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The Roots of Radicalism: Natural Rights,
Corporate Liberty, and Regional Factions in
Colonial Connecticut, 1740-1766

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April 4, 2016

The standard history of the American Revolution is hauntingly familiar, involving sweeping ideologies and fiery polemics. Beginning with the Stamp Act in 1765, it escalates through debates over taxation and representation, which pit colonists against their imperial governors and hinged on the nature of republican liberty. Massachusetts is the center of this story. Through its harsh treatment of Andrew Oliver, Thomas Hutchinson, and Francis Bernard—imperial officials who supported the Stamp Act—the colony exemplifies the ideological fervor of the Patriot cause.¹

At first glance, Connecticut seems to fit the same pattern. Between 1765 and 1766, Connecticut radicals ousted their conservative rivals from power and colonial office. The treatment of Thomas Clap, religious leader and President of Yale College, is particularly salient: During his tenure as President (1745-1766), disgruntled students set off homemade bombs in the college yard, poisoned the food at commons, and threatened to “skin old Tom Clap’s hide.”² This pattern of unrest came to a head in 1765, when a mob of students attacked Clap’s home on the eve of commencement, throwing stones and injuring the President with a shard of broken glass.³ The next year, facing student opposition and lacking allies in the administration, Clap resigned his post.⁴

¹ On Hutchinson, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Boston: Belknap Press, 1976); on Oliver and Bernard, see Edmund Morgan and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 7-20, 123-125, 137-139.

² “Investigation of ye alleged poisoning of college students in Commons,” 1764, in Thomas Clap, President of Yale College, Records; Christopher Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 181.

³ Louis Leonard Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist: President Thomas Clap of Yale College* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 255.

⁴ By this point, all of Yale’s tutors had abandoned the college. James Dana wrote to Ezra Stiles, “Yale-College was perhaps never in so confused a state as at present.” James Dana to Ezra Stiles, June, 17, 1766, in Ezra Stiles Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; *Connecticut Courant*, July 21, 1766; Robert Sandeman to Nathaniel Barrell, July 18, 1766, in Franklin B. Dexter, ed., *Extracts from the Itineraries and other miscellanies of Ezra Stiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), 589.

Jared Ingersoll, London Agent and Stamp Distributor for the Connecticut colony, received a similar treatment. In October 1765, “Three Divisions” of “five hundred men, all on horseback,” approached Ingersoll en route to Hartford. These Sons of Liberty hailed from the “eastern Parts of the Colony,” especially Windham, Norwich, and New-London. Having declared that there could be no Stamp Act without a Stamp Distributor, they demanded Ingersoll’s immediate resignation, and were persuasive.⁵ Under the threat of force, Ingersoll announced his surrender to the colony’s General Assembly. Thereafter, he was “told [to shout] Liberty and Property, with three cheers.”⁶

Days later, Thomas Fitch, the longtime Governor of Connecticut and Ingersoll’s closest ally, met a crushing political defeat. An Act of Parliament prescribed that all colonial governors must, before November 1765, swear an oath to enforce the Stamp Act. Driven by duty and attachment to his post, Fitch did so at the end of October, and his colleagues were not pleased.⁷ Of the twelve members of the Assembly’s Upper House, only four helped to administer the oath.⁸ The others—“Gentlemen [from] the East”—fled the Assembly chambers to launch a political campaign against the Governor. As a result, in May 1766, Fitch and his four supporters lost their bids for reelection. Their replacements were men of the East, Sons of Liberty, and future supporters of the American Revolution.⁹

⁵ Ingersoll objected, “What if I won’t resign. What will be the consequence?” One man “said *Your Fate*.” *The Connecticut Gazette*, September 23, 1765.

⁶ Ibid.; Lawrence Henry Gipson, *Jared Ingersoll: A Study of American Loyalism in Relation to British Colonial Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 180-190.

⁷ Thomas Fitch, *Some Reasons That Influenced the Governor to Take... The Oath Required by the Act of Parliament; commonly called the Stamp Act* (Hartford: Printed by Thomas Green, 1766); Gipson, *Jared Ingersoll*, 190.

⁸ These men were Ebenezer Silliman, Benjamin Hall, John Chester, and Jabez Hamlin. Ezra Stiles, “Election, Connecticut, May 4, 1767” (a note), in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 63-64; Ibid.

⁹ On the demographics of the election, see “Ezra Stiles, “Election, Connecticut, May 4, 1767” in *Extracts from the Itineraries of Ezra Stiles*, 63-64; Edith Anna Bailey, “Influences Toward Radicalism in Connecticut, 1754-1775,” in *Smith College Studies in History* 5, no. 4 (1920): 242-246; Gipson, *Jared Ingersoll*, 120; fn. 209-211.

On their surface, these events echo the ‘standard history’ of the Revolution, best associated with Massachusetts. But although Connecticut did experience chaos in 1766, this chaos had long and underappreciated roots. Connecticut radicalism began decades before the Stamp Act. Intellectually, it arose in regional debates on issues particular to Connecticut life. Politically, it was also a local affair; the political divide over the Stamp Act evolved from preexisting divisions in Connecticut society.¹⁰

This essay traces the roots of Connecticut radicalism, beginning with the religious and economic upheavals of the early 1740s. Thereafter, radical ideas developed through debates over the independence of Yale College, the nature of the colony's religious institutions, and the territorial expansion of a proprietary company. These debates had important similarities: All three addressed the validity of natural rights and the scope of corporate liberty, the right of groups to run themselves without outside interference. Moreover, the debates were politically bundled; the same men who held radical views on religion also held radical views on expansion. This faction led the ousters of Clap, Ingersoll, and Fitch. Building on its past radical arguments, it also provided the principal opposition to the Stamp Act. In this way, Connecticut radicalism began at home; a combination of local ideas and local politics created Connecticut’s First Revolution.

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¹⁰ Buel writes, “Connecticut played no major role in the development of the new political consciousness. Though her newspapers carried essays on the Stamp Act and on the question of Parliament’s right to tax the colonies, she made only one contribution to the wider imperial debate. This was a pamphlet entitled *Reasons why the British Colonies in America, should not be charged with internal taxes.*” Richard Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut’s Mobilization for the Revolutionary War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), 13.

Previous historians have approached this topic in two ways. One group has focused on the intellectual origins of colonial radicalism.¹¹ Its principal concern is political language: the sets of ideas that comprise a radical worldview. In this regard, these historians pay close attention to changing conceptions of power, rights, and representation—with an eye to their implications for imperial politics. Notably, they date the roots of colonial radicalism to the Sugar and Stamp Acts in the mid 1760s.¹² They also devote little attention to regional variations in colonial ideology, treating colonial politics as a single, unified debate.¹³

Another group of historians has worked more narrowly on the history of Connecticut.¹⁴ In explaining the rise of radicalism, their main focus has been the collapse of “steady habits,” the

¹¹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991); Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*; John Phillip Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution* vol. 1-4 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986-1993); Daniel J. Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire: New York and the Transformation of Constitutionalism in the Atlantic World, 1644-1830* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

¹² For instance, Bailyn writes, “By 1763, the great landmarks of European life—the church and the idea of orthodoxy, the state and idea of authority...had faded in their exposure to the open, wilderness environment of America. But until the events of the 1760s, these changes had not been seized upon as grounds for a reconsideration of society and politics.” Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 19-20. Similarly, Wood makes a distinction between political eras: the 1750s and before were the age of monarchy, the 1760s and 1770s were the age of republicanism, and the 1780s and after were the age of democracy. Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*. Also, when these historians describe the antecedents of radicalism, they draw on English and classical, not provincial, sources; for instance, see Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 22-54; Reid, *Constitutional History* vol. I, 9-15. Relatedly, some historians explain the downfalls of Clap, Ingersoll, and Fitch as products of the Stamp Act. For Clap, see Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy*, 182; John Roche, *The Colonial Colleges in the War for American Independence* (Millwood: Associated Faculty Press, 1986), 20; for Ingersoll, see Gipson, *Jared Ingersoll*; Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 144-158; Edwin S. Lines, “Jared Ingersoll, Stamp Master, and the Stamp Act,” in *Papers of the New Haven Historical Society IX* (New Haven: Printed for the Society, 1918), 186; for Fitch, see Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 234.

¹³ One reason for this is that, by the time of the Stamp Act Congress, pamphlets and revolutionary arguments crossed colony lines. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 1-21.

¹⁴ Bushman’s *From Puritan to Yankee* is the preeminent work of this kind. Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Oscar Zeichner, *Connecticut’s Years of Controversy, 1750-1766* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1949); Christopher Collier, *Roger Sherman’s Connecticut: Yankee Politics and the American Revolution* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971); Albert E. Van Dusen, *Puritans Against the Wilderness: Connecticut History to 1763* (Chester, CT: Pequot Press, 1975); Robert Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History* (Millwood, CT: KTO Press, 1979); Richard Warfle,

Puritan values that long upheld Connecticut's social order.¹⁵ To that end, these historians pay close attention to theological disputes of the Great Awakening. They also emphasize the economic changes in the colony and the rise of interest group politics. However, unlike their counterparts in the first group, these historians have shied away from the intellectual origins of radicalism. Although they discuss the period's central debates and key pamphlets, they largely neglect the incremental development of ideas and the continuities across local debates.¹⁶ They also miss the political connections between interest groups, which culminated in a unified radical faction in the early 1760s.

To best understand Connecticut radicalism, historians must revisit Connecticut's midcentury debates, from pamphlet wars to personal correspondence. In doing so, they must address the continuity and development of radical ideas, the distinctive character of Connecticut thought. They must also connect these debates to ground level, local politics—showing how radical leaders employed these ideas to enact revolutionary change. Only through the particulars of ideas and personalities can historians escape the sweeping generalizations of the Stamp Act period, to explain how the traditionally conservative Connecticut found its way to Revolution.

Connecticut radicalism emerged primarily through three debates, pertaining to the government of Yale College, the nature of religious toleration, and the pace of colonial expansion. Radicals opposed Yale's administration, endorsed toleration over Orthodoxy, and

Connecticut's Western Colony: The Susquehanna Affair (Hartford: American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1979); Edith Anna Bailey, "Influences Toward Radicalism in Connecticut, 1754-1775," in *Smith College Studies in History* vol. 5, no. 4 (1920): 179-249.

¹⁵ For instance, Bushman describes the late colonial period as an era of destabilization: Connecticut's "Puritan order" collapsed "under the impact first of economic ambitions and later of the religious impulses of the Great Awakening." After these factors had removed all "restraint[s] on ambition, Bushman writes, the colony was susceptible to Yankee radicalism. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, ix. Methodologically, this argument shares the assumptions of the German Frankfurt School, particularly regarding the significance of social reproduction in history.

¹⁶ An exception is Grasso, who offers a compelling narrative of law and moral order in Connecticut, particularly around the time of the Great Awakening. Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 17-184.

supported rapid expansion. Their chief rivals were Clap, Ingersoll, and Fitch—prominent conservatives who defended ‘Orthodoxy’ in religion and deference to traditional institutions.

At stake in these debates were two visions of legal authority. On one hand, the colony’s Old Guard grounded its case in common law precedents and reverent readings of charter principles. On the other hand, Connecticut radicals appealed to constitutional arguments from the Glorious Revolution and held a Lockean view of natural rights. These debates also addressed the question of corporate liberty, pitting the independence of intermediate institutions against the supervisory powers of broader governments. At once, Yale College sought independence from the General Assembly; individual churches sought independence from ecclesiastical councils; and private companies sought independence from the British Crown.¹⁷ In this vein, the period balanced two accounts of rights: the right of the majority to rule itself and the right of an individual to independence from the whole.

This essay proceeds in five parts. The first describes Connecticut as a land of steady habits, first beset by unsteady tendencies in the 1740s. The second addresses the government of Yale College, which drew public opposition for its illiberal policies and independence from the colonial legislature. The third moves to a broader debate over religious toleration, arguing that ecclesiastical politics had serious implications for political radicalism. The fourth is a history of the Susquehanna Company, illustrating how its plan for Western expansion entailed a rejection of both colonial and British authority, thereby contributing to a spirit of radicalism. Finally, the fifth connects these narratives to the events of 1765 and 1766, showing the continuity of radical principles into the Stamp Act era. As Benjamin Gale observed, the religious reformers, the

¹⁷ Grasso approaches a similar insight: “Clap’s common law conservatism [exposed] the emerging conflict between the “imperial” legal theory that envisioned law as an instrument of state power for the preservation of order and the “local” legal theory that was grounded in local custom and resisted or restrained the exercise of centralized power.” Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 147.

Susquehanna proprietors, and the Sons of Liberty were of the same faction, constantly “Metamorphosizing... each change drawing in some new members.”¹⁸ This faction ousted Fitch and Ingersoll over differences in ideas. They later led the Stamp Act protests and helped write the Declaration of Independence.

I: Prelude, Steady and Unsteady Habits

To her contemporaries, Connecticut was a “land of steady habits.” This renowned stability began with government: The colony, unlike its neighbors, elected its own Governor, and its Assembly wielded plenary power. Voters, content with their leaders, generally reelected them for life. Citizens also embraced their Royal Charter, which they viewed as the source of their privileges and the link to their common law inheritance. Finally, factions were rare, largely absent before the 1740s. In all, one historian wrote, Connecticut “practiced a fuller measure of self-government than did any other British province excepting Rhode Island.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Gale’s letter reads, “The manuscript I mentioned to you is an historical account of the several Factions which have subsisted in this Colony originating with the New London Society—thence Metamorphosizing into the faction for proper emissions on Loan, thence into New Light, in y^e Susquehanna & Delaware factions—into Orthodoxy—now into Stamp duty—the actors the same, each change drawing in some new members—but it contains such stubborn facts and will so blacken men’s Coats that I fear the Author would not long survive the impression.” Benjamin Gale to Jared Ingersoll, January 13, 1765, in Julian Boyd, ed., *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2 (Wilkes-Barre: Wyoming Historical & Geological Society, 1930), 307.

¹⁹ Zeichner, *Connecticut’s Years of Controversy*, 3-4. Collier concurs, “Connecticut was the most important and autonomous colony in America, possessing and exercising complete local self-government.” Collier, *Roger Sherman’s Connecticut*, 27. On the Charter, Van Dusen notes, “Connecticut’s charter of 1662 was so generous as to be almost unbelievable. The King not only gave Connecticut a clear legal title, but also a surprising amount of self-government.” Van Dusen, *Puritans Against the Wilderness*, 54. Finally, on the absence of factions, Taylor observes, “Connecticut reelected its colonial governors beginning with John Winthrop, Jr., year after year, until poor health or death dictated another choice. Such loyalty helped earn the colony the nickname of the ‘Land of Steady Habits.’” Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 37.

In its early years, Connecticut also experienced great economic prosperity. Most people were farmers, producing meat, livestock, or dairy.²⁰ There was also an abundance of land, and the common practice was to give each adult male an allotment.²¹ This allowed for economic mobility and the creation of new wealth. Because land ownership was connected to social status, it also allowed the rapid assimilation of new settlers.²²

In matters of faith, the Saybrook Platform grounded the social order. Written in 1708, the Platform included both a “Confession” of Congregationalist faith and fifteen Articles “for the Better Regulation of Church Discipline.” Its most significant item was the creation of consociations, which combined small groups of churches into quasi-regional governments. These consociations had supervisory powers and were tasked to regulate, reward, and punish their individual members. Not surprisingly, there were ambiguities with the system; the balance of power between churches and consociations was vaguely defined and sometimes contested. There was also regional opposition to the plan; whereas the Platform was embraced in the West, it was viewed skeptically in the East.²³ Nonetheless, the system gave structure to church life and allowed the preservation of common Congregationalist identity.²⁴

Indeed, these early churches shared a common moral foundation: a set of principles called ‘covenant ideology.’ As Christopher Grasso describes, this view assumed a tight connection between religious order and secular government. Men believed that God punished and rewarded groups for their collective moral character. It followed that chaos in either religious or colonial

²⁰ John Gaspere Saldino, *The Economic Revolution in Late Eighteenth Century Connecticut* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1984), 2.

²¹ Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 42.

²² Jackson Turner Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 28-56, 115-151.

²³ C.C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800: Strict Congregationalists and Separate Baptists in the Great Awakening* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 3

²⁴ On the history and structure of the Saybrook Platform, see Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 40-49.

government was contagious; what angered God in one instance might bring punishments in the other. To avoid this, church and state were to collaborate closely, maintaining their coexisting principles of order under the ‘public covenant.’ Church discipline and secular stability were one and the same.²⁵

The Great Awakening disrupted this stability, paving the way for the birth of radicalism in Connecticut. It undermined the public covenant, divided the colony into factions, and coincided with a shortage of available land. Led by itinerant preacher George Whitefield, the movement came to Connecticut in 1740.²⁶ There is a theological explanation for the Awakening; it was in part a rejection of the Half-Way Covenant, a religious compromise that allowed “unconverted” men to be members of the church.²⁷ There was also an emotive aspect; revivalist preachers rejected the “cold formalism” of traditional preachers, injecting energy, passion, and fervor into their sermons. Finally, there was an intellectual component: Traditional preachers were professionals, educated at Yale College and well versed in the classics. The revivalists were amateurs, neither well educated nor affiliated with an established church. Accordingly, revivalist preaching deemphasized church precedent in favor of *a priori* argument.²⁸

²⁵ Grasso notes, “God gazed upon a people not just as a collection of individuals, but as a public body bearing corporate guilt.” Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 37. On covenant ideology, see *Ibid.*, 1-40.

²⁶ Other influential itinerants included Gilbert Tennant and James Davenport. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 184-186; Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 132; Benjamin Trumbull, *A Complete History of Connecticut, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, vol. 2 (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1797), 151-160.

²⁷ Under the Covenant, Puritan churches had two kinds of members. Full membership, including the right to vote and partake of the Lord’s Supper, required a “conversion” experience. Partial membership, available to children of converted men, was possible without one’s own conversion experience. The revivalists, in opposing the Covenant, believed that conversion should be a strict requirement for membership. Zeichner, *Connecticut’s Years of Controversy*, 21. On the revivalist view of conversions, see Cedric Cowing, *The Great Awakening and the American Revolution: Colonial Thought in the 18th Century* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971), 67-74.

²⁸ On the Awakening, especially in Connecticut, see Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism*, 1-35; Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 25-236; Jon Butler, *New World Faiths: Religion in Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Roland H. Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry: A History of Education for the Christian Ministry at Yale from the Founding in 1701* (New York: Harper & Brothers,

The unrest caused by such changes created two factions: The Old Lights affirmed church tradition, the education of ministers, and the Half-Way Covenant. The New Lights believed church membership required a conversion experience and that emotive preaching was conducive to conversion.²⁹ This division began as an ecclesiastical split, representing diverging models of “rationalism and evangelical religion.”³⁰ In time, however, it took on political significance; Old and New Lights soon vied for control of Connecticut government.

This politicization began in pamphlets and the popular press. In *A Looking Glass for Changelings* (1743), Isaac Stiles warned that the Awakening “loudly threatens a subversion to all peaceable Order in a Government... [casting] barefac’d Contempt... upon Authority both Civil and Ecclesiastical.”³¹ Thomas Clap took a similar stance. Two years later, in *A Letter from the Reverend*, he accused Whitefield and his followers of having a “scheme” to oust unconverted men from the ministry.³²

This pamphlet debate, combined with the institutional disruptions to the church establishment, prompted censorship and legal repression. In 1742, the Connecticut Assembly passed the Guilford Resolves, responding to “disorderly and irregular practice,” driven by “sundry persons who are very illiterate, and have no ecclesiastical character, or any authority whatsoever to preach or teach.” Under them, preachers who were not “settled or ordained

1957), 15-32. Bushman argues that the Great Awakening as, in part, a reaction to economic variables: “an increased desire for material wealth... and the growing frequency of clashes with authority entailed in the pursuit of wealth. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 188.

²⁹ Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism*, 36-37.

³⁰ Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 8.

³¹ Isaac Stiles, *A Looking-Glass for Changelings: A Seasonable Caveat against Meddling with Them That Are Given to Change* (New London: 1743), 21, quoted on Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 1.

³² Clap proceeds to compare Whitefield’s conduct to the attempted usurpation of King George I by the “Pretender” James Francis Edward Stuart. Clap: *A Letter from the Reverend Mr. Clap... to the Rev. Mr. Edward* (Boston: Printed by T. Fleet, 1745), 6-7.

ministers” would receive a considerable fine.³³ Itinerants from outside the colony would also face exile.³⁴ This, in effect, allowed the arrest of all revivalist preachers.³⁵

Thomas Clap played a significant role in this process, helping to draft and promote the Guilford Resolves and fighting to preserve “Orthodoxy” at Yale College.³⁶ He began his clampdown on Yale with the passage of a speech code, forbidding criticism of Yale’s tutors.³⁷ When this failed to contain the revival, he expelled two students—John and Ebenezer Cleveland—for attending New Light sermons.³⁸ Finally, when he perceived a threat to his influence, he worked with the General Assembly to close Shepherd’s Tent, a revivalist school in New London. This both slowed the growth of the New Lights and preserved Yale’s local monopoly over education.³⁹

³³ The fine was “one hundred pounds lawful money.” This was the rough equivalent of 25 acres of land, such that one fine would ruin a man’s livelihood. Trumbull, *History of Connecticut*, 162-165. On the average value of land, see Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 33. The resolves have also been called the Anti-Itinerancy Act.

³⁴ By law, this applied only to those who preached “without the desire and license of the settled minister,” but few ministers gave this permission. Ibid.

³⁵ For instance, John Davenport, a leader of the revivalists, was arrested in 1743. Van Dusen, *Puritans Against the Wilderness*, 119.

³⁶ On Clap’s ties to the Act of Uniformity, see Zeichner, *Connecticut’s Years of Controversy*, 24; Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 135.

³⁷ J. David Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges* (United States: Rowman & Little, 2002), 69. On rhetoric and the curriculum at Yale College, see Mark Garrett Longaker, *Rhetoric and the Republic: Politics, Civic Discourse, and Education in Early America* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), 79-134.

³⁸ Explaining his actions, Clap wrote that the “design of erecting the college... was to train up a succession of learned and orthodox ministers... [it could not allow students to] trample upon their own laws, and break up the churches which they establish and protect.” Trumbull, *History of Connecticut*, 179-181. The expulsion of the Clevelands is listed as a grievance in a 1763 Memorial, protesting Clap’s conduct. *Memorial to the General Assembly at Harford*, March 10, 1763, Yale University Corporation Records, Manuscripts and Archives Library, Yale University, Box 1. See also Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry*, 33-34; Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 138-141.

³⁹ Jürgen Herbst, *From Crisis to Crisis: American College Government, 1636-1819* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 67-68. In addition to the above measures, Clap barred all itinerant preachers from campus, forbid the printing of Locke’s *Letters on Toleration*, and suspended classes in 1742. Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind*, 69; Richard J. Purcell, *Connecticut in Transition: 1775-1818* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), 19; *Boston Evening Post*, Apr. 26, 1742, in Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 134.

These measures were met with little political resistance, and not for lack of anger; the expulsion of the Clevelandes generated “great clamour in the state.” It was instead a matter of influence. The Old Lights controlled every organ of the Connecticut government such that, in the short term, there was little the revivalists could do.⁴⁰ So they turned to writing. In sermons and pamphlets, they defended New Light principles and argued for toleration.

The best of these publications was Elisha Williams’ pamphlet, *The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants* (1744).⁴¹ Williams introduced John Locke to Connecticut discourse, providing a rival framework to covenant ideology.⁴² He also advanced an individualist model of society. For him, man was not a social being; in nature, he lives alone and is judged only for his own conduct. This belief lay at the roots of Connecticut radicalism.

Williams’ argument began with a “state of nature” and the subsequent premise that “the great end of civil Government, [is] the Preservation of Persons, their liberties and Estates, [and] of their property.”⁴³ Such preservation requires a sacrifice; in leaving the state of nature, men give up the “power of punishing” and self-defense, yet “retain their natural liberty in all such cases as have no relation to the ends of such a society.” One such case was the “natural Liberty or Right of judging for oneself in Matters of Religion”—that is a right to “Conscience.”⁴⁴ It followed that “Civil Authority hath no Power to make or ordain Articles of Faith” and “Civil Rulers have no

⁴⁰ Trumbull, *History of Connecticut*, 182; fn. 34.

⁴¹ Elisha Williams, *The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants: A Seasonable Plea for the Liberty of Conscience and the Right of Private Judgment in Matters of Religion* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1744).

⁴² The claim that Williams introduced Locke to Connecticut comes from Edmund Morgan, *Puritan Political Ideals, 1558-1794* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965), xli-xlv. On William’s life, see Francis Parsons, “Elisha Williams: Minister, Soldier, President of Yale,” in *Papers of the New Haven Historical Society* vol. 7 (New Haven: Printed for the Society, 1908): 188-217.

⁴³ Williams, *Essential Rights*, 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

Authority to determine for Christians [their] Form of Church Government.”⁴⁵ To Williams, such “spiritual Tyranny” would constitute political oppression.⁴⁶

Essential Rights was aimed directly at the Guilford Resolves but had implications that went far beyond them. If “every Church has Right to judge in what Manner God is to be worshipped by them,” then the Saybrook Platform and the consociation system, with their common “Form” of Discipline” violated the rights of churches.⁴⁷ In essence, Connecticut’s religious order left insufficient room for the toleration Williams’ view required.

Williams received his fair share of rebuttals.⁴⁸ And the debate was far from over; the question of ‘Conscience’ continued to shape Connecticut’s religious debate for the next two decades. Nonetheless, *Essential Rights* was reprinted in Connecticut and its influence is evident in later works.⁴⁹ When radicals protested the status of Yale College or the ordination of Dana, they drew on Williams’ model of conscience.⁵⁰ In this way, *Essential Rights* helped set the stage for Connecticut’s revolutionary moment.

Economic developments in this period also contributed to Connecticut radicalism. Although Connecticut had experienced an economic boom in the 1720s, the 1750s were an age of stagnation. The central problem was the availability of land. By 1750, the allotment system, once

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁸ Charles Chauncey, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England* (Boston: N.p., 1763); William Worthington, *The Duty of Rulers and Teachers in Unitedly Leading God’s People* (New London: Printed by T. Green, 1744); Noah Hobart, *The Principles of Congregational Churches, relating to the Constitution and Authority of Ecclesiastical Councils, Considered and applied to the Case of the late Ordination at Wallingford* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1759); Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 57-58.

⁴⁹ Grasso writes, “*Essential Rights* helped redefine the entire debate about religious liberty, state power, and moral order. It provided a rationale for church separation and civil disobedience that could not be dismissed as the mad prattling of an enthusiast or the harangue of an “illiterate” exhorter.” Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 57.

⁵⁰ See fn. 82-83, 94, in which Clap’s opponents ground their case on a Lockean view of natural rights. See also fn. 125-128, in which one reverend discusses the natural rights of churches before they joined consociations.

a driver of social mobility, had come to a close.⁵¹ Moreover, the rising value of land was pricing new buyers out of the market.⁵² As a result, between the 1720s and the 1740s, the proportion of landless men in Connecticut more than doubled, reaching a peak number of 40%.⁵³

The period also witnessed a massive increase in population. In 1749, the colony included 70,000 residents. By 1756, however, the number was roughly 130,000.⁵⁴ This rapid immigration was one factor driving the value of land. It also produced cultural tension; because land ownership was tied to social status, high rates of landlessness hindered the assimilation of new residents.⁵⁵

These factors hit hardest in the East. Since the 1730s, the region had experienced a shortage of currency, a condition that was exacerbated by Western economic policy.⁵⁶ The East also suffered from high rates of land speculation. Into the 1760s, there remained a good deal of uncultivated territory, well suited for farming and agriculture but unused because it was the property of absentee landowners, held for the sake of speculation.⁵⁷ The resulting phenomenon—landless men confronted with unused land—engendered popular resentment.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy*, 30.

⁵² Between 1680 and 1750, the average value of land in the colony had doubled, from £2 to £4. Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 33. This accompanied a shortage of money. As late as 1762, merchant John Proing bemoaned, “money grows very scarce in this Government and many People are very much Drove.” Worst of all, he added, “it is expected to be much worse.” John Proing to Jonathan Trumbull, November 6, 1762, in Jonathan Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 4.

⁵³ Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 123.

⁵⁴ Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy*, 30.

⁵⁵ See fn. 22.

⁵⁶ In the 1730s, a group of Easterners formed the New London Society, which attempted to bring cheap money into the region and break Connecticut's dependence on Boston and New York, its primary sources of capital. It did so by printing bills of credit, which functioned as currency in the region. The General Assembly, controlled by men of the West, halted its operation, declaring that the Society had no right to print such bills and prohibiting their use. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 124; Van Dusen, *Puritans Against the Wilderness*, 123-124.

⁵⁷ Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy*, 30.

⁵⁸ Boyd observes that, from 1755 to 1765, “there is a noticeable and distinct depression in the wealth of the East, there being an actual decrease in rateable estates from 1755-1760.” Julian Boyd, ed., *The*

Going forward, as the origin of the Great Awakening and the greatest victim of economic collapse, the East became the political home of Connecticut radicalism. Contemporary authors picked up on this trend. For instance, in a pamphlet war in 1755, radical polemicist Benjamin Gale referred to himself as a “Gentleman of the East” and to his conservative counterpart as a “Man from the West.”⁵⁹ Similarly, in 1767, Ezra Stiles observed that the “Eastern Part of the Colony were vigorous Sons of Liberty... [The] Connecticut River [was] the dividing line” between a radical East and a conservative West.⁶⁰ The East’s association with radicalism began in the contexts of religion and land, but soon carried on into the factional politics of the 1760s. At that point, whereas the West voted to keep to him Fitch and his allies in office, the East voted to replace them with Sons of Liberty.⁶¹

The growth of Eastern influence began with the political organization of the New Lights. In a letter to William Samuel Johnson, Indian agent and member of the Connecticut Assembly, an Anglican minister reflected,

The N.L. within my short memory were a small party merely a religious one, honored within and restrained by laws and decrees of assembly... in this short period of their continual struggles they have acquired such an influence as to be nearly the ruling part of

Susquehanna Company Papers vol. 1 (Wilkes-Barre: Wyoming Historical and Geographical Society, 1930), lii. The East also experienced the greatest population growth during this period, particularly due to immigration from southeastern Massachusetts; Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 83. For more on the economic habits of the East, see Boyd, *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, xli-li.

⁵⁹ In fact, both men were from the Western half of the state. Gale hailed from Killingworth. Benjamin Gale, *A Reply to a Pamphlet, Entitled, The Answer of the Friend in the West, with a Prefatory Address to the Freeman of His Majesty’s English Colony of Connecticut* (New Haven: 1755). Thomas Clap, *The Answer of the Friend in the West to a Letter from a Gentleman in the East, entitled The Present State of the Colony of Connecticut Considered* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1755). For fuller discussion of these pamphlets, see fn. 84-89.

⁶⁰ Ezra Stiles, “Election, Connecticut, May 4, 1767,” in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 63-64. John Devotion similarly reported, “We are coming into high Discipline, the main Line is Conn, River.” John Devotion to Ezra Stiles, June 6, 1767, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 465. See also, Benjamin Gale to Jared Ingersoll, January 13, 1765; Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 122-134; Buel, *Dear Liberty*, 16;

⁶¹ Ezra Stiles, “Election, Connecticut, May 4, 1767.”

the government owing to their superior attention to civil affairs and close union among themselves in politics.⁶²

The claim that the New Lights paid “superior attention” to politics is well supported. Their influence began locally, in country associations and Eastern consociations. But by the early 1750s, they soon began to win seats in the Lower House as well.⁶³

The best testament to their success was the political conversion of Thomas Clap. In 1755, Clap became a ‘political New Light,’ changing his party but not his principles. Although the President did not renounce Orthodoxy, he hoped that an alliance with the party of toleration would grant him more leeway at Yale College, securing greater independence from the General Assembly.⁶⁴ It was a reasonable plan, but it was not enough.

II: Yale College, The Illiberalism of Thomas Clap

In 1745, Clap rewrote Yale’s charter, declaring the school’s independence from the General Assembly. The document also centralized power in the College President, giving Clap near exclusive control of Yale’s affairs.⁶⁵ He used this power in the service of Orthodoxy. Between 1753 and 1766, Clap centralized all worship under an official College church, punished

⁶² [Unknown Anglican Minister] to WSJ, January 4, 1763, in William Samuel Johnson Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University [microfilm], Reel 1, Folder 2.

⁶³ Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 139; Samuel Harrison Rankin, Jr., “Conservatism and the Problem of Change in the Congregational Churches of Connecticut, 1660-1760” (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1971).

⁶⁴ Ibid; In a note in his *Itineraries*, Ezra Stiles wrote, “[Clap and his allies in the College] that they could carry their Points, especially prevail on the Assembly to support a Professor of Divinity, by taking the New Light Side... But the New Lights would not for a long time believe the President that he was sincere, because he had Arminian, nay Arian Fellows & Tutors.” “Ezra Stiles’ Note,” July 10, 1761, in *Extracts from the Itineraries of Ezra Stiles*, 6.

⁶⁵ The Charter is printed in Clap’s *Annals of Yale-College* and described in Tucker’s work. Thomas Clap, *Annals or History of Yale College* (New Haven: B. Mecom, 1766), 44-52; Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 73-74.

dissenting students, and denied all appeals of his conduct. These actions, however, drew increasing scrutiny, which culminated in calls for Clap's removal.⁶⁶

During this period, Yale was at the center of a debate over religious toleration and corporate liberty. Clap defended his case—"Orthodoxy" and independence from the Assembly—with robust historical arguments, appealing to church precedents and charter privileges. His opponents advanced radical principles, including religious toleration and the right of the Assembly to regulate College affairs. They also appealed to different argumentative authorities: natural rights and 'English liberties.'⁶⁷ In the end, Thomas Clap was ousted because both College and colony rejected his politics; the tumults at Yale were a product of emerging radical ideas.

The President's first tumult occurred in 1753, when he tried to standardize student worship and religious instruction. Previously, students could attend services throughout the colony, and some had attended Anglican mass in West Haven. This troubled Clap, who shared what one historian called the "traditional Puritan abhorrence of the Church of England."⁶⁸ As such, the President passed a new rule to "preserve and secure the Religion of the College upon its original Foundation and Constitution."⁶⁹ Under it, all students were required to attend services in the

⁶⁶ As mentioned above, some historians have explained the fall of Clap as a product of the Stamp Act. See fn. 12. Others, more plausibly, have pointed to his methods of governance; Clap was a strict disciplinarian, policing Orthodoxy through high fines and the constant threat of expulsion. Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*; David Alan Richards, "New Haven and the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765-1766," 67-85. It is easy to see how these policies might have angered students, contributing to Clap's ouster. However, an exclusive focus on discipline neglects the substantive, radical arguments leveled against Clap and his supporters. Another explanation of Clap's downfall comes from Kelley; Clap "alienat[ed] the General Assembly... made the college much more narrowly sectarian, split the fellows, and left Yale badly disrupted by the disputes he had so joyously entered." Brooks Mather Kelly, *Yale: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). Although Kelly's account glosses over the details of these disputes, it rightly grasps the centrality of ideas and debate.

⁶⁷ In this way, the debate at Yale had two components. On one hand, participants debated policy; for instance, should the College accommodate religious dissenters? On the other hand, they discussed questions of authority; in a conflict of historical law and natural right, which should win?

⁶⁸ Louis Leonard Tucker, "The Church of England and Religious Liberty at Pre-Revolutionary Yale," *William and Mary Quarterly* 17, (Jul., 1960): 320.

⁶⁹ Clap, *Annals or History of Yale College*, 61.

college dining hall and study under the supervision of Yale's Professor of Divinity. In this setting, Clap hoped, they would receive thorough instruction in Congregationalist Orthodoxy.⁷⁰

Given that this decision altered the purpose of a Yale education—to focus more firmly on sectarian principles—it was highly controversial. Anticipating his opposition, Clap wrote two pamphlets to defend his conduct. In *The Religious Constitution of the Colleges*, he argued that Yale was a “religious society,” which meant that Yale was founded for a religious purpose and must maintain that purpose going forward.⁷¹ The designation also implied that Yale was rightfully independent from state supervision; “no society, or body politick, can be *safe*, but only, in its having, a principle of self-preservation.”⁷²

Clap's argument rested on a thorough discussion of Yale's charter, as well as precedents from Oxford and Cambridge.⁷³ It also entailed a firm stance on toleration. Clap construed “liberty of conscience” as a conflict between the right of an individual and the right of “Voluntary Societies of Men... to determine their own Design.”⁷⁴ The implication was that, if the College were to honor its students' request for toleration, it would lose its right to define its own nature; it would no longer be a “religious society.” For this reason, Clap concluded that toleration was incompatible with both the College charter and the intention of its Founders.

Clap's second pamphlet built on this argument by attacking his opponents. In his view, the “new scheme of divinity” embraced a dangerous individualism, the heretical belief that the “only

⁷⁰ In the first year, Clap acted as Professor of Divinity. Thereafter, Naphtali Daggett took over the role. Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 106; Tucker, “The Church of England,” 321.

⁷¹ Thomas Clap, *Religious Constitution of Colleges: Especially of Yale-college in New-Haven* (New-London: Printed by T. Green, 1754), 2-3, 18; Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 177-178.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷³ Citing English jurist Edward Coke, Clap argued, “he who first undertakes to Form, Establish, and Order a College, and gives *something* for the benefit of it, is called the Founder.” He then endeavored to prove that Congregationalist ministers from Cambridge, Massachusetts—not the Connecticut General Assembly—gave the first funds to the College. *Ibid.*, 2-14. See also, “Clap entrenched himself behind the walls of historical and legal tradition.” Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 178.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

Criterion of Duty to God is *Self-Interest*.”⁷⁵ To Clap, this belief had implications for toleration: “tho’ every Man has a Right to examine and judge for *himself*, according to Truth; yet no Man has a *Right*, in the Sight of God, to judge *wrong*.”⁷⁶ Clap’s argument was wide in scope: If error has no rights—that is, if no man has the right to hold false religious beliefs—then the true religion had no need to accommodate dissenters. There was no requirement of toleration.

The best challenge to Clap’s view came from Thomas Darling, a Connecticut merchant and graduate of Yale College. In *Some Remarks on Mr. Clap’s History*, Darling offered an alternative history of Yale, in which its founders “gloried in their religious liberty.”⁷⁷ He then shifted to a religious argument, where he called Clap a Catholic and compared him to the “Roman clergy.”⁷⁸ This phrase connected the President to the Glorious Revolution, when James II sought to build an absolutist, Catholic monarchy.⁷⁹ Insofar as Clap’s “religious tests of Orthodoxy” resembled “civil tests of loyalty,” the pamphlet argued, they were a threat to Connecticut’s liberty.⁸⁰

Darling also argued against corporate liberty, noting that, “a Judgement of Publick Bodies and Communities is nothing but the private Judgments of every Individual of that Body or Community.”⁸¹ To Darling, it followed that people always retained their “right of private judgment,” even in a group context; they never ceded the right of conscience.⁸² This argument is

⁷⁵ Thomas Clap, *Brief History and Vindication of the Doctrines Received and Established in the Churches of New England* (New Haven: n.p., 1755), 19.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁷ Thomas Darling, *Some Remarks on Mr. President Clap’s History and Vindication of the Doctrines of the New-England Churches* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1757), 4. This argument accompanies a rival reading of Yale Charter; *Ibid.*, 9-16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁹ On the role of Catholicism in the Glorious Revolution, see Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 68.

reminiscent of Williams' social contract philosophy.⁸³ And it had broad philosophical consequences: whereas the case for corporate liberty presumed the existence of a preexisting communal consensus, Darling's argument began from a radical, Lockean individualism.

Clap did not respond to Darling. He did, however, address similar issues in a debate with Benjamin Gale, a physician from Killingworth, Connecticut. In 1755, the two men debated the issue of visitation, that is, the right of the General Assembly to 'visit,' supervise, and regulate College affairs. Gale argued that, because the General Assembly founded Yale, it had rightful control of its operations. This claim of founding was hard to prove, but potentially effective; if true, it undermined the foundation of Clap's views and reforms.⁸⁴

The two also addressed a question of funding. The General Assembly gave Yale an annual allotment. Although the amount was trivial—roughly £100—Gale wanted to end the practice as a violation of the rights of Connecticut freemen. Under the colony's Charter, he wrote, "The Freemen of this Corporation [colony] ... have undoubtedly a natural Right to know in what Manner, and for what Purposes the Moneys raised by Taxes are appropriated."⁸⁵ This language, connecting taxation to popular accountability, hints at future arguments over the Stamp Act. It was also a clever response to Clap. The President wanted to frame the issue of toleration as a

⁸³ The commonality was in their common starting point, a pre-political account of a right to conscience; fn. 43-46.

⁸⁴ Gale's historical argument was roughly as follows: Gale wrote, "I know some say the College is a distinct Corporation, or Government by itself, and therefore "all their Religious Instructions, Worship, and Ordinances, may be carried on within their own Jurisdiction." "But I am not satisfied that Yale-College is such a Corporation. Nor do I think our General Assembly can make such a Corporation. For none but a king [can.] This government itself is but a Corporation Erected by Letters Patent of King Charles 2d." In this view, Yale was different than existing ecclesiastical societies, which have greater autonomy. It was also different from Oxford and Cambridge, which were formed as independent corporations directly by the king. Benjamin Gale, *The Present State of the Colony of Considered: In a Letter from a Gentleman in the Eastern Part of said Colony, to his Friend in the Western Part of the same* (n.p., 1755), 10-13.

⁸⁵ Benjamin Gale, *A Reply to a Pamphlet, Entitled, The Answer of the Friend in the West, with a Prefatory Address to the Freemen of His Majesty's English Colony of Connecticut* (New Haven: 1755), iv.

clash between the majority in the College and a dissenting minority. Gale introduced a new party: taxpayers.

Clap responded that taxpayers did have a vested interest in the College, but he insisted that the College required independence to accomplish its purpose: Whereas “all other Ecclesiastical Societies are for training up the common People for Religion,” he explained, “Colleges are Societies of Ministers, for training up Persons for the work of the Ministry.”⁸⁶ Because the success of the churches depended on the success of the College, and because it would be “inconsistent and preposterous” for the “Religion of a whole country... [to] be subject to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the neighboring parish,” the well-being of the taxpayers required the independence of the College.⁸⁷

Also underlying this debate were fundamental tensions between eastern and western Connecticut. Clap and Gale referred to each other as the “Friend of the West” and the “Gentlemen of the East” respectively, and for good reason. Western Connecticut generally sympathized with Yale, whereas the East was largely skeptical of its conduct.⁸⁸ Gale addressed this point explicitly in the text of his pamphlet, noting, “The “Eastern part of the Government” has “not so many Freeman” as the Western, yet its freeman are more engaged in politics... [They] are more united and engaged.” He therefore predicted that, “in a few years, the Governor, Deputy-Governor, and much of the [Upper House]...[will] reside in the Eastern Parts of the Government.” This, he implied, boded poorly for Yale.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Thomas Clap, *The Answer of the Friend in the West to a Letter from a Gentleman in the East, entitled The Present State of the Colony of Connecticut Considered* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1755), 8.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁸ Yale itself is in the Western half of the state. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 141-142.

⁸⁹ Gale, *Present State*, 19. In a contemporary pamphlet, preacher Noah Hobart confirmed the connection between the College and political factions. Throughout the work, he referred to an “aforesaid Meeting,” suggesting the presence of real political organization on the regional level. Later, adopting a satirical impression of an Easterner, he chided, “we may, over a While... have the Country on our Side, or at least

In sum, the early debates over Yale College involved a clash of political philosophies. At stake were competing visions of toleration and corporate independence, with Gale arguing for Lockean radicalism, and Clap arguing for conservative Orthodoxy. There was also a divide over the sources of authority; Clap relied on historical and institutional demands, whereas Darling and Gale appealed to natural rights. Yet, as contentious and wide-reaching as they were, these early debates put little emphases on Clap himself; they focused on the role of Yale College, not the particular abuses of its President. This would soon change.

By the turn of the decade, radical students were at great odds with Thomas Clap himself. In 1758, a father wrote to his son, a Yale student,

I am exceeding sorry to hear of the strife and contention that is arisen at College betwixt your Clap and the Seniors, more especially I am concerned to see that you are so desatisfied. . . My dear son, I rejoice if you have not been active in none of these misdemeanors. [If you are], I fear you are in great danger of doing or saying that which may germinate much to your disadvantage.⁹⁰

The image is bleak: tensions were high at the College and Clap was cracking down on dissent.

The resulting pamphlet debate got personal, shifting its focus from the independence of the College to the nature of Clap's administration. Gale was the first to make that transition, associating the President with 'arbitrary power.' In *A Calm and Full Vindication*, he argued that the system of fines at Yale was "arbitrary and illegal."⁹¹ He also criticized the fact that students

so many of them, as that by our Skill, we may seize upon the College." Noah Hobart, *Congratulatory Letter from a Gentleman in the West, to his Friend in the East, upon the Success of his Letter, Entitled, the Present State of the Colony* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1755), 3, 7. James Trumbull similarly reads Hobart's pamphlet as evidence of early political associations. Hon. James Hammond Trumbull, "Sons of Liberty in 1755," *New Englander and Yale Review* 35 (April 1876): 299-313.

⁹⁰ The father added, "whilst you are Inocent," such actions might "disaffect the Authority of the College against you." Jonathan Trumbull Sr. to Benjamin Trumbull, January 22, 1758, in Benjamin Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Library, Yale University, Box 1.

⁹¹ Benjamin Gale, *Calm and Full Vindication of a Letter wrote to a Member of the Lower House of Assembly, Shewing That the Taxes Imposed on the Students of Yale-College Are Stated Higher Than to Defray the Annual Expences of that School* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1759), 18; Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 201-216.

could not appeal Clap's judgments against them; the prohibition violated the "privileges of an English subject, that he may have copies of the judicial proceedings against him."⁹² In Gale's view, Clap was arbitrary because his power was unconstrained; neither colonial law nor the "rights of Englishmen" restricted his conduct. For Gale, this translated into another argument for visitation by the Assembly: such visits defended English liberties from the danger of Clap's arbitrary rule.⁹³

However, the most significant attack on Clap took place in the General Assembly. In 1763, a group of students and unaffiliated citizens brought a Memorial against the President, seeking relief for two grievances. The first related to his arbitrary power. Like Gale, the students opposed Clap's fines and the inability of students to appeal Clap's judgments. They also objected that, in all College proceedings, the President was the judge in his own case, combining legislative and executive power. Their second grievance pertained to religion. A college law provided, "no scholar under pretext of religion shall, on the Sabbath or any other day, go to any public or private meeting that is not established or tolerated by law, or not approved of by the President." This prohibition, especially considering the arbitrary means of enforcement, was "an infringement on the natural rights of Englishmen."⁹⁴ Going forward, the Memorialists demanded that all laws of the College "be laid before the General Assembly for their inspection to be

⁹² Ibid., 29.

⁹³ Ibid. Gale expounded on this case in Benjamin Gale, *A Few Brief Remarks on Mr. Graham's Answer; and on His Vindication of Mr. President Clap* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1760); John Graham, an ally of Clap, wrote a response to Gale: John Graham, *A Few Remarks on the Remarker* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1760).

⁹⁴ *Memorial to the General Assembly at Harford*, March 10, 1763, Yale University Corporation Records, Manuscripts and Archives Library, Yale University, Box 1; Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 223-225. Beyond these grievances, the students wrote that the college laws, taken together, are "very exceptionable or savouring too much of arbitrariness and severity."

approved or repealed as should be judged proper.” The Assembly would also approve future laws, and students would have “liberty of appeal.”⁹⁵

This Memorial put Clap in a difficult position. The case—determining Yale’s independence—would be heard and decided by the General Assembly, which had an institutional stake in the case, such that its probable outcome seemed clear. Indeed, just prior to Clap’s testimony, the Assembly heard a sermon, arguing, “As Civil Rulers [are] Gods by Office, Obedience is due to them.” This totalizing view of government left little room for corporate liberty, the centerpiece of Clap’s case.⁹⁶

Nonetheless, Clap persuaded the Assembly to drop the charges. His *Reply to the Memorial* began with a lengthy historical argument, drawing on arcane precedents to prove its central claim: Congregationalist ministers, not the General Assembly, founded Yale College.⁹⁷ It also, however, addressed the specific questions of arbitrary power and natural rights. On the former, Clap denied holding all executive power, as he was required to consult the tutors on “difficult and important cases.” He also defended being a judge in his own case; the role was “absolutely necessary in such a society as this.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Stephen White, *A Sermon Preached Before the General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut at Hartford on the day of their Anniversary Election, May the 12th, 1763* (New London: Timothy Green, 1763), 21. It was customary for each seating of the General Assembly to begin with a sermon, popularly called an election sermon. Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 31. This particular sermon began with the assertion that governments are created among men promote a godly quality, maintained by godly governors. Moving to the issue of education, it proclaimed, “The interests of Learning are so nearly connected with the good of the Government, that the Legislature, I trust, will think it an Object worthy of your Attention.” This left no room for the corporate independence; “from such a visitation the College can never fairly plead Exemption by the Privilege of their Charter: For a Society incorporated by Charter, with a primary view to the publick Good, can’t be made independent of” the civil power. White, *Sermon Preached*, 32.

⁹⁷ Clap elaborated, “The common law we conceive is very plain that he who makes the first donation towards the founding any college is in law the Founder and not the King who makes it a legal corporation.” The first donation came from the ministers. Thomas Clap, *Reply to the Memorial*, Yale University Corporation Records, Box 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid.; Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 226-229.

The kind of “society” to which Clap referred was a “religious society,” discussed in his earlier pamphlet *The Religious Constitution of Colleges*. In matters of government, Clap conceded, the rights of Englishmen may indeed have included a right to appeal. But a religious society was different, observing a different set of rules that related to its purpose of promoting orthodoxy.⁹⁹ Clap elaborated on this view in a separate *Letter on the Right of Appeal*. At Yale, natural rights came into conflict with the “laws of the community.” In weighing the question of a right to appeal in all cases, Clap argued, it must be asked, “whether the inconveniences [outweigh the] advantages to the community.”¹⁰⁰ He concluded they did not, and the Assembly agreed.

This was a great victory for both the President and Yale’s independence.¹⁰¹ It also revealed the intellectual polarization of colonial Connecticut. Whereas the students invoked natural rights and disparaged arbitrary power, Clap rejected the relevance of natural rights and employed procedural arguments. In this way, the debate over the Memorial was a debate between orthodoxy and radicalism, showing the growing spirit of Connecticut radicalism.

However, although Clap defeated the Memorial, he failed to convince Yale students of his position. In 1765, a group of students threw rocks at Clap’s home, demonstrating the strength of radical sentiment on campus.¹⁰² By 1766, this sentiment pushed Yale to the brink of collapse,

⁹⁹ Another difference between a college and a government was the age of college students. In *Some Observations Relating to the Government of the College*, Clap advanced the illiberal view that “view that the pupils of the College are persons *sui Juris*, and thus lack the full rights of adult citizens: “The pupils of the College are mostly minors and all of them to be considered as such in their relation to [the] College. And therefore are to be considered not as persons who are *sui Juris*, but as under the government of parents, masters, or guardians, so as not to have a full right to government themselves.” Thomas Clap, *Some observations relating to the Government of the College*, 1764, in Thomas Clap, President of Yale College, Records, Box 1, Folder 12.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Clap, *Letter on the Right of Appeal of students in college* (February 2, 1764), in Thomas Clap, President of Yale College, Records, Box 1, Folder 11; Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 174-175.

¹⁰¹ Tucker called it Clap’s “greatest moment... the very peak of his power.” Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 230; Herbst, *From Crisis to Crisis*, 64; Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 178-179.

¹⁰² See fn. 3. For more on student unrest, see Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 232-243, 250-257.

with its tutors resigned and its students up in arms. James Dana, a preacher from Wallingford, Connecticut, reported that, “[A]ll the students except two or three” submitted a petition of grievances to the Corporation, objecting to “the want of tutors for the senior & freshman class... [Clap’s] neglect to publish a law granting appeals to corporation—and in general, [that]... the president (*pro arbitrio*) makes laws, and alters penalties for past crimes.”¹⁰³ According to Dana, even some of Clap’s closest confidants “began to whisper... either he must be controul’d, or greatly alter his phylosophic (rather unphyosopic) government, or be discharg’d, or college is ruin’d.”¹⁰⁴

On July 1, 1766, Clap gave in to this pressure and resigned. In his last address to the student body, delivered at a commencement service that October, he implored the College to “never on any pretence whatever, turn aside from the Way of Orthodoxy; & [to] never chuse a President... who is lukewarm or indifferent to the Principles of Religion.”¹⁰⁵ Clap understood that the rise of student radicalism was a direct threat to conservative principles, and he hoped the College’s administration would take a firm stance against it.

The Trustees politely declined. As students were withdrawing and the fate of the university was at stake, they offered the post to three men, all of them with radical leanings. Their first choice, New Light preacher John Lockwood, had written in praise of “Civil Liberty” and in condemnation of “arbitrary ruler[s].”¹⁰⁶ When Lockwood declined the post, the Trustees

¹⁰³ These grievances, summarized briefly in Dana’s letter, are reminiscent of the Memorial submitted to the General Assembly in 1763. Relatedly, with the tutors having left, Clap and the Professor of Divinity, Naphtali Daggett, were the only faculty members left at the College. James Dana to Ezra Stiles, March 11, 1766, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 455.

¹⁰⁴ James Dana to Ezra Stiles, June 17, 1766, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 456.

¹⁰⁵ The speech was reprinted in *New-London Gazette*, October 3, 1776.

¹⁰⁶ Chauncey Whittelsey to Ezra Stiles, August 8, 1766, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 590; John Hubbard to Ezra Stiles, September 21, 1766, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 511; James Lockwood, *The Worth and Excellence of Civil Freedom and Liberty Illustrated, and a Public Spirit and the Love of our*

approached Ezra Stiles, a supporter of toleration and active opponent of the Stamp Act.¹⁰⁷ Stiles also demurred. With no other option, the Trustees turned to the Professor of Divinity, Naphtali Daggett, who became President *pro tempore*.¹⁰⁸ Daggett, although a long-time ally of Clap, became a staunch opponent of the Stamp Act, writing newspaper polemics under the pseudonym ‘Cato’.¹⁰⁹

The transition from Clap to Lockwood, Stiles, and Daggett shows a broader change in Connecticut society, reflecting the influence and leverage of the radical movement. In order to placate student concerns, the Trustees felt the need to appoint a radical President. As the subsequent sections will argue, the radicals’ influence extended beyond the sphere of collegiate affairs, shaping religious institutions and land policy as well.¹¹⁰

III: Wallingford, The Ordination of Dana

During the same period, Wallingford, Connecticut, was experiencing a similar set of tumults, beginning in the realm of religion. By 1750, Connecticut had rejected the ‘public covenant.’ People no longer believed in a union of religious and secular order, nor did they believe that God would punish them for the sins of their neighbors; the tight link between church, community, and

Country Recommended: A Sermon Delivered before the General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut, at Hartford on the day of the Anniversary Election (New London: Printed by T. Green, 1759).

¹⁰⁷ John Devotion to Ezra Stiles, July 7, 1766, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 457.

¹⁰⁸ Ezra Stiles to John Devotion, July 25, 1766, in Ezra Stiles Papers, folder 576; Edmund Morgan, *The Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727-1795* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); *Connecticut Courant*, November 3, 1766.

¹⁰⁹ David W. Robson, *Educating Republicans: The College in the Era of the American Revolution 1750-1800* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 48. For instance, see *New-London Gazette*, August 30, 1765.

¹¹⁰ Debates over Collegiate independence continued well into the next century. See Benjamin Trumbull, *A Letter to an Honourable Gentleman of the Council-Board for the Colony of Connecticut, Shewing that Yale College is a very great Emolument, and of high Importance to the State* (New Haven: Printed by B. Mecom, 1766); John S. Whitehead, *The Separation of College and State: The Transformation of Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, and Yale From Quasi-Public to Private Institutions, 1776-1876* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1971).

state had loosened.¹¹¹ In its place remained a claim about liberty, which Benjamin Gale expressed well: “All our liberties and privileges, both civil and sacred... are so inseparably connected, and mutually so dependent on each other, that such as rob us of the one, deprive us of both.”¹¹² Connecticut residents believed that a tyrant in religion would also be a tyrant in government. Moreover, threats to religious liberty were also threats to secular liberty.¹¹³

This argument, used during the debate over Yale College, became particularly salient in Wallingford. In 1758, a Wallingford church began to look for a new minister.¹¹⁴ The majority of the congregation, mostly Old Lights, agreed to appoint and ordain James Dana. A minority, however, held strong objections.¹¹⁵ This group, comprised of New Lights, reached out to their New Light-controlled consociation, asking it to block Dana’s ordination. It obliged *de jure*, but failed *de facto*. Defying their consociation, the Old Light majority ordained Dana anyway.¹¹⁶ In doing so, it challenged the legitimacy of the Saybrook Platform and ignited a lengthy debate on toleration, natural rights, and corporate liberty.¹¹⁷ This debate resembled that over Yale College, reflecting the spread and further development of radical ideas.

It began with a pamphlet from Reverend William Hart, an Old Light. Siding with Dana, he argued that the “strife for power in the hands of the consociation [was] destructive of the most

¹¹¹ Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 49.

¹¹² Gale, *A Few Brief Remarks*, 7.

¹¹³ On the relationship between religion and politics in 1750s Connecticut, see Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist*, 199; Zeichner, *Connecticut’s Years of Controversy*, 25; Richards, “New Haven and the Stamp Act Crisis,” 82; Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism*, 136.

¹¹⁴ Its previous minister, Reverend Samuel Whittelsey, had retired.

¹¹⁵ Their principal claim was that Dana was an Arminian, and thus a heretic. William Hart, *A Few Remarks Upon the Ordination of the Rev’d Mr. James Dana, and the Doings of the Consociation, respecting the same* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1759), 35.

¹¹⁶ Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 156-157; Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 216.

¹¹⁷ The facts of this case reveal the changing demographics of Connecticut life. In the 1740s, Old Lights used the infrastructure of the Saybrook Platform to restrict revivalist preaching. By the 1750s, the tables had turned. New Lights used the consociation system to enforce their own orthodoxy. Old Lights, in turn, became the supporters of toleration. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 216.

important rights of particular churches.”¹¹⁸ Insofar as Wallingford faced the “tyranny of consociated churches,” it was the “most important controversy that ever was managed in these churches.”¹¹⁹ This language is familiar; Hart, like Clap, was appealing to corporate independence, arguing that individual churches had rights against consociational interference. Hart rested this case on a thorough reading of the Saybrook Platform. As a question of statutory law, he argued, each parish had the right to choose its own minister.¹²⁰

Reverend Noah Hobart responded with a pamphlet entitled *The Principles of Congregational Churches* (1759). Drawing on church and historical precedents, Hobart described the rights of churches *before* the Saybrook Platform. Even before the Platform was ratified, he argued, “neighboring churches” had the authority to regulate their neighbors. This argument tried to preempt appeals to natural rights by inverting the form of the social contract. If neighboring churches had this regulatory power before forming consociations, Hobart argued, they certainly retained it afterwards.¹²¹

Hobart also argued against corporate liberty. Like Clap, he set up a tension between the rights of the individual and the rights of the community, arguing that “The choice, or settlement of ministers in a consociated church, [was] a matter of a public nature, and a general concern.”¹²² However, the congregation’s conduct “[imposed] a guardian, an inspector, a judge over all the

¹¹⁸ Hart: *A Few Remarks*, 43.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁰ In particular, he compared the relative authorities of the two halves of the Saybrook Platform: the Articles of Discipline and the Heads of Agreement. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹²¹ Noah Hobart, *The Principles of Congregational Churches, relating to the Constitution and Authority of Ecclesiastical Councils, Considered and applied to the Case of the late Ordination at Wallingford* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1759), 17-18. Hobart bolstered his historical case in Noah Hobart, *Vindication of the Piece, Entitled “The Principles of congregational Churches... (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker, 1761).*

¹²² Hobart, *Principles of Congregational Churches*, 20.

rest... not only without their consent, but against their declared dissent.”¹²³ This argument was nearly identical to that in Clap’s *Religious Constitution of the Colleges* (1753).¹²⁴

In his response to Hobart, Hart employed the radical principals of Williams’ *Essential Rights*. Just as Williams asserted that all men were created equal, Hart posited a natural equality of churches: “every particular church duly organized, has the government of her own affairs and members in her own hands.”¹²⁵ Because “others [lack] a right to judge for them... particular churches are not holden to submit to... councils in matters of faith, or to any public tests of orthodoxy.”¹²⁶ This principle of inter-church toleration was a necessary corrective for the “imperfect judgments of men.”¹²⁷ It was also a protection against civil tyranny: “Public tests of orthodoxy will never make any great figure, nor command a general submission, unless they are enforced by the *temporal sword*.”¹²⁸

Roger Wolcott, former Governor of Connecticut, similarly tied Hobart to temporal politics. Whereas Hart’s vision of church government conformed to the principles of “mixt government”—dividing power between the clergy and the laity—Hobart vested all power in the clergy.¹²⁹ This was a dangerous choice, as “when the Reformation came on,” Wolcott wrote, “the Clergy were the greater opposers of it;” it was up to “Law-Men” to “overcome [their]

¹²³ Ibid., 40.

¹²⁴ Hobart’s account of consociations mirrored Clap’s account of “religious societies.” Both argued that their groups were subject to distinct rules and standards, connected to the general interest, and entitled to legal deference against claims of independence. Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)

¹²⁵ William Hart, *Remarks on a Late Pamphlet Wrote by Mr. Hobart, Entitled The Principles of Congregational Churches* (New Haven: J. Parker, and Company, 1760), 5.

¹²⁶ William Hart, *A Letter to Paulinus, Containing an Answer to His Three Questions, Lately proposed to the Public, in the Connecticut Gazette* (New Haven: Printed by J. Parker and Company, 1760), 4.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹²⁹ Hart’s system was mixed insofar as, under it, churches could petition their consociation for advice, but were not bound to accept its decisions. Roger Wolcott, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Noah Hobart* (Boston: Green & Russell, 1761), 10.

Obstinacy.”¹³⁰ The former Governor believed that mixed government was the best protection against arbitrary power. By rejecting a separation of powers, Wolcott argued, Hobart threatened both the religious and civil liberty of Connecticut.

Chauncey Whittelsey was more explicit in this regard, connecting Hobart to the Glorious Revolution:

Hobart is writing again... High Church Principles seem at present to be much in [vogue] among us; the dispute among us is nearly the same as obtained between high church and low in England, the last Century [the Glorious Revolution]; tho passive obedience and non-resistance to [our] Rulers is not insisted upon, yet it is to the Clergy, which is for worse.¹³¹

By connecting Hobart to the Revolution, Whittelsey clarified the stakes of the conflict. If the consociation system was the “High [Seat] of Inquisition,” then the Saybrook Platform was illegitimate, fundamentally incompatible with the ‘rights of Englishmen.’¹³² This conclusion inspired radicals to political organization, as discussed below.

In sum, the debate over Dana covered similar ground to the debate at Yale College. Just as Clap defended orthodoxy and the institutional independence of “religious societies,” Hobart defended the Saybrook Platform and the institutional autonomy of consociations. And just as Williams, Darling, and Gale attacked orthodoxy through appeals to natural rights and the hereditary “rights of Englishmen,” Hart, Wolcott, and Whittelsey used those same arguments to oppose the consociation system.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³¹ Here, the reference to “High Church Principles” was an allusion to Catholicism, a label that tarred Hobart and the consociation system, as well as Thomas Clap. Chauncey Whittelsey to Ezra Stiles, July 30, 1760, in Ezra Stiles Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University [microfilm], reel 1. See also Chauncey Whittelsey to Ezra Stiles, September 25, 1759, in Ezra Stiles Papers [microfilm], reel 1: “you know the old Controversy about Liberty and Prerogative must be [revived] once in a Century.”

¹³² The phrase “High Seat of Inquisition” appeared in, Benjamin Gale to Ezra Stiles, January 7, 1761, in Ezra Stiles Papers [microfilm], reel 1.

Contemporary authors, like Jonathan Todd, noticed these similarities. They also observed how the radical factions in New Haven and Wallingford collaborated to reach their common goals:

It is known to many, that there have been, of late years, attempts to alter our constitution, by forming a general consociation in the colony, and [endowing] the same with a power over all the churches in the government; and that the most zealous promoters of this new scheme abet the notion of the college's being made 'an ecclesiastical society superior to all others.'¹³³

Chauncey Whittelsey, Benjamin Gale, and Jared Ingersoll drew similar connections, illustrating the growing influence of radicalism in Connecticut.¹³⁴ Not only were radicals in New Haven and Wallingford employing similar arguments, but they were also participating in a common political project. This project, better termed a faction, was significant enough to draw widespread attention and push for significant electoral change.¹³⁵

The radical faction first entered politics in the Governor's election of 1759. In past years, Fitch had been reelected with ease. This year, however, radicals in New Haven and Wallingford united to oust him from power.¹³⁶ Their effort was a response to Fitch's conduct in the General Assembly. After the ordination of Dana, New Lights in Wallingford had petitioned the Assembly, asking permission to split off and form their own congregation. This action would have given them greater control over their tax dollars; instead of supporting Dana's

¹³³ Jonathan Todd, *A Reply to the Reverend Mr. Eell's Serious Remarks upon the faithful Narrative* (New Haven: J. Parker, 1759), 7.

¹³⁴ Chauncey Whittelsey to Ezra Stiles, September 25, 1759; Benjamin Gale to Jared Ingersoll, January 13, 1765, in Ezra Stiles Papers [microfilm], reel 1; Jared Ingersoll to William Samuel Johnson, December 22, 1759, in William Samuel Johnson Papers [microfilm], reel 1, folder 1.

¹³⁵ There is reason to believe that the conservatives in New Haven also aligned with the conservatives in Wallingford. For instance, Clap opposed the ordination of Dana. Gale, *A Few Brief Remarks*, 11; Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 156-157.

¹³⁶ Whittelsey observed, "Whereupon New Haven and Wallingford Male Contents have united to attempt a mighty Change in Governor." "The Gentlemen to be dropped out of the Administration would [be] the Govr and Newton, Silliman, Burr, Chester, Wolcott, Edwards, and Hamlin." Four of the six were men of the West. Chauncey Whittelsey to Ezra Stiles, September 25, 1759; Todd, *Reply to the Reverend*, 7.

congregation, their taxes would have gone to the new, incorporate society. The Lower House of the Assembly, which leaned New Light, supported this measure. Governor Fitch, along with the Upper House, vetoed it.¹³⁷

Although the attempted ouster did not succeed—Fitch remained in office—it did change the course of Connecticut politics. Thereafter, Fitch and the Old Guard were at serious risk of losing power, and this realization changed the way they governed. Breaking from their approach in Wallingford, Fitch and the Assembly began approving the separation of divided congregations. For instance, in Canterbury County, one church was “unhappily divided in [its] religious sentiments respecting the way of administering church discipline.” Responding in 1760, the Assembly released one faction from the taxation of the other. Thereafter, both groups were “allowed to keep and maintain the public worship of God in [their] own way.”¹³⁸

However, this change in policy did not succeed in assuaging radical sentiments. Just as Thomas Clap faced increasing pressure in the early 1760s, so too were the colony’s churches wracked by a “spirit of disunion... disorders and confusion.”¹³⁹ The center of this dispute, as before, was the Saybrook Platform. Radical churches demanded the ability to separate from their consociations and become fully independent. Many of them succeeded in doing so.

Thomas Fitch reacted to and criticized this phenomenon in a pamphlet, entitled *An Explanation of the Say-book Platform*. Writing in 1765, the Governor appealed to those churches “which [were] not thus consociated,” urging them to rejoin the colony’s religious establishment. In doing so, he acknowledged these churches’ concerns; they feared “judicial power,” or the

¹³⁷ Van Dusen, *Puritans Against the Wilderness*, 120; Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 156-157.

¹³⁸ In 1760, the Assembly approved three requests for division. The divided societies were in Canterbury, New Haven, and Plainfield. Charles J. Hoadly, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, vol. 11 (Hartford: Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1877), 412, 415-417, 425.

¹³⁹ Noah Hobart, *An Attempt to Illustrate and Confirm the Ecclesiastical Constitution of the Consociated Churches in the Colony of Connecticut, Occasioned by a late “Explanation of the Saybrook Platform”* (New Haven: Printed by B. Becom, 1765), 44.

ability of consociations to shape church conduct and restrict citizens' liberties. In response, Fitch deemphasized the authority of the consociations, giving an account of the Saybrook Platform which resembled that of William Hart: In this account, consociations existed solely for the "mutual assistance" of their members.¹⁴⁰ Under them, "Each particular church hath right to choose its own officers, and to admit and exclude its own members."¹⁴¹ This system, Fitch argued, preserved "liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment, in their confessions of faith."¹⁴²

For Fitch, the fate of the Saybrook Platform had significant implications for Connecticut politics. If individual churches were to "unite with others upon this plan," he hoped that they would "encourage, comfort, and strengthen one another." If not, he worried that, through "divisions, contentions, [and] uncharitableness... the churches [would] crumble into parties, and become seats of dispute and controversy, to the great detriment, if not the destruction, of their peace, comfort, and order."¹⁴³

It was unusual that Fitch wrote this pamphlet himself; prior to this date, he had not written on ecclesiastical politics, let alone Connecticut politics. His reason for the effort relates to partisan politics: in referring to a "dispute and controversy," Fitch addressed a challenge to his own administration. That challenge arose from recent events in Connecticut. By opposing the separation at Wallingford and associating with the Old Lights, Fitch had alienated the colony's radical faction, and this faction was gaining political influence. Accordingly, facing increasing

¹⁴⁰ Historians of Connecticut have greatly underappreciated this document, which is essential for understanding the connection between religious debates and factional politics in Connecticut. In particular, they have missed the sense in which it was a concession to the radical faction, connected to Fitch's concerns about reelection. This argument is absent from the existing literature. Thomas Fitch, *An Explanation of Say-Brook Platform or the Principles of the Consociated Churches in the Colony of Connecticut* (Hartford: Printed by Thomas Green, 1765), 12.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 39.

pressure at the ballot box, Fitch wrote a defense of his past positions, couching church unity in the liberal language of toleration. Through this act of appeasement, Fitch hoped he might stave off another attempt to oust him from power.¹⁴⁴

In this way, the *Say-Brook* pamphlet gives historians another explanation for Fitch's ouster. The Governor's authority was in jeopardy, not only because of the Stamp Act, but also due to a local religious debate. Connecticut radicals, resenting Fitch's views on toleration and the consociation system, marshaled counterarguments in the language of natural rights. They also formed a political faction, whose influence grew throughout the 1760s. Although this faction failed to oust Fitch in 1759, it succeeded in 1766. By that date, the New Haven and Wallingford radicals had been found another ally: the economic radicals of the Susquehanna Company.

IV: The Susquehanna Company

Connecticut radicalism reached well beyond religion. One of the colony's most pressing issues—on par with toleration—was the nature of its expansion. Land policy determined the wealth and status of Connecticut citizens. It pitted interest groups against each other and balanced competing views of imperial policy. Most importantly, it challenged core ideas about rights and power. In discussing the Susquehanna Company, citizens debated corporate liberty, the natural rights of settlers, and the rightful powers of the English Crown, with conservative men arguing for the right of the Crown to restrain expansion, and more radical men arguing for the liberty of the Company to expand regardless of royal policy. Significantly, the radicals in this

¹⁴⁴ Although Fitch did not put this intention in writing, it is by far the best explanation for his intervention in this debate. Facing political pressure for other reasons as well—related to the Susquehanna Company and the Stamp Act—Fitch had good reason to play politics and make concessions.

argument were the same men who ousted Fitch and Ingersoll, as well as the most ardent opponents of the Stamp Act.¹⁴⁵ Another constituency of radical opposition was taking form.

The debate over the Company had economic roots. As mentioned above, mid-century Connecticut faced fiscal stagnation and a shortage of land, with implications for social mobility.¹⁴⁶ The Susquehanna Company was an answer to these social and economic ills. In 1753, the General Assembly received six memorials, each requesting to settle “Wild & Uncultivated” land outside the colony.¹⁴⁷ These groups soon formed the Susquehanna Company, a proprietary project to form a “Township” along the Susquehanna River.¹⁴⁸ Its stated aims were to “enlarge his Majesties English settlements in North America... to spread Christianity [and] also to promote [its] own temporal interest.” Its founders hailed mostly from the Eastern half of Connecticut.¹⁴⁹

The Company grounded its petition on a historical argument: Under the Connecticut Charter, they argued, the colony extended indefinitely to the West, all the way to the Pacific. Because this “Ancient Boundary” included the Susquehanna territories, they concluded that the Assembly could grant them to the Company. Yet, there was a problem. In recent years, the Crown had

¹⁴⁵ Gipson agrees that the Susquehanna Company was a force for radicalism in Connecticut, but he traces the start of its radicalism to 1768. This paper argues for an earlier date, the early 1760s. Lawrence Henry Gipson, *Jared Ingersoll: A Study of American Loyatism in Relation to British Colonial Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 320. Bailey agrees with Gipson. Bailey, “Influences Towards Radicalism,” 191.

¹⁴⁶ See fn. 51-58.

¹⁴⁷ “Memorial of John Judd and others,” March 29, 1753; “Memorial of Isaac Tracy and others,” May 8; “Memorial of John Whiting and others,” May 10; “Memorial of the Inhabitants of Greenwich,” May 14; “Petition of the Inhabitants of Suffield,” May; “Memorial of Nathaniel Giddings and others,” May, in *The Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, 16-27. On the economic culture of the Susquehanna region, see Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁸ The Susquehanna River is in present-day Wyoming. “Minutes of the Susquehanna Company,” July 18, 1753, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, 28-29. On the formation of the Susquehanna Company, see *Ibid.*, lviii-lxxxvix.

¹⁴⁹ The six Memorials list the hometowns of the petitioners: Norwich, New London, Farmington, Windham, Canterbury, Plainfield, and Volingtown. Six of the seven are East of the Connecticut River. See fn. 147.

granted much of these westward lands to New York and Pennsylvania. In claiming ownership of the Susquehanna, the Company was contesting these grants, a view that provoked serious opposition.¹⁵⁰

The Company faced a second difficulty. Although the land in question was uncultivated, it was not unoccupied. Indeed, it was home to the Susquehanna tribe, loosely affiliated with the Six Nations of the Iroquois.¹⁵¹ Unfettered, the Company sent a representative to purchase the land from the Susquehanna. The sale was later contested, with some people alleging that it had never occurred.¹⁵²

As one might imagine, the Company faced significant pushback in the colonies. Its greatest opponents were two Pennsylvania politicians, James Hamilton and Thomas Penn. First, the two pressed the issue of charters, arguing that Connecticut had no claim to the Susquehanna. Second, they discussed the great threat of “Indian War.” The fear was that if the Company moved into the Valley, the Natives would see it as an act of aggression, thereby harming British imperial policy. This anxiety remained salient throughout the 1760s.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ The best statement of the Susquehanna position, which grew to be highly nuanced, was Jonathan Trumbull, *The Susquehanna Case* (N.p.: 1774), in Jonathan Trumbull Papers, Box 11, Folder 4. See also Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, June 1754; Richard Hunter Morriss to Thomas Penn, October 7, 1754, *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, 95, 135; “Opinion of Charles Pratt,” 1761; Ezra Stiles to Pelatiah Webster, May 21, 1763 in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 66, 221-228.

¹⁵¹ On the history of the Six Nations, see Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The People’s of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁵² Some argued, for instance, that the sale was made under duress, or when the Natives were intoxicated. See James Hamilton to Sir William Johnson, March 19, 1754, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, 74; Robert Hunter Morris to Thomas Fitch, November 20, 1754, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 163; Boyd, *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, lxxxiv.

¹⁵³ For example, see James Hamilton to Roger Wolcott, March 1754, 56; Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, June 1754, 95; Robert Hunter Morris to Thomas Fitch, November 20, 1754, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, 161; Richard Peters to Lewis Gordon, September 15, 1760, 24; “State of the Case for the Pennsylvania Proprietors,” 1760, 52; James Hamilton, “Proclamation Against the Connecticut Settlers” (Pennsylvania: Printed by B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1761), 61; James Hamilton to Jared Ingersoll, July 8, 1762, 143; Sir William Johnson to the Board of Trade, August 1, 1762, 149; Earl of Egremont to Thomas Fitch, January 27, 1763, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 195.

These concerns were deeply held. But, even beyond the question of land policy, Penn and Hamilton objected to the way in which that policy was being decided. In their view, it was absurd for a private company—“lawless people”—to make deals with foreign powers. The conflict over expansion should be “settled on the common terms,” that is, between colonial governments.¹⁵⁴ This argument would soon involve claims about power and rights.

In 1754, the Pennsylvanians wrote to Fitch and Roger Wolcott, urging them to prohibit and prevent the Company’s conduct. Wolcott, who was then Governor of Connecticut, responded by defending the proprietors. He argued that their conduct would help, not hurt, Britain’s imperial policy; it would “enlarge the English possessions of the Country &... strengthen and Encourage ye English in north America against ye Encroachments of ye French.”¹⁵⁵ Fitch responded more equivocally. Upon becoming Governor, he wrote that he was “unacquainted with the Scheme proposed” but would “lay [it] before [the] Assembly.”¹⁵⁶

In 1755, the Connecticut Assembly approved the Company’s Memorial for westward expansion. In doing so, it went further than any previous Memorial had requested; the Company was granted, not merely another “Township,” but instead “a well Regulated Colony.” This grant accompanied a clear vision of British imperial policy: through trade, the Company would promote good relations with the Indians and thereby provide for the common defense.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, June 1754, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 1, 95. The concern regarding private men also appeared in, Robert Hunter Morris to Thomas Fitch, November 20, 1754, in *Ibid.*, 161. In Pennsylvania, proprietors bought tribal land indirectly through the government, as opposed to directly from the Natives themselves; see “Minutes of the Pennsylvania Council,” August 6, 1754, in *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵⁵ Roger Wolcott, “Approval of the Susquehanna Company Project,” January 1754, in *Ibid.*, 50-51; Roger Wolcott to James Hamilton, March 13, 1754, in *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Fitch to Robert Hunter Morris, November 29, 1754, in *Ibid.*, 180-181.

¹⁵⁷ More precisely, the Assembly recommended that “His Majesty” grant said lands to the petitioners, thereby forming them into a colony. The distinction, however, is of little import; what mattered was that the Company received the colony’s blessing. “Resolution of the Connecticut General Assembly on the Memorial of the Susquehanna Company,” May 1755, in *Ibid.*, 278-280.

Unfortunately, this decision came seven years too early for Pennsylvania to mount a response. As the colonies began a war with France, their attention moved away from expansion to the practical exigencies of conflict. It was only after the Seven Years War that the colony had time to reply.

In the 1760s, Connecticut residents begin to enter Susquehanna lands. Their expeditions were small in scale and unaffiliated with the broader Company. Nonetheless, they prompted a firm response from the Pennsylvania government. In a well-distributed broadside, Hamilton urged “all Sheriffs... to exert themselves, and use their utmost Endeavours to prosecute, and bring to Justice and condign Punishment, all Offenders in the Premises.”¹⁵⁸ He also pressed Fitch to end the settlements, to no avail. The Governor responded that Connecticut had... “no concern in those affairs... as [the settlers] act in the private capacity... we can do nothing only by advice.”¹⁵⁹ This claim moved closer to a principle of independence, demarcating separate jurisdictions for state and corporate actors.

As tensions increased, so too did intellectual innovation. In 1761, Charles Yorke, Solicitor General for England and Wales, wrote an opinion on the Company’s claim, arguing that the “best Title to Lands in America [was] Cultivation and Improvements, especially after the space of almost a century.” It followed that, if the “People of Connecticut had any right [to the claim], it was much stronger in 1664 and in 1683... than it can be now.”¹⁶⁰ Here, Yorke drew on the argument of Locke’s *Two Treatises*, which was available and widely read in the colony.¹⁶¹ If

¹⁵⁸ James Hamilton, “Proclamation Against the Connecticut Settlers” (Pennsylvania: B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1761), in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 61-62.

¹⁵⁹ James Hamilton to Thomas Fitch, February 10, 1761, in *Ibid.*, 57; Thomas Fitch to James Hamilton, May 7, 1761, in *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁶⁰ Charles Yorke, “Opinion,” March 30, 1761, in *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶¹ For Yorke, the reason that Connecticut’s claim had become weaker was that, despite holding a legal title to it, the colony had not worked the land. However, New York and Pennsylvania had not worked it either. This allowed the Susquehanna Company to make a claim, provided it practiced the proper

ownership was a product of cultivation, and if the Susquehanna lands were uncultivated, then the lands had no owner; the Company could claim them through its labor.

Several years later, the same argument appeared in a pamphlet by Eliphalet Dyer, a founder of the Susquehanna Company.¹⁶² In defending the settlers, Dyer alluded to the Lockean concept of cultivation; “[the Susquehanna settlers] will emigrate in search of lands, [because] they have a right [to do so], providence plain points it out by this amazing still uninhabited continent, and they will and ought to enjoy that right.” For Dyer, the settlers were forced to emigrate because speculation had claimed the available land in Connecticut; “are not the lands [in Connecticut] more taken up and already divided into smaller quantities in this than in any colony upon the continent?”¹⁶³ As such, he defended the Susquehanna Company as an effort to vindicate a lost liberty. Independent of colonial government and unencumbered by speculation, the Company would allow settlers to realize their natural right of to uncultivated land.

In sum, by the mid-1760s, the debate over expansion resembled that over toleration. Like the debate in Wallingford, the Susquehanna issue hinged on questions of natural rights and corporate liberty: Was the Company an independent entity? Could the colonial government regulate its conduct? And did settlers have a natural right to land? In the end, some opposed the Company through legalistic and procedural arguments, insisting that expansion was the rightful task of colonial governments.¹⁶⁴ Others, the more radical camp, insisted on the Company’s

cultivation. John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, ed. Thomas Hollis (London: Printed by A. Millar, 1764), 215-226, 236. The *Two Treatises* were in the Yale College library as early as 1743. Thomas Clap, *A Catalogue of the Library of Yale-College in New Haven* (New London: Printed by T. Green, 1743), 41.

¹⁶² Although the following pamphlets were written in 1769, they are historians’ best window into the popular debate over the Company. Despite the controversy it generated in the colony, few written works were produced on the question of expansion.

¹⁶³ Eliphalet Dyer, *Remarks on Dr. Gale’s Letter to J.W. Esq.* (n.p., 1769), 16.

¹⁶⁴ Benjamin Gale wrote a response to Dyer, reiterating these points. He also made an economic case for how westward expansion would harm Connecticut farmers. Benjamin Gale, *Doct. Gale’s Letter to J.W.*

independence and its natural right to uncultivated land. Taken together, the fault lines in this debate mirror those in both the Yale and Wallingford controversies.

In the case of the Susquehanna, however, the debate went further, to the point of active resistance. In 1762, when the Company announced its first formal expedition—sending one hundred men to settle the Susquehanna River—Fitch departed from his previous position.¹⁶⁵ The plan was “disapproved of by the government,” he stated, because the expedition would disturb the “public peace” and the Company would “subject [itself] to the Royal Displeasure.”¹⁶⁶ The last point was particularly significant. Fitch reasoned that, if the Company angered the Crown, and Connecticut was seen as backing the Company, then Connecticut itself would fall out of royal favor. Its very Charter could be at risk.¹⁶⁷

The Company responded with a show of strength. Although Fitch had condemned the expedition, he had not forbidden it, nor would the Company let him. Instead of sending one hundred men to the Valley, it resolved to send two hundred. It also announced it would settle “an additional tract to be laid out on the West Side of the River, opposite to whether the first was Granted.”¹⁶⁸ This decision, printed in local newspapers, was an assertion of independence from colonial government.¹⁶⁹

Esquire, Containing a Narrative of the Municipal Matters of a Public and Municipal Nature which were Subjects of the Debates and Resolves of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Sold by Green and Watson, 1769), 21-24. It is unclear whether Gale was advancing these arguments as his own, or merely recounting what had been said against the Company.

¹⁶⁵ “Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehanna Company,” July 27, 1762, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 145-146.

¹⁶⁶ “Proclamation of Thomas Fitch Against the Susquehanna Company,” June 18, 1762, in *Ibid.*, 135. James Hamilton was “extremely pleased” with this statement. See James Hamilton to Jared Ingersoll, July 8, 1762, in *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁶⁷ Historians know from later events that Fitch was particularly invested in charter privileges, and particularly paranoid that the Crown will take them away. See fn. 192-194.

¹⁶⁸ “Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehanna Company,” July 27, 1762, in *Ibid.*, 145-146.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of the Company were often printed in colonial newspapers. For instance, see *Connecticut Gazette*, June 28, 1762; *Providence Gazette*, January 12; February 2; May 4, 1765.

The Company continued this assertion in the face of royal power. In 1763, Fitch received orders from the Crown, demanding that the Company withdraw its men from the Susquehanna.¹⁷⁰ Weeks later, an “Order of the King in Council” was distributed throughout the colony, demanding the same.¹⁷¹ At that point, the stakes of the settlement were clear: If the Company did not comply with the Order, it would be seen as rejecting royal authority.

Even so, the Company seemed to stand resistant. As Ezra Stiles reported, it was “difficult to say whether [the King’s orders] threw more Discourag[men]t upon the Affair, or augmented the Eagerness and Resolution of the Company.”¹⁷² Dyer, for one, believed that the decree was ill founded, obtained by the “Craft and Deceit” of Fitch and Connecticut’s Old Guard.¹⁷³ Even so, the Company reasoned that it could surmount the problem. After all, Stiles claimed, it had political “connexions... large eno’ to influence one Third of the Votes in the Government.”¹⁷⁴

Ultimately, the Company, led by Dyer, developed a three-part response to the Order. First, the group agreed to withdraw its men from the Susquehanna—but only on paper.¹⁷⁵ In fact, in a clear and radical defiance of the Crown, it maintained several settlers in the region¹⁷⁶ Second, the group appealed to the King to change his mind. Dyer himself made the case, traveling to England

¹⁷⁰ The order cited “Controversy with the Indians” as the primary concern. Earl of Egremont to Thomas Fitch, January 27th, 1763, in *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁷¹ This document clarified that the expeditions were suspending, pending further review from the King. In modern judicial language, it was a stay, not a prohibition. “Order of the King in Council,” June 15, 1763, in *Ibid.*, 255.

¹⁷² Ezra Stiles to Pelatiah Webster, May 21, 1763, in *Ezra Stiles Papers* [microfilm], Reel 1.

¹⁷³ Eliphalet Dyer to William Samuel Johnson, July 12, 1768, *William Samuel Johnson Papers*, Reel 5. He later wrote, “the principal opposition arises from the old party [the Old Guard], but however the country in general seems to be more & more approving of the Colonys right to those Western lands.” Eliphalet Dyer to William Samuel Johnson, November 10, 1769, in *William Samuel Johnson Papers*, Reel 5.

¹⁷⁴ Ezra Stiles to Pelatiah Webster, May 21, 1763.

¹⁷⁵ “Minutes of the Susquehanna Company,” May 18, 1763, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 219. Writing to an imperial official, Fitch reported that he had convinced the Company “Unanimously to Desist in their undertaking to Cause those to withdraw who were Gone.” Thomas Fitch to Earl of Egremont, September 14, 1763, in *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁷⁶ Eliphalet Dyer to Jared Ingersoll, April 14, 1764, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 290; Bailey, “Influences Towards Radicalism,” 205.

to serve as the Company's agent. His aim was to win a "Charter similar to Connecticut for civil government," granting self-rule to the Company and allowing full independence from colonial governments.¹⁷⁷ Third, if all else failed, the Company would turn to electoral politics.

The first plan came to ruin when the Susquehanna settlers were attacked and overrun by Native Americans.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Dyer's trip to England was doomed from the start. In a letter to Dyer, Joseph Chew, a merchant from New London, cautioned,

what I gather from person of the first character—the very mention of it is odious to the Crown y ministry and I believe that [your efforts to support it] will not only gain the Displeasure of the great on the other side of the water – but of the many in power in the colonies.¹⁷⁹

Expressing his concern and friendship for Dyer, Chew warned that a failure in England could hurt the agency back home; the Company might "throw all the blame on him" for their own failure.¹⁸⁰ Dyer proceeded regardless. His decision to do so demonstrates a commitment to both his cause and the radical philosophy that underlay it.

It so happened that, just as Dyer arrived in London, Parliament was debating the Sugar and Stamp Acts. In a letter to a friend, Dyer reported,

the Ministry here are highly Jealous of ye growing Power & Interest of the Colonies. I am very certain that the Regular forces [sent] over and forming in North American... [are] a Rod over the Colonies, to be a Check upon them whenever they think proper or as needful.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Ezra Stiles to Pelatiah Webster, May 21, 1763.

¹⁷⁸ After the incident, Dyer, noticeably bitter towards Ingersoll, wrote, "I am sorry for their misfortune, but understand it saved the government the trouble of driving them off." Eliphalet Dyer to Jared Ingersoll, April 14, 1764. For an account of the attack, see *New York Gazette*, July 25, 1763; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 23, 1763.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Chew to Eliphalet Dyer, June 9, 1763, in Jared Ingersoll Papers, New Haven Historical Society, Box 1, Folder J.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Chew expounds on this argument in his correspondence with Jared Ingersoll. See Joseph Chew to Jared Ingersoll, June 17, 1763; June 1763; August 10, 1763, in Jared Ingersoll Papers, Box 1, Folder J.

¹⁸¹ Eliphalet Dyer to Samuel Grey, February 10, 1764, in Eliphalet Dyer Correspondence, United States Library of Congress [microfilm]. See also Eliphalet Dyer to Samuel Grey, March 20, 1764, in Ibid.

Dyer was frustrated by both Parliament's indifference to the Company and its prejudgment against the colonies' independence. Over time, he came to see these two issues as intertwined. After all, given his status as one of the few Americans in England, it fell on him to argue both cases. At once, he was asking Parliament to grant a charter to the Susquehanna Company and arguing that a similar charter gave Connecticut significant rights against English rule.¹⁸² It was a tough sell.

In the end, Dyer's mission failed. The Order was not repealed and the Stamp Act was passed. However, the time abroad gave Dyer time to think, and his resulting frustration with Parliament pushed him to develop a more radical view of independence. In the coming years, he would join the Sons of Liberty and campaign against the Stamp Act. He would also lead the effort to oust both Fitch and Ingersoll from colonial government.

Ultimately, regarding the Royal Order, electoral politics was the Company's last resort.¹⁸³ The group reasoned that if the Old Guard had practiced "Craft and Deceit," if it had obstructed a natural right to cultivation, if it was a political obstacle to Company interests, then the Old Guard had to go.

In the early 1760s, the Company had advanced similar arguments as its radical counterparts in New Haven and Wallingford, particularly regarding the scope of corporate liberty and the authority of natural rights. It was thus no coincidence that, when a mob forced Ingersoll to resign from his post, its leaders were Susquehanna men. Nor was it a coincidence that, when Fitch lost his reelection, the Eastern counties—the homes of Susquehanna men—

¹⁸² Samuel Grey later wrote, "Col. Found them extremely prejudiced against the Colony, as also against the affair he specially was soliciting [the Susquehanna Purchase]...The Col has industerously endeavored to remove their prejudices against the Colony." Samuel Grey to Jonathan Trumbull, April 15, 1764, Jonathan Trumbull Papers, Box 2, Folder 6.

¹⁸³ Warfle concurs, "The politics of 1765 were, in part, an attempt to overturn the Standing Order against Susquehanna operations." Warfle, *Connecticut's Western Colony*, 14.

voted in mass against him. In 1766, led by Dyer, the Susquehanna Company had become the most influential faction in Connecticut politics. Like its comparable factions at Yale and in Wallingford, the Company would be an effective agent of radicalism.

V: Radicalism in the Age of the Stamp Act

Connecticut radicalism emerged in the 1740s, developed in the 1750s, and gained political traction in the 1760s, long before news of the Stamp Act reached Connecticut. In topics from collegiate politics to colonial expansion, citizens invoked radical concepts of independence and natural rights to defend a new vision of Connecticut society. These beliefs translated into political action. Long before 1764, radicals sued Yale College, tried to oust Governor Fitch, and ignored clear orders from the English Crown.

In doing so, they had a large group of supporters in the eastern half of the colony. There, New Lights battled Old Lights over the Saybrook Platform; there, they opposed Clap's tenure and Yale's independence from the Assembly; there, they supported the radical actions of the Susquehanna Company. But not until the 1760s did eastern radicals seize political power in the General Assembly. In 1757, one third of the House belonged to men of the East. In 1760, after the campaign to oust Fitch, the East held roughly half of the body. Finally, by 1765, the East controlled two thirds.¹⁸⁴ This development allowed for the political success of the radical movement.

This section will tie the above debates—over Yale College, the Saybrook Platform, and the Susquehanna Company—to the intellectual and political turmoil of the Stamp Act period, showing the continuity of ideas and factional alliances across time. First, it will argue that the colony's debate over the Stamp Act featured the same arguments and political dynamics as the

¹⁸⁴ Upper House membership is recorded in the *Public Records of Connecticut*, vol. 11 and 12. For membership rolls and further analysis, see Appendix I.

colony's earlier debates on local politics. Next, it will highlight the role of the Susquehanna Company in ousting Ingersoll from office. Finally, it will illustrate how a radical faction of eastern voters was responsible for Fitch's downfall.

In May 1764, the General Assembly formed a committee to articulate and defend the colony's grievances. The hope was that a civil, conciliatory approach to the issue would convince Parliament to repeal the Act.¹⁸⁵ Both Fitch and Ingersoll were members of this group, and their resulting pamphlet was Connecticut's main contribution to the Stamp Act debates. Its key innovations were the distinction between external and internal taxes, and the claim that Parliament could tax only the former.¹⁸⁶

The pamphlet was a conservative document. Echoing the arguments of Clap and Hobart, it began with an appeal to the "Constitution, Government, and Laws of Great Britain," especially the precedent that, "by the Common Law of England, every Commoner hath a Right not to be subjected to Laws made without his Consent."¹⁸⁷ It then gave a lengthy historical argument, drawing on precedents from the Connecticut's Charter and the history of English law. Unlike the radical pamphlets of Williams, Hart, and Dyer, it did appeal to pre-political rights or a draw on the logic of a social contract.¹⁸⁸

Not surprisingly, Connecticut radicals took a different approach. In the pages of the *New London Gazette*, a newspaper published in the eastern half of the colony, radicals condemned the Stamp Act as "arbitrary and unconstitutional," the product of "Tyranny and oppression." Whereas Fitch and Ingersoll took a conciliatory tone towards the Crown, these radicals were aggressive and confrontational. Moreover, whereas Fitch and Ingersoll grounded their case on

¹⁸⁵ Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 124.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas Fitch, *Reasons why the British Colonies in America should not be charged with Internal Taxes, by Authority of Parliament* (New Haven: Printed by B. Mecom, 1764); Buel, *Dear Liberty*, 13.

¹⁸⁷ Fitch, *Reasons why the British Colonies in America*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

narrow English precedents, radicals appealed to “Rights, antecedent to all earthly Governments—Rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human Laws.”¹⁸⁹

These differences in argument manifested in personal antagonism. Radicals resented the conservative arguments of Fitch and Ingersoll, and pressed them to take a more aggressive stance against the Stamp Act. This tension came to a head in October 1765. As Governor, Fitch was required, by November of that year, to take an oath, “guaranteeing the faithful observance of the [Stamp] Act.”¹⁹⁰ Of course, the radical faction urged Fitch against it. Jonathan Trumbull, a resident of the east and member of the Upper House, wrote him a letter, warning that “the people in this part of the colony, are very jealous for their liberties; and desire that the most vigorous exertions be made for the repeal of the late act of Parliament... utterly subversive of their Rights & Privileges both by Charter, and as English Men.”¹⁹¹ This was a threat. If Fitch took the oath, Trumbull implied, the eastern part of the colony would vote as a block against him.

Nonetheless, Fitch swore the oath and defended his action in a popular pamphlet. “It is to be presumed,” he wrote, “that if the Governor and Council, whom the people choose, should refuse obedience... the King and Parliament would deprive the people of the privilege of electing such officers.”¹⁹² In this way, he argued, “non-compliance with the Stamp-Act... would be fatal to the charter privileges granted to the good people of this colony” and the “whole welfare” of its

¹⁸⁹ *New-London Gazette*, September 6, 1765, See also, *Ibid.*, October 11, 1765; November 8, 1765; December 20, 1765. The *Connecticut Courant* also appealed to the “natural, inherent, constitutional Rights of Englishmen.” *Connecticut Courant*, June 24, 1765.

¹⁹⁰ Leverett Hubbard to Ezra Stiles, November 6, 1765, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 512.

¹⁹¹ Jonathan Trumble to Thomas Fitch, October 1765, [in Fitch Papers], 355. The Lower House gave similar instructions to Richard Jackson. The Act is “an infringement of the essential liberties of the colonies;” the people would “by no means content that you should give up the matter of right.” Colony of Connecticut (General Assembly) to Richard Jackson, October 1765, in Albert Bates, ed., *The Fitch Papers: Correspondence and Documents During Thomas Fitch’s Governorship of the Colony of Connecticut* vol. 2 (Hartford: Hartford Printing Co., 1920), 367.

¹⁹² Thomas Fitch, *Some Reasons That Influenced the Governor*, 8.

citizens.”¹⁹³ Swearing the oath was necessary cost to preserving Connecticut’s hereditary legal liberties.¹⁹⁴ This, resembling his first pamphlet on the Stamp Act, was a deeply conservative argument.

For his choice, Fitch met a swift and harsh backlash. To take the oath, the Governor required four members of the Upper House to serve as his witnesses. However, when Fitch asked the House for such witnesses, “a long debate ensued [and] finally the Gentlemen on the East side of the River refused, and withdrew.”¹⁹⁵ Thereafter, the eastern faction used the incident as a political attack against the Governor. Dyer led this effort, boasting, “I was the only one who made a public declaration to [Fitch and his allies] that it was an oath in my opinion contrary to the oath [they] had before taken to maintain ye right &c of the colony.”¹⁹⁶ In light of Dyer’s campaigning, an observer predicted that the Governor and his allies would soon face “political death.”¹⁹⁷ He was correct.

In sum, Connecticut’s debate on the Stamp Act followed the same pattern as the colony’s earlier debates on toleration and expansion. Just as Clap and Hobart argued from charter and ecclesiastical precedents, so too did Fitch and Ingersoll rely on a narrow, legalistic argument. Just as Williams and Hart appealed to natural rights, so too did the *New-London Gazette* and Jonathan Trumbull defend pre-political liberty. Finally, just as crossing the radicals at

¹⁹³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁹⁴ Writing in 1791, Samuel Peters drew a similar conclusion: that the oath was an attempt to “save” the charter. Samuel Peters, *A General History of Connecticut* (New Haven: Printed by D. Clark, 1829), 253.

¹⁹⁵ Leverett Hubbard (New Haven physician) to Ezra Stiles, November 6, 1765, in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 512; Jared Ingersoll to the Stamp Commissioners, November 2, 1765, *Selection from the Correspondence... of Jared Ingersoll*, 355. The men who remained—Ebenezer Silliman, John Chester, Benjamin Hall, and Jabez Hamlin—were all men of the West. They were also veterans of the Upper House; each had served for eight years or more. On the tenure of the members, see Appendix I.

¹⁹⁶ Peters, *A General History*, 254; quoted in “Sketch of Thomas Fitch,” in Albert Bates, ed., *The Fitch Papers: Correspondence and Documents During Thomas Fitch’s Governorship of the Colony of Connecticut* vol. 1 (Hartford: Hartford Printing Co., 1918), xlvi.

¹⁹⁷ Chauncey Whittelsey to Ezra Stiles, December 24, 1765.

Wallingford had implications for electoral politics, so too did swearing the oath harm Fitch at the ballot box.

To better explain the influence of the radical faction, this section will now address the role of the Susquehanna Company in arranging Ingersoll's downfall. Prior to the Stamp Act period, Ingersoll was a stockholder of the Susquehanna Company and had promoted the group's interests when in London.¹⁹⁸ However, after Fitch and the Crown condemned the Company, Ingersoll jumped ship; as Stiles recorded, he "represented the Discouragements in the Way that there was so little or no Reason to expect success & that he would readily sell out, as he did."¹⁹⁹ The Susquehanna group, especially Eliphalet Dyer, took great offense at this action.²⁰⁰

Years later, the Company got its revenge. In September 1765, Ingersoll was traveling to Hartford for a special assembly on the Stamp Act. En route, he encountered two scouts from an approaching militia, who informed them of "a great Number of People coming in Three Divisions, one from Windham through Hartford, one from Norwich through Haddam, and one from New-London." This militia, called the Sons of Liberty, intended to confront Ingersoll and force him to resign.²⁰¹ Led by John Durkee, the group succeeded. Ingersoll was made to issue a

¹⁹⁸ In January 1762, Ingersoll helped "prepare the case of the Susquehanna Purchase... to be by him laid before his Majesty." As London Agent, Ingersoll presented this case the following summer. "Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehanna Company Papers," January 5, 1762, in *Susquehanna Company Papers* vol. 2, 119; "Testimony of Stephen Sayre about the Susquehanna Company," 1762, in *Ibid.*, 154-155. See also Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 226.

¹⁹⁹ Ezra Stiles to Pelatiah Webster, May 21, 1763.

²⁰⁰ Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 229; Gale, *Doct Gale's Letter*, 27; fn. 178.

²⁰¹ *Connecticut Gazette*, September 23, 1765, reprinted in *Mr. Ingersoll's Letters Relating to the Stamp Act* (New Haven: Printed by S. Green, 1766), 61-68.

written resignation, which was published in several colonial newspapers.²⁰² He later admitted that these actions were “extorted.”²⁰³

In these events, the influence of the Susquehanna Company is inescapable. There are four relevant connections: The first is that the origins of the militia—Windham, Norwich, and New London—were Susquehanna counties.²⁰⁴ The second is that Durkee, the group’s leader, was a member of the Company.²⁰⁵ The third is the involvement of Eliphalet Dyer. In a letter to his father, Joseph Trumbull argued that Durkee did not work alone; “somebody of more consequence or craft [twas] at the Bottom” of the affair. He then pondered, “What could induce Col Dyer to stand Clerk to the Meeting at Windham... but to seize popularity—I must say I think him at the Bottom of it all.” Dyer’s involvement suggests a radical Susquehanna presence.²⁰⁶

Finally, the fourth reason pertains to a pamphlet from Benjamin Gale. In it, Gale recounted how both Fitch and Ingersoll turned against the Company in 1763. He then suggested, “the resentments rais’ thereby, had not some influence to excite the sons of liberty in that quarter of the government.”²⁰⁷ When the Susquehanna men approached Ingersoll in 1765, they remembered his opposition to their Company. Deposing him from office not only spared them the Stamp tax, but also settled an old score.²⁰⁸

²⁰² *Connecticut Gazette*, September 27, 1765; *Newport Mercury*, September 30, 1765; *Connecticut Gazette*, January 10, 1766.

²⁰³ Jared Ingersoll to Richard Jackson, November 3, 1765, in Franklin B. Dexter, ed., *Selection from the Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Jared Ingersoll*, in *Papers of the New Haven Historical Society* vol. 9, 357.

²⁰⁴ Fn. 149.

²⁰⁵ Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 225.

²⁰⁶ Joseph Trumbull to Jonathan Trumbull, December 22, 1765.

²⁰⁷ Gale, *Doct. Gale’s Letter*, 27-28.

²⁰⁸ Bushman and Zeichner hint at this animosity in the Susquehanna group, but they cite neither Trumbull’s letter nor Gale pamphlet—the crucial evidence for establishing such a claim. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 263; Zeichner, *Connecticut’s Years of Controversy*, 71.

The radical faction also removed Fitch from power. In May 1766, the Governor and his closest allies—the men who had administered the Stamp Act oath—all lost their bids for reelection. To understand the demographics of this loss, it is useful to consider the election of 1767, on which Ezra Stiles took extensive notes.²⁰⁹ Stiles wrote,

The Eastern Part of the Colony were vigorous Sons of Liberty, the 500 who deforced Mr. Ingersol's Resign coming chiefly from these. The Western part were less vigorous, & more awed by the Anti American measures. Connecticut River became the dividing line. The West Side voting for Gov. Fitch; & the East Side for Gov. Pitkin [the radical candidate]²¹⁰

Religion played a role in the split; “the West side New Light interest joined Pitkin.” Moreover, of the five Senators from the West, each won the support of the “East Side.”²¹¹

Stiles' notes confirm the relevance of religious and regional politics to the rise of Connecticut radicalism. The choice between Fitch and Pitkin—an ally of the Sons of Liberty—was a choice between conservatism and Connecticut radicalism.²¹² Whereas Fitch won votes from the western side of the state, Pitkin won votes from eastern. Whereas Fitch won votes from Old Lights and some Western New Lights, Pitkin won votes from Eastern New Lights. Finally, just as Ingersoll lost the support of the Susquehanna Company, it is likely that Fitch experienced the same fate.²¹³ Ultimately, the eastern, radical vote carried the day. Connecticut radicalism, formed through local debates on corporate liberty, religious toleration, and proprietary expansion, had at last gained widespread political influence.

²⁰⁹ Presumably, the voting patterns in the two elections were similar. Unfortunately, historians lack detailed data on the election of 1766.

²¹⁰ Ezra Stiles, “Election, Connecticut, May 4, 1767,” in *Extracts from the Itineraries*, 63-64.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² The Sons of Liberty were the first to nominate Pitkin for the office of Governor. Albert C. Bates, *The Pitkin Papers: Correspondence and Documents During William Pitkin's Governorship of the Colony of Connecticut, 1766-1769* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1921), xxv.

²¹³ By all accounts, Fitch had done more to hinder the Company's expansion than Ingersoll had; the Governor had actively forbid its operations. As such, if the Company was willing to march against Ingersoll, it was certainly prepared to vote against Fitch.

Conclusion:

The roots of radicalism in Connecticut emerged decades before the Stamp Act. They developed through debates on distinctly local institutions, including Yale College, the Saybrook Platform, and the Susquehanna Company. These debates, although separate in their subject matter, employed similar arguments regarding natural rights and corporate liberty. They also produced a unified radical faction, which grew in influence between the early 1750s and the mid-1760s. Ultimately, it is hard to escape the localism of these events. To understand radicalism in Connecticut, it is necessary to examine local ideas and local politics.

This radicalism impacted the broader course of the American Revolution. After the events of this paper, Connecticut radicals left the local context and shaped familiar debates over the colonies' future. Dyer, for instance, was a delegate at both the Stamp Act Congress and the First Continental Congress.²¹⁴ Similarly, William Samuel Johnson—a Son of Liberty who was elected to the Upper House in 1766—participated in the Philadelphia Convention and signed the United States Constitution.²¹⁵

In these debates, Connecticut radicals were influenced by their backgrounds in local politics, and the nature of this influence deserves further research. To understand the conduct of Connecticut citizens in the American Revolution, and to thereby improve our understanding of the Revolution itself, historians should begin with the roots of Connecticut radicalism.

Word Count: 11,798

²¹⁴ On Dyer's attendance at the Stamp Act Congress, see *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 24, 1766. Dyer also attended the First Continental Congress in October 1774. John Adams, "Notes of Debates in the Continental Congress," September 6, 1774, in *John Adams Diary* 22A, in Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²¹⁵ On William Samuel Johnson, see E. Edwards Beardsley, *Life and Times of William Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1876); Elizabeth P. McCaughey, *From Loyalist to Founding Father: The Political Odyssey of William Samuel Johnson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

Bibliographic Essay

The standard history of the American Revolution begins with the Stamp Act. When Parliament levied new duties on the colonies, it asserted an unprecedented sphere of sovereignty and ended a century of salutary neglect. This prompted a colonial backlash, which escalated in response to further legislation and culminated in a Declaration of Independence.

In the fall of my junior year, I took History 135J, a course on colonial American politics taught by Professor Joanne Freeman. For the course, I decided to write on the political culture of the colonial colleges. Given the standard history, I expected to find the beginnings of collegiate radicalism around the time of the Stamp Act. Yale College, however, did not fit this pattern.

In July 1766, a combination of student unrest and administrative indifference forced Thomas Clap, President of Yale College, to resign from office. This event was a long time coming. Clap had run afoul of student radicals as early as 1743, when he expelled two students for attending the wrong church. Throughout the 1750s, Clap pushed for Orthodoxy at Yale, alienating religious dissenters. In the early 1760s, he was a victim of student harassment: homemade bombs in the college yard, student walkouts, and poisoned food at the dining hall. These events, which occurred long before the Stamp Act, caught my eye. I first learned of Clap's ouster from Roche's *Colonial Colleges in the War for Independence*. I got a better grasp of the antecedent events through Louis Leonard Tucker's *Puritan Protagonist: President Thomas Clap of Yale College*.

Historians John Roche and Christopher Grasso explain Clap's ouster as a response to the Stamp Act, yet their theory has several faults: First, I could not find any historical record of Clap's opinion on the Act. He does not appear to have supported it, and his enemies never accused him of doing so, at least in print. Second, as mentioned above, student unrest began in the mid-1750s, long before Parliament had even considered Stamp legislation.

Tucker presents a different explanation for Clap's fall: He blames the President's single-minded pursuit of order and religious orthodoxy; Clap's greatest liability was not a political belief, but his love of discipline. This view, too, is insufficient. In looking through an online copy of *Ezra Stiles' Itineraries*, I discovered that the Yale Corporation nominated Stiles to be Clap's successor. I knew that Stiles was a Patriot Whig, who supported religious toleration and later took an active role in the American Revolution. Although Stiles ultimately declined the Corporation's offer, this choice of nomination hinted at the Corporation's priorities. Why, I wondered, did the group try to replace Clap with a political liberal?

Given the chronology of events and Clap's silence on the Stamp Act, I hypothesized that Roche and Grasso had oversimplified events at Yale. The Stamp Act did not end Thomas Clap; there was some other cause. At the same time, given Stiles' appointment as Clap's successor, I found Tucker's conclusion underwhelming. The nomination of Stiles suggested that politics or political philosophy played some role in Yale's unrest.

I wrote a seminar paper on this topic for History 135J. My principal sources were the letters and pamphlets of Thomas Clap, which I found in both Yale's Manuscripts and Archives Collection and a series of online databases. The records of the Yale Corporation and the Ezra

Stiles papers—at Manuscripts and Archives and the Beinecke Memorial Library respectively—were also invaluable.

In the course of this project, I discovered that Clap was engaged in controversial colonial debates about the scope of religious toleration and the rights of students to criticize their administrators. The following is the central argument of my seminar paper, quoted from the original:

Clap was not only a disciplinarian, but fundamentally illiberal. Although he never supported the Stamp Act, his political and religious positions—particularly his opposition to religious toleration, condemnation of “visitation” policies, and denial of students’ “right to appeal”—cast him in opposition to the emerging patriot, or Whiggish, sympathies in the colony. Clap’s many enemies recognized and took offense at this philosophy, justifying their formal opposition and popular protests in political language. As such, one can understand the fall of Thomas Clap as Connecticut’s rejection of illiberalism.

I enjoyed writing this paper and decided to expand its argument for my senior thesis. My hypothesis was that, because Clap’s ouster was preceded by robust regional debates, the same would be true for other high-profile departures in colonial Connecticut politics. In this regard, I was particularly interested in Thomas Fitch, the Governor of the Colony who was ousted in 1766. I also wanted to study Jared Ingersoll, a Commissioner of the Stamp Act who was forced to resign in response to popular unrest.

This thesis draws on an observation from my seminar paper: that the language of religious radicalism was closely tied to that of political revolution. When Connecticut *New Lights* compared Clap to a “Chief Dictator” intent upon “purg[ing] both Church and State” of heretics, they drew a strong equivalence between religious and secular liberty. Furthermore, in evoking this Whig language of the “rights of Englishmen” and “arbitrary power,” these religious dissidents anticipated the language of the Stamp Act protestors in 1766. For my thesis, I wanted to see if this pattern was narrowly confined to debates surrounding Yale College, or if it applied more widely across religious debates in the colony.

I also wanted to follow two suggestions from Professor Steven Pincus. After completing my seminar paper in Fall 2014, I sent it to Professor Pincus, my academic advisor, for some additional feedback. He recommended that I consider the scope and implications of a political rivalry between East and West Connecticut. He also suggested that I study the history of the Susquehanna Company and the dynamic of political economy in this geographical divide. Both of these suggestions were helpful in shaping my current topic, though Professor Pincus has not seen any drafts of this thesis.

The argument of my thesis is best understood in contrast to Richard Bushman’s *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, the classic history of the period. Bushman and I share a similar focus on the role of religious and economic forces in colonial Connecticut. We disagree, however, over the role and influence of ideas. For Bushman, the history of Connecticut is history of declining Puritan values. Once the Great

Awakening and newfound economic opportunities had ‘cleared away’ the established order, Bushman argues, a revolutionary spirit was ready to fill the void. This argument draws from the methodological tools of the Frankfurt School, especially the concept of social reproduction. It has gained traction with subsequent authors on the topic, including Edith Bailey, Christopher Collier, Albert Van Dusen, Robert Taylor, and Richard Warfle.

My thesis attempts to give a proper intellectual history of colonial Connecticut. In the style of Quentin Skinner, it contextualizes key ideas by reconstructing popular debates and paying close attention to political language. More than other historians of Connecticut, I have focused on the minutiae of pamphlet debates as a window into the roots of radicalism. This approach yields a richer understanding of colonial Connecticut than that of Bushman, allowing historians to connect disparate debates—from religious toleration to colonial expansion—to a common contest of factional politics.

It was this close reading of pamphlets that pushed me to focus on the development of a unified, radical faction. As I noticed the similarities in arguments between the colony’s religious and economic debates, I wondered if their participants overlapped as well; were radicals in religion also radicals in expansion? A trip to the Connecticut Historical Society and a read through the William Samuel Johnson Papers helped confirm this suspicion, as did a letter from Benjamin Gale to Jared Ingersoll. Writing on January 13, 1765, Gale described a manuscript that was,

a historical account of the several Factions which have subsisted in this Colony originating with the New London Society—thence Metamorphosizing into the faction for proper emissions on Loan, thence into New Light, in y^e Susquehanna & Delaware factions—into Orthodoxy—now into Stamp duty—the actors the same, each change drawing in some new members

Although I could not find this manuscript, the letter was a hint in the right direction. In some ways, my thesis resembles the “historical account” Gale describes.

In doing my primary research, the assistance of Bill Landis at Yale’s Manuscripts and Archives Library was invaluable. I also appreciate the help of those at the Beinecke Memorial Library, the Sterling microfilm reading room, the New Haven Historical Society, the Connecticut Historical Society, and the United States Library of Congress. Julian B. Boyd’s edition of the *Susquehanna Company Papers* was an important resource, as was the collection of pamphlets on *America’s Historical Imprints*, a Readex database.

In secondary research, I have drawn heavily from Christopher Grasso’s *A Speaking Aristocracy*, a history of religion and public life in colonial Connecticut. Grasso strikes a compelling balance between intellectual exegesis and factional politics, explaining both the religious origins of the Great Awakening and its concrete implications for Connecticut politics. His work helped me strike a similar balance.

Appendix I: The Connecticut Upper House

Membership

	1757	1758	1759	1760	1761
	Roger Newton	Roger Newton	Roger Newton	Roger Newton	Roger Newton
	Ebenezer Silliman	Ebenezer Silliman	Ebenezer Silliman	Ebenezer Silliman	Ebenezer Silliman
	Jonathan Trumble	Jonathan Trumble	Jonathan Trumble	Jonathan Trumble	Jonathan Trumble
	Hezekiah Huntington	Hezekiah Huntington	Hezekiah Huntington	Hezekiah Huntington	Hezekiah Huntington
	Andrew Burr	Andrew Burr	Andrew Burr	Andrew Burr	Andrew Burr
	John Chester	John Chester	John Chester	John Chester	John Chester
	Thomas Wells	Thomas Wells	Thomas Wells	Thomas Wells	Elisha Sheldon
	Benjamin Hall	Benjamin Hall	Benjamin Hall	Benjamin Hall	Benjamin Hall
	Roger Wolcott, Jr.	Roger Wolcott, Jr.	Roger Wolcott, Jr.	Matthew Griswold	Matthew Griswold
	Jonathan Huntington	Jabez Hamlin	Jabez Hamlin	Jabez Hamlin	Jabez Hamlin
	Daniel Edwards	Daniel Edwards	Daniel Edwards	Daniel Edwards	Daniel Edwards
	Phineas Lyman	Phineas Lyman	Phineas Lyman	Shubael Conant	Shubael Conant

Residency

	1757	1758	1759	1760	1761
	West	West	West	West	West
	West	West	West	West	West
	East	East	East	East	East
	East	East	East	East	East
	East	East	East	East	East
	West	West	West	West	West
	West	West	West	West	East
	West	West	West	West	West
	West	West	West	East	East
	East	West	West	West	West
	West	West	West	West	West
	West	West	West	East	East

Analysis

	1757	1758	1759	1760	1761
% East	33%	25%	25%	42%	50%
% West	67%	75%	75%	58%	50%
Turnover		8%	0%	17%	8%

Membership

	1762	1763	1764	1765	1766
	Eliphalet Dyer	Eliphalet Dyer	Eliphalet Dyer	Eliphalet Dyer	Eliphalet Dyer
	Ebenezer Silliman	Ebenezer Silliman	Ebenezer Silliman	Ebenezer Silliman	William Pitkin
	Jonathan Trumble	Jonathan Trumble	Jonathan Trumble	Jonathan Trumble	Roger Sherman
	Hezekiah	Hezekiah	Hezekiah	Hezekiah	
	Huntington	Huntington	Huntington	Huntington	Hezekiah Huntington
	Andrew Burr	Andrew Burr	Jabez Huntington	Jabez Huntington	Jabez Huntington
	John Chester	John Chester	John Chester	John Chester	Robert Walker
	Elisha Sheldon	Elisha Sheldon	Elisha Sheldon	Elisha Sheldon	Elisha Sheldon
	Benjamin Hall	Benjamin Hall	Benjamin Hall	Benjamin Hall	Abraham Davenport
	Matthew Griswold	Matthew Griswold	Matthew Griswold	Matthew Griswold	Matthew Griswold
	Jabez Hamlin	Jabez Hamlin	Jabez Hamlin	Jabez Hamlin	William S, Johnson
	Daniel Edwards	Daniel Edwards	Daniel Edwards	Daniel Edwards	Joseph Spencer
	Shubael Conant	Shubael Conant	Shubael Conant	Shubael Conant	Shubael Conant

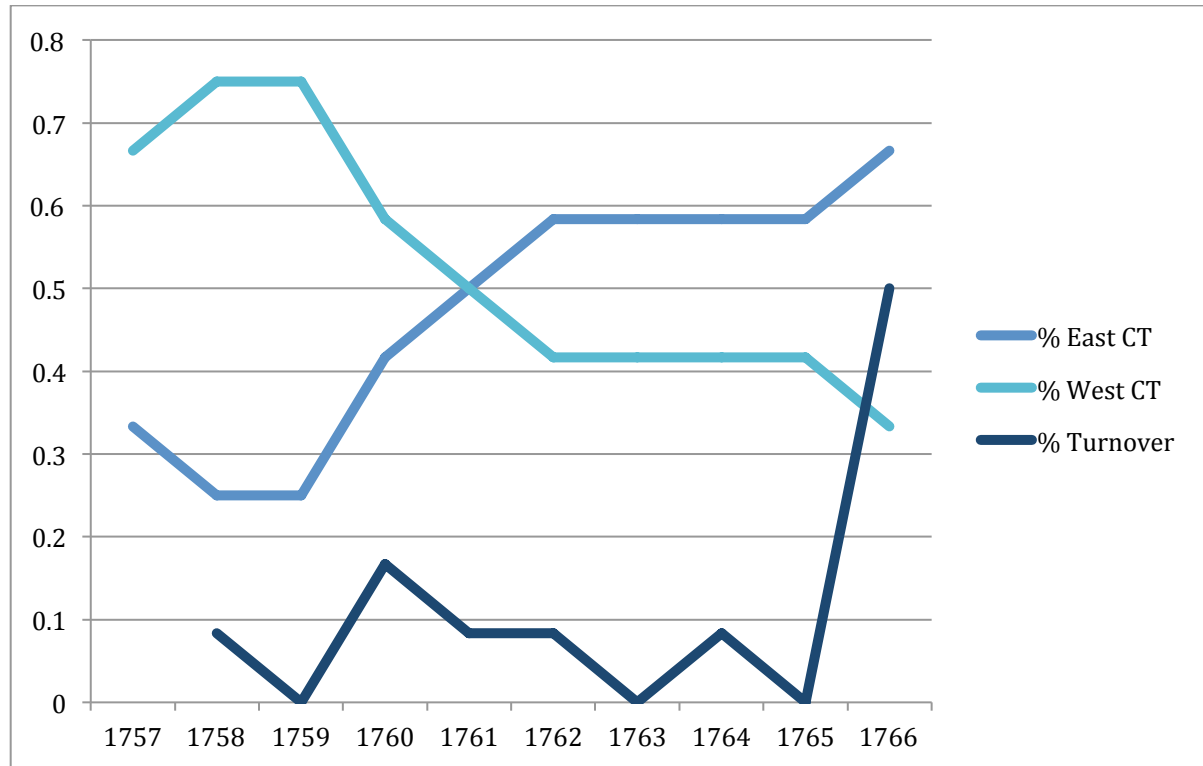
Residency

	1762	1763	1764	1765	1766
	East	East	East	East	East
	West	West	West	West	West
	East	East	East	East	West
	East	East	East	East	East
	East	East	East	East	East
	West	West	West	West	West
	East	East	East	East	East
	West	West	West	West	East
	East	East	East	East	East
	West	West	West	West	West
	West	West	West	West	East
	East	East	East	East	East

Analysis

	1762	1763	1764	1765	1766
% East	58%	58%	58%	58%	67%
% West	42%	42%	42%	42%	33%
Turnover	8%	0%	8%	0%	50%

Membership Change Over Time



Assumptions: The membership of the upper house is recorded in the *Public Records of Connecticut*, volumes 11 and 12. The records also contain the members' hometowns, or home districts, which I used to assign the members' status as "East" or "West." Following Ezra Stiles, the Connecticut River was the "dividing line;" all towns to the West of that river were counted as Western towns, and visa versa.

Membership in the upper house was decided through colony-wide vote. As such, it is a good proxy for colonial influence—that is, which factions and groups were influential.

Takeaways: The graph above shows two things, both discussed throughout my thesis. First, between 1757 and 1766, Eastern representatives gained control of the upper house. Second, 1766 was the first tumultuous election in the revolutionary period, with high turnover removing longstanding incumbents.

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