the King and the concept of monarchy were unimportant to the average colonist. However, many colonial publications, especially the popular sermons published on a monarch’s coronation or death, demonstrate the importance colonists placed on their King and his patronage. Further, the documents produced around English dealings with Native Americans show numerous references to royal authority. Indeed, evidence shows that the English settlers imposed their English ideas about hierarchy onto Native American social interactions. Finally, the usage of the monarch’s image and/or symbols of monarchy reified the colonists’ ideas about the King and the monarchy; the ubiquitous nature of these images and symbols underscores the importance of the monarchy to the average colonist. The paper concludes that the King and the concept of monarchy represents widely held and understood concepts to colonial Americans.

God Save the King: The Concept of Monarchical Authority in Colonial America

by
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DEDICATION

For my mother, Ruth Snyder Miller,

Who always believed in my dreams.

And in memory of my grandmother, Ruth Chitty Snyder,

Who taught me the meaning of unconditional love.

BIOGRAPHY

Presently, D. Todd Miller is a doctoral candidate in American history at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He continues his studies of the monarchy in colonial America under the direction of Dr. Phyllis Hunter.

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I. Introduction

Perhaps the most memorable moment of Queen Elizabeth II's 1953 coronation occurred as the Archbishop of Canterbury placed St. Edward's Crown on the new monarch's head: all who gathered to watch the festivities, peer and commoner alike, shouted the acclamation "God Save the Queen" to a fanfare of trumpets and bells. Indeed, one can scarcely help thinking of the queen or romantic ideas about castles and knights when reflecting on the words "England" or "Great Britain." Likewise, the styles and image of the queen adorn many facets of modern British life: British laws gain assent in the queen's name, British currency and stamps bear the queen's image, and the year of the queen's or king's reign often measures time. Today, the monarchy mainly serves as a symbol of Britain's illustrious past, and the monarch as a unifying figure for the diverse parts of Great Britain. However, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the institution of monarchy in Britain mattered enormously as it embodied a hierarchical, divinely ordered concept of society.

How does the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British monarchy matter to American history? British ethnicity dominated in the American colonies, as the bulk of migrants came from the British Isles.¹ These British settlers did not land in America and suddenly lose all vestiges of British thinking and mores.

¹ Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 14.

Rather, those who relocated to British North America brought their “British” ideas about monarchy and about the essential makings of an orderly society with them. Like their contemporaries on the British Isles, many British North American colonists probably believed that an orderly society featured a hierarchical orientation.² Of course, the monarch reigned at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy and embodied the ultimate source of beneficence to even the lowliest ploughman. A page from an eighteenth century New England homesteader’s journal recorded:

“Oct. 9. 1760. Bo’t my Cart Wheels of Mr. Gove for 30 £.

Oct. 17. 1760... this year I tan 39 hides & 114 Calfskins.

Oct. 25. 1760. King George the 2nd Died.”³

Though far-removed from England and the king’s presence, this common man saw fit to record the date of the king’s death along with the other events important to his life. Based on the nature of this record, we cannot know the full scope of this man’s views toward the king and the system of monarchy. However, the fact that the king’s death found its place among activities that document a rural homesteader’s economic life suggests that the king represented something personal to the man who recorded the document; he

² Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1992; Vintage Books, 1993), 11.

³ Samuel Lane, *A Journal for the Years 1739-1803 by Samuel Lane of Stratham, New Hampshire*, ed. Charles L. Hansen (Concord, NH: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1937), 38.

found the king's demise important enough to note alongside his business transactions and work activities.

Colonial Americans transferred aspects of British society, including their allegiance to the monarchical system, to the New World. Colonial historians have observed that, like Englishmen, the colonists viewed loyalty to the king as symbolic of loyalty to one's country, despite the fact that England and America were not the same place.⁴ Colonists recreated a British world bound together by loyalty to the monarch.

Historians investigating the institution of monarchy in Colonial America face a daunting challenge. Records relating to pre-Revolutionary colonial opinions about individual monarchs and the institution of monarchy remain sketchy and widely dispersed. The task requires extensive research in order to find even the occasional window into colonial American thoughts and feelings about monarchy. Furthermore, documentation exists only from the literate, and usually the most affluent, members of society. The problem compounds itself in Colonial American history in that the bulk of pre-Revolutionary written records originated in population centers, such as Boston, Philadelphia, or Williamsburg, or in the records of plantation owners (another sort of population center), and not in the "backcountry," away from the larger eastern towns.

⁴ Max Savalle. "The Genesis of 'American' Nationalism" in *Interpreting Colonial America: Selected Readings*. ed. James Kirby Martin (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1973), 473.

However, one does have certain ways to gauge the colonists' feelings about their monarch. To examine and argue that the king and the monarchy represented a widely held and widely understood set of attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs about society, one can look at a few aspects of colonial life. For example, some colonial publications, especially the popular sermons published on a monarch's coronation or death, demonstrated the way colonists thought about their king and his patronage. Furthermore, from the earliest period of English settlement in the New World, the English inculcated Native Americans into the colonial world by transferring English notions of a monarchical social order onto the Natives. Finally, a look at the usage of physical symbols of the monarchy conveys the means by which symbolism reified the colonists' abstract ideas about the King and the monarchy; the ubiquitous nature of these images and symbols underscores the place of the monarchy in the mind of the average colonist.

Despite the fact that the British North American colonies existed under the monarchical system for nearly 170 years, the institution of monarchy in the mainland American colonies remains somewhat understudied. Indeed, after an extensive search, I found only two book-length studies, Richard L. Bushman's 1985 work *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* and Brendan McConville's 2006 monograph *The King's Three Faces*, which treat the institution of the American monarchy as their main subject. In many books, the American monarchy usually becomes an introductory or background section, never really

earning the author's central focus. At first glance, Michael A. Beatty's work *The English Royal Family of America: from Jamestown to the American Revolution* appears to be an exception, but the book belies its title. The work merely features biographical sketches of royal family members, mistresses, and bastards. In fact, Beatty's work does nothing to advance our knowledge of the means by which the institution of monarchy applied to America.

Bernard Bailyn's influential work *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* treats the colonial view of monarchy as a sort-of precondition for the type of rhetoric about liberty that emerged during the revolutionary era. Bailyn argues that colonists understood power in England as a balance between the monarch, the nobility, and the people.⁵ As long as this balance was maintained in England, and by extension in England's government of its colonies, liberty, or the capacity to exercise "natural rights," would be safe. When Parliament in England, and colonial governors (as the King's representatives) locally, began to encroach upon the colonists' liberties, the balance of power was upset, leading to the "logical" rebellion of the American colonies.⁶

Despite the importance of Bailyn's work, it does not directly deal with the majority of the colonists; only erudite colonists would have had access to, and an understanding of, much of the material Bailyn cites in making his argument. Furthermore, the book's timeframe, reaching back to the seventeenth century but

⁵ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1967, 1992), 76.

⁶ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 94-95.

mostly concerned with the years 1763-1776, does not focus on the bulk of the colonial era. In addition, the monarchy is not treated on its own; rather, it is amalgamated into “crown and Parliament.”

Since the 1967 publication of Bailyn’s work, several historians have provided great insight into the monarchical institution as it relates to America, despite the fact that monarchy itself does not comprise the central focus of their books. Edmund S. Morgan’s *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* traces development of the fictional concept “government by the people” in the United States from the older fiction of “the divine right of kings.”⁷ In order to make his argument, Morgan insists that monarchy rested on the fiction, or “make-believe,” that the monarch divinely obtained his/her status.⁸ Morgan notes that none of the colonies that would become the United States were authorized by an act of Parliament; whether the monarch granted colonial governing powers to a corporate entity, a family, or a group of families, the right to settle and govern an English colony came from the monarch alone.⁹

The distance between England and the New World required the rule of a man (or a group) representing the king, because the people’s belief in the “divine right” fiction depended on the monarch claiming his place at the head of a

⁷ Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (London/New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 14-15.

⁸ Morgan, *Inventing*, 18-19.

⁹ Morgan, *Inventing*, 122.

hierarchical society; thus, Morgan claims, the belief in this “fiction” about the king shaped the political reality of the American colonies.¹⁰ Morgan, however, departs from his examination of the monarchy *per se* early in the work, and moves toward developing his thesis: that shifting “fictions” about the sovereignty of “the king” versus the sovereignty of “the people” shaped real-world politics in Britain and America. This shift, Morgan asserts, was brought about by the political needs of rural colonies far away from England.

While witty, Morgan’s use of the terms “make believe” and “fiction” seems to demean the notions that undergirded colonial (and, later, American) society. The ideas of monarchy, like the ideas that would replace monarchy, were complex constructions that evolved over time and held very real meaning for those who subscribed to them. These “fictions” bolstered some people, oppressed others, and ultimately caused a rift between the “mother country” and colonies that would give birth to a new nation, the United States; constructed ideas about politics make for very powerful “make believe,” indeed.

Like Morgan, Gordon S. Wood, in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, argues that Colonial America maintained a hierarchically oriented society, with the king as the capstone and the giver of all beneficence. However, instead of focusing on the roots of “the people” as a political fiction, Wood argues that the American Revolution should be seen as radical, but in a “very special eighteenth-century” sense, given that pre-Revolutionary Anglo-America, despite

¹⁰ Morgan, *Inventing*, 14.

its distance from England and its unique social and cultural milieu, still adhered to fictional, hierarchically arranged society as in England.¹¹ He maintains that Anglo-American people understood that they, like the king, possessed rights as “free-born Englishmen,” and the king served to maintain these rights.¹² Wood asserts that pre-Revolutionary American society was “monarchical,” with diverse persons (and colonies) relating to one another only through their common tie to the king.¹³ In making this point, Wood emphasizes the image of the “father king,” who headed the “British” family, kept order among the members of the family, and ensured that each family member remained in his “proper” place.

Jerrilyn Greene Marston’s *King and Congress: The Transfer of Political Legitimacy, 1774-1776* also endorses the idea of a “father king” connecting the diverse British North American colonies, when discussing pre-Revolutionary colonists’ relationship with the monarchy. Marston also argues, based on contemporary colonial newspaper accounts, that the grand pomp and ceremony surrounding the monarch caused colonists to feel pride that their “father king” carried himself in magnificence.¹⁴ This pride in “belonging” to a magnificent monarch (and his magnificent nation) served to bind the colonists to the mother country. Interestingly, when discussing the demise of the monarchy during the American Revolution, Marston novelly calls King George III’s actions towards

¹¹ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1992; Vintage Books, 1993), 5.

¹² Wood, *Radicalism*, 13.

¹³ Wood, *Radicalism*, 11-12.

¹⁴ Jerrilyn Greene Marston, *King and Congress: The Transfer of Political Legitimacy, 1774-1776* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 25-27.

America an “abdication” in the eyes of colonists, and asserts that Congress replaced the king in intercolonial government as an executive, rather than a legislative, body.¹⁵ Congress, then, became a new sort of “father” to the emerging nation, according to Marston.

The patriarchal image of the “father king” enjoys widespread acceptance, especially among historians of slavery. Robert Olwell’s *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects* highlights the monarchical model for master-slave relationships particularly well, using the term “kings and subjects” to summarize the relationship between South Carolina planters and those living under the planter’s rule.¹⁶ Planters, according to Olwell, likened their position to that of the king: planters regarded themselves as symbols of patriarchal authority to their slaves, while slaves were expected to show obedience and deference to their owner-king. Likewise, the planter had the responsibility to provide for the basic needs of his “subjects,” like children who depend on their father to meet their basic needs of sustenance, clothing, and shelter. This culture of patriarchal power did not arise on its own; low-country masters attended to the cultivation of power with as much care as they devoted to the rice their slaves grew in the swamps.¹⁷

Rhys Issac also utilizes the analogies of plantation to kingdom and planter to king in *Landon Carter’s Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a*

¹⁵ Marston, *King and Congress*, 6-9, 35-36.

¹⁶ Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1740-1790* (Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1-6.

¹⁷ Olwell, *Masters*, 9.

Virginia Plantation. Isaac sees Landon Carter as the exemplar of a vast and ancient cultural inheritance, who, like a king, assumed “God’s prerogative” in his relations with his dependents, both slave and natural family; to this end, Carter took matters of discipline and punishment very seriously, expecting absolute obedience from those dependent upon him.¹⁸ Issac finds that Carter began to fear rebellion in his own plantation kingdom after the colonies began to rebel against their king. Like King George III, Carter bitterly protested the revolt of his dependents toward him.¹⁹ At the same time, Carter’s diary lamented the king’s lack of “fatherhood” toward his American children.²⁰ Here, Carter explicitly demonstrated that planters themselves understood and consciously utilized the image of “father-king” when considering the structure of the society in which they lived.

Unlike most historians of colonial America, Richard L. Bushman’s *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* places the monarchy front-and-center, arguing that the political culture of pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts focused on two poles, king and people, bound together in an interdependent relationship of favors and obligations. Royal power, Bushman argues, ensured the rights and privileges of the people, while the people owed obligation and deference to the

¹⁸Rhys Issac, *Landon Carter’s Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation* (Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 219.

¹⁹Issac, *Landon Carter’s Uneasy Kingdom*, 50.

²⁰Issac, *Landon Carter’s Uneasy Kingdom*, 292.

monarch who protected them.²¹ In America, the monarchy accommodated some popular rights, including elections and electoral campaigns, protests, and published criticisms of governors.²² Royal governors faced an especially daunting challenge because the widespread system of political patronage in England could not be replicated in the colonies, where widespread land-ownership and a larger electorate precluded the creation of a web of interdependency. In addition, the royal governor was tasked with representing the king, but the governor was *not* the king; thus, the cloak of royal infallibility and mystique that the monarch enjoyed did not cover the royal governor.²³

Despite his focus on the monarchy in America, Bushman treats the monarchy in a teleological way, investigating and writing about colonial ideas of monarchy while looking forward to the American Revolution. Early in the narrative, Bushman poses the question, “How did republican government emerge from provincial political culture if popular rights, the foundation of republicanism, were fundamental to monarchy as well?”²⁴ The rest of the book serves to answer this question, searching for, and highlighting, the growing independence of relatively wealthy, property-owning white men within the traditional social system represented by the monarch. Given this growing independence, the American

²¹ Richard L. Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 4-5.

²² Bushman, *King and People*, 5.

²³ Bushman, *King and People*, 37 and 39.

²⁴ Bushman, *King and People*, 5.

colonists finally repudiated the monarch once he ordered that force should be used to quell the American rebellion.

Brendan McConville's *The King's Three Faces* dismisses the teleological narrative and takes the political realities of colonial America on their own terms. Concentrating his study on the years from the Glorious Revolution (1688) to the mid-18th century, McConville finds that the diverse colonies of North America all embrace a common allegiance to the monarch, who upholds the Protestant faith and protects his subjects from the designs of papists.²⁵ McConville argues that the provincial colonial world's penchant for Pope's Day processions, public celebrations of royal birthdays, royalist literature, rites of devotion to the monarch, and consumer goods emblazoned with the king's image testifies to the existence of a "cult of monarchy" in British North America.²⁶ As do other scholars writing on the monarchy in America, McConville reminds readers that the American understanding of monarchy was not absolutist, but patriarchal. However, McConville asserts that the colonial understanding of the "father king" drew on a deep desire to restore the divinely ordained connection between God and king that both the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution had sundered.²⁷

McConville's reconstruction of colonial America's view on monarchy allows him to develop a new understanding of the nature of the early British

²⁵ Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 6-7.

²⁶ McConville, *King's Three Faces*, 69.

²⁷ McConville, *King's Three Faces*, 49-50, 140.

Empire. The royalization of America, he contends, made eighteenth century America more overtly monarchial than England itself, with the lower orders of society giving special devotion to the monarch.²⁸ These emotive ties, rather than the strong institutions or traditional social hierarchies that undergirded monarchy in Europe, held together the early British Empire in North America.

Like McConville's work, the present paper takes a different approach from the teleological narrative of colonial history as the prologue to the American Revolution. It makes a close analysis of the published sermons and poems that circulated among the literate; I believe such an analysis helps us gain insight into the prevailing notions about monarchy during the colonial period. Further, most historians examine the European imposition of the monarchial model as it relates to master-slave relations; I find an examination of the relations between Europeans and Native Americans to be instructive in ascertaining the colonists' ideas about monarchy. Finally, in most works, the physical symbols of monarchy seldom become important tools for examining the monarchy in America. However, I find that the physical symbols, instead of being mere decoration, represent a reification of the abstract ideas about the king, and contribute to our understanding of the monarchy in America.

I differ from McConville's assertion that the monarchy held completely different, somewhat vague meanings ("faces") for different groups. Through my analysis, I hope to demonstrate that the monarchy represents a kind of common

²⁸ McConville, *King's Three Faces*, 138, 254-255.

vernacular; a widely held and widely understood set of attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs about the way society was arranged, maintained, and governed.

A better understanding of the monarchy's role in America will help refine our knowledge of the hierarchical systems that undergirded notions of sovereignty in colonial American society: white over black, master over servant, men over women, and the "haves" over the "have-nots." Given that many public festivals and rites featured royal imagery, an understanding of colonial attitudes toward the monarchy helps us to evaluate whether or not these rituals held real meaning to colonists beyond the gaiety and fellowship the festivities provided. Finally, understanding colonial monarchy contributes to the discourse about the American Revolution, especially regarding whether the Revolution was conservative or radical.

II. Background

To fully understand the American colonist's social and cultural values regarding the institution of monarchy, we must consider how the concept of monarchy developed in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the years of earliest English colonization of North America. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, monarchs sometimes made their views on the institution of monarchy public. Two famous royal anecdotes provide insight into the mindset of those at society's hierarchical apex. Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) often defined "monarch" as a servant of God entrusted to govern. For instance, in her 1601 "Golden Speech," Queen Elizabeth called the monarch God's "instrument to maintain His truth and glory, and to defend this kingdom [England] from dishonor, damage, tyranny, and oppression."²⁹ Her successor, King James I (r. 1603-25), held a more grandiose view of the monarchical institution: "The State of Monarchie is the supremest thing upon earth: For Kings are not onely Gods Lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon Gods throne, but even by God himselfe they are called Gods."³⁰ As the ensuing decades of unrest, upheaval, revolution, and change testify, the British people did not universally share James's rather extreme concept of monarchy. However,

²⁹ Elizabeth Tudor, *Elizabeth I Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 342.

³⁰ James Stuart, *The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, James by the Grace of God, King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c.* (London: James Bishop, 1616), 529.

despite the upheaval of the mid-seventeenth century English Civil War, older notions of monarchy persisted even among members of the regime who deprived King Charles I of his head.

The Speaker of the House of Commons offered Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the interregnum English commonwealth, the office of King on 31 March 1657 by stating that Parliament wished “to commend the title and office of a King in this nation; as that a King first settled Christianity in this Island; that it had been long received and approved by our ancestors, who by experience found it to be consisting with their liberties, that it was a title best known to our laws, most agreeable to their constitution, and to the temper of the people.”³¹ Cromwell rejected Parliament’s request, insisting that he “would not seek to set up that [*i.e.*, the monarchy] which Providence hath destroyed and laid in the dust.”³²

Despite Cromwell’s rejection of the offer, the House of Commons acknowledged the centrality of monarchy to popular ideas about stable government by offering Cromwell the office in the first place. Cromwell, who needed to bring order to the disintegrating Commonwealth government, had already accepted the quasi-monarchical position of Lord Protector in 1653.³³ He probably wanted to occupy the position for a limited time, in order to bring about

³¹ Qtd. in Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector* (New York: Knopf, 1973; New York: Smithmark Books, 1996), 606.

³² Ivan Roots, ed., *Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1989), 128.

³³ Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 593.

a more permanent settlement for the republican form of government.³⁴ Cromwell certainly never intended to rule England as a monarch.³⁵

While Cromwell disliked the office of quasi-king, he really did not have any republican leadership model available to him. The Doge of Venice, who reigned as a powerless figurehead, and the Stadholder of Holland, who had powers quite different from Britain's Lord Protector, provided the only examples of non-royal heads-of-state.³⁶ Thus, for expediency's sake the new Lord Protector of Britain utilized a modified version of kingship while in office. Furthermore, the Protectorate government used the former royal palaces as residences and meeting places for government officials.³⁷ With these august surroundings, the government that formed around the Lord Protector bore a strong resemblance to the old royal Stuart court.

With a court-like government forming around him, and the lack of a republican leadership model, Cromwell became more king-like as time passed.³⁸ In fact, he began to co-opt royal symbols to portray his authority. Cromwell's banner as Lord Protector prominently featured a crown surrounded by the initials "O.P. (Oliver Protector)."³⁹ (Ironically, years earlier, in 1649, Cromwell ordered the destruction of the English Crown Jewels in a campaign to eliminate vestiges

³⁴ Austin Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982; London: Phoenix Books, 2000), 392-393.

³⁵ Woolrych, *Commonwealth*, 393.

³⁶ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 593.

³⁷ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 594.

³⁸ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 594-595.

³⁹ Eric Inglefield and D. J. Lally, *Flags* (London: Ward Lock/Kingfisher Books, 1979), 123.

of the old Stuart monarchy from England.) Further, the 1655 Commonwealth Coat of Arms bore a striking resemblance to earlier Royal Arms: they reused the crowned lion representing England in the Royal Arms, along with the English crown sitting atop a shield featuring symbols of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Interestingly, the Welsh Tudor dragon replaced the unicorn, as the unicorn represented too close of a connection with the Stuart royal family.⁴⁰ Likewise, coinage produced late in Cromwell's reign as Lord Protector featured his portrait, dressed in a Roman toga and laurel wreath, attire later found on all royal coinage effigies, including the first coinage effigy of the present queen. Had royal symbols ceased to connote power in republican England, leaders would have completely abandoned them. Therefore, Cromwell's use of symbols from the old regime testified to the status still accorded to these monarchical symbols by the English public at large. The Caroline Restoration and the 1688 English revolution shifted some *de facto* power away from the monarch, but a hierarchical understanding of society persisted and dominated the debate over the proper means of governing a colony.

In debating appropriate government, seventeenth-century philosopher and Elizabethan beekeeper Richard Remnant utilized the example of a humble beehive, "a feminine monarchy and orderly Commonwealth" that contained an

⁴⁰ Stephen Friar and John Ferguson, *Basic Heraldry* (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1993), 110-111.

“amiable, loving, and gentle Queen⁴¹ . . . and valourous Commons: all worthy [of] admiration and serious observation.”⁴² Without strong leadership, he argued, society would disintegrate and (further drawing on the beehive analogy) drones would multiply and devour each other.⁴³ Other commentators found fault in early attempts at English colonization in North America: a lack of “great men,” who demanded monarchial obedience, led to failure.⁴⁴ Therefore, for a colony to be successfully established, it had to emulate England by operating under royal prerogative with governors who could carry out royal directives, maintain the peace, and instruct those beneath their station.⁴⁵ Likewise, men serving as “valourous Commons” occupied the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder and performed the laborious task of literally building a successful colony. In fact, many historians of the Jamestown, Virginia colony often cite the lack of “working men” as a reason for the early near-collapse of the colony.

As England moved toward civil war and a Puritan commonwealth in the mid-seventeenth century, the colony of Virginia retained its staunchly monarchist leanings and became a refuge for royalists loyal to the Stuart monarchy.⁴⁶

According to eighteenth-century historian Robert Beverly, after the restoration of

⁴¹ While Remnant utilized the gender-specific word “Queen” in making his beehive analogy, one may infer from the text that he meant to connote “King or Queen,” the point being that a monarch had to reign in order for a society to be orderly and workable.

⁴² Qtd. in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “The Beehive as a Model for Colonial Design,” in *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 275.

⁴³ Kupperman, *Beehive*, 275.

⁴⁴ Kupperman, *Beehive*, 275.

⁴⁵ Kupperman, *Beehive*, 280.

⁴⁶ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 212-214.

the monarchy in 1660 Charles II proclaimed Virginia “The Old Dominion,” reflecting the loyalty of Virginia during the English Civil War and Protectorate.⁴⁷ In 1663, Charles II’s government also granted Virginia a new seal bearing the motto “*En dat Virginia Quintum* (Behold, Virginia gives the fifth),” referring to Virginia as the fifth of Charles’s dominions, behind England, Scotland, Ireland, and France.⁴⁸ As His Majesty had several other colonies in the New World, the symbolic status of full-dominion bestowed by this motto testified to Virginia’s place in the bosom of the post-Restoration British government: a special place granted because of the Virginian loyalty to both the monarch and the institution of monarchy.

The newcomers to Virginia, rich and poor alike, did not arrive in the New World expecting the egalitarian “city on a hill” often cited by post-Revolutionary American thinkers and sentimentalists. Rather, they expected to find, and accepted, the hierarchical English society they had known in the old country.⁴⁹ Perhaps no group expected to find a hierarchical society more than British subjects who entered Virginia against their will. “Undesirables” found themselves banished from England by a proclamation first issued by King James I in late 1617:

“Item, for the more speedy suppressing, and freeing the said Countries [counties] and places of notorious and wicked offenders

⁴⁷ Emily J. Salmon and Edward D.C. Campbell, eds., *The Hornbook of Virginia History: A Ready-Reference Guide to the Old Dominion's People, Places, and Past*, 4th ed. (Richmond, VA: Library of Virginia, 1994), 88.

⁴⁸ Lyon G. Tyler, “The Seal of Virginia,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (1894): 84-85.

⁴⁹ Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 228-232.

that will not be reformed, but by severity of punishment; Wee have taken order...to send the most notorious ill livers, and misbehaved persons of them that shall be so certified, into Virginia, or to some other remote parts to serve in the Warres, or in Colonies, that they may no more infect the places where they abide within this our Realme."⁵⁰

King James's proclamation, along with later pieces of similar legislation, removed a large number of "undesirables" from the British Isles; in fact, some estimates place the number of convicts dispatched to America during the colonial era at 50,000.⁵¹ Denied the right to stay in their English home counties, the men ensnared by this act certainly did not believe Virginia to be a place of egalitarian bliss. Thus, the Virginia tidewater society came to reflect the social order understood by those migrating to the colony. Likewise, those who migrated to other parts of America brought European expectations about societal structure with them.

⁵⁰ Clarence S. Brigham, ed., "By the King, 23 December 1617. A Proclamation for the Better and More Peaceable Government of the Middle Shires of Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmerland" in *British Royal Proclamations Relating to America 1603-1783* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1911; New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 7.

⁵¹ Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigration to the Americas of Felons, Destitute Children, Political and Religious Non-Conformists, Vagabonds, Beggars and other Undesirables, 1607-1776* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co, Inc., 1992), 7.

III. Publishing and Preaching Hierarchy and Monarchy

By the eighteenth century, royal government prevailed over most of the colonies in British North America. Compared to the bureaucratic behemoths of the twenty-first century, government in British North America seems personal and intimate. Prominent colonists usually knew the governors, justices, and dignitaries personally, and socialized with them.⁵² Because of this intimacy, leading officials often dealt with matters that seem insignificant to modern eyes; as a Marylander observed in 1769, the meanest person in the colony seemed to have “an easy and immediate access to the person” of the governor.⁵³ While this observation may contain some exaggeration on the part of our Marylander, the lower rungs of colonists could gain some access to a man representing the beneficence of the monarch. However, the prominent men who made up his social circle formed a sort-of court around the closest thing colonists had to the king himself: one can only imagine the number of perquisites gained by the members of a royal governor’s inner circle.

Colonists submitted to royal rule day-by-day from the belief in the legitimate right of the monarch (represented by his governors) to rule, as the colonists believed the monarch’s rule provided protection from disorder.⁵⁴ In other words, colonists depended on the monarch or his representative to make

⁵² Wood, *Radicalism*, 61.

⁵³ Qtd. in Wood, *Radicalism*, 61.

⁵⁴ Bushman, *King and People*, 55.

daily life orderly and livable. This dependency served as a link in a network of interlocking dependencies that began with the king's reliance on God (and increasingly, as the eighteenth century progressed, Parliament's approval) to gain and hold the royal throne. Through this pyramidal network, the reach of the throne extended into the lowest ranks of society and the most far-flung parts of the empire.⁵⁵

Despite the distance from the royal court in London, the wealthier classes of colonial America distinguished themselves by imitating the manners and purchasing the goods used by the social class "closest" to the throne, the British aristocracy.⁵⁶ Not unlike the rising middle class in England, American gentlemen used their access to trade in order to "purchase" objects that helped them fashion a genteel identity.⁵⁷ The American countryside and its people, by the design of colonial grandees, took on the appearance of (orderly) England as much as possible: by the eighteenth century, periwigs, fine clothing, elaborate dwellings, coats of arms, and swords (as well as books on "proper" etiquette) had become *de rigueur* accoutrement of colonial gentlemen.⁵⁸ Likewise, colonists claimed the tradition of "English liberty" for themselves as well. Despite the traditional rhetoric celebrating "Englishmen's liberties and freedoms," no one living in this

⁵⁵ Bushman, *King and People*, 55.

⁵⁶ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 264.

⁵⁷ Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World: Massachusetts Merchants, 1670-1780* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 107.

⁵⁸ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14.

hierarchical society could be truly free and independent.⁵⁹ Intricate networks of personal loyalties, quasi-dependencies, and obligations held society together.⁶⁰

“Patronage” describes these personal relationships of “lesser” people depending on “greater” people,⁶¹ meaning those who held positions of high status, wealth, or power could benefit those of lesser wealth, status, or power through political favors, financial gifts, or protection. Depending on one’s needs, patronage could assume different forms. For example, an ambitious young gentleman might cultivate a relationship with an aristocrat to gain entry into the higher echelons of power. In the eighteenth century, this relationship was a necessity because there existed almost no means of obtaining office (or any government favor) other than through the influence of a powerful person.⁶² Indeed, men from the upper elements of society dominated political officeholding.⁶³ Down the patronage network, a laborer might seek employment by ingratiating himself to the local smallholding farmer.

The monarch formed the capstone of this patriarchal network. The royal government, in order to reaffirm the notion that the patronage network began with the monarch, used the church to give divine authority to social hierarchy. Sermons or poems sometimes marked the occasion of a monarch’s accession, birthday, or death. Oftentimes, prominent citizens or the government itself

⁵⁹ Wood, *Radicalism*, 57.

⁶⁰ Wood, *Radicalism*, 57-58.

⁶¹ Bushman, *King*, 56.

⁶² Bushman, *King*, 57.

⁶³ Bruce C. Daniels, “Introduction,” in *Power and Status: Officeholding in Colonial America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 3.

ordered the printing of such a sermon or poem when it held a message that “needed” to be disseminated among the citizenry. These sermons and poems represent a conversation about monarchy; by examining them, one may assess the ways in which colonists viewed the institution of monarchy as time passed. One must remember that published sermons appeared in the northern colonies almost exclusively. In the south, the established Anglican Church did not utilize sermons in worship. Instead, a liturgy sufficed. The liturgy contained prayers for the King and the royal family, but tells the modern reader little about the colonists’ opinions on monarchy. Therefore, the northern published sermons and poems give better insight into prevailing thoughts about monarchy.

John Wilson’s 1626 *Song of Deliverance for the Lasting Remembrance of God’s Wonderful Works Never to be Forgotten*, re-published in Boston in 1680, represents an early example of a “message” poem. Boasting a text as verbose as its title, the poem, originally published in 1626, owed its reprinting “For the sake of several who have much desired to see and read this work.”⁶⁴ While the true reasons for its reprinting remain lost to history, one may suppose that anxiety or tavern debate over the Catholic heir to the throne (James, the Duke of York, and later King James II) prompted its republication.

The debate over religion had played a prominent role in English politics since the 1530s, when King Henry VIII’s desire for a new wife (and a male heir)

⁶⁴ John Wilson, *Song of Deliverance for the Lasting Remembrance of God’s Wonderful Works Never to be Forgotten* (Boston: James Allen, 1680), cover page. Microfiche.

prompted him to throw off the papacy and create the monarch-controlled Church of England. Because church and state became intertwined, the King expected “loyal” Englishmen to submit to the new Church of England.⁶⁵ Henry’s male heir, Edward VI (r. 1547-1553), oversaw the introduction of a more radical form of continental Protestantism into England, only to be followed by a bloody re-imposition of Roman Catholicism under Henry’s daughter Queen Mary I (r. 1553-1558).⁶⁶ Not until Elizabeth (r. 1558-1603) would a settlement regarding religion be made, though tensions between the radical Protestants (“Puritans”), “loyal” members of the Church of England, and remaining Roman Catholic adherents created political instability throughout the seventeenth century.

The 1680 republication of Wilson’s *Song of Deliverance* occurred during the debate over the status of James, Duke of York, heir to the British throne *and* practicing Roman Catholic. James’s brother, King Charles II (r. 1660-1685), had regained the British throne in 1660 and assented to several Parliamentary laws that reinstated the Church of England and the Book of Common Prayer; the legislation of religious conformity sought to prevent political instability by preventing both the return to Puritan republicanism and the possibility of Roman Catholic royal absolutism.⁶⁷ Charles lacked a legitimate heir (none of his children were borne by his wife, Catherine of Braganza), making the Catholic Duke of

⁶⁵ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 6-8.

⁶⁶ MacCulloch, *Boy King*, 11-12.

⁶⁷ G.M. Trevelyan, *The English Revolution, 1688-1689* (Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 14.

York heir to British throne. The prospect of a Catholic monarch horrified the English elite in Parliament, who feared a Catholic king would assert absolute power like King Louis XIV had done in France. To prevent Catholic James from becoming king, in 1679 the House of Commons undertook debate on the Exclusion Bill, which sought to bar James from the throne; the debate lasted until 1681, which King Charles II used his royal prerogative to dissolve Parliament, thus ending the possibility of the Bill's passage.

Into this milieu, *Song of Deliverance* reappeared. The poem itself serves as a religion-based, seventeenth century propaganda piece designed to show the reader God's hand and intentions when preserving Britain (and, by extension, her colonies) from "ungodliness (*i.e.*, popery)."⁶⁸ Wilson also demonstrates the importance of doing service to one's superiors. In his dedication to the "Christian reader," Wilson gives special attention to the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada, the 1603 accession of Protestant King James I, and the 1605 thwarting of the Gunpowder Plot. When describing Queen Elizabeth Wilson gushes, "Our VIRGIN-QUEEN with holy dance, unto her Timbrel sang, Our Land for this Delieverance, with shouting-Echoes rang. Her Soul had marchted like *Deborah* amidst the armed Train, Her faith had scorn'd with holy laugh the bragging Hoast of Spain."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Wilson, *Deliverance*, Introduction.

⁶⁹ Wilson, *Deliverance*, 11. Emphasis as in the original text.

Wilson's extolling of Elizabeth underscores her perceived importance as a figure of stability. In the two decades prior to Elizabeth's accession, England had been rocked by Henry VIII's break with Rome, Edward VI's turn toward radical Protestantism, and an equally radical return to Catholicism under Mary. Because religion and politics intersected, the back-and-forth between Catholicism and Protestantism made the state unstable and divided English subjects into separate, competing camps. In order to both secure her throne and forge a united nation, in 1559 Elizabeth ushered an Act of Supremacy and an Act of Uniformity through Parliament; the former confirmed the monarch's role as head of the English Church and the latter established the form of worship in the Church of England. Wilson's poem implies that Elizabeth fulfilled the requirement of her position by upholding faith in (a Protestant) God, who answered her prayers by defeating Catholic Spain. The poem continues in a similar style, extolling the virtues and deeds of Queen Elizabeth and, especially, King James I, who had died the year prior to the original publication date of *Song of Deliverance*.

Wilson highlighted the patron-subject relationship between god and king by stating:

"Our Royal King right humbly fell before the King of Grace [God], In mournful weeds, becoming well, this sad and heavy case. It pittied him to see his sheep, by flocks to fall away, It made his very Soul to weep, to see their quick decay. Himself began, and then he made, his Subjects all to fast. By Proclamation he forbad, (so long as plague shall last) All other works, upon the day to fasting set apart, That all at once might weekly pray, to God with

broken heart...In twelve weeks, after this no more [dying of the plague].⁷⁰

This passage demonstrates both the king's role as intercessor for his people and the need to perform duties required in the system of patronage. The king and his people owed God prayer, worship, and obedience. As long as the people remained neglectful of their prayer and worship, God abandoned them to the ravages of the plague. However, once the king restored proper worship and fasting, by proclamation no less, God poured his beneficence over the people by stopping the plague. The supposed ability of a monarch, as God's representative, to uphold the Christian religion and grant God's favor to his people reinforced the need for a monarch in the peoples' minds. Demonstrating the benefits of giving God his due worship reinforced patronage because it provided an example to the people of the benefits gained by doing one's duty to one's "superior."

Because this reprint of Wilson's poem originated in Boston, the publisher must have felt the British American public had an interest in reading and digesting the information contained in the poem. Through reading this poem, the colonists gained insight into the role of the monarchy as sustainer of Protestantism throughout the British world. This message would have resonated especially in New England, a region that had a vested interest in the continuance of Protestantism in the British realm, because of its predominant form of worship.

⁷⁰ Wilson, Deliverance, 33-34. Emphasis as in the original text.

In addition, the New World Puritans may have been especially averse to royal absolutism and Catholicism, given their special history in New England.

The first generation of New England Puritan settlers believed a social contract existed between a monarch and his people, with instability and tyranny resulting should the monarch overreach and claim absolute powers like those God himself possessed.⁷¹ In addition, New England Puritans believed the world proceeded in an orderly, divinely controlled fashion; nothing occurred randomly or by coincidence.⁷² Should calamity befall a society, something was amiss in the contract between the people and God, or between the monarch and the people; the societal upheavals under Catholic Mary, for instance, could be interpreted as God's judgment on a monarch who overreached herself by attempting to re-Catholicize (or, as Puritans would interpret it, damn to Hell) her people.

Likewise, God smiled upon England during the reign of Elizabeth, a monarch who attempted to bring reconciliation and settlement to the past upheavals (though Puritans surely found aspects of the Elizabethan religious settlement objectionable). Wilson's poem, then, served to remind New Englanders of the social contract between the monarch and society. The underlying message seems to be, should the Duke of York ascend the throne, he would likely violate the social contract between the king and the people by

⁷¹ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 411-412.

⁷² Miller, *New England Mind*, 4-5, 17.

imposing his religion on the people, and abrogating Parliament, thereby claiming absolute powers traditionally reserved for God. The British realm would then fall from God's favor, with the people suffering the consequences.

Later New England publications also reflected on the earthly monarchy and the divine monarchy. *The Glorious Throne*, a sermon preached by Cotton Mather on the 1714 death of Queen Anne and the accession King George I, contained a message so important that the Massachusetts Governor and his council ordered its publication.⁷³ Cotton Mather (1663-1728), son of the influential Puritan minister Increase Mather, wrote prolifically, authoring more than 450 books and pamphlets.⁷⁴ Mather's literary works made him one of the most influential religious leaders in America.⁷⁵ In the eyes' of colonists, this illustrious reputation likely gave credence to the sermon's message.

Mather asks his reader to reflect upon the never-ending reign of Jehovah, "a king that never dies," when considering the mortal demise of a monarch.⁷⁶ Mather also contrasts the imperfections of earthly kings (but interestingly, Mather mentions no British kings except for the "despicable" Catholic James II) with the perfection of the heavenly king, to remind his readers of God's special place in the arrangement of the universe.⁷⁷ The sermon soon turns sharply political,

⁷³ Cotton Mather, *The Glorious Throne* (Boston: B. Green, 1714), Coversheet. Microfiche.

⁷⁴ Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 194.

⁷⁵ Middlekauff, *Mathers*, 194-195.

⁷⁶ Mather, *Glorious*, 1-2.

⁷⁷ Mather, *Glorious*, 23-24.

divulging the probable reason the authorities ordered its publication and dissemination.

Mather lauds Queen Anne for her zeal for the Protestant succession of her throne. Queen Anne sat on the British throne because of the events of the Revolution of 1688, remembered by Whig sympathizers (and Whig historians) as the “Glorious Revolution.” Despite attempts to exclude James, Duke of York, from the throne, in 1685 he had become king upon the death of his brother Charles II. While James practiced Catholicism, and, according to Whig historian G. M. Trevelyan, made some overtures toward Rome,⁷⁸ the British seemed content to allow James to reign because his daughters and heirs, Princesses Mary and Anne, practiced Protestantism. The situation changed on 10 June 1688, with the birth of a son, Prince James Francis Edward, by James’s second wife; because of the tradition of male primogeniture, this son took precedence over his half-sisters in the line of succession, and could establish a line of Catholic monarchs over Britain.

With the prospect of Catholicism (and the societal upheaval that would inevitably follow) returning to Britain, a group of noblemen invited William of Orange, husband of Princess Mary and a grandson of King Charles I, to invade England and claim the throne for his wife. In short order, James II abandoned the throne, Parliament declared the throne vacant, and William and Mary gained the English throne as co-regent monarchs. Because William III and Mary II had

⁷⁸ Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 24-26.

no heirs, the throne passed to Mary's younger sister, Anne, upon the death of King William III, who had survived his co-monarch wife.

Queen Anne had no surviving heirs, necessitating the implementation of the 1701 Act of Settlement. Without any heir from Anne, the Act settled the throne on Sophia, the Electress of Hanover and granddaughter of King James I, and her Protestant heirs. The Act also forbade anyone in the line of succession who practiced Catholicism or married a Catholic from ascending the British throne. Thus, the Act bypassed Anne's Catholic half-brother (James II's infant son by his second wife – a boy who could have established a Catholic line of kings over Britain). Since Electress Sophia predeceased Queen Anne, the Act bequeathed the throne to an obscure German cousin, George of Hanover. Given the British reputation for xenophobia, the government had to "spin" (in modern political parlance) the accession of an unknown, foreign prince in a favorable light. Here, Mather does not disappoint:

"And now, with what a Surprize, must we Behold and Adore, the Providence of the Glorious LORD, *Sitting on the Throne High and Lifted up*, which has in a very Sudden Manner brought on that *Succession*; With a most Wise and Strong Provision for a *Quick Proclamation* of it, and Exquisite Methods to Establish the Government in the Hands of the PRINCE, who is the *Only Lawful and Rightful Heir to the Crown*, and Extinguish the hopes of a *Popish Pretender*...We see ascending to the *British Throne*, A KING whose Way to it is Prepared in the Hearts of His Joyful Subjects, by the Accounts which they have Long had of His Princely Endowments, and of His Excellent Conduct in His *German Dominions*. A KING, in whose Dominions *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*

Live Easily with One Another; and all *Good Protestants* have Employments Indifferently Conferred upon them...⁷⁹

Mather continues his praise for a few more pages, ending with the finding that “A KING” as just as George will regard Dissenters as true and loyal subjects; this observation would have especially appealed to Mather’s New England audience of dissenters.

King George I, then, maintained England as a Protestant nation, lending a national identity to England and its realms, even those realms in America. Should the new royal house fail, the Catholic Stuarts were poised on the European continent to reclaim their throne. The return of the Stuarts would place England and its realms under the purview of the Pope. Because the Pope and his Catholic Church were linked to absolutism in the English mind, the maintenance of Protestant king in England helped insure that the Crown would remain restrained by Parliament and tolerant of Dissenters.

Just as the accession of King George I provided a forum to shore up support behind the new royal house, King George’s death provided the opportunity for another lesson on being a good and true subject. *Christian Loyalty*, a sermon Mather preached on the death of King George I and published for wider dissemination, provides a look at the “official” attitude towards a king. Cotton Mather dedicated this sermon to the Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, a show of deference toward the King’s representative. Mather

⁷⁹ Mather, *Glorious*, 33-34. Emphasis as in the original text.

reminds the people of their Biblical duty to be “joyful in their king” by citing Psalm 149:2.⁸⁰ The Bible, Mather claims, cast Jesus in “Royal Circumstances” throughout the Bible: “In our Bible, how does our SAVIOUR every where appear in all *Royal Circumstances!* With a *Crown* and a *Diadem* on his *Head*; With a *Scepter* or a *Rod of Iron* in his Hand!”⁸¹ The sermon continues on this subject for several more pages, eventually transitioning into a list of King George’s admirable qualities. The comparison of Christ’s royal traits with King George’s royal traits would have imparted a sort of divinity over the position of the monarch in the mind of the listener or reader.

Further, Mather reminds his audience of King George’s Protestant lineage: “*Behold, A KING, whose Royal Grandfather lost a Crown by his Fidelity to the Protestant Religion, brought unto a Crown, which placed Him at the Head of the Protestant Interest.*”⁸² Here, Mather raises the specter of George’s grandfather, King Frederick V of Bohemia. A look at genealogy makes the connection between King George and his “Royal Grandfather” clear: Princess Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of King James I of Britain, married Frederick V of Bohemia. The twelfth child of Frederick and Elizabeth was Sophia, Electress of Hanover.⁸³ Since the 1701 Act of Settlement conveyed the throne of Britain to Sophia and

⁸⁰ Cotton Mather, *Christian Loyalty* (Boston: T. Fleet, 1727), 1. Microfiche.

⁸¹ Mather, *Loyalty*, 5. Emphasis as in the original text.

⁸² Mather, *Loyalty*, 18. Emphasis as in the original text.

⁸³ The present queen, then, is a direct descendant of Sophia.

her heirs on the death of Queen Anne, King George inherited the British throne because his mother, Sophia, predeceased him.

George's grandfather Frederick inherited the electorate of the Rhenish Palatinate and later became king of the Protestant estates of Bohemia after they rebelled against the rule of the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II. Frederick later lost the throne of Bohemia after his defeat by Holy Roman forces at the 1620 Battle of White Mountain. Mather carefully recast this story as a Protestant king losing his throne because of his refusal to submit to a Catholic emperor.⁸⁴ Therefore, according to Mather's reckoning King George inherited the leadership of the continental Protestant cause from his grandfather Frederick. Protestants likely composed all of Mather's audience because of a ban on Catholics in the New England colonies. The "fact" of King George's Protestant leadership, then, extolled the king's position even more in the colonists' sentiments, as the king made a contract with the people to prevent a dreaded "papist" from sitting on the English throne.⁸⁵

A minister who preached for greater piety during the "First Great Awakening" of the later colonial era also utilized monarchial imagery to make his points. Gilbert Tennent's *Sermon on the Death of King George II*, published in 1761 at the "request of the audience," contains the expected dedication to the

⁸⁴ Mather, *Loyalty*, 18.

⁸⁵ McConville, *King's Three Faces*, 46-48.

lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania.⁸⁶ Revealingly, Tennent calls himself the governor's "affectionate friend and humble servant," showing the personal relationship between the prominent minister and the lieutenant governor, and the appropriate deference necessary in the patronage system.⁸⁷ While following this convention, Tennent, himself a somewhat radical reformer, represents one of the so-called "New Light" ministers of the Great Awakening, a movement to bring Christians back to actively living their faith.

The reform-minded and devout Tennent chose to ignore flattery of George III's place in the secular world. Instead, Tennent emphasized the young king's religiosity. He complemented the new young king for the character he demonstrated when making a "Proclamation for the Encouragement of Virtue and Piety, and for preventing and punishing Vice, Prophaness, and Immorality."⁸⁸ Further, Tennent calls George III "our young Soloman" and "our British Josias."⁸⁹ Recalling the times of the Catholic James II, Tennent thanks God that "we live in better Times, having the unspeakably precious and important Privilege of a truly PIOUS PRINCE on the THRONE..."⁹⁰ The king, then, still serves to uphold the

⁸⁶ Gilbert Tennent, *Sermon Occasioned by the Death of King George II, of Happy Memory, who Departed this Life on the 25th Day of October, in the Year of our Lord, 1760, in the 77th Year of his Age, and the 34th of his Reign; Beloved and Honored by his Subjects, for his Eminent Royal Virtues, Together, With some Brief Hints, of the Amiable Character of His Majesty King George III, Now Seated on the British Throne, and the Auspicious Omens, that Attend his Infant Reign* (Philadelphia: W. Dunlap, 1761), Coversheet. Microfiche.

⁸⁷ Tennent, *Sermon*, Coversheet.

⁸⁸ Tennent, *Sermon*, 19.

⁸⁹ Tennent, *Sermon*, 19.

⁹⁰ Tennent, *Sermon*, 22. Emphasis as in the original text.

Protestant religion and keep God's favor over the people of Britain and her colonies.

Tennent the reformer further opined, "The great Influence of Authority properly exerted, and enforced by good Example from the THRONE...promote[s] national REFORMATION..."⁹¹ Despite this change in focus away from the king's secular power and toward the king's personal religious example, Tennent never challenged the institution of monarchy in this sermon. Instead, he viewed the monarch as an exemplar of piety for others to follow. Interestingly, the king wielded less real power by 1761: in the preceding decades, throughout the reigns of Kings George I and II, the new office of Prime Minister had eroded royal executive power. Despite the loss of real political power, the king still served as a potent symbol of Britain and of political power; otherwise, Tennent would not have utilized George III as an example of Christian leadership.

The sermons and poems published throughout the colonial period provide an ongoing conversation about monarchy, helping to establish and maintain the common understanding of the monarchy as a reciprocal, patronage-type relationship between king and subject. The preservation of this relationship insured the maintenance of a stable government, and prevented the establishment of an absolutist, non-reciprocal Catholic monarchy over the Protestant British realm. From the spiritual authority of the pulpit, colonial clergymen chose to extol their monarch, thereby exhorting their congregations to

⁹¹ Tennant, *Sermon*, 25. Emphasis as in the original text.

accept both the king's limited authority and, by extension, the monarchical system that the king represented. The publication and dissemination of the sermons expanded the messages' impact beyond the listening congregation, into the minds of literate colonists who read the pamphlets.

European Americans, though, usually wrote their sermons and poems for other European Americans, who represented only one group living in British North America. Another group, Native Americans, paradoxically evoked fear, admiration, condescension, negotiation, and threats from European Americans.⁹² European Americans often invoked monarchy in order to give "official" power to their dealings with Natives, and to assimilate Natives into a European worldview.

⁹² See Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

IV. Englishmen and Indians

An examination of monarchial authority in the relationship between the European Americans and Native Americans demonstrates and complements the ideas about monarchy featured in the colonial publications. The story of American settlement did not begin with the establishment of Jamestown in 1607: those who ventured to America did not find an uninhabited paradise of forests, swamps, and grasslands. Distinct societies of peoples already claimed the land of “Virginia” as their own. A look at the relations between Europeans and Native Americans illustrates the importance colonists placed on recreating the English social order. Native Americans, usually called “savages” by Englishmen, employed their own rules about societal order. The forms of governments found among Native American tribes are nearly as varied and as many in number as the tribes themselves. However, one must remember that English-style social relations were not identical to social relations in Native American societies. Nevertheless, Englishmen imposed their understanding of social hierarchy on the observed relationships between these Native people.

Generally, chiefs of each Native American tribe in the newly christened land of Virginia recognized a *mamanatowick*, or paramount chief, as his ultimate authority figure. For instance, the earliest tribe encountered by Englishmen in

1585, the Roanoacs, recognized a chief named Wingina.⁹³ Around Wingina there lived four men of “special influence” who appeared to assist in governing Wingina’s territory: his father (from whom he inherited his position), his brother, and two advisors of special rank, Manteo and Wanchese.⁹⁴ While the inheritance of power from father to son mirrors somewhat the English tradition of royal primogeniture, the English left us no elaboration on the power structure of Native American tribes. In fact, from the very beginning of English settlement Englishmen used terms from English society to describe the relationships in Native American society.

Sir Walter Raleigh obtained a patent from Queen Elizabeth I in 1584 that allowed for “the discovering and planting of new lands and Countreys.”⁹⁵ After he christened the newly found land “Virginia” in the queen’s honor, the discovery garnered Raleigh a knighthood. When the ill-fated 1585 expedition to Roanoke Island (in present-day North Carolina) made contact with the natives, Captain Arthur Barlowe referred to a tribal elder in his journal as the brother of the “king.”⁹⁶ The use of the appellation “king” placed the English concept of royal status on the tribal chief, despite the differences between English society and Native American society. However, except for the expedition’s chronicler

⁹³ David Stick, *Roanoke Island: The Beginnings of English America* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 131.

⁹⁴ Stick, *Roanoke*, 132-133.

⁹⁵ Qtd. in Felix Pryor, *Elizabeth I: Her Life in Letters* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 85.

⁹⁶ Qtd. in Giles Milton, *Big Chief Elizabeth: How England’s Adventurers Gambled and Won the New World* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), 58.

Thomas Harriot, the leaders of the Roanoke expedition did not study Native American culture or language.⁹⁷ Over the subsequent years and decades, the indiscriminate and often inappropriate usage of titles like “Indian King” or “Indian Princess” led to numerous misunderstandings between English settlers and Native Americans.

In April 1586, tribal chiefs in the areas near Roanoke Island accepted Queen Elizabeth as their “Weroanza,” a title that meant “Big Chief” to the Native Americans. The English leaders of the colonial effort appear to have understood the title as more akin to the European notion of “Empress,” indicative of domination by the monarch of one realm over a foreign realm. Elizabeth’s new imperial status held important implications in the minds of new English settlers: it established the central authority of the monarch and her government over the untamed land and “savage” people of America. As might be expected, the English did not consider the Natives equal to them as the queen’s fellow subjects.⁹⁸ Instead, they seem to have regarded the Natives as a kind of conquered people, under the purview of the Queen, but not full subjects as such.

In 1607, years after the failed attempt to establish an English settlement on Roanoke Island, a more successful colonial expedition founded Jamestown. Another misunderstanding between Native Americans and Englishmen occurred

⁹⁷ Milton, *Big Chief Elizabeth*, 175-178.

⁹⁸ Jenny Hale Pulsipher, “‘Subjects...Unto the Same King’: New England Indians and the Use of Royal Political Power,” *The Massachusetts Historical Review*, vol. 5 (2003): <http://www.historycooperative.org>.

when Captain Christopher Newport sought to claim formally the area of Jamestown for King James I. Newport “sett up a crosse with this inscription, Jacobus Rex, 1607, and his owne name belowe” after which “we prayed for our kyng and our owne prosperous success in this his action, and proclaimed him kyng with a greate showte.”⁹⁹ Natives began to admire the cross, not realizing that their homeland had just been formally annexed to the British crown. To avoid potential conflict and hide the truth, Newport lied, telling the Natives “that the two armes of the crosse signified Kyng Powhattan and himself.”¹⁰⁰

The Powhatan, a very powerful tribe of Native Americans, lived in Tenakomakah (called Virginia by the English) at the time of the first English-Native encounters. Chief Powhatan (c. 1550-1618), properly named Wahunsunacock or Wahunsenacawh, served as the leader of the Powhatan (also spelled *Powatan* and *Powhaten*). *Powhatan* was originally the name of his home village, as well as the river it sat upon (called the James River by the English). When he created a powerful empire by conquering most of tidewater Virginia, he called himself the *Powhatan*, often taken by the English as his given name. Actually a Native title, *Powhatan* became a name preceded by the title of 'Chief', 'King' or 'Emperor' when interpreted by the English. Beyond the misnomer of “King” Powhatan, the aforementioned incident with the cross illustrates the vast difference in understanding between Englishmen and Natives.

⁹⁹ Qtd. in Milton, *Big Chief Elizabeth*, 303.

¹⁰⁰ Milton, *Big Chief Elizabeth*, 303.

The Englishmen attached religious and hegemonic symbolism to the planting of the cross: in one action, the new land became English *and* Christian. Natives, who did not understand the English concept of Kingship, much less the Christian religion, readily accepted an outrageous lie as the explanation for the cross's erection.

As the 17th century progressed, so did the English annexation of Native American lands for use by the trickle, and then the flood, of British settlers. In 1662, ostensibly to assuage the outrage of tribes who found their land confiscated, the Virginia Assembly ordered badges made for the "kings" of the various Indian tribes "within our protection."¹⁰¹ The badges, made of silver and copper, bore the inscription "Ye King of [the tribe to which the wearer belonged]." By producing these badges, the white colonists persisted in their imposition of the English notion of kingship onto the leaders of local Native tribes. Further, the wearing of the badge compares to the badges of knighthood or chains of state worn by officials back in Britain. However, the badges came to take on a sinister guise when the Assembly passed the resolution that none of the Indian inhabitants could "presume upon what occasion soever to come within the legally established English bounds without those badges upon them or one with a badge

¹⁰¹ Graham Hood, "In Small Things Remembered," *The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, Autumn 2005, 53.

in their company.”¹⁰² It seems the English claims of protection actually meant domination.

Perhaps the incident that best portrays both the exploitation of the monarchical authority concept and the British misunderstanding of the Native American relations occurred during the reign of Queen Anne in 1710. The incident also illustrates the power of early eighteenth century marketing and political maneuvering. The affair involved the appearance of “Queen Anne’s American Kings,” a small cadre of four Natives taken to London and feted as “Her Majesty’s Loyal American Indian Kings.”¹⁰³ The “kings” became political pawns for white interests, and a source of fascination and sensationalism among the British public. Queen Anne’s “Indian Kings” gained wide currency and credibility in England because the English, like their colonial American counterparts, understood the concept of a hierarchical, monarchical society, which allowed colonial leaders to manipulate both the British Crown and British public in order to obtain government largess and notoriety for the colonies. While the incident of the American kings represents just one occurrence in time, the manner in which the kings found their reception in England provides us with an understanding of European-Native American relations in the early 18th century.

By the time of the kings’ trip to England in 1710, the numbers of Europeans in British North America had increased substantially from the

¹⁰² Qtd. in Hood, *Small Things*, 53.

¹⁰³ *The Four Indian Kings Speech to Her Majesty* (London: 20 April 1710), Broadside sheet. Microfiche.

approximately 200 souls who settled Jamestown in 1607. While estimates of the white population of British North America vary widely, the average estimate finds about 300,000 whites. With the substantial increase in people of European descent, conflicts previously confined to Europe began to spill into North America. The struggle of the English and the French in the War of Spanish Succession reached America as Queen Anne's War, with inhabitants of British New York perceiving nearby French Canadians as a threat to security.¹⁰⁴

Colonel Peter Schuyler, a leader of New York, along with two other white notables hatched a plan to send a small group of Native American "Kings" to petition Queen Anne. While the kings' petition called for a close alliance between England and the tribes represented by the "kings," it also sought money and arms.¹⁰⁵ The white colonial leaders hoped to use any money and/or arms gained by the Kings for a strike against the French Canadians at Acadia. In fact, European leaders of New York had planned a "Glorious Enterprise," a scheme to conquer New France through a land and naval assault by the combined forces of Britain, New York, and its native allies.¹⁰⁶ To obtain Britain's military support, the "kings" pledged fealty on behalf of the tribes that each "king" allegedly led.

¹⁰⁴ Richmond P. Bond, *Queen Anne's American Kings* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1952), 17.

¹⁰⁵ *The Four Indian Kings Speech*, London: 20 April 1710. Broadside. Microfiche. Emphasis as in the original.

¹⁰⁶ Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 225.

The Indian “kings” lived in different tribes of the Iroquois League. The origins of the League remain shrouded in myth and legend, but by the early sixteenth century, the League had taken form. The League’s leadership derived from a Grand Council of fifty Sachems from the clans of the major villages of the Five Nations, with the Onondaga tribe’s leader as moderator.¹⁰⁷ The League met yearly to resolve complaints among member tribes and exchange ritual gifts in a sign of respect among the tribes.¹⁰⁸ Despite this organization, European-Americans ignored the arrangement when hatching the plan to present Indian “kings” to the British government and public.

Unknown to the queen and the British government, a problem existed: none of the “kings” presented to Queen Anne were actual kings. Colonel Schuyler chose the Native men based on appearance, health, willingness to travel, and reliable conduct, with only a passing glance at their tribal status.¹⁰⁹ In truth, the Natives’ titles, as presented to the queen, British government, and public, represented grandiosity rather than accuracy.¹¹⁰ Indeed, at best all of them served as only minor sachems in the tribes they represented.¹¹¹ It appears that only one of the men billed as “kings” actually possessed any real authority in the eyes of his tribesmen.

¹⁰⁷ Richter, *Ordeal*, 39.

¹⁰⁸ Richter, *Ordeal*, 39.

¹⁰⁹ Bond, *American Kings*, 38.

¹¹⁰ Bond, *American Kings*, 39.

¹¹¹ “Sachems” were chiefs in Algonquin tribes.

This Native man called “emperor Hendrick” was Te Yee Neen Ho Ga Prow, a *bona fide* Mohawk leader who often appears in the historical record; Hendrick even visited England again and received a gold-fringed green coat from King George II in 1740.¹¹² “King John of Ganajahhore” (Oh Nee Yeath Ton No Prow) disappeared from the historical record after his visit. Likewise, “King Brant of the Maquas” (Sa Ga Yean Qua Prah Ton) and “King Nicholas of the River Nation” (Elow Oh Kaom) had little or no prominence after returning from England.¹¹³ The fading into obscurity of three of the Indian kings underscores their lack of importance to their tribes and to the colonists who used them.

The flippant translation of “sachem” into “king,” and the fact that the “kings” hosts in England did not know the difference, demonstrates the Anglo-centric nature of the understanding of Native societal structure. The European Americans imposed a European form of governmental authority on the sachems in order to display them to Englishmen. By labeling the men as “kings,” the European Americans tapped into the supremacy of a role that was widely understood by the queen, her government, and her people. The fact that Native American tribes were being represented and understood as “kings” added gravitas to their petition, making the queen and her government more likely to grant money and arms to them.

¹¹² Bond, *American Kings*, 40.

¹¹³ Bond, *American Kings*, 40.

The “kings” met Queen Anne on 19 April 1710, after a splendid procession to St. James’s Palace in two of the royal coaches.¹¹⁴ The “kings” speech, made through their interpreter Colonel Schuyler, quickly found its way into wide distribution via a printed broadside. In the speech, the Natives paid due deference to the English queen, demonstrating an understanding of the need for obedience in a hierarchical society (and testifying to the true, Anglo-American authorship of the speech):

“GREAT QUEEN! We have undertaken a long and tedious Voyage, which none of our Predecessors could ever be prevail’d upon to undertake. The Motive that induc’d us was, that we might see our GREAT QUEEN, and relate to Her those things we thought absolutely necessary for the Good of HER and us Her Allies, on the other side of the Great Water.”¹¹⁵

In order to give a sense of urgency to their request, the Native “kings” speech concluded by raising the specter of Catholic conversions among Her Majesty’s loyal Indian subjects. Like the sermons and poems of the time, the “threat” of Popery (real or imagined) helped elicit a reaction from a Protestant audience because, in the English mind, royal absolutism (and “bad” government) was connected to Catholicism and the Pope. Queen Anne and her government likely paid special attention to stymie the advancement of Catholicism because the queen’s Catholic half-brother¹¹⁶ had designs on Anne’s throne, especially since the queen had no surviving heirs. One need recall that the devotedly Protestant

¹¹⁴ Bond, *American Kings*, 1.

¹¹⁵ *The Four Indian Kings Speech*, Broadside. Microfiche. Emphasis as in the original.

¹¹⁶ Prince James Edward Stuart, the son of King James II and Mary of Modena

Queen Anne inherited the British throne due to the 1688 overthrow of her Catholic father, King James II, by her Protestant brother-in-law William of Orange. As would any ruler who gained power because of a *coup d'état*, Anne probably sat uneasily on her throne and jealously guarded it against any usurpers.

The spread of Catholicism in the New World could threaten the legitimacy of Queen Anne's rule and prevent the smooth transition of power to the Electors of Hanover upon her death, as had been decided by the 1701 Act of Settlement.

The Indian "kings" stated:

"Since we have been in Alliance with our *Great Queen's* Children [the colonists], we have some Knowledge of the *Saviour* of the World; and have often been importuned by the *French*, both by the insinuations of their Priests, and by Presents, to come over to their interest, but have always esteem'd them *Men of Falshood*: But if our *Great Queen* will be pleas'd to send some Persons to instruct us, they shall find a most hearty Welcome."¹¹⁷

The Catholic threat evidently caught the queen's attention more than the French Canadian threat did: on the day the queen received the "kings," she ordered her Secretary of State to refer the "kings'" request for religious instruction to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.¹¹⁸ The Archbishop and the Society created a program to convert the Iroquois, spending a sizeable sum of money to send missionaries to the Iroquois, build churches, translate and distribute Bibles, and (curiously) urge the

¹¹⁷ *The Four Indian Kings Speech*, Broadside. Microfiche. Emphasis as in the original.

¹¹⁸ Bond, *American Kings*, 7.

colonial governors to execute laws against selling intoxicating liquors to the Indians.¹¹⁹

These kings also helped the white colonists obtain Britain's official blessing and supplies for a preemptive strike on French Canada. In the summer of 1711, a massive British military expedition involving some 12,000 American colonists and about 800 Native Americans set sail from Boston in 60 transports and 9 men-of-war bound for the French stronghold of Quebec. Unfortunately, in the darkness and swift currents of the St. Lawrence, several of the British ships ran aground on the Île-aux-Oeufs, necessitating the expedition's abandonment.¹²⁰

However, beyond the false kings and the "gifts" they obtained, the visit to England stirred public excitement usually reserved for events like coronations. Once the royal audience ended, the "kings" entered a strenuous round of official events, a grand tour of London, and became themselves a spectacle to the city's mobile populace.¹²¹ Songs, plays, and poems written around the "Four Indian Kings lately arriv'd" found receptive audiences all over London and, as time passed, greater parts of England. The king's portraits came to adorn people's homes: fine reproductions of their commissioned portraits for the rich, and inexpensive broadside copies for the poor. For the British, the kings transformed into a symbol of the Britishness that had spread into the wider world. The fealty

¹¹⁹ Bond, *American Kings*, 8.

¹²⁰ Bond, *American Kings*, 50-54.

¹²¹ Bond, *American Kings*, 3.

paid by the American kings took on a special meaning. Because the public understood that kings sat at the pinnacle of society, the fact that Native American kings paid homage to the English queen raised her status in the minds of her British subjects. No longer was their queen just a queen of England. Instead, she had become the empress of a foreign land, with American “kings” under her purview. The idea of British control over a foreign people surely stroked the pride of the British public: no small feat for obscure Native men from the backwoods of an obscure colonial outpost.

The understanding of Queen Anne as “Empress” of America did not mean that (white) English Americans understood themselves to be subjects of an Empress. Instead, white colonists continued to identify themselves as “Britons” even though they did not live on the British Isles. To this end, they championed their British monarch, heaping praise on him or her in print, in public rites and festivals, and in the usage of monarchical symbolism in the material culture.¹²²

¹²² McConville, *King's Three Faces*, 9.

V. Making the Abstract Concept of Monarchy Real

While sermons and imaginary Indian kings created and maintained abstract ideas about monarchy in the minds of American colonists, the physical sphere could also emphasize and extol the monarchical system. The present-day Virginia lowcountry, at least geographically, still honors Great Britain's royal family: county names include Prince George, King William, and Prince Edward; river names include the James (for James I of England) and the Elizabeth (for Princess Elizabeth, eldest daughter of James I); and place names include Jamestown and Williamsburg. Indeed, Virginia itself bears the name Elizabeth I of England, history's famous "virgin" queen.

A visit to the restored and preserved Colonial Williamsburg provides a look at the means by which an eighteenth century colonist reified his views of monarchy. This symbolism, architecture, portraiture, and decoration found throughout Williamsburg convey this understanding. Williamsburg serves as a unique tool for the historian: no other colonial American town has its entire original site preserved, reconstructed, and interpreted to the extent found in Colonial Williamsburg. Further, the town served as the capital of Virginia, the most populous and economically important colony of the British North American mainland colonies. Thus, modern visitors may immerse themselves in a town that represented an important provincial power-center in the southern British colonies. Given the paucity of written sources related to monarchy in the

southern colonies, Colonial Williamsburg gives an opportunity to gauge the relative importance of monarchy in the South. Finally, since the carefully restored town reflects the year 1774, the prominence of monarchical symbols lends credence to the argument that colonists remained loyal to the king even on the eve of the Revolution.

The plan for the town of Williamsburg emphasized royal supremacy over the capitol city and, hence, over the Virginia colony. The original town plan featured an intertwined W and M (for William and Mary) in its center.¹²³ The name of the main street through the town, “Duke of Gloucester,” honors Princess (later Queen) Anne’s son, the youngest Protestant Stuart in line for Britain’s throne.¹²⁴ Public buildings surrounding the town emphasized the reality of patronage and hierarchy in eighteenth-century society; the prominent placement of the Governor’s Palace, capitol building, church, and courthouse, buildings that housed institutions of monarchical power, all testified to the monarch’s prerogative and beneficence. The architecture and decoration of these public buildings furthered the idea of monarchical supremacy.

No structure in Williamsburg expressed royal power better than the Governor’s Palace. In the eighteenth century, the central palace building represented the grandest interpretation of a structure in the “Georgian” Virginia style, an architectural style favored by the colony’s elite when building their own

¹²³ Marcus Whiffen, *The Public Buildings of Williamsburg: Colonial Capital of Virginia* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg, 1958), 9.

¹²⁴ Whiffen, *Public Buildings*, 10. This son predeceased his mother.

homes.¹²⁵ The palace set itself apart from other Williamsburg buildings by its tremendous lawn, which drew the eye to an impressive, almost crown-shaped, brick palace complex. Since the present-day Governor's Palace stands as a completely rebuilt structure, site planners took great pains for accuracy in its representation of the eighteenth century emphasis on monarchy. As the interior represents an expert recreation from the inventory of Royal Governor Botetourt, a historian may rest assured that the rooms (s)he sees accurately reflects the rooms an eighteenth-century visitor saw.

Upon arriving at the palace, an imposing brick, wrought iron, and gilt gateway "greeted" any visitor. The ironwork, a series of curlicues and intertwined gilt crowns, ultimately formed the King's cipher, GIIIR (for *Georgius III Rex*), prominently in the center. Carved stone symbols of the lion and the unicorn, taken from the British royal arms, flanked the columns that form the gateway. Each of these heraldic forms themselves wore a crown and held a shield; the lion grasped the shield of England that features three lions, and the unicorn bore a shield combining Scotland's symbolic lion and France's fleur-de-lis. The message made a clear impression to the visitor: passing these gates brings a subject into the King's powerful presence through His Majesty's governor. Atop the palace itself, the building's crown-like cupola bore a weathervane emblazoned with the cipher GIIIR. Atop the weathervane, a gilded crown sat at

¹²⁵ Graham Hood, *The Governor's Palace in Williamsburg: A Cultural Study* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg, 1991), 38.

the highest point in town, and transmitted the message that the King reigned supreme in this place.

Once admitted to the palace, the visitor waited in an entrance hall decorated with some 540 rifles, handguns, and swords symmetrically arranged over the walls and the ceiling. The weapons represented the crown's might, just as Virginia's Lieutenant Governor Spotswood, who directed the weapons' 1715 installation, had planned.¹²⁶ The visitor noticed the fine wood paneling and impressive marble flooring: such an ostentatious display conveyed power and wealth. This already overwhelming room featured a huge, gilded version of the King's coat-of-arms, prominently displayed over the hearth. An obligatory symbol for all government buildings, courthouses, and churches, royal coats-of-arms reminded those present that the king kept the order and provided for the defense of the realm.¹²⁷ Over the passageway directly in front of the visitor hung Union flags and flags of the King's regiments; again, more symbols of royal supremacy and might.

The visitor of sufficient rank followed a valet upstairs to the "Middle Room," a space that modern Americans would term an "office." The placement of the Middle Room, on the second story and at the center of the house, showed a calculated study in superiority in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth

¹²⁶ Hood, *Governor's Palace*, 80.

¹²⁷ Hood, *Governor's Palace*, 88.

centuries.¹²⁸ The room's height from the ground and central location suggested the governor's appropriate "condescension" to the town; from this vantage point, the King's representative could stand and observe the goings-on of the surrounding town.¹²⁹ Like the entrance hall, the office dazzled with rich appointments and featured gilded leather wallpaper and an impressively large inlaid desk for the governor. Gazing down from the ceiling at corner of the room, a marble bust of George III reminded everyone of the King's dominance and preeminence. Descending the staircase from the governor's "Middle Room" office, the visitor observed another version of the King's arms positioned at eye-level to anyone coming down the stairs.

Entering the ballroom further immersed the visitor in royal symbolism. As the central location of ceremony and celebration for the elite until the end of the colonial era, the ballroom served to remind the elite that their status depended on their acquiescence to the King and his representative. The brightly painted and gilded initials GIIIR crowned the elaborate doorframes. The near end of the ballroom featured life-sized portraits of King Charles II and Queen Catherine, presumably a reminder of the order brought to England and America by the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660. At the far end of the room, where the governor and his lady stood to receive ball guests, hung life-sized portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte. Eighteenth-century visitors curtsied or

¹²⁸ Hood, *Governor's Palace*, 100.

¹²⁹ Hood, *Governor's Palace*, 100.

bowed to the portraits of George and Charlotte as they passed in the receiving line; this act paid homage to the monarchs, even if they were not physically present to receive it.¹³⁰

In the gardens outside the palace, where many politicians negotiated “deals” among a maze of foliage and flowers, the visitor observed a very elaborate, gilded version of the King’s arms over the backdoor of the palace. This seemed to remind the visitor, as he strolled the gardens, who controlled the place he strolls. As any 18th-century palace garden strollers undoubtedly represented the upper crust of colonial society, the King’s arms also reminded them that their own status originated from the monarch, giver of all dignities.

In addition to the Governor’s Palace, the capitol building also conveyed the monarch’s preeminence over the colony. Over the building’s main entranceway the cipher AR (for *Anna Regina*), carved in stone, reminded those council members entering the building of the monarch they served. Inside the building, meetings came into session by invoking the King’s (or Queen’s) name and shouting “God Save the King (or Queen).” This invocation reminded representatives that they advised the monarch (via the governor) through their positions. The Governor’s Council chamber, a kind of power *sanctum sanctorum* decorated with elaborate wall decorations and oversized, elaborately carved chairs and table, evoked the power that the governor and his council wield in the monarch’s name. Had any ordinary colonist gained admission to this room,

¹³⁰ Hood, *Governor’s Palace*, 169-170.

(s)he would understand the amount of the power the monarch entrusted to his or her representatives; indeed the Council's members probably found the room an impressive show of status and dignity. Gazing down from the wall, a portrait of Queen Anne reminded the council members from whom their power originated.

The capitol building recreated in Colonial Williamsburg traces its design from the original building built during Queen Anne's reign. This original building burned in 1747. However, less evidence survives for the design of the 1750s replacement capitol building.¹³¹ Since the recreated structure does not date from the eve of the revolution, as the rest of Colonial Williamsburg is supposed to do, portraits of American patriots and facsimiles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution used to flank the walls of the Council chamber.¹³² However, recent efforts by Colonial Williamsburg have led to a more accurate representation of the way the building would have looked during Queen Anne's reign.

Turning to religious worship, the 18th-century colonist found monarchy and its hierarchical structure alive and well in Bruton Parish Church. The current structure dates to about 1713, and a levy of 20,000 pounds of tobacco paid for its construction (*i.e.*, royal government funds through a tax levy on the people).¹³³

The communion silver (not displayed but still sometimes used) bears the arms

¹³¹ Whiffen, *Public Buildings*, 138.

¹³² Carl Lounsbury, "Ornaments of Civic Aspiration: The Public Buildings of Williamsburg," in *Williamsburg: A City Before the State, 1699-1999*, ed. Robert P. Maccubbin (Williamsburg, VA: City of Williamsburg, 2000), 32.

¹³³ Whiffen, *Public Buildings*, 77-79.

and cipher of King George II, as they were a gift from His Majesty to the parish. This royal symbolism embodied the king's role as Head of the Church, with the result being that the colonial communicant received the body and blood of Christ from silver bearing the King's arms and cipher. Indeed, in this instance the king served as a sort of intermediary between the people and God, further extolling the importance of the monarchical institution in the eyes of each parishioner. The governor sat in a large, upholstered, canopy-covered chair, symbolizing his position as the monarch's representative. Around the governor, his council sat inside a boxed area, partitioned off today by brass railings.¹³⁴ As the governor's "box" is more prominent than even the altar, the visitor understands the importance of His Majesty's representative. In colonial times, a screen partially partitioned off the box area, allowing privacy for the governor and his council while "worshipping." This special seating area, separate from the common people, enhanced the dignity and mystery of the king's representative.

In the modern church, a niche over the altar contains organ pipes. In colonial times, the King's coat-of-arms and cipher would have occupied the niche, again reminding colonists of His Majesty's position as head of the Church. In addition, the soundboard over the pulpit, in colonial days, formed a crown-like shape, whereas it shows a plain façade in the modern church. The crown over the pulpit perhaps gave gravitas to the words spoken by the church's minister. A docent explains that since the church-building still houses a working Church, and

¹³⁴ Whiffen, *Public Buildings*, 77-79.

is not a part of Colonial Williamsburg *per se*, Bruton Parish has not been totally restored to its 1774 appearance. However, when taken with information provided by docents, enough of the original colonial decoration remains to draw conclusions about the church building's role in reinforcing the idea of royal supremacy over the church.

The local courthouse further reinforces monarchy and hierarchy. In colonial times, "common people" stood behind the wooden bar dividing the building. When called to give testimony or make a plea, the petitioner or defendant stood just outside the bar and removed his hat in the justices' presence. The justices sat on a raised platform, while the judge reposed in a large imposing chair which bears a sort of triangular decoration at the top. The chair, therefore, appeared to point upward to the King's coat-of-arms and cipher, prominently painted at the highest point of the back wall. Here the coat-of-arms portrayed the same message, as did it in other buildings: it reminded all who saw it of the source of peace and justice. All trials dispensed justice in the King's name, with a rousing cry of "God Save the King" at the beginning and ending of the court's proceedings. The courthouse remained in use, with the bar and royal arms removed, by local government until the 1930s, when it became a museum.¹³⁵ The courthouse reacquired its 18th-century appearance in a 1989 restoration. Thus, the courthouse accurately reflects the appearance and symbolism it conveyed to a colonist.

¹³⁵ Lounsbury, *Ornaments*, 37.

Outside of the public buildings, various townsmen increased their prestige by utilizing symbols of monarchy. Wealthy individuals made their homes in close proximity to the Governor's Palace, constructing homes that complemented, but did not overpower, the grandeur of the palace.¹³⁶ The close proximity of one's own home to the King's representative gave the homeowner a sort of proximity to the King himself; this proximity showed one's high status on the hierarchical scale. However, one must have made sure his home does not overpower the Governor's Palace, so as not to offend the Governor's (and, therefore, the King's) preeminent position and prerogative: excessive display, colonists surely recalled, historically led to the downfall of an "over-mighty" subject.

In commerce, associating one's goods with a royal symbol conveyed prestige on the goods. The tavern-keeper near the Capitol on Duke of Gloucester Street named her establishment "The King's Arms," with a boldly painted sign featuring the King's arms. The china used to serve the diner featured the King's arms as well. This association with the King gave prestige to the establishment, making it a socially acceptable and desirable place to dine or lodge.¹³⁷ Indeed, The King's Arms Tavern became a favorite spot for the colonial elite and gentry on the eve of the revolution.

¹³⁶ Mark R. Wenger, "Boomtown: Williamsburg in the Eighteenth Century," in *Williamsburg: A City Before the State, 1699-1999*, ed. Robert P. Maccubbin (Williamsburg, VA: City of Williamsburg, 2000), 43.

¹³⁷ Wenger, Boomtown, 46-47.

Based on the prevalence of monarchical symbols, as well as the symbols' usage by the common folk, one may ascertain that the King continued to be an important symbol to Colonial Virginians, even as late as 1774. While the colonists were beginning to groan with dissatisfaction over the British Parliament's perceived exploitation, colonists appeared to be loyal to King George III himself and the system of hierarchy.

VI. Conclusion and Epilogue

Historians sometimes argue against the importance of the monarchy and the monarch to the average British North American colonist. The king, they maintain, existed on a faraway island and was thus irrelevant. Most recent works, however, have endeavored to explain and characterize monarchy in colonial America. Gordon Wood, in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, characterizes eighteenth century America as a monarchical society in order to demonstrate the dramatic shift in the way Americans constructed their society after the American Revolution. Likewise, Richard Bushman's *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* describes the bonds between colonists and their monarch in order to show how republicanism arose amid the ashes of a monarchical culture. Brendan McConville, dismissing these notions as "whiggish" and "teleological,"¹³⁸ claims his work is different because he does not treat American monarchy as a prelude to republican representative government. However, McConville's interpretation often seems to reduce the king and the monarchy to mere symbols, or vague notions ("faces"), which meant very different things to different people.

Wood and Bushman make valuable contributions to our understanding of monarchy and its place in colonial America, but I believe McConville has a valid criticism of both Wood and Bushman. Despite their claims to the contrary, Wood

¹³⁸ McConville, *King's Three Faces*, 3 n.2

and Bushman frame their analyses with an eye toward the Revolution and its republican aftermath, as both books seek to explain how republicanism emerged from monarchical America. Like McConville, I view the monarchy and monarchical society on its own terms, interpreting evidence without looking forward to the American republic. However, I differ with McConville's assertion that the monarchy held completely different, somewhat vague meanings for different groups. Instead, I view the monarchy as a kind of common vernacular; a widely held and widely understood set of attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs about the way society was arranged, maintained, and governed.

The sermons and poems published during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mixed religion and monarchy freely, and instructed the people on how to be good and loyal Christian subjects of the king. Like publishers today, colonial printers only published material they deemed marketable. One may suppose that people actually bought and read the published sermons and poems; had the messages about monarchy been irrelevant, people would not have bought the papers and printers would not have published them. Indeed, many sermons and poems found publication because of consumer demand. For these sermons and poems to sell and be popular, they had to express common assumptions and views that were widely held and understood by the public.

The monarchy represented an orderly societal system that encompassed all subjects. From the earliest settlements until the end of colonial times, colonists viewed relationships with Native Americans through the distinctly

English prism of monarchical order, often with the goal of placing Indians under the king's authority as a kind of conquered people under an Emperor, but not as full British subjects with an equal status to white colonists. To this end, submission to the English monarch oftentimes marked the first step at "civilizing" these "savage" people. Furthermore, the farce of Queen Anne's "Indian Kings" gained wide currency and credibility in England because the English, like their colonial American counterparts, understood the concept of a hierarchical, monarchical society, allowing colonial leaders to manipulate both the British Crown and British public in order to obtain government largess and notoriety for the colonies.

Finally, the frequent use of physical monarchical symbols reminded colonists of their connection to Britain and the king, and lent prestige to businesses. Whether the king's arms appeared on a government building, a communion chalice, or a bottle of wig powder, the public understood the meaning behind the symbol, and imbued the symbol with notions of tradition and order. Especially in the commercial realm, had the monarchy been irrelevant or widely misunderstood, tavern keepers and shop owners would not have used monarchical symbols to tout the quality of their wares or services. The monarch, despite his or her distance from American shores, certainly did occupy an important place in the minds of pre-Revolutionary colonists by embodying common notions about supremacy and order.

However, unlike other British colonies, those that became the United States of America ended the institution of monarchy and broke away from British control in 1776. Colonists had been discontent with new levels of British taxation and control after the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, but colonists focused their wrath on local officials and Parliament.¹³⁹ However, by 1775, the king had labeled the colonies as “in rebellion,” and had sent troops that fired upon protesting colonists, thereby abrogating his role as patron of his subjects and the colonists’ reciprocal role as loyal subjects of the king.¹⁴⁰

When the Revolutionary War ended with the 1783 Treaty of Paris, America’s leaders carefully avoided creating an aristocracy and a monarchy despite the monarchical model’s prevalence in European governments at the time. Ostensibly, at least, the new nation would become relatively egalitarian, a complete rejection of the old understanding of royal authority. For those colonists devoted to the Revolutionary cause, the monarch transformed from a worshipped idol into the very epitome of evil. In fact, the Declaration of Independence charged the king himself with the perceived abuses of the British Crown, abuses that had once been accepted as monarchical perquisites.¹⁴¹ This action denigrated the king, and recast him as an abuser of colonists’ rights,

¹³⁹ McConville, *King’s Three Faces*, 286-287.

¹⁴⁰ McConville, *King’s Three Faces*, 290-293.

¹⁴¹ Wood, *Radicalism*, 174-175.

making him unfit to rule over America, and upending a social and political system once accepted in the colonies.¹⁴²

New York patriots, enflamed by the publishing of the Declaration of Independence, even attacked and “killed” the king in effigy. In 1770, a gilded lead equestrian statue of King George III had been erected on Bowling Green in New York City. After America declared its independence in 1776, a mob pulled down the statue, and broke it into pieces. The melted-down remains of the statue became 42,088 bullets for the patriotic cause.¹⁴³ Years after the fact, lithographs and paintings portraying the destruction of the statue still captured the American imagination: as late as 1859, American artists produced new renderings of the incident.¹⁴⁴ (In fact, an engraving made from the 1859 John McRae painting adorns even the Vintage trade paperback cover of Gordon Wood’s *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*.)

The revolutionary cause also adopted a medium formerly used to extol the monarch: poetry. A poem by “Americanus” appeared in the *Virginia Gazette* that examined royal “characteristics from Queen Elizabeth’s time to the present era.”¹⁴⁵ In addition to assessing the various monarchs who ruled America, the poem also calls for unity among all Americans against enemies of liberty. The poem extolled the rule of Queen Elizabeth (despite the fact no permanent

¹⁴² Wood, *Radicalism*, 175-176.

¹⁴³ “Where is King George’s Head?,” *The Sons of the American Revolution Magazine*, Winter, 1998: http://www.ctssar.org/articles/king_georges_head.htm

¹⁴⁴ “George’s Head,” http://www.ctssar.org/articles/king_georges_head.htm

¹⁴⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Williamsburg, VA. 15 June 1776

American colony existed during her reign), William of Orange, Anne, and George I and II. However, when commenting on George III, the poem turned decidedly negative:

“But GEORGE the third, a Papist grown, Both Church and State
has overthrown, The laws perverted, with intent T’enslave this
glorious continent: Yet shall he never gain his ends While BRAVE
AMERICANS are friends; But should they ever disunite, Farewell to
liberty and right. Ye SONS of FREEDOM, now exert Yourselves;
your children dear protect From foreign and domestic foes;
Encourage every heart that glows With ardour in his country’s
cause To crush the knaves that break our laws.”¹⁴⁶

Interestingly, despite the accession sermon’s lauding of George III’s Protestantism, poets during the Revolution sometimes labeled the king a “Papist,” perhaps as a reference to the Quebec Act of 1774, which gave French Canadians both the right to practice Catholicism freely and the ability to take an oath of allegiance without reference to Protestantism. The label of “Papist” was especially incendiary for colonists because it undermined the *raison d’être* of the Hanoverian royal line, which was the maintenance of a Protestant royal house, and, thus, a restrained, just government over Britain. “Papist” drew upon the old association of Catholicism with absolutist tyranny, helping meld King George III with the absolute monarchs of continental Europe, men who were anathema to traditional English national understandings of the relationship between the king and the people. Like the charges leveled in the Declaration of Independence and the symbolic act of “killing of the king,” the characterization of the king as a

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Emphasis as in the original text.

Catholic further denigrated George III in the eyes of his American subjects, providing yet another reason to resist his “unjust” government. With publications and actions like the ones above, the king became a target for long-standing American outrage at the British government’s policies toward its North American colonies.

The factors that led to the change from a monarchial to a republican mindset did not appear overnight, nor are they simple to understand and explain. However, Richard Bushman and Gordon Wood made great strides in explaining this mindset change. Bushman contends that Revolutionary leaders feared that monarchial government became despotic too easily, because those who acted in the king’s name seemed to work for their own benefit and aggrandizement, serving their patrons and themselves rather than the people they governed.¹⁴⁷ The merit of republican government, then, was that it gave to the people, rather than to the king, the power of appointment, thereby blending the interests of both the rulers and the people.¹⁴⁸ Wood argues that facets of republicanism already existed alongside monarchism in Britain and in British realms, largely due to the settlement around the 1688 installation of William and Mary by Parliament, and the *laissez-faire* attitude to English affairs demonstrated by Kings George I and II.¹⁴⁹ In America, the Revolution removed the monarchial ideas about society,

¹⁴⁷ Bushman, *King and People*, 227.

¹⁴⁸ Bushman, *King and Congress*, 228-229.

¹⁴⁹ Wood, *Radicalism*, 97-98.

while leaving behind the coexisting republican ideas.¹⁵⁰ The longstanding republican ideas, once brought to the surface, resulted in a government that rested on the consent of the governed and the responsibility to promote a unitary public interest.¹⁵¹

Further research into the circumstances and ideas around the American Revolution should help explain America's radical transformation from an obedient monarchy to a defiant republic. However, a clearer understanding of colonists' thoughts about their monarch and monarchy will enrich our understanding of the colonial Americans, and help us better understand their world on its own terms.

¹⁵⁰ Wood, *Radicalism*, 169.

¹⁵¹ Wood, *Radicalism*, 169 & 187-189.

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