

Designed for the Good of All
The Flushing Remonstrance and Religious Freedom in America

A thesis
presented to the
faculty of the Department of History
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in History

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August 2006

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Keywords: Colonial America, Flushing, Quaker, New Netherlands,
Remonstrance, Religious Freedom

ABSTRACT

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On December 27, 1657, the men of Flushing, Long Island, signed a letter of protest addressed to the Governor-Director of New Netherlands. Though the law of the colony demanded otherwise, the men of Vlissengen pledged to accept all persons into their township, regardless of their religious persuasion. Their letter, called the Flushing Remonstrance, not only defied the laws of one of the most powerful, religious governors of the colonial age, it articulated a concept of religious freedom that extended beyond the principles of any other contemporary document.

Given its unique place in early American colonial history, why have historians not devoted more research to the Flushing Remonstrance? The answer to that question had roots in suppositions widely accepted in the academic community. This thesis addresses and refutes these assumptions in full historical context.

DEDICATION

To Bayley, Tucker, and Harper Annie. I'll tell you stories from the past, you give me hope for the future- I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Dale Schmitt, Dr. Douglas Burgess, and Dr. Melvin Page. To Dr. Schmitt, the chair of my committee, for his support and his immeasurable patience; to Dr. Burgess for his inspiration and advice , and to Dr. Page for his guidance, wisdom, enthusiasm, creativity, and, most of all, his friendship. Thank you.

Thanks also to my husband, Dr. Jay Boland, for his love, patience, and support without which this thesis could never have been written; to my father Dennis Garman, for his encouragement, intellectual curiosity, and love of history; and to my mother Rebecca Garman, for being the best research assistant, traveling companion, and friend I could ask for. Lastly, thanks to the ETSU School of Graduate Studies for their financial support of my research.

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CHAPTER 1
DESIGNED FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

On December 27, 1657, Edward Hart wrote a letter on behalf of his fellow townsmen. He was town clerk for Vlissengen, and with the authority vested in his office he spoke for all the inhabitants of the settlement. Though the law of New Netherlands demanded otherwise, Hart wrote, Vlissengen would offer “free egress and regress unto our Town, and houses,” to any who sought it, whether “Jews, Turks... Egyptians... Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist or Quaker.” “Wee desire...not to judge least we be judged,” he explained, “neither to condemn least we be condemned, but rather let every man stand or fall to his own Master...designed for the good of all” In accordance with the “Outward state of Holland” and “the patent and charter of our Towne...which we are not willing to infringe,” Vlissengen respectfully refused to obey the law. Their letter not only defied the laws of one of the most powerful, religious governors of the colonial age, it challenged the very idea of state-enforced religion. The belief that religion was an affair of state lay at the core of the bloody religious persecutions that had plagued Europe throughout the Reformation age. Even in the more lenient American colonies, the words of the Remonstrance expressed a

concept of religious freedom that extended beyond the principles of any other contemporary document.¹

The Remonstrance presented a raw version of the radical ideals later solidified in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. It represented a direct ideological link between the founders of the colonies and the founders of America. Standing apart from the accepted ideologies of the “Old” world, the Flushing Remonstrance recorded the difference between Europe and America—it was the first glimpse at a uniquely American character. Yet Edward Hart’s letter was not included in American histories—the Flushing Remonstrance remained virtually unknown outside the better business bureau of Queens, New York.

The Flushing Remonstrance was banished to the flotsam and jetsam of time—an obscure document historians usually deemed unimportant to the study of American history. Only a handful of historians have bothered to write books on New Netherlands in specific, a seemingly natural source for histories of the Flushing Remonstrance. The Library of Congress listed only ten books under “New Netherland: History,” whereas there are 82 texts under “New England: History.”

¹ Two contemporary documents often used to infer an early belief in religious freedom actually limit their acceptance to members of the Christian faith, at least in their choice of wording. The Toleration Act of 1649 made persecutions against any Christian sect a crime in Maryland, and Roger Williams’ charter for Rhode Island guaranteed “a full libertie in religious concerments; and that true pietye rightly grounded upon *gospel principles*.” (My italics) Charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, July 15, 1663. Accessed online: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/states/ri04.htm> [3 February 2006].

To be fair, the lack of scholarship devoted to the Dutch colonies was due more to the origins of American histories than a lack of interest on behalf of historians. Early American historians, men like Daniel Webster and David Ramsay, intended their histories to “construct a common past which projected the national distinctiveness of the United States into the future,” to link “the constitution to ancient concepts of justice and traced its transplanting from Teutonic forests and heroic English documents to the Mayflower compact and New England town meetings.”² After centuries of indoctrination in the mythic connection between England’s history and America’s, it was not surprising that historians proved reluctant to reach beyond New England’s borders.³

Of the few historians who devoted an entire book to a history of the New Netherland colonies, fewer still mentioned the Flushing Remonstrance. Thomas A. Janvier’s work, *The Dutch Founding of New York*, the twelve essays edited by Joyce D. Goodfriend in her collection, *Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives in Early Dutch America*, Cornell

² Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob. *Telling the Truth About History*. (NY: W.W. Norton, 2004): 123.

³ Appleby, Hunt and Jacob. *Telling the Truth*: 102,109.

It should also be noted that a trend in the modern study of American history promises to break through the English-American history that has dominated the field for centuries. Histories like Jack P. Greene’s *Pursuits of Happiness* have questioned the dogged insistence of earlier historians that the New England colonies were the only colonies to influence the founders of America.

Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: UNC press, 1988).

Jaray's *Historic Chronicles of New Amsterdam, Colonial New York and Early Long Island*—none referred the Flushing Remonstrance at all.⁴

Historians it seemed, saw the Remonstrance only in terms of how it affected the powerful Governor-Director of New Netherlands, Petrus Stuyvesant. The most thorough textual descriptions of the Flushing protest are found in biographies of this important man. The Remonstrance was used to highlight Stuyvesant's policy decisions or his religious principles and their influence on the colony. The protest is most frequently portrayed as a reflection of Stuyvesant, important only to the understanding of his governorship and/or personality, with no characteristics in and of itself that historians found worthy of further study.

Regardless of the subject of the work, those few historians who mentioned the Flushing protest generally did so with high praise. John S. C. Abbott's *Peter Stuyvesant: The Last Dutch Governor of New Amsterdam* (NY: Dodd Mead, 1873) calls the letter a “noble remonstrance,”⁵ while Russell Shorto claimed it to be “one of the foundational documents of American liberty” and “ancestor to the first

⁴ Thomas A. Janvier, *The Dutch Founding of New York* (NY:Ira J. Friedman, 1903 reissued 1967) Joyce D. Goodfriend, ed. *Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives on Early Dutch America* (Boston: Brill, 2005) Cornell Jaray, ed. *Historic Chronicles of New Amsterdam, Colonial New York and Early Long Island*, 2nd series (NY:Ira J. Friedman, 1968 reissue)

⁵ Abbott, 200.

amendment in the Bill of Rights,”⁶ and George L. Smith called the Remonstrance “the most important piece of theorizing about religious liberty that the New Netherland produced.”⁷ Despite such acclaim, most historians devoted a scant paragraph to the story of the Flushing Remonstrance.

How is such high praise for the Remonstrance and the men of Flushing to be rectified with the dearth of scholarship on the protest? The answer to that question had roots in assumptions widely accepted in the academic community. Just as the first American historians influenced the trend toward New England colonial history, historians’ long held assumptions about Dutch colonial policy inadvertently undercut the importance of the Flushing Remonstrance in the study of American history. The impression of the Dutch Republic as a land of religious freedom, as recorded in the journals and records of English colonial settlers and evidenced by the diversity of the Republic, implied that the men of Flushing were merely aping the religiously tolerant views already in place in Dutch governance. Rather than being a uniquely American ideology, it then follows, the tolerance asserted in the Flushing Remonstrance was an extension of European religious philosophy.

In response to the 1593 Act against Puritans, a radical segment of Puritan society elected to abandon England to set up an enclave of purity

⁶ Russell Shorto, *The Island and the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America* (NY: Doubleday, 2004): 276.

⁷ George L. Smith, *Religion and Trade in New Netherland: Dutch Origins and American Development* (London: Cornell University Press, 1973): 225.

in the Dutch Republic. These Pilgrims were not alone in their choice of destination; members of religions persecuted throughout Europe found shelter in the thriving cities and towns of the Republic. So diverse was the population, the émigrés themselves grew concerned about the influence of such exposure on their youth. Their children, noted William Bradford, fell victim to “the great licentiousness ... in that country, and the manifold temptations of the place.”⁸ Pilgrim leader John Winthrop wrote that a key factor in his decision to board the *Arabella* in 1620 was based on the religious diversity of the Dutch Republic. According to Winthrop, Massachusetts Bay was founded in part by Puritans seeking to flee the “fountains of learning and religion” and their “multitude of evill examples and the licentious...seminaryes” inside the Dutch Republic.⁹

The religious diversity of the Republic that drove the Pilgrims to seek more moral climes in the New World formed the basis for one of the arguments historians used to inadvertently minimize the importance of the Flushing Remonstrance in American history. The religious diversity of the Republic, historians argued, was the result of a tolerant religious policy in the Dutch Republic. Therefore, the Flushing charter, which stipulated that colonists could exercise liberty of conscience “according to

⁸ William Bradford, *Bradford's History of Plimouth Plantation* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1901). http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/documents/documents_p2.cfm?doc=219 [Accessed: 9 February 2006].

⁹ Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*, 2nd edition (NY: Longman, 1999): 36.

the costume and manner of Holland,” entitled the men of Flushing to the same religious freedoms extended to all citizens of the Dutch Republic.

In the chapter entitled “Left-Wing Dissidents,” George L. Smith made just this argument in his book *Religion and Trade in New Netherland: Dutch Origins and American Development* (London: Cornell University, 1973). The men of Flushing, Smith wrote, “cited the ... clause of their 1645 charter,” to support their right to religious freedom under Dutch law.¹⁰ Similarly, Frederick Zwierlein explained in *Religion in New Netherland* (New York: John P. Smith Printing, 1910) that the Remonstrance was written to protest “the violation of the privileges of the town of Flushing” by Director-Governor Petrus Stuyvesant.¹¹

In following through this version of the Flushing protest, historians then argued that the “disgraceful persecutions” of Petrus Stuyvesant preceding the Flushing protest were in opposition to the tolerant policies of the Dutch Republic. Since the Dutch Republic was religiously diverse and thus endorsed religious freedom, then the government-run Dutch West Indische Compagnie (WIC) must have similarly supported tolerance in the New Netherland colony. It followed that the religiously restrictive policies of Director-Governor Petrus Stuyvesant were not supported by the WIC or the States-General. Stuyvesant, these historians argued, was

¹⁰ Smith, *Religion and Trade*, 225.

¹¹ Frederick J. Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland: A History of the Development of the Religious Conditions in the Province of New Netherland 1623-1664* (NY: John P. Smith Printing, 1910), 219.

a rogue Calvinist acting on his own accord. “Stuyvesant...crossed the line,” in his religious policies according to Henry Kessler and Eugene Rachlis in their book, *Peter Stuyvesant and his New World* (New York: Random House, 1959).¹² Stuyvesant’s excesses were “disgraceful,” according to John S.C. Abbott in *Peter Stuyvesant: The Last Dutch Governor of New Amsterdam* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1873). Abbott concluded: “The governor was unrelenting. Whoever ventured to oppose his will felt the weight of his chastising hand.”¹³

The Remonstrance, the historians implied, was designed by the religiously biased men of Flushing to remind over zealous Stuyvesant that the Flushing charter granted freedom of religion “in the costume and manner of Holland.” At its essence, this version of the Flushing protest reduced the Remonstrance to little more than an eloquently worded contract dispute. In his book, *The Island at the Center of the World* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), Russell Shorto used Edward Hart’s own words in support of this view. When Hart wrote that they wanted only “the law of love peace and libertiee...which is the glory of the Outward State of Holland,” Shorto concluded, they “reminded” Stuyvesant of their chartered right to “religious freedom [as] guaranteed in the Dutch constitutional document.”¹⁴

¹² Kessler and Rachlis, 192.

¹³ Abbott, 202.

¹⁴ Shorto, 276.

But the same quotation used by Shorto to draw his conclusion, when read carefully, undermines the core premise to this version of the Flushing protest. It was not on a poetic whim that Edward Hart wrote of “the *Outward* state of Holland” when referring to religion in the Dutch Republic. In that choice of words Hart implied that the Dutch Republic had only a veneer of religious diversity—religious freedom existed in the Republic by bureaucratic accident. Hart and the men of Flushing understood what Shorto, Smith, Zwierlein, and others did not: there was no Dutch constitutional document expressly granting religious freedom to anyone, and thus there was no “guarantee” of religious freedom inherent in the Flushing charter. The men of Flushing saw the religious diversity of the Dutch Republic for what it truly was-- an unintentional side effect caused by shaky foundation upon which the Republic of Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands was built.

As Hart implied in his choice of words, the religious diversity in the Dutch Republic was far more complicated than historians seemed willing to admit. The historical significance of the Remonstrance hinged in many ways on whether or not the tolerance it afforded originated in the Dutch Republic or was unique to the American colonists. In order to correctly ascertain the origin of religious diversity in the Republic and the New Netherlands, this thesis will begin at the beginning—the creation of the Dutch Republic.

Following that, a study of the influence of the Republic on the creation of the West Indische Compagnie and Petrus Stuyvesant's governorship is used to infer the level of freedom afforded in the charter of Flushing and the role of Petrus Stuyvesant in the protest. To analyze the origins of the unique religious tolerance expressed in the Remonstrance, a study of the few signers whose religious proclivities can be traced through colonial documentation follows. The religious journey of William Thorne Senior and Michael Milner demonstrates that their religiously tolerant views came after their arrival in the colonies, from a uniquely American source.

A thorough understanding of the true nature of religious diversity in the Dutch Republic and the New Netherlands, as well as the American origins of the ideology expressed in the Remonstrance, must "be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate."¹⁵ Only with that knowledge can the story of the Flushing protest, and its importance in American history, be told.

¹⁵ Charles Dickens. *A Christmas Carol*. Elliot Stock, editor. (London: Paternoster Row, 1890): 1.

CHAPTER 2 IN THE COSTUME AND MANNER OF HOLLAND

Following years of harsh treatment at the hands of the Catholic Church and inspired by the piquant piety of the European Reformation, leaders of the Protestant minority in northern Netherlands determined to cast off the imperial shackles of papist Spain. In 1579 Dutch Reformed leaders in seven provinces: Holland, Zeeland, Friesland, Groningen, Utrecht, Gelderland, and Overijssel, pledged in the Union of Utrecht to fight their Spanish oppressors “as if a single province.”¹

Naturally such resolve required the combining of the seven separate provincial armies. Subsequently, the signers of the Union agreed to elect men of standing in the Dutch Reformed Church to represent the provincial military interests in meetings of the States-General at The Hague. The fiery skirmishes with Spanish forces in the early days of the revolution that led to the signing of the Union of Utrecht, however, preceded a grindingly slow sort of war. The unanticipated long term maintenance of a combined military force required the Republic to have access to an ample treasury. The States-General responded to the need by giving itself the authority to negotiate taxes and pass economic legislation in all provinces.

¹ Union of Utrecht, 1579 in Jaap Jacobs. “Between Repression and Approval: Connivance and Tolerance in the Dutch Republic and in New Netherland.” *De Halve Maen* 3 (Fall 1998):53.

While the revolution simmered in the Republic, tensions in Europe were coming to a boil. The powerful Hapsburg dynasty was disintegrating, leaving much of Northern Europe on the edge of war. Competition for foreign trade and colonial resources left England, France, and Spain similarly positioned on the brink of chaos. Over-shadowing it all, the Reformation and the bloody struggles for political power it caused made all of Europe suspicious and unstable. In such an environment, it was necessary for the Dutch Republic to negotiate diplomatic treaties and other alliances. Thus the States-General allotted itself the powers of diplomacy previously given to the individual provinces.²

For the most part, the power of the States-General grew organically in response to the Union of Utrecht's pledge to unite against Spain "as if a single province." This flimsy premise for building a centralized government was a triumph for the Protestant leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church. Despite the previous efforts of the Church to convert the provinces, the vast majority of the population remained stubbornly Catholic. Following Reformation logic, the Calvinists determined to seize control of the States-General in order to force conversion through legislation.³

In general, historians have credited the Dutch Republic with being one of the first European nations to separate church from state. The modern understanding of this philosophy, however, was not embraced by

² Roger D. Congleton. "Theoretical and Practical Origins of Modern Constitutional Design: the Enlightenment Literature on Constitutions." George Mason University, rdcl.net/class/BayreuthU/CONDS5A.pdf [Accessed 25 February 2006].

³ Jamers R. Tanis. "The Union of Utrecht". *De Halve Maen* 3, (Fall-Winter, 1979): 3.

the Dutch Reformed Church. Rather, the Calvinist government of the Republic designed the division of church and state in favor of the Church, allowing the Calvinists to use the state to enforce religious decrees. The States-General professed that “the civil authority must not meddle in the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church” and that “doctrinal matters” were beyond the “realm of civil power.” Most importantly in terms of religious freedoms, the Reformed representatives of the Republic argued, “the spiritual chaos caused by heresy can only result finally in political chaos,” thus “the civil authority is required to take an active role in warding off heresy by employing the civil law in the service of the pure doctrine of the true Church.”⁴

The first of two clauses referring to religion in the Union of Utrecht stated “that each person shall remain free, especially in his religion, and that no one shall be persecuted or investigated because of his religion.”⁵ Such wording implied an unprecedented amount of religious freedom that led to the influx of religious sects unwelcome in any other area of Europe, giving historians the impression that the Republic was religiously tolerant. If the Union of Utrecht had been written as a constitution, the historians would be correct in their assessment.

⁴ George L. Smith. “Guilders and Godliness: The Dutch Colonial Contribution to American Religious Pluralism.” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 47 (March 1969): 8.

⁵ In Dutch: “een eder particulier in syn religie vry sal mogen blyven ended at men nyemant ter cause vande religie sal mogen achterhalen ofte odersoeken” De Unie van Utrecht, as quoted in “Between Repression and Approval: connivance and Tolerance in the Dutch Republic and in New Netherland,” translated by Jaap Jacobs, *De Halve Maen* (Fall, 1998):53.

The Union of Utrecht, however, was a military alliance, not a fully formed Constitution. At the time it was written and signed, the Union was an agreement of military unity amongst seven established provinces whose religious proclivities were either Protestant or Catholic. The representatives who wrote and signed the Union of Utrecht intended Article 13 as an extension of an earlier military alliance, The 1576 Pacification of Ghent, that briefly united the warring religions of the provinces.⁶

The Pacification of Ghent was signed in a last gasp attempt to unite the Protestant hierarchy of the Northern provinces with the Catholic ruling class in the south. In it the Catholics under King Philip of Spain grudgingly agreed to acknowledge and tolerate the Protestant minority in the north and include their representative, William of Orange, in matters of governance for the Spanish Netherlands. The failure of the Pacification three years after its signing led to the meeting of Reformed Church leaders and the writing of the Union of Utrecht. Article 13 of the Union was written to assure the Catholic majorities in the rural areas of the provinces that the armies of the Calvinist States-General would not vent their hatred of papist Spain through internal religious persecutions.

⁶ “Article 13 called for religious tolerance in accordance with the pacification of Ghent.” Ruben Alvarado, “Covenant and Capital: The Dutch Republic and the Rise of the Modern World.” *Woodbridge Publishing: Christian Cultural Studies Page*, http://www.wordbridge.net/ccsp/covcap06.htm#N_1_ [Accessed 12 February 2006].

The second reference to religion in the Union of Utrecht, and the one most often overlooked by American historians, authorized each provincial government to legislate religious matters as it saw fit “for the peace and welfare of the provinces.”⁷ When combined with the previously mentioned Calvinist view on the separation between church and state, this clause allowed the Dutch Reformed Church writers of the Union of Utrecht to seize power of provincial governments and determine what level of toleration variant religions received within their borders. Provided they did not cross the line drawn by Article 13, which was subject to ideological interpretation, they were free to enforce whatever religious doctrine or moral decree they wished.⁸

Within a few years of the signing of the Union of Utrecht, members of the Dutch Reformed Church dominated the States-General and the highest level of provincial government in all seven provinces. In the early days of the Republic, they were preoccupied with the Revolution from Spain and military maneuvering, as intended by the writers of the Union of Utrecht. But in 1609 a “pause for breath” truce with Spain nurtured an expansion of the States-General’s power to matters other than military, and “a new, different, indeed unique state, the Dutch Republic, made its

⁷ In Dutch: “tot rust ende velvaert vande pvoncien” De Unie van Utrecht, as quoted in “Between Repression and Approval: connivance and Tolerance in the Dutch Republic and in New Netherland,” translated by Jaap Jacobs, *De Halve Maen* (Fall, 1998)

⁸ Jaap Jacobs, “Between Repression and Approval,” *passim*.

appearance in Europe.”⁹ The temporary cessation of hostilities and growth of power allowed the States-General to focus more closely on internal issues-- an introspection that immediately led to an examination of the moral and religious state of the new nation.

The introspection divided the Protestants in the Dutch Republic into two ideologically warring factions. The Dutch Reformed Church and the Calvinists under Maurice, son and heir to the House of Orange, “insisted on the necessity of intellectual and religious repression,” while followers of Joseph Arminius called Remonstrants, “increasingly argued for toleration.” The latter group, representative of the “the wealth and power of one of the most stubborn and resourceful classes of men in the federation, the merchant rulers of the Dutch cities,” was led by Johan Van Oldenbarnevelt.¹⁰

Elected by the provincial government Advocate of the Province of Holland beginning in 1586, it was Oldenbarnevelt’s duty to represent the powerful interests of Holland in the States-General Assembly.¹¹ Holland was the dominant province in the Republic, the most economically powerful with the largest populace— and as its representative,

⁹ Charles Wilson. *The Dutch Republic and the Civilization of the Seventeenth Century*. (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1968.):11.

¹⁰ James Homer Williams, “Abominable Religion and Dutch Intolerance,” 85.

¹¹ The principles underlying the government of the Dutch Republic were quite simple, as indicated by the Union that, though not written as a Constitutional document, served as its Constitution. The only actual reference in the Union of Utrecht to any form of central government was the reference to the seven separate provinces working “as if a single province,” so the States-General, the governing body of representatives, dealt strictly with matters of common concern to all, leaving much control in the hands of the individual provinces. The Dutch people would not have an actual Constitution until 1719.

Oldenbarnevelt's opinions counted for much in the States-General. In the 32 years Oldenbarnevelt held the title of Advocate of the Province of Holland, he did much to firmly establish many of the principles so vaguely defined in the Union of Utrecht. Oldenbarnevelt was, in short, "the first great statesman to spring from the North Netherlands."¹²

Despite his successes, Oldenbarnevelt found himself under attack in the States-General. Maurice of Orange and "the Calvinist Church, its ministers and most fanatical supporters" vehemently objected to the tolerance proposed by Oldenbarnevelt and the Remonstrants. To Maurice, the religious argument was "not to be settled by many orations and flowery arguments "but with the sword."¹³ After mounting a political persecution to discredit the statesman, Maurice and the Dutch Reformed leaders arrested Oldenbarnevelt as a heretic and seized control of Holland. Oldenbarnevelt was brought to trial and, as his religious beliefs "dared to jeopardize the position of the faith and greatly oppress and distress God's Church," he was executed in 1619.¹⁴

After the execution of Oldenbarnevelt, resistance to the Calvinists crumbled, leaving the Dutch Reformed Church in complete control of the States-General and effectively ending the religious debate. Followers of Arminius were harassed by the Church and driven from seats of power.

¹² Pieter Geyl. *The Revolt of the Netherlands: 1555-1609*. (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1932.): 212,213.

¹³ Pieter Geyl, *The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century: Part One: 1609-1648*. (NY: Barnes and Noble, 1966): 57.

¹⁴ Pieter Geyl, *Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century*, 62.

Laws were enacted that required all provincial magistrates and government officials be members in good standing in the Dutch Reformed Church, all public schools to teach the Reformed doctrine, and all marriages to be conducted in the faith. “Anabaptist, Lutheran, and Humanist heretics were dealt [in the law] with...public refutations and other kinds of harassment” similar to the Puritan torments used later in the Massachusetts Bay colony. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, “Calvinism was, without any doubt, the dominant religion and, more importantly, the only one with an official right to public worship.”¹⁵

Within a few brief years of seizing control of the States-General, the Reformed Church and the provincial governments managed to “obliterate or severely restrict religious dissent in the United Provinces—*on paper*.”¹⁶ Yet the leaders of the Church and government could not effect the same stranglehold on the Dutch as their brethren had in other regions of Europe. However many laws they passed and punishments they implemented, the Calvinist leaders could not persuade the local civil authorities to uphold their decrees. In 1626, a Reformed minister in Amsterdam wrote to the States-General bemoaning the response of local magistrates to the new moral law:

“They [the town fathers] countenance only Calvinism, but for Trade’s sake they Tolerate all others, except the Papists...you may be what Devil you will there, so you be but peaceable...If you be unsettled in your Religion, you may try all, and take at last what you like best...It’s the Fair of all the

¹⁵ George L. Smith, “Guilders,” 10.

¹⁶ Italics original; see George L. Smith, “Guilders,” 10.

Sects, where all the Pedlars of Religion have leave to vend their Toyes.”¹⁷

For centuries, the merchant class of the New Netherlands controlled the tenor of local policy. Merchants dominated city government, which in turn “controlled the Estates of Holland, which controlled the States General...of the United Provinces.”¹⁸ If the merchant magistrate did not like a decree handed down by the Calvinist powers-that-be, it was simply ignored. Even the requirement of church membership to hold government office was essentially meaningless-- “if a minister seriously displeased his magistracy, he could find himself deprived of his salary, and even threatened with persecution.” The economic control the wealthy merchants exercised over the local clergy made a local Church endorsement easy to obtain.¹⁹

The Dutch merchants, to the chagrin of the Calvinist leaders, found religious tolerance good for business. The religious freedom espoused in the literal, but not intended, interpretation of Article 13 in the Union of Utrecht drew massive numbers of religious refugees, dramatically expanding the Dutch market base as it increased international trade.²⁰ The Dutch merchant class was perfectly willing to accept the beliefs of persecuted sects provided there was a profit in it—and there certainly was.

¹⁷ John J. Murray. *Amsterdam: In the Age of Rembrandt*. (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967): 25.

¹⁸ John J. Murray, *Amsterdam*, 26.

¹⁹ J.L. Price. *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic During the 17th Century*. (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974.): 81.

²⁰ Jaap Jacobs. “Between Repression and Approval: Connivance and Tolerance in the Dutch Republic and in New Netherland.” *De Halve Maen* 3 (Fall 1998):55.

Trade flourished, arts flourished, philosophy, science, mathematics-- all benefited from the influx of ideas that flowed in alongside “spices, sugars, dyes, drugs, fruits, wine, flax, hemp, raw silk...cloth, wool, grains, salt, herring potash, copper and iron...pelts, honey, tale, whale-oil and olive oil.”²¹ The capitalist drive, particularly in the powerful province of Holland, was so strong that it was said a Dutch merchant “would sail his ships through hell and risk singeing the sails if there were prospect of a profit.”²²

Even more than economics, religious tolerance was a political necessity on the local level as in no other contemporary European nation. In the years between the implementation of the Union of Utrecht and the execution of Oldenbarnevelt, sects of “Jews, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Socinians, Quakers and Brownists” had come to the Republic seeking sanctuary—and Catholics continued to dominate the small villages and rural districts of the provinces. The large proportion of non-Calvinist religions in the Republic made the violent imposition of religious conformity on the local level impossible without the cooperation of local magistrates. To their dismay, the States-General found the local magistrates preferred maintaining the social and economic stability of their province and their own political standing, rather than creating a

²¹ George L. Smith. “Guilders and Godliness: The Dutch Colonial Contribution to American Religious Pluralism.” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 47 (March 1969): 12.

It should be noted that the same capitalist drive that encouraged religious tolerance, also led the Dutch merchant class to dominate the African slave trade.

²² P.J. Blok quoted in Smith, “Guilders,” 13.

purely Protestant society.²³ The Calvinist governmental leadership was stunned. The States-General had not anticipated their moral reform to meet resistance on the local level. While in all other areas of governance the States-General had simply given itself the authority to act on behalf of the Dutch people, in matters of religion they were hampered by their own history.

The people of the Netherlands had relied on strong localized provincial governments since the Middle Ages, and they showed no disposition to altering the system which had ushered in the Dutch Golden Age. Since the strength of the States-General was a by-product of the Union of Utrecht, the Dutch people had no input in its construction. As they had already shown a resistance to centralized authority under the Spanish imperial government, Calvinist representatives at The Hague had every reason to believe the people would similarly resist any such form of governance, particularly if instigated by members of a minority religion.

For the same reason, the States-General did not dare alter the Union of Utrecht or write a true Constitution. However vexed they were by the peculiar religions sheltering in the Republic under the literal interpretation of Article 13, the representatives had no explicit authorization to amend or alter the wording of the Union. Any attempt to author a more restrictive testament to their authority would have aroused the suspicions of the local merchant-magistrates and defenders of

²³ George L. Smith, "Guilders and Godliness," 10.

provincial autonomy. Only five words in a military treaty allowed the Reformed Church to create a central government without the consent of their constituency, and the States-General and Dutch Reformed Church were not about to lose the power they had gained by calling attention to themselves.²⁴

In desperation, the States-General dispatched Calvinist missionaries to the rural districts of the provinces in the hopes that new converts would force the magistrates to enforce their reforms. The renewal of the war against Spain and the fervor of revolution assisted in this effort; patriotic Dutch townsfolk wished to rid themselves of all things Spanish, including Catholicism. The new converts, however, used the Reformed Church decrees expressly to persecute Catholics and continued to accept all others.

The Dutch Reformed Church and States-General issued an increasing number of moral reforms they were unable to enforce in anticipation of the day the Calvinist religion would dominate the provinces. Given the wave of Protestantism sweeping through Europe following the English Civil War, religious dissidents in the Republic had every reason to fear a change in public sympathies. The safety of the religious refugees in the Dutch Republic rested on the minority status of the state religion and the profitability of religious tolerance. Were either of

²⁴ Roger D. Congleton. "Theoretical and Practical Origins of Modern Constitutional Design: the Enlightenment Literature on Constitutions." George Mason University, rdc1.net/class/BayreuthU/CONDS5A.pdf [Accessed: 25 February 2006].

those two factors to change, the States-General and the many moral laws they generated were positioned to summarily quash religious diversity in the Dutch Republic.²⁵ Though the diversity of the populace continued throughout the age of the Republic, at the time the Remonstrance was written in Flushing, the religious fate of the Republic was yet to be determined.

As Edward Hart implied in his careful wording of the Remonstrance, religious diversity in the Dutch Republic existed only in the “Outward State of Holland.” The promise of the Flushing charter granting the inhabitants the right to liberty of conscience as was the “costume and manner of Holland” did not, in and of itself, guarantee anything.

Even more importantly to the intent of the Remonstrance, Flushing was not part of the Dutch Republic proper. Were the settlement in the main Republic, evoking Article 13 would, arguably, have bolstered their claim to religious freedom. But as a colony, Flushing was subject to colonial law and the directives of the West Indische Compagnie above all. Though historians have implied that the religious diversity of the Republic supported the Flushing protest, in truth it worked against it. Because the States-General was unable to enforce moral law at home, the Board of the WIC determined to exert its efforts in the New Netherlands.

But the Remonstrance was not addressed to the WIC, nor to the States-General of the Dutch Republic. At the heart of the Flushing protest

²⁵ George L. Smith, “Guilders and Godliness,” 11.

were the actions of the WIC's Governor-Director Petrus Stuyvesant. No historians writing on the Remonstrance disputed the laws of Stuyvesant were religiously intolerant. Therefore, it followed that the Governor-Director wrote religious law without the approval of the Dutch Republic. This thesis, however, has demonstrated the precarious nature of religious tolerance in the Republic at the time of the Flushing protest. What it has yet to examine is the level of influence the Reformed Church had in the New Netherlands.

As in the Republic, the state of religion in the New Netherlands was far more complicated than historians have implied. From its earliest creation, the WIC was intended to propagate the Dutch Reformed faith-- but the WIC was not the first Dutch company in the New Netherlands. To infer the role of religion in the New Netherlands at the time of the Flushing protest, we must begin with the early stages of Dutch colonization and proceed through the administration of Governor-Director Stuyvesant up to the summer of 1657 and the events that led to the Flushing Remonstrance.

CHAPTER 3 NETHERLAND'S ZION

In 1609, the Board members of the Dutch East India company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC) hired Englishman Henry Hudson to find a northwest passage to East Asia. To the explorer, the patronage of the VOC offered an opportunity to fulfill a dream denied. Two prior voyages proved fruitless, and the English company with whom he worked had cancelled his contract. Yet he felt he was on the verge of discovery, and thus he accepted the VOC's offer to prove his geographic theories and overshadow his previous failures.

The VOC, however, was not so romantically motivated. With the political endorsement of Johan Van Oldenbarnevelt and the might of the merchants of Holland, the Dutch East India Company had exploited its monopoly on Dutch trade east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of the Strait of Magellan for seven lucrative years. It was a governmental construct, a forced union between companies designed by Oldenbarnevelt to help finance the war with Spain. In hiring Hudson, the VOC meant to extend its reach into the New World and further improve the economic prospects of the fledgling Dutch Republic.

In April, the good ship *Halve Mean* (*Half Moon*), Henry Hudson and 20 sailors of both Dutch and English heritage, set sail under the Dutch Republican banner. While poking along the eastern shore of North America looking in vain for a shorter passage to India, Hudson stumbled

onto Manhattan Island. Though a thorough search of the surrounding bay did not reveal the sought after shortcut, Hudson claimed the island and its neighboring lands on the continent under the authority of the VOC and the Republic. Thus the Dutch Republic established its first colony in the New World.

The first settlements were nothing more than trading posts stocked with merchants intent on making their fortunes and returning to Holland. The Dutch proved apt traders, and a profitable fur trade with Mohawk inhabitants of the region quickly developed. The span of territory, however, was far too great for the VOC to handle on its own-- it had taken it several years to establish a somewhat permanent trading post, and it had made no serious attempt to colonize the territory. Tensions between the Dutch and the other imperialist powers, Spain and England, made it vital that the New Netherlands firmly establish Dutch claim on the territory through settlement.

As the VOC pondered the New Netherlands, the Dutch Reformed States-General was looking for a way to enforce a thoroughly Calvinist doctrine in the Republic. Frustrated in their attempts at home, the Reformed representatives turned toward the New Netherlands as a venue for their religious aspirations. In the creation of the Dutch West India Company (Westindische Compagnie, WIC) in 1621, the States-General sought to establish Dutch claims in the New Netherlands through the promotion of a Calvinist society. The Calvinists determined to model the

company in their image, righting the merchant-related religious tolerance of the VOC. Through the WIC, the Reformed Church “was free to govern its colonies—and the internal religious policies—largely as it saw fit.”¹

Much like the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the WIC, backed by the States-General and Dutch Reformed Church, intended to establish religious havens strictly designed on their theological doctrine.²

Almost immediately, however, the WIC ran into problems in fulfilling its religious aspirations. Despite the growing membership in the Dutch Reformed Church, none of the “right sort” felt called to leave the “deeply civilized bosom of Amsterdam...and venture to the back of beyond, to an absolute and unforgiving wilderness.”³ The pressure to firmly establish territorial claims in the New World necessitated immediate action, and the Dutch Reformed Church had precious little time to round-up missionaries. So, on March 29, 1624, the ship *Nieu Nederlandt* departed with the first wave of settlers, consisting not of Dutch but of thirty Walloon⁴ families from Belgium.

Accepting that Walloons had to do to begin with, the Calvinist WIC tried to plant its feet firmly in New Netherlands. Like seeding a field, the WIC spread the families out over the entire territory claimed by the

¹ James Homer Williams, “Abominable Religion and Dutch (In) Tolerance: the Jews and Petrus Stuyvesant,” *De Halve Maen* (Winter 1998): 86.

² Jaap Jacobs, “Between Repression and Approval: Connivance and Tolerance in the Dutch Republic and in New Netherland,” *De Halve Maen* (Fall, 1998): passim.

³ Russell Shorto. *The Island at the Center of the World: the Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America*. (NY: Doubleday, 2004):50

⁴ Walloons were French Huguenots (French Reformed Church) living in Belgium whom had long been rivals of the Dutch Flemings in the Northern Provinces.

company. In 1624 and continuing through 1625, six additional ships sailed for New Netherland with colonists, livestock, and supplies. On each return journey, the supply ships were laden with Walloon colonists determined to escape the dangers and hardships of life in a new land. For each group of Walloons sent out to the New Netherlands, another group of Walloons returned to the comforts of the Dutch Republican Golden Age. Thus, by 1630 the total population of New Netherland was only about 300 souls. Approximately 270 lived in the area surrounding Fort Amsterdam, primarily working as farmers, while about 30 were at Fort Orange, the center of the Hudson valley fur trade with the Mohawks. In comparison, the colony of Virginia is estimated to have had 2,500 colonists in 1630, with the total population of all colonies being 4,700.⁵

By all accounts, the Calvinist WIC was failing miserably in creating the Calvinist-led colony they had envisioned. To make matters worse, the Director-Governors chosen by the Board to lead the WIC in its moral mission became woefully corrupt once across the ocean and out of immediate control of the States-General. Despite being carefully chosen by the Calvinist leaders for their perceived piety, once in the position of power the Director-Governorship had offered them, each to the man had abandoned all thoughts of religious ideology and turned to skimming off

⁵ Deane W. Merrill. "Estimated Population of the American Colonies 1630-1780: Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Dept. of Commerce." <http://merrill.om.net/mdocs/pop/colonies/colonies.htm>. 2 Feb 1998. [Accessed 11 January 2006]

the top of the profitable Native trade market. In the first fourteen years of colonization, the WIC replaced the Director-Governor four times.

By Willem Kieft's appointment in 1638, the Calvinist States-General, the WIC, and the Dutch Reformed Church were clearly losing the race to colonize North America. The WIC was in such dire straits that when English settlers began to occupy the eastern part of Long Island in the 1630s, they could do nothing effective to stop it. The island was divided right down the middle: the English with permanent settlements dominating the east at Southold, Southhampton, and East Hampton; the Dutch in the west with trading posts at Breuckelen (Brooklyn), Amerfort (Flatlands), Midwout (Flatbush), and New Utrecht.

Desperate to formalize their claims to Long Island and faced with a shortage of discontented New Netherlanders looking to leave Holland, the WIC reluctantly agreed to entertain charter requests from the English. In addition to the English settlers on the eastern edge of the island, others arrived at Director-Governor Kieft's door in New Amsterdam after fleeing the domineering Puritan colonies of Massachusetts Bay. In 1641, under the advice of Director-Governor Willem Kieft, the WIC "consented that the English should settle there under their jurisdiction, on taking the oath of allegiance to the States General, and the Dutch West India Company."⁶

⁶ Daniel Denton. "A Brief Description of New York Formerly Called New Netherlands." In *Historic Chronicles of New Amsterdam, Colonial New York and Early Long Island* 2nd series, Cornell Jaray ed. (NY: Ira J.. Friedman Inc, 1968): 10.

From 1644 to 1646, Kieft granted three charters to Englishmen and one to an English woman. Kieft agreed to sell Lady Deborah Moody a grant for a settlement called Gravesend with land on the western edge of Long Island in 1643. Her charter, and the charter for Flushing Long Island granted to William Thorne, Michael Milner, and other Englishmen in 1645, included the stipulation that there be no public worship outside the Dutch Reformed Church as was the true “costome and manner of Holland.” However, he allowed the English to practice public governance in the English style and granted them the right to elect men not of the Dutch Reformed church to represent them in New Amsterdam.

None of these additional stipulations had been approved by the Board of the WIC or of the Calvinist States-General of the Dutch Republic. To the contrary, the WIC insisted as a condition for its approval of Kieft’s plan that all “officials in the colony must be Dutch Reformed...and the civil, military and judicial business [was] to be conducted in the Dutch language only” with all matters of governance in strict adherence to the practices of the Republic.⁷ To make matters worse for Kieft, the plethora of settlers he assured the WIC would stream in once the word had been passed that the New Netherlands was

⁷ James Homer Williams, “Abominable Religion and Dutch (In)Tolerance: The Jews and Petrus Stuyvesant,” *De Halve Maen* (Winter 1998): 86.

accepting outsiders never materialized. By 1646, the population of the New Netherlands amounted to only “about one thousand souls.”⁸

To be strictly accurate, Kieft’s overtures to the English bore fruit and brought many colonists, as he had predicted. It was his shameful lack of diplomacy with the Native tribes of the region, particularly the Mohawk, that led to the low population growth. The loose structure of the WIC allowed Kieft to wield total civil authority in the colony, and he had quickly succumbed to the same greed that had plagued the previous Director-Governors of the colony. While his predecessors were content skimming off the top of the WIC accounts, Kieft attempted to expand the enterprise by extending his colonial land holdings to include Mohawk hunting and fishing ground. The Natives, already perturbed by the increasing number of European colonists invading the eastern shore, responded with “an energy and power totally unanticipated” by the greedy Governor. A ruinous war erupted that gained nothing “but a harvest of blood and woe.”⁹

The aggressive greed of Kieft that started the war caused the “relations between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in New Netherland [to go] from bad to worse.” When Everardus Bogardus, the Dutch Reformed minister in New Amsterdam, preached against the “covetousness, and other gross excess” of Kieft’s regime, the Director-

⁸ John S. C. Abbot, *Peter Stuyvesant: the Last Dutch Governor of New Amsterdam* (NY: Dodd Mead, 1873):121.

⁹ John S. C. Abbott, 117, 106.

Governor stopped attending services. When his noticeable absence did not stop Bogardus' weekly criticisms, Kieft took to firing off the cannon or ordering the playing of drums during the minister's sermons.

Undaunted, Borgadus worked his condemnation of Kieft into sermons delivered at weddings and christenings. Kieft responded by stationing the soldiers under his command outside the church to taunt "the faithful who came to partake of the Lord's Supper." By 1647, nine years after his appointment, the WIC had enough. After both men were found guilty of various misdeeds against the WIC and Church respectively, both Kieft and Bogardus were recalled to Holland "to terminate their disputes of long standing before the Directors."¹⁰

After years of struggle for control of the New Netherlands, the Dutch Reformed Church intended the new governor to at long last enforce religious hegemony. The Church was at its height of power in the Republic- the grandson of Maurice of Orange, William II, was made stadhouder for five of the seven United Provinces the same year the fifth candidate for Governor-Director was sworn in to office in the New Netherlands. It seemed the prospect of creating a haven for Calvinists was in reach, if not in the Republic, then certainly in the New Netherlands.

¹⁰ In an ironic twist, the ship carrying both men wrecked in the Bristol Channel, killing both men, permanently ending their petty bickering.

Frederick J. Zwierlein. *Religion in New Netherland: A History of the Development of the Religious Conditions in the Province of New Netherland 1623-1664*. (NY: John P. Smith, 1910): 80-82

For the men of Flushing, then only two years established, 1647 saw the inauguration of the man to whom the Remonstrance was later addressed. “Thick-necked, with a piggish face and hard eyes offset by voluptuous lips” and with a wooden leg, Petrus Stuyvesant commanded the respect of all in his company.¹¹ He also believed in authority “as represented by the stern, austere, uncompromising church of John Calvin, and of men who, by virtue of a Christian life, were chosen to lead other men.”¹² In short, he was just what the Dutch Reformed Church was looking for.

Within days of his installment in New Amsterdam, Petrus Stuyvesant began issuing sharp decrees to enforce a more Calvinist doctrine in the Dutch colony, with full approval of the WIC. His first strike was against the alehouses and drinkers that operated “even on the Lord’s day of rest.” The penalties laid down for defying the decree were severe: “A taptster selling beer or wine on the Sabbath was fined heavily and had his license revoked, while anyone drawing a knife...did a half-year’s hard labor on bread and water.”¹³ The first tax imposed by Stuyvesant’s administration focused on wines and liquors, and the proceeds went to a complete remodel of the New Amsterdam Dutch

¹¹ Russell Shorto. *The Island at the Center of the World: the Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America*. (NY: Doubleday, 2004):146.

¹² James Homer Williams. “Abominable Religion and Dutch (In)Tolernace.” 87.

¹³ George L. Smith. *Religion and Trade in the New Netherlands: Dutch Origins and American Development*. (London: Cornell University Press, 1973): 188.

Reformed Church.¹⁴ Upon its completion, Stuyvesant ordained that “from this time forth, in the afternoon as well as in the forenoon, there shall be preaching from God’s word” at which attendance for all residents was mandatory.¹⁵ Through Stuyvesant, the States-General and WIC were finally able to start constructing the Calvinist paradise they had been denied by Dutch merchant-magistrates: “God-fearing, honest, hard-working, and abstemious.”

By 1650, the English settlements that had cropped on the eastern half of the island in the 1630s had grown increasingly larger, which threatened both the Dutch Republic’s claim to the territory and the religious hegemony sought by the WIC. Arranging a meeting between the leaders of the colonies therein, Stuyvesant negotiated the Treaty of Hartford, that divided the Island “from Oyster Bay due south to the Atlantic Ocean. East of the line, Long Island was to be English; west of the line, Dutch.” It was a testimony to Stuyvesant’s statesmanship that such an equitable division was accepted; at 1/10 of the population as that of New England, he had little to bargain with. Where before the English situation had demanded diplomacy to prevent a takeover of the island, the Treaty of Hartford freed Stuyvesant to enforce the letter of the Dutch Reformed law in the colonies of western Long Island.¹⁶

¹⁴ Henry H. Kessler and Eugene Rachlis. *Peter Stuyvesant and His New York*. (NY: Random House, 1959): 67.

¹⁵ Quoted in John S. C. Abbott. *Peter Stuyvesant: the Last Dutch Governor of New Amsterdam*. (NY: Dodd Mead, 1873): 129.

¹⁶ Henry H. Kessler and Eugene Rachlis, 120.

Stuyvesant immediately sent spies to Gravesend, Flushing, and other English settlements in the Dutch territory to ascertain the extent of their moral debasement.¹⁷ This concern stemmed primarily from the quality of representatives the English were sending to the capital. Stuyvesant bemoaned the English “election and appointment of such Magistrates, as they please, without regard to their religion. Some, especially the people of Gravesend, elect libertines and Anabaptists, which is decidedly against the laws of Netherlands.”¹⁸ In response to this quandary, Stuyvesant rigidly enforced the law of the Dutch Republic—demanding all representatives be members in good standing of the Dutch Reformed Church and refusing to seat any magistrate who failed to meet that requirement.

In the early 1650s, the English colonists, including representatives from both Flushing and Gravesend, protested the sudden religious restrictions imposed on their representatives in New Amsterdam. November 26, 1653, representatives from the Dutch settlements in New Netherlands and the English settlements of Long Island met in New Amsterdam to write a petition outlining their grievances with Stuyvesant’s authoritarian rule.

¹⁷ Victor H. Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman: New York’s First Lady Liberty: The Life and Times of Lady Deborah Moody (1586-1659?)*. (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1995): 117.

¹⁸ A. E. McKinley. “The English and Dutch Towns of New Netherland.” *The American Historical Review* 6, (Oct 1900): 14.

The Director-Governor's restrictions, they pointed out to the WIC, were "odious to every free born man, and especially so those whom God has placed under a free state in newly settled lands." Like many modern American historians unexposed to the convoluted intricacies of the Dutch Republic, the English colonists believed the Dutch Republic willingly supported religious tolerance, and that as citizens of New Netherlands (and therefore the Republic) they believed themselves entitled to the same liberties. Stuyvesant and the WIC, however, understood the true meaning behind the Union of Utrecht and the accidental influx of foreign religions, and the Director-Governor was not about to take such questioning of his divine rights diplomatically.¹⁹

Stuyvesant responded by ordering the settlers gathered in New Amsterdam to disperse, "on pain of our highest displeasure." When the colonists protested demanding what right the Director-Governor had to prevent them from so meeting, Stuyvesant replied, "We derive our authority from God and the Company, not from a few ignorant subjects; and we alone can call the inhabitants together." The WIC agreed with their Director, writing in May that they were unable to find one point in the colonists grievances "to justify complaint." Further, they suggested that Stuyvesant "punish what has occurred as it deserves, so that others may be deterred in future from following such examples," chastising Stuyvesant that in the Board's opinion, he "ought to have acted with

¹⁹ Thomas A. Janvier, *The Dutch Founding of New York*, (NY: Ira J. Friedman, 1903): 151-161.

more vigor against the ringleaders of the gang.” The Director-Governor assured the Board that “if any one, during my administration, shall appeal [the religious rulings of Stuyvesant and the WIC], I will make him a foot shorter, and send the pieces to Holland and let him appeal in that way.”²⁰

The results of the 1653 protest made clear to all colonists of New Netherlands that their chartered rights were not what they appeared to be. Four years before the Flushing Remonstrance was written, the WIC unambiguously denounced religious freedom by supporting Petrus Stuyvesant’s enforcement of Dutch Reformed hegemony. All other evidence aside, the failure of the 1653 protest belies historians claims that the Flushing protest resulted from a contract dispute.

Though historians examining the Flushing Remonstrance implied that Stuyvesant’s religious policies in the New Netherland were in opposition to the tolerance of the WIC, in actuality, Stuyvesant was their gubernatorial ideal. But there is still another tacit argument to be addressed before the story of the Flushing Remonstrance can be told.

Before the Remonstrance was written, those colonies typically lauded by modern historians for their religious tolerance had evolved from a desire to protect the religion of its founders. Roger Williams, for example, insisted on a level of religious tolerance in his charter for Rhode Island only after he had been cast out of Massachusetts Bay. His

²⁰ John Romeytn Brodhead, *History of the State of New York* Volume 1: 473

tolerance, in other words, came out of a desire to be tolerated. Because of this predisposition of dissidents to protect their religious views through an expression of religious tolerance, some historians have assumed that the men of Flushing who wrote the Remonstrance after Stuyvesant's persecution of Quakers were themselves Quakers.

Historian George L. Smith wrote that the men of Flushing were "smitten by Quaker preaching," and Frederick Zwierlein wrote that "Quaker preaching had...infected" the town.²¹ Henry Kessler and Eugene Rachlis went so far as to refer to the men of Flushing as failed martyrs to the Quaker cause.²² Though the religion adhered to by the inhabitants of Flushing should be of no consequence, the implication that the Remonstrance was written for self-protection does serve to minimize the story of the protest.

Even more corrosive to the significance of the Remonstrance was the implication that as Quakers the men of Flushing were merely repeating the Quaker creed. In order to understand the unique nature of the Remonstrance, and thus the importance of its writing to American history, a religious history of the signers would be most helpful. Unfortunately, like so many early colonists, few records exist to verify what religion the men of Flushing followed.

²¹ Frederick J. Zwierlein. *Religion in New Netherland: A History of the Development of the Religious Conditions in the Province of New Netherland 1623-1664*. (NY: John P. Smith, 1910):219.

²² Henry H. Kessler and Eugene Rachlis. *Peter Stuyvesant and His New York*. (NY: Random House, 1959): 193.

There are, however, a few men who left behind documents to speak to their faith. Flushing founders William Thorne and Michael Milner were both residents of the Massachusetts Bay Colony prior to moving to Long Island, and they left behind documentary evidence of their religious proclivities. The following chapter examines first the religious lives of Milner and Thorne to the founding of Flushing then the contact between Petrus Stuyvesant and Flushing preceding the writing of the Remonstrance. By connecting the historical dots left by these men leading up to the Remonstrance, there is enough evidence to infer the true nature of their religious beliefs.

CHAPTER 4 BETWIXT GOD AND OUR OWN SOULS

While the WIC struggled to find Dutch Calvinists willing to settle New Netherlands, the tripartite forces of persecution, religious propagation, and economic depression gave ample reasons for English Puritans to flee their homeland. Between 1629 and 1640 thousands of English colonists, 60% of whom came from the strictly Puritan rural regions of East Anglia, boarded ships bound for the Massachusetts Bay in the hopes of being able to establish a Puritan society in the New World.¹

While none of the thirty-one signers of the Remonstrance left any documents to explain why they chose life in the colonies, there were several events in England leading up to and during the great migration that may have influenced their decision to some degree. The comparatively peaceful reign of King James I ended in 1625 and a powerful militant sect of Protestantism led by William Laud seized control of Parliament and most of the English Church. James' successor Charles I promoted the Armenian Laud "in every sense," and appointed him Bishop of London in 1628. Neither Laud nor his king showed any "awareness that they might need to inspire popular enthusiasm for the innovations in religion that they now foisted on a horrified Church of England."²

¹ David Hackett Fisher, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, (NY: Oxford, 1989): 64.

² Diarmuid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History*. (NY: Penguin Group, 2003): 516.

Once again Puritans were the focus of persecution. “There were savage Star Chamber punishments which went beyond ruinous fines to the cropping of ears for some of the noisiest opposition voices.” Charles’ Queen, Henrietta Maria, was Catholic, which led many Puritans to believe the monarch a participant in a “papist plot to take over the English Church.” As the persecutions of Puritans in London mounted, so did the resolve of the Puritan people to amend the evils of the Church. England was moving ever closer to a Civil War, and the conditions in the country became intolerable. “The radical religious changes brought about by Charles I’s regime encouraged many gentry, clergy and ordinary people who had no inclination to separatism to uproot themselves and try the hazards of a long Atlantic voyage.”³

In 1630, the *Arabella* set sail carrying Puritans to New England under the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Their intent was to create a “City upon a Hill,” a living testimony to the glory of God and an example to the world.⁴ The quest to create the ultimate Puritan sanctuary free from any influence from outside religions or variant opinion was as strong a motivation for the English Puritan emigration in the 1630s as was the threat of religious persecution under Charles I.

As the religious zeal of the Puritans drove them to the ports of London, John Winthrop noted in his journals that England had “grown weary of her inhabitants.” Winthrop wrote that the economic condition in England left “it

³ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*. 518, 534.

⁴ Edmund S. Morgan. *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*, 2nd ed. (NY:Longman, 1999):36.

almost impossible for a good and upright man to maintain his charge and live comfortably.”⁵ Grain riots and famine in East Anglia began in 1629 and did not abate until 1631. The “small villages and towns, half-industrial, half-agricultural...a society of clothiers and cloth-workers, capitalists, and craftsmen” of East Anglia were in the midst of a depression that lasted until the late 1630s.⁶ The economic conditions in the rural parishes “show clearly the economic situation in south-eastern England...[and] reveal a condition conducive to emigration.” While no direct proof has ever been found to connect economic conditions to emigration rates, logic would dictate the dire conditions in Essex and other counties must have contributed to the massive movement to the colonies.⁷

In the middle of this great migration, 1635, the *James* of London disembarked England’s shore headed to the Massachusetts Bay. Aboard, according to the ship log, was one Michael Milner, aged 23. Seven years after his arrival in Salem and three years before Milner helped found the Flushing settlement, Milner’s name again appears in colonial records as a resident of Lynn, Massachusetts. Another Flushing founder, William Thorne, Sr., also resided in Lynn, and both Thorne and Milner were linked in town records from 1642. Though the documentary trail of the founders of Flushing is scant, there is enough to infer the religious proclivities of both Milner and Thorne prior to

⁵ Edmund S. Morgan. *The Puritan Dilemma*, 34.

⁶ George C. Homans. “The Puritans and the Cloathing Industry in England.” *The New England Quarterly* 13 (Sept 1940):528.

⁷ Nellie M. Crouse. “Causes of the Great Migration 1630-1640.” *The New England Quarterly* 5, (Jan 1932): 11, 14.

their founding the Long Island settlement. We must, however, begin with an understanding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the time of their arrival.

The government structure of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was outlined before any Puritans set foot to shore. In structure, it was much like the vestry and parish governments that brought order to the rural towns of England, with the Puritan church and Mosaic law the ultimate authority in all colonial matters. Though mirroring England in most instances, John Winthrop, the governor and founder of the colony, instigated an unprecedented amount of participation in governmental matters amongst the laity.

Members admitted in full to the colony, called freemen, “were to meet four times a year in a ‘Great and General Court’ to make laws for both company and colony. Once a year...they would elect a governor, a deputy governor, and eighteen ‘assistants’...to manage affairs between meetings of the General Court.” There was no stipulation for a quorum in the directives of the central government, which allowed the governors and assistants complete control of colonial policy, in effect granting a “dozen or so members...unlimited authority to exercise any kind of government they chose.”⁸

Though no record exists to indicate whether or not Michael Milner was a freeman, William Thorne, another Flushing founder and owner of "30 acres and tenn" in the rich garden landscape of Lynn, was administered the “Freemen’s

⁸ Edmund S. Morgan. *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*. (NY: Longman, 1999.): 75.

Oath” in May of 1638.⁹ After submitting a letter of recommendation from the Puritan sanctioned church leaders and being submitted to rigorous examination by Church elders, Thorne stood before the selectmen of Lynn, Massachusetts, to proclaim his loyalty to the government of the Bay Colony.¹⁰

Only men who had undergone a religious conversion certified by the local minister could become freemen in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In order to prove such moral certitude, William Thorne had to meet strict religious standards and follow faithfully the religious law of the colony. This was no simple task, as “colonists were punished for scolding, eavesdropping, meddling, naughty speeches, profane dancing...playing cards, pulling hair and pushing wives.”¹¹ Walking on the Sabbath Day was discouraged unless the step was sufficiently somber and the path was to the church door. One shouldn’t clean house or kiss the children on the Sabbath, “adultery, blasphemy, and idolatry were punishable by death.”¹²

The stark intolerance inherent in the Puritan oligarchy’s religious premise was demonstrated late October 1635, literally days after Michael Milner landed in Salem. The charismatic minister Roger Williams was excommunicated and banished from the Puritan colony for expressing “new

⁹ Jane McMurtry Allen. *Abraham Alling of Oyster Bay, New York :abt. 1630-post 1711: Some of His Descendants and their Related Families*. (Gateway Press, Baltimore, 1992): 239.

¹⁰ Stephen Daye. *Oath of the Freeman*. (Cambridge, MA, 1639) Charles Evans in, “Oaths of Allegiance in Colonial New England,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s., 31 (April 13–October 19, 1921): 389. http://oll.libertyfund.org/Texts/LFBooks/Lutz0397/ColonialOrigins/HTMLs/0013_Pt03_Mass.html#hd_lf013.head.112 [Accessed 21 February 2006].

¹¹ Victor H. Cooper. *A Dangerous Woman: New York’s First Lady Liberty: The life and times of Lady Deborah Moody*. (Bowie, MD: Heritage, 1995): 76.

¹² D. McConnell. *History of the American Episcopal Church*. (London: Wells, Gardner, Darton and Co, 1897.): 32

and dangerous” religious opinions.¹³ Nor could a challenge to the authority be born two years later, when Anne Hutchinson claimed to receive direct revelations from God. She too was banished and followed Williams to his colony in Rhode Island. The desire of Winthrop and the Puritan hierarchy to create a world pleasing to their God’s eye allowed for no deviations in philosophy.¹⁴

Most cases of crime went before the local authorities and were judged by church leaders and freemen. Each town had pillories and stocks prominently placed, and they rarely stood empty. In certain periods of Massachusetts Bay history serious religious infractions such as heresy sometimes resulted in the slitting of nostrils or removal of ears. Heretics, a title given anyone who challenged Puritan religious orthodoxy, were branded on the face “burned very deep with a red-hot iron with H. for heresie.” But truly dangerous offenders, radicals like Roger Williams or Anne Hutchinson who threatened the very foundation of the Puritan regime, were made to stand at the Great Court before a jury of freemen elected from participating townships.¹⁵

One such juror elected to attend a meeting of the General Court July 29 1641 was William Thorne, Sr. of Lynn, Massachusetts. He heard the case of Goody Sherman’s stolen pig, a complicated matter involving much oath taking and comparison of swinish birthmarks. There were numerous affairs regarding

¹³ Roger Williams was banished from the colony by the Court of Massachusetts Bay sometime in late October, 1635. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma*,. 113.

¹⁴ The Library of Congress. “Anne Marbury Hutchinson.” *American Memory*. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/jul20.html> [Accessed: 20 February 2006].

¹⁵ David Hackett Fisher. *Albion’s Seed*, 194, 195.

the neglecting of fences and a defamation case between George Story and Peter Pettford of Marblehead. Of the most severely punished by Thorne's jury was John Kettle, a young boy and apprentice of "Jno. Lovett of Mackerell cove" who was sentenced to be "severely whipped" for stealing a second cup of milk from his Master on the Sabbath.¹⁶

When Thorne sat on the jury at the Salem Great Court sometime late in the summer of 1641, there was every evidentiary indication that he did so as a Puritan in good standing, as ordered and upright as any man of the colony. Documents refer to him on occasion as Goodman Thorne, a title reserved for a respectable yeoman, and his status in the Lynn church was vouched for by his election to the Salem jury. It could be argued that Milner too, by nature of the lack of evidence speaking to the contrary, also adhered to the tenets of Puritanism. Neither man, according to the evidence available, demonstrated any religious dissidence or Quaker tendencies.

But at the same time Goodman Thorne was in Salem hearing the case of Goody Sherman's stolen sow, another case in session led to a change in the Puritan lives of Milner and Thorne. Francis Hutchinson, son of Anne, and his brother-in-law William Collins were brought before the Quarter Court to face charges of heresy. Collins "a man of learning," was "found a seducer" of the pious, propagating a theology reflective of his mother-in-law's radical teachings. Francis was found guilty of calling the Church of Boston "a whore,

¹⁶ George Francis Dow, ed. *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Volume I: 1636-1656*. (Essex Institute, 1911). <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/Essex/> [Accessed: 20 February 2006].

etc” in the process of similarly speaking against the Puritan creed. Both men were duly fined then sentenced to immediate banishment on pain of death.¹⁷

To the Puritan government, heretical teachings demanded swift, powerful justice. Banishment was reserved for the worst cases—given the hostile relationship between Natives and colonists, it could be viewed as a passive-aggressive form of the death penalty. Of course, those so expelled from the established colony could and did survive; Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson both lived to establish settlements on Rhode Island, though in 1643 Hutchinson was killed by Mohicans in East Chester, New York. Even more than physical dangers however, banishment was a symbolic renunciation. If only the Puritan was capable of eternal salvation, and even they had no guarantee of such, then the ex-communicated Puritan was essentially damned to hell.

It was vital to the salvation of the Puritan system that heretics be thrust from their bosom with all haste, lest the taint of their heresy ooze onto the faithful. The judgments of the Company, men allegedly in complete command of Biblical law, were not to be questioned in any regard—to do so was to question the very existence of God. Everyone in the colony understood the consequences of challenging Company authority, both physical and spiritual.

Despite this clearly comprehended authority, William Thorne Senior endangered his standing to defy the laws of the land. Sometime late in the summer of 1641, the village constabulary learned that Francis Hutchinson and

¹⁷ Timothy Fellows. *True Religion Works: September*. [no date]. http://www.truereligionworks.com/calendar_sep.cfm [Accessed: 21 February 2006].

William Collins had been living on Thorne's farm. Goodman Thorne had provided them with shelter and supplies, enabling the two men to arrange their affairs and prepare for their banishment despite the immediacy of the sentence. On September 7th, 1641, after seeing the two men off to the safe haven in Rhode Island, Thorne was fined "6 2/3 pounds for concealing, hiding & supplying the escaped son and son-in-law of Ann Marbury Hutchinson."¹⁸

There was no documentary evidence found to explain why the upstanding freeman William Thorne chose to aide and abet two convicted heretics. Circumstantial evidence, however, was another matter. Between 1638, when Thorne had proved himself to be a Puritan of good standing and taken the Freeman's Oath, and 1641, when Thorne hid Frances Hutchinson and William Collins in defiance of Puritan law, events in Lynn influenced Thorne's change of heart. It all began when Lynn resident Sir John Humphrey sold his house.

Sir Humphrey, and his wife Lady Susan Fiennes, had arrived in Lynn in its early days of settlement. To accommodate his wife's extravagant taste and aristocratic heritage, Humphrey built a large house, quite grand by colonial standards, overlooking the sea. Lady Susan was not satisfied with the house, called "Swampscott" after the red cliff upon which it was built, and by early 1641 the pair decided to return to England where the fine courts and company were more to her liking. Humphrey sold "Swampscott" and its surrounding

¹⁸ Philip Voyle Thorne. "Relevant Facts Regarding William Thorne." *John Coutant Thorn's Homepage*. (Last Updated 24 February 2006) <http://thorn.pair.com/> [Accessed: 24 February 2006].

farmland for “eleun hundred pounds” to Lady Deborah Moody, recently arrived from London.¹⁹

Lynn in 1641 was, by all accounts, a garden paradise. It drew the finer sort of folk, eager to escape the hubbub of Salem for the life of a New England squire. Bounty flowed from the earth, green peas and “herbs, leeks, onions, vines, mulberries, plums, currants, cherries, filberts and walnuts” were harvested; “salmon, bass, skate, lobsters, herring, haddock, mullet, eel, crab, mussels and oysters” were brought from the sea, and “flocks of pigeons were so dense they ‘darkened the sky’.”²⁰ No doubt the abundance is what drew Lady Deborah to settle in Lynn, as it did Michael Milner and William Thorne—though neither man shared Moody’s aristocratic status.

Moody’s father, Walter Dunch Esq., served in Parliament in the reign of Elizabeth, and her deceased husband, named baronet by King James in 1622, also served Parliament most honorably. She was related to Sir Henry Vane, the Governor of Massachusetts in 1635, and it could be that Vane’s urgings are what led Lady Moody to embark for the colonies. But she could just as easily have been driven by the tensions caused by the rule of Charles I and England standing poised for civil war. Whatever her cause, sometime between 1638 and 1640, when she was in her mid-fifties, Lady Moody boarded a ship in London bound for Salem, Massachusetts.

¹⁹ Victor H. Cooper. *A Dangerous Woman: New York’s First Lady Liberty: The Life and Times of Lady Deborah Moody: 1586-1659?*. (Bowie MD: Heritage Books, 1995.): 70-72

²⁰ Victor H. Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman*, 67.

Lady Deborah lived for a time in Salem and maintained a small house there even after purchasing “Swampscott.” She became a member of the Salem church in 1640, two years after William Thorne had sworn the Freedman’s Oath before the town select. Her acceptance into the church, however, was not as rigorously determined as William Thorne’s—as a woman of wealth and standing, Moody was an attractive addition to the colony, and her piety was accepted with little question.²¹

Had the leaders of the Salem church thoroughly examined Lady Moody, they might have found her religious ideology alarming. She was, first off, an Anabaptist; she held that there was no scriptural support for infant baptism as promoted by the Puritans, and she viewed the practice as “a coercive offence against a child before it could exercise free-will.” This preference for adult baptism was only the tip of the iceberg in Moody’s theology. She believed “Christ’s people” to be “free, unforced, and uncompelled...who receive Christ with desire and a willing heart.” Her Anabaptism, in short, was a cry for liberty of conscience—the right of the individual to *chose* to worship God and not have such faith inflicted upon them by the government.²²

This conviction made her a danger to the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Company, whose entire governmental structure was based on imposed piety. There is no evidence that the church elders ever questioned Lady Moody about her beliefs prior to her admittance; to the contrary, her admittance to the

²¹ Victor H. Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman: passim*.
Lucille L. Koppelman. “Lady Deborah Moody and Gravesend: 1643-1659.” *Halve Maen* 67. (1994): *passim*

²² Victor H. Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman*, 7.

churches of Salem and Lynn imply that they did not even ask her. If they had, the proud Lady Deborah would surely have told them the truth—at least, she showed no compunction in sharing her opinions with her fellow residents of Lynn.

Shortly after arriving in Lynn and settling into “Swampscott,” Lady Deborah started holding meetings in her home, much like Anne Hutchinson had done years earlier. The Lady’s connection to Hutchinson was not limited to religious views or theological style—she had moved in the same circles as Ms. Hutchinson while both were still in London. Additionally, Lady Moody’s friend Thomas Savage was married to Anne’s daughter Faith, and the happy couple resided just down the muddy lane from Lady Deborah’s town home in Salem.²³ This connection between Moody and Anne Hutchinson most likely inspired William Thorne to hide Hutchinson’s son and son-in-law and pay a heavy fine as a consequence.

Deborah Moody’s religious conversations were no more acceptable to the Puritan leaders than Anne Hutchinson’s had been. The Puritans in power saw Lady Deborah as “evill in opposing the churches and leav[ing] her opinions behinde her... she is a dangerous woeman.”²⁴ But Anne Hutchinson, however well connected in England, was just Anne Hutchinson—Deborah Moody was a Lady, the widow of a baronet, and wealthy to boot. The authorities moved as slowly as they dared, but the dowager persisted in her heresy. In October of

²³ Victor H. Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman*, 74.

²⁴ Quoted in Lucille L. Koppelman. “Lady Deborah Moody and Gravesend: 1643-1659.” *Halve Maen* 67. (1994): 39

1642, the Court had no choice but to have Deborah Moody “presented for not believing in infant baptism.”²⁵

The admonishment she received in October did not alter the good Lady’s convictions. In early December of the same year she was again before the Court, charged with “holding that the baptism of Infants is no ordinance of God.” This was, for the Quarter Court, the final straw. At this sentencing, Lady Deborah was “admonished, suspended and excommunicated from the church.” This censure forbade Lady Moody from receiving communion or attending public worship, and ministers warned the faithful “to have as little social intercourse” with her as possible. Anabaptists, the Puritan congregations were reminded, were “incendiaries of the common wealth and infectors of persons in main matters of religion” and an Anabaptist as powerful as Lady Deborah should be avoided by the faithful Puritan at all costs.²⁶

The ministers needn’t have bothered warning their congregants, however. Days before the punishment was rendered, Lady Moody left Salem and all of the Massachusetts Colony behind in search of a more tolerant place to practice her faith. Of her leaving, John Winthrop noted in his journal:

“The lady Moodye, a wise and anciently religious woman, being taken with the error of denying baptism to infants, was dealt with by many of the elders and others, and admonished by the

²⁵ George Francis Dow, ed. *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Volume I: 1636-1656*. (Essex Institute, 1911): 48. <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/Essex/> [Accessed:20 February 2006].

²⁶ Lucille L. Koppelman. “Lady Deborah Moody and Gravesend: 1643-1659.” *De Halve Maen* 67. (1994): 39.

Church of Salem...but persisting still, and to avoid further trouble, she removed to the Dutch against the advice of her friends. Many others, infected with anabaptism, removed thither also.”²⁷

According to the *Records and Files for the Quarterly Court of Essex County* ²⁸, two of the “others...removed thither also” were Michael Milner and William Thorne. The final entry for December 28, 1642, a few days following Moody’s excommunication, read: “Divers of Lyn Gon to Long Iland & some not warned: Goodman Thorne & Michell Meller”

As previously noted, between the years 1643 to 1646, the Dutch West Indische Compagnie granted three charters to Englishmen and one to an English woman. Director-Governor Kieft agreed to sell Lady Deborah Moody a grant for Gravesend Long Island in 1643. No record indicated why Kieft granted the charter to Moody, a woman, an Anabaptist, and English, but given the Governor-Director’s temperament, his decision was no doubt influenced by her social standing and wealth. The charter²⁹ issued by Kieft to Lady Deborah stipulated that the settlers were: “to have and injoye the free libertie of conscience according to the costome and manner of Holland, without

²⁷ John Winthrop’s Journal, July 1643, quoted in Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman*, 86,87.

²⁸ The heading “& some not warned” is in itself intriguing. The notation “some not warned” implies that either Thorne or Milner had been brought before the Lynn or Salem church leaders and warned against persisting in the Anabaptist theology. As theirs are the only two names listed, this would seem logical. It could also mean that both Thorne and Milner had been thusly chastised, and when they left others accompanied them that had not so been warned. The quotation was found in: George Francis Dow, ed. *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County Volume 1*, 51.

²⁹ The quotation comes from the 1645 re-issue of the charter, believed by historians to be a duplicate of the first charter. According to Lady Deborah Moody’s biographer, Victor H. Cooper, Kieft “confiscated” the 1643 patent for Gravesend Long Island, and the Governors’ “admiration” for Lady Deborah, instigated the re-issuance of the charter. Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman*, 107.

molestation or disturbance from any Madgistrate or Madgistrates or any other Ecclesiasticall Minister that may p'tend jurisdiction over them.”³⁰ Two of the men listed as co-founders of the colony at Gravesend were Michael Milner and William Thorne.

The documentary evidence thus far indicated that both Milner and Thorne, founding fathers of Flushing, agreed with Lady Deborah Moody's belief in freedom of worship. Prior to Moody's arrival in Lynn, Massachusetts, Thorne, and for all intents and purposes Milner as well, had been an upstanding member in the Puritan community of Massachusetts Bay. After Moody's arrival, William Thorne was convicted of abetting two heretics in the Salem court. Within days of Lady Deborah's excommunication and departure from Lynn, William Thorne and Michael Milner were noted in the Salem court record as having left Massachusetts Bay for Long Island. Lastly, both men appear as original founders of, and were allotted land in, Moody's colony at Gravesend through to the founding of Flushing in 1645.

Milner and Thorne remained in Gravesend with Deborah Moody until 1644. That year, Mohicans, enraged by Governor-Director Kieft's gross mishandling of native affairs began attacking settlements in the New Netherlands. Long Island in particular was a sore spot for the Natives as the increase in European settlements under Kieft had encroached on their traditional fishing grounds. Being warned of the impending attack on their settlement, forty men from Gravesend, including William Thorne and Michael

³⁰ Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan. *A Documentary History of New York, Volume I*, (Albany NY: Van Benthuyesen, 1850): 629

Milner, elected to defend the town. After several hours of intense fighting, the men of Gravesend repelled the Mohican attack. Though they had saved Lady Moody's home, which had served as the center of their defense, much of the rest of the colony was destroyed. Shortly thereafter, Governor-Director Kieft "confiscated" Lady Deborah's charter for Gravesend without cause.³¹ Dispirited and frightened, Lady Deborah retreated to Rhode Island to weigh her options, while Milner and Thorne explored Long Island.³²

In early 1645, Lady Deborah decided to petition Kieft for re-instatement of her charter for Gravesend. On her return to New Amsterdam, she was accompanied by William Thorne, Michael Milner, and Edward Hart,³³ who were seeking a patent for a new settlement less than 20 miles to the north of Gravesend. There was no documentary evidence to attest to Thorne, Hart, or Milner's intention in founding a settlement outside of Gravesend.

Circumstantially, their arrival in New Amsterdam in Lady Deborah's company indicated that they were all on good terms, and it can be inferred that the cause for separation was not personal. Most likely, the men found the area for which

³¹ There are no documents indicating why Kieft confiscated Moody's charter. Though most historians believe the re-issued charter of 1645 was exactly the same as the 1643 version, the 1643 charter did not survive to attest to its contents. Given the pressure on Kieft from the WIC at the time, it seems possible that the Governor-Director confiscated the charter to change something in it that the Board would not have approved of—but this is only speculation.

³² Victor H. Cooper. *A Dangerous woman: New York's First Lady Liberty: The life and times of Lady Deborah Moody*. (Bowie, MD: Heritage, 1995):102, 103.

³³ There are no documents that definitively state where or when Hart joined Milner and Thorne. Clara Hart Kennedy, the Hart family historian, notes in her memoirs that Hart's name appeared on an early map of Rhode Island as one of the founders of Roger Williams' colony in Providence. The map has since been lost, and no corroborating evidence has been located. If Hart were indeed in Providence when Lady Moody visited Rhode Island in 1644, it is possible that he returned with her to Long Island. Monty Hart, "Edward Hart Descendants." August 2001. <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:1525317&id=I057> (Accessed: 3 March 2006).

they sought a charter while Moody was in Rhode Island contemplating the future of Gravesend.

The charter for Vlissengen, eventually re-named Flushing after the English mispronunciation of the Dutch name, included the same religious clause as did the charter for Gravesend. In her settlement, Moody insured that religion, “gave no offence to any stranger or person of another Religion than her own” allowing all settlers to worship as they saw fit. All indications were that the founders of Flushing promoted the same policies. Neither charter, however, guaranteed religious freedom—to the contrary, all religions other than Dutch Reformed were prohibited from public worship. Only the ineptitude of Governor-Director Kieft and his willingness to ignore religious dissidents in favor of personal power protected the non-conformist beliefs of Flushing and Gravesend from persecution by the Dutch Reformed Church in the “costome and manner of Holland.”³⁴ The precarious nature of Flushing’s religious freedom did not become apparent to the men of Flushing, however, until the appointment of Petrus Stuyvesant.

The writing of the Flushing Remonstrance did not happen in a vacuum. Many historians recording the events of the protest, particularly those who infer the protestors were Quakers, omit the events in the years preceding the writing of the Remonstrance. Before Quakerism was introduced to the area, before the arrival of missionaries in Flushing, the men of the settlement had registered their disapproval of Stuyvesant’s religious policies. From the

³⁴ Victor H. Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman*, 111.

beginning of Stuyvesant's administration, the men of Flushing had objected to the Calvinist leanings in the law.

In following through the new moral law, Stuyvesant meant to force the true "costume and manner of Holland" on all settlements within WIC domain. Though Kieft had averted his gaze and allowed the Englishmen inhabiting Long Island to do as they pleased, he had not done so with the approval of the WIC. When Stuyvesant took the oath of office, he did so with the knowledge that the WIC intended him to strictly enforce the law of the Republic. As previously mentioned, this led to the enforcement of the law requiring representatives of the settlements be members of the Dutch Reformed Church- a law protested by English colonists, including members of the Flushing settlement, but supported by the WIC.

The latter, however, was not the only instance of Flushing protest against Stuyvesant's policies. Inherent in that law, each settlement required the presence of the Dutch Reformed Church, so that its representatives might be adherents to the faith. As such, Stuyvesant instituted a policy in the early days of his regime calling for each settlement to maintain a Dutch Reformed minister at the expense of the townsfolk. The Reverend Francis Doughty was henceforth dispatched to Flushing, as the town had no such minister at hand.

On January 17, 1648, a complaint from Flushing was lodged with New Amsterdam protesting the enforcement of a Dutch law the previous Governor-Director had allowed them to ignore. "Edward Hart...with a few other... inhabitants of Flushing, in New Netherlands... are [the] principal opponents

...[to] contributing their share to the maintenance of the Christian and pious Reformed minister.” The Flushing residents, Edward Hart key among them, refused to contribute to the salary of the New Netherlands mandated Reformed minister, Francis Doughty.³⁵

To Hart and the others, the mandatory financial support of a Reformed minister was too much to bear. That was not to say that Doughty was mistreated—to the contrary, he was well-housed and fed by Flushing residents. But as none of the townsfolk attended his services or belonged to his Reformed Church, the residents of Flushing felt it unfair that they should pay his stipend. Stuyvesant, upon receiving the complaint, called the protestors to New Amsterdam on January 23, 1648, “under penalty of prosecution” to justify themselves to the Stuyvesant’s Council.

This call to the capital introduced Hart and the others to the new policies of Stuyvesant’s regime. In the “costome and manner of Holland,” under the rigid gaze of Stuyvesant, all governmental proceedings were conducted entirely in Dutch. Given that Hart and the other men of Flushing were English, and thus spoke no Dutch, the trial was incredibly short. Stuyvesant and his Council, including other representatives of the WIC, fined the lot 200 guilders, ordered Doughty be paid the back salary owed him, and that the reverend’s salary henceforth would come out of the pockets of the inhabitants of Flushing.

³⁵ “Secretary of State's office, at Albany, N. Y January 17, 1648,” quoted in *Edward Hart Descendants*, by Monty Hart, <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:1525317&id=I057>. (Accessed: 13 March 2006).

Despite Stuyvesant's decree, the men of Flushing, though paying the fine, refused to pay Doughty. The problem, in a sense, took care of itself—in 1655, the minister found a town in Virginia willing to pay for his services and slipped off without informing New Amsterdam, shaking the dust of Flushing from his feet.³⁶ Ironically, in the same year Doughty moved to Virginia, the first Quaker missionaries arrived in America—on the island of Barbados.³⁷ Clearly, this fact alone belies the argument that the protestors from Flushing were members of the Quaker religion. The problem the people of Flushing had with Stuyvesant stemmed from their belief in liberty of conscience, freedom of religion, not with the propagation of a particular sect of Christian faith. The protest, in short, began when Stuyvesant enforced the letter of Dutch law on the freedom-loving people of Flushing.

Thus far this thesis has disproved the tacit arguments made by historians that undermine the importance of the Flushing Remonstrance in American history. First, the writers of the Flushing Remonstrance were not, themselves, Quakers. At least two of the key founders of Flushing were followers of Lady Deborah Moody's version of Christianity—i.e. freedom of religion and liberty of conscience, and there was no record to indicate that the

³⁶ It would be over a century after its founding before Flushing had a "traditional" church: St. George Episcopal erected in 1746. Lady Moody's Gravesend did not receive a permanent church until the Third Reformed was dedicated in January, 1834. Peter Ross, *The History of Long Island, from its earliest settlement to the present time*, (NY:Lewis Publishing, 1902)trans. Coralynn Brown. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~jdevlin/newyork/> [Accessed: 20 February 2006]. Monty Hart, *Edward Hart Descendants*, <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:1525317&id=I057>.

³⁷ Rufus Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*(1911) <http://www.orangecountyquakers.org/quakers/general/history/moments/17th/1655.htm> [Accessed: 20 April 2006].

town as a whole prescribed to any other religion. Second, the religious restrictions of Petrus Stuyvesant were not an aberration from the desires of the Dutch Republic and/or the WIC. To the contrary, the law of the Dutch Republic, with its interpretable clause for religious liberty, supported religious law as administered from the Dutch Reformed Church—particularly in the New Netherlands. Third, in writing the Remonstrance the men of Flushing were not relying on their charter to defend their position. The outcome of the 1653 protest, and the previous protest of 1648, made Stuyvesant's position, and his support from the WIC and Dutch Republic States-General, abundantly clear to the men of Flushing. Now that the complete history leading to the Remonstrance is thoroughly understood, with all tacit arguments against the nobility of the protest removed, the story of the Flushing Remonstrance can be told.

CHAPTER 5
PEACE, LOVE, AND LIBERTY

In August of 1657, Reverend Johannes Megapolensis, senior minister in the New Netherlands capital of New Amsterdam, wrote to his superiors in the ecclesiastical governing body at the classis of Amsterdam. Having just completed a moral inventory of the colony in the company of his assistant minister Samuel Drisius, Megapolensis was concerned with the minimal progress made in religious hegemony in the English colonies of Long Island. Gravesend, Middleburgh, Flushing, and Hempstead were particularly troublesome to the devote Calvinist—their abject refusal to obey the morally righteous laws of their Governor-Director Petrus Stuyvesant was a constant thorn in the minister’s side.

To his horror, Megapolensis wrote, “the majority of them reject the baptism of infants, the observance of the Sabbath, the office of preacher, and any teachers of God's word.” When the minister had demanded explanation, the Englishmen in Flushing claimed that it was through such religious devotion that “all sorts of contentions have come into the world.”

Really, Megapolensis explained, the problem began when the minister Francis Doughty was assigned to the Flushing settlement by the Director-Governor. The inhabitants of Flushing refused to attend his sermons, “and would not pay the preacher the salary promised to him. He was therefore obliged to leave the place and go to the English Virginias.”

At the time of his writing, the minister continued, the town of Flushing had “been without a preacher for several years.”

The lack of spiritual leadership took its toll on the colony according to Megapolensis. In 1656, a troublesome shoemaker from heathen Rhode Island had visited Flushing saying he had “a commission from Christ.” After preaching, he convinced several of the residents to allow him to baptize them in a nearby stream. Of course, Megapolensis assured the Classis, when representatives of the church heard about the matter, the cobbler was brought to New Amsterdam and, after suitable physical punishment had been administered, was sentenced to be “banished from the province.” None the less, the minister concluded, Flushing remained “imbued with divers opinions...quot hominess tot sententiae.” The residents of Flushing, Megapolensis cautioned, seemed contented to be of many minds regarding religion.¹

The day after Megapolensis sealed his letter of August 5, a small coastal trading ship, the good ship *Woodhouse*, pulled without fanfare to the shores of Manhattan. Its journey had been rough, and though bound for the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the ship’s captain determined to rest a spell in New Netherlands before proceeding to the intended destination.

The *Woodhouse* carried no flag of origin and did not follow the standard procedure of firing a salute to announce its arrival. Such

¹ Letter by Johann Megapolensis to the Cassis of Amsterdam, August 5, 1657, in *Narrative of New Netherlands 1609-1664*, J.F. Jameson ed, (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909) <http://www.fullbooks.com/Narrative-of-New-Netherland1.html> [Accessed: 20 April 2006]

deviation from protocol brought Governor-Director Petrus Stuyvesant from his offices in Fort Amsterdam to discover the ships' intent. As the Governor-Director boarded, he was shown none of the typical signs of respect owed a man of his political stature. The master of the ship did not even remove his hat, standing staring "as if a goat," speaking only when directly addressed.

The reticence of the man to converse was justified. The owner of the *Woodhouse*, Robert Fowler of Bridlington England, had leased the vessel to members of his faith so as to assist in the missionary efforts of the religion. His brethren, the Quakers, had become *personas non gratis* in England—openly persecuted by members of nearly every other Christian sect in Western Europe. They had determined to abandon their homes in the hopes of finding a peaceful refuge in New England from which to preach their faith.

The Quaker doctrine was one of peace. Adherents tried to be kind and charitable to all persons, regardless of religion or creed, and as such refused to participate in armed conflicts or warfare. They also believed that all men were equal in the eyes of God and so should be equal in the eyes of man. They refused to use titles in differentiating classes or denoting respect, saying "my Lord Peter and my Lord Paul are not to be found in the Bible." And, to Stuyvesant's dismay, they refused to remove

their black felt hats for any man, believing such an act of humility was owed God alone.²

Social conventions aside, the Quakers were the pariahs of Europe for two particular reasons. First, as part of their belief in equality, they refused to swear oaths of any kind. In an age of religious paranoia and political instability, loyalty oaths were the preferred method used by the reigning religion and/or political power of the day to insure the faithfulness of their oft reluctantly converted citizenry. Refusing to take such an oath, in the minds of many European church leaders, was tantamount to treason.

Second, the irregular nature of their religious services encouraged dramatic displays of religious fervor. Believing as they did that God sent them a specific directive that surpassed the Biblical word, the Quakers encouraged the individual's "inner-light," to direct the path of the his or her worship. Unfortunately for the faithful, the method of worship some individuals felt called to included "ecstatic blasphemy, joyous tobacco-smoking and running naked down the street."³ None of this, neither the creed nor the frenzy, was sanctioned by any "traditional" religious body. It was considered "a new unheard of abominable heresy...seeking to seduce

² H.E. Marshall, *This Country of Ours* (NY:Kessinger, 2004)
<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext03/cours10.txt> [Accessed:20 April 2006].

³ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 526.

many, yea were it possible even the true believers—all signs of God’s just judgment and certain forerunners of severe punishments.”⁴

Though Stuyvesant remained “moderate in words and action” upon realizing the passengers’ religion, the *Woodhouse* was told to move on. The following morning, August 7, 1657, the trading vessel slipped from the dock with nary a word.

Unbeknownst to the Governor-Director, eleven Quakers elected to stay behind without New Amsterdam’s consent. As the *Woodhouse* pulled into the ocean and beyond the point of return, two of their number, Dorothy Waugh and May Witherhead, “began to quake and go into a frenzy.”⁵ Seized by the spirit, the women wailed in the middle of the bustling street, crying that the people should repent “for the day of judgment was at hand.” Panicked, the townspeople thought there must be a fire, and pandemonium ensued accordingly. With difficulty, New Amsterdam officers of the peace seized Waugh and Witherhead “by the head” and dragged them to the “noisome filthy dungeon” in the bowels of Fort Amsterdam.⁶

The reception their sisters received did not go unnoticed by the Quaker brethren. Six opted to remain in New Amsterdam and await the outcome of the impending trial, the other three determined to press on

⁴ Proclamation of Petrus Stuyvesant, January 21, 1658, quoted in Frederick J. Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherlands 1623-1664* (NY: Da Capo Press, 1971): 214.

⁵ Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherlands*, 214.

⁶ Gerard Croese, *The General History of the Quakers* (London, 1696) quoted in, Victor Cooper, *A Dangerous Woman: New York’s first lady liberty: The Life and Times of Lady Deborah Moody 1586-1659?*, (NY: Heritage Books, 1995): 142.

into Long Island to seek sanctuary should the group be allowed to remain in the New Netherlands.⁷

Among the three missionaries heading toward Long Island, was one Robert Hodgson, a vocal 23 year-old convert to Quakerism, whose youthful fanaticism made him a powerful preacher. As the group stopped in the small townships of Gravesend, Flushing, Jamaica, and Hempstead to share their faith, it was he that drew the largest crowds. In Gravesend, they found “many sincere seekers...prepared to appreciate those spiritual views of religion” the Quakers preached.⁸ In Jamaica, they found a supporter in Henry Townsend, who allowed them to board and preach at his home. Townsend’s former home town of Flushing, however, denied the Quakers lodging, and they resorted to camping in a nearby fruit orchard.⁹

Other than refusing to house the missionaries, the inhabitants of Flushing treated the Quakers with a polite curiosity. The colonists were well aware of the radical reputation of the Quakers, many had seen their predecessors, the Ranters, cavorting around the villages in English East Anglia. Few thought it wise to allow the group into their homes, let alone

⁷ Both May Witherhead and Dorothy Waugh were sentenced to be whipped then banished to Rhode Island “where” according to the Minister Megapolensis, “all kinds of scum dwell, for it nothing else than a sink for New England.” John S. C., Abbott, *Peter Stuyvesant: The Last Dutch Governor of New Amsterdam* (NY: Dodd Mead, 1873): 198.

⁸ Though Hodgson was well received in Gravesend, there is “no evidence that Lady Moody ever became a Quaker.” Lucille L. Koppelman, “Lady Deborah Moody and Gravesend, 1643-1659.” *De Halve Maen* (1994): 42.

⁹ Megapolensis and Drisius to Classis of Amsterdam, August 14, 1657 quoted in Frederick J. Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherlands 1623-1664* (NY: Da Capo Press, 1971): 215.

embrace their ideology. Nevertheless, crowds were drawn out amongst the trees to hear Hodgson speak, and while lodgings were not forthcoming, the missionaries did receive the odd free meal and similar local hospitalities.

Despite the peaceable nature of the travelers and the cautious courtesy with which the residents of Flushing had received them, when word of the missionaries reached the capital of New Netherlands, Governor Petrus Stuyvesant authorized their immediate arrest. When the trio arrived in Hempstead, the local Sheriff Richard Gildersleeve, upstanding member in the Dutch Reformed Church, followed Stuyvesant's command. Gildersleeve summarily arrested the three, reading the charges in Dutch as the law required. He then led the confused Quakers to his home, which served as the local repository for such criminals, before attending the evening services at the Hempstead church. Later that evening, the jailer found the determined Hodgson preaching in his chains to a small group gathered on Gildersleeve's front stoop. Stunned by this perceived arrogance, Gildersleeve wrote to New Amsterdam seeking advice.

When Gildersleeve's note reached Director-Governor Petrus Stuyvesant, it confirmed his belief in the danger of English religious dissidence in his New Netherlands colony. English crowds gathering to hear the theology of a radical English religion boldly exclaimed by a miscreant Englishman from the doorstep of a Dutch dwelling went beyond the limits of Stuyvesant's patience. He directed Gildersleeve to bring Hodgson and his companions to New Amsterdam to stand immediate trial.

He further ordered Hodgson chained to the back of a cart and dragged the entire 15 mile journey.

The three were brought to Fort Amsterdam where Hodgson, bruised and bloodied, was cast into the dungeon cell recently vacated by his religious sisters. The preacher's companions were soon released under the same terms their brethren had received: that they leave New Netherlands forthwith and seek sanctuary in Rhode Island. The young minister Hodgson, however, was remanded for trial.

Brought before Stuyvesant and his Council, the English speaking Hodgson was charged with violation of the law against public worship in a trial conducted entirely in Dutch. After the incomprehensible charges were read, Hodgson was ordered to remove his hat. This request conflicted with the Quaker credo and Hodgson, not sure of what was being said in the first place, refused. For his insolence, the Council denied him the right to respond to the charge, forbade him to communicate with any English speaking persons, and dragged him back to his cell.

The following day Hodgson was brought back, hands bound, before the Council for his sentencing. The proceedings opened with Stuyvesant snatching Hodgson's hat from his head, thus "preserving the dignity of the court." Hodgson was then fined six hundred guilders, and when he could

not pay, the sentence was converted to two years hard labor with the African slaves of New Amsterdam.¹⁰

The Quaker was immediately dragged from the courthouse to the nearby quarry, visible from the town center. There, he was brought before a wheelbarrow laden with stones and ordered, in Dutch, to push. When Hodgson, uncomprehending, did not move, Stuyvesant ordered Hodgson publicly flogged with a length of rope “about four inches thick,” dipped in pitch. An African slave was chosen to administer the beating until the preacher finally fell to the ground. The Governor-Director ordered two other African slaves to hold Hodgson up, and the beating continued until the young minister lapsed into unconsciousness. Stuyvesant then ordered him chained to the barrow and left him to roast in the hot August sun until dusk without food or water.¹¹

The ritual torture was repeated day after day, Hodgson first beaten to unconsciousness for “refusing” to work in fulfillment of his sentence, then chained to the barrow until sunset without rations. Once thrown in his cell, he was given only bread and water. On the third day, late in the afternoon, Hodgson pleaded with passers-by to explain what law he had breached, what transgression he had committed, to deserve such torment. When Stuyvesant was told of the Quaker’s questions to the crowd, he

¹⁰ Henry H. Kessler and Eugene Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant and his New York* (NY: Random House, 1959): 190-91.

¹¹ Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 217.

ordered him confined to the dungeon “two nights and one day and a half of which, without bread and water.”¹²

Upon completing this sentence, Hodgson was then taken to a room in Fort Amsterdam, “where he was stripped to his waist and hung to the ceiling by his hands with a heavy log tied to his feet, so that he could not turn his body.” An African slave was then ordered to thrash the minister with rods “until his flesh was cut into pieces, after which he was kept in the solitary confinement of a loathsome dungeon for two days, when he was again made to undergo the same torture.”¹³

Such dramatic news traveled fast in the colonies, and soon all New Netherlands knew of Hodgson’s torture at the hands of Petrus Stuyvesant. After ten days of abuse, Robert Hodgson, feeling he was about to die, asked the WIC representatives in Stuyvesant’s Council to provide him an English speaking person to whom he could confide his final words. An Englishwoman, whose name was not recorded in the histories of the event, was permitted to attend to Hodgson’s need and allowed entrance to his cell. Shocked by the physical condition of the young minister, the woman begged Stuyvesant to release him into her care-- her husband agreed to give his largest ox to the Director-Governor in exchange for Hodgson’s life. But the Director-Governor, assured that his torture of the Quaker was in

¹² Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 218.

¹³ H. Onderdonck, *Friends on Long Island and in New York, Annals of Hempstead* (1872) in *Religion in New Netherlands 1623-1664*, Frederick J. Zwierlein (NY: Da Capo Press, 1971): 218-19..

the best interest of the Reformed church's wayward New Netherlands flock, refused.¹⁴

To the horror of all who witnessed it, Stuyvesant ordered Hodgson chained to the wheelbarrow the following day. Some New Amsterdam residents, both English and Dutch, attempted to approach the chained Hodgson with water or salve. One wealthy resident even offered to pay the preacher's fine or purchase his servitude, but Stuyvesant denied any mercy. It was not until days later, when Stuyvesant's own sister pled for Hodgson's life, that the governor finally relented. Moved by her overt display of emotion, and doubtless aware of the sympathy Hodgson's plight was generating throughout the colony, Stuyvesant ordered Hodgson's release under condition the Quaker leave New Netherlands forever. Agreeing, the young preacher was released from the barrow, thrown into a cart, and chased out of New Amsterdam by the defenders of the Fort.

Stuyvesant was not confident that the torture and banishment of Hodgson had had the desired effect, particularly in the settlements of Long Island. He immediately ordered the arrests of any colonists who had offered lodgings to the Quaker travelers as they made their way across Long Island. That decree was followed in short order by another proclamation stating that any ships carrying Quakers into the New Netherlands would be confiscated and their passengers deported to their home of origin on the first available outgoing ship—without trial. To

¹⁴ Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 218.

punish those who might be tempted to convert, Stuyvesant further decreed that any colonists found taking Quakers into their homes would be fined fifty guilders and, if unrepentant, jailed at the governor's discretion.

Henry Townsend, former resident of Flushing currently residing in Jamaica, was summarily arrested and brought to New Amsterdam. The martyrdom of Hodgson convinced Townsend to convert to Quakerism just before he was called to trial. Townsend's religious metamorphosis proved ill timed-- in addition to being fined for housing the preacher, the court found him guilty of religious deviance and banished him from the New Netherlands.

From the first, the Flushing Sheriff Tobias Feake and founding father William Thorne had expressed the opinion that the cruelty of Stuyvesant's actions was too egregious to peaceably endure. These opinions strengthened and gained the support of Michael Milner and Edward Hart after Feake was forced to post parchments listing the retaliatory proclamations from New Amsterdam. As Englishmen and elected officers in the Dutch government, Feake, Milner, Hart, and Thorne's vocal opposition to the governor's acts were particularly dangerous; the risk they took in expressing their opinions garnered a good deal of respect amongst their neighbors.

As the men of Flushing warmed themselves against the bitter winter wind around Michael Milner's hearth on the night of December 27, 1657,

Town Clerk Edward Hart read from a statement of principles Feake had prepared in advance of a town meeting. Though none of the men of Flushing had converted to Quakerism or indeed been affected by Stuyvesant's proclamations in any immediate regard, the townsmen agreed that something had to be done.

Defying Stuyvesant and his Council, particularly given the barbaric torture of Hodgson, was not without risk-- a reality that must have dominated the discussions following the decision to act. So too, their history with unsuccessful protests regarding Stuyvesant's religious policies in 1648 and again in 1653 did not lend them any confidence. Eventually, it was decided that a remonstrance, an official letter of protest, outlining their collective concerns should be drafted and delivered to Stuyvesant with all haste.

It fell to Edward Hart to write the letter, largely because the gentleman had the finest handwriting in the settlement—a distinction that had led to his appointment as town clerk years before. Using Feake's statement of principles as a guide, Hart transcribed in his meticulous hand the sentiments expressed by the people of Flushing:

Right Honorable

You have been pleased to send unto us a certain prohibition or command that we should not receive or entertain any of those people called Quakers because they are supposed to be, by some, seducers of the people. For our part

we cannot condemn them in this case, neither can we stretch out our hands against them, for out of Christ God is a consuming fire, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Wee desire therefore in this case not to judge least we be judged, neither to condemn least we be condemned, but rather let every man stand or fall to his own Master. Wee are bounde by the law to do good unto all men, especially to those of the household of faith. And though for the present we seem to be unsensible for the law and the Law giver, yet when death and the Law assault us, if wee have our advocate to seeke, who shall plead for us in this case of conscience betwixt God and our own souls; the powers of this world can neither attach us, neither excuse us, for if God justifie who can condemn and if God condemn there is none can justifie. And for those jealousies and suspicions which some have of them, that they are destructive unto Magistracy and Ministrye, that cannot bee, for the Magistrate hath his sword in his hand and the Minister hath the sword in his hand, as witnessse those two great examples, which all Magistrates and Ministers are to follow, Moses and Christ, whom God raised up maintained and defended against all enemies both of flesh and spirit; and therefore that of God will stand, and that

which is of man will come to nothing. And as the Lord hath taught Moses or the civil power to give an outward liberty in the state, by the law written in his heart designed for the good of all, and can truly judge who is good, who is evil, who is true and who is false, and can pass definitive sentence of life or death against that man which arises up against the fundamental law of the States General; soe he hath made his ministers a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death.

The law of love, peace and liberty in the states extending to Jews, Turks and Egyptians, as they are considered sons of Adam, which is the glory of the outward state of Holland, soe love, peace and liberty, extending to all in Christ Jesus, condemns hatred, war and bondage. And because our Saviour sayeth it is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him by whom they cometh, our desire is not to offend one of his little ones, in whatsoever form, name or title hee appears in, whether Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist or Quaker, but shall be glad to see anything of God in any of them, desiring to doe unto all men as we desire all men should doe unto us, which is the true law both of Church and State; for our Saviour sayeth this is the law and the prophets.

Therefore if any of these said persons come in love unto us, we cannot in conscience lay violent hands upon them, but give them free egress and regress unto our Town, and houses, as God shall persuade our consciences, for we are bounde by the law of God and man to doe good unto all men and evil to noe man. And this is according to the patent and charter of our Towne, given unto us in the name of the States General, which we are not willing to infringe, and violate, but shall houlde to our patent and shall remaine, your humble subjects, the inhabitants of Vlishing.

Written this 27th of December in the year 1657, by mee.

Edward Hart, Clericus

Tobias Feake had the honor of signing the Remonstrance first behind Hart, followed by town founder William Thorne, Senior, and his son, William Junior, as well as town blacksmith Michael Milner. The six men living in Flushing who couldn't write left their mark and Edward Hart carefully printed their names out next to it. In all, twenty-nine men signed Hart's letter that evening.

The next day, two residents from Jamaica, the banished Quaker convert Henry Townsend and his brother John, added their signatures making the total thirty-one. Hart then made a second copy of the letter,

to be retained in the Flushing town records, before setting the Remonstrance with a wax seal and giving it to Tobias Feake.¹⁵ On December 30th, the Remonstrance sealed and secured in his hand, Sheriff Tobias Feake boarded a ferry to deliver the will of the people of Flushing to the doorstep of Fort Amsterdam and Governor-Director Petrus Stuyvesant.

Feake handed the Remonstrance, as was the chain of command, to Nicasius de Sille, the Fiscal of New Amsterdam on December 31st. De Sille took the letter to the Governor-Director, who upon reading the letter, immediately ordered Feake's arrest. The following day, January 1st, Stuyvesant issued summonses for two other magistrates of Flushing and signers of the Remonstrance, Edward Farrington and William Noble. When the two men arrived in New Amsterdam late the same day, they too were arrested. Edward Hart, the town clerk, was summoned to New Amsterdam for cross-examination then placed in solitary confinement.¹⁶

Governor-Director Petrus Stuyvesant, after consulting his council, charged the men with having "violated the articles of the charter of 'Freedoms and Exemptions' that permitted the public exercise of no other religion than the Reformed" and subsequently violating the post-Hodgson decrees.¹⁷ In an ironic twist inexplicably overlooked by all of the historians cited in this thesis, the very article often pointed to as a

¹⁵ The copy of the Remonstrance made by Hart, is believed to be the document currently housed in the Albany Archives of New York. The original document given to Stuyvesant disappeared, possibly destroyed in an Archive fire in 1911.

¹⁶ Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 221.

¹⁷ Council Minutes, January 1, 1658, quoted in Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 221.

justification for the Remonstrance, “the costume and manner of Holland,” was in the same section of the charter Stuyvesant charged the men with violating.

January 9th, Farrington and Noble, after ten days in the Fort Amsterdam dungeon with only bread and water, were brought before Stuyvesant and his Council to explain themselves. At first, both men denied they had committed any offense in signing the Remonstrance. They argued that, after close study of their charter, they had believed themselves within their legal rights to protest the religious persecutions instigated by their Governor-Director. After hours of demanding questions directed at them by the Council, however, the men resorted to pleading “ignorance,” claiming that the idea for the protest had originated with Tobias Feake, and that the sheriff had not told them of the changes to policy in Stuyvesant’s religious decrees. In a show of “mercy,” and convinced the Remonstrance had been instigated by either Feake or Hart alone, Stuyvesant “graciously” pardoned Noble and Farrington after ordering them to recant the Remonstrance heresy in writing, pay all fines and court costs, and having them formally vow to be more cautious about challenging the authority of New Amsterdam in the future.¹⁸

Town clerk Edward Hart remained in the dungeon on bread and water rations for several more days. Described by various historians as “frail,” or “elderly” upon his arrest, Hart soon took ill under the harsh

¹⁸ Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 222.

conditions in which he was kept.¹⁹ Inhabitants of Flushing and members of Hart's own family arrived in New Amsterdam to plead with Stuyvesant on the ailing man's behalf. After hearing their testimony, Hart was released and pardoned under the same conditions as Noble and Farrington.²⁰

The pardons granted by Stuyvesant to Farrington, Noble, and Hart implied an element of mercy on behalf of the New Amsterdam Council. In actuality, throughout Stuyvesant's tenure as Governor-Director of New Netherlands, he demonstrated a preference for seeking out a single person on whom to vent his righteous anger. In his persecution of Lutherans and Jews, Stuyvesant singled out "key-agitators" for punishment, John Ernest Goedwater and David Ferera respectively, while letting other participants off with fines and admonitions.²¹ In the case of the Quakers, Robert Hodgson was tortured, while his companions were simply banished from the colony. With the Flushing Remonstrance, Governor-Director Petrus Stuyvesant focused his displeasure on the Sheriff, Tobias Feake.

Convinced that Feake was solely responsible for the "seditious" Remonstrance, Stuyvesant ordered him to stand trial, after leaving the Sheriff in the dungeon with nothing but bread and water for nearly a month. Surely, Stuyvesant argued to the Council, the Sheriff of Flushing

¹⁹ The ancestors of Edward Hart have traced his birth to the year 1616, making him between 40 and 42 years old at the time of his arrest.

²⁰ Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 222.

²¹ For Goedwater, see Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 187-212. For Ferera, see James Homer Williams, "Abominable Religion and Dutch (In)tolerance: The Jews and Petrus Stuyvesant," *De Halve Maen* (Winter 1998): 85-91.

could not deny he had received “an order from the Hon. Director General not to admit, lodge and entertain in the said village any one of the heretical and abominable sect called Quakers.” The Council promptly found Feake guilty of having instigated the “mutinous and detestable letter of defiance wherein [the men of Flushing] justify and uphold the abominable sect of Quakers, who vilify both the political authorities and the ministers of the Gospel, and undermine the State and God’s service and absolutely demand, that all sects, especially the said abominable sect of Quakers, shall and must be tolerated and admitted.”²² Feake was sentenced to banishment, unless he agreed to recant the Flushing Remonstrance.

Despite his severely weakened condition, Feake refused to admit error or plead for pardon. Stuyvesant returned him to the dungeon. After a few days of isolation, Feake finally agreed to recant. He was fined two hundred florins and the costs of the trial and summarily degraded from his office. In the end, all the “principal remonstrants had been brought to retract the principles that they had advanced in contradiction to Stuyvesant’s policy of government.”²³

Stuyvesant was not finished with the inhabitants of Flushing, however. He personally traveled to the settlement to modify its municipal government so as to prevent future disorders from “arising from town

²² Sentence of Tobias Feake, January 28, 1658, quoted in Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 223.

²³ Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 223.

meetings.” In the future, the Director-Governor informed Flushing, any sheriff or magistrate elected from the town must be “acquainted not only with the English and Dutch language, but also with Dutch practical law.” All suggestions instigated at town meetings were to be brought before a board “of seven of the most reasonable and respectable of the inhabitants, to be called tribunes and townsmen” before any action was to be taken. Lastly, in a decree that twisted the religious dagger in Flushing’s back, “a tax of twelve stivers per morgen was imposed...for the support of an orthodox minister.” These new procedures, Stuyvesant declared, would be accepted by the town, or the inhabitants were ordered “to dispose of their property at their pleasure, and leave the soil of this government.”²⁴

But the belief in religious liberty did not die in the hearts of the men of Flushing. Despite the defeat of the Remonstrance, the inhabitants of the town continued to quietly defy Stuyvesant’s law. Even though Stuyvesant promised generous rewards to any who came forward to evidence religious dissidence, few people on Long Island were tempted to inform on their colonial brethren. Soldiers were dispatched from New Amsterdam to insure no Quakers were meeting in Flushing or Jamaica. Townsfolk in Jamaica were forced to sign statements assuring Stuyvesant they would “inform the authorities about Quaker meetings.” Those residents who refused to sign were forced to quarter Stuyvesant’s soldiers. Most of the residents of Jamaica, outraged by the religious persecutions

²⁴ Council minutes for January 1658, quoted in Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, 224-225.

under Stuyvesant, abandoned their settlement en masse for the English colony of Oyster Bay, but the people in Flushing remained. Four years after the Remonstrance protest, the quest for religious liberty in Flushing began again.²⁵

In the summer of 1662, the soldiers in Jamaica sent word to New Amsterdam that a Flushing resident, John Bowne, was hosting meetings of the “abominable Quaker sect” every Sunday.²⁶ Bowne, who had been Sheriff of Gravesend in 1655, moved to Flushing shortly after the Remonstrance protest to marry Tobias Feake’s daughter, Hannah.²⁷ When his wife converted to Quakerism after hearing a group of missionaries preaching in the woods near Flushing, Bowne agreed to let the sect meet in their newly constructed home.²⁸ According to his journal, Bowne “was so moved by the beauty and simplicity of the worship,” he too elected to join the Quaker Society of Friends.²⁹

Stuyvesant immediately ordered the new Sheriff of Flushing, Resolved Waldron, to arrest John Bowne. In September of 1662, Waldron

²⁵ Kessler and Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant*, 193.

²⁶ Council records August 1662, quoted in Haynes Trebor, “The Flushing Remonstrance: The Origin of Religious Freedom in America: Distributed at the Bowne House: A shrine to religious freedom,” (State of New York Joint Legislative Committee for the Celebration of the 300th Anniversary of the Signing of the Flushing Remonstrance, 1957): 25.

²⁷ Almost all the genealogical data gathered by members of the Feake family points to Hannah being Tobias’ daughter. One of Feake’s ancestors, however, constructed a family tree that indicated she was his niece. Roderic A. Davis, *The Feake Family 1484-1806*, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~dav4is/ODTs/FEAKE.shtml> [Accessed: 20 May 2006].

²⁸ Although there is no documentary evidence as to when Hannah Feake converted, it is possible that the missionaries referenced were none other than Hodgson and his fellows.

²⁹ The Diary of John Bowne, quoted in Kessler and Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant*, 193-194.

arrived at Bowne's house, "with a company of men with swords and guns," and announced his mission. Hannah Bowne and the youngest Bowne child were deathly ill, and Bowne protested that his family "were not in a condition to leave them." Waldron replied that he "could not help that, he must follow his order," even if he had to bind Bowne "hand and foot and carry" him. Bowne argued with the Sheriff that the order from Stuyvesant specified that Bowne should be arrested if he was found "in unlawful meetings," of Quakers, which, at the time of Waldron's arrival, he was not. The sheriff responded by binding Bowne as threatened and throwing him in a waiting boat bound for Manhattan and New Amsterdam.³⁰

The following day, Bowne was presented before Petrus Stuyvesant on the streets of New Amsterdam. Bowne asked one of his captors if it could be arranged for him to speak to Stuyvesant. The sergeant repeated Bowne's request to Stuyvesant and returned to relay the message: "the General said that if [Bowne] would remove his hat and stand bare-headed, he would speak with [him]." When Bowne refused, in the Quaker tradition, to remove the offending haberdashery, Stuyvesant refused to speak to him, and "the soldiers did break out in laughter at it."³¹ Bowne was then brought to the Council court to face his charges. Unfortunately for Bowne, the prisoner still had his wide felt Quaker hat firmly upon his head. "Stuyvesant could not stand Quaker hats" nor the Quaker practice

³⁰ Kessler and Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant*, 194.

³¹ Kessler and Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant*, 194-195.

of leaving them obstinately in place in the presence of social superiors. As in the Hodgson trial, Bowne's case began with the forcible removal of the offensive black felt.³²

Stuyvesant himself read the charges against Bowne, accusing him of offering comfort to "heretics, deceivers and seducers." The Council found Bowne guilty of lodging Quakers and holding meetings in his house, "thus the abominable sect, that vilifies the magistrates and preachers of God's Holy Word, that endeavors to undermine both the State and Religion, found encouragement in its errors and seduced others from the right path with dangerous consequences of heresy and schism." Bowne was fined "25 Flemish pounds plus court costs, and threatened with double that fine for a second offense, and banishment for a third."³³ John Bowne, as Tobias Feake had before him, refused to accept the sentence of the Council and Petrus Stuyvesant. Having no alternative, the Director-Governor had Bowne cast back into the Fort Amsterdam dungeon.

Stuyvesant, at this point, was stymied. The Quakers had damaged the Director-Governor's reputation; from his first appointment in New Netherlands, Stuyvesant viewed himself running the colony "as a father governs his children;" the brutal and public torture of Hodgson had eroded that image.³⁴ Even more, Hodgson's ordeal had done little to stop

³² George L. Smith, *Religion and Trade in New Netherlands*, 228.

³³ Sentence of John Bowne, September 14 1662 quoted in George L. Smith, *Religion and Trade in New Netherlands*, 228.

³⁴ Petrus Stuyvesant, quoted in John S.C. Abbott, *Peter Stuyvesant: the Last Dutch Governor of New Amsterdam* (NY: Dodd Mead, 1873): 124.

the influx of Quakers, particularly in the English colonies on Long Island. Stuyvesant had reason to believe similar actions against Bowne would accomplish nothing for the Dutch Reformed Church and only serve to create another martyr for the Quaker cause. While the Director-Governor pondered the next step, John Bowne remained in prison where “every sort of device short of torture” was employed to force his submission to the Council ruling.³⁵

Four months after his refused sentence, Bowne was again dragged before Stuyvesant and the Council of New Amsterdam. On December 14, 1662, “for the welfare of the community and to crush, as far as it is possible, the abominable sect, who treat with contempt both the political magistrates and the ministers of God’s Holy Word and endeavor to undermine the police and religion,” the Council resolved “to transport from this province the aforesaid John Bowne...in the first ship ready to sail, for an example to others.” On January 8, Bowne was bound “hand and foot” and carried aboard the *Vos*, along with a letter from Stuyvesant to the WIC offering to inflict “more severe prosecutions” of Bowne should the WIC find it warranted. The *Vos* set sail for Holland the following day.³⁶

For Stuyvesant, the exportation of the Englishman Bowne to the Dutch Republic seemed a happy resolution to a frustrating event. The problem was dispatched in a manner sufficiently uncomfortable to Bowne to make Stuyvesant’s annoyance clear, yet it fell far short of the brutality

³⁵ George L. Smith, *Religion and Trade in New Netherland*, 228-229.

³⁶ George L. Smith, *Religion and Trade in New Netherland*, 229.

of the Hodgson torture. If Bowne were to return to New Netherlands, then Stuyvesant would be justified in using every evil implementation in his Fort Amsterdam arsenal against him. In the meantime, the Englishman was left to wander around the Dutch Republic with all his family and friends an ocean away. On the surface, it seemed the perfect solution.

In practice, however, banishing John Bowne to Holland was a mistake that proved fatal to Stuyvesant's righteous persecution of Quakers. The *Vos* was bound for Amsterdam, the busiest port in the Dutch Republican province of Holland. It was from this province that Oldenbarnevelt had ruled with the support of the most powerful merchants of the Republic. Though Oldenbarnevelt had been executed, Holland remained the stronghold for the merchants of the Republic. As their motivation stemmed from commerce, the province of Holland was also the least inclined to acknowledge any of the religious based law of the States-General. They, among all Dutch provinces, most strongly adhered to the creed of religious tolerance rooted- of course- in economics.

In March of 1663, scarcely two months after finding himself standing on a Holland port, John Bowne pled his case before the Amsterdam Chamber of the West Indische Compagnie. His argument before the council was grounded in the liberty of conscience afforded him in the literal interpretation of his charter. The Chamber responded that any such stipulation had been granted Flushing prior to the arrival of Quakers, who refused to abide by the laws of the colony, and therefore

they could “suffer” Bowne no jurisdiction on those grounds. “It is good first to consider,” Bowne countered, “whether that law...be according to justice and righteousness or whether it be not quite contrary to it and also to that liberty promised us” in the literal interpretation of the charter. With that short repartee, the Chamber released Bowne into the streets of Amsterdam while it debated his case.³⁷

For over a month, the Chamber argued over the case of John Bowne. On the one hand, the Dutch Reformed Church placed an enormous amount of pressure on the WIC as a whole to support its religious efforts in the New Netherlands. On the other hand, the colonies were still sparsely populated, and discouraging settlement ran contrary to the capitalist aims of the Holland merchant representatives.

Finally, in April of 1663, the Chamber bade John Bowne return to hear their decision. The Chamber ruled that while they disapproved of the “abominable religion” of Quakerism, they were not “disposed to take offence at (the Flushing inhabitant’s] manners or the like.” John Bowne, they determined, was free to return to the New Netherlands, Flushing, and his family. After dismissing Bowne, the Chamber penned a letter explaining their ruling to Petrus Stuyvesant. “Although we heartily desire that these [Quakers] and other sectarians remained away” from Flushing, the Chamber wrote:

³⁷ Kessler and Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant*, 195.

“yet as they do not, we doubt very much whether we can proceed against them...without diminishing the population and stopping immigration which must be favored at so tender a stage of the country’s existence. You may therefore shut your eyes...but allow everyone to have his own belief, as long as he behaves quietly and legally, gives no offense to his neighbors and does not oppose the government. As the government of this city has always practiced this maxim of moderation and consequently has often had a considerable influx of people, we do not doubt that your Province too would be benefited by it.”

In yet another ironic turn of events, Stuyvesant’s choice to banish religious dissident John Bowne to Holland resulted in the Governor-Director being forced to accept religious dissidents in the New Netherlands. From that point forth, Stuyvesant adhered to the “maxim of moderation.”³⁸

But the Flushing protest, which began with the Remonstrance and ended with the defiance of John Bowne, did more than alter the course of Stuyvesant’s gubernatorial tenure—it established precedent. One year after Bowne was redeemed before the board of the WIC, Director-Governor Petrus Stuyvesant ceded control of Fort Amsterdam, Fort Orange, and the

³⁸ Letter from the Amsterdam Chamber to Petrus Stuyvesant April 16, 1663 reprinted in its entirety in Kessler and Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant*, 196.

New Netherlands colony to James, Duke of York, and the English crown. The transfer of colonial ownership was sealed in the Articles of Capitulation on the Reduction of New Netherland signed in September of 1664. The eighth clause of the Capitulation protected the right of the colonists of New Netherland, now renamed New York, to “the liberty of their consciences in Divine Worship and church discipline.”³⁹

Unlike the colonial charters issued by the Director-Governors of New Netherland, which promised settlers religious freedom in the custom and manner of Holland, the Capitulation was unambiguous-- the colonists were guaranteed the right to worship in whatever manner they felt called, period. Coupled with the precedent established by the actions of John Bowne and the writers of the Flushing Remonstrance, the citizens of New York enjoyed greater religious freedom under the British crown than any other contemporary colonial settlement. This concept of religious liberty later enforced by the philosophies of the Enlightenment, became so engrained in the emerging American psyche, the writers of the Constitution of the United States saw fit to make it the first entry in the Bill of Rights.

³⁹ Articles of Capitulation on the Reduction of New Netherland 1664-1665, Reprinted in: *The History of New Netherland and the Half Moon*, John Wismuller, ed.(15 April 2006). <http://www.newnetherland.org/history.html> [Accessed: 4 July 2006].

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Flushing Remonstrance was the first colonial document to clearly express the ideology of religious liberty echoed a century later in the American Constitution. While it is impossible to determine whether or not the letter directly affected the creators of the Bill of Rights, it is undeniable that the Remonstrance foreshadowed the First Constitutional Amendment. The few historians who wrote of the Flushing protest do not deny the importance of the event. Russell Shorto readily admits that it is “one of the foundational documents of American liberty,” a sentiment echoed in all the historical narratives of the protest.¹ Yet few Americans have ever heard of the Flushing Remonstrance.

It is not for a lack of provenance or narrative detail that the Flushing protest languishes in the back waters of American history. Scholars like George L. Smith and John S.C. Abbott describe the event in detail, aided by the wealth of primary sources available in the Dutch colonial records. While it is true that many of the original Dutch documents were destroyed in a fire at the Albany Archives in 1911, the English translations survived. The translated writings of Petrus Stuyvesant, letters of Megapolensis and Drisius, the diary of John Bowne,

¹ Russell Shorto, *The Island and the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America* (NY: Doubleday, 2004): 276.

the governmental papers of the WIC to name but a few available sources, bridge the centuries to provide a clear narrative of the Flushing protest.

Even more, the Remonstrance narrative is in and of itself compelling. The recreations in the works of Smith, Abbott, Shorto, and the other men to devote a few paragraphs to the protest contain all the dramatic elements of a television miniseries. The torture of Hodgson, the winter meeting ‘round Milner’s hearth, the aftermath of the Remonstrance, and the trial of John Bowne before the Board of the WIC are written of in rich language and exacting detail.

The few historians to write about the Remonstrance did not fail in their factual recreation of the narrative nor in their dramatic retelling of the protest. Rather, they failed to provide the proper context for the event. In so doing, they substantially yet inadvertently undermined the importance of the Remonstrance in American history. By assuming that the Dutch Republic was founded on the principle of religious freedom for example, George L. Smith reduced the protest to an eloquently worded contract dispute. No matter how rich his narrative of the event, the implication that the men of Flushing were merely demanding the religious liberty extended to citizens of the Dutch Republic tarnishes the brave actions of the men who chose to sign the Remonstrance. Similarly, when historians Henry Kessler and Eugene Rachlis argue that Petrus Stuyvesant was a rogue Calvinist who defied the lenience of the Dutch Republic in enforcing his religious hegemony, the signers of the

Remonstrance become men seeking relief from a tyrant. However eloquent their description of the Remonstrance event, this implication undermines the truly idealistic and revolutionary ideology expressed in the letter. And when scholar Frederick Zwielerlein claimed the men of Flushing were Quakers prior to the writing of the Remonstrance, his dramatic narrative drowns in the implication that the men of Flushing were simply repeating the tenets of their faith in defense of their religious brethren.

It has been the intent of this thesis to challenge the assumptions of historians regarding the circumstance surrounding the Flushing Remonstrance. The Dutch Republic was not a land willingly indulging in religious liberty—the religious diversity of the nation resulted from the tug of war between the merchant class and the Calvinist hierarchy. Petrus Stuyvesant was not a religious zealot acting on his own accord—he was a pious leader determined to make the Calvinist dream of the WIC a reality. And though the Quaker preaching of John Hodgson did convert colonists in neighboring Jamaica, the men of Flushing did not so much as offer the preacher shelter, let alone ascribe to his Quaker faith.

Without these assumptions, the story of the Flushing protest is revealed as the truly heroic narrative that it is. The Remonstrance represents the emergence of a uniquely American desire for complete religious freedom. While Europe struggled for religious control of its nations, the American colonists in Flushing chose to withdraw from the

conflict in favor of freedom. The Flushing Remonstrance was the first toddling step toward a separate American identity.

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