

Presidential Address

**STRAW FROM THE HAYSTACK: ISRAEL WARD ANDREWS,
THE WESTERN COLLEGE SOCIETY,
AND EDUCATION IN THE WEST, 1840-1875**

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In the midst of a Berkshire thunderstorm during the summer of 1806, a group of Williams College students took refuge in the closest shelter they could find, which happened to be a nearby haystack.¹ During their sojourn under the hay they felt themselves overcome by the Holy Spirit and began to pray. From that moment of spiritual quickening, at least according to the Williams College tradition, sprang the fervor which sent the Congregationalist mission impulse around the globe in the nineteenth century. Those same spiritual winds, in effect, scattered the straw from that haystack to every corner of the world. Some of those scatterings helped bring education into the west in the form of many of the colleges where we teach today. Indeed, it is the purpose of my paper to use the experiences of Marietta College as a case study in examining the commonality of several Mid-western colleges. Bound together by their sense of mission, their evangelical fervor, and their often espoused anti-Catholicism, a number of these schools worked together in fund raising toward a single purpose: survival. Thus the language of their representatives reflects the somewhat strident tenor of their times.

Among those representatives was Israel Ward Andrews, a graduate of Williams who may have been inspired by the lingering influence of the Haystack Prayer Meeting.² Andrews was the son of the Reverend Mr. William Andrews, a well-known Congregationalist minister who had served churches in Cornwall and Danbury, Connecticut. Ward Andrews, as he called himself when he arrived on that campus in western Massachusetts, was determined that he would secure a college diploma as a protection against less desirable occupations. He had already found that neither farming nor store-keeping were to his liking. At Williams, Andrews embraced collegiate life so fully that two of his brothers

2 OAH PROCEEDINGS

eventually attended there. As a student he plunged wholeheartedly into campus activities as a fraternity member and as a speaker in one of the debating clubs. By his junior year he was an officer and a regular speaker in the debating society to which he belonged. At the annual union program of the two groups in 1836, he was one of the speakers, as he was later at graduation in 1837.

Israel Ward Andrews, along with his fellow debaters, engaged topics of rather serious and somewhat contentious nature. On at least three occasions during his years at Williams, the society to which he belonged considered the same issue: "Ought nunneries be suppressed?"³ Each time the resolution was judged in the affirmative, that Roman Catholic orders should be dissolved. At least in that instance the college students were in step with those in society who were advocating opposition to, if not suppression of, Roman Catholic orders.

Clearly, Andrews was more than comfortable in the pervasively religious atmosphere of his alma mater, but he did not follow in his father's footsteps by becoming a minister. Instead, after graduation he chose the path of many educated young men of his day by teaching; he joined the faculty of an academy at Lee, Massachusetts. As he began his second year there, however, President Mark Hopkins of Williams recommended him for a teaching job at Marietta College, an infant institution in Ohio.

Perhaps it was a lingering spark from that long ago spiritual storm at Williams, or on the other hand, it may have been curiosity about the West which prompted Andrews to undertake his adventure to far away Ohio. Thus in the spring of 1839 the young college graduate, backed by a year's experience teaching in an academy, took up his post as Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. His inaugural address offered a sober disquisition on the discipline of mathematics, the subject he found most appealing.⁴ Because the faculty at Marietta College was small, numbering only four or five including the president who also taught, he did not enjoy the luxury of teaching only the subject he preferred. Teaching would only be one of his responsibilities, for he along with all the other faculty and students were required to attend chapel twice daily during the long academic year which began in September and ended in July. Whether as professor or president, Andrews was expected to preach in the chapel services, taking his turn along with the other members of the teaching faculty. Professor Andrews, it should be pointed out, had no formal training in either theology or homiletics. He was, to be

sure, an educated man who had endured his father's sermons over the years as well as those he had heard from President Mark Hopkins at Williams.

By 1841, Israel Ward Andrews not only was preaching in the chapel services but also serving as a supply preacher in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of Washington County, Ohio.⁵ He took up such issues as moral behavior and individual responsibility, preaching his conservative "Old Puritan" approach that he had learned in New England and transported to the West.

Soon after he arrived in Ohio, however, Marietta, like many of her sister institutions in the West, faced one of its frequent financial crises. The Panic of 1837 had severely restricted the disposable funds which individuals had to donate for the support of colleges like Beloit, Heidelberg, Illinois, Knox, Marietta, Wabash, and Wittenberg. Because the inhabitants of the region were still relatively poor, many of the colleges sent representatives east on fund raising missions. At the same time, of course, the Eastern colleges had similar problems, which led to episodes in which a community like Northhampton, Massachusetts would be visited by the presidents of Marietta, Williams, and Yale, all within a period of three weeks.⁶ If western New York had become the Burned Over District from intense revivalism, Massachusetts must have become the Picked Clean District from extensive college fund-raising efforts.

So intense was this difficulty in 1843 that representatives from Lane Seminary, Marietta College, Illinois College, and Wabash College gathered in Lyman Beecher's Cincinnati home to discuss their common plight and form the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West.⁷ (Western Reserve did not attend this initial gathering, but it was included in the first list for funding.) First and foremost their difficulty was financial. Since most of them had New England roots, they were all attempting to raise funds from the same constituencies. All were struggling institutions, most only a few years old, without endowments or major benefactors, for whom relatively small amounts were often the difference between survival and collapse. They also were motivated by their common belief in the need for Puritan institutions in the West which would uphold traditional moral values. In an 1845 meeting of the society at Park Street Church in Boston, President Mark Hopkins of Williams asserted "that permanent institutions of learning, under Christian influence, are necessary for the proper organization of society in the West".⁸ Colleges also could become

4 OAH PROCEEDINGS

bulwarks in the struggle against the influence of Roman Catholic agencies.

Lyman Beecher, whose *A Plea for the West* had sounded this battle cry in 1831 (Xavier was founded that year), warned in 1845 “that the association of Catholics and Catholic potentates of Europe, united to secure the uncontrolled direction of education in the Western States, demands the prayerful attention, the systematic action of our entire nation”.⁹ At the same meeting, Edward Beecher observed “that in the coming conflict of the moral world, it does not become the descendants of the Puritans to be unprovided with engines of war of the highest power”.¹⁰ As President Lyman Beecher noted further about the Roman Catholics: “We must encounter them by *educational institutions, and churches, and ministers, and the preaching of the gospel, and revivals.*”¹¹

At the Cincinnati organizational meeting, the colleges agreed to join forces in a fund raising effort. Thus was established the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, soon called the College Society.¹² Its avowed purpose was to raise funds and then direct them to the constituent members according to their needs. Once each college had reached a level of financial stability, it would no longer be eligible for funds, allowing the agency to direct its resources to the still struggling colleges. The list of colleges would grow to twenty-one over the years, eventually aiding not only eight colleges in Ohio, but also others across the country from the Ohio River to the Pacific coast and from Oregon to California.

In order to receive support, colleges had to demonstrate good administration, denominational orthodoxy, and freedom from competition in its immediate area.¹³ No school applying escaped the scrutiny of the Society. Often it took more than one application before a college received approval and funding. Knox College had to be investigated to be certain that it wasn't founded for pecuniary gain. The society was particularly fearful of communities who merely wanted to say they had a college in order to lure settlers there. Although the founders of the College Society had been Congregationalist and Presbyterian, money also was given to Wittenberg, Heidelberg, and the German Evangelical College of Missouri. At each year's meeting of the society, representatives carefully reported on the spiritual temperature of their respective colleges. One year Marietta's president could report that as the result of campus revivals all save one of the students had become “pious”.¹⁴ At Wittenberg, on the other hand, there had been no general

revival: the President and the Professors had been too overwhelmed with their teaching duties to carry out a revival. Wittenberg, like the other colleges in the West sought any means possible to raise scholarship money. During the 1840s Wittenberg offered individuals a chance to underwrite a four year tuition scholarship by paying the college thirty dollars. Heidelberg had serious difficulties of a different nature. The enrollment at that "Anglo-German" institution had fallen by twenty-five per cent in one year as a result of crop failures and cholera outbreaks.¹⁵

The College Society also urged the member colleges to engage in annual "Concerts of Prayer for Colleges", aimed at bolstering student faith, sounding the Puritan battle cry against ignorance and Romanism (which may have been synonymous in their minds), and renewing their efforts to raise funds among their constituents.¹⁶ In February of 1846, Israel Ward Andrews preached on these themes.¹⁷ He remarked that "between religion and learning there has ever existed an intimate relation." Andrews meant "the religion of the Bible. Protestant Christianity has ever been the warm friend and liberal patron of learning and general education." In that "system founded on error", Professor Andrews warned, "the Pope is an utter enemy to education and general intelligence." All should pray for the preservation of the colleges which will educate young men who will enter the lists of battle against the "votaries" who offer "blind, implicit obedience to a fallible fellow man."

Given the stakes in the contest against Rome, Andrews was pleased by the number of Marietta College students who had gone on to Lane Seminary in Cincinnati. "It is gratifying to learn that in our Great Theological Seminary for this Valley, of 61 students from twenty different colleges, Marietta has furnished 14, a number greater by 9 than any other."¹⁸ Both Andrews and the Reverend Mr. J. R. Barnes, one of the college's representatives and a brother-in-law to one of the trustees, were urging support for ministers who would enter the mission field of the American West where battle could be done against the forces of Rome. Both men warned potential donors not to send more money to foreign missions than to funds designated for the important field of work in the West.¹⁹

As Andrews and other supporters of the College Society believed, support for colleges and seminaries was essential for the country's future. "The young men raised up and educated in the West are to deliver its destiny, political and religious."²⁰ The West was an important battleground in the struggle against ignorance, where a trained ministry

6 OAH PROCEEDINGS

was an absolute necessity, thus making colleges like Marietta, Wittenberg, Heidelberg, Western Reserve, Wabash, and Illinois important platforms for training ministers.

By the tenth anniversary of its founding, the society could welcome one of its own products as the featured preacher at its annual gathering. Joseph F. Tuttle had graduated from Marietta, gone on to Lane Seminary, and become the pastor of a church.²¹ (His next assignment would be the presidency of Wabash College in Indiana.) From his experiences he understood the plight of schools supported by the society. Tuttle quoted his seminary professor Lyman Beecher in describing those colleges as “the best link in the chain of moral cause, the most powerful citadel of defense against foreign aggression and internal dissension—a new era, when the importance of evangelical colleges shall be appreciated, not only by men of literary and far-reaching minds, but by the whole church of God as a primary object of prayers and charities.”²²

Like his mentors Henry Smith and Israel Andrews of Marietta and Beecher of Lane, Tuttle raised the alarm against Rome. “The Papacy is bringing all its ingenious devices, backed with abundant pecuniary means to give America the despotism of Hildebrand [Gregory VII, 1073-1085, advocate of papal supremacy] and the impiety of Leo X [Giovanni de’Medici, 1513-1521, foe of Luther]”²³ Tuttle argued the necessity of supporting the western colleges if they were to continue their work of preparing the next generation of ministers to battle that trinity of foes known as infidelity, popery and irreligion. Clearly Tuttle stood in the tradition of Andrews and Beecher as he went west to assume the presidency of Wabash.

By the 1860s the College Society had reached the point where it could allocate its Funds for the coming year. In 1860 the total was \$10,400 (\$184,000 in 1998 dollars), with Wabash and Beloit promised \$1750 each plus an additional \$250 if funds permitted, Illinois and Iowa to receive \$1500 and \$1250 respectively, Wittenberg and Marietta to be given \$1000 each (20% of Marietta’s annual budget), Knox, German Evangelical College of Missouri and Pacific University to be specified \$750 each plus an additional \$200 to Pacific if funds were available, and Heidelberg granted \$500.²⁴ A further resolution promised another \$500 to Pacific if the investigations of the corresponding secretary found its application acceptable. Being on this list for disbursements, however, did not guarantee that you would receive the monies. Like pledges in any

century, the money had to be raised. In an earlier year Marietta College was approved for \$600 but only received \$300.²⁵

During the first twenty-seven years of its existence, the society's principal officer was Theron Baldwin, a New Englander and Yale graduate who had felt the call to service in the West when he was an undergraduate. In response, Baldwin and six friends pledged themselves to the work of the spirit in Illinois. Once there, trying to raise money for institutions such as Illinois College and Monticello Female Seminary, Baldwin encountered the difficulties of too many western institutions going back to the same fund raising territory in the East. During his tenure as secretary of the College Society, he successfully raised \$1,250,000.²⁶

Fund raising efforts on behalf of colleges and seminaries was not only a matter of concern at the colleges themselves but also within influential circles in Washington. Joseph P. Henry of the Smithsonian prepared a questionnaire that he mailed out to colleges in 1859.²⁷ Henry wanted to know the names of all the donors who had given a thousand dollars or more, the object for which the money was given, the residences of the donors, and their places of birth. Officials at Marietta College readily complied, eager to cooperate with Secretary Henry, hopeful that such assistance might yield some measure of new support for the college. Yet when no publication or other reflection of this information's impact came forth, President Andrews wrote Henry, asking if there was to be such a publication.²⁸ Andrews also explained that since his last letter to Washington, giving to literary institutions had increased dramatically, with more given in the early 1860s than in the previous decades. Marietta in the previous year had been the recipient of some \$50,000, a sum in excess of what the college had received in the previous ten years!²⁹ (In 1998 dollars that would be \$798,000; Marietta's annual expenditures in those years were about \$5,000.)³⁰

When he wrote this letter to Henry, Israel Ward Andrews must have been breathing a great sigh of relief as he looked back over ten years of trying to raise money for Marietta College. He could not have imagined how he could have made it without the help of the College Society. Although he had not become president until 1855, the college's financial exigencies had become part of his responsibility in 1850 when he was named treasurer of the college. At that moment he had confronted the creative financing being practiced to keep the college doors open. The college was giving notes to individuals with the promise of paying them interest until the principal could be repaid. The trustees

8 OAH PROCEEDINGS

also were asking faculty members to accept interest-bearing notes in lieu of part of their salaries. On one occasion while Andrews was treasurer, he accompanied President Henry Smith on a fund-raising trip to the East, successfully soliciting in Hartford, Connecticut, and Lee, Massachusetts (where Andrews had once taught).³¹

Andrews also knew that when President Smith left for a new post at Lane Seminary in 1855, Marietta College owed Smith \$1,000 in the form of notes. When he moved on from Lane he asked the college to pay him the money to help him fund his relocation. Where Smith and other Marietta College faculty found means to live is unclear. Smith noted that

money was a thing unknown. In those days in Marietta, we dealt in barter. I have a distinct remembrance of one year in particular, when balancing my accounts with the college, I found I had received in payments applicable to the support of my family, the sum of exactly \$100.³²

From the dark days of the 1840s, when the college had almost closed its doors through the difficulties of the 1850s to the relative security of the 1860s, Marietta, like many other colleges of similar situation, had found a supportive shepherd in Theron Baldwin and the College Society.³³ In gratitude for Baldwin's efforts, he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Marietta College in 1862.³⁴ By 1872, thanks to the Society, four of the colleges on the first list, Marietta, Wabash, Illinois, and Western Reserve had moved from precarious to promising status.³⁵ Ripon and Pacific University were two of those receiving aid. Marietta and her sister schools in Ohio and elsewhere had now become model institutions of Christian influence for the Congregationalists moving farther west. The president of Colorado College (approved by the Society in 1875) drew a map to accompany one of his promotional pamphlets on which he indicated Marietta, Oberlin, Western Reserve, Wabash, Illinois, Knox, Beloit, Ripon, and Iowa as centers of Christian influence which he wanted his new school to emulate. His message was the same as that of his predecessors, train ministers to combat Roman Catholicism and Mormonism in the West.³⁶ The straw from the haystack had thus blown across the country, where, nurtured by the support of the College Society, it gave rise to another generation of spiritual outposts.

NOTES

1. Colin Durfee, *Williams Biographical Annals* (Boston, 1871).
2. E. B. Parsons, *Obituary Record of Williams College, 1885-1895* (Williamstown, 1895)
3. Adelphi Union and Philologian Societies, Book 2, Williams College Special Collections, Williams College Library, Williamstown, Massachusetts.
4. Inaugural Address of Israel Ward Andrews, July 1839, Andrews Papers, Slack Research Collection, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio
5. The manuscripts of Andrews' sermons are in his papers at Marietta College. Each is written out in longhand with careful annotations about each time and place the sermon was preached (the record was seventy times!). Other marginal notes indicate modification when an address might be preached to a different audience or on another occasion.
6. The Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West was established in Cincinnati. See the *Society's Annual Report for 1845* (New York, 1845).
7. Ibid.
8. *Proceedings of A Public Meeting in Behalf of the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, Park Street Church, Boston, May 28, 1845, Including the addresses of Rev. Drs. Hopkins, E. Beecher, Bacon and L. Beecher*, (New York, 1845).
9. Lyman Beecher Remarks, Ibid. See also his *Plea for the West* (Cincinnati, 1831).
10. Edward Beecher Sermon, *Proceedings . . . 1845*.
11. Lyman Beecher Sermon, Ibid.
12. *Proceedings of the Society for the Promotion . . . , 1845, 1854*
13. On the Society, its long-time secretary, Theron Baldwin, and its work, see Charles Petersen, "Theron Baldwin and the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West," unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins, 1959.
14. *Eleventh Report of the Society for the Promotion . . . , 1854* (New York, 1854).
15. Ibid.
16. See Andrews Sermon on "A Concert of Prayer for Colleges", 1846, in Andrews Papers, Marietta College.
17. Ibid.
18. Andrews, *Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Marietta College, 1885* (Marietta College, 1885).
19. J.R. Barnes, "Sermon on Behalf of Marietta College," 1846, in Andrews Papers.

10 OAH PROCEEDINGS

20. On the beginnings of the New England movement to send young men as missionaries to the West, see Charles Petersen, "Theron Baldwin and the Society for . . ." for his discussion of Baldwin, Julian Sturtevant and the Yale Band. Sturtevant would later be the president of Illinois College.

21. Joseph F. Tuttle, *An Address in Behalf of the Society . . . , Delivered at Its Tenth Anniversary, . . . , 1854* (New York, 1854).

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. *Annual Report of the Society for the Promotion . . . , 1860.*

25. Petersen, Theron Baldwin, p. 227.

26. On Baldwin, see Petersen, *ibid.*

27. Joseph P. Henry to Israel Ward Andrews, February 1859, Andrews Papers, Marietta College.

28. Andrews to Henry, *Ibid.*

29. Marietta College's principal benefactor during this period was Douglas Putnam, a local merchant and dedicated supporter of the college. See Andrews' Annual Reports to the Board, especially during 1859-1860, when Putnam's challenge grant was instrumental in securing the school's financial stability; Andrews Papers, Marietta College.

30. There is an inflation calculator at <http://www.WestEgg.gov>, expressed in dollars.

31. Arthur G. Beach, *A Pioneer College: The Story of Marietta* (Marietta, 1935), 85.

32. *Ibid.*, 81.

33. Joseph Tuttle, *Annual Report of the Society . . . , 1854.*

34. Petersen, "Theron Baldwin and the Society"

35. *Annual Report of the Society for the Promotion . . . , 1872.*

36. *Ibid.*