

BEYOND THE FUNDAMENTALIST/LIBERAL CONTROVERSY: A REVISIONIST HISTORY OF H. ORTON WILEY AT POINT LOMA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

Aaron Friberg

Introduction

The contemporary Christian college, or university, faces two threatening pressures as it seeks to remain faithful in its mission of the pursuit of truth. One, liberalism, relegates Christian truth to the private realm, preventing it from offering a legitimate claim to public truth (truth beyond one's own subjectivity). Fundamentalism, the other pressure, rejects this dichotomy but offers a narrow perception of truth and thus subverts the concept of a "university," which claims all knowledge is one. Point Loma Nazarene University, in the very years of its founding as Pasadena College, housed this very struggle between liberals and fundamentalists.¹ The authoritative history of the college/university narrates how H. Orton Wiley offers a middle way between these two pressures, remaining sufficiently open to the means of truth yet not excessively modern/liberal. Yet one might question this historical reading. Wiley does not offer a middle way between liberalism and fundamentalism, but instead rejects both. This rejection finds coherency in his deeper philosophical denial of the claims of modernity, out of which both liberalism and fundamentalism flow. Wiley seeks to retrieve a vision of the university as conduit of those Christian disciplines that, through Christ, enable one to see truth and participate in it.

Wiley as the Middle Way?

In *For Zion's Sake*, Ron Kirkemo offers the authoritative work on Wiley's relationship to Nazarene University and Pasadena College. Kirkemo colors Wiley as embodying a Wesleyan theology that traverses a "middle way" between fundamentalism and modernity.² Fundamentalism, which Kirkemo arbitrarily lumps with revivalism, provides a "closed" system of thought both "antiscientific" and "anti-intellectual."³ In contrast, Kirkemo asserts that Wesleyans, relying on the Quadrilateral, hold a "broad" view of truth that is open to "new laws of science, principles of society, and expressions of good and evil."⁴ Wesleyanism embraces "cultural pluralism" while ensuring that the essential "elements" of the Christian faith remain intact.⁵ While Wesleyanism eschews the narrow-mindedness of fundamentalism, it also avoids excessive modernism. Kirkemo identifies modernism with those movements such as evolution, scientific rationalism, and the exploration of the unconscious that make God peripheral to an adequate understanding of the world.⁶ Wesleyanism holds that Christian truth can be affirmed.

As one of the school's heroes, Kirkemo places Wiley as a model of the middle way characterized by Wesleyanism. Although Kirkemo remains critical of Wiley's actions to separate the university from the rest of society, he still holds Wiley in high regard.⁷ Kirkemo says Wiley "represented a return to classical Wesleyan theological understandings of grace

¹ Editor's note. Wiley served as President of Nazarene University and Pasadena college which later became Point Loma Nazarene University. For the sake of this article the Universities' current title will be used most prominently to encourage the reader to see both historical and contemporary implications.

² Ron Kirkemo, *For Zion's Sake: A History of Pasadena/Point Loma College* (San Diego: Point Loma Press, 1992), 88.

³ *Ibid.*, 86,87,112.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 364.

and sources of truth."⁸ He asserts Wiley embraced modernist tendencies in that, unlike fundamentalists, he did not hold that the Bible was the sole source of truthfulness. However, Kirkemo acknowledges Wiley did not follow modernity's rationalism to its "Humean" end; Wiley held that Christian truth remains viable. Kirkemo thus paints Wiley as embodying a perceived Wesleyan middle way between modernism and fundamentalism.

One may question Kirkemo's account via two interrelated issues. The first question rises out of Kirkemo's classification of Wiley as a middle way between modernism (which Kirkemo uses near synonymously with liberalism) and fundamentalism. However, one can challenge this view by claiming Wiley does not craft a middle way between liberals and fundamentalists. Instead Wiley rejects both "options" by undercutting the philosophical grounds upon which they stand. Secondly, Kirkemo colors fundamentalism as an irrational rejection of truthfulness opposed to modernity. In contrast to this reading, one can assert that fundamentalism, along with liberalism, remain an outgrowth of modernity.

Wiley's position of rejecting both fundamentalists and liberals lies not in adopting some philosophical middle way that Kirkemo characterizes as Wesleyanism; rather, Wiley philosophically undercuts the whole modernist project upon which both fundamentalism and liberalism rest. Wiley's critique of fundamentalism and liberalism emerges as one traces their modernist roots.

The Two Options of Modernity

Liberalism and fundamentalism develop as strains of modernist thought. Both adopt modernity's dictate of basing systems of knowledge upon a foundation which is universally accessible. Fundamentalism therefore, exists not as irrational or unscientific thought, rather, this movement simply presumes a different foundation of truth than that which liberals accept.

Modern thought arises from certain political shifts occurring around the 16th and 17th century. As princes and certain fiefdoms increasingly usurped power from the Roman Catholic Church, modernist ideologies arose that justified this separation from ecclesiastically ran political life. Modernists claim that particular beliefs and traditions supposedly lead to unquenchable conflict, "wars of religion".⁹ To subvert the supposed violence of "religion," modernity demands that truth be based upon a foundation which is universally accessible. The truth of the foundation must remain sufficiently open so all people can ascribe to or participate in its truth. This prizing of the universal was thought capable of diminishing the supposed violence of particular claims of truth. As Leo Strauss noted, the purpose of the West is one "in which all men could be united."¹⁰ Modernity then builds a system of knowledge from this unquestionable foundation.¹¹ The modernist project therefore privileges the universal and general, as opposed to the particular and timeful, in systems of knowledge. Both fundamentalism and liberalism represent outgrowths of modernity which simply adopt different foundations as the acceptable ground for a system of knowledge.

Fundamentalists accept modernist assumptions of truth and hold as their foundation Christian scripture. For fundamentalists, Christian scripture is the unquestionable truth. It is *the* revelation of God and therefore inerrant in all things. The rest of the natural world must

⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁹ William Cavanaugh, " 'A fire strong enough to consume the house': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11, no. 4 (1995). This claim is questionable. The "Wars of Religion" of the 16th and 17th century saw Protestants and Catholics on both sides of fighting. At issue was the very liberal project that claimed to pacify religious violence, the creation of political exercise free from Christian authority. William Cavanaugh, " 'A fire strong enough to consume the house': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11, no. 4 (1995).

¹⁰ Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 3.

¹¹ Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity Press, 1996), 11-35. Foundationalism as an epistemology begins with Descartes.

conform with the truth of Scripture. Given modernist strictures, these moves are necessary to ensure a sturdy foundation. The foundation of scripture is also universally accessible. Employing the Scottish common-sense realism of Thomas Reid, fundamentalists argued that, in contrast to Hume and skepticism, nature as humans perceive it does not differ from nature's actual state. This is possible because all humans participate in universal common sense rationality. Likewise, the facts of the bible are accessible by common processes of reading and understanding and also must be taken at face value (hence the literalism of much of fundamentalist thought). Any person can understand the scriptures through their own autonomous common sense rationality (for all people have been similarly constituted) such that all people will naturally accept the truth of Christian scripture. Therefore, fundamentalism clearly lies in the modernist tradition for it follows modernism's dictates of creating an unquestionable foundation of knowledge that has as its goal universal participation.¹²

Liberalism is an alternative response to fundamentalism given modernist presuppositions. As stated above, modernism demands a universally acceptable foundation upon which the rest of a system of knowledge is built. Fundamentalists made Christian scripture their universal foundation, claiming it is the absolute revelation from God. Yet problems quickly attended this position. The skepticism of Hume called into question the reasonableness of using scripture as a foundation. Hume argued that reason remains unable to validate religious presuppositions.¹³ Additionally, Enlightenment scientific advancement made truth dependent upon clear relationships of cause and effect discernible in nature. If scientific method cannot confirm theological claims, these claims are either invalid or are not based upon reason.¹⁴ Joined to Hume's general skepticism, a skepticism towards claims of revelation outside an individual's personal experience developed. Theological claims became private beliefs outside rational public discourse.

Immanuel Kant codified the distinction between public and private knowledge. Kant answers skepticism by distinguishing between pure reason, which flows from science, and practical reason, which assumes that reason about God must not be based on the order of the physical world.¹⁵ Thus liberalism creates a public/private dichotomy where truth confirmed by science is publicly acceptable. "Religious" truth is something found internal to the individual.¹⁶

Liberalism posits this public/private dichotomy and argues that a transcendental anthropology gives theological truth its necessary foundation. For liberals, something common to humans qua humans gives common ground for universal participation. For Kant, the common characteristic of all humans, indeed humanity's essence, is freedom. Those who have not grasped freedom are but "domestic cattle," not fully human. Freedom leads to greater truth for it allows humanity to develop intellectual and moral maturity.¹⁷ Freedom is the ground from which all knowledge of the divine is constructed. Choice necessarily follows from this

¹² George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). See Marsden for the development of Fundamentalism, including its reliance on common-sense philosophy, its later conflicts with Darwinism, and its general history.

¹³ Murphy, 20.

¹⁴ Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 25-28.

¹⁵ Murphy, 56.

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment," in Modern History Sourcebook. [cited 11 January 2004]. Available from www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kant-what-is.html; INTERNET. For a discussion on how the Enlightenment, following Kant, changes religion to private religious belief in order to bolster the power of the developing nation-state see Talal Asad, "The Limits of Religious Criticism in the Middle East," *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993) 200-208.

¹⁷ Asad, 202.

anthropology of freedom. The foundation upon which all truth lies, for Kantian liberalism, is choice and freedom.¹⁸

In conclusion, both fundamentalism and liberalism, often colored as opposites, in actuality arise from modernism. In meeting the demands of modernism, both assume different foundations upon which the remainder of human knowledge can be built. In order to avoid the excesses of religious fanaticism, these foundations are accessible to assent (fundamentalism) or freedom of choice (liberalism) for all humanity, they are universal. Given modernist presuppositions, these remain the only two options.¹⁹ Modernism presents fundamentalism or liberalism as the only viable options for Christian universities when thinking about the nature of theological truth. We now turn our attention to the early years of Point Loma Nazarene University in which we see the pervasive influence of modernism.

Fundamentalism at Point Loma Nazarene University

Both fundamentalist and liberal influences were vying for authority in Point Loma Nazarene University. Among the founders of the university, fundamentalists certainly held much sway. Edgar Ellyson, second president of the university, represents this fundamentalist tradition.²⁰ Ellyson's leadership had its clearest effect in the change of the university's bulletin. Written by Wiley the first two academic years, the bulletin of Point Loma Nazarene University dramatically changed under Ellyson's presidency. Wiley wrote that "On every school, on every book, on every scholastic exercise should be stamped, 'Holiness unto the Lord.'"²¹ The Bulletin of 1912-1913, produced by Ellyson, replaces the guiding standard of "Holiness unto the Lord" with "Loyalty to Christ and the Bible."²² Just what threatens Christ or the Bible that required this change in the school's motto? Introductory descriptions of the different academic disciplines absent in Wiley's bulletin name the culprit.

Additions to course descriptions in Ellyson's bulletin reveal distrust of those scientific and critical theories that question the literal accuracy and authority of Christian scripture. Wiley's bulletin simply says astronomy will offer a "descriptive and non-mathematical" approach as well as analyzing "the principles, problems, methods, and results of the science." Ellyson's bulletin radically differs:

In this study it will be seen that 'the Heavens declare the glory of God.'...The Bible will be acknowledged as an authority. Special attention will be given to the different astronomical facts referred to in the Bible and the special significance of these references will be considered.

Ellyson defends the inerrancy of the Bible, authoritative even in astronomy. The description added to biology offers a more pointed defense:

¹⁸ D. Stephen Long, *The Goodness of God: Theology, Church, and the Social Order* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), ch 2. See Long for a discussion of Kant's transcendental anthropology of freedom.

¹⁹ In this discussion of liberalism and fundamentalism I have distinguished the two by stressing liberalism's adoption of transcendental anthropology (either in freedom or religious experience) as its foundation as opposed to fundamentalism's adoption of scripture. It could be argued that fundamentalism also assumes a transcendental anthropology of universal rationality – so necessary to common-sense philosophy. This seems to collapse the distinction between liberalism and fundamentalism but is not a problem since that is indeed one of the objects of this exercise.

²⁰ For a more complete picture of fundamentalism at Nazarene University see Ron Kirkemo *For Zion's Sake...* Kirkemo traces fundamentalist influence throughout the university's history present in the thought of Nazarenes such as Aaron Hills and Noble Ketchum.

²¹ H. Orton Wiley, *Bulletin: Nazarene University, 1910-1911*. PLNU archives.

²² Edgar Ellyson, *Bulletin: Nazarene University, 1912-1913*. PLNU archives. In my brief archival study I did not see any documents suggesting Ellyson as the author of the changes in the 1912-1913 bulletin. This is the assertion Ron Kirkemo makes. I defer to his judgment.

The department of Biology is one of the most difficult and critical in all the college curriculum. It is here that errors have crept in and destroyed the faith of many. We have no sympathy with the so called modern Rationalism, or Agnosticism; with that evolutionary theory that makes man the offspring of the animal.

Clearly, Ellyson holds a fundamentalist view of the literal accuracy of all parts of the Bible, authoritative throughout.

In the crucial founding years of Point Loma Nazarene University, fundamentalists vied for control of the university. They were not the only ones claiming authority in the university. Before assessing the liberal presence at Nazarene University, one must first analyze the development of Kantian liberalism in Methodist theology so as to put A.J. Ramsey, the outspoken liberal of NU, in his theological context.

The Liberalization of Methodist Theology²³

The nineteenth century saw critical theological shifts in American Methodism, departing from Wesley's original reflections on revelation, sin and grace. Orthodoxy, wherein humanity is completely depraved, colors much of Wesley's theology. Sin, a "loathsome leprosy...totally corrupts every power and faculty" of humanity.²⁴ For Wesley, humans inherit depravity and a sinful nature. This depravity so pervades humanity's station that human freedom is significantly marred: "Since the fall, no child of man has a natural power to choose anything that is truly good."²⁵

Given this condition, redemption requires the initial move of the divinity. Only when God has acted is humanity free to accept the work that God has done because of God's grace. This freedom to respond to the true and beautiful Wesley calls preventing grace. Through preventing grace, God reveals to humans their own depravity so that they are free to receive and acknowledge the work God has already done. Wesley remains orthodox concerning humanity's depravity and the necessity of a gracious God for any step towards salvation or healing. Wesley's depravity heavily colored his epistemology.

Wesley's epistemology relies on revelation. The unregenerate human mind cannot comprehend scripture and scripture's witness to the ultimate revelation, Christ, without the Holy Spirit's assistance. The Spirit works "to apply and enable man to receive with faith the illuminating and saving meaning of God's revelation."²⁶ Human reason can only give partial knowledge – revelation is needed for the deepest human knowledge – salvific knowledge. Humanity's depravity prevents it from understanding meaningfully without the assistance of divinity. Following the influence of Kant, 19th Century Methodists would turn from Wesley's tenets.

John Miley represents these theological shifts. Miley affirms humanity's complete depravity but then proposes that prevenient grace imbues "natural virtues" in all of humanity. Miley asserts the absence of original guilt – guilt can only be incurred through an individual's choice.²⁷ Prevenient grace moves from soteriology to anthropology. For Wesley, prevenient grace showed humans how sinful they are so that they might accept the work that God has done. Wesley's view of a completely depraved humanity that cannot even choose the right is generally absent. Wesley's stress on "free grace" becomes a liberal variation of "free will". Thus freedom and choice are essential categories within Miley's theology. Miley adopts freedom as that which unifies humanity and makes movement towards the good possible.

²³ Robert Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism, 1790-1935* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965). In this whole section I rely on Chile's work on the changes in American Methodism in which he analyzes three 19th Century theologians in addition to Wesley. In this exercise I focus on Wesley and Miley.

²⁴ Chiles, 117.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

Kant's influence is evident. Moreover, free choice assumes unmediated knowledge of the natural world. Accordingly, Miley lays much emphasis on the ability of universal human reason to assess independently the natural world. Miley thus also adopts fundamentalism's stress on universal reason as that which enables all humanity to affirm truth. Miley, and the liberalization of Methodism, embodies a philosophical position that adapts aspects of both Kantian liberalism and fundamentalist rationalism.

The 19th Century saw a theological liberalization of Methodist theology. For Wesley, rationality is only accessible through the illumination of Christ. Alternatively, Miley posits a rational humanity - preventing grace moves from soteriology to anthropology. Humanity becomes essentially good through its ability to choose the Good of its own volition. This liberalism, mixed with rationalism, strongly shaped Ramsey, professor of Theology at Point Loma Nazarene University.

The Liberal Tradition at Point Loma Nazarene University

Although PLNU was certainly no bastion of liberalism, liberalism had its supporters vying for governance of the college. Professor A.J. Ramsey most clearly represents this tradition. Ramsey's theological views were by no means anathema. Rather, he partakes in a liberal trajectory present in Methodist theology for a century.

One sees Ramsey's views in the controversy that broke out between Ramsey and conservatives on campus in 1916. In the spring of 1916, Rev. C.W. Raymond of the University Church wrote a letter to the Board of Trustees complaining of Ramsey's teaching with 260 signatures attached. This letter reveals Ramsey's dependency on Miley's liberal theology. According to Raymond, Ramsey "teaches that man is not depraved to such an extent that any of his powers are destroyed."²⁸ What are these powers? Raymond notes that more than one student quoted Ramsey as saying, "There is no such place before one is saved where it is impossible to do right." Ramsey seems to be stressing the ability of human freedom to such an extent that human beings no longer need divine illumination. Ramsey seemingly taught "that man in his worst state in this life has the power both to choose and to do good as well as evil, and that he possesses this power as his own which is therefore independent of the grace of God." Wiley directly confronted Ramsey in this benevolent view of humanity stressed human freedom.

Wiley confronted Ramsey's liberalism in the first semester of the 1915-1916 academic school year. In a series of 16 chapel lectures, Wiley laid out his case against theological liberalism. This controversy became heated when Ramsey stood up in chapel and confronted Wiley publicly.²⁹ Wiley's lectures directly renounced Ramsey's liberal presuppositions.³⁰ Throughout the lectures, Wiley clarifies the denomination's theology as Arminian, accepting humanity's complete depravity, therefore increasing the role of God's grace while also noting that humans must cooperate with God in justification. Wiley stresses these themes explicitly to counter Ramsey's arguments when Ramsey interrupted him in chapel. Although Wiley does not mention Ramsey by name, he almost certainly refers to him and his disruption of chapel:

The assertion was made yesterday, and made thoughtfully, that no person can believe in a salvation which is all of grace, without believing in the total depravity of the object of that grace. This truth is therefore, one of our cardinal doctrines, and essential to a belief in salvation by grace.³¹

Wiley then goes on to quote Wesley and Fletcher as well as Arminian authors in support of his position on the inherent depravity of humanity. Liberal theology that places human salvation

²⁸ The signed protest is written by C.W. Raymond and titled "To the Board of Trustees of the Nazarene University." PLNU archives.

²⁹ Kirkemo, 43.

³⁰ The lectures are reprinted in the *Herald of Holiness* from April 12 to September 6, 1916.

³¹ H. Orton Wiley, "Chapel Talks: No. 4, Original Sin or Total Depravity" in *Herald of Holiness*, May 17, 1916.

in the individual's choice must eschew orthodoxy's position on original sin that adversely affects all of humanity's faculties. For Methodist liberalism, the individual must simply choose Christ to gain salvation. Wiley criticizes this faith, "merely an exercise of human power" as Pelagian and little different than Unitarian. Wiley considered the confrontation of liberalism important enough that he published his lecture series against Ramsey in the *Herald of Holiness*.³²

Ramsey's liberalism, born out when looking at these confrontations, clearly falls within the larger liberalization of Methodist theology that, following Kant, stresses the individual's freedom and choice in discerning truth. Ramsey accepts a transcendent anthropology that emphasizes the freedom of humans qua humans, thereby rejecting orthodoxy's complete depravity of humanity. In addition to accepting tenets of liberalism, Ramsey's theology assumes similar presuppositions of fundamentalist thought. As discussed above, fundamentalists accept a modernist strain that emphasizes rationalism. Ramsey's theology of choice assumes that the individual first knows both good and evil apart from divine illumination. Ramsey's subject then retains liberalism's freedom and fundamentalism's rationality. Ramsey embodies the consummate middle-way, pushing the school's fundamentalists toward liberalism.

Wiley Beyond Modernism

Wiley, in facing the power struggles between liberals and fundamentalists, does not adopt a middle-way to appease both groups. Rather, he confronts both positions. Wiley first criticizes modernity's elevated anthropology that both fundamentalism and liberalism adopt. Wiley's theology completely calls into question modernist assumptions about the progressive nature of society coupled with a benevolent view of humanity. Wiley notes in the *Herald* that unless the adjustments of mental development are "made in the midst of sympathetic and wholesome surroundings and under the wise counsel of godly men," these periods "may mar the student's life and turn him from the course of righteousness into skepticism and worldliness."³³ The world remains fallen and threatens to turn youth away from faithfulness. Endorsing the college at the 5th District Assembly for the Southern California District in 1911, Wiley notes that Point Loma Nazarene University established "in harmony with the spirit and purpose of the good work to which God has so signally called us" will combat "the opposition to holiness [and] world conformity."³⁴ Wiley clearly rejects modernity's stress on human goodness and maintains an orthodox viewpoint on human depravity. This meant society as a whole was corrupt. In addition to criticizing modernity's benevolent view of humanity, Wiley specifically criticizes both liberalism and fundamentalism.

Wiley clearly sees liberalism as a threat to the university. For liberalism, the nation-state becomes a good by allowing individuals to sustain the freedom of private decisions for truth (ie-Ramsey's individual that chooses the good). Wiley poignantly criticizes liberalism when he relates it to contemporary "educational theory."³⁵

³² I have offered a significantly different historical reading of this controversy than has been traditionally told. Kirkemo surmises that there could not be any serious theological disagreement between the university and Ramsey, otherwise Ramsey never would have been hired. Kirkemo claims that Wiley seemingly misunderstood Ramsey's teachings. This interpretation seems unlikely to me. Wiley felt there was strong enough theological difference to give public lectures attempting to correct the heterodoxy. In defense, Ramsey publicly confronted Wiley. Wiley then countered, after failing to convince the school board to let Ramsey go, by having the lectures published in the *Herald*. Here lies major theological difference that Wiley thought important enough to correct publicly. See Kirkemo 41-47.

³³ H. Orton Wiley, "The Nazarene University," *Herald of Holiness*, (August 25, 1915). PLNU archives.

³⁴ A report given at 5th District Assembly, 1911. Wiley's name starts the list of authors. The archives contain only a copy without the title of the report.

³⁵ H. Orton Wiley, chapel talks from April 26th and May 17th issues of *Herald of Holiness*.

Most Christian schools founded in the 20th Century saw their mission as uplifting the life of the nation state through producing moral citizens. This allegiance to the goals of the liberal nation state made resistance to this polity's liberalism difficult and in the end resulted in secularization.³⁶ Although Wiley does not tie secularization to the larger liberal society, Wiley's exhortation that the university not lose "the glow and fervor of spiritual life" like other "denominational schools," reveals Wiley is certainly wary of the possibility.³⁷ Wiley rightly senses the secularization of the academy in the liberal nation-state. Wiley remains wary of any alliance between church and world that could corrupt the theological commitments of students.

Wiley asserts that all societies, of which universities are a part, have an intrinsic vision of the good, or a telos to which they reach.³⁸ As Wiley notes, "there are different aims and ideals as to what is the supreme good of life."³⁹ Different educational systems accompany these differing societies, reinforcing and affirming the telos of that society. For Wiley there is no disinterested education. The educational system of the early 20th Century reinforced the ills of contemporary society.

Wiley criticizes contemporary educational institutions for holding a corrupted telos in common with a worldly society. Wiley proclaims that "the tendency of modern education is to produce men and women who love ease, and luxury, and worldly preferment."⁴⁰ This arises from these colleges' "Sadducean ideal which believes neither in angels nor spirits, but in ease and wealth and earthly honors."⁴¹ In this passage Wiley describes the vocationalist focus of contemporary American colleges and universities. Wiley rejects these colleges because they have an improper end. The telos of contemporary universities that claim to make science and

³⁶ *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). On the process of secularization see George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges & Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Here I use liberal in the classical political sense, although it surely is related to theological liberalism. Liberalism stresses the freedom of individuals ability to choose. Government must respect the rights of the individual. Further, following Adam Smith, the sum of individual choices will be the promotion of the common good. In this scheme, in conjunction with theological liberalism, "religion" belongs in the private realm as an individual personal value. In the liberal society, there is no overarching good save that of the promotion of the liberal society itself (a privilege gained through its granting the privileges of citizens to make choose). For criticism of liberal society see Alasdair MacIntyre, In the Methodist tradition, from which the Nazarenes arose, this secularization (see Burtchaell for analysis of Methodist educational secularization) occurred concurrently with Methodist cultural accommodation to American society. There is a vast amount of literature on Methodism's beginnings as a counter cultural movement and its accommodation into middle class American society. See also Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Donald Mathews, "Evangelical America – The Methodist Ideology," in *Rethinking Methodist History: A Bicentennial Historical Consultation*, ed. Russell Richey and Kenneth Rowe (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985); William Williams, "The Attraction of Methodism: The Delmarva Peninsula as a Case Study, 1769-1820," in *Rethinking Methodist History*; Nathan Hatch et al., eds., *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001); Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, and Cities* (New York: Random House, 1992); Roger Robins, "Vernacular American Landscape: Methodists, Camp Meetings, and Social Respectability," *Religion and American Culture* 4, no. 2: 165-191.

³⁷ Wiley, *The Educational Ideal...*, 4.

³⁸ In the early 20th Century, even the secular world acknowledged that education must have a telos or good it assumes. See Alfred Maynard Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).

³⁹ Wiley, "The Educational Ideal..." 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

impartiality their goal is nothing short of materialism, worldliness, and luxury that seeks only the advancement of the educated classes.⁴² Christian universities' commitment to the advance of the nation state had corrupted the youth.

In contrast to surrounding universities, Point Loma Nazarene University, as Wiley envisions it, produces students for the sustenance of the church rather than for the good of the nation state. The university will produce faithful members of the church rather than faithful citizens. In the first written page of the first bulletin of Point Loma Nazarene University Wiley wrote that the work of the school was carried out in order to provide "competent as well as consecrated workers – ministers, missionaries, deaconesses and laymen."⁴³ Wiley adopts the church as the primary polis of the school. Wiley saw the work of Point Loma Nazarene University as essential to the sustenance of the church's witness:

In one generation the characteristics of our schools will gain control of our churches. This school, this college, this university is molding the men and women who are to be our future leaders and preachers and missionaries and teachers.⁴⁴

The university can resist the demand of liberalism that authoritative public voices must make claims absent of theological commitments. This is because the university has a different end than the preservation of American society.

Wiley not only criticizes liberalism but just as strongly criticizes fundamentalism.⁴⁵ In writing the denomination's statement on scripture, Wiley avoided a literal reading of scripture and instead wrote of "plenary inspiration."⁴⁶ In his reading of the controversial creation narratives of Genesis, Wiley proclaimed that Genesis One and Two were a "Creation Hymn" more akin to poetry than a scientific account.⁴⁷ Wiley clearly avoided a fundamentalist reading of scripture which evaded scientific truth. Wiley asserts that "nature is the primary source of knowledge" of God while "the Bible is the supplementary source." Fundamentalism denies God's "two texts" of revelation: nature and scripture.⁴⁸

Wiley faced the destruction of Christian witness on two fronts. If the school embraced liberalism, the world must be embraced and the particularity of Christian truth diminishes. Education would become nothing more than materialistic self-advancement. If the school embraced fundamentalism, scientific truth would be denied. Given these two options, Wiley chooses not to mediate but rejects both positions out of hand. However, Wiley's vision does not end in mere criticism. Rather he lays out a vision that places the Christian university as essential to God's redemptive work amidst the world. Wiley lays out this vision in his inaugural address as president of the college given on September 17, 1913.

Wiley's Inaugural Address

Wiley desired to create an educational institution infused among a people who praise God, the Creator of all things. Wiley notes that creation exists as a "glorious harmony" made possible

⁴² Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America; A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1957). Wiley is clearly not alone in his critique of the materialism of contemporary education, in large part due to the influence of business of the American academy.

⁴³ H. Orton Wiley, "Nazarene University History," *Bulletin: Nazarene University, 1910-1911* PLNU archives.

⁴⁴ Quote by H. Orton Wiley in newspaper article entitled "First Nazarene Church Crowded to the Doors." The article is in the archives but is photocopied and does not list the newspaper or magazine's name. The date also is missing.

⁴⁵ Although Wiley equally criticizes both, the school's history has under-stressed Wiley's critique of liberalism. This paper, in part, has attempted to correct this.

⁴⁶ Kirkemo, 89.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁸ H. Orton Wiley, "The Educational Ideal of the Nazarene University," 12. Inaugural Address given in Pasadena the 17th of September, 1913. NNU archives.

by one Creator who is “the center of the universe.”⁴⁹ As the center of the universe, God lies behind all things. Not only is God the source of all things, but all of creation participates in the praise of God. Natural objects, such as the lilies of the field, glow with spiritual meaning when seen correctly.⁵⁰ All creation participates in God’s revelation:

The earth and the Bible are God’s two texts each having its place, time and function. Nature is the primary source of knowledge the Bible is the supplementary source. Without the Bible the problems of nature would be dark and perplexing; but without the study of science, philosophy, history, aesthetics and mathematics, the Bible cannot be rightly understood.⁵¹

Humanity, who has “been made capable of ceaseless approach to an infinite ideal,”⁵² also witnesses as creation to its Beginning. The natural world participates in God as a sign that points to its Creator.

At face value, Wiley’s position here seems contradictory to his diatribe against “world conformity” and worldliness. How can one see creation as revelation and simultaneously deny the world? A distinction must be made here between the “world” and creation. Indeed, this distinction is not new. Christians both strive to be “unstained by the world” (James 1:27) and live in a creation that has been set free by the redeeming work of Christ (Romans 8:18-22). The world is that part of God’s creation living under the dominion of sin. Creation is the world as it truly is – a participant in the redeeming work of God. As Jonathan Wilson states, “to claim the world as creation is to presume also its redemption.”⁵³ Redeemed creation is the true reality of this world. Consequently, Wiley criticizes contemporary materialist education as having “no vision of the real and enduring things.”⁵⁴ Its practitioners have not seen correctly. For Wiley, seeing correctly remains all important; however, the “fact” of creation (that it participates in the glorification of God) is not immediately discernible.

Although all of God’s creation witnesses to and praises the Creator, this is not immediately discernible outside of faith. For Wiley, only those formed by Christian practices can rightly discern the complete truth of God’s creation. The truth that God exists at the center of all and that all of creation blends together into harmony is “a state of soul which only they can comprehend who have been transformed by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁵ The human mind must be illumined to discern correctly. Wiley credits the spiritual disciplines as playing a large role in this transformation:

There is to be [at Point Loma Nazarene University] an atmosphere of prayer and devotion in such a marvelous measure, that students will tarry in the presence of God continually, and study language and literature, science and history and philosophy and make all these minister to increased knowledge and devotion to God.⁵⁶

Students formed by the practices of prayer and devotion can make God’s creation find its right telos – the praise and glory of God. The student must be transformed so she can perceive the created world rightly – as praise to the Creator:

Life is an unfolding of a mysterious power wherein man rises to self-consciousness, and through self-consciousness to a knowledge of the true, the beautiful and the good, a plane of human volition where action may no longer be left to the sway of impulse,

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵³ Jonathan Wilson, “The Place of the Natural Sciences in an Ecclesially Based University,” *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, edited by Michael L. Budde and John Wright (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 133.

⁵⁴ Wiley, *The Educational Ideal...*, 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

but controlled by reason and conscience. To educate is to unfold this life by deliberate and intelligent effort.⁵⁷

In "co-operation with the Infinite Being," students participate in the Christian disciplines to see the beautiful, true and good as found in God.⁵⁸ Wiley ties reason to the particularity of embodied practices.

By positing the beautiful, the true, and good as the objects of reason, Wiley ties reason to aesthetics and therefore the affections. The human mind, disciplined by prayer and devotion in concert with the Holy Spirit,⁵⁹ can see the beautiful as it is found in God. This discernment of Beauty brings illumination:

Beauty is nobly useful. It illumines the mind, raises the imagination & warms the heart. It is not an added quality, but grows from the inner Nature of things: it is the thought of God working outward.⁶⁰

Perception of the beautiful also produces certain affectional responses – it "warms the heart." Contemplation of the Beautiful also results in the "eternal thrill" of enjoyment of God.⁶¹ Truth and reason for Wiley find their fulfillment in proper affectional responses to creation, the enjoyment of God.

Wiley asserts that "truth must be tinged with emotion before it takes deep hold upon the heart."⁶² Contrary to modernist aspirations of the uninvolved subject, Wiley argues that certain affections accompany the perception of truth. Wiley, claiming to follow Wesley, describes the "emotional life" as "truth wrought in the heart by the immediate agency of the Spirit of God."⁶³ Truth is not accessible to all humanity but is found within a group of people that have, through the work of the Holy Spirit, developed the proper practices and affectional responses. For Wiley, the subject moves from contemplation of the natural world to aesthetics⁶⁴ (they see the Beautiful in creation as it is found in God) and from there move to redemptive action.

Wiley argues that through particular practices one sees truth (the natural world as redeemed creation and Beauty) and this produces affections of enjoyment in God. From aesthetics, the subject can then live a life that calls the rest of the world into redemption. Wiley uses Moses as an exemplar of this process:

When Moses had lingered for 40 years at the backside of the desert, and had meditated upon the greatness of God, when he had seen the majesty of God in the great mountains, and the beauty of his plan in the verdure of the plains, when he had meditated upon the mystery of life, and the wonderful providences of God until Earth seemed pervaded with God, God looked down and said, Moses my servant has seen me in the mountains and the plains, in the beauty of the flowers, in the mystery of animal life, if he can see me now in a common scrub bush, then he is ready to graduate from the primary department and come up onto the plain of human events and go down into Egypt and lead my people out.⁶⁵

Through the particular practice of meditation, Moses began to see the truth of God's creation as it is found in God and notices this is a thing of beauty. After learning to enjoy God, Moses is

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 31,32.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

then ready for what Wiley calls “heroic service,”⁶⁶ calling the rest of the world into repentance. The Christian subject moves from illumination (through formation in the right disciplines) to aesthetics to practice. Wiley calls Point Loma Nazarene University to foster this service among its students so “that God may, through us, pour out without obstruction, the burning glowing joy bestowing message of redeeming love.”⁶⁷ These “noble subjects of the kingdom of heaven”⁶⁸ do not act alone though. This heroism is not individualistic. Rather, the student finds themselves as part of “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people” that has as its duty calling the rest of the world to praise its Creator.⁶⁹ The university thus has a key role in training students to see the world correctly so that they may enter into the holy mission of the church. The world must learn that in truth they are creation. This requires a “peculiar people” that witnesses, with a particular set of practices and affections, to the good work that God is doing with God’s creation.

Wiley’s vision clearly differs from modernism. He does not seek a foundation of truth that is accessible to all humanity. Rather, Wiley stresses truth’s inseparable connection to the particularity of Christian practice and worship. Truth and rationality are always embodied in particular practices and the narratives that sustain them.⁷⁰ Far from being a novel approach, this stress on embodied reason resonates with Aquinas’ thought. Aquinas, according to John Milbank, taught that “intelligence begins as a bodily exercise, accompanied by desire that reaches into the unknown.”⁷¹ Wiley, like Aquinas, stresses reasons irrevocable particularity as it is embodied in certain practices. Aquinas’ stress on desire draws on earlier Christian Orthodoxy, St Augustine, who Wiley also imitates.

Augustine ties knowledge of truth with the affection of desire. Augustine divides the world into *res* (thing) and *signum* (sign). Things can be enjoyed completely in and of themselves. Signs on the other hand may be enjoyed to the extent that they participate and point to something greater than themselves. For Augustine, the only true *res* is God. The rest of creation acts as *signum* pointing us towards God.⁷² For Augustine, beauty and enjoyment lie at the center of the Christian life. The redeemed are “a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God.”⁷³ Following Augustine, Wiley places Beauty at the center of his discourse which prompts affections of enjoyment of God. Wiley adopts Orthodox language that connects truth with practice and emotion and thereby rejects modernity’s foundationalism which panders to the universal subject. Wiley’s vision thus starkly contrasts with university as “servant of the state” model. The university, situated amongst the City of God, fosters among its students those spiritual disciplines and affections that, through Christ, witness to a good creation with God as its center.

Conclusion

Wiley brushes aside the claims of liberals and fundamentalists, rejecting a middle way that adopts perspectives of both. Instead Wiley undermines the whole project upon which these ideologies are based. Both liberalism and fundamentalism rely on a modernist approach that attempts to lay a ground for knowledge that is universally accessible. Wiley rejects this foundationalism by rejecting the proposition that truth is readily accessible to all people. Wiley assumes the unity of revelation and thus avoids the split between public and private truth. The Christian university can disregard liberalism’s separation of faith from our public bodies.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁰ Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 133, 478.

⁷¹ John Milbank, “The Last of the Last: Theology in the Church,” *Conflicting Allegiances...*, 245.

⁷² Barry Harvey, “City of Carnage, City of Refuge: Accounting for the Wages of Reason in the Ecclesially Based University,” *Conflicting Allegiances...*, 64.

⁷³ Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, XIX.17, ed. R. W. Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 947.

Christians can also readily explore the natural world in all its dimensions and avoid the trap of fundamentalism.

In the place of modernism, Wiley returns to an Orthodox discourse. For Wiley, truth is only accessible once the mind has been illumined in Christian discipleship. Wiley claims that those rightly formed by the disciplines of the church, in concert with the Holy Spirit, can rightly discern the two revelations of Christ, scripture and nature, and help these find their true end in the praise of God. God's revelatory work carries forth in the particular praxis of the Christian community gathered around the praise and enjoyment of God.

Aaron Friberg
Point Loma Nazarene University