

MID-AMERICA NAZARENE COLLEGE

Olathe, Kansas

THE NAZARENE TROJAN HORSE

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO
PAUL WILLIAMS
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
HISTORY AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

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4-18-86

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The Church of the Nazarene has been characterized by growth in every dimension: growth in physical size, in acceptance, in education and outreach, but as the first laid plans of any predesigned structure represent the ideal, perfection in fact, is not attainable, at least in the organization. Any assemblage composed of parts like that of the Church with assortments of human personalities made up of experiences and attitudes, expectations, and styles is bound to have conflict; conflict both obvious and unobvious; things that are battled and debated over and things that creep in in subtle ways and take hold without anyone knowing. There is one such subtle effect that gripped our early Church, but was unknown to most, even on such an issue as our foundation.

The Nazarene Church has inherited two opposite and incompatible points of view on the central issue of spiritual, theological authority.¹ An understanding of these two viewpoints is essential to gaining insight as to their misunderstanding by the majority, causing our unperceived problem.

One position is traditionally held by the Fundamentalists, those brought up in the reform tradition like our own A.M. Hills, who was educated at Oberlin and

1 Paul Merritt Bassett, The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement, 1914-1940. The Church of the Nazarene ~ Case Study (Theses, Nazarene Theological Seminary), p. 85.

Yale.² This position contends that the content of Scripture is inerrent. The idea centers on its logic structure, and there is an emphasis on the words. This does not mean they deny the Christocentricity of their faith of what the Bible says, but their betrayal comes methodologically because they are Fundamentalist in their understanding of what the Bible is or how it is used.³ Thus, Fundamentalists presuppose Scripture is the basic revelation of God.

The opposite position is held by followers of John Wesley, like H. Orton Wiley who was brought up in the Wesleyan tradition and educated under the Methodists. Wiley's view of authority centers on Christ and experience more than logic. The Bible is a vehicle of the Word, and as it functions it is inerrent. There is a greater emphasis in Scripture telling about redemption. The spotlight is on Jesus Christ, not the structure of sentences and their foundational authority.⁴

...The Bible •..must be considered in relation to Christ the Living Word. Not from themselves do the inspired books give forth light. The original source of the Christian knowledge of God must ever be, the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him as the ever-living Light the written word is subordinate. The Personal Word manifests Himself in and through the written word. The books which were written concerning Him by evangelists and apostles bear a relation to His Divine Human life resembling His own spoken words to His Person; and these books through the succeeding derive their light and their truth uninterruptedly from Him who is the Light and the Truth.

Mystically connected with the Christ of God, the Scripture continues to be the objective medium

- 2 Bassett, Interview,
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.

through which by the Spirit, the original Light shines into the hearts of true believers. When, however, the living synthesis of the written word and the Personal Word is lost, the Church thereby sunders the Bible from the spiritual communion in which it perpetually stands, and comes to view it as an independant book, apart from the living presence of its Author. Divorced from its true meaning and mystical ground, the Bible holds a false position for both theologian and teacher.⁵

In grandeloquent style, Wiley is saying that Christ must be first. He is the cornerstone of our faith. We cannot give divinization to Scripture although the bible is important. One must come from faith in Christ to belief in the authority of Scriptures, not vise-versa. When Fundamentalists travel from authority of Scripture to faith in Christ, they deny Him His rightful pre-eminence.⁶ Fundamentalists would on no terms give assent to this fact. What they portray spiritually does not match up to what they practice.

Wiley's view of the Bible can then be defined as intermediary in regard to authority:

Christ the Personal Word was Himself the full and final revelation of the Father. He alone is the true Revealer. Not merely His words and acts, but He Himself as manifested in His words and acts. In this sense it may be truly said that 'the Oracle and the oracles are one.' To rightly understand then, the nature and the function of the Bible, it must be viewed as occupying an intermediate position between the primary revelation of God in nature and the perfect revelation of God in Christ - the Personal

5 H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology 3 vols., (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1940), pp. 139-140.

6 Bassett, p. 84.

Word.7

These two positions seem quite clear. With an issue such as the source of authority, a misunderstanding is not possible. Or is it? The early Holiness movement supported the relationship between Christology and the question of the authority and inspiration of Scripture, 8 but this doctrinal teaching was lost for a time because everyone stopped to watch the two bullies of the block have it out.

The enlightenment, industrialization, geographic expansion, and loosening of standards only serve as a few possible causes of the rise of Modernism. -Modernists had redefined what a fact must be and reality itself. They had narrowed the definition of what truth or a truth must be and how it would be determined to be a truth.9 This train of thought was becoming quite popular as many were joining in the fad of theorizing.

The sway toward liberalism raised a most maudlin attitude in the group known as the Fundamentalists. Fundamentalism has always been as much an attitude as a set of beliefs. Some characteristics include: rigidity, sectarianism and anti-intellectualism. They have an engrained belief that "our's is the only way," or "we are the only ones that are right."10 So, when the Modernists took

7 Wiley, p. 138.

8 Bassett, p. 70.

9 Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 103-131.-- ----

over some of their turf, battle lines were drawn, and sides were picked. What was left was the two extremes with everyone a conservatist or a liberal.¹¹

Traditionally, Wesleyans have not been combative or rigid like Fundamentalists. We believe we have truth, but not the only truth. We are accepting of other denominations to a greater degree than Fundamentalists, but in the confusion of conflict and the perceptions of a needed alignment with the Fundamentalist cause, Wesleyans did react to Modernists.¹²

This reaction was quietly accepted by many Nazarenes who were naive to the deeper implications. They thought they had chosen the "good" side as opposed to the "bad." This foment, in turn, caused somewhat of a snowballing effect .starting in the grassroots of the church and later encompassing the leadership as well. Our problem was only accepted because it was not understood and "everybody was doing it", a sort of socialized norm.

One reason this might have been allowed to happen is the uneducated leadership our Church has generally had and especially that intelligentsia of the early Nazarene Church. Those in Church leadership have generally not been chosen because of theological expertise, but as a result of field experience and popularity within the denomination.¹³

10 Interview with Donald S. Mets, Professor, Mid-America Nazarene College, Olathe, Kansas; 4 February, 1986.

11 Bassett, Interview.

12 Mets, Interview.

At this point, let it not be said that, the Nazarene Church openly ascribed to and aligned itself to the specific doctrine of mainline Fundamentalists. Though we may have people in our Church- pastors, laity and teachers- who could portray a Fundamentalist view, the Church generally has rejected that label. Thus, we may have had Fundamentalists in the Church, but we have always called ourselves Conservatives more than Fundamentalists.¹⁴ So, in terms of the state of the Controversy in 1920, the usual or perceived conservative is within the Fundamentalist frame of thought.¹⁵

This frame of thought was encouraged and even propogated, but also very subtly: In 1908, E.P. Ellyson's Theological Compend was published by deliberate arrangement to celebrate the merger that year of the Holiness Church of Christ and the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene marking the birth of the Church of the Nazarene as a national denomination. ¹⁶ This was the first wide gauged systematic theology from within the Holiness movement itself. It was surely relied upon as a major text for theological preparation and apologetics, but not one word concerning the doctrine of revelation appears in its contents.¹⁷

It seems odd that such an important issue would be ignored. One would think the doctrine of revelation would be

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Bassett, p. 73.

16 Edgar P. Ellyson, Theological Compend (Chicago and Boston: Christian Witness, 1908).

17 Ibid.

so salient that in depth exposition would be devoted to its explanation. One can only guess as to its exclusion. It might have been that the demands of early formation of a new national denomination were considered of primary importance, or possibly extraneous conflicts demanding attention to save face left smoldering fires unattended. Whatever the case, the authority and inspiration of Scripture were believed to be divine, and that was believed to be self-explanatory.¹⁸

For Wesleyans, the authority of Scripture depends on self-authentication, but more importantly, experience of the authenticating voice of the Living Word. For Fundamentalists, proof of authority lies external to Christian experience. The Bible is authoritative because it is inspired.¹⁹

The majority did not comprehend this fact, but were caught up in the emotion of a good fight. they had picked their winner and would defend it to the end.

For H. Orton Wiley, both Fundamentalists and Modernists overextended the province of reason or logic. He felt both camps, in regard to Scripture inspiration, were unsuitable. He snuck into the battle in a very political fashion and offered a third alternative, more Weslian and classically orthodox. His efforts were not without frustration. His polity was so well disguised and the conservative move towards Fundamentalism so perpetuating that the contrast

18 Bassett, p. 69.

19 Ibid, pp. 68-69.

between Wiley's position and the "recieved" position of the great majority was not percieved.²⁰ Many who knew only the two extremes thought Wiley was a Fundamentalist although this was not the case.

N~ylect to be specific in the early organization of our church regarding Scripture inspiration proved to foster a subtle leavening by Fundamentalist Doctrine.²¹ Though it is easy to see the problem, a reverse of this cause could not be openly confrontive. The attack must be as subtle as the invasion.

Where does one start to mend, if seemingly, *you* are the only one who senses the problem? H.O. Wiley affected our Church where he had authority. He started where he could; he worked with what he had; It was all he could do.

In 1923, the sixth General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene submitted an "approved constitution" to the various districts of the Church for their decisions and voted to act on the whole constitution at the seventh General Assembly in 1928.²² Under consideration of change were two words in the Article of Faith and a similar revision in the Statement of Belief. Until 1923, the Article of Faith referring to Scripture read: "By the Holy Scriptures we understand the sixtY-Six books of the Old and New Testaments, given by Divine inspiration, revealing the will of God concerning us

20 Ibid, pp. 65,67.

21 Ibid, p. 73.

22 "Sixth General Assembly," Journal, 1923, pp. 54-56.

in all things necessary to our salvation; so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined in an Article of Faith."²³ The 1923 Statement of Belief echos: "We believe in the Divine inspiration of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and that they contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living."²⁴ It is easy to see *our* heritage here. The 1923 Article of faith is very similar to the 25 Articles of Methodism and 39 Articles of Episcopalianism.²⁵ The conclusion should be drawn; as a denomination, the Nazarenes were to this point more passive and unsure of their own beliefs, leaving themselves open to be tossed by other winds of doctrine.

Change occurs in the 1928 revision. The article now stands: "We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures by which we understand the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, given by Divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to *our* salvation; so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an Article of Faith."²⁶ The new Statement of Belief read: "We believe in the Plenary inspiration of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and that they contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living."²⁷

23 Manual, 1923, p. 28.

24 Ibid, p. 22.

25 Bassett, Interview.

26 Manual, 1928, p. 22.

27 Ibid, p. 28.

The two changes are evident and simple enough. Plenary means full and inerrantly, obviously, without error. These two words could be easily incorporated without resistance from the majority or, as it turns out, everyone.

Neither the periodicals of the Church of the Nazarene between the sixth and seventh General Assembly, nor the minutes of District Assemblies, nor minutes of the 1928 General Assembly show any sign of debate over what came to be of the new Article of Faith.²⁸ This fact leads one to believe there is a lack of understanding of Wesleyan doctrine or a great sense of apathy. More than likely, it was viewed as a welcome step against Modernism and applauded readily into acceptance as a stronger alliance with the Fundamentalists. Whatever the case, it leaves the impression that there may be a guiding hand in the background who is knowledgeable of the subtle effect the Fundamentalists are having on the Nazarene Church.

The quiet guiding hand was that of H. Orton Wiley. Sources confirm the fact that he did indeed frame the new article of 1928.²⁹ But Why? Plenary inspiration is Wiley's. It is congruent and consistent with his theology and the doctrine of his denomination. Inerrantly, on the other hand, as it is used, seems to be a deliberate avoidance of the word 'Inerrance' which gives overtones of Fundamentalism.³⁰

28 Bassett; p. 74.

29 Bassett, Interview.

30 Bassett, p. 74.

Although guidance in church polity was a good start, Wiley's task was becoming more complicated as this seemingly unknown disease gained infectious momentum.

Between 1923 and 1928, the Nazarene Church was swept into more encouragement of Fundamentalism. Paul Bassett asserts: "One is impressed that in this period, 'second blessing holiness' was not as critical to the denomination as it had earlier been ... a fundamentalist orthodoxy with respect to the inspiration and authority of Scripture had become a defacto mark of a 'good Nazarene.' He goes on, "The only alternative to inerrancy seemed to be errancy. The only alternative to infallibility, fallability. The only alternative to verbal, ideational."³¹

J.B. Chapman was a man with extreme influence. He was editor of the Herold of Holiness from 1923 through 1928, at which time he became General Superintendant and continued as editor of Preacher's Magazine well into his superintendancy. With these credentials, his overwhelming popularity, and his clear favorableness with the Fundamentalists; by 1928, the General Superintendants were quite clear in their sympathy with Fundamentalism.³²

The address of the General Superintendants at the seventh General Assembly in 1928, shows quite evidently their mindset:

31 Ibid, p. 75.

32 Ibid, pp. 76-77.

First, we note with pleasure that there are no differences or divisions among us. We are a perfectly united denomination. In this General Assembly there will be no discussion of Modernism or Fundamentalism. We are all Fundamentalists, we believe the Bible, we all believe in Christ, that He is truly the Son of God. We stand for the same great fundamentals and we will not be torn asunder nor be hurled into strife by arguments or contentions arising from the differences of opinion regarding the great underlying principles of Christianity.

We must stand for the whole Bible. We do not as a movement believe merely that the Bible contains the Word of God. We believe it from Genesis to Revelation. We stand for it in life and death.

Every man in this body is a Fundamentalist ... We believe the Bible and accept it as being the revealed Word of God, immutable, Unchangeable, infallible and sufficient for every human need. A Modernist would be very lonesome in the General Assembly.³³

J.B. Chapman's 1925 Herold of Holiness began advertising a book that should have sent any well informed Wesleyan into hysterics at the very idea of our own Nazarene denomination endorsing such a work. The book's title, Cunningly Devised Fables: Modernism Exposed and Refuted, is very appealing in light of the period's milieu. It was written by Basil W. Miller and U.E. Harding. It was published without the trademark of the Nazarene Publishing House, luckily, and was the first head on attack of Modernism to come from the Nazarenes.³⁴

Miller's book was warmly endorsed by A.M. Hills³⁵ and the introduction was written by J.B. Chapman.³⁶ Although the

33 "Seventh General Assembly," Journal, 1928, p. 63,49,52,58,63.

34 Hearold of Holiness, 25 June, 1925.

35 Ibid. 2 Sept. 1925.

36 Basil W, Miller, U.E. Harding, Cunningly Devised Fables;
(Footnote continued)

Nazarene Publishing House has no record of the press run of the book, its popularity in history is remembered well. It seems odd that most usually, when the few with the power endorse something in particular, all others of lower status follow blindly, even after a fallacy.

Just as will be shown of Hill's later work, Miller's book was without reference to the Holy Spirit as an agent of continuing inspiration. It was also without reference to Christ as the focus and foundation. The term "Word of God" for Miller, refers only to the written word. The effect of Miller's work was to raise the Bible to a sort of divinity traditionally attributed to the Trinity.³⁷

This brief background of the men mentioned thusfar, sets the stage for a better understanding of H.D. Wiley's efforts to keep the denomination away from a greater leavening effect of Fundamentalism.

The report of the General Board of Education to the 1923 General Assembly recommended that another work by Basil Miller and J.B. Chapman, "The Faith once Delivered to the Saints,", be referred to the committee on Education for consideration of inclusion in the "Course of Study for Licensed Ministers."³⁸ The committee on education did take the matter up and in turn recommended it to the committee on

36(continued)

Modernism Exposed and Refuted. (no place, no publisher, no date) .

37 Ibid. pp. 132-133.

38 Fifth General Assembly, Journal, 1919.

Course of Study. This move was approved by the assembly.³⁹ H.O. Wiley was the secretary of all the committees involved in this move and was fully aware that there was not then and never had been a committee on the course of study.⁴⁰ The effect of the whole UJ::"dCL.11 WL.1::; Lo kill the project so no fundamentalist work would get into the course of study, no matter how strong the identification with the Fundamentalists from the Nazarenes was.⁴¹

Paul Merritt Bassett evaluates the activities by saying:

H. Orton Wiley's presence at every step, always in a policy shaping role, is circumstantial evidence that his was a major influence that kept that book from the official list. This evidence, plus the common knowledge that Wiley framed the 1928 "Artical of Belief" on Scripture, ... are critical data in explaining why Fundamentalism did not capture the Church with its biblicism ... (from) 1923 to 1928, ... Wiley seems to have followed the more politic road of keeping the official structure and doctrine of the Church away from endorsing doctrinaire Fundamentalism, even on the point of biblical authority rather than attempting to formulate a positive position which might, *in* the heat of a larger fray, be misunderstood.⁴²

These proceedings, although necessary, were just busy work in regard to the effect the growing Fundamentalist attitude was having on the Nazarene Church at this time.

In 1919, a formal request was given by the General Department of Education to H.O. Wiley, then the President of

39 Seventh General Assembly, Journal. 1928, p. 241.

40 Bassett, p. 79.

41 Ibid. p. 79.

42 Ibid. p. 79.

Northwest Nazarene College, to write a full-range systematic theology.⁴³ At the same time A.M. Hills began writing his own systematic theology. He was then a member of the Pasadena University faculty. Former students of his were urging him to put his thoughts into writing. He took their advice and as Wiley, began preparing his work.⁴⁴

Although they started at the same time, Hill's Fundamental Christian Theology was published a decade before Wiley's work.⁴⁵ Hill's theology was not published by the Nazarene Publishing House because it was considered too liberal with respect to the authority and inspiration of Scripture.⁴⁶

In the one hundred pages that Hill's expounds on inspiration of Scripture there is not one word in reference to the Living Word or the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. Hill's accepted the Fundamentalist argument for the authority and inspiration of the Bible without seeing that he was arguing that where Scripture appeared to fail, or at least falter, the principle weight of authority falls on logic or reason.⁴⁷ One is left with the impression that Hills was a part of this subtle transformation and did not even know his own position, let alone his impact.

H. Orton Wiley critiques this in his later published

43 Wiley, intro.

44 A.M. Hills, Fundamental Christian Theology: ~ Systematic Theology, 2 vols.; (Pasadena, Calif.: C.J. Kline, 1931).

45 Ibid.

46 Bassett, Interview.

47 Hills, pp. 101-203.

systematic theology and offers an alternative to Fundamentalism and Modernism, in hopes of placing the accepted theology of the Church of the Nazarene back on a proper orthodox course.⁴⁸

Wiley's critique and efforts by others were to a degree unsuccessful as the doctrine of A.M. Hills gripped the Church through education in the 1930's and 1940's. His work was the first published and as a result, used. Many teachers used Hill's work as a reference and failed to catch the presuppositions therein.⁴⁹ They, like Hills, were unaware of the subtle heresy at work.

Subtleness is what is being emphasized here. Just the fact that something looks good on the outside does not make it totally acceptable. Many times, a cause that seems to be "the truth" is not truth at all when viewed more closely and all the implications weighed.

Just as Nazarene theology strayed, in this period, from it's original stand on authority and inspiration of Scripture; other subtleties of fundamentalism crept in. In its move from the city to Suburbia with a pursuit to build stable, eloquent churches, the Nazarenes have slowly developed a lack of concern for the poor, their original mission, and adopted emphasis on standards and sectarianism.⁵⁰

48 Wiley, p. 142.

49 Bassett, p. 81.

50 Frank Moore, Proffessor, Mid-America Nazarene college, Olathe, Kansas, Class Lecture.

It is not being concluded that this Fundamentalist attitude and a move away from the Social Gospel is a result of early heretical teaching in the area of authority and inspiration of Scripture; what is being implied is that definite beliefs are essential. There must be no room for error. If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything.

The idea of a trojan horse must be ever present in the mind of a denomination. Like in the building of a cathedral, a doctrine must have a firm foundation or it will come crashing to the ground.

Christ's Church is a living body. The Nazarene Church is only a section of that. What are we investing in the lives of those people involved in the grassroots of the Church?

These are just a few factors that may continue the effect of a contrary doctrine on our Wesleyan beliefs. The price that is to be paid cannot yet be assessed. It has been said that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We must make ourselves aware of the possible subtleties that can creep in and destroy.

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