

Political Fragmentation in Early Maryland and the Imperial Origins of North American Liberalism

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ABSTRACT

This essay locates the origins of American liberalism in the local politics of the early English empire. Maryland and its political discord in the seventeenth century provide a compelling case study of how imperial matters could affect politics on the local level. Settlers and colonial leaders in Maryland argued over how aristocratic or democratic the colony should be and placed those political preferences within the larger context of imperial success. This allowed English colonists to think about political power as a rightful benefit of their voluntary migration, which ushered into American politics a newly ambiguous and, at times, liberal treatment of self-interest. This article challenges the idea that the political thought in the colonies during this period was largely mimetic and reveals a distinct and polarized political discourse in North America as settlers mobilized the circumstances of colonization to challenge English norms.

In a promotional tract for Maryland, published in 1666 and entitled *A Character of the Province of Maryland*, the colony was declared to be “the Miracle of the Age.” The author of the text, George Alsop, defended such high praise by pointing out that, in a world full of so much religious and political tumult, Maryland provided an exemplar of societal stability. He followed this pronouncement by outlining the presence of two divisive political cultures that made Maryland’s politics, in actuality, the setting for some of the sharpest political discord in all of the English empire (Alsop 1666, 16). But it was in

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these conflicts, however, not in any imagined social harmony, that something new would emerge. Pushed to extremes by an acrimonious discourse, political actors in Maryland began to employ a new political language to help justify their aspirations. This language marked the beginnings of liberalism in America.¹

In the seventeenth century, political conflict throughout England and its colonies often broke down along democratic and aristocratic lines, but in Maryland, the parameters of these debates were expanding, making for a particularly contentious political discourse. On the side of aristocratic extremes was the colonial charter, which was unusual for the extensive powers that it granted to the proprietor of the colony, Lord Baltimore. The language of the charter emboldened the second Lord Baltimore, Cecilius Calvert, to pursue a governing authority in the colony that he recognized was exceptional in English politics. On the side of democratic extremes, on the other hand, was the Calvert family's open Catholicism, which fostered from Maryland's predominantly Protestant population a potent attack on aristocratic institutions, encouraging the colonists to pursue a democratic agenda that they too admitted stretched English norms. England's many towns, urban corporations, and colonial settlements were all full of political actors looking to make civil institutions either more

1. The scholarship on the liberal political thought in prerevolutionary America is extensive. For the seminal works on the influence of Lockean-liberal ideas on political discourse in America, see Hartz (1955) and Becker (1942). The works of these scholars, among others, established a "liberal" consensus regarding the ideological foundation of Anglo-American political traditions. In the 1950s and 1960s the interpretative framework faced a challenge from a new group of scholars, who de-emphasized Lockean liberalism in favor of a civic humanist republican tradition (Robbins 1959; Pocock 1975). Bernard Bailyn, in a related but distinct interpretation, also diminished the importance of Locke's influence, emphasizing instead the importance in the colonies of a particular strand of radical, oppositionist thought present in England during the eighteenth century (Bailyn 1967, 1968). The "liberal" consensus has not gone quietly, however, as scholars more recently have continued to find compelling evidence in North American politics of Lockean modes of thought and discourse (Appleby 1978; Diggins 1984; Pangle 1988; Dworetz 1990; Yirush 2011). For the defenders of the presence of liberal modes of thought in early American politics, though, the starting point is Locke and the colonists' adoption of his understanding of political rights based on natural rights or laws. This article argues for an earlier and more diverse understanding of the origins of liberalism in North America. The English empire had a role to play in these developments and could encourage liberal modes of political thought that predated Locke's *Second Treatise* and did not arise out of the early modern natural law tradition. Locating the origins of liberalism in the empire can offer a new and important context to Locke's own philosophical formulations and the reception of those ideas in the colonies. A broader understanding of North American liberalism can also offer one possible explanation to the lingering question of how America could have turned so liberal so quickly, even though Locke's writings were not common or particularly popular in the colonies for the first half of the eighteenth century (Dunn 1969).

democratic or more aristocratic, but in Maryland, the two sides had moved farther apart and were more opposed to each other.

As political actors admittedly sought political variations on English norms in Maryland and consequently looked for a way to justify their own unorthodoxy, they turned to their imperial participation, hoping to translate that involvement into local political power. The English empire enabled these kinds of political maneuverings. In the seventeenth century, English colonial efforts relied on the private and often reversible contributions of individuals, making their continued participation a powerful bargaining chip for those most important to the functioning of the empire. In Baltimore's view, wealthy investors like himself were clearly central to the colonial endeavor. It was their funds and leadership that were crucial to any attempts to colonize successfully. His democratic opponents, not surprisingly, understood things differently. The empire was most dependent on the average settler, who they claimed was doing the real work of colonization. Their own actions, both sides argued, were so essential that effective imperial policy demanded, above all else, that their particular contributions be sustained. In the contest over local political authority in Maryland, each side looked to benefit from its role as imperial actor.

The politicization of imperial participation, which could be particularly useful in the pursuit of political extremes in the colonies, infused Maryland's political discourse with liberal modes of thought that clashed with traditional, community politics. This was because the decision to participate in empire, unlike the expectations of those wielding political power over a community, included a self-interested component.² Both Baltimore and those opposed to proprietary authority freely acknowledged the role of self-interest in their decision to become imperial participants. Baltimore, for instance, argued that he would never have invested so much personal wealth in Maryland without being promised the public power necessary to protect his private interests. Without such promises, he would have withdrawn his support, dealing a crippling blow, in Baltimore's view, to Maryland's future prospects. His democratic opponents would make a different argument based on the same logic. For both sides, self-interest was transformed through one's imperial contributions into something good, something that needed to be protected by political power. This contrasted sharply with the conventional and foundational political premise that self-interest existed only in opposition to the common good and had no place in any justification of political authority.³ Precisely because the justification of political power was so different, this liberal language and its new understanding of

2. For the rising of the language of interest in the early modern political discourse, see Gunn (1969), Pincus (1998), and Houston and Pincus (2001, 1–19).

3. For the political salience of the classical conception of the common good in early English colonial efforts, see Fitzmaurice (2003).

self-interest could justify new liberties in America, which made it particularly attractive to political actors in Maryland because of the support that it could offer for their pursuit of political extremes.

Maryland's political developments in the seventeenth century hold an important place in the larger history of politics in the English colonies. Although there was much that was unique about Maryland, the liberal political argument that emerged in that setting was possible across the English empire. Colonists everywhere could attempt to use their contributions as self-interested imperial actors for political gain. Maryland's turbulent politics, exacerbated by the proprietor's Catholicism and the political vulnerabilities that it created, helped bring to the surface a fault line that existed throughout the English empire and in that way anticipated a colonial political culture that would exist beyond Maryland's notable particularities. In Maryland, this early emergence of liberal modes of political thought brought private interest into the public realm, helping to create a polarized public dialogue, rife with evidence in conventional terms of the worst kinds of corruption, while also serving to expand substantively the political boundaries of what was possible in the colony. The resulting instability in Maryland's politics, however, is better understood as precursor, not anomaly, in the history of colonial politics in North America, as its struggles would soon become the dominant features of colonial politics in the eighteenth century.⁴ Far short of the "miracle" proposed by Alsop or its opposite, Maryland's political fragmentation in the seventeenth century would actually function as an early example of what would soon become commonplace in North American politics.

Baltimore's broad claim to political authority was one source of Maryland's fragmented politics. Maryland's predecessor in the Chesapeake region, Virginia, had been riddled with early failures and frequent internal conflict, and for many, including Charles I, the primary reason had been the company's democratic organization. The proprietary charter granted to Lord Baltimore

4. In his foundational work on colonial politics in the eighteenth century, Bernard Bailyn described an American politics that in its outward characteristics had much in common with Maryland's seventeenth-century political history. For Bailyn, the defining feature of American politics was a contentiousness so severe that the colonists were constantly haunted by "the specter of catastrophe." A major factor in this persistent political conflict for Bailyn was the pursuit of political extremes, as colonial circumstances encouraged both a "presumptuous prerogative" and "an overgreat democracy" (Bailyn 1968, 106–7). This analysis resonates so aptly with Maryland's earlier political history that it opens up the possibility for an important point of intersection between Maryland's seventeenth-century experience and the larger contours of colonial politics more broadly considered in the eighteenth century.

in 1632 was an attempt to solve these earlier problems. The proprietor was given extraordinary powers so that Maryland would have a steady, virtuous, and singular leadership (Bliss 1990, 8–44). The charter was a key justification for the political authority that Baltimore sought in Maryland, which, much to his chagrin, was often challenged by settlers in the colony. Despite what Baltimore believed was a fair interpretation of the charter and a clear legal right, he put forth an additional defense of his authority based on a harsh appraisal of colonial populations. It was not only his charter that justified his personal authority. In Baltimore's view, the settler population was also unqualified to exercise any political influence, making any opposition to his authority in favor of more democratic institutions even more dubious. In his defense of his particular claim to authority in Maryland, Baltimore would present a broad understanding of colonial circumstances that could justify aristocratic political forms throughout the English empire.

Baltimore's political ambitions in Maryland were greatly encouraged by his proprietary charter and its language comparing his authority in Maryland to the bygone figures, the "Bishops of Durham." In a proclamation to the colony on August 26, 1649, Baltimore announced, "wee doe hereby declare that it is intended by our said charter that we should have all such Jurisdiction [in Maryland] as the Bishops of Durham at any tyme heretofore ever had, Exercised, or enjoyed, or might have exercised, or enjoyed in Temporalls within the Bishoprick or County Pallatine of Durham in the Kingdome of England" (Papenfuse 2006a, 263). The Bishops of Durham had been given sweeping power in medieval times, as a result of their location along the northern border and the royal powers thought necessary to protect their estates against hostile incursions from the Scots. That authority had disappeared from contemporary patents, but Baltimore had succeeded in having that language and its full meaning reconstituted in his charter, a fact he never tired of reminding the colonists of, especially in regard to the rights and privileges, or lack thereof, of the elected assembly in the colony (Lovejoy 1972, 73).

The claim to such expansive authority in Maryland was always controversial, but especially so during the interregnum, when Baltimore's governing aspirations ran counter to political developments in England. In 1653, he published a short tract, entitled *The Lord Baltemores Case*, and defended himself against the charge that he intended a "Monarchical Government," which critics charged was now "inconsistent with[in] this Commonwealth." In defending his chartered privileges, Baltimore downplayed just how unique his authority was in Maryland, but even then, he was forced to admit the presence of some exceptional powers. He began by pointing out that many of his powers were no different than those possessed by a manor lord in England, who also issued "writs," required "oaths of fealty" in their names, and had "great Roy-

alties and Jurisdictions,” for instance. Rather than attempt to deny completely the uncommon nature of his authority, however, he acknowledged certain exceptions to this comparison, admitting that “the power of making Lawes touching life and Estate,” the “power of pardoning,” and also the “negative Voice [in Maryland] in the making of Lawes” were indeed unique. He admitted that the political authority he sought in Maryland “may not be convenient for any one man to have in England” (Baltimore 1653, 8–9). Baltimore was determined to argue for the legitimacy of his exceptional authority in Maryland, not to deny it.

Baltimore’s pursuit of exceptional powers faced frequent opposition within the colony, a fact Baltimore often attributed to the lack of quality among Maryland’s settler population. Early on, he had envisioned a migration of the wealthy and well educated, which would have filled the colony with like-minded individuals who, he assumed, would surely have acknowledged the rectitude of his governing authority. The first wave of migrants met those expectations but did not last long, leaving Baltimore with few qualified candidates to fill important offices. Men like Robert Philpott, William Coxe, and Thomas Allen, all commissioners of Kent County, would never have qualified for analogous positions in England. Thomas Baldrige was a former servant who became sheriff in St. Mary’s County in the late 1630s, and Daniel Clocker, a justice of the peace in St. Mary’s County, was illiterate. In these early years, freeman-ship alone established eligibility for participation in the political process. The members of the assembly during this period were most often only of modest social origins, poorly educated, and sometimes landless or having only recently become property holders. They also proved difficult to control. There was significant turnover in the assembly, with a small percentage of members sitting in repeated assemblies, which gave Baltimore little to work with in terms of patronage and influence. The Maryland assemblymen, especially in the early years of the colony, had few claims to elite status and even fewer ties to the proprietor (Jordan 1987, 11–59; Walsh 2010, 124–31).

As Baltimore anticipated, given the lowly background of many of its members, the elected assembly frequently opposed his claims to authority. A key justification for the assembly in resisting Baltimore’s governing pretensions came through the assumption put forth by many settlers that Maryland’s political institutions should reflect the same principles embodied by England’s mixed constitution at home. The assembly repeatedly drew parallels between their powers and the privileges of Parliament and, through the comparison, justified their assertions of power on a range of issues. Baltimore and his subordinates challenged this comparison, as it represented, in their view, a misunderstanding of the rights of settlers in Maryland. The word “Parliament,” they claimed, never actually appeared in the charter, and they consciously

chose to use less suggestive language when referring to the representative body, such as “general assembly” (Jordan 1987, 28–29). Throughout this period, Baltimore, bolstered by his interpretation of the charter, consistently resisted any claim of legislative initiative by the assembly and asserted that all sessions were called and could be revoked at the pleasure of the proprietor.⁵ The boldest assertion of assembly power occurred in March of 1660, when its members declared that they judge “themselves to be a lawfull Assembly without the dependence on any other Power in the Province” (Papenfuse 2006a, 388). The proprietor’s governor, Josiah Fendall, could sit in the now unicameral assembly but had no additional powers outside of the right of a double vote (Jordan 1987, 56–59; Sutto 2008, 249–75). Baltimore soon recovered power in the colony, but these developments, even if in exaggerated form, gave clear evidence of an alternate vision for the colony, one that rejected his aristocratic governing agenda.

Faced with these types of challenges to his rightful authority in the colony, Baltimore often sought a broader justification for his exclusive governing agenda than one based only on the language of the charter. One method was to establish his own credentials to wield such broad powers over a community. For Baltimore, by his own appraisal, was perfectly virtuous and magnanimous in his exercise of authority. For anybody who was paying attention, he claimed, in the same proclamation of 1649, his every action as proprietor should have provided “sufficient Testimony” of his “sincere affection to [the Maryland colonists] and [his] reall desire to promote by all the fitting meanes that may be, their happiness and welfare.” He did not pursue a personal agenda and was always prepared to put the colonists’ “welfare before [his] owne particular advantage” (Papenfuse 2006a, 270–72). With such a virtuous disposition, the more political power that rested with him the better. His authority over the assembly ensured that his virtue would be the guiding light for the colony. So confident in this logic, Baltimore found it difficult to understand why “any Intelligent person that hold any thing vnder vs there should be soe blind” as to attack the rights of the proprietor (Papenfuse 2006a, 265). If Maryland’s settlers opposed Baltimore’s authority, they would be attacking someone whose only aim was their own good.

The people who did resist his rightful authority in Maryland were, Baltimore claimed, motivated by self-interested concerns. He was quick to spot private economic interests at play in any opposition to his authority. In 1649, for instance, he accused his detractors of having purchased large tracts of land

5. In the January–March 1637/38 session of the assembly, for example, Baltimore refused to approve a set of laws proposed by the assembly on the basis that the right of initiation lay solely with the proprietor (Jordan 1987, 34–43).

directly from native groups, but not yet having received official title from the proprietor. In an effort to gain legal title, they attacked Baltimore's leadership, seeking to inspire "Jellousies" among the colonists and so "exasperat" the people of the colony as to make them turn to "Violent proceedings, one against the other." The hoped-for result was chaos: by eliciting "division and faction" among the people of Maryland, they would leave the colony in such a confused state that they could then seize governmental control and secure their land claims. This was how Baltimore wanted political dissent and assembly intransigence to be understood in Maryland. Any attack on his virtuous leadership and rightful authority was done by people who sought to mislead the "well affected" and "Wellmeaneing" colonists through "subtile Suggestions" and "evvell intention" as they "pretended" to act on the "Peoples behalf." Their real goal was to make "themselues Lords and Masters of the Province" at the risk of "the ruine of all the People there"(Papenfuse 2006a, 262–72). Their protests were thinly veiled attempts to procure the political authority necessary to fulfill their private ambitions.

Baltimore's depiction of his political opponents had much in common with standard political rhetoric in England, but he sought to reorient these debates within a specifically colonial context. In England, local political actors, whether supporting a democratic or aristocratic agenda, attacked each other in mostly predictable ways. Those in pursuit of more democratic institutions accused community leaders of pursuing their own narrow economic agenda at the expense of the larger community, while those favoring aristocracy argued that a more inclusive government would give political power to unqualified individuals who were incapable of practicing virtue in the public realm.⁶ Baltimore's criticisms of his opponents were in line with how democratic pursuits were attacked in England, but he then included a colonial component, which he contended changed the nature of the debate in Maryland. He argued that settler populations of communities in America were inferior to those in England. In *Lord Baltemores Case*, he declared that Maryland's settlers were a prime example of this fact and were composed of "such necessitous factious people as usually new Plantations consist of" (Baltimore 1653, 10). For Baltimore, the colonies and England were not the same, and their political arrangements should reflect this fact.

By treating colonial space and its people as distinct, Baltimore created a new rationale for his pursuit of exceptional power in Maryland. He agreed

6. For one example of this political conflict in early modern England, see Phil Withington's examination of the town of Ludlow at the turn of the seventeenth century, which he argues serves as an illuminating example of the broader contours of the political discourse occurring across England's many cities and boroughs (Withington 2005, 51–84).

that the democratic institutions that his settlers demanded may well have made sense in England, but not in Maryland. The depth of the comparison was shallow, he contended, and did not justify extending the same institutions to North America. Elected assemblies in the colonies ceded political power to a sort of individual that never was nor intended to be empowered by the analogous English institutions. In fact, the general indictment of English settlers allowed Baltimore to turn back the charge of tyranny, so often levied in his direction, and apply it to his more democratically inclined opponents. In the 1649 proclamation, Baltimore discussed the “Oath of fidelity” in Maryland, and specifically its inclusion of the words “Absolute Lord and Proprietary.” Even though that title, Baltimore maintained, was given to him in the charter, he admitted that some people took it to “inferre a Slavery in the people there to [Lord Baltimore].” It was not his expansive powers, however, that posed the greatest risk to the liberties of the colonists, he maintained, but the misguided transference of English rights to America. The “direct Roade to bondage” and “true Slavery,” he maintained, with Maryland clearly in mind, “is vusually found in specious pretences of Preservation of Liberty” (Papenfuse 2006a, 263–65).⁷ For Baltimore, colonial populations were less capable of exercising political power, and that had to be reflected in American politics through more exclusive political institutions. The goal of a prosperous and stable community was the same in Maryland as it was in English localities, but the means to that end needed to be adjusted. Baltimore’s political powers, some of which he admitted were antiquated in England, were not so in Maryland. Political variation in the form of his increased personal authority was, instead, absolutely necessary.

Lord Baltimore was not alone in his attempt to account for political exceptions in Maryland. A political opposition arose in the colony that countered Baltimore’s pursuit of aristocracy, which had continued throughout the 1660s and 1670s. They contended, using all available Catholic stereotypes, that Charles Calvert was not virtuous, as he claimed to be, but was actually

7. Baltimore’s evocation here of the much-feared political “slavery” for both himself and his settlers was a common feature in the Anglo-American discourse at this time, and one that existed in heavy irony with the increasing presence of enslaved laborers in the English colonies. As Baltimore and the English settler population in Maryland fought against a loss of freedom in the political realm that they described as “slavery,” they were members of a community in Maryland and part of a larger empire that was actively enslaving Native American and African peoples. For an analysis of the problem in English politics of how to resist “slavery” in one context while supporting it in another, see Farr (2008).

part of a larger conspiracy to destroy Maryland and its Protestant population.⁸ With this perspective, they revisited his and his father's recent political activities in the colony and found ample evidence, not of beneficence, but of corruption. These political abuses had been made possible, in part, they claimed, by Maryland's distant location from the imperial center. Because abuses by powerful people could more easily go unnoticed in the colonies, so far away from imperial officials, democratic institutions were essential in America. This was the case put forth by the proprietor's political adversaries as they laid the intellectual groundwork for a justification of democratic extremes in Maryland.

In the decades leading up to the "Complaint" in 1676, Baltimore and his heir, Charles Calvert, who before becoming proprietor himself served as resident governor in the colony from 1660 to 1675, had looked to capitalize on Maryland's growing population to create a government that was more amenable to the due rights of the proprietor. The population in the 1630s and 1640s never exceeded 500 people, but by 1660 that number had climbed to 2,500 inhabitants, and within the next 15 years it would reach 13,000 (Land 1981, 58–59; Jordan 1987, 14). With this increase in population, Baltimore stood a better chance of getting more qualified people in government, which he assumed, given his past experiences, would help solve many of the problems that had plagued the colony. With the Privy Council, for instance, he and Charles Calvert became more assertive with their powers of patronage in order to help bolster the social credentials of its members, as well as ensure their loyalty to Baltimore. In that vein, Baltimore also began to arrange marriages to create political alliances, including that of his niece Anne Calvert to councilman Baker Brooke. After 1676, membership on the council in nearly all cases necessitated some relation to the Calverts, by either blood or marriage. As a part of these developments, the council also became more heavily Catholic. The profile of the Privy Council was moving in the right direction for the Calverts during this period, but the task at hand was formidable (Jordan 1977, 68–72). In 1666, they had considered requiring major officials to wear "habbits Meddalls or otherwise" so that "some visible distinction or distinctions" might be drawn (Papenfuse 2006d, 16). That this initiative was even contemplated showed just how much work the Calverts had in front of them.

Proprietary efforts to influence the makeup of the assembly were even more pronounced. The liberal franchise in Maryland, which David Jordan has argued created a "more fluid political arena than prevailed elsewhere in the English-speaking world," was one target (Jordan 1987, 22). In 1670, they

8. For a careful examination of the language of anti-popery and its place in early modern English politics, see Lake (1989).

moved to restrict suffrage to property owners with “visible seated Plantations” of at least 50 acres. Massachusetts and Virginia had made similar moves, but in both cases, their assemblies had pushed the new laws. They also looked to shrink the size of the assembly. In 1676, Charles Calvert, now Lord Proprietor of the colony, summoned only two of the four elected delegates from each county.⁹ Both actions demonstrated the dual goals of restricting the voice of the common colonists and procuring a higher-quality representative. With the colony’s population growth, the transition to a wealthier and more elite body had already been occurring to some extent. In 1658, for instance, 12 of the 16 assembly members possessed more than 400 acres, none possessed less than 200 acres, and only one individual’s literacy was in question (Jordan 1987, 33). With their new electoral policies, the Calverts hoped to accelerate this process.

As with the Privy Council, the Calverts’ efforts to exercise more control over the assembly would take time, and they had made only a few concrete gains by the 1670s. The assembly of 1671 was a good example of the limits of proprietary influence in government. That assembly proved so satisfactory that Baltimore continued the same body, instead of calling for new elections, for four consecutive sessions over the next 5 years, the longest such period to date in Maryland’s history.¹⁰ During that year, however, the colonists declined to elect many of Baltimore’s favorites, a list that included two prominent proprietary proponents, Thomas Notley and John Morecroft; Nathaniel Utie of Baltimore County, who would quickly be appointed to the council after failing to be elected a burgess; and William Stevens of Somerset and Robert Dunn of Kent, both dependable proprietary supporters. Several of the assembly’s new members that year had never received a proprietary commission. The makeup of the assembly suggests that Maryland’s colonists continued to rebuke incumbents in favor of sending new men to the assembly and were disinclined to support men currently enjoying the proprietor’s favor. The political quiescence in the early 1670s was due more to the lack of serious economic problems in the first half of the decade than to any early returns on the Calverts’ efforts to increase their control of government (Jordan 1987, 108–9). When Charles Calvert, after the death of his father, called for new elections in 1676, he was in a precarious political position. He had taken conspicuous steps to try to increase proprietary influence in government by filling the council and

9. Charles Calvert would make the move to two delegates per county permanent in 1681 (Jordan 1987, 80–89).

10. This decision to continue a compliant assembly was consistent with efforts at the local level. With the appointments of sheriffs and other officers, Charles Calvert began to keep satisfactory persons in the same positions as opposed to the earlier pattern of frequent turnover among incumbents (Jordan 1987, 97–139).

the assembly with family members and favorites, but he had yet to reap fully the benefits of these efforts.

The year of 1676 was particularly tumultuous for the entire Chesapeake region. To the south, Bacon's Rebellion exploded onto the scene in Virginia, leading to wars with the local Indians and the overthrow of its government. Maryland's government was vulnerable to the same sort of uprising, and its leaders worried about the contagion of revolt spreading to Maryland. Thomas Notley, the acting governor during much of this period owing to Charles Calvert's departure to handle his father's estate, reported in a letter to him after the unrest had subsided that the discontented populace in Maryland had lacked only a "monstrous head to their monstrous body" (Papenfuse 2006b, 153). The one limited attempt at rebellion in Maryland occurred late in August when an armed group, led by colonists William Davyes and John Pate, met in Calvert County to protest against proprietary leadership. The group refused to lay down their arms but offered little real resistance. The two leaders were tracked down and hanged in their own counties, sending a powerful message to any future dissidents. Their chief complaints were the high taxes of that year, 297 pounds of tobacco per poll, the highest ever levied in the colony, and what they considered to be a weak response by the government to recent raids on English settlers by local Indians (Lovejoy 1972, 78–84).

In late 1676, Notley issued a remonstrance following the uprising and laid out a defense of proprietary government. The remonstrance was in line with Cecilius Calvert's portrayal of past dissent in the colony. The agitators were self-interested, were malevolent, and would bring chaos and disorder to Maryland if empowered: they were "desperate and ill Affected persons," a "malignant Spirit," and "rotten members" of the body politic who "doe Endanger the whole." If their rebellion had not been put down in Maryland, the colony would have met the same fate as its southern neighbor, which had been "torne in peeces under the maske of publique Reformacon & ease from taxes" and suffered the "Calamities of Intestine Warre." The Lord Proprietor, on the other hand, remained a paragon of virtuousness. The new Lord Baltimore, as his father had done before him, pursued the "Reall & permanent" prosperity of Maryland society: "That this happy day may once arive hath bin the long & unwaryed Endeavour of my Lords deceased ffather And . . . will be the constant Employ of my Lord that now is." The "peace & plenty of every individuall in the Province," Notley maintained, "truly consists in the due preservacon of his Lordshipps rights" (Papenfuse 2006d, 137–41). As the Lords Baltimore had always contended, their political powers promoted the larger good of the colony and its individual inhabitants.

In defense of the Davyes–Pate Rebellion and in response to Notley's proclamation, a protest document entitled "Complaint from Heaven" surfaced in

late 1676, and its authors looked to attack the key premises of the proprietary argument for political power.¹¹ They immediately targeted Charles Calvert and his claimed concern for the welfare of Maryland's population. Far from virtuous, he was, in fact, a sworn enemy to the majority of the colony's population. For this accusation, they would employ all of the commonplaces of English anti-popery, accusing the third Lord Baltimore of being part of a vast Catholic conspiracy, whose ultimate goal was universal tyranny and the destruction of all Protestants. He did not serve the king or the English nation, but instead looked to "propagate the Pope's interest and supremacy in America." The goal of driving the population in Maryland into "purgatory" was just the beginning of his ultimate desire to "overturn England, with fever, sword and distractions" (Papenfuse 2006b, 134, 147). This, they claimed, was his true agenda in Maryland. Charles Calvert, much worse than a self-interested political leader who simply put his own private gain above the common good, actively sought the destruction of his community.

Once Charles Calvert's evil intent had been established, his political opponents revisited his efforts to make the colony's government more exclusive. The vast majority of Maryland's settlers, they reasoned, would never support his designs for the colony, so his efforts to make government as exclusive as possible were especially dubious. The more he could consolidate political power to himself and his close associates, the more possible it would be to enact such an unpopular agenda. He had little choice then but to restrict the extension of English rights to Maryland and pursue a political agenda in the colony that was "contrary to the liberties and privileges of the King's Majesty's free born Subjects of England" (Papenfuse 2006b, 136). What was to the Calverts the construction of a beneficent aristocracy was to their political opponents a particularly destructive form of oligarchy.

With Charles Calvert's motivations reinterpreted, his past political maneuverings drew the ire of his detractors. His push to put better people in government was now clear evidence of corruption, for instance. The "Complaint" pointedly listed the many family members who served on the present council: "Young child Charles Baltimore . . . son in law Deputy Governor . . . Philip Calvert . . . William Calvert nephew, secretary . . . Brooks surveyor

11. The full heading of the petition is "Complaint from Heaven with a Hue and cry and a petition out of Virginia and Maryland," and it is addressed to the "King of England &c. with his parliament." The document has a small presence in the historiography of Maryland's political history during the colonial period. For most historians, the importance of the document is in its indication of a widespread anti-Catholicism in Maryland and its detailed inventory of the settlers' economic grievances (Carr and Jordan 1974, 31–34; Webb 1984, 70–76; Krugler 2004, 236–39; Sutto 2008, 393–406).

generall, kindsman.” Nearly all of its members were “strong papists,” the authors continued, besides “som protestants for fashion sake” (Papenfuse 2006b, 137). His recent efforts in the assembly also faced scrutiny. In decreasing the makeup of the assembly from four representatives per county to two, Charles Calvert gained the power to select the men that best served “his purpose,” which for the authors of the “Complaint” resulted in the election of “either papists, owne creatures and familiars or ignoramuses.” His use of patronage to influence assemblymen was particularly egregious, using “all Arts and devises . . . to perswade and create fit turne-coats.” Too many men had proved susceptible to these tactics and “betray[ed] [their] trust to [their] Country, for a Collonell’s or Captains name and office, or peculiar favour, to the oppression and ruyn of many of the Kinge’s poore subjects.” The lieutenant governor, Thomas Notley, was a prime example. He had earned his position by his past support of proprietary policies as speaker of the assembly. In a previous meeting, he had led assembly support for a “2 shilling custom per hogshhead to my Lords Heyre . . . and made it hereditary.” His reward was his provincial post. Along with bribery, intimidation was an effective tool as well. If any assemblyman “stands out or up for the comon good,” they reported, then from the upper house “perswadinge spirits goe forth” and through “frowns and treathnings scares them to be quieth” (Papenfuse 2006b, 137, 141, 138).

In their efforts to manipulate and control the government, the Lords Baltimore had been remarkably successful, their opponents claimed. The assembly in the colony had become nothing more than a pawn to proprietary power. When a plan was “hatched” in the “popish chamber,” they claimed, the proprietor could simply call an assembly to provide a “Country cloack.” When he wanted the power to raise a force for an ill-fated military expedition, for instance, he “overswaded an Assembly” into compliance. When he unjustly attacked a neighboring Dutch community, the “tyranny” was retroactively approved and “chalked over with an Assembly.” Concerning the Indian controversies connected to Bacon’s Rebellion, the proprietor again sought “to cloake his policy with an Assembly” and convinced it to take measures to conceal his transgressions. An elected assembly did not, as it should, signal the extension of English institutions to America and indicate some measure of self-government in Maryland. It was a fraudulent institution because in reality, they claimed, the “Assent of the freemen within the Province . . . [was] utterly denied” (Papenfuse 2006b, 137, 136, 135, 141). Enabled by his small coterie of supporters in government, including the assembly, who were referred to alternately in the “Complaint” as the “Lord and his Champions in their Prince-ship,” the Lord Proprietary and his “cloake of mutiniers and disaffected persons,” or the “proprietary with his familiars,” Charles Calvert had become by 1676 “an absolute prince” (Papenfuse 2006b, 145, 143, 138).

In the Calverts' accrual of political authority in Maryland, their political opponents argued that they had taken advantage of colonial circumstances. So far away from England, it was easy for their actions to escape the notice of imperial officials. The abuses of the charter and its true purposes were rampant, for instance. It had been obtained to begin with, they argued, by "misinformation." The reference to Lord Baltimore as "absolute Lord and Proprietary" was a mistake and had been "undoubtedly intended conditionally." The type of political power that the Lords Baltimore aspired to in Maryland was by "no ways warrantable by [the] Maryland Charter" (Papenfuse 2006b, 139, 147). But despite this, the Calverts had been successful and had attained an expansive authority in the colony, even though it worked against the people in Maryland and the English empire. This had been possible, their detractors reasoned, because of Maryland's distance from the imperial center and the attendant ease with which the full extent of these abuses could be concealed. The authors of the "Complaint" hoped that change would come to Maryland if they could, through their petition, shed light on what was actually happening there.

One potential solution for Charles Calvert's opponents in 1676 was more democratic political institutions. The New World, even more than England, needed legitimate democratic institutions to help forestall the opportunities for political corruption that were more likely to go unnoticed in the colonies. The authors of the "Complaint" highlighted this fact in their listed demands for what needed to change in the colony for it to prosper. They started by asking the king to take over the government of the colony and appoint a Protestant governor. Charles Calvert would retain his property rights, but they limited his "quitt rents" on tobacco to "two pence per lb" and requested that any disputes between the proprietor and the settlers be "regulated and overruled" by the king and Parliament. They also wanted more Protestant churches and finished with a plea for "6. or 7000 good resolute Scotts Highlanders," who were to be seated on the frontiers because they were "fitt to encounter with the Indians, and keep the French robbers at a distance." But even with the proprietor's political powers removed, their borders protected by some fearsome Scots, and a revived Protestant presence in the colony, the petitioners made clear the necessity of English rights. The Protestant governor, they demanded, would need to "rule the inhabitants accordinge to the custome of England." They made clear exactly what this meant: the "free men" in the colony would have the right to "choose their delegates & those free votes in the Assemblys; to enact for the comon Generall good for the people and Country; without any by respect, compellment and perswasion or interruption" (Papenfuse 2006b, 148–49). Their battles with the Calverts had underscored the value of democratic institutions in America, which the authors

of the “Complaint” carried forward in their political vision for the colony, even with a future potentially free of a Catholic governor.

The demand for assembly rights by Charles Calvert’s opponents was more than a call for the customary rights of Englishmen to be extended to America. As aggressive as the authors of the “Complaint” were in attacking the proprietor, they admitted a vulnerability in their own claims to political power. When Cecilius Calvert had attacked the character of Maryland’s settlers, he had contended that the extension of the English rights had different implications in the colonies because they empowered a less qualified individual. The authors of the “Complaint” did not deny the truth of this observation. Like Cecilius Calvert before them, they sought to justify, rather than shy away from, the exceptional nature of their political claims. They admitted the accuracy of Baltimore’s criticism about Maryland’s settler population and, by extension, the people now petitioning for political rights: “wee confess a great many of us came in servants to others” (Papenfuse 2006b, 140). They knew that their social origins made suspect their demands for such a powerful assembly, which explained their need to “confess” that fact. They could admit this, however, because their argument did not depend on its denial. The abuses of government that were possible in the colonies, so ably demonstrated by the Lords Baltimore, were what justified a more democratic English America. In the colonies, the opportunities to exploit political authority by those in power were so magnified that they warranted political variations on the side of democracy to counter them.

In pursuit of new political powers in Maryland, both sides claimed that their opponents lacked virtue on a fundamental level. This sort of political criticism was common in early modern England, but both Cecilius Calvert and his son’s political rivals argued that colonial circumstances had increased the dangers posed by their opponents, thereby justifying their own pursuit of political variations. The circumstances of the empire, however, would do more than exacerbate the conventional discourse. They would also enable the emergence of a new political language, one that would complicate the traditional understanding of self-interest in the political realm and offer an additional rationale for political extremes in Maryland. In the seventeenth century, English colonization relied on the willing participation of English subjects, which gave great leverage to the most important imperial participants and their political demands. Because of this, the Calverts and their adversaries competed over the importance of their roles to the larger success of the empire. The politicization of imperial contributions infused American politics with a new understanding of self-interest because both sides admitted the importance of private ambi-

tions in their decision to participate in colonization. Through its encouragement of imperial participation, self-interest could be defined anew and reimagined, in the case of colonization, as working toward a larger good and, in turn, warranting political protection. This imperial argument for political power in the colonies, with its new understanding of the relationship between self-interest and political power, marked the origins of liberal political thought in English America. It had the power to justify new political configurations in the colonies, making it attractive in Maryland to those seeking alterations on English norms, while resting in clear tension with traditional political values.

Cecilius Calvert began his liberal, imperial argument for his political rights in Maryland by detailing the early history of the colony and his instrumental role therein. In *Lord Baltimore's Case*, he reported that, in the inaugural migration, he had “sent two of his own brothers with above 200 people to begin and seat a Plantation there,” noting the deaths of both “his said two brothers,” who had lost their lives in “prosecution thereof.” He also claimed expenditures for the colony of over 20,000 pounds “out of his own purse” (Baltimore 1653, 1). Baltimore was the central figure of his own narrative. He had put the plan in motion, had provided the necessary finances, and had taken all the risks. The 200 non-Calvert colonists that Baltimore mentioned, for instance, were static entities who did not act, but instead were acted upon. They arrived in the colony only because Baltimore had sent them there.

When Baltimore explained why he had undertaken to do the hard and risky work of starting a colony, he acknowledged both public and private ambitions in that decision, in sharp contrast to how he portrayed himself as the political leader of the Maryland community. Baltimore understood his actions in Maryland as serving a greater good. He praised colonization as “advantagious to the interest” of England, declaring that he had “adventured the greatest part of his fortunes” in these endeavors for the “honour of this Nation.” Despite the benefit to England that his colonial activities would bring, however, that outcome alone was not enough to have elicited such extensive contributions. He admitted, as it concerned his involvement in colonization, the limits of his own virtue because he was equally interested in his colonial endeavors serving his “own particular advantage” (Baltimore 1653, 10–11). This cut against his public image in Maryland, where he, as his son would also do, presented himself as committed entirely to the greater good of the local community, at whatever cost to his private interests. In 1683, amid some wrangling over legislation in the lower house, Charles Calvert, for instance, scolded the assembly for playing politics: “Tis not fitt nor reasonable that I should be thus imposed on when I only Seek the generall not my private advantage[;] when you catch me at the Latter[,] Gentlemen[,] I will give you leave to make Bargains” (Papenfuss 2006c, 493). In their leadership of the Maryland

community, the Calverts had no self-interested motivations. Cecilius Calvert's decision to participate in English colonization, however, was a different story.

Cecilius Calvert had contended that his self-interest, far from representing a moral failing, needed to be protected and even encouraged to ensure that he and his family continued their involvement in the empire and their leadership of a colony. For Baltimore, individuals like himself, who were capable of making large financial investments, made English colonization possible. It was no accident that he excluded the travails and contributions of the settler population in his account of the first voyage to Maryland. The empire needed men like Baltimore to play these vital roles, and if Baltimore was right that the necessary sacrifices asked too much of even the most virtuous individuals, then self-interested ambitions of some would have to be catered to for the empire to survive. For Baltimore, the colonies would “not be undertaken by any, whether it be a Company or a single man, without as great encouragements of privileges as are in the Lo. *Baltimore's* Patent of *Maryland*.” The promise of political power was absolutely crucial in attracting men of Baltimore's stature because it offered the surest protection for the substantial investments that they were uniquely capable of. “No single man,” he continued, “that is well in his wits, will be so indiscreet, as to undertake a Plantation at so vast an expence as the Lord *Baltimore* hath, if . . . [the people who] went thither at his charge . . . should have power to make lawes and dispose of him, and all his estate there” (Baltimore 1653, 10). The Maryland charter granted political power, in Baltimore's view, to the person most important to the colony's very existence and future prosperity. There should have been little that was controversial or mysterious about the Maryland charter, then, and its promise of extensive political privileges to Baltimore. For Baltimore, it simply represented smart and effective imperial policy.

In the “Complaint,” the authors countered with their own liberal argument for political authority. To this end, they put forth a far different understanding of the English empire and its most valuable contributors. They too discussed Maryland's beginnings but paid little attention to Baltimore's financial investments: “wee ourselves thereuppon have transported our selves and our estates into this Country, purchased the land from the Indians with loss of Estate and many hundred mens lives (yea thousands) and must defend ourselves continually without my Lord Baltimore's ability, whereby our land and possessions are become owr Owne” (Papenfuse 2006b, 140).¹² It was not

12. The mention of the purchase of land from local Indians and the need to constantly defend themselves is important here. Baltimore's political opponents in Maryland were constantly on the side of a more aggressive approach in the colony's interactions with Indians and frequently critical of, in their view, Baltimore's overly accommodating diplomacy, which they blamed on his desire to protect his profitable trading relationships. This line of attack on

Baltimore's sacrifices that had built the colony, but the labor and courage of the common settlers. They had "adventured [their] lives" to come to Maryland and were the ones extending English influence in the New World and producing the salable goods that made the colonies valuable to so many different people. The beneficiaries of their labors were numerous. They noted the "considerable custome" that the king received "out off the fruit of ovr labours and industry."¹³ They turned next to the merchants of London, "whom ovr labour and industry affords in exchance for the merchandize many a thousands of thousands of returnes, and employment for a great numbre of ships and men, which will increas by God's permission as wee increas and decreas iff wee decreas" (Papenfuse 2006b, 140, 148). The Maryland settlers were the key cogs in the machinery of empire. Their contributions were as present in the "Complaint" as they were invisible in Baltimore's account: "wee have made it," they declared, "a Country for the glory and enlargement of the Dominion and Emperial Crowne of England" (Papenfuse 2006b, 145, 140).

Baltimore was featured in the "Complaint" (Papenfuse 2006b, 134). English settlers and their hunger for new lands played a major role in these disagreements, as the territorial claims of an expanding English population created serious and recurring tensions with local Indians. Baltimore's political opponents did not want their position on Anglo-Indian affairs, however, to be understood as being motivated by self-interested economic desires at the expense of the greater good. So they put forth a carefully crafted definition of the empire, emphasizing population numbers, territorial scope, and agricultural production as the true measurements of imperial success. If success in these areas did indeed become the goals of the empire, then the appropriation of Native American lands would serve the larger interests of the empire, more so, potentially, than the trading relationships fostered and protected by Baltimore. This would align the private interests of the common English settlers with the public interest of the empire, which was crucial to the liberal imperial argument for a more democratic Maryland being put forth in the "Complaint." These political implications required that the supporters of more democracy for English settlers also be on the side of an aggressive English empire. The authors of the "Complaint," for instance, referred to the Virginia colonist Nathaniel Bacon, well known for his deadly attacks on and general hostility toward Native Americans, as a supporter of their political agenda, being one of the region's "best commonwealths men" (Papenfuse 2006b, 135, 147).

13. There is an obvious omission in the "Complaint" concerning the growing numbers of enslaved African laborers in the Chesapeake. Although the move to African slavery begins to accelerate dramatically after 1680 (enslaved laborers as a percentage of the population in the Chesapeake region increased from around 7% in 1680 to 25% by 1720), black slaves were a source of labor during this period. It is difficult to pinpoint how much of the labor claimed by Baltimore's political opponents was actually performed by themselves versus others, either black slaves or white indentured servants. The argument put forth in the "Complaint," however, focuses more on the production that came out of this labor than the act of doing the labor itself. This liberal argument, in fact, was very amenable to laying claim to the labor of others if they had no voice in this discourse and no control over their labor. The unspoken expropriation of labor in the "Complaint" had components based on race, but also gender and class. For a recent and detailed exploration of the rise of slavery in the Chesapeake, see Walsh (2010, 131–44, 200–210).

The contributions of the Maryland settler, as had been the case with Baltimore's, had been motivated in part by self-interested ambitions that needed to be protected through political power. After admitting in the "Complaint" their low social backgrounds as former servants at the time of their migration, the authors asserted that many had subsequently "advanced themselves much" through "hard labour out of the ground in a terrible Willdennis." The Calverts' "popish tyranny" and oppressive policies, however, had stripped them of these rightful gains. The wealth that accrued from their labor was too often siphoned off to the proprietor: there was "little difference," they claimed, "between them and bondslaves that work 3 days for themselves and 3 days to maintaine others." Unwilling to submit to the economic ramifications of Maryland's "arbitrary government," the authors presented the king and Parliament with a choice between two different political agendas, one supported by the proprietor and the other by Maryland's settlers. "Our Great King and Parliament," they asked, "judge now between your loyall subjects and my Lord Baltemore and his Champions and favorits in Maryland." If imperial officials ignored their demands and chose instead to support Charles Calvert's political authority in 1676, sustaining the economic vulnerabilities of the population at large, the consequences for Maryland would be ruinous: it would "depopulate the Country in stead of increasinge [it]" and would "not houlde longe, nor maintain the Country, [nor be] profitable to [the king's] reelm of England." Many of the settlers were, in fact, already considering abandoning the colony. The only thing holding many of them back from making good on this threat was the proper valuation of their estates: if the proprietor would give them the "reall [value] for owr estates," they maintained, "a great many protestants would leave the Country to him and his papists" (Papenfuse 2006b, 140–45). Supporting Charles Calvert's political ambitions over theirs, in short, would make for disastrous imperial policy. The settlers, not the Calverts, were the ones who had the power to destroy the colony by depriving it of their persons and labor, a fact that should put their political appeasement through democratic institutions on the right side of sound imperial policy.

The efforts by both sides to translate imperial participation into political power marked the origins of a new, liberal political language in America. In the context of these debates and in sharp contrast to its traditional meaning, self-interest was a social force that generated positive behaviors. Because of this shift in definition, local politics within the empire did not demand the removal of all self-interest from political considerations but supported political power to be distributed in a way that protected the self-interest of some in the hopes of encouraging the behaviors that most benefited society. This is why, in Maryland, comparisons of self-interested colonial contributions could function as a proxy debate over political power. The appeal of this political thought was in its

open-ended possibilities. Its new means (the self-interested, not virtuous, individual) to different ends (the success of the empire instead of the good of a single community) opened up a nearly limitless potential to justify new arrangements of political power. In Maryland, for instance, this liberal political language could offer a positive argument for the expansive authority of a single individual as easily as it could the increased political influence of a group of former servants, and it could do so on positive terms, instead of relying only on an exaggerated indictment of one's political rivals.

Maryland's extreme politics provided fit circumstances for a stark articulation of this emergent liberalism, but the politics of the empire and its liberal potential were possible throughout the English colonies. For anyone in any colony who freely migrated or contributed to the English empire, the contingency of that participation gave them leverage in the discussions over the allocation of political power in America. A connection between individual migration and the promise of political power was apparent in other colonies at the same time that the "Complaint" surfaced in Maryland. It was evident, for instance, in colonies such as Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania through their promotional strategies, which included grand political promises to potential migrants (Vanzant 2013, 120–61).¹⁴ As soon as this colonial participation, with all of its political potency, came to be understood as being motivated by self-interest, a change that began to occur in the 1650s, the circumstances were in place for a new understanding of self-interest to surface anywhere in the English colonies.¹⁵

For all of its political possibilities, the employment of this liberal political argument was also fraught with discursive danger and had the potential to

14. The colonization of South Carolina provides one example of this dynamic. In 1665, the proprietors of that colony issued the "Concessions and Agreements" in order to attract migrants. Among other promised liberties, this document promised all prospective settlers an elected assembly with the sole authority to tax the colonists (Weir 1983, 49–52). This generous political promise was necessary in the competition between colonies for migrants during the 1660s and 1670s. The proprietors of New Jersey issued an almost identical promise to its settlers in 1665, and the proprietors of the West Jersey colony would follow suit in 1677 (Pomfret 1973, 22–48).

15. The acceptance of self-interest as a prominent motivation for those migrating to America was not an immediate development in the history of English colonization. In the early decades of settlement in both Virginia and New England, for instance, those encouraging migration hoped that virtue, not self-interest, would be the reason that colonists chose to migrate to the New World. So fearful were they, in fact, of the negative effects of self-interested individuals in America that they actively discouraged those considering migration for self-interested reasons. For the importance of virtue in early America, see Fitzmaurice (2003, 58–101). For evidence that this emphasis on virtue in the colonial promotion began to decline around midcentury, see Vanzant (2013, 68–161).

create an important and defining tension in colonial politics. In Maryland, for instance, Cecilius Calvert acknowledged that he, like elite colonists throughout the English empire, pursued his own “particular advantage” in the New World. This type of admission could empower his opponents, who contended that, in conventional terms, his son was unfit to lead the colony precisely because his “selfe interest [was] irrevocable and perpetuall” and that he sought to “convert[] the comon good to his privat ends.” On the other hand, the colonists who opposed Charles Calvert in 1676 talked about the importance of preserving their estates, which had been, they admitted, “purchased . . . from the Indians” (Papenfuse 2006b, 138–41). This remark fit nicely within his father’s earlier suspicion that the people who opposed the proprietor did so to secure illegal land claims (Papenfuse 2006b, 138–41). The liberal, imperial argument could not exist only within itself, supplementing conventional politics with an additional way to justify political authority because it was necessary to assert and describe in the imperial argument exactly what, in traditional terms, most jeopardized conventional claims to political power. At the same time that the liberal politics of the empire pushed the colonial discourse toward new extremes substantively, it did the same rhetorically, as the means by which these ends were pursued also incited the worst fears of corruption. If a defining characteristic of American politics is the early embrace of liberalism and its political possibilities alongside an equally powerful fear of a lost virtue in politics, Maryland in the seventeenth century offers an early example of how one could help cause the other.¹⁶

For all the unique characteristics of Maryland in the seventeenth century and its already polarized political discourse, the liberal political thought that emerged there was possible throughout the English empire. The prerequisite for this new political language was not Maryland’s idiosyncrasies but the English empire and its reliance on the willing participation of a wide range of individuals, whose contributions to the empire, if any, were understood increasingly to be motivated by self-interest. Whatever the attraction of political mimesis in America, it could not dissolve the tension with traditional politics created by the individual expectations that attended this type of imperial participation.¹⁷ For most, the English empire was not conceptualized as a com-

16. For important analyses of the issue of fear, even paranoia, in American politics, see Bailyn (1967, 1968) and Wood (1982).

17. Proponents of the argument that political action in the colonies should be understood as the pursuit of English rights in America have exercised a powerful influence in the historiography of early America, none more so than David Lovejoy and his foundational study, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (1972). On the enduring importance of his analysis, see Johnson (2003, 99–117). In the historiography of the Chesapeake region in particular, James Horn has been a strong proponent of this view, arguing that Bacon’s Rebellion in Virginia,

munity with all the moral obligations that that would imply. It was an economic endeavor, understood atomistically, where each individual “adventured” something at great personal risk, whether it be money, labor, or life, in the hopes of a greater return. Self-interest and the behaviors that it encouraged existed at the very foundation of colonial communities, giving self-interest a thoroughly ambivalent meaning in early America. When the new definition of self-interest emerged in colonial politics in connection with imperial participation, it could be used in support of widely different political visions. This promised more division in colonial politics, because English settlements in America could not become more aristocratic and more democratic at the same time, and also more fears of corruption, because self-interest now held a conspicuous place in political discussions. But, as was the case in Maryland, asking colonial actors to sacrifice their imperial claims to political power for the sake of domestic serenity would be a tough sell. In the English empire, the politics of self-interest and its fragmentary ramifications had staying power.

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for instance, was best understood as an effort to “restore the traditional rights of Englishmen” (Horn 1994, 378). In a different article on the entire Chesapeake region, he expands his analysis to make the more general claim that “traditional attitudes, inherited from their English backgrounds, powerfully influenced the way settlers thought about themselves, social relations, and the institutions of state and church they sought to establish” (Horn 1998, 170–92). Elizabeth Mancke has recently challenged this approach, arguing against understanding political rights in the colonies as predominantly a transmission or transplantation of English liberties abroad. Instead, she points to the possibility of the empire as a place for the “active creation of liberties” (Mancke 2010, 25–49).

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