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Reverend Lyman Whiting's Test of Faith

Robert M. Taylor, Jr.

The voters of Massachusetts chose an almost total slate of American Party, or Know-Nothing, candidates to state and national offices in 1854.¹ Nathaniel P. Banks, fresh from his first congressional term, joined the surging nativist phenomenon and won re-election by a margin unprecedented in his district. Historical accounts of Banks' election make it appear that the incumbent rolled with the tide of political opportunity and retained his seat with little difficulty.² Actually, a stroke of luck in the eleventh hour of the campaign made possible Banks' candidacy. His good fortune resulted from the last minute resignation of the Reverend Lyman Whiting, whom the party had initially selected over Banks. Prior to this defeat, Banks had received the nomination of the Democratic and Free Soil parties. Thus, the election shaped up as a Banks versus Whiting match with the consensus being that Whiting would emerge the victor. Because Whiting's withdrawal jeopardized the Know-Nothing's favorable prospects at the polls, the party expediently tapped Banks, who willingly accepted, knowing the endorsement assured victory. Banks' subsequent career as the next speaker of the United States House of Representatives, governor of Massachusetts, Civil War General, United States Marshall, and long service in Congress after the war, underscores the importance of his re-election, and of Lyman Whiting's role in the whole affair. But who was Lyman Whiting and how did he become an American Party congressional candidate? And, why, when triumph was practically guaranteed, did he step down?³ The following account of Whiting's brief political adventure attempts to answer these questions, besides affording a glimpse into the behind-the-scenes activity of the secretive Know-Nothings.

Foreign immigration and political upheaval characterized Massachusetts life in the early 1850s, and in the confusion the Know-Nothings carried the day. Thousands imagined the Catholic immigrant as the advance guard of a papal conspiracy, and as bringing about an increase in pauperism, intemperance, sabbath breaking, labor problems, crime, and illiteracy. Responding to this catalog of social discontent, the Know-Nothings captured the zeal of religious nativism and the impulse of Protestant reform. Equally attractive to the anxious native was the American Party's insistence that it could do something about these concerns, because its standard bearers would be fresh political faces, morally upright, and in touch with the true needs of persons. This was an era that bred a "politics of impatience," as Michael Holt has labeled it. Americans, invariably at odds with politicians, seemed especially sensitive to party disorgan-

ization, corrupt and unrepresentative bosses, and the disinterest in local issues. The Know-Nothing's anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, and anti-party creed, therefore, was irresistible to the disenfranchised.

The kinds of problems addressed by the Know-Nothings induced a sizeable number of Protestant ministers to actively enter the political arena. To understand the seriousness of the shift from clergyman to lawmaker, it should be recalled that the constitutional provision of religious liberty took from the state the right to legally enforce morality and handed the responsibility for the nation's moral tone to the churches. Only through the tools of persuasion, not through statutes, could religious professionals inculcate that body of shared beliefs they and practically everyone else thought essential for the society's health. The ministerial office, as a result, acquired a sense of sacredness and accountability. With an ever-expanding rationale, nineteenth-century ministers elevated their status, while demeaning that of the politician. Clergymen reasoned that the politician's moral rectitude suffered under the twin pull of ambition and envy. Party spirit was linked with the spirit of war. The desire for office at the expense of social agitation and strained relations was an unworthy aim for the Christian minister. The clergy could participate in general public questions but not in political strife. He could preach the gospel in its application to politics, but not preach politics.⁴ Further distinctions and elaborations on questions of church and state, sacred and profane, Christian character and worldly temperament, religious conduct and practical politics, contributed to an atmosphere and ethos that discouraged ministers from holding elective office.

The American Party's mission helped relax the traditional barriers to a cleric's political involvement, but internalized norms proved more resilient and some ministers experienced unpleasantness trying to reconcile conflicting roles. So it was with Lyman Whiting. From his nomination to his resignation, he was preoccupied with the gravity of his position. Instead of organizing a campaign he sought advice, much of which supported his entering Congress. In the end, however, Whiting could not compromise his pastoral calling, and Nathaniel Banks, who possessed fewer spiritual constraints, returned to Washington.

What little is known of Whiting's career prior to his joining the Know-Nothings suggests that he was not a "low sectarian preacher," the sort, one contemporary believed, that united with the American Party.⁵ By education, at least, he does not fit the mold of the ignorant religious fanatic. Born in Brookfield, Whiting studied at Amherst, Harvard, the Theological Institute of Connecticut, and Andover Seminary. After graduation from Andover in 1843, he began his ministry in his hometown parish. In 1847 he helped found, and pastored, the First Congregational Church in Lawrence. From 1851 to 1855 he served the Old South Church in Reading.⁶ While at Lawrence fifteen members declared his usefulness at an end and called for his dismissal. Despite a supportive petition signed by over 140 members, Whiting stepped down after a counsel of Congregational clergymen deemed the action best for the peace of the church. Whiting and a small splinter group organized a new church where he briefly served before accepting the position at Reading.⁷ Though a novice in secular politics, Whiting was no stranger to the virulence of parish politics.

In recording his political trial, Whiting omitted his reasons for associating with the Know-Nothings. No doubt, the movement's fundamental antipathies toward immigrants and Catholics exerted considerable weight, particularly when these targets of hostility were thought to bear on unresolved local problems associated with severe socio-economic dislocations. The expressed desires and frustrations of his parishioners, and his assessment of dislocations in his own industrializing region, may have influenced his decision to explore the ameliorative program of a new political order. Too, the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in May of 1854 apparently radicalized Whiting's anti-slavery views. His strong opposition to the legislation represented a shift in opinion for one who had been counted as a conservative, or "Webster Whig," an advocate of compromise and of the preservation of the Union at all costs.⁸ On June 1, 1854, he went to an anti-slavery rally in Boston, and at the end of June he attended his first Know-Nothing meeting.⁹ This scenario, if more than coincidence, suggests that Whiting, like a number of his fellow Whigs, as well as Freesoilers, found the American Party could accommodate partisans wanting a new unity in the anti-slavery crusade. Whatever the chief incentive for Whiting's shift to the Know-Nothings, once having been judged eligible by professing his theism, documenting his native-born citizenship, and his kin's Protestantism, he pledged to resist the "insidious" Church of Rome and other foreign designs on America's institutions. He also promised to place only native-born Protestants in leadership positions.¹⁰

The Know-Nothings of Congressional District Seven held their nominating convention in Boston's Hancock School House on October 10, 1854. The previous day, Whiting had received a communication from Nathaniel P. Banks requesting the Reading minister to come to Boston to chair the nominating committee and to preside over the convention.¹¹ Banks, already the aspirant of the Democrats and the Free Soilers, had expeditiously united with the Waltham Know-Nothing Council upon discovering the potential political strength of the state's nativism. Assisted by Samuel O. Upham, the council president, and Gideon Haynes, Banks soon ran the lodge.¹² Ironically, it may have been Whiting's official role in the convention proceedings that determined his and not Banks selection as the party's candidate.

To emphasize its departure from old-style machine-type politics, the Know-Nothings generally held "open conventions" in which a secret ballot by the delegates determined the nominee. This process, however, did not prevent prior efforts to crystallize support behind one candidate. Unquestionably, Banks worked hard to insure being selected irrespective of the polling procedures.

Whiting records that he sat quietly in a corner at the convention, reading a penny paper until called upon to assume the chair. After a few "bungling" remarks, he organized the delegates for a balloting to determine who the nominee or nominees might be. To his "complete amazement" his name stood at the head of the list.¹³ Whiting was unaware of a movement to nominate him, as indicated by a letter he received a few days later from delegate Charles S. Hall. Hall noted that while he and several others sat talking, he observed the friends of Banks planning their strategy to obtain the congressman's election. The

“dread of the prevalence of obnoxious influence was indeed heightened” by what he witnessed. Hall meant by this that the intrusion of professional political elements, Banks’ “duplicity” (his nomination by two other parties), the conspiring of Banks’ supporters, and the feeling that Banks used the nativist cause, aroused fears of corrupting intrigue. The delegates not in the Banks camp, Hall went on to reveal, were unprepared to champion anyone until a “timely example” was shown them.¹⁴ Whiting’s chairing of the convention may have been this example. Whiting, the minister, may have mirrored an image of integrity, a concern for the public welfare, someone close to the common folk, and especially a political novice, untainted by previous office holding.

Because Whiting had not received a majority vote, a second ballot was required. His astonishment at finding himself a front runner was so overwhelming that he gave no thought to stepping down. “I was so amused and surprised, it seemed so *ridiculous* and unreal, that I wholly forgot to *refuse* my name to the second ballot, and lo! I came out 60 or 79 to 44. At any moment up to then had the sober question been put—‘Would I go to Congress’—a full round ‘no’ had been my answer.”¹⁵ Probably he forgot to have his name deleted because in the brief time between the two ballots his thoughts centered on the momentous decision he faced. After his victory, further bewilderment may have prevented an immediate withdrawal. Whiting admitted that the expectation of a political career seemed oddly intriguing. “I confess to a curious vanity to see how it [the delegate vote] would come out. Another love now held me—all thoughts and feelings began a new career—Twas strange.”¹⁶ For Whiting’s supporters, his winning signaled “a triumph of principles over men,” and with the acknowledged strength of the party, the eventual success in the general election appeared certain.

Whiting tackled his new line of work, as a congressional candidate, by seeking counsel from close associates and family. From a compilation of the letters he received plus a draft of a letter he wrote, it is evident he wanted advice primarily on the corrupting influence of politics on a minister. Would the political venture “spoil” him as a minister? Could he come back to the pulpit with his consecration unimpaired? Could he go to Congress and keep his name unspotted that he might be fit for the pulpit afterwards? Was life in Washington too toilsome or intolerable for a virtuous man to reside there? In a more practical vein, he also asked if the pay would be adequate to maintain his family? Whiting did not request guidance on how best to advance the party’s political program, only how the position, if elected, would affect his personal and professional life.

One of the first letters Whiting received, and perhaps the one most anticipated, came from his wife Sophia. Since she had known him, she wrote, he harbored secret desires for fame and for higher positions. She knew that he “mourned” over his “low estate,” his “father’s obscurity” and lack of education, his wife’s unpretensions toward social status, and his envy toward those persons with fewer qualifications who found themselves called to “go up higher.” His going to Congress, she suggested, might prove of inestimable worth for the nation’s future course. “Your prayers and influence may control the angry passions of some—and your vote may save thousands from slavery and war.” Not only could his election be personally enhancing and beneficial to the

country, but to Sophia it could mean release from financial burdens, and relief from the wear and tear of being a minister's wife. On the other hand, she observed, God had blessed them in parish work. She feared that outside the pulpit her husband exposed himself to Satan's arrows, and he would "look in vain for the Lord's quiet ways in the wordly paths of Congress." She doubted if his present influential status with his ministerial brethren could be regained after his return from Washington. Lastly, she presented the persuasive view that she would rather die a wife or widow of a minister than a wife or widow of a statesman. As for financial hardship, she expressed her faith that God would provide.¹⁷ Whiting may have received small consolation from his wife's marshalling the pros and cons of his political activity. She had reminded him of the family's welfare and her mental and physical health, valid considerations which he now had to place alongside self-interest and God's commands in resolving his dilemma.

Between the time of his nomination and his wife's letter, some newspapers found out the results of the convention. The Reading newspaper complimented the Know-Nothings on their choice, and it anticipated the entire vote of the town going to him.¹⁸ C. C. Hazewell, a *New York Sunday Herald* correspondent in Boston, informed his readers that Whiting was an able and popular man in Reading.¹⁹ The newspaper stories, however, dwelled upon his dismissal from the Lawrence church in 1850. The Whig *Lowell Courier*, the day after Whiting's nomination, reported that as evidence of his incompetence. "We can not envy anybody of mere mortals among whom Mr. Whiting has influence."²⁰ A Lawrence reporter replied to the *Courier*, pleading ignorance of the episode, calling attention to his "firm" and "courageous" qualities, and predicting sweeping success for Whiting.²¹ Whiting noted at the time that he was "hashed up by the papers."²² Actually, his exposure to the public via newspapers was limited because few papers knew the results of the convention until names appeared on ballots at election day.

Nevertheless, the events of the week following nomination settled in Whiting's mind what he should do. On October 17, 1854, he drew up his resignation and sent it with A. B. Ely to the Know-Nothing Council. Whiting noted two reasons for his resignation: his unfitness for political office and his inability to find grounds for pursuing a new calling:

I have no practical knowledge of civil affairs, I possess no special aptitude or enthusiasm for them—So that the best intentions of my heart would often fail in action through want of needed skill or knowledge to carry them to the end I have been for years invested with a public sacred character. It has become the Law of my life absorbing into itself my knowledge, my sympathies, memories and aspirations. To abandon it, for a diverse, and an untried career, would be a sacrifice, which no reasons apparent to me command.²³

The quality of political innocence, prized by nativists in their clerical candidates, was already proving to be, at least in Whiting's case, more a hindrance than asset.

The finality of Whiting's decision, however, was illusory. The transparency of his rationale soon emerged when a committee of Know-Nothing leaders convinced him to reconsider. Whiting wrote of this meeting that he "never felt so robbed of reasons and will, and I could make no case for myself."²⁴ Perhaps to gain time, Whiting informed the committee he would reconsider his resignation while on a trip to Andover, where he went to solicit further direction. Before he left for Andover on the 20th of October, letters arrived from Henry Ward Beecher, Richard F. Fuller, and Thomas Atkinson. Beecher, pastor of the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, and known for his anti-slavery editorials in the New York *Independent*, viewed the ministry as a form of public service.²⁵ The clergyman, he said, should be in every respect a citizen, bearing his share of citizen's duty both "as obeying law, and as a maker of laws." Beecher regarded a person's vocation as a "calling," thus Whiting's decision turned on whether he truly "felt" an "inward call" to become either a politician or remain a minister. If Whiting felt called to Washington, Beecher could envision no reason why he should not accept. He warned Whiting, though, that if he went to Congress he would have to break completely with his parish in order to have enough time to gain expertise in political matters.

Richard F. Fuller, unconvinced that congressional pay was adequate, cautioned Whiting to retain his Reading position, if only part-time, or to preach somewhere in the interim. This, Fuller reasoned, would provide financial relief and assure employment should re-election fail. He added that he had no issue with preachers as legislators, but he "blushed for those who lay aside their sacred office for this miserable distinction."²⁶ Thomas Atkinson, editor of the *Congregational Yearbook*, doubted that a minister could enter politics and return to the pulpit with "augmented power." Yet the matter rested on the candidate's qualifications and the country's condition, and Atkinson considered Whiting "peculiarly qualified" for leadership in the present national crisis. While he gave tacit approval to Whiting's candidacy, Atkinson disliked seeing him run with the Know-Nothings, which, as a secret society, he believed was not fighting "lawfully." He feared the party was too divided to be a durable political force. Moreover, he worried that an American Party success would mean a loss of "our" best anti-slavery and temperance candidates, evidently in other parties. Atkinson also conjectured that, if victorious, the Know-Nothings could force the Germans and Irish to band together thus indirectly adding to the strength of "Romanism." He concluded with the hope that Whiting would remain in Reading or work for the Congregational denomination rather than follow the political path.²⁷

With this body of mixed opinion in mind, Whiting journeyed to Andover and discussed his situation with Dr. Calvin E. Stowe, professor of sacred literature at Andover Seminary and husband of Harriet Beecher. He also spoke with Amos Abbott, a former Massachusetts congressman.²⁸ Both men urged Whiting to retain the nomination. These consultations were major factors in his resolve to continue his political connection. Still, even as he yielded to his advisors, he "felt sadly for it."

It has turned me upside down. Awakened new mental life—altered all horizons—set me on *unthought* of thots [sic]. I am not happy nor unhappy but doggedly quiet. Some are against it, others for it I am very much afraid. It will be a terrible discipline. If it makes me a better preacher let me bear it. I also dread its *pervverting* force. Strange! Is it penalty for my unhollowed longings after other *fields* I am moved as under a gr[eat] sorrow. It weighs on me. What does Pro[vidence] intend?²⁹

Whatever providence intended for Whiting it did not include relief from the pressures of politics. The events of the last week in October and first week in November proved doubly trying for him. The Whig party of district seven held their convention in Lawrence, October 25th, and elected Whiting to be its candidate for Congress. Whiting now matched Nathaniel Banks' "duplicity" as the nominee of more than one party. Whiting responded to this newest development in what was becoming a standard form: "I am more astonished—it is an intense perplexity."³⁰ His surprise may have been due to his having been selected and not because he was considered for the job. Two days before the Whig convention, James Fogg, chairman of the Whig district committee, and Eliphalet Pierce, vice-president of the Whig convention, called on Whiting. The two officials possibly heard a rumor of Whiting's indecision with the Know Nothings, and they simply wanted to confirm it. But they also may have taken the opportunity to feel out Whiting about a Whig nomination.³¹

Why did the Whigs nominate Whiting? The available evidence supports two conclusions. First, William Parsons, a Lawrence Know Nothing, wrote Whiting the night of the Whig convention and suggested a conspiracy on the part of some Lawrence Whigs, old enemies of Whiting from the Lawrence church, to secure his nomination to discredit him. Parsons intimated that this group, assuredly unable to elect anyone on their ticket, merely used the occasion to hurt Whiting.³² A second, more plausible explanation for the Whig action centers on Nathaniel Banks. Banks' defeat by Whiting at the Know Nothing convention in October had shown the Whigs that only he could defeat Banks in November. W. C. Todd, a Newburyport Whig, exhibited this line of reasoning in a letter to Whiting the day following the Whig convention. "Some days ago I saw your name proposed and immediately wrote an article for one of the Whig papers in your district expressing my belief that the only way to defeat Mr. Banks was to nominate you, and my earnest hopes that if they wished for success in the district they would pursue such a course."³³ The Whigs, at any rate, had nothing to lose by nominating Whiting. They could even anticipate that Whiting's strong attraction at the polls could lure previously bolted Whigs back to the party.

Whiting's nativist allies implored him to decline the Whig offer and to remain steadfast in his party commitment. The Know-Nothings not only feared the loss from their ranks of former Whigs, but, if Whiting chose to run for the Whigs, the party leadership would be hard pressed to enlist a satisfactory replacement by election day.³⁴ One writer boldly suggested to Whiting that if he thought it best to decline the Know-Nothing nomination, he wait until after the election.³⁵

The intensity of the moment for all parties concerned seems to have brought about a general agreement on the question of clergymen in politics. W. C. Todd could think of no reason why a minister of the Gospel should keep aloof from politics.³⁶ A Know-Nothing sympathizer declared that Congress needed "salt—the real Rock" which clergymen could provide.³⁷ Another Bostonian enthusiastically observed that "some of our most successful congressmen have been clergymen."³⁸ J. B. Fairfield, a South Lawrence Know-Nothing, confidently asserted that the New England clergymen would not have had such a rough time in Congress over their petition against the Kansas-Nebraska Act if more ministers had been present.³⁹ Joseph Richardson, Unitarian minister and former congressman, informed Whiting that he had not suffered in any way from his experience as a minister in Congress. The interests of Congress, he wrote, certainly affected the Christian community, and the congressman's business of making laws was not inferior in sacredness to any vocation. Life in Washington was toilsome and intolerable, he said, only to men of bad principles or no principles. Richardson thought that the Reading church should continue Whiting's salary, and Whiting, in turn, would pay his replacement, thus solving the potential financial problem.⁴⁰

Some of these letters, written after November First, were too late to have any effect on Whiting's next decision, which was to withdraw his candidacy from both parties. The details surrounding his activities between the time of his Whig nomination and his dual resignation are sketchy. Clearly, he spent hours in conversation with various persons. The critical conversation, according to Whiting, was with Rufus Choate, former representative and Whig senator who opposed Know-Nothingism. Choate practiced law in Boston; he had been out of the national political limelight for some years, but he remained active in state political circles. Whiting described his meeting with Choate in glowing terms as one of joy with "deep" counsel. Choate exhorted Whiting to continue in the ministry, for he had never witnessed a clergyman in Congress who he, Choate, "did not think had better be home."⁴¹ Conceivably, amidst the confusion of advice, Choate's frank appraisal of the minister as politician gave support to Whiting's innermost feelings on the matter.

Whiting stood firm this round, and both parties moved to find new candidates. The Know-Nothings picked Banks, who appeared at the hastily called convention and convinced most delegates that he held sincere nativist views.⁴² Whiting's resignation and Banks' nomination particularly agitated the Whig partisans who had gone to such trouble to defeat Banks. The Whigs nominated Luther V. Bell without his knowledge and without any assurances of his acceptance.⁴³ On election day, Banks, earlier spurned by the Know-Nothings as a corrupting element in the movement, led the party to a huge margin of victory. Banks captured three-fourths of the district vote. Beneath the surface unity following Banks' success at least one Know-Nothing thought the party's legitimacy had been compromised. Henry F. Harrington, a staunch supporter of Whiting, withdrew from the order, because "Mr. Banks is not a true representative of Know-Nothing principles."⁴⁴

Why Whiting bowed out of the political battle cannot be determined conclusively as neither copies nor drafts of his resignation letter have been



Nathaniel P. Banks, from the collections of the Springfield City Library

uncovered. The newspapers vaguely referred to professional and personal reasons as explanations for his stepping aside. Some Know-Nothings thought his resignation was an act of courageous sacrifice in favor of Banks. Support for this notion may have been derived from Whiting's statement at the Know-Nothing post-election celebration at Waltham on November 25th.⁴⁵ The Boston *Traveller* reported that Whiting turned to Banks and said "that from the first moment he never had a doubt that the man who stood the fire in the breach ought to have the glory of passing through. He (Whiting) could not escape the conviction that a mere tyro in political affairs should not take the place so ably filled by another."⁴⁶ Capitulating to the proper spirit of the moment, Whiting contributed to party harmony for the sake of public consumption, but privately, in a letter to James Fogg, he admitted that the inducement to defeat Banks had been a factor in his standing all along. Whiting denied the implication that his withdrawal reflected a magnanimous gesture towards Banks. On the other hand, he would not divulge why he stepped aside. To Fogg: "I have a right to my own reasons. My acts belong to my fellowman."⁴⁷

In all likelihood, Whiting's motives centered on his desire to be obedient to his religious calling and his conception of the relative sacredness of the ministerial office. On election day Whiting jotted down his feelings, which mirror these priorities and which suggests that he conceived his experience as a personal purification:

Election Day—Triumph everywhere. . . . To have stood—equaled election. A day of gladness to me. I not at stake. . . . This is the *third* great deliverance in the *Temptation*. It has stirred up my worldly longings. Evermore my soul will have this *might have been* for a decoy to ambition and love of name. Let me *watch* and *remember*—I never so loved the ministry. It endears all its little duties and comforts—puts new sacredness in them. O could I now see souls renewed—*how blessed*. It will do me no good as a minister—unless by increased devotion I give myself to Jesus. How I would sink in dust if I might add to his honor.⁴⁸

The glorification of Jesus and not the ennoblement of Nathaniel Banks determined the action of Whiting, who, in effect, confessed his unrighteousness and rededicated his life to the ministry. The meaning Whiting derived from his experience was echoed by Reverend Horace James, of Worcester, in a letter to Whiting shortly after the election. "You did a wise and noble thing to decline your nominations. It was a self-denial to do it. But you will stand higher and stronger for having done it in the regard and confidence of your brethren and in the love of Zion. It was a temptation. Do not let the reaction try or trouble you. It was a tribulation from the master to refine you."⁴⁹

The Know-Nothings rewarded Whiting for his "sacrifice." He accepted the office of chaplain to the state's senate, and he served on the Governor's Council of Henry J. Gardner. His recent ordeal, however, may have been too discomforting, for early in 1855 he relinquished his posts in the state government and in the Reading church, and he assumed a pastorate in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Whiting never returned to a Massachusetts pulpit. After three years in Ports-

mouth, he embarked on a pastoral trek that led him to parishes in Rhode Island, Iowa, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. While in Iowa he was honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree from Iowa College. He was a trustee of Beloit College, in Wisconsin, from 1870 to 1877. Whiting died on May 27, 1906, in his 89th year.

For a brief moment, then, in the mid-nineteenth century, circumstances offered an opportune time to test the strength of the proscriptions restraining clergymen from holding elective office. Most ministers, if called upon, such as the Reverend Mark Trafton, Congressman-elect from the eleventh district, made allowances for a vocational shift.⁵⁰ Some did so in order to assert the right to expound on secular matters or to "redeem" the evils attending politics. For others, the inducements were power and celebrity, a chance to exercise authority in a broader field, to involve oneself in practical and far-reaching issues, and to reap a degree of public prominence beyond that which the solitary pulpit could promise. The cant of the campaign trail could be distasteful, the moral environment of government assemblies could be tainted, as rumor had it, but the prospect of exercising one's talents of persuasion in legislative halls happened to be a formidable incentive. By resigning his candidacies, Whiting presumably exemplified the exceptional minister in 1854; however, he represented the more pervasive attitude, then and now, as regards the subject of preachers in politics. His conviction of the solemn and sacred role of the ministerial office, that of serving the soul, ultimately led him to terminate his flirtation with political life. In so doing, he unwittingly returned to relative obscurity while bolstering the eventful future of Nathaniel Banks.

NOTES

1. For the general background of the Know-Nothing movement, see Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York, 1952), and Michael F. Holt, "The Politics of Impatience: The Origins of Know Nothingism," *The Journal of American History*, LX (September, 1973), 309-331. For the Massachusetts context, see Dale Baum, "Know-Nothingism and the Republican Majority in Massachusetts: The Political Realignment of the 1850s," *The Journal of American History*, LXIV (March, 1978), 959-986, and John Mulkern, "Western Massachusetts in the Know-Nothing Years: An Analysis of Voting Patterns," *Historical Journal of Western Massachusetts*, VIII (January, 1980), 14-25.
2. Fred Harvey Harrington's *Fighting Politician: Major General N. P. Banks* (Philadelphia, 1948).
3. The primary source material for this paper is drawn from the Whiting Papers located in the Special Collections section of the University of Iowa library, Iowa City, Iowa.
4. See "Politics and the Pulpit," *The New Englander*, XII (May, 1854), 254-275.

5. Quoted in Howard P. Nash Jr., *Third Parties in American Politics* (Washington, 1959), p. 15; see also Billington, p. 413.
6. *Historical Catalogue of the Theological Institute of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1881), pp. 35-6; *Amherst College Biographical Record, 1963, Biographical Record of the Graduates and Non-Graduates of the Classes of 1822-1962 Inclusive* (Amherst, 1963), p. 40; and Lilley Eaton, *Genealogical History of the Town of Reading, Massachusetts. Including the Present Towns of Wakefield, Reading, and North Reading, with Chronological and Historical Sketches, from 1639 to 1874* (Boston, 1874), pp. 218-19.
7. Documents relating to the Lawrence episode are in the Whiting manuscripts.
8. Newspaper clipping in Whiting MSS.
9. Whiting Diary, June 1 and June 23, 1854.
10. Whiting's order probably followed the ritual set forth in the Constitution of the National Council of the United States of North America. The Constitution is printed in *The Political Text-Book, or Encyclopedia*, ed. by M. W. Cluskey (Philadelphia, 1858), pp. 57-68.
11. Whiting Diary, October 9, 1854.
12. Harrington, *Fighting Politician*, p. 23.
13. Whiting wrote a brief history of his experience. This four-page note will be referred to hereinafter as "Congress."
14. Charles S. Hall to Lyman Whiting, Charlestown, October 12, 1854 in Whiting MSS.
15. Whiting, "Congress."
16. *Ibid.*
17. Sophia Whiting to Lyman Whiting, Reading, October 14, 1854.
18. "Rev. Lyman Whiting," newspaper clipping, Whiting MSS.
19. Quoted in "Know-nothing Congressional Nominations," newspaper clipping.
20. "The Know Nothings," *Lowell Courier*, October 11, 1854, newspaper clipping.
21. "Know Nothing Nomination," newspaper clipping.
22. Whiting, "Congress."
23. Draft of Whiting's resignation letter.
24. Whiting, "Congress."

25. Henry Ward Beecher to Lyman Whiting, Brooklyn, October 16, 1854. Whiting apparently was an acquaintance of the Beechers of Boston, as he records in his diaries numerous occasions of visiting with Dr. Lyman Beecher, Henry's father, and Edward, Henry's brother.
26. Richard F. Fuller to Lyman Whiting, Boston, October 18, 1854.
27. Thomas Atkinson to Lyman Whiting, New York, October 18, 1854.
28. Whiting, "Congress."
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. Whiting Diary, October 23, 1854.
32. William W. Parsons to Lyman Whiting, Lawrence, October 25, 1854.
33. W. C. Todd to Lyman Whiting, Newburyport, October 26, 1854.
34. B. W. French to Lyman Whiting, Lawrence, October 26, 1854 and William Morse to Lyman Whiting, Lawrence, October 26, 1854.
35. E. W. to Lyman Whiting, Boston, November 1, 1854.
36. Todd to Whiting, October 26, 1854.
37. ——— Farwell to Lyman Whiting, Boston, October 27, 1854.
38. E. W. to Whiting, November 1, 1854.
39. J. B. Fairfield to Lyman Whiting, South Lawrence, November 3, 1854.
40. Joseph Richardson to Lyman Whiting, Hingham, November 1, 1854.
41. Whiting, "Congress."
42. Harrington, *Fighting Politician*, p. 23.
43. "District Convention at Charlestown," newspaper clipping.
44. Henry F. Harrington to Lyman Whiting, Lawrence, November 14, 1854.
45. Gideon Haynes to Lyman Whiting, Waltham, November 21, 1854.
46. *Boston Traveller*, November 25, 1854, newspaper clipping.
47. Draft of a letter to Fogg of November 25, 1854.
48. Whiting, "Congress."
49. Horace James to Lyman Whiting, Worcester, November 13, 1854.

50. Trafton, speaking at the Know-Nothing's victory party at Waltham, which Whiting attended, justified his switch from pulpit to Congress: "It had been often said that clergymen should not be politicians—that it did not become the cloth—that politics were a dirty thing. He did not doubt it. (Laughter.) They had said to him 'you had better be wise and look out for your bread and butter.' He had thought for years if politics were so dirty, that it was quite time they were cleansed. The clergy had as much right to step into the political arena as they had to say prayers. So long as he regarded right as right, so long should he not fail to utter his sentiments against wrong wherever found." *Boston Daily Bee*, November 29, 1854, newspaper clipping.