

**religion and
higher education
in gilded age america
the case of wheaton college**

richard s. taylor

On March 8, 1860, Chicago's Congregationalist newspaper carried a notice announcing the founding of Wheaton College. Dedicated to Congregationalist principles, it was to be a school especially deserving of denominational support, wrote Wheaton's first president, Jonathan Blanchard, who hoped to establish his college as the premier Congregationalist school in Illinois.¹ By 1868, however, Blanchard's plans lay in ruins, his claims for Wheaton having been rejected by influential churchmen. Rebuffed, Blanchard parleyed his frustrations into a new style of educational leadership, and as Blanchard's style changed, Wheaton's Congregationalist character faded. After 1868 the college emerged as a non-denominational Christian institution distinguished by its uncompromising commitment to a defensive brand of evangelical piety based upon conversion, but expressed primarily in very specific intellectual and behavioral standards.

Wheaton's subsequent development followed patterns set by its first president.² In 1882 Jonathan Blanchard retired in favor of his son Charles, who guided Wheaton's destiny until 1925. Reiterating his father's message, Charles successfully appealed to a constituency of conservative evangelicals frightened by Gilded Age intellectual, social, and cultural trends that they regarded as contrary to traditional Christian values. In the twentieth century, the younger Blanchard led Wheaton into the Fundamentalist movement. And the school, under Charles Blanchard's successors, retained its conservative character,

becoming such an important center of evangelical Protestantism that one journalist, struggling to find a metaphor suggesting Wheaton's position, described it as the "Harvard of the Bible Belt."³ Another observer, noting the cluster of national evangelical organizations headquartered near the school, characterized the college and its environs (somewhat incongruously) as the "Vatican of Evangelicals."⁴

Because of Wheaton's standing among American evangelicals, the school's past clearly warrants study in and of itself. But Wheaton's early years also illumine larger aspects of religious and educational history that deserve more careful attention. Historians of religion now depict the late-nineteenth century as a fluid period of experiment, adjustment, and realignment for American Protestants. Although life was growing more secular in some places, it was apparently growing more religious elsewhere, and if liberal theology attracted some evangelicals, others moved in a more conservative direction.⁵ Similar patterns also are appearing in the history of higher education. The post-Civil War period can no longer be regarded simply as an era of secularization in the nation's colleges and universities. While the ancient link between piety and learning atrophied at some schools, religion flourished on other Gilded Age campuses.⁶ But where and why?

Jonathan Blanchard originally intended to organize Wheaton's public image around its affiliation with the Congregational church. A former president of Knox College who lost control of that school in a bitter struggle with the Presbyterians, Blanchard was strongly identified with Congregational interests in Illinois when he moved to the village of Wheaton, near Chicago, in 1860 to assume the presidency of Illinois Institute, a small nearly-bankrupt college that had been founded seven years earlier by a coalition of Wesleyan Methodists and local boosters.⁷ Blanchard wrote a new charter, renamed the school Wheaton College, and added several Congregationalists to the board of trustees. "The college is hereafter to be under the control of *Orthodox Congregationalists*, with the cooperation of its founders and friends, the Wesleyans," resolved the board. Because Congregational church polity precluded formal denominational ownership or management of educational institutions, Wheaton's Congregational character was necessarily informal, meaning that most of the school's faculty and trustees belonged to the denomination and that Wheaton was endorsed by the General Congregational Association of Illinois, as were Illinois, Knox, and Beloit colleges.⁸

Soon after taking office, Blanchard began advertising Wheaton as a distinctly denominational college. "My personal motive in coming to this place," he told readers of Chicago's *Congregational Herald* in 1860,

was that there might be in this State, a College whose officers could, without giving offence, state to their pupils that: Ac-

ording to the New Testament; the only body on earth that has, or can have, just power over the standing of church-members, is the local church; and that all other church contrivances are simple usurpations and adding to God's Word.⁹

Congregational principles, argued Blanchard, could not be freely expressed by the faculty of "mixed colleges" (schools sustained by more than one denomination). It was clear that Blanchard hoped to wean Congregational patronage away from nearby competitors—Illinois, Beloit, and Knox—by representing Wheaton as a more faithful and zealous champion of denominational principles. After all, he reasoned, "there is today—quarter of a million of church property in Chicago alone, produced by Congregationalists and their descendants."¹⁰ President Julian Sturtevant of Illinois College, who was trying hard to satisfy both Presbyterian and Congregationalist constituents of his "mixed college," worried that Wheaton would become the "pet of the Congregationalists."¹¹

That was precisely Jonathan Blanchard's plan. The mid-nineteenth century was an era of growing denominational consciousness, on which Blanchard hoped to capitalize.¹² Stressing his zeal for "Scriptural church government," he pointed to his defense of Congregationalism during the unsuccessful struggle for control of Knox, attacking the notion of inter-denominational cooperation in education. "Two cannot walk together except they be agreed," argued Blanchard in a review of Julian Sturtevant's 1860 defense of colleges founded on a "broad denominational basis." Sturtevant's "grand defect," charged Blanchard, "is that he totally ignores . . . *the difference between* Presbyterianism and Congregationalism." And Congregationalism, hoped Blanchard, would be the key to Wheaton College's identity and survival.¹³

Blanchard did not plan, however, to rely solely upon a Congregationalist constituency. He also appealed to residents of the region around the college, and he dunned reform-minded evangelicals, who were drawn to Wheaton because of its "radical reform principles."

Blanchard, who was forty-nine when he came to Wheaton, was a veteran abolitionist and an earnest advocate of other evangelical reform causes—temperance, sabbatarianism, and anti-masonry. He was also a champion of "reformatory" education.¹⁴ Believing that colleges should instill a "zeal for reformation," Blanchard had once called for a "martyr age of Colleges and Seminaries," schools that would "send forth a host of young men, at the sound of whose going the whole land shall tremble—men who will not rest while one way or practice in the community violates the law of God."¹⁵ That philosophy of education was embodied in a resolution passed by Wheaton's board of trustees shortly after Blanchard arrived. "The instruction and influence of the Institution shall bear decidedly against all forms of error and sin," resolved the board.

The testimony of God's Word against slaveholding, Secret Societies and their spurious worships; against intemperance, human inventions in Church Government, war, and whatever else shall clearly appear to contravene the Kingdom and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, are to be kept good.¹⁶

Stressing Wheaton's testimony against "error and sin," Blanchard appealed to the wealthy patrons of evangelical reform. Wheaton began as a "radical reformatory institution," he wrote to Gerrit Smith, "and I thought as I have toiled steadily with you for the slaves now for 25 years without ever taxing your generosity, that you would help me."¹⁷ Smith did help, although more substantial support came from J.P. Williston, a Massachusetts merchant and patron of evangelical education who was an abolitionist and an old friend of Blanchard's. Williston had a special regard for colleges devoted to evangelical reform, and during the first years of Blanchard's term, he donated more than \$7,000 to Wheaton.¹⁸

Local support was also important. Residents of the town and region around Wheaton made substantial contributions in both cash and land. "Friends in Wheaton and Du Page County" had given "above *twenty-thousand dollars*" in "cash, notes, and lands," announced the trustees in 1860. Outstanding among local donors was Warren Wheaton, an early settler and college trustee who contributed fifty acres, in return for which he had the school named after him.¹⁹

By drawing on local supporters and reform-minded evangelicals, Jonathan Blanchard managed to keep Wheaton solvent through the Civil War years, when low enrollments and a financial depression closed more well-established schools. Helping to carry the college were enrollments in the preparatory department. While, in 1860, there were only thirteen students in the regular classical course, there were over one hundred in the academy.²⁰ Only three graduates, all young women completing the special, three-year "ladies course," received diplomas in 1864. Still, neither Illinois College nor Beloit even held commencements that year.²¹ And when, in 1863, Blanchard sold the school's boarding hall to pay the last of a \$6,000 debt, friends of the college boasted that Wheaton was debt free.²² At war's end, however, it was still a marginal institution drawing on a very narrow constituency.

By 1865 a drive was underway to enlarge that constituency. Blanchard planned an ambitious building program, and he hoped to endow several professorships. For those purposes, he once again stressed Wheaton's denominational character.

This time, eastern Congregationalists were the primary target of Blanchard's appeal. In 1865 John Calvin Webster joined Wheaton's faculty from the pastorate of a Massachusetts Congregational church. Although Webster seemed ill-prepared for college teaching, his abolitionist background and eastern connections made him an attractive

candidate for a faculty appointment. After spending several months raising eastern funds to endow his professorship, Webster moved to Wheaton in the summer of 1865.²³ That same year, he assisted Blanchard in presenting Wheaton's application to the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West (also known as the Western College Society), an organization that for more than twenty years had been channeling funds from eastern churches, mostly Presbyterian and Congregationalist, to a select group of western colleges.²⁴

Given Blanchard's fund-raising strategy, it was particularly important that Wheaton secure College Society approval. Not only did the SPCTEW act as a conduit for eastern funds, it also functioned as an informal accrediting agency for western colleges.²⁵ By granting an appropriation to Wheaton, the College Society's board of directors (a group of eminent Protestants) would, in effect, recognize the college as a legitimate educational enterprise, a worthy object of eastern benevolence. A rejection would, on the other hand, diminish Wheaton's standing with many Congregationalists, weakening Blanchard's contention that his school was the only truly Congregationalist college in Illinois.

It was, therefore, a serious blow when the College Society twice rejected Wheaton's application—first in 1865 and again in 1868. In both instances, Wheaton was refused primarily because influential Illinois Congregationalists opposed Blanchard's bid for support, even though his claims were based on Wheaton's distinctively Congregational character. Theron Baldwin, the College Society's corresponding secretary, wrote to Blanchard in 1865 that Wheaton's president had produced only one "written testimonial" from "all the church west." Of particular importance were Chicago Congregationalists, whose influence was growing with their city's population. According to Baldwin, one important Chicago Congregationalist wrote such a harsh reply to the College Society's inquiries about Wheaton that its publication "would have killed Wheaton as dead as a hammer."²⁶

Why were many Illinois Congregationalists opposed to Wheaton? In his published report to Wheaton's trustees following the College Society's 1868 decision, Blanchard charged that "the chief and most effectual opposition to Wheaton College grows out of ITS OPPOSITION TO SECRET SOCIETIES." He argued that prominent Congregationalists had defeated Wheaton's College Society application and were plotting to destroy the school because of its anti-secrecy testimony. Wheaton's position, he wrote, was similar to abolitionist colleges ostracized for their righteous but unpopular stand against slavery before the Civil War.²⁷

Blanchard's accusations were rooted in his personal history, in his isolation from important centers of denominational power, and in his desire to find a renewed sense of purpose for himself and a workable identity for his college.

Like many other reform-minded evangelicals of his generation, Blanchard was a long-standing opponent of secret societies. He grew up in rural Vermont at a time when organized anti-masonry was sweeping through New England.²⁸ Even after the anti-masonic movement declined in the 1830s, Blanchard occasionally preached and wrote against secrecy, reiterating familiar anti-lodge formulas of the period. Secret societies, he warned, were “anti-republican and unchristian” institutions that would destroy both true religion and democratic government.²⁹ At times, Blanchard also exhibited a tendency to blame secret societies for his own defeats and frustrations. He had believed, for example, that his enemies at Knox College were using local lodges as meeting places to conspire against him.³⁰ When the Civil War dashed his hopes for a peaceful settlement of the slavery question, he also attributed it to the influence of southern secret societies.³¹

Although secret societies were on the list of evils that Wheaton’s trustees vowed in 1860 to oppose, anti-masonry was a relatively insignificant part of the college’s public image until 1865. That year a local lodge applied to the circuit court for an order requiring Wheaton to reinstate two students suspended under a school rule prohibiting attendance at secret society meetings.³² Even though the courts eventually sustained the college, it seemed to Blanchard and his followers that the Masons were trying to destroy Wheaton. Blanchard’s son-in-law reported, from a nearby town, that “earnest advocates” of secret societies were making “quite an effort” to “prevent students from the neighborhood from going to Wheaton” on account of the college’s opposition to “secret combinations.”³³

In 1865 Blanchard launched a public crusade against secrecy that eventually flowered into a miniature revival of the old anti-masonic movement. He began introducing anti-masonic resolutions at annual meetings of the Illinois General Congregational Association, and in a pamphlet entitled “Circular to Congregationalists,” he appealed for money to erect a new building at Wheaton by characterizing the college as both a Congregationalist and an anti-masonic institution.³⁴ In 1867 Wheaton’s president was instrumental in organizing the National Christian Association Opposed to Secret Societies. The following year, he began publishing an anti-secrecy newspaper, the *Christian Cynosure*, which he edited for the next twenty-four years.³⁵ And as Wheaton’s students and faculty joined Blanchard’s crusade, the college became linked in the public mind with anti-masonry. “The ‘anti-secrecy movement’ originated with Dr. Blanchard, and those associated with him, in connection with Wheaton College,” wrote one friendly observer.³⁶

Yet Wheaton’s troubles with the College Society did not, as Blanchard charged, stem from the school’s opposition to secret societies. Congregationalist antagonism toward Blanchard and his college pre-dated the emergence of Wheaton’s anti-masonic image; anti-

secrecy was, in part, one symptom of Blanchard's isolation from important centers of denominational power, not its cause. In 1863, long before Blanchard began his public attack on masonry, Julian Sturtevant reported that Wheaton's president did not have the "confidence of Congregationalists at Chicago to any considerable extent."³⁷

The lack of confidence sprang from several sources. Some Congregationalists were simply committed to competing institutions. Friends of Illinois, Knox and Beloit colleges resented Blanchard's claim that his was the only truly Congregational college in the region, while Chicago Congregationalists were absorbed in the struggle to build a new theological seminary.³⁸ More importantly, many Congregationalists regarded Blanchard as an unreliable individual who had been responsible for the Presbyterian takeover at Knox. "Blanchard's influence is disastrous to any thing which he touches," warned Sturtevant in 1860, and some of Blanchard's former allies were inclined to agree.³⁹ "Somewhat impulsive" and "not a truly, well ballanced [*sic*] mind" was how one of Knox's Congregationalist trustees described him; a "bad general" said another.⁴⁰ Blanchard's crusade against secrecy reinforced, but did not create, an already widespread impression that he was not dependable.

By 1868 Blanchard's denominational strategy had failed, and he blamed it on the influence of secret societies. His charges were a mixture of sincere conviction and shrewd calculation as he used anti-masonry to cope with his personal frustrations and to forge a new identity for his college. By arguing that Wheaton was being persecuted for righteousness sake, Blanchard was able to re-focus the school's public image. No longer would "scriptural church government" be emblazoned on Wheaton's banner; instead, Blanchard began touting his school's loyal defense of evangelical intellectual and behavioral standards that seemed threatened by secret societies and other forms of Gilded Age "error and sin."

After 1868 Wheaton's Congregational character faded, and the school emerged as a non-denominational Christian college distinguished primarily by its uncompromising defense of evangelical standards of faith and practice. Although Wheaton's position seemed identical to that of the many liberal arts colleges that dotted the educational landscape prior to the Civil War, Wheaton's stance really reflected a subtle change in the evangelicalism that had been an optimistic, culture-shaping force in the antebellum period. It was evangelicalism on the defensive that Wheaton came to represent.

"We are fallen on perilous times," wrote Jonathan Blanchard, for whom anti-secrecy became a way of organizing and expressing his fears about Gilded Age social, cultural and intellectual trends that were creating conditions seemingly contrary to evangelical standards.⁴¹ Urbanization, industrialism and immigration were producing a social and cultural pluralism antithetical to evangelical visions of a homogeneous Christian commonwealth. At the same time, scientific

naturalism and theological liberalism were eroding intellectual standards that had been accepted by the evangelical community prior to the Civil War.⁴² “Unless there is a rallying to the doctrine of the word of God and salvation by the atonement of Christ,” warned Blanchard in 1873, “we are already in the great apostasy which must precede the ‘coming day of the Lord.’”⁴³

Those fears shaped Wheaton’s new identity. A steadfast defense of evangelical principles against cultural change and against “non-committal,” apostate churchmen became Wheaton’s trademark. “No idlers, tobacco-users, frivolous, or evil-minded persons are knowingly retained” as students, wrote Charles Blanchard.⁴⁴ That uncompromising, defensive quality set Wheaton apart from secular or secularizing colleges and universities. Wheaton was neither one of those “large and powerful institutions” where “mere secular training” was offered, nor one of those schools offering “professed” Christianity that “plays cards and billiards, drinks wine, goes to the theater, joins the Masonic lodge and does other things of like character.”⁴⁵ Wheaton stood for the old evangelical verities, for what Jonathan Blanchard called “American principles and institutions.”⁴⁶

“The precious spark of liberty has been kindled and was preserved by the Puritans alone,” wrote one Wheaton senior in an 1872 class assignment on the “American movement.” “What has made America?” asked another essayist. “We answer in a word—the Bible. . . . Yes; it is the Bible that gives America her greatness.”⁴⁷ Wheaton students learned from Jonathan Blanchard that the dynamic essence of American culture sprang from English Puritanism and that American political and economic greatness rested on a Christian foundation.

They also learned that there was a movement afoot to “dechristianize the United States.”⁴⁸ Immigrants in America’s burgeoning cities broke the sanctity of the Protestant sabbath and appeared enthralled by strong drink, sinful “amusements,” and two holidays of “pagan origin and Romish consecration”—Christmas and Easter.⁴⁹ A coalition of “infidels, Papists and Jews” seemed bent on secularizing public education by removing the Bible from the schools.⁵⁰ The era’s intellectuals were beginning to accept naturalism, particularly Darwinism, which Blanchard characterized as the “sickly product of a trifling intellect.”⁵¹ And, worst of all, there was the smug optimism of mainline Protestants and theological liberals, who seemed oblivious to many of the dangers threatening American culture.⁵² “This struggle for American principles and institutions . . . has need of Wheaton College,” concluded Jonathan Blanchard in an 1870 appeal for funds to complete the school’s main building.⁵³

It was estimated that the new building, which was really a massive enlargement of an older structure, would cost \$80,000. Only \$10,000 of that sum had been raised when the cornerstone was laid in 1868, and for the next decade Wheaton’s fate seemed dependent upon fi-

nancing the building, an enterprise that culminated in a challenge to Jonathan Blanchard's leadership and a potential threat to Wheaton's new identity.⁵⁴

The building's plans reflected that identity. It was to be a fortress-like, three-story, stone structure with two wings and a central tower topped by battlements. An "arsenal" was how Jonathan Blanchard, who regarded the building as a symbol of Wheaton's resistance to secularism, described it. If "we can complete our buildings," he wrote, "men will think it possible for a college to live and not bend the knee to Baal." But "if I fail to complete that building," he admitted, "I am crippled and must give up."⁵⁵

Like-minded evangelicals responded to Blanchard's appeals. Many contributions came in small amounts from rural Illinoisans who heard Blanchard preach during one of his frequent fund-raising tours. "If I live long enough to canvass the rural districts in our State where I am known we can complete our buildings," he wrote, conceding, however, that towns seemed "foresworn" against the college and that "our leading clergy and newspapers *depend* on the towns."⁵⁶ Wheaton found its constituency in the small villages and countryside where evangelicals who shared Blanchard's concerns about American culture heard his lectures against the lodge and made small contributions to his college building fund. And in a few cases, there were larger donations. One such contribution came from Joseph Tillitson of Cambridge, Illinois, who visited Wheaton to see if the college was faithful to its principles and then made a "liberal donation of land."⁵⁷

Contributions did not, however, meet expenses. At one point, Wheaton's trustees suspended work on the new building for about two years, and in 1870 Blanchard took a leave of absence from teaching to solicit funds. Although he raised enough to resume construction, the college was forced to borrow in order to finish its building, which was dedicated in 1873. By that time, Wheaton had accumulated a debt of \$20,000, and the nation had entered an economic depression that would last five years.⁵⁸ Blanchard continued canvassing the small towns and "rural districts," boasting that he had never "asked aid in a single church and been refused."⁵⁹ But the totals were still discouraging. "To raise twenty thousand dollars, in small sums, and keep down two thousand dollars annual interest is a long road in this hot weather," he admitted in the summer of 1874. And in 1877 he wrote, "our funds are deranged; . . . interest is not paid; and the struggle is sharp, beyond precedent."⁶⁰

In 1877 a movement to replace Jonathan Blanchard as Wheaton's president reached its climax. To cover operating expenses, Blanchard had persuaded the executive committee of the board of trustees to borrow \$3,000 from the endowment fund for Professor John Calvin Webster's chair. When Webster bitterly complained, arguing that he had raised the money and that Blanchard had no right to divert it for other purposes, opponents of Wheaton's administration seized the op-

portunity.⁶¹ Members of a local “citizens committee” circulated a petition asking for a change in the school’s administration. It seemed to the four hundred “residents of Wheaton and vicinity” who signed the petition that the college was dangerously in debt and that Blanchard was at fault. Not only had he exceeded his authority by borrowing from an endowment fund, but also Wheaton’s president was “autocratic” and had made the school unpopular by running it as an “anti-masonic institution.”⁶²

“With its present spirit Wheaton College is narrowing its constituency to a small class of men of extreme views on a single question,” charged an anti-Blanchard trustee. Objecting to the “spirit, aim and moral quality of the administration,” Blanchard’s detractors traced Wheaton’s financial woes to its president’s anti-masonic obsession. They argued that the school had become so identified with anti-masonry that Wheaton had lost many of its old friends, particularly in the surrounding community, where men of “intelligence, wealth, morality, and religion” had turned against it. And they claimed that Wheaton was a local college belonging to the “Christian community around it,” a school that should offer a “broad, generous, liberal education under moral and religious influences”—not the narrow, one-sided morality of Jonathan Blanchard.⁶³

It was clear to Blanchard’s friends that Wheaton’s distinctive character was at stake, that the opposition wished to make the school “like other colleges.”⁶⁴ Anti-masonry was not the only issue, argued one faculty member, Professor E.D. Bailey, who traced the troubles at Wheaton to a general erosion of faith and practice within Protestantism and to the decline of evangelical hegemony within American culture. Blanchard’s critics had simply departed from the “underlying *principles* which Wheaton College so persistently maintains,” charged Bailey. And he identified a constituency for Wheaton very different from that described by Blanchard’s opponents, who viewed the college primarily as a local institution. “President Blanchard is the child of a growing element of Protestants of all churches,” he wrote, “while at the same time he is their leader.” In that “growing element” are evangelicals alarmed “that the strength and vigor of the principles which gave birth to our Christian nation are giving way before the rising power of the principles which once quailed before Puritanism.” Many Protestants within all denominations are “fully aroused by the determined attitude of Infidelity and Catholicism striking hands to declare this a Godless nation,” wrote Bailey, who repeated the familiar list of “popular evils” to illustrate the erosion of evangelical influence in American culture—sabbath desecration, secret societies, secular education and “heathen or Catholic festival days.” Worried evangelicals were determined to oppose such “popular evils,” concluded Bailey. They would use “all just means,” and they would sustain Wheaton College.⁶⁵

Had Blanchard’s critics succeeded, Wheaton might well have be-

come “like other colleges” where there was a gradual erosion of the link between piety and learning and where character and culture were slowly being substituted for Christianity. But Blanchard retained control. At their annual meeting in 1877, Wheaton’s trustees removed John Calvin Webster from his professorship by a vote of thirteen to three. The three anti-Blanchard trustees soon resigned.⁶⁶ Wheaton would continue to seek its constituency among those evangelicals who were angered by America’s cultural apostasy, frustrated by their seeming inability to influence the course of events and alienated from the complacent optimism of the mainline Protestant churches. It was in the late 1870s and 1880s that their anger and alienation began coalescing into the movement that became, in the twentieth century, Fundamentalism.⁶⁷ Thanks to Jonathan Blanchard’s victory, Wheaton was in a position to capitalize on those trends.

“God has provided for the entire extinction of our College debt by little short of a financial miracle,” wrote Jonathan Blanchard in the fall of 1878.⁶⁸ It had taken eighteen months to raise the \$22,000 necessary to pay the college debt. Charles Blanchard, who spent the summer of 1878 raising money, reported that donations came from thirteen different states. The largest contributions came from wealthy trustees and members of the college community. Significantly, those subscriptions were made on the condition that the “principles of the College should be maintained.”⁶⁹

In 1882 Charles Blanchard became president of Wheaton, a position that he would hold for forty-three years. It was during Charles Blanchard’s regime that the Fundamentalist movement reached maturity and that Wheaton earned its reputation as the “Harvard of the Bible Belt.”⁷⁰ But the school’s distinctive character had clearly taken shape much earlier. Its defensive piety and image as an “island of resistance in a turbulent sea of change” were products of an era that can only be fully understood after scholars have lavished as much attention on schools like Wheaton as they have on the secularizing colleges and universities that once occupied center-stage in histories of Gilded Age higher education.⁷¹

Springfield, Illinois

notes

1. Jonathan Blanchard, “Wheaton College,” *Chicago Congregational Herald* (hereafter cited as *CH*), March 8, 1860.

2. There are three general accounts of Wheaton’s history, all written from an evangelical perspective. They all emphasize continuity rather than change in the school’s past: Clyde S. Kilby, *Minority of One: The Biography of Jonathan Blanchard* (Grand Rapids, 1959), 142-219; W. Wyeth Willard, *Fire on the Prairie: The Story of Wheaton College* (Wheaton, 1960); and Thomas A. Askew, Jr., “The Liberal Arts College Encounters Intellectual Change: A Comparative Study of Education at Knox and Wheaton Colleges, 1837-1925” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1969). See also Richard S. Taylor, “Seeking the Kingdom: A Study in the Career of Jonathan Blanchard, 1811-1892” (Ph.D. diss., Northern Illinois University, 1977), 457-568.

3. Sharon Johnson, “The Harvard of the Bible Belt,” *Change* 6 (March 1974), 17-20. Johnson’s outsider’s perspective should be balanced by Harold Berk, “Christianity in the Classroom,” *Change* 6 (May 1974), 4-5.

4. "Evangelicals Flock to Wheaton," *Springfield [Illinois] Journal-Register*, July 24, 1978.
5. The best and most recent account of Gilded Age religious developments from this perspective is Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb, Ill., 1971). See also James F. Findlay, Jr., *Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist, 1837-1899* (Chicago, 1969), 1-21.
6. James McLachlan, "The American College in the Nineteenth Century: Toward a Reappraisal," *Teachers College Record* 80 (December 1978), 304-305; and Timothy Smith, *Uncommon Schools: Christian Colleges and Social Idealism in Midwestern America, 1820-1950* (Indianapolis, 1978), 48-59.
7. Blanchard's career at Knox is best described in Kilby, *Minority of One*, 103-141; Taylor, "Seeking the Kingdom," 310-455; Askew, "Liberal Arts College," 9-39; and Hermann R. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-Slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College* (New York, 1959), 221-237, 250-301, 329-394. For Illinois Institute, see Kilby, *Minority of One*, 142-147.
8. Askew, "Liberal Arts College," 40; Wheaton College Board of Trustees, Minutes, Jan. 2, 1860, Wheaton College Archives. See also "An Act to Incorporate Wheaton College," *Private Laws of Illinois* (1861), 28-30.
9. Blanchard, "Wheaton College," *CH*, March 8, 1860.
10. *Ibid.*; and Blanchard, "'Sectarianism' and the 'Position of Silence,'" *ibid.*, April 18, 1861.
11. Julian Sturtevant to Theron Baldwin, Jan. 2, 1860, Baldwin-Sturtevant Correspondence, Tanner Library, Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois.
12. There are good discussions of the growing denominational role in mid-nineteenth century colleges in Smith, *Uncommon Schools*, 36-48, and W. Bruce Leslie, "Localism, Denominationalism, and Institutional Strategies in Urbanizing America: Three Pennsylvania Colleges, 1870-1915," *History of Education Quarterly* 17 (Fall 1977), 235-256. For the growth of denominational consciousness among mid-nineteenth century Congregationalists see Samuel C. Pearson, "From Church to Denomination: American Congregationalists in the Nineteenth Century," *Church History* 38 (March 1969), 67-87.
13. Sturtevant, "Denominational Colleges," *New Englander* (Feb. 1860), 68-89; and Blanchard, "Denominationalism, In Colleges or Out," *CH*, April 5, 1860.
14. Blanchard's own account of his career is in Blanchard, "My Life Work," in *Sermons and Addresses* (Chicago, 1892), 7-14. Other studies of Blanchard's life are *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "Blanchard, Jonathan"; Kilby, *Minority of One*; and Taylor, "Seeking the Kingdom."
15. Blanchard, *Public Men and Public Institutions of the Church* (Cincinnati, 1842).
16. Wheaton Trustees, Minutes, Jan. 2, 1860.
17. Blanchard to Gerrit Smith, July 3, 1861, Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University (copy in Blanchard Papers).
18. Kilby, *Minority of One*, 104, 108-110, 178; and Blanchard, *The Wheaton Ex-Parte Council and Its Findings. A Discourse by Pres. J. Blanchard, Delivered in the College Chapel, Wheaton, March 24, 1878* (n.p., n.d.).
19. Wheaton Trustees, Minutes, Jan. 2, 1860; and Kilby, *Minority of One*, 142-143, 148.
20. "Report of Committee on Wheaton College," *Minutes of the General Association of Illinois, at Their Seventeenth Annual Meeting, Held in Aurora, May, 1860, with the Narrative of the State of Religion: The Constitution, Articles of Faith, Rules of Business, and the Statistics of the Churches* (Quincy, Ill., 1860), 21-22.
21. "Our Western Correspondence," *New York Independent*, July 14, 1864.
22. Executive Committee of the Wheaton College Trustees, Minutes, May 15, 1863; and "Our Western Correspondence," *Independent*, July 9, 1863.
23. Kilby, *Minority of One*, 155, 176-177; "Our Western Correspondence," *Independent*, March 23, July 27, 1865; and Theron Baldwin to A.B. Rich, Jan. 24, 1868, Letterbook, Papers of the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West (hereafter cited as SPCTEW Papers), Congregational Library, Boston.
24. Baldwin to Blanchard, Aug. 2, 1865, Letterbook, SPCTEW Papers; and J.C. Webster to Baldwin, Oct. 24, 1865, Correspondence Box, SPCTEW Papers.
25. For general accounts of the Western College Society see James Findlay, "The SPCTEW and Western Colleges: Religion and Higher Education in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *History of Education Quarterly* 17 (Spring 1977), 31-62; and Harvey Rader Bostrom, "Contributions to Higher Education by the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, 1843-1874" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1960).
26. Baldwin to Blanchard, Nov. 21, 1865, Letterbook, SPCTEW Papers; and Baldwin to A.B. Rich, Jan. 18, 24, 1868, *ibid.*
27. Blanchard, "Report to the Executive Committee of Wheaton College of His Application to the College Society under Direction of the Wheaton Trustees by the College President," *Wheaton Northern Illinoian*, Dec. 23, 1868.
28. The classic account of the pre-Civil War anti-masonic movement is Charles McCarthy, "The Anti-Masonic Party: A Study of Political Anti-Masonry in the U.S., 1827-1840,"

Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1902, 2 vols. (Washington, 1903), I: 365-574. Blanchard described his early introduction to anti-masonry in [Blanchard], "Editorial Correspondence," *Chicago Christian Cynosure* (hereafter cited as CC), Aug. 23, 1888.

29. Blanchard, *Secret Societies: An Argument before the State Congregational Association, at Rockford, Ill., afterwards Delivered in Two Discourses in the First Presbyterian Church, (Rev. Mr. Bascom's), in Galesburg, Ill., June 22, 1850* (Galesburg, Ill., 1850), 11.

30. Blanchard to Leonard Bacon, Aug. 5, 1850, Leonard Bacon Papers, Yale University.

31. Blanchard to Gerrit Smith, July 12, 1862, March 12, 1869, Smith Papers (copies in Blanchard Papers).

32. Blanchard, "Our Colleges and Secret Societies," CC, April 19, 1873; and Blanchard, "Masonic Descent on Wheaton," *ibid.*, March 18, 1875.

33. James B. Stoddard to Blanchard, Oct. 3, 1865, Blanchard Papers.

34. Blanchard, "The Congregational Church and Secret Societies," *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 31, June 4, 1867; and Blanchard, *Circular to Congregationalists* (n.p., n.d.).

35. There are histories of the National Christian Association and the Gilded Age anti-masonic movement in [Maria Blanchard Cook], "A Short History of the Reform against the Secret Orders," in *A Brief History and Minutes of the National Christian Association* (Chicago, 1875), 4-48; [Blanchard], "The National Christian Association. Sketch of Its History," CC, May 25, 1882; Robert Wayne Smith, "A Study of the Speaking in the Anti-Secrecy Movement, 1868-1882, with Special Reference to the National Christian Association" (Ph.D. diss., State University of Iowa, 1956); Clarence N. Roberts, "The Crusade against Secret Societies and the National Christian Association," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 66 (Winter 1971), 382-400; and Taylor, "Seeking the Kingdom," 504-546.

36. J.R.W. Sloane, "Gossip about Some Colleges," CC, Aug. 1, 1872.

37. Sturtevant to Baldwin, Feb. 11, 1863, Baldwin-Sturtevant Correspondence.

38. Sturtevant to Baldwin, Jan. 2, 23, June 1, 1860, *ibid.*

39. Sturtevant to Baldwin, June 1, 1860, *ibid.*

40. Samuel G. Wright to Baldwin, Oct. 16, 1857, Correspondence Box, SPCTEW Papers; and Sturtevant to Baldwin, June 1, 1860, Baldwin-Sturtevant Correspondence.

41. [Blanchard], "Easter," CC, April 1, 1880.

42. See the following *Cynosure* articles by Blanchard: "Editorial Correspondence," Aug. 12, 1875; "The Sermon," Aug. 6, 1885; and "Darwinism," Sept. 28, 1871.

43. [Blanchard], "An Arch-Apostate," CC, April 3, 1873.

44. Charles A. Blanchard, "Wheaton College," CC, March 8, 1888.

45. "Wheaton College," CC, Sept. 22, 1881.

46. Blanchard to Gerrit Smith, Feb. 1, 1870, Smith Papers (copy in Blanchard Papers).

47. Blanchard described the class assignment in "The American Movement," CC, Nov. 28, 1872. For the quotations see Arthur W. Blunt, "The American Movement. Its Inception under Mary and Elizabeth in the Form of Puritanism," CC, Dec. 5, 1872; and Anastasios D. Zaraphonithes, "The American Movement. American Principles and Institutions Contrasted with Those of Other Nations," CC, May 1, 1873.

48. Blanchard, "Editorial Correspondence," CC, July 23, 1885.

49. See the following *Cynosure* articles by Blanchard: "Editorial Correspondence," Sept. 6, 1870; "Christmas," Dec. 23, 1875; and "Easter," April 1, 1880.

50. [Blanchard], "The Bible Out of Schools," CC, Dec. 28, 1869.

51. [Blanchard], "Darwinism," CC, Sept. 28, 1871.

52. Blanchard, "The Sermon," CC, July 1, 1886; and Blanchard, "Christ's Kingdom on Earth," CC, Aug. 13, 1891.

53. Blanchard to Gerrit Smith, Feb. 1, 1870, Smith Papers (copy in Blanchard Papers).

54. "Wheaton College," in *Seventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Illinois, 1867-1868* (Springfield, Ill., 1869), 227.

55. Blanchard to Gerrit Smith, Dec. 14, Feb. 1, 1870, Feb. 11, 1871, Smith Papers (copies in Blanchard Papers).

56. Blanchard to Gerrit Smith, Feb. 1, 1870, *ibid.*

57. Wheaton Trustees, Minutes, June 27, 1865; Executive Committee of the Wheaton College Trustees, Minutes, March 20, 1872, Nov. 20, Dec. 13, 1875; and CC, Aug. 24, 1882.

58. Oscar F. Lumry, "Wheaton College," in *History of Du Page County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1882), 177; Wheaton Trustees, Minutes, June 28, 1870; and CC, June 5, 1873.

59. Blanchard, "Editorial Correspondence," CC, July 30, 1874.

60. *Ibid.*; and Blanchard to Samuel Greene, Nov. 22, 1877, Blanchard Papers.

61. *A Report of an Ex Parte Council of Congregational Churches Held at Wheaton, Illinois, Feb. 12, 13 and 14, 1878* (Wheaton, n.d.), 22-23; and Blanchard, *Wheaton Ex-Parte Council*. There are secondary accounts of the Webster/Blanchard imbroglio in Askew, "Liberal Arts College," 94-98; Kilby, *Minority of One*, 184-187; and Taylor, "Seeking the Kingdom," 493-498.

62. "The Masonic Attack on Wheaton," CC, June 7, 1877; and "The Wheaton Unpleasantness," *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, June 27, 1877.

63. *Ibid.*; and "Wheaton College," *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1877.

64. Lumry, "Wheaton College," in *History of Du Page County*, 178.

65. E.D. Bailey, "The Conflict of Principles at Wheaton," *CC*, March 21, 1878.

66. "Blanchard's Triumph," *Inter-Ocean*, June 29, 1877; and Wheaton Trustees, Minutes, June 26, 27, 28, 1877.

67. Ernest R. Sandeen, "Towards a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," *Church History* 36 (March 1967), 66-83; Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago, 1970), 132-161; and George Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism," *Church History* 46 (June 1977), 215-232. See also the following exchange: Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," *Christian Scholar's Review* 1 (Winter 1971), 141-151; and Sandeen, "Defining Fundamentalism: A Reply to Professor Marsden," *ibid.* 1 (Spring 1971), 227-233.

68. [Blanchard], "Hail! Readers of the Cynosure!" *CC*, Oct. 3, 1878.

69. *CC*, July 4, Sept. 5, 1878.

70. Wheaton College under Charles Blanchard is best described in Askew, "Liberal Arts College," 183-250.

71. The "island of resistance" image is from Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 64. Among the many examples of the secularization theme are George E. Peterson, *The New England College in the Age of the University* (Amherst, Mass., 1964); Thomas Le Duc, *Piety and Learning at Amherst College, 1865-1912* (New York, 1946); John Barnard, *From Evangelicalism to Progressivism at Oberlin College* (Columbus, 1969); and Winton U. Solberg, "The Conflict between Religion and Secularism at the University of Illinois, 1867-1894," *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 183-199.