

Now with the availability of this book (all expense aside), there can hopefully be further consideration of the workers, the common people and the faithful congregants of that era. For those who might want a closer look at the text before purchasing, a liberal portion of the book can presently be accessed on the Internet through Google Books. This might also be a good occasion to revisit Seaver's work, and there again, the same source provides an ample preview. Dr. Booy has done great service in making these journals available to the modern reader, and the work should be well-received. Some readers may also want to attend to his other writings, which generally focus on autobiographical literature from the seventeenth century. His two earlier volumes are respectively, *Personal Disclosures: An Anthology of Self-Writings from the Seventeenth Century* (2002) and *Autobiographical Writings by Early Quaker Women* (2004).

One curious note in closing: citation of this book does occasionally appear under the title *The Selected Writings of Nehemiah Wallington: The Thoughts and Considerations of a London Puritan and Wood-Turner, 1618-1654* (2007). Nothing appears under that title on OCLC's WorldCat, nor is there anything in the copy at hand that would sustain that title. So it remains unclear to this reviewer whether that is, or was, the title of an English edition or a prior printing or perhaps simply an error that has been picked up and repeated.

J. S. Maloy. *The Colonial American Origins of Modern Democratic Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. ix + 214 pp. \$75.00. Review by WILLIAM J. SCHEICK, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN.

In *The Colonial American Origins of Modern Democratic Thought* J. S. Maloy investigates the principle of governmental accountability—that is, the means or instruments whereby the public can hold elected politicians accountable for their behavior while fulfilling their term in office. Presently in the United States, once officials are elected to governmental posts they remain largely exempt from citizen correction until the end of their term. Even then, politicians can be held accountable only if they rerun for the same office. Until that electoral occasion, voters are alienated from their rightful democratic agency

and, for the most part, remain powerless to control their rulers serving their appointed terms.

Accountability was not always restricted in this manner, Maloy discloses, nor did this peculiar version of accountability in democratic theory suddenly emerge in post-Revolutionary America. It actually originated much earlier, with the seventeenth century having been a time when democratic theory was an especially yeasty brew of contesting ideas. During that century, Maloy finds, there were various, if marginalized, mechanisms for responding to a politician's performance while in office. These instruments, generally exercised by a concerned social elite, were derived from inquest models associated with the classical regard for public liberty, the ecclesiastical oversight of religious truth and the fiduciary protection of investor interests.

Maloy points to the Levellers, that loosely allied anti-Parliament resistance group particularly noteworthy today for its "democratic" political views expressed during the English Civil War. Abrading against the grain of more traditional assumptions about authority, the Levellers advanced the notion of constituent power. John Lilburne, a "Leveller so-called" in his own words, had argued during the 1640s that humans possessed certain rights that could not be abridged by governmental agents. This was so, Lilburne believed, because the authority to rule derived fundamentally from the will of the people.

Today democratic societies tend to perceive Lilburne's claim to be a commonplace idea. But scrutinized more closely, Maloy contends, the Levellers understood popular elections as neither the only nor even the best means to deter tyranny or misrule. Their conception of governmental accountability included a radical feature of democratic theory that we somehow have not embraced today.

Leveller democratic theory insisted on rulers being *regularly* accountable to the people. It emphasized non-electoral means of accountability at the local level, including special inquests, frequent audits, issue-related impeachments and assessments of legal liability. Collectively, such devices were designed to expose governing officials who betrayed the public trust.

For the Levellers, then, a productive tension existed between traditional and non-traditional means of ruler accountability. Even decades before the English Civil War, Maloy argues, this tension can be

found in commentary by colonial American settlers. This is the case, we learn, with John Smith's "discourse of virtue and corruption" (58).

Without toppling the traditional regard for authority and without dismissing governmental directives from the homeland, Smith maintained that the New World was a "proving-ground for virtuous men" (63) whose competence and honesty qualified them to be entrusted with wide discretionary powers. These locally approved and locally evaluated men of exemplary character and leadership would, Smith thought, counter exploitative colonial factions. A combination of democratic and aristocratic paradigms, augmented by an image of Virginia as a little commonwealth in its own right, informs Smith's elevated estimation of such representative men.

The Pilgrims in Plymouth and the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay were also sensitive to and critical of the impact of profiteering in Virginia. But, Maloy observes, this was not the only concern they shared with Smith. They also shared his valorization of virtuous local leadership.

Even so, they stressed their difference from the Virginian colonists. Believing they were communally joined in a sacred and intimate bond, Pilgrims and Puritans alike represented themselves as more virtuous, more industrious and more economical than Virginians. "This was," Maloy explains, "a purely internal kind of fidelity, not a trans-oceanic one between colonial servants and their metropolitan masters—thus foreshadowing the New Englanders' use of ideas of not only personal but also political trust" (93).

Elements of democratic theory also trace back to how Separatists and Congregationalists hedged their management of the structure of ecclesiastical authority. In ecclesiastical matters, both groups acknowledged a hierarchical distribution of authority while at the same time they accorded some power to the laity. Balancing these two ideas was hardly simple, and sometimes the balance was easily lost, such as during the Antinomian controversy. During this crisis, for instance, church and government authority figures were quick to discredit ecclesiastical populism as too prone to heresy.

However, John Cotton, Increase Mather and others continued the mixture of political modes. They upheld aristocratic ministerial authority but also allowed for popular consent, such as ratification

and selection, albeit without quite the power of democratic accountability. John Winthrop, too, insisted on political trust in magisterial discretion, and (like Smith) he pointed to the virtue of his personal achievements in support of his emphasis on trust in political leadership; yet Winthrop also accommodated electoral accountability.

In all of these and other colonial instances reviewed in Maloy's study, the tilt was always towards authority or governmental agents' discretionary power. And this tilt had a lasting impact as democratic theory in the colonies drifted toward the reliance on regular elections as a sufficient mechanism for ruler accountability.

What got lost was a Leveller-like inclusion of broader non-electoral controls. What got lost was a more personal and more pervasive citizen input involving an actual and routine exercise of elector power. What displaced and obscured this elector or constituent power, Maloy claims, was a mystifying idealized language of democracy that effectively enabled (and still enables today) the traditional understanding of a ruler's discretionary power.

*The Colonial American Origins of Modern Democratic Thought* is a hard read. Its overly compacted sentences feature insider vocabulary, abrupt transitions, contracted or elliptical observations and non-linear argumentation. Whenever these features impair a reader's close-up scrutiny of the means and progression of discussion, the author's discretionary authority is enabled—a discursive performance that sometimes seems ironically to mimic the very idealized and co-optating political language critiqued in the book.

My grouching about manner aside, though, Maloy offers a thoughtful reevaluation of the importance of both the Levellers and the French political philosopher Jean Bodin to the emergence of modern democratic theory. And Maloy's detailed reconsideration of the financial, governmental and ecclesiastical structures of the early colonial period successfully sheds new light on the rise of an electoral procedure that eventually formalized a considerable reduction of the American public's potential democratic agency.