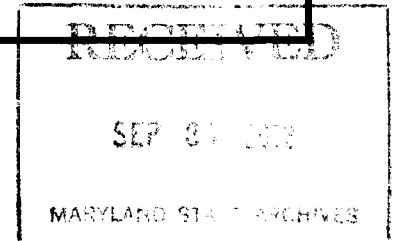


NARRATIVES OF VILLAINY AND VIRTUE: GOVERNOR FRANCIS NICHOLSON AND THE CHARACTER OF THE GOOD RULER IN EARLY VIRGINIA

A Paper
by
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Francis Nicholson, governor of Virginia from 1698 to 1705, was by any measure a controversial figure. His enemies had lurid stories to tell about him, which they recounted with vigor and enthusiasm to friends and patrons in England. Given the exaggeration and one-sidedness of the surviving accounts, it is hard to know just how much credence to give to them. But when we shift our attention to the stories themselves, as historical artifacts in their own right, they shed insight into the values of the men who narrated them. When Nicholson's enemies constructed for him an identity as a villain, they made reference to a rather conservative, indeed archaic ethical tradition, embedded within the moderate Anglican theology which was fast becoming orthodoxy both in England and in the colony. These men inhabited an ethos that was hostile to the proto-liberal, proto-bourgeois moral values of the most commercial elements of British society. They did not work from the harsh egoism of Hobbes and Mandeville, nor the domesticated egoism and sociability of Shaftesbury. Rather, their condemnation of the governor employed the ethics of Christian humanism, which was itself an expression of Erasmian, Thomistic and ultimately Aristotelian views of the good man and the good society. The Virginia envisioned by these story tellers then looked backward to the renaissance, not forward to the market revolution of the 19th century and the classical liberalism which undergirded it.

Copies of the paper are available for reading at the Institute, the Department of History, and the American Studies Program, all at the College of William and Mary; at Colonial Williamsburg's John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Library; the University of Richmond's Department of History; the Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of History, the Virginia State Library, and the Virginia Historical Society, all in Richmond; the Department of History, Old Dominion University, Norfolk; and at the University of Virginia's Corcoran Department of History in Charlottesville.

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TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: James Blair Hall, Room #206, College of William and Mary

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Francis Nicholson was a wildly immoderate and disordered man, of unsound and indeed immoral character. “One might as well pretend to describe an hurricane to one that never saw it,” commented one Virginian, “as to think to describe the brutality and savageness of his passions.” To another he was the “proudest man I ever saw,” a “viper,” a man whose most common demeanor was “to hector and domineer.” Such commentators emphasized Nicholson’s experience as an officer in the English Tangier garrison, where, they implied, he had learned his arrogant and imperious style. Nicholson instructed his subjects “that they were dogs, and their wives were bitches; that he knew how to govern the Moors, and would beat them into better manners.” The Tangier regiment was infamous for its excesses putting down Monmouth’s rebellion in 1685—not at all the training ground for leaders respectful of the “rights of Englishmen.”[1]

So at least said his detractors. In the first years of the eighteenth century a substantial number of highly placed Virginians, many of them connected by marriage to the influential Harrison family, devoted considerable energy to disparaging the character of their Governor. He was, they said, the antithesis of the public-minded magistrate Englishmen praised as the ideal ruler. Within just a few years of assuming office in 1698, Nicholson was the subject of a veritable torrent of critical narratives, recounted to officials, friends, and patrons in England. In the depictions of his critics, Governor Nicholson was temperamentally unfit to rule anybody, and certainly not Englishmen. The descriptions contained within the dozens of stories written and told about the Governor offer an extraordinary window onto the practical ethics of a substantial body of early eighteenth-century Virginians. In vilifying Nicholson, the authors of these stories revealed themselves.

A later generation of English political thinkers had no difficulty analyzing the disordered personality Nicholson’s detractors perceived in their governor. Working within the tradition of Whig political and constitutional theory, especially as it developed in the years following the Glorious Revolution, these analysts contrasted the evils of absolute monarchy with the security

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for English liberty provided by the Revolution settlement of 1688. "Despotic princes," wrote John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in January, 1720, "educated in pride and luxury" and surrounded by sycophants, necessarily were detached from their people. It could hardly be expected that they should employ their power for the public good, since they habitually used "for the support of their greatness, the same vile measures by which they acquired their greatness, till they have at length sacrificed all things in heaven and earth to their ambition." England, however, was blessed with a constitutionally limited monarch, ruling within the framework of a "mixed" or "balanced" constitution. In such a setting the "passions and infirmities of the prince cannot enter into the measures of his government." So long as the equilibrium of the constitution was maintained, English liberty would be preserved, and it was the duty of the good citizen to stand watchful guard against any measure which might over-balance it.[2]

Colonists later in the eighteenth century certainly remembered Nicholson precisely in such terms. His name, for example, appeared in a long litany of allegedly despotic colonial governors published in a 1734 edition of the *New York Weekly Journal*. These rulers, "as very bashaws as ever were sent from Constantinople," illustrated the dangers of unrestrained executive authority. Corrupt, ambitious governors like Nicholson must be enveloped in the habits and rules of law. Their authority must be restrained by an ever-vigilant citizenry, and checked and balanced by countervailing government institutions. There is some indication, moreover, that Whig political theory also colored contemporary accounts of Nicholson's administration. Robert Beverley, for example, one of Nicholson's more hostile critics, drew in part from Whig ideals in his *History and Present State of Virginia* (1705). Governor Nicholson did not "make the acts of assembly the rule of his judgements," wrote Beverley, but rather governed arbitrarily, by "his own all sufficient will and pleasure." Beverley emphasized Nicholson's contempt for the basic securities of English liberty. The governor, Beverley claimed, had announced "he would hang up

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those that should presume to oppose him, with Magna Carta about their necks." Historians who have interpreted the controversy as an expression of Whig political values in the colony have good warrants for their claims.[3]

When we examine the stories told about Nicholson, however, we do not find a straightforwardly Whig villain. While Nicholson's enemies certainly expressed due concern for the security of their traditional English rights, the focus of their stories was not primarily on Nicholson's threat to the proper balance of public institutions. Nor were their concerns primarily even about the abuse of political power, although to be sure accusations of public corruption did figure into some of their accounts of Nicholson. The socially prominent planters of early eighteenth century Virginia were men whose education and experience of metropolitan England dated from before the Glorious Revolution. As they contemplated passing their authority to a younger generation born in Virginia, who had little firsthand experience of England, they expressed anxiety for the prospects of English civilization in the colony. "The first Stock of *Virginia* gentlemen," wrote the authors of a report to the Board of Trade in 1697, "having had their Education in *England*, were a great deal better accomplish'd in the Law, and their Knowledge of the World" than their descendants. As apprehensive Virginians, in the words of historian Carole Shammas, "grew more concerned about their colony's deficiencies," they naturally turned to England for their image of the good society. The narratives defaming Nicholson, then, provide access to the ethical sensibilities of a group of powerful Virginians at the moment in which a stable plantation society was coming into existence. To these gentlemen, Nicholson's inability to display an appropriate character was vitally important, because the project of erecting a civil society in the colony depended upon the temperament of the chief magistrate at the apex of the social order. [4]

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Thus, alongside the Whig political idiom employed by Nicholson's foes were prominent strains of much older understandings of the good society and of the good ruler, derivative from the political order that predated the English civil wars of mid-seventeenth century. Incorporated into the practical theology and ethics of the post-restoration moderate Anglican *via media*, these older conceptions of the good society and the good ruler stressed an understanding of human nature derivative from Thomas Aquinas and ultimately from Aristotle. In this model of the good society, civility emanated from the top of the social hierarchy down. Its advocates emphasized the obligation of rulers to embody virtue, setting the pattern to be emulated by inferiors lower in the social hierarchy, and thus, ultimately fashioning the civil character of the entire society. In the first decades of the century, this older idiom, as rearticulated in and reinforced by moderate Anglican theology, flourished in the colony of Virginia, and structured the multitude of stories told about Nicholson. Nicholson's private character was the key issue in the stories his critics told, not his conduct in office. In the sensibilities of these men we see the origins of the "ethos of stewardship" Jack P. Greene and others argue characterized mid-eighteenth century Virginia. Ironically, in a colony early defined by individual striving for material success, a substantial body of Virginia's most socially prominent gentlemen rejected alternative, market ethics which grounded visions of the good society solely in human appetite or aversion from pain. The narratives produced by Virginians at the turn of the century emphasized an organically integrated hierarchical society, not a society forged from the exertions of autonomous individuals.[5]

I

Francis Nicholson became Captain General and Governor in Chief of Virginia in 1698, and the process by which he acquired the position sheds some insight into the controversy that erupted some years later. Nicholson had served in the colonies for more than a decade, initially as an officer under the command of Colonel Sir Edmund Andros in the newly created Dominion

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of New England. He was a competent soldier, and Andros rewarded him with increasing administrative responsibility. When English officials extended the Dominion in 1688 southward to include New York and the Jerseys, they offered Nicholson a position as Lieutenant Governor. The Glorious Revolution resulted in the Dominion's dissolution, but Nicholson's patrons in England subsequently secured for him a post as Lieutenant Governor of New York, and then almost immediately Lieutenant Governor of Virginia. Two years later, in 1692, authorities in England transferred him to serve as Lieutenant to the Governor of Maryland, while Edmund Andros took Nicholson's place in Virginia. Nicholson remained in that position for six years, until he was promoted to the Governorship of Virginia. He was thus a remarkably seasoned officer and magistrate, with extensive experience in Colonial administration throughout England's continental colonies.[6]

Nicholson's elevation to the Governor's seat came at the expense of Sir Edmund Andros. By 1697 Nicholson was allied with the Reverend James Blair, the senior Anglican clergyman in the colony and a member of the Governor's council, against Andros. Blair, in various letters and memorials, described several confrontations between Nicholson and Andros in the late 1690s, and the factional alliance between Nicholson, Blair, and Blair's allies among the leading men of Virginia, on the one hand, against Andros and his supporters on the other, seems to have been common knowledge among Nicholson's English patrons. Blair traveled to England in 1697, to lobby support for the College of William and Mary, but he used his time there to good effect, to undermine Governor Andros, and to support Nicholson. In December, 1697, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London met at Lambeth Palace to discuss the allegations against Andros. The meeting at Lambeth represented the culmination of Blair's effort to unseat the Governor, and despite the enthusiastic effort that the Governor's advocate, the young William Byrd II, mounted in his defense, Blair succeeded in convincing the Bishops that Andros "never

did any considerable service to the King, nor the people," and that he "was a great instrument of arbitrary power." Sir Edmund Andros, the Earl of Bellomont reported to the Board of Trade in April, 1699, "for quarreling with Dr. Blair in Virginia brought the resentment of the Bishop of London and the Church (they say) on his head, which is the reason he has lost his government." Andros resigned, in ill health and under considerable pressure, in May, 1698.[7]

Blair worked to undermine Andros by assaulting his character. "In his private conversation he is a great encourager of tattlers, tale-bearers and sycophants," Blair wrote. "By these methods the ancient kindness, hospitality and good neighborhood of Virginia is broke off, and a peaceable and quiet country as ever was in the world is now come to such a degree of faction and animosity, that they scarce none visit one another, or pay common civility." There was a direct connection between the personal deportment of the magistrate and the behavior of the governed, Blair implied. In a report to the Board of Trade that he co-authored in 1697, Blair likened the ideal governor to "a tender nurse," whose guidance and good example "is sufficient to take the management of the infant government, till it grow older, and wants other tutors and governors to look after it." Andros had failed to provide a good role model, with ruinous consequences for the "common civility" of the country. In this attack on Andros, Blair rehearsed the later, and much more fully developed critique he and numerous others would narrate against Francis Nicholson. To appreciate fully the vision of the good ruler and the good society which Blair and other Virginians deployed, we must briefly sketch the intellectual and theological context which structured the ethical thought of men like James Blair.[8]

II.

In assaulting Andros's character in this fashion, Blair invoked an understanding of the good ruler and the good society of long provenance in England. Sixteenth and seventeenth century political theory took for granted that sovereignty inhered in the person of the monarch,

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and thus focused attention not on the inevitability of executive corruption but rather on the ethical problem of ensuring that the right kind of person exercised authority. The “lawfull good King,” wrote no less an authority than James I, “acknowledges himself ordained for his people,” and thus governs with their good always in mind. A tyrant, on the other hand, “thinketh his people ordained for him, a prey to his passions and inordinate appetites.” The problem then was to ensure that the man destined to become a ruler possessed the dispositions necessary to remain virtuous, that is, to resist the impulses of appetite. Lurking behind the commitment to absolute monarchy, then, was a commitment to an attenuated version of Thomistic (and ultimately Aristotelian) ethics. The virtuous man suppressed his appetites through cultivation of good habits, directed by practical reason.[9]

The claim that the conduct of a magistrate established the civil pattern for the people subject to his authority, which Blair used to attack first Andros and then Nicholson, originated in sixteenth century pedagogy and political theory. No less venerable a thinker than Desiderius Erasmus, writing as a guest in the home of Thomas More, argued that the comportment of the Prince set the standard for his realm. “All men's eyes are upon him,” Erasmus wrote. If the Prince set a good example, he “gave life and safety to mankind.” But even small lapses “from the Rule of Honesty and Honour reaches farther than himself, and opens a gap to many men's ruin.” In this notion of kingship, a monarch ruled not by inspiring fear and awe in his subjects, but rather by displaying his exemplary virtue. This conception of regal authority was pervasive in subsequent British moral discourse. James Stuart's influential *Basilikon Doron* (1599), for example, popularized this image of the good magistrate. James' treatise became the model for a series of advice manuals, aspiring to teach the principles of civility to young gentlemen, which appeared with some regularity throughout the seventeenth century. James emphasized the importance of a monarch acting as a good model for his people. “Your behaviour in your owne

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person," he advised his son, will "teach your people by your own example, for people are naturally inclined to counterfeit . . . their Prince's manners." A king, James underscored, "is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly doe behold." [10]

English moralists recognized, moreover, that the importance of shaping magisterial character extended deeper into the social hierarchy. In the aftermath of the Tudor reforms and the creation of local administrative bodies organized around the Commission of the Peace, political commentators extended their focus to include the preparation of subordinate magistrates for wielding public power. Sir Thomas Elyot's *Boke Named Governour* (1531), for example, was not meant solely or even primarily for the King. Elyot aimed throughout the *Boke Named Governour* at producing civically minded magistrates. "By example of governors," he wrote, echoing Erasmus, "men do rise or fall in virtue or vice." Throughout his essay Elyot argued that prospective governors must learn self-mastery before they could rule others. Young gentlemen who aspired to be magistrates or rulers must subordinate their natural appetites or passions to reason. A magistrate had an obligation to exercise "a double governance." First, he must effect "an interior or inward governance," over "his affects or passions, which do inhabit within his soul, and be subjects to reason," and only second "an exterior or outward governance," over the people. Since public manners emanated outward from the inward qualities of the governors, preparation for rule began by fashioning the inward qualities of the virtuous man. [11]

English moralists working in this tradition asserted an Aristotelian psychology, mediated via Thomas Aquinas, which distinguished unrefined humanities' base, animalistic nature from the higher capacities permitted by exercise of human reason. Erasmus, in his 1529 treatise *De Pueris Instituendis* (On Education for Children), had explicitly argued that education was necessary to achieve a man's full, human potential. The man whose faculties were unrefined by education "is a creature quite inferior to the brute animals," Erasmus wrote, because only careful

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refinement permitted a man's rational faculties to govern his passions. "There is no beast more savage and dangerous than a human being who is swept along by the passions of ambition, greed, anger, envy, extravagance, and sensuality." In the seventeenth century this understanding of human nature pervaded English pedagogical treatises. Appetite was to be suppressed whenever possible; the antithesis of civility was bestial savagery or unrestrained passion, which English moralists equated with the baseness of the fallen human soul. Concern for careful self-discipline and for its artful performance was thus constituent of seventeenth century British ideals of good rulership. A man's external demeanor advanced claims to public virtue and hence fitness to hold public power. It was this standard against which the James Blair and his allies measured Sir Edmund Andros, and after him Francis Nicholson, and found both deplorably lacking.[12]

The new constitutional order legitimated by the Glorious Revolution shifted attention from the ethical problem of crafting virtuous magistrates. If sovereignty did not have to inhere in the person of the monarch, but could instead be divided or shared within a "mixed" or "balanced" constitution, then it became possible to consider institutional mechanisms for protecting the people from the effects of tyranny. English political discourse as it evolved after the Glorious Revolution increasingly emphasized the potential for power to corrupt even the best of men, and thus the necessity of devising mechanisms for limiting executive power. "There is something wanton and monstrous in lawless power, that there scarce ever was a human spirit that could bear it," proclaimed *Cato's Letters*. "The mind of man, which is weak and limited, ought never to be trusted with a power that is boundless." [13]

The late seventeenth century transition in constitutional order corresponded with a period of heated debate in English moral philosophy. From the Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth century on, one notorious and increasingly influential strain of ethical thought emphasized an egoistic conception of human nature, which stressed the inherent self-interestedness of human

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motivations. Thomas Hobbes, widely condemned as an atheist in the latter half of the seventeenth-century, had famously argued that all human motivation stemmed from base desire, thus foreclosing the efforts of English pedagogues to fashion the good man by habituating reason to subdue passion. Even as the drama in Virginia played itself out, the Dutch physician Bernard Mandeville published his satirical poem *The Fable of the Bees*, in which he argued forcefully for the proposition that "private vices" produced the public good. For Mandeville, human motivations reduced wholly to egoistical self-interest. The moderate divines of the post-restoration Anglican church, including James Blair, in turn condemned this ethical tradition in strident tones. Anglican social thought, one obvious source of value for Virginia gentlemen anxious to preserve English civilization in their colony, thus represented a conservative ethical position within metropolitan England. The radical egoism of Hobbes and Mandeville, as domesticated by the Scottish Enlightenment, represented the future.[14]

Just as English moral thought was in a state of transition across the late seventeenth century, so too was Anglican theology. Indeed, the moderate Anglican theology which increasingly defined English orthodoxy after the Restoration broadly encompassed and rearticulated the Thomistic understanding of the good, both in England and in Virginia. Starting in the 1640s and 1650s, a number of popular moderate Anglican divines, including William Chillingworth, Henry Hammond, Jeremy Taylor and Richard Allestree, as well as a group of Anglican theologians and philosophers at Cambridge, including Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth, John Smith, and Henry More, argued for a less extreme vision of human nature than that of the radical Calvinists, as affirmed in the *Canons* produced by the Synod of Dort (1619) or in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647). These moderate Anglicans asserted that human beings, far from being completely depraved, retained some capacity to exercise right reason to interpret scripture and nature. "It is necessary that every man should consider," Taylor urged in

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his 1650 treatise *Holy Living*, "that since God hath given him an excellent nature, wisdom and choice, an understanding soul, and an immortal spirit, having made him Lord over the Beasts, and but little lower than the Angels; he hath also appointed him for a work and service great enough to employ these abilities." As historian W. M. Spellman has noted, the moderate Anglican movement which emerged from the work of these theologians, derisively labeled "latitudinarian" by its dissenting foes, represented an effort to return the Church to the semi-Pelagian vision of human nature articulated by the medieval church, and by Northern humanists like Erasmus and Colet during the Reformation. But in affording greater scope of action to human reason, moderate Anglican theologians reaffirmed the Thomistic and Erasmian conception of the role of the good ruler.[15]

Post-restoration Anglican theologians were sharply critical of egoist ethics that attributed the sources of human motivation solely to self-aggrandizement. Unchecked egoism resulted in civic decay. "No principle, or rule of practice is left, beside brutish sensuality, fond self-love, private interest, in their highest pitch, without any bound or curb," said Isaac Barrow, "which therefore will dispose men to do nothing but prey on each other." Egoism elevated men's lower, brutish nature, at the expense of civility. Moderate Anglican thinkers equated egoism with atheism, which, they thought, encouraged the kind of conduct that political thinkers like Thomas Hobbes described as the essence of human nature. "Every man thence will be a God to himself, a fiend to each other," said Barrow, "so that necessarily the world will be turned into a chaos and a hell." To indulge desire or appetite was, moreover, fundamentally a conscious human choice. "Wickedness," preached John Tillotson, one of the most influential moderate Anglican theologians, "is a kind of voluntary frenzy, and a chosen distraction." The social conditions Hobbes ascribed to the "state of nature" were thus hardly natural at all. They derived from human choice, not natural law. Faithless people could not regulate their passions, and lack of

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faith itself reflected destructive human habits and decisions. “The naughtiness of infidelity will appear by considering its effects and consequences” Isaac Barrow proclaimed, “which are plainly a spawn of all vices and villainies.” Remove faith, he said, and “no virtue can remain.” In a properly faithful society, religion would teach gentlemen to rein in self-centered passions, and to exemplify good behavior for their dependents. A society lacking in faith, on the other hand, tended towards the destruction of private virtue, and hence of social order and stability. The aphorism Bernard Mandeville would make famous several decades later thus reversed moderate Anglican moral theology. Whereas, for Mandeville, “private vices” produced “public benefits,” for these theologians public good stemmed from private virtue.[16]

The Reverend James Blair, a forceful narrator of dramatic stories concerning Virginia’s Royal Governors in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, preached within the moderate Anglican idiom. Blair asserted the fundamental rationality of the Christian message. The apprehension of religious truth “requires a great deal of sedate thought to make us in any degree sensible” of it, he claimed. Until the “innate principles in our minds” are “excited by reason and argument,” Blair argued, we know God best “from the excellency of his works, and the holiness of his precepts.” From careful study of the bible and of nature the reasonable man could deduce the existence of God. The fall of man was not complete—a remnant of reason remained. Thus, among the ways that “Christians may be said to suppress their light,” Blair argued, was “by neglecting to make use of the means of grace, whereby their own minds may be duly enlightened.”[17]

Blair emphasized, like other early eighteenth century Virginia ministers, an Aristotelian view of humanity. All creatures have a *telos*, Blair said. “The chief good of brute creatures consists in sensible things, such as tend to the fattening of the body, and the gratifying the lusts thereof; but the chief good of rational creatures is to enjoy God.” Thus, Blair maintained, the

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rational man must suppress his carnal appetites. Blair condemned the “vain mirth and sottishness occasioned by gluttony and drunkenness,” because indulging such appetites hampered “thought and reflection.” He who “blindly follows the brutish appetites” and permits them to “blunt his understanding,” Blair affirmed, “like a brute beast” can have “no right sense of God and religion.” Here is the northern humanist pedagogy of Erasmus, now incorporated into moderate Anglican theology. The temperate man restrained his animal nature by exercising his reason and by actively placing his faith in God.[18]

Since God permitted us the faculties to refine ourselves, and by doing so to understand better the nature of the divine, every person was obligated to undertake a project of self-improvement. Blair condemned roundly those “who neglect to make use of the several talents, whether natural or acquired, wherewith they are entrusted; by which negligence it comes to pass, that their own minds are kept in darkness.” He recognized, however, that social stratification permitted some persons greater time and opportunity to engage themselves in this process of reflection and self-improvement than others. “God has given a plentiful portion to some men,” he said. One of the benefits high station permitted was the leisure to pursue education. Refined men and women who possessed virtue had a special obligation to fashion and present themselves as good role models for their dependents. “Parents, teachers, pastors, tutors, guardians, masters, mistresses, relations, friends and acquaintances,” Blair asserted, diffused “knowledge and practice of religion and virtue,” by means of “instruction, advice, or example.” Proper comportment was thus, in Blair’s estimation, especially an obligation of those gentlemen and gentlewomen in the upper reaches of British society, who might then “communicate their knowledge in their several stations to others, who might be the better for it.”[19]

Like Tillotson and other late seventeenth century latitudinarian divines, Blair argued that degenerate living caused men to develop atheistic principles. “Wicked living obscures light,” he

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said, “and dims the candle both of natural knowledge and divine grace.” Dissolute men, “of atheistical opinions are commonly brought to that horrid state by the wickedness of their lives.” Since most men required some consistency between their principles and their practice, he thought, those who could not “forbear their wicked practices, and bring up their lives to their good principles,” too often instead chose to “bring down their good principles to their wicked lives.” Atheism was thus evidence for moral crisis, and the obligation to choose both God and virtue fell heavily upon the right reason of the individual believer. Within just a few years of Nicholson’s arrival in Virginia, James Blair seems to have concluded that the Governor was precisely such a disordered person. Many of the stories that he and his allies told about Nicholson stressed the Governor’s lack of respect for the Church and its clergy, and thus implied not only that the Governor lacked self-control, but also that the source of his personal incapacity was the failure of his faith. As an appropriate “nurse” for the young colony then, Nicholson stood twice condemned in these stories: he lacked the capacity to govern himself, because he did not stand in a properly righteous relationship with God.[20]

III.

During his visit to England, Blair developed a relationship with John Locke, the Whig philosopher and spokesman for limited government, who served on and lent his considerable prestige to the newly formed Board of Trade from its establishment in 1696 until 1700. Locke wasted little time in placing his stamp on imperial policy. Under his urging, the Board of Trade undertook a systematic examination of economic conditions in the colonies. Edward Randolph, the Surveyor General of Customs in America, authored a report on Virginia received by the Board in 1696, which acquired a certain prominence. Randolph argued that indentured servants had ceased to immigrate to Virginia because there was an artificial land shortage there.

"Members of the Council and others who make an interest in Government," Randolph wrote,

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"have from time to time procured grants of very large tracts of land, so that for many years there has been no waste land to be taken up by those who bring with them servants, or by servants who have served their time." [21]

Locke called on other sources, among them James Blair, to comment on Randolph's analysis. In 1697 Blair prepared a briefing paper for Locke in which he substantiated Randolph's claim. "The great men of the country," Blair wrote, have "20, 25, or 30 thousand acres of land in their hands, and there is hardly any left for the poor people to take up." Blair urged a much stricter accounting of the "great tracts possessed already," that their owners pay the proper quitrents due to the crown. He also decried the "arbitrariness of Government" and argued that the Governor possessed too much ability to manipulate the Council, and hence that the Council could not serve as a check upon the potentially tyrannical power of the chief magistrate. A second, similar report to the Board of Trade by Henry Hartwell, Edward Chilton, and James Blair likewise supported the claims that Randolph had advanced in 1696. These authors emphasized the degree to which the land system in Virginia was open to abuse, both by "the ignorance and knavery of surveyors," and by the county clerks, who exercised "great liberty . . . in issuing out Certificates for [land] rights." They also noted "there has been great talk of concealment of quitrents," a charge that Hartwell, in a separate letter to the Board of Trade, substantiated in greater detail. These analyses shaped the policies of the Board of Trade. Blair's characterization of Virginia's government usefully undercut the administration of the "tyrannical" and "corrupt" Governor Andros. It also, perhaps, had consequences unintended by Blair, for it immediately influenced the instructions given to the next governor of Virginia, Francis Nicholson. [22]

Nicholson presented his commission to the Council of Virginia on the ninth of December, 1698. He arrived with a strong reputation as a friend of the Church of England. When he left Maryland, the House of Burgesses of that colony offered a testimonial to Nicholson's service,

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which the Governor, no doubt with deep satisfaction, copied in a 1699 letter to his patron the Earl of Bridgewater. The Marylanders praised Nicholson's "great care & study . . . to promote the practice of piety and worship of almighty God by erecting churches, schools & nurseries of learning both for reforming of manners and education of youth." They noted the various ways in which Nicholson "maintained his Majesty's glory and authority in this province," and they praised him for the vigor with which he promoted order and justice in the colony. But they especially emphasized Nicholson's good character, and the good example he had set for the colony. They closed by thanking him for his "pious, and just, . . . noble and benevolent carriage in all things," which, they said, promoted "better parts" in the colony. In this description, Nicholson was a "a generous and good governor," indeed a paragon of the ideal English magistrate. [23]

Nicholson's private correspondence with the Earl of Bridgewater revealed, however, that all had been not quite as tranquil in Maryland as the testimonial of the House of Burgesses might imply. He implored Bridgewater in August of 1688, "that what ever articles may be exhibited against me, your lordship would be pleased to suspend your beliefs of them." As would happen in Virginia, Nicholson had provoked the ire of a faction of Maryland gentlemen, who were busily spreading accounts of his administration "part false, part foolish, and part scandalous & malicious." As Nicholson observed "they act according to the proverb, fling a great deal of dirt, and some of it will stick." Nicholson dismissed the authors of these calumnies as men of "notoriously bad" character "both here and in England," and as "papists and jacobites," men, that is, who judgements did not have to be taken seriously. They were enemies of stability and order, who "are never satisfied with any government, but always endeavoring to raise commotions and rebellions." But he obviously took them quite seriously indeed, for he continued to work to strengthen his ties to his patron in later letters. "I thank God," he wrote from Virginia in February of 1699, "that I endeavored [while Governor of Maryland], as I hope I shall do here, to discharge

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my duty to God, his majesty, and you my honorable patron, as also to do the people all good I possibly can." The hierarchy expressed here, the rank ordering of magisterial and personal duty and obligation, would inform Nicholson's conduct throughout his career in Virginia. Nicholson acknowledged his deep gratitude to Bridgewater "for my being advantageously removed hither, whence I hope (God willing) to behave myself that your lordship may never have any cause to the contrary."^[24]

Nicholson's instructions as Governor of Virginia reflected Locke's Whig philosophy, and aimed, among other things, to correct the abuses delineated by the various reports received by Locke and the Board of Trade. Nicholson's instructions limited the ability of the governor to control the Council by curtailing his capacity to suspend councilors. They also required Nicholson to contain the power of the Council by reducing pluralism in office. In addition, the Governor's instructions required him to put a stop to the practice of wealthy, well-connected men engrossing large quantities of land, and also to develop better means for collecting quitrents. Nicholson's efforts to follow these instructions contributed to the bitter antagonism that surrounded him over the next several years.^[25]

While the break between Nicholson and his opponents did not erupt until 1702, relations between Blair and Nicholson seem to have become strained shortly after Nicholson's arrival in Virginia. In his 1702 memorial to the Bishop of London, the first official letter of complaint that Blair registered against Nicholson, Blair recounted a violent confrontation with Nicholson shortly after the Commissary returned to the Colony. "He began his Government with picking a quarrel with me upon the subject of moderation," Blair observed, "which your grace and several other of his friends had recommended to him." Blair carried with him a number of letters for the Governor, which included the advice that so offended Nicholson. "He asked me what the Devil they meant to recommend moderation to him," Blair related. "I answered that his friends were all

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of opinion that it was the best advice could be given him, for said I they have seen the articles which were exhibited against your Excellency from Maryland and judged that all those ill things they accuse you of proceeded from your passion." Nicholson, according to Blair, responded angrily to this. "I know better to govern Virginia and Maryland than all the Bishops in England, if I had not hampered them in Maryland and kept them under I should never have been able to have governed them." In his conclusion to this dialogue, Blair reported himself telling Nicholson, somewhat sanctimoniously, "I don't pretend to understand Maryland but if I know anything of Virginia they are a good natured tractable people as any in the world and you may do what you will with them by way of civility but you will never be able to manage them in that way you speak of by hampering and keeping them under." The initial story that Blair narrated to attack Nicholson, then, turned on Nicholson's allegedly unbalanced character. Blair portrayed Nicholson in much the same fashion as he earlier had portrayed Andros. Nicholson's lack of moderation, and his insistence on "hampering and keeping them under" rather than governing with "civility," made him unfit to hold office. The governor's external demeanor hinted at a disordered, unbalanced inward temperament, governed more by passion than reason.[26]

Blair's disdain for Nicholson, however, stemmed as much from factional politics in Virginia as from Nicholson's explosive personality or Blair's prickly sensibility. Blair, by virtue of his status as the Bishop of London's Commissary, occupied a seat on the Governor's Council of the colony. In 1687 he had married Sarah Harrison, the daughter of Benjamin Harrison I, thereby establishing relationships with a cluster of other significant Virginia families. One of his brothers-in-law was Philip Ludwell II. Another notable family to whom Blair was connected by marriage was the Burwells, one of the more substantial families in the colony. These men had formed the core of the faction that had supported Blair in his campaign against Andros.

Nicholson's actions as Governor ultimately threatened their interests, and provoked the crisis which marred his final years in Virginia.[27]

Nicholson, upon his arrival in Virginia, proceeded with some vigor to implement the program contained in the instructions Locke had drafted for him. William Byrd I, in a letter to Philip Ludwell, commented on the "storm and continual hurry" of business at the capitol, noting that "councils and assemblies begin to be weekly or monthly." Nicholson acted quickly to bar members of the Council from holding lucrative positions as naval officers or collectors of customs, and he restricted some of the civil privileges that members of the Council had up until then enjoyed. The governor also moved, although less energetically, to address land reform. He called for a county by county "rent roll," or list of land-holders, in order to facilitate collection of quit-rents, and he took steps to limit the size of land-grants and to regulate more closely the administration of head-rights. He also asserted control over the sale of "treasury rights," claims sold directly at the rate of 5 s. per 50 acres. Nicholson required surveyors and county clerks to submit all sales of more than 1,000 acres to him for approval. William Byrd I, in his capacity as Auditor of the colony, reported to Nicholson the "very great abuse" by county sheriffs and surveyors, who he claimed systematically under-reported quantities of land. "I conceive a great part of those frauds might be prevented by making of good diligent men to be sheriffs," Byrd noted. Thus, in order to ensure that these new regulations would be followed, the governor claimed control of the appointment of county sheriffs and clerks of the county courts.[28]

By challenging, in such an essential fashion, the entrenched institutions of the colony, Nicholson was almost sure to have provoked an eruption of factional politics. In curtailing pluralism of office by members of the Council, for example, Nicholson required eight councilors to give up office as Collectors, and a ninth, Robert Carter, to resign his commission as a naval officer. Nicholson's efforts at land reform threatened one of the fundamental arrangements by

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which Virginia's emergent aristocracy derived its wealth. By 1702, open conflict with the Harrison faction on the council had erupted. In that year Nicholson had opened land south of the James River, the Blackwater Swamp, to settlement, and members of the Harrison clan had used their connections to aggrandize most of it before it was made available to other planters. Moreover, the College of William and Mary owned a substantial tract of land in the area, and James Blair, as president of the College, hoped to enhance the revenues of the College by selling it. William Byrd I, among others, complained acridly to Nicholson of the Harrisons' land-grab, writing "I humbly conceive a great part [of the sales] are very irregular and contrary to the intent and meaning of His Majesty's said royal instructions." Nicholson's decision to close the region, amid charges of favoritism and corruption, thus brought the governor into immediate conflict with a well-developed faction of powerful, intermarried Virginia families.[29]

IV

In the midst of the political tensions produced by Nicholson's reform efforts, an ugly confrontation erupted between Nicholson and Blair in the summer of 1702, provoking a spate of competing narratives addressed to church authorities in England. The immediate occasion of this conflict was a funeral oration, delivered by Blair when Virginia received news of the death of the King, in which the Commissary warned of the dangers of absolutist government. Nicholson, all accounts agreed, interpreted the sermon personally, as a public rebuke of his administration. Nicholson hastened to assure Archbishop Tenison that his dispute with Blair would not prevent him "from endeavoring to do my duty to my holy Mother the Church of England." Some months later twenty of Virginia's clergymen addressed a lengthy testimonial in support of the Governor to the Bishop of London, complaining bitingly against Commissary Blair. "His funeral oration upon the death of his late Majesty, and his contemptuous speeches in conversation with several of us and others in the colony are sufficient demonstrations not only of affronting the Governor's

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person, but also of lessening him in his authority and undermining him in the dignity of his office," they wrote.[30]

Blair, in turn, fired off letters to his ecclesiastical patrons denouncing Nicholson in the most vitriolic terms. "What a storm has fallen upon us, upon the occasion of a funeral oration I pronounced in our College in memory of King William," he noted. "It was chiefly occasioned by my making use of that opportunity, to commend the mildness and gentleness of the King's reign, which our great man took to be a tacit reflection on himself for his furious and mad way of Government." The public dispute, however, concealed a much deeper animosity. In a second memorial Blair noted that while he had heard "strange stories of [Nicholson's] rudeness and abusiveness," he also recollected Nicholson's vigorous support, while Governor of Maryland, for the Church. I was, Blair wrote, "so blinded with my former good opinion of him . . . that for a great while after he was detected by others that were near witnesses of his life and conversation I inclined to the charitable side, had still good hope of him, defended him on all occasions, and took him to be a good man at bottom." Blair recounted "the strange and unexpected manner" in which God "opened my eyes" to Nicholson's true character. "It was a scene of one of the vilest and grossest sorts of lewdness," the "particulars of which are not so proper as to be put in writing." Nicholson's "strange lewdness," which he conducted "to a degree of impudence and brutality beyond that of most other men," revealed a fatally flawed character. "He made many base attempts upon persons of honor and virtue," Blair related, "and those with such abundance of rudeness and violence as looked more like a design of perpetrating a rape than obtaining a consent." The story of Nicholson's "amours," Blair wrote, "gave such numerous instances of fury, jealousy, and revenge etc. threatening etc. with many other extravagant things of this nature that I really came at last to consider him as a man of the blackest soul and conscience that I had

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ever known in my life." This was powerful language indeed, coming from the senior clergyman in Virginia.[31]

The occasion of Blair's contempt was Nicholson's effort to woo the daughter of a prominent local gentleman. Shortly after his arrival in Virginia in 1698, Nicholson met and fell in love with Lucy Burwell, the daughter of Major Lewis Burwell, who in turn was related by marriage to the Harrison family. The governor at that point was in his mid-forties, while the subject of his courtship was more than twenty years his junior, so given the age difference and the developing factional animosity it is perhaps not surprising that she refused him. In May, 1700 Nicholson wrote Burwell asking leave to court his daughter, "who by her beauty, many extraordinary virtues and rare accomplishments," the Governor wrote, "hath charmed me to a degree beyond expression." Burwell responded tersely that Lucy was betrothed to another, "which for me to endeavor to prevent, being consenting to it, will make me seem odious in the sight of God and man." Nicholson was, he wrote, "in an ecstasy of trouble, which I am heartily sorry for, but which I know not how to relieve." The Governor pressed his suit anyway, writing ardently to Lucy attesting his love for her, as well as entreating her father to reconsider the match. "Sir," he wrote in an undated letter to Burwell, "I beg of you to believe that I'm an honest and sincere man, without either artifice or cunning." [32]

As his romantic prospects worsened, Nicholson became something of a laughingstock, both in Virginia and England. A friend in England reported "it is here said and sneered at by the meanest of those who have come in lately that you still prosecute your amours without the least hopes of success; and it is in truth not a little trouble to us that have a value for you to find out how much it lessens you to make such a rout about this matter." No doubt feeling embarrassed and exposed, Nicholson became increasingly hostile. He accused Burwell of intervening with his daughter to prevent Lucy from marrying him. Amid a deteriorating atmosphere ever more

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charged with anger and denial, the correspondence between Burwell and Nicholson became frosty. Nicholson accused Burwell of intervening with his daughter to prevent the match, which Burwell heatedly denied. By early 1703, Nicholson had realized the futility of his romantic hopes. Nicholson wrote Burwell requesting the return of his correspondence with the family, terminating his courtship in a series of bitter recriminations against Lucy and her father.[33]

Nicholson's conduct of this romance became a central element of his opponents' critique of his private character. The Reverend Stephen Fouace, for example, had lurid stories to tell describing Nicholson's ungentlemanly management of this affair. Nicholson was "so incredibly jealous in the great concern of his love" that any unmarried man who chanced to be in her company risked bringing upon himself the full "fierceness, resentment, and violence" of the Governor. Indeed, Fouace described, "he has often threatened to have the hearts blood of his mistress' relations that he thinks do oppose his having of her," and "he swore once to Mr. Blair that if she was married to another he would cut the throats of the minister, of the Bridegroom, and of him that should give the license." [34]

Nicholson's romance soured in tandem with the political tranquility of his administration. Early in 1703, six councilors, most allied with the Harrison family, petitioned the Queen for Nicholson's removal. "We beg leave in all humility," they wrote, to relieve us from "the many great grievances and pressures we lie under by reason of the unusual, insolent and arbitrary methods of government as well as the wicked and scandalous examples of life which have been now for divers years past put in practice by his Excellency Francis Nicholson, Esq." Robert Carter, John Lightfoot, Matthew Page, Philip Ludwell, Benjamin Harrison, and James Blair, half the council, took this extraordinary step on May 20, 1703, and in so doing raised the factional conflict in Virginia to new levels of caustic intensity. As in the previous struggle against Sir Edmund Andros, a key part of their strategy was to demonstrate the Governor's lack of

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gentlemanly character, thereby establishing that he was temperamentally unqualified to govern.

Nicholson's private failings, they argued, disqualified him from public office.[35]

V

The charges the dissident councilors made against the Governor were serious. In a lengthy document submitted to the Board of Trade they presented a detailed catalog of Nicholson's failings. "We shall limit our observations," they wrote, "to his behavior towards ourselves, in the several capacities wherein we act," for to do otherwise, they insisted, "would require a large volume." This document revealed their own vested interest, as members of the Council of Virginia, and as landed gentlemen. Nicholson was an autocrat, they insisted, who "engrosses all power by acting alone in most of the chief affairs of Government." They complained that Nicholson now appointed important colonial offices--Justices of the Peace, Sheriff, Naval and Militia Officers--without consulting the Council. Moreover, they sharply criticized Nicholson for attempting to reform the land system in Virginia. "Rules of limitation in taking up land have been prescribed to surveyors," they wrote, "against both law and custom." They were especially incensed by Nicholson's closure of the Blackwater Swamp lands. "When the Blackwater Land was opened," they wrote, "and a great many people had been at the charge of purchasing rights of her majesty and of making entries and surveys, he by his private orders contradicted and retracted all, forbidding the surveyors to proceed, without taking any notice to the council." In brief, they complained, Nicholson resorted to every method to "engross all power into his own hands and to render the Council insignificant ciphers." [36]

The six councilors emphasized Nicholson's egregious failings of civil comportment. They devoted the fourth and longest section of their grievance, more than half the document, to a long series of complaints about Nicholson's personal conduct. "His haughty, furious, and insolent behavior to the best gentlemen in the country is more like downright madness than anger or

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passion," they wrote. His language, they said, was profane, and his demeanor abusive. Many of the charges in this section, unlike the previous ones, were expansively written, with little specific substantiation. From the stories told in subsequent letters and memoranda, however, it is clear that the councilors alluded to particular incidents in the factional disputes of Virginia politics, including especially the Governor's courtship of Lucy Burwell. Their complaints, moreover, illustrate the degree to which the councilor's civil position was threatened by their dispute with Nicholson. "He is," they wrote, "exceedingly self willed and utterly uncounselable by any person or persons whatsoever." By failing to embody civil order, Nicholson threatened the entire structure of civil life in Virginia. A responsible magistrate affirmed by his benevolent paternalism the social status of his subordinates. Nicholson's unrestrained passion and contempt for local elites made him "uncounselable," and left the gentlemen of his court without an appropriate civil role. In a society in which civilization began at the top, how was Virginia to become civilized?[37]

The memorial against Nicholson was presented to the Queen in March, 1704, some ten months after it was written. Meanwhile Blair had returned to England, to lobby for Nicholson's removal. Blair submitted additional documents to buttress the charges against Nicholson, including two personal affidavits, the first on 25 April 1704, and the second a few days later, on 1 May. Robert Beverley and Stephen Fouace likewise submitted affidavits supporting the charges in the councilor's original memorial, and also a series of letters from Lewis Burwell, Nathaniel Burwell, William Byrd, Robert Carter, William Drummond, Benjamin Harrison, Nathaniel Harrison, John Lightfoot, and Philip Ludwell Jr., documenting various aspects of Nicholson's deportment as described in the original complaint.[38]

These documents contained numerous stories illustrating the Governor's temper and lack of self-control. Captain Moody, for example, complained that the Governor's behavior had been

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immoderate and passionate almost from Moody's first meeting with Nicholson in 1701. When he reported to Nicholson in September of that year, the Governor asked him to attend the funeral of another local naval officer, Captain Neville. Nicholson lent his prestige and authority to the occasion, in honor of the deceased, and called out the local militia. Moody described the "great concourse of people" who attended the funeral, together with "a great many of the militia, both horse and foot." Nicholson undercut this display of governmental authority, however, by failing to maintain a moderate demeanor. Moody "went out of the Church," he recalled, "where he saw and heard the Governor, in the most outrageous passion that he ever saw, swearing the most horrid oaths and most bitter imprecations, against Mr. Slaughter, the then minister of that parish, . . . shaking his horsewhip and threatening to beat the said Slaughter therewith, and to pull his gown over his ears." Moody noted that "upon inquiring the reason of the Governor's so violent passion, there was answer made, that was little, to what was usual with the Governor." [39]

Numerous other writers had similar stories to tell. Robert Beverley, for example, emphasized that he had "heard the governor very profanely curse and swear in the church yards both of James Town and Middle Plantation or Williamsburg, immediately after divine service in church, as well as in may other public places." Somewhat later Beverley noted "I have heard Governor Nicholson often in public threaten several gentlemen of good repute with ruin and abuse them in vile Billingsgate terms, and nothing is more common with him." George Luke, a Commissioner of Customs in Virginia, recounted witnessing and being subject to a number of such outbursts. When departing from a Williamsburg church service, Luke reported in a deposition to the Board of Trade in 1704, he "heard the Governor cursing and swearing in a violent manner in the churchyard." Luke described a second incident in which Nicholson stopped him after a church service, "fell into a very exceeding great passion continued in the same for half an hour at least, during which time he uttered very many oaths and curses and gave [Luke] very

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scurrilous and opprobrious language." Implicit in such stories, but left unstated, was Nicholson's status as a Godly man. The Governor's disordered behavior was indicative of a faithless, unregenerate man. [40]

VI

By March, 1704, Nicholson clearly was aware that complaints had been leveled against him, although he remained ignorant until September of the full scope and intensity of the charges. Nicholson's patrons in England and friends in the imperial bureaucracy, once they were aware of the situation, appraised the Governor of the campaign against him. He received a series of letters in the summer of 1704, offering him advice about how to respond to the allegations against him. These writers were most concerned to address the allegations that Nicholson was disloyal to the Crown. Nicholson, for example, acknowledged William Blathwayt's advice that he "should take care to answer more particularly what Mr. Blair & others have alleged concerning the public accounts." The pace of transatlantic correspondence, however, ensured that Nicholson's information was partial, and his reaction correspondingly slow. As he complained later, the long delay before he was informed of the charges against him was by design. His opponents, Nicholson wrote, submitted their petition and supporting documents to the authorities in England at a time "when the ships were all sailed for Virginia, and they were sensible that I could not have any notice of it, and would be a long time before I could make my answer." Nicholson did not learn of the full extent of the grievances against him until December 1704, almost a year after the charges against him were first leveled, and almost two years after the six councilors and their allies first prepared their complaints.[41]

Unlike the previous governor, Andros, Nicholson was ably represented in England, by John Thrale, agent to the colony of Virginia and an accomplished lawyer. Thrale acted quickly on Nicholson's behalf to challenge the substance of the councilor's allegations, noting rightly

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enough that they were vague and largely undocumented. He also demanded that Nicholson be informed of the proceedings and given the opportunity to defend himself and clear his name. Many of the charges against Nicholson, Thrale said, "are in such general terms that it is impossible a direct answer" could be made to them. Since the Governor was subject to so "many scandalous aspersions" against his good name, of which Nicholson "could not possibly have any notice," Thrale requested that the Board of Trade conduct a formal hearing as soon as Nicholson had had the opportunity to respond to the charges. Having carefully reviewed the charges against Nicholson, item by item, Thrale noted that in any case, "no matter of truth charged in this memorial is of that weight as to subject the Governor . . . either to her Majesty's displeasure or your Lordship's censure." Sadly for Nicholson, Thrale was in ill health, and shortly died, leaving Nicholson without an active representative in England to plead his case.[42]

It was not until the Spring of 1705 that Nicholson began actively to defend himself. He promptly addressed the Virginia House of Burgesses, summarizing the dispute and describing to them the nature of the Councilors' complaint, and asking for their support. Nicholson provided copies of the various petitions, memorials, and affidavits against him to the Speaker of the House, for the Burgesses' perusal. He was, he told the House, appalled at the tenor of the petitions. "I had rather lie in a jail and live upon bread and water an honest man than to have the greatest honor and estate in the world and to be such a man as they have represented me," he said. "If I were conscious to myself that the five hundredth part of the inhabitants here would join in their petition [and] memorial to her Majesty and approve of their affidavits I should think myself duty bound . . . to quit the government and to petition her most sacred Majesty that I may lay down her Majesty's commission at her Royal feet." The Burgesses obligingly considered the charges against the governor in a session several days later, and voted, 27 to 17, on a series of resolutions affirming their continued support for his administration. Nicholson also marshaled support from

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the Clergy, from various militia companies, and from the minority on the Council who supported him.[43]

The chief thrust of Nicholson's defense, in his direct responses to the Board of Trade, demonstrate the degree to which he worked from a very different ethical frame than his opponents. Nicholson emphasized the priorities he had delineated in his earlier letters to the Earl of Bridgewater—his duty, in rank order, to God, Crown, Patron, and only last the people under his rule. He prepared four letters to the Board of Trade on March 1, 2, 3 and 6—long, detailed statements addressing the allegations against him. Understandably, Nicholson was most concerned to refute those charges that accused him of malfeasance in office or maladministration. The focus of his lengthy correspondence was on vindicating his policies regarding the militia, his handling of official funds, his appointment of councilors, and his overall loyalty. He was especially incensed at insinuations "that there would be a rebellion here, either by my setting up in the nature of Cromwell or Bacon," or "that the people are so exasperated against me, that unless I was turned out of the government, they would rise." [44]

The driving issue raised by Nicholson's critics was his character, however, not malfeasance in office or maladministration. Addressing these attacks was not a high priority for Nicholson, judging from the space and detail he gave them in his letters. "How they came to have such a bad opinion of me now, when they had quite the contrary formerly," Nicholson wrote, "I can't tell except it were that I would not be guided and governed by them and turn secretaries, auditors, collectors naval officers and others out of their places, and put them and their friends in." Nicholson made only the weakest efforts to establish his fitness to rule, and to challenge the damning ethical portrait of him painted by his enemies. "I hope I shall not be found to have a cloven-foot, to be a fury or have snakes instead of hair (for both by the petition, memorial and affidavits they have represented me to be possessed with a legion of devils)," he

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argued, "but like another ordinary man both in person and disposition." Nicholson developed this line of argument further, in his letters of March 3 and 6, contesting, if only indirectly and abstractly, the character charges against him. He protested that he was, after all, only a fallible human being. "What is true" in the allegations against him, Nicholson protested, "I hope God willing to be able to justify, abating human frailty and infirmities. I must own that I never did, nor do I pretend to be a saint, or to have the spirit of a martyr; but I hope in God that I shall prove that I have been, and am an honest man." [45]

Intriguingly, Nicholson bolstered this line of defense by appending two long quotations, from sermons by John Tillotson and Robert South, two of the most prominent moderate Anglican divines of the late seventeenth-century, to his long final letter of March 6. Tillotson's sermon, preached "Against Evil Speaking," was especially relevant. "They that will observe nothing in a wise man but his oversight and follies, nothing in a good man but his failings and infirmities may make a shift to render a very wise and good man very despicable," Tillotson had written. The selection Nicholson choose from South was similarly pointed. "Nothing can be imagined more destructive to society" than slander, South wrote. "It robs the public of all that benefit and advantage that it may justly claim and ought to receive from the worth and virtue of particular persons by rendering their virtues utterly insignificant, for good itself can do no good while it passes for evil." [46]

But by the standards of his opponents, and critically, of moderate Anglican social ethics, Nicholson needed to do more than assert that he was an "ordinary man." He gave little attention to counteracting the devastating stories of unrestrained passion surrounding his courtship of Lucy Burwell. Any irregularities in his housekeeping, he noted in his only reference to his romance, should be "put upon the score of my not being so fortunate as to have a wife . . . but I think endeavored as much as any man could to have got one, who I believe amongst her other good

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qualifications would have been able to have managed that affair, and therefore what is amiss on that account is not my fault but theirs, who used all the ways and means possible to hinder that match." Such statements, buried among the pages of prose vindicating his official conduct, could hardly have answered the concerns of his critics. Moreover, by arguing that he should be held to the standards of "ordinary men," Nicholson forfeited, at least by their ethical standards, his claim to authority. No doubt the evils of slander and malicious gossip against which Tillotson and South argued were real enough, but Nicholson's line of defense, viewed from the moral perspective of his critics, implicitly conceded that there was truth to the character faults alleged against him. The ethical standard asserted by Nicholson's enemies demanded more from its magistrates, who set the moral tone, by their example, for the rest of society. Nicholson instead predicated his fitness to rule on his loyalty to his superiors in England and his administrative efficiency, and not on the civil model that he set for Virginia's society.[47]

VII

Nicholson governed at a time in which Virginia's elite had only recently stabilized, and was attempting, with apprehension and vigor, to erect a self-consciously English society in the colony. Nicholson's conflict with the faction formed around the Harrison family, for which James Blair was such a powerful spokesman, was complexly rooted both in personal animosities and Nicholson's challenge to the faction's self-interest. The language that these men employed to attack the Governor, however, was revealing. While clearly familiar with Whig political theory, Nicholson's opponents drew liberally upon other ethical models as well. The vast majority of the narratives that they recounted to discredit Nicholson focused on his private character. In those stories, he was more often an antagonist crafted along Thomistic, Erasmian, or moderate Anglican lines, than he was a Whig villain.

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Robert Beverley, Stephen Fouace, James Blair, and men like them, ultimately a sizable faction from among the most powerful families in Virginia, expended considerable effort to secure the removal of Governor Nicholson in the first years of the eighteenth-century. Their effort is noteworthy, however, more for its rhetoric than for its success. While the crown ultimately did remove Nicholson from office, its action had less to do with the content of the accusations leveled against the Governor than for the fact that the accusations existed at all. The storm of protest against his administration provided an opportunity to exert colonial patronage that others, in the charged political atmosphere of the English Court, seized upon for their own ends. As historian Stephen Saunders Webb has noted, the ascent of the Duke of Marlborough meant a reshuffling of colonial patronage between 1704 and 1709, and Nicholson might very likely have lost his job in any case, though the tempest of remonstrations emanating from the colony certainly made Nicholson's removal easier to justify. Moreover, Nicholson's career hardly came to an end because of the spiteful confrontation that emerged from his tenure as Governor of Virginia. Nicholson had many years of distinguished service ahead of him in 1705, when the Queen recalled him to England, both as a military officer and as a Royal Governor, albeit not in Virginia.[48]

Judged as a causally significant event, then, the confrontation between Nicholson and his critics is at best of minor significance. The stories Nicholson's enemies recounted tell us relatively little regarding the political influence in England of the Virginia plantation elite, nor do they seem to have contributed much to shaping subsequent events in the colony. But the multitude of letters, memoranda, petitions, and depositions in which Blair and his allies told their stories reveal a deep moral outrage and disgust for their Governor. Nicholson's opponents quite clearly were acting in part to protect their political and economic interest from the threat of external imperial control. Nonetheless, the language they choose to frame their opposition and to

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express their revulsion for the Governor sheds insight into the moral values of Virginia's plantation elite, at that liminal moment when the mature eighteenth-century Virginia plantation society, so ably described by historians like Rhys Isaac and Jack Greene, was coming into self-conscious existence.

The sensibility of a significant number of prominent and powerful Virginians at the beginning of the eighteenth century rejected a view of human society predicated upon possessive individualism. They do not adopt the proto-liberal egoism of radical thinkers like Bernard Mandeville, who in the first decades of the eighteenth century would claim such influence in the ethical thought of forward looking British intellectuals. Rather, these men formulated their understanding of magisterial authority and character within a traditional and conservative body of ethical thought that was Aristotelian and Thomistic, mediated by the thought of Erasmus and his pedagogical successors in England. This conception of the role of "governors" perceived civilization originating in the good character of the men at the apex of the local social and political hierarchy. Its most forceful spokesmen in the colony were Anglican ministers, who rearticulated in the social theology of moderate Anglican orthodoxy older English conceptions of the good ruler. Part of what it meant to be English, at least as Virginians comprehended it at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was to be ruled by gentlemen who comported themselves appropriately. Nicholson's failure to meet such a standard of behavior provided the focal point of the complaints against him, which in turn were instigated by his challenge to the material, political, and social standing of a prominent group of aspiring Virginia families.

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NOTES

I would like to acknowledge the generosity of Emory Evans, who shared material from his research with me, and James Henretta, who has mentored this project from its inception. Warren Billings, Lee Congdon, Christopher Doyle, Emory Evans, Christopher Grasso, James Henretta, Warren Hofstra, and James Rice offered cogent and detailed criticism of earlier versions of this essay. I am indebted to Herman Belz, Scott Hammond, Jon Kukla, Howard Lubert, Iain McLean, Stephen Reich, and Philip Riley for their insights into the problems posed in this paper, shared over many fruitful conversations. The staffs of the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Huntington Library, the Rockefeller Library of Colonial Williamsburg, the Swem Library of the College of William and Mary, and the Virginia Historical Society deserve every recognition for their extraordinary courtesy, helpfulness, and professionalism.

1. Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, Louis B. Wright, ed., (London: 1705; Reprint edition, Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1947), p. 107; Beverley, "Narrative" of 12 February 1704, in H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Virginia*, (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia State Library, 1927), Vol. II, p. 392; "Mr. Commissary Blair's Memorial against Governor Nicholson," (1702) in *Historical Collections of the American Colonial Church, I, Virginia*, (Reprint edition, Westminster, Maryland: Willow Bend Books, 2001), p. 78; On the Tangier garrison, see Bruce T. McCully, "From the North Riding to Morocco: The Early Years of Governor Francis Nicholson, 1655-1686," *WMQ*, 3rd Series, 19 (1962), pp. 534-556; and Stephen Saunders Webb, "The Strange Career of Francis Nicholson," *WMQ* 3rd Series, 23 (1966), pp. 515-520. The soldiers of the Tangier garrison formed the elite core of Charles II's army, and were notorious for their savage repression of Monmouth's Rebellion in 1685. See, in addition to Webb, Geoff Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 12, 170-171.

2. John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, No. 14, Saturday, January 28, 1720, in Ronald Hamowy, ed., *Cato's Letters: Or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other Important Subjects*, Vol. 1, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), pp. 104-110.

3. *New York Weekly Journal*, Jan. 21, 1733/1734, as quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 137; Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, Louis B. Wright, ed., (London: 1705; Reprint edition, Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1947), pp. 104, 107. See also Beverley's "Narrative" of 12 February 1704, in H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Virginia*, (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia State Library, 1927), Vol. II, pp. 392-394. For synthesis of the complicated literature discussing the evolution of English political theory, see the various essays in J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, and especially the essays by Donald R. Kelley, Howell A. Lloyd, J.P. Sommerville, Corinne C. Weston, David Wooton, and Blair Worden; and J.G.A. Pocock, ed., with the assistance of Gordon J. Schochet and Lois G. Schworer, *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and especially the essays by Linda Levy Peck, J.G.A. Pocock, Howard Nenner, and Nicholas Phillipson.

Edmund Morgan places Whig ideals at the center of his interpretation of the dispute between Nicholson and his Virginia foes. In Morgan's interpretation, the key issue was

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Nicholson's effort to reform the militia of the colony, which his opponents understood as an effort to create a standing army under the Governor's sole control. See Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), pp. 349-358; Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988), p. 138.

Stephen Saunders Webb argues that Nicholson supported a program of "prerogative and social regulation" in opposition to "openly whig ideals of law and property," and that his efforts to implement this conception of authority, by martial law if need be, brought him into conflict with the gentlemen of his Council. See Webb, "Strange Career," pp. 536-7. In order to sustain his argument, however, Webb accepts at face value the depictions of Nicholson by his political enemies. Given the vitriolic and in places hysterical nature of the stories told against the Governor, it seems prudent to remain agnostic regarding Nicholson's true character. What we have to analyze are the stories themselves, which are historical artifacts in their own right.

4. For the anxieties of Virginia during the transition to a native-born elite, see Carole Shammas, "English-Born and Creole Elites in Turn-of-the-Century Virginia," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), pp. 274-296, quote is from 295. On the origins of the Virginia gentry, see Bernard Bailyn, "Politics and Social Structure in Virginia," in James Morton Smith, ed., *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1959); John C. Rainbolt, "The Alteration in the Relationship between Leadership and Constituents in Virginia, 1660 to 1720," *WMQ*, 3rd. Ser., Vol. 27, No. 3. (Jul., 1970), pp. 411-434; and Martin Herbert Quitt, "Immigrant Origins of the Virginia Gentry: A Study of Cultural Transmission and Innovation," *WMQ*, 3rd. Ser., Vol. 45, No. 4. (Oct., 1988), pp. 629-655.

Henry Hartwell, James Blair, and Edward Chilton, *The Present State of Virginia, and the College*, Hunter Dickenson Farish, ed., (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1940), p. 45.

5. On the ethics articulated by Thomas Aquinas, I have found especially useful the classic account by Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by L.K. Shook, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

Jack P. Greene's analyses of mid-eighteenth century Virginia, an abiding focus throughout his long career, may be found collected in Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviors & Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1992), and Greene, *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1994). Rhys Isaacs' magisterial account in *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790*, dovetails nicely with Greene's analyses, establishing what I take to be the current scholarly consensus on the political, social, and cultural order of eighteenth-century Virginia.

The best treatment of Anglicanism in eighteenth century Virginia is John K. Nelson, *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Practitioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). In contrast to views which assert the "religious lassitude, indifference, and institutional weakness of Virginia's Mother Church," Nelson argues for the centrality of Anglican practice. "Viewed from its parishes rather than from Williamsburg or London, Virginia's Anglican establishment appears firmly rooted and tightly woven into the daily and commonplace experiences of eighteenth-century Virginians." (Pp. 4, 7) Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia*

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(Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986), provides a recent statement of the contrary position, but see Nelson's devastating critique, pp. 188-194.

6. See Webb, "The Strange Career of Francis Nicholson," *WMQ* 3rd Series, 23 (1966), pp. 513-548; Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, Vol. 1, *The Tidewater Period: 1607-1710* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 334-336; and Emory Evans, "A 'little factious party' and 'a very strange sort of men . . .' Elite Politics, 1700-1737," unpubl. mss., 1995. The political struggles that characterized Nicholson's tenure in office are ably described in David Alan Williams, "Political Alignments in Colonial Virginia Politics, 1698-1750" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1959), pp. 1-78.

7. For an excellent and concise analysis of the conflict between Blair and Andros, stressing the importance of imperial politics, see Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, *Colonial Virginia: A History* (White Plains, New York: KTO Press, 1986), pp. 146-154. Other surveys of the dispute include Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, Vol. 1, pp. 350-355; Louis B. Wright, "William Byrd's Defense of Sir Edmund Andros," *WMQ* 3rd series, Vol. 2 (1945), pp. 47-62; and Parke Rouse, Jr., *James Blair of Virginia* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 96-116.

The transcript of the meeting at Lambeth Palace can be found in Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church in Virginia*, I, pp. 36-65. A copy of one of Blair's numerous attacks on Andros can be found in "A Short Character of Sir Edmund Andros' Conduct," und., in Ganter, comp. "Documents Relating to the Early History of the College of William and Mary and the History of the Church in Virginia," in *WMQ*, 2nd series, Vol. 19 (1939), p. 347-351, quote is from p. 351. An account of Blair's suspension from the Virginia Council, written most likely by Blair, may be found in Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., *The Present State of Virginia, and the College*, by Henry Hartwell, James Blair, and Edward Chilton (reprint edition, Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1940), pp. 37-39. On the testy relationship between Nicholson and Andros, see Blair's "A Memorial concerning Sir Edmund Andros, Governor of Virginia," (1697) in Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church in Virginia*, I, pp. 23-29; the alliance between Blair and Nicholson is acknowledged in a December, 1702 letter from an English clergyman, clearly a friend of Nicholson's, to the Governor, also in Perry, I, p. 70. The Archbishop of Canterbury championed Nicholson for the Virginia governorship, at least partly at Blair's urging; see Archbishop Tenison to Bishop Compton, 21 May 1698, Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace Library.

Quote is from Governor the Earl of Bellomont to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 19 April 1699, in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, 40 Vols. (London, 1860-1939), Vol. 17, *America and the West Indies*, 1699, p. 138.

8. "A Short Character of Sir Edmund Andros' Conduct," *WMQ*, 2nd series, Vol. 19 (1939), pp. 350-351; Farish, ed., *The Present State of Virginia, and the College*, by Hartwell, Blair, and Chilton, p. 21.

9. James VI and I, "Basilicon Doron," in Johann B. Sommerville, ed., *King James VI and I: Political Writings* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 20. J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 19-21; Howell A. Lloyd, "Constitutionalism," Part II., "The Origins and End of Political Society," in Burns and Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, pp. 258-264.

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10. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, translated and edited by Lester K. Born (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), pp. 139-140; Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, (translated by John Wilson, 1688; reprinted London, 1913), cited in Born's introduction, p. 12. See also Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 58-67. James I, *Basilikon Doron*, in Sommerville, ed., *Political Writings*, pp. 20, 49. W. Lee Ustick traces the impact of James' work in later seventeenth century courtesy books. See Ustick, "Advice to a Son: A Type of Seventeenth-Century Conduct Book," *Studies in Philology* 29:3 (July, 1932), pp. 409-441.

11. On the indivisibility of sovereignty in sixteenth and early seventeenth century English thought, see Howell A. Lloyd, "Constitutionalism," Part V., "England: Hooker," in Burns and Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, pp. 279-283. On English pedagogy, see Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Modes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1998). Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named The Governor*, ed. S.E. Lehmberg (London: Everyman Library, J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1970), p. 13, 183, 209, 241. See also Pearl Hogrefe, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Elyot, Englishman* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press), esp. pp. 107-156; and S. E. Lehmberg, *Sir Thomas Elyot: Tudor Humanist* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1960).

12. Desiderius Erasmus, "On Education for Children/De Pueris Instituendis" in Rummel, ed., *The Erasmus Reader*, (Toronto, Canada, University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 68, 73. For comparison, see Louis B. Wright, ed., *Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Francis Osborne* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962); Henry Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman*, in Virgil B. Heltzel, ed., *The Complete Gentleman, The Truth of Our Times, and The Art of Living in London*, (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York, 1962); Richard Braithwaite, esq., *The English Gentleman: Containing Sundry excellent Rules or exquisite Observations, tending to Direction of every Gentleman, of select rank and quality: How to demean or accommodate himself in the manage of public or private affairs* third edition, (London: 1641). For the classical origins of this conception of self-identity, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 115-126.

13. Trenchard and Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, No. 25, Saturday, April 15, 1721, in Ronald Hamowy, ed., *Cato's Letters: Or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other Important Subjects*, Vol. 1, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), p. 180.

14. For brief accounts of the development of English ethical thought in the seventeenth and centuries, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (Collier Books: New York, 1966), pp. 121-177; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, Indiana, 1988), pp. 209-325; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989), pp. 211-284; J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, esp. pp. 310-427; and Shelley Burt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688-1740* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992). On Mandeville and his influence in the eighteenth century, see the useful introductory essay by F.B. Kaye in Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or,*

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Private Vices, Publick Benefits (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1924: reprint edition, Liberty Fund, 1988), Vol. 1, pp. xxxviii-cxli.

On the ethical positions of late seventeenth century Anglicanism, see W.M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1993); Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, vol. I, *Whichcoate to Wesley* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976); John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1991); and Tina Isaacs, "The Anglican Hierarchy and the Reformation of Manners, 1688-1738," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982): 391-411.

15. W.M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700*, pp. 20-29, 54-71. On the moral philosophy of the Cambridge Platonists, see Schneewind, *Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 194-214; see Burt, *Virtue Transformed*, pp. 39-63, for a discussion of Anglican understanding of virtuous citizenship after the Glorious Revolution. See also the discussion in Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, vol. I, pp. 9-24. Taylor, as quoted in Rivers, p. 21.

16. John Tillotson, "The Folly of Scoffing at Religion," and "The Wisdom of Being Religious;" and Isaac Barrow, "Of the Evil and Unreasonableness of Infidelity," in Irene Simon, ed., *Three Restoration Divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson, Selected Sermons* (Paris: Bibliotheque de la Faculte de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Universite de Liege, 1976) Vol. II, part II, pp. 413, 419, 421, Vol. I, part II, p. 396.

On the emergence of a secular ethics as an alternate basis of identity in the early eighteenth century, see E.J. Hundert, "The European Enlightenment and the History of the Self," in Roy Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 72-83; and Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2000), pp. 156-183, 205-229. On seventeenth century atheism and reactions to it, see John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976).

17. James Blair, *Our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount, contained in the Vth, VIth and VIIth Chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, Explained: And the Practice of it Recommended in divers Sermons and Discourses* (London, 1740), pp. 132, 459-460. This book was originally published in 1722, and contained a series of sermons delivered by Blair from the early 1700s on.

It is possible that the stories Blair and his allies had to tell about Nicholson do not reflect their sincere commitments in Virginia, but rather shed insight into their calculations as to the line of argument most likely to be persuasive to authorities in England. However, the continuity between the ethical position Nicholson's opponents adopted in the stories they told, on the one hand, and the practical theology articulated by Blair in his sermons, on the other, implies that this thesis is incorrect. The consistency in Blair's ethics, both in his sermonizing and in his attacks on Andros and Nicholson, suggests that the stories he had to tell about Virginia governors reveal something more than calculated propaganda.

Blair, it should be noted, was not the only Anglican minister in the colony to preach from a moderate Christian perspective. See, for comparison, Robert Paxton, "Sermons Preached in Virginia," Houghton Library, Harvard, MS AM 1561 (microfilm).

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18. Blair, *Our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount.*, pp. 132, 225-226, 231-232.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 459-460.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 462-463; on religion in seventeenth century Virginia, see Edward L. Bond, *Damned Souls in a Tobacco Colony: Religion in Seventeenth Century Virginia* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 239-286. More broadly, see W.M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (University of Georgia Press: Athens, Georgia, 1993).

21. See Michael Kammen, ed., "Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century: An Appraisal by James Blair and John Locke," *VMHB* 74 (1966), pp. 141-153, Randolph quote is from p. 143; Parke Rouse, Jr., *James Blair of Virginia*, pp. 110-116; Billings, Selby, and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, pp. 151-154. Randolph wrote a series of similar reports to the Board of Trade, as did Colonel Robert Quarry, detailing abuses of the Navigation Acts, and other violations of imperial policy, throughout the continental colonies. See, with regard to Virginia, Billings, Selby, and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, pp. 134-135.

22. Blair's essay is reprinted in Kammen, ed., "Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century," *VMHB* 74 (1966), pp. 153-169, quotes are from pp. 156-157, 159; Farish, ed., *The Present State of Virginia, and the College*, by Hartwell, Blair, and Chilton, pp. 16, 58; Hartwell to Lord Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, Sept. 13, 1697, PRO C.O. 5/1309, as quoted in Evans, "Elite Politics," p. 5.

23. "To his excellency Francis Nicholson Esq. and Governor and Guardian of his Majesties Province and Territory of Maryland," Ellesmore Collection, Huntington Library. Nicholson copied this for the Earl of Bridgewater, testifying it was a true copy on 4 Feb. 1699.

Steven Saunders Webb argues that "Nicholson's primary aim in his very generous benefactions to Anglican churches and church colleges in the colonies throughout his career was to support the teaching of political obedience to a new generation of colonial leaders." Webb, "Strange Career," p. 521. While political obedience was certainly one important goal for Nicholson, it does seem likely that his religious convictions were more generous and less cynical than Webb might imply. For alternative readings of Nicholson's philanthropy, see Bruce T. McCully, "Governor Francis Nicholson, Patron *Par Excellence* of Religion and Learning in Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Ser. 3, 39 (1982), pp. 310-33; and James D. Kornwolf, "Doing Good to Posterity: Francis Nicholson, First Patron of Architecture, Landscape Design, and Town Planning in Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina, 1688-1726," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 101 (1993), pp. 333-74.

24. Francis Nicholson, Maryland Port Anapolis, to the Earl of Bridgewater, 19 August 1698; Francis Nicholson, Virginia James City, to the Earl of Bridgewater, 4 Feb. 1699. Both letters are in the Ellesmore Collection, Huntington Library.

25. See Kammen, ed., "Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century," *VMHB* 74 (1966), pp. 150-153; Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, Vol. 1, pp. 361-363; David Alan Williams, "Political Alignments in Colonial Virginia Politics, 1698-1750," (Ph.D. Diss., Northwestern University, 1959), pp. 3-32; and Evans, "A 'little factious party' and 'a very strange sort of men . . . Elite Politics, 1700-1737,'" unpubl. mss., 1995. The Board of Trade's instructions to Nicholson

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are discussed in some detail in Williams, "Political Alignments in Colonial Virginia Politics," pp. 4-21. The text of Nicholson's instructions may be found in CO 324/26, pp. 103-146. The full text of several letters to and from Blair may be found in Rouse, *James Blair of Virginia*; see Blair to Nicholson, 2 June 1698, and Blair to Locke, 8 Feb. 1698/9, pp. 113, 114-115. "Mr. Commissary Blair's Memorial against Governor Nicholson," in Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church in Virginia*, I, p. 75.

26. "Mr. Commissary Blair's Memorial against Governor Nicholson," in Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church in Virginia*, I, pp. 76-77.

27. Rouse, *Blair*, pp. 34-35, 133.

28. Evans, "Elite Politics," p. 5-7; Billings, Selby, and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, pp. 158-163. William Byrd I to Philip Ludwell, 6 July 1702, in Tinling, ed., *Correspondence of the Three William Byrds*, pp. 186, 188-189.

29. Evans, "Elite Politics," p. 9; Billings, Selby, and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, pp. 161-162; Williams, "Political Alignments in Colonial Virginia," pp. 19-21; William Byrd I to Francis Nicholson, 21 Oct. 1703, in Tinling, ed., *Correspondence of the Three William Byrds*, p. 188.

30. Nicholson to Tenison, 28 July 1702; and Peregrine Cony [writing on behalf of Nicholson] to Tenison, 22 July 1702, in the Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace Papers. Clergy of Virginia to Bishop Compton, 25 August 1703, with some signatures added 22 Sept., in the Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace Papers. Nicholson's letter of 28 July and the memorial of the Clergymen has been reprinted in Ganter, comp. "Documents Relating to the Early History of the College of William and Mary and the History of the Church in Virginia," pp. 354-355, 361-365. Nicholson's letter of 22 July has been reprinted in Perry, I, pp. 126-131.

When news arrived in Virginia of the death of William III and the accession of Queen Anne, Nicholson arranged for public ceremonies to mourn the King and to celebrate the new monarch. It was during this public pageantry that Blair delivered the funeral sermon that so offended the Governor. This ceremony was observed by a Swiss traveler in Virginia, Francis Louis Michel, who recorded a vivid description of the several day event. See William J. Hinke, ed., "Report of the Journey of Francis Louis Michel, from Berne, Switzerland, to Virginia, October 2, 1702-December 1, 1702," in *VMHB* 24 (April, 1916), pp. 125-129.

31. Blair to Archbishop of Canterbury, 22 July 1702, in Perry, I, p. 125; original is in the Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace papers. "Mr. Commissary Blair's memorial against Governor Nicholson," 1702, Perry, I, pp. 78-80. On 26 August, 1703, Nicholson complained bitterly that "it appeared Mr. Blair had misrepresented him in England, and insinuated as if this country were dissatisfied with his Excellency's government with several other aspersions." See McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, Vol. 2, pp. 334-335.

32. Polly Cary Legg, ed., "The Governor's 'Extacy of Trouble'," *WMQ* second series, 22 (1942), pp. 391-393. For a recent interpretation of this episode, see Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 254-5 and n. 16, p. 448.

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33. *Ibid.*, pp. 393-395; letter "From some person unknown to Governor Nicholson," 8 December 1702, in Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church in Virginia*, I, p. 69.

34. Fouace to Archbishop Tenison, 28 October 1702, in Ganter, comp. "Documents Relating to the Early History of the College of William and Mary and the History of the Church in Virginia," p. 360.

35. "Council of Virginia to the Queen, 20 May 1703," in Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church in Virginia*, I, pp. 80-81. The original of this document may be found in PRO CO/5 1314, no. 3.

36. PRO CO/5 1314, no. 5. A transcription of this document may be found in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, Vol. 22, America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, p. 91-95.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Fouace and Beverley submitted the letters to the Board of Trade on 28 April 1704; see *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, Vol. 22, America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, pp. 104-105. The full text of these letters may be found in PRO CO/5 1314, nos. 14 and 15. Blair's affidavits can be found in PRO CO/5 1314, nos. 7 and 23. Both have been printed--the first in Perry, I, pp. 93-112, the second in Samuel Clyde McCulloch, ed., "The Fight to Depose Governor Francis Nicholson--James Blair's Affidavit of June 7, 1704," *Journal of Southern History*, 12 (1946), pp. 403-422.

39. "Deposition of Captain James Moody," PRO CO/5, 1314, no. 9.

40. PRO CO/5 1314 No. 10; PRO CO/5, 1314, no. 13.

41. Writing to William Blathwayt in March of 1705, Nicholson acknowledged Blathwayt's "very extraordinary kindness to me, especially concerning the affair of Mr. Blair etc which I am very sensible of, not only by your own letters of the 6th of June and 23 of August last, as likewise in a letter which I had from his Grace the Duke of Bolton, and others from Mr. Perry, Mr. Wilcocks, etc." Francis Nicholson, Virginia, to William Blathwayt, 7 March 1704/05, Blathwayt Papers, Huntington Library. Governor Nicholson to Board of Trade, 6 March 1705, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, Vol. 22, America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, p. 433.

42. "Answer of John Thrale in Behalf of Nicholson" in "Papers Relating to the Administration of Governor Nicholson and to the Founding of William and Mary College," *VMHB* 7 (1899-1900), pp. 388, 390.

43. Speech of Governor Nicholson to the Virginia House of Burgesses, 1 May 1705; journal minutes for session of Saturday, 5 May 1705, in H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1702/3-1705, 1705-1706, 1710-1712*, (Richmond, Virginia, 1912), pp. 101, 107-108; Billings, Selby and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, p. 168; "Address of the Clergy to Nicholson," "Address of the Governor and Clergy to the Queen," "Address of the Clergy to the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations," "Address of the Clergy to the Archbishop of Canterbury," "Address of the Clergy to the Bishop of London," "Justices of

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Kevin R. Hardwick, James Madison University, 13 August 2002

Gloucester County to Nicholson," "Petition of Certain Justices of Middlesex County," in "Papers Relating to the Administration of Governor Nicholson and to the Founding of William and Mary College," *VMHB* 8 (1900-1901), pp. 47-48, 48-49, 49-52, 52-53, 53-54, 126-127, 128-131; Governor Nicholson to Board of Trade, 6 March 1705, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, Vol. 22, *America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, p. 433; McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, Vol. 2, pp. 391-395, 414-442.

44. Governor Nicholson to Board of Trade, 1, 2, 3, and 6 March, 1705, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, Vol. 22, *America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, pp. 397-402, 403-406, 411-428, 429-437. Quotes are from pp. 429-430, 432.

45. *Ibid.* pp. 401, 430-431; Memorandum, attached to Nicholson to Board of Trade, 3 March 1704/1705, PRO CO/5 1314, no. 43 (iii)(b).

46. Attachment to Nicholson to Board of Trade, 6 March 1704/1705, PRO CO/5 1314, no. 44 (ii).

47. Governor Nicholson to Board of Trade, 1 and 6 March, 1705, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, Vol. 22, *America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, pp. 401, 430-431.

48. Stephen Saunders Webb, "The Strange Career of Francis Nicholson," pp. 541-548.