

FRANCIS WAYLAND:
CHRISTIAN AMERICA-LIBERAL AMERICA

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APPROVAL PAGE

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DEDICATION

For the two Angies, who are the lights of my life.

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FRANCIS WAYLAND:
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ABSTRACT

In the decades before the Civil War, two powerful cultural forces shaped American life; evangelical Protestantism and republican liberalism. Among those persons most active in the effort to reconcile the two movements was Brown University President, Baptist leader, and prominent moralist, Francis Wayland. This dissertation traces his efforts to negotiate among the diverse elements of his Christian faith and his liberal beliefs, as he attempted to create a Christian and democratic university, to mediate the growing moral and political crisis over slavery, and to balance social reform with the evangelical command to save souls.

Early in his career, Wayland saw a genuine harmony between his Christian faith and American republicanism. His Baptist faith supported religious liberty, individual autonomy in moral judgment, and limited government, which cohered with his liberal beliefs in laissez-faire economics, democratic educational reform, and meritocratic social organization. He believed that together, Christian faith and liberal republicanism could create a virtuous and free nation. However, in the years after 1837, his faith in harmony between Christianity and liberalism was severely challenged. He failed to convince his fellow citizens to adopt his vision of Baptist evangelical Christianity and republican liberalism as the basis for a free and virtuous national culture, but in his efforts to combine these two powerful movements there is revealed an all too often forgotten option for what frequently seems incompatible elements of the American identity.

INTRODUCTION

On April 15, 1865, the terrible news of the death of the president sped across the nation. The citizens of Providence, Rhode Island, were no less bewildered than were those of the other towns and cities of the victorious north. They all struggled with their grief and uncertainty and looked for whatever comfort they could find. The people of Providence called a town meeting and sought a speaker who could address their pain and give them hope and comfort. They approached Francis Wayland, the retired president of Brown University to lead them. He was in ill health; in six months he would be dead, and he refused their request to address the Providence citizenry. He told them that his health would prohibit him from traveling to the site for the meeting. They asked him if he would address the meeting if they built a speaker's platform on his lawn. He agreed, and that evening Wayland addressed a gathering of over 1,500 persons.¹

At the end of his life, the citizens of his community turned to Wayland for understanding and comfort in a time of national crisis. What was it about him that made his fellow citizens look to him for wisdom in such a time of grief? He was not a powerful political leader or an economic pillar of the community. It had been almost ten years since he served as the president of Brown University; yet the people turned to him. There were many other younger popular ministers in the city who could have provided a religious analysis of the event; still Wayland was the choice. It is worth trying to

¹ James O. Murray, *Francis Wayland* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1891), 151-154.

understand why they chose him to address them in a moment of national sorrow.

Accordingly, it is the intent of this study to probe into the character and thought of Francis Wayland and, by so doing, gain insight into why the citizens of Providence had such high regard for him; and perhaps by so doing shed light on the relationship between Christianity and the American liberal democracy that emerged before the Civil War.

Christian America-Liberal America

In the decades before the Civil War, two powerful forces shaped American culture. On the one hand, a liberal democratic spirit raised up the value of individual striving, equality, self-interest, and individual autonomy, while a Christian evangelical spirit emphasized personal humility, obedience to the law of God, self-denial of worldly goods, and the moral deficiencies of the individual. It is apparent that these two powerful movements posed a problem of cultural integration for the new nation. The liberal vision of individual freedom and self-determination sharply contrasted with the Christian belief in a sinful humanity, unable to save itself, or to act morally without obeying the word of God. Stewart Davenport suggests that this conflict was the most significant one in antebellum America.² He believes that the conflict is all the more important because it existed within the individual. Wayland contained elements of Christian America and of liberal America within himself, and he struggled mightily to integrate these two often discordant spirits. In fact, much of his life and work sought to synthesize these two early American movements, but no matter how hard he tried, he could not unite them into a cultural form that could survive the forces of large scale political, economic, and

² Stewart Davenport, "Another Conflict or Consensus: Liberal America/Christian America," *Journal of the Early Republic* (Summer 2004): 24.

religious organizations; rapidly advancing science and technology; and an aggressive Lockean liberalism that defined freedom in terms of the control of property.

Wayland is one of the leaders of his generation who struggled with the conflict that Davenport identifies. He grew up in a religious home. His father left a prosperous business to become a Baptist minister. In due time, young Wayland followed his father into the ministry and spent his entire life trying to be a pious and devout Christian. He also praised the American democracy and wrote a widely used textbook on political economy that espoused a liberal economic philosophy.³ As president of Brown University, he sought both to prepare committed graduates for a Christian life and educate them in the modern sciences. He wanted his students to be obedient, moral Christians and democrats. He wanted them to have an ordered Christian college experience and the freedom to take electives that would better prepare them to enter the world of work and the democratic community. Wayland engaged these and many other conflicting issues in his personal and professional life. The struggle to harmonize the conflict and maintain a strong sense of personal integrity was a constant challenge to him.

The religious faith in which Wayland was brought up was Calvinist, sectarian, and evangelical.⁴ His father and mother immigrated from England to America in 1793, and they brought their Baptist faith with them. Francis Wayland Sr. was a courier, but

³ Francis Wayland, *Elements of Political Economy* (New York and Chicago: Sheldon and Company, 1886).

⁴ Francis Wayland, Jr., and Heman Lincoln Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1867). This two-volume memoir, prepared by his sons, contains a large selection of letters, a reminiscence of Francis Wayland, and some contributed material from those who knew and worked with Wayland. It provides the biographical information used in this introduction.

experienced a call to the ministry and left his occupation as a leather worker. The family was devout, worshiping frequently within its own home. The young Wayland heard from his parents, and especially from his father, a message of universal sin, divine forgiveness through Jesus Christ, the centrality of believer's baptism in their denomination, and the importance of sharing the Gospel with all who would hear it. But the Baptists were also a middling people. They supported the religious tolerance advocated by Thomas Jefferson, the hard work and success which they believed would follow a morally upright life, and equality before the law. Even though the Calvinist God would save those He pleased, the Wayland family believed that men and women could choose to live a godly life. They opposed those behaviors that ran counter to the moral life, as they understood it; yet they also opposed most efforts to enforce moral behavior on unwilling citizens. Christian America and liberal America had many conflicting elements and Wayland confronted most of them. For this reason he can teach us much about the way in which a sincere person attempted to live a moral life in a rapidly changing period of our national history.

Who was Francis Wayland?

In the almost 70 years of his life, March 11, 1796–September 30, 1865, Francis Wayland experienced some of the most formative years of the American civilization. His work reflects the cultural currents that flowed through the years of his life, and in some important ways, he gave direction to those currents. He grew up in New York City, the son of immigrant parents. His father was a currier and a Baptist minister. He drew a generous and loving spirit from his mother and a more stubborn and contentious nature from his father. He attended Union College and Andover Theological Seminary. After leaving Andover, he taught at Union for four years before accepting the pastorate of First

Baptist Church in Boston. In 1827, he became the president of Brown University, where he served until 1855. From February 1857 until May 1858, he was the acting pastor at First Baptist Church of Providence. He was a prolific author, community leader, and speaker. After his first wife died in 1834, he remarried in 1838. He was the father of three sons and one daughter, who died in the second year of her life. He lived a life that was productive, emotionally rich, and full of commendations. The uniting thread integrating his life was his strong evangelical faith.

Perhaps no single emotion characterized Wayland's life more than that of duty. He reported that no bill had to be presented to him more than once, nor was any of his paper ever discounted. Talking with a life-long friend on his death bed, he told his friend that he had no obligations that were unmet.⁵ His moral philosophy is known for its emphasis on the primacy of duty over the consequences of action. He reported that he did not know how to recreate. He told a student that he did not dance because he had little time for that sort of thing. He felt a duty to God and to his fellow man, and that sense of duty stayed with him until he died. Late in his life, he was scheduled to speak to a group of boys at the Rhode Island Reform School. The day was snowy and the snow changed to rain, leaving the streets covered with slush. While two much younger men, who were also scheduled to speak, failed to appear, Wayland came.⁶ In actions large and small, he demonstrated his response to the call of duty.

But duty was not the only emotion that animated Wayland. He was driven by a genuine concern for others. He was the oldest of six children. His sisters reported that he

⁵ Ibid., 2:353.

⁶ Ibid., 2:339.

protected their play from the destructive intrusion of his brothers. When his younger brothers grew up, he gave one a job and helped the other to find a place. He was a conscientious teacher and pastor, a contributor to charity, and a comfort in grief to his family and friends. He demonstrated tolerance for the views of those who disagreed with him, and he showed respect for those who were insane, in prison, or persecuted. Whether dealing with Syrian Christians experiencing oppression, inmates in Rhode Island prisons, or members of his own family, he took the time to care. Most often, his benevolent acts were aimed at helping the recipient develop his or her own capacities. He contributed to schools and libraries. He sought to bring education to all the children of the society, and he advocated for the mission cause.

In discussing Lyman Beecher, Daniel Walker Howe notes the depression that followed the famous evangelical leader throughout his life.⁷ Howe hypothesizes that depression may have been endemic to those who shared in the political culture of the Whigs. He points to Abraham Lincoln in this regard. Wayland is another member of the evangelical-Whig culture who suffered from depression. Both his letters to family members and friends and comments made about him by those who were close, reference periods of more than usual melancholy, despondency, or fatigue and flatness in affect.⁸ These depression-like symptoms occurred from the time of his adolescent struggle to find his evangelical faith to his doubts at the end of his life concerning the appropriateness of his career choices. He left his pastorate in Boston because he was depressed over what he

⁷ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 270.

⁸ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2:131.

felt was a failure in his ministry only to find that his congregation was surprised and hurt by his departure.⁹ On a trip to Europe in 1840 – 1841, he experienced depression from the time he boarded the ship to take him to England until he returned six months later. Again at the time of his retirement from the presidency of Brown in 1855, he fell into depression as he watched his reforms reversed. Howe believes that the enormously high expectations for progress toward perfection on the part of evangelicals, coupled with the persistent stubbornness of the world to conform to their wishes, provided a built-in condition for producing depression among those who worked the hardest to achieve the millennium. In the case of Wayland, he responded to his depression by working all the harder to bring about the kingdom.

Driven by duty and depression, Wayland strove to work hard; and work hard he did. In a letter to his sister during the time that he was attempting to implement his far-reaching reforms at Brown, he described himself as a “dray horse” in the harness and unable to escape.¹⁰ At this time he was president of Brown, vice president of the Baptist Triennial Convention, traveling widely to lecture and preach, working on the publication of his first book, *Occasional Discourses*,¹¹ raising funds to build a library on the Brown University campus, and tending to a growing family. As intense as his work was at this time, it was not unusual. He worked continuously throughout his entire life. As a young minister in Boston, in addition to his duties at his church, he edited the *Baptist Magazine*; participated in and became a force in Baptist politics; participated in the Baptist

⁹ Francis Wayland, *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel* (Boston, New York, and Cincinnati: Gould and Lincoln, 1863), 199.

¹⁰ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 1:357.

¹¹ Francis Wayland, *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833).

Missionary Association; wrote three sermons that received wide spread attention, making his reputation as an upcoming evangelical leader and intellectual; and found time to find a wife. One can pick any year, five-year period, or decade of his life and easily document similar activities and accomplishments. Work medicated the heart and soul of this driven man.

Hard work and depression represented a tension in the personality of Wayland that occurred in several other forms in his life and thought. If depression pulled him toward meaninglessness and despair, hard work pulled him toward belief and hope. He exalted individualism and democracy but feared that they would lead to self-indulgence and political chaos. He argued that economic individualism had to be balanced by personal benevolence and political democracy by strict adherence to the U.S. Constitution and to the laws of the land. His discourses on “The Accumulation of Wealth” in 1837, and “The Affairs of Rhode Island” in 1842 set forth his belief that the Panic of 1837 and the Dorr rebellion revealed the danger to the nation of unchecked individualism and democracy.¹² His book, *The Limitations of Human Responsibility*, argued that a manic acceptance of individual responsibility for the sins of the world would lead uncontrolled reformers to create chaos in society.¹³ One could not be expected to do what he or she lacked the capacity to do; nor did one have an obligation where he or she lacked the proper authority. This warning, issued in 1838, was aimed

¹² Wayland, *The Moral Law Of Accumulation: A Discourse Given In Providence On May 14, 1837* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1837); Wayland, *The Affairs Of Rhode Island: Two Discourses Delivered In The Meeting House Of First Baptist Church, Providence, May And July, 1842* (Boston: William D. Ticknor, 1843).

¹³ Francis Wayland, *The Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1838).

primarily at abolitionists who were seeking the immediate abolition of slavery. Wayland feared disorder, chaos, self-indulgence, intemperance, and conflict. He affirmed hard work, order, strict adherence to the laws of man and God, duty, and a concern for one's fellow man that led the individual toward responsible living. Perhaps his inability to participate in recreation or to enjoy dancing found a ground in his horror at unrestrained self-expression. This is a particularly interesting conflict in an era of growing individualism and religious self-expression. The religious revival and the market economy affirmed such individualism, but Wayland was very suspect of these tendencies in American culture.

One cannot read the published writings, the sermons and discourses, and the private correspondence without being impressed by the degree to which Wayland depended upon his Christian faith to sustain him. Whether in the deaths of beloved family members, or in professional trials and setbacks, or in the economic and political crises of his time, he turned to his faith for comfort and for direction. His piety was evident in all that he did. He was certain of the truth of his religion, but his certainty grew more out of his reason than his personal experience with the holy. Near his death, he told a friend that while he was sure of his faith, he had not been given the personal religious experience with which many others had been blessed.¹⁴ He believed that he had been saved, that all things were in God's hands, that humble prayer was the appropriate attitude with which to approach God, and that faith in God required moral action. He believed that the moral action which flowed from the Christian believer was the necessary element for the success of a liberal democracy and economy. Without Christian moral action carried out

¹⁴ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 1:56 and 2:360.

in accordance with the laws of God, democracy would descend into chaos and the market economy would be destroyed by evil speculation and self-indulgence. For all his public work in education, politics, and philanthropy, he maintained the belief that no greater service to humankind could be offered than to bring the individual sinner to a saving belief in Christ. While he expressed doubt, he embraced a faith and philosophy that provided him with absolute certainty. His certain faith freed him from the anxiety of depression, democratic chaos, and economic exploitation. He did not so much synthesize democracy, philosophy, and religion, as he held them in tension with one another.

The Plan for the Study

Francis Wayland was a man of faith. He strove to draw the principles for his behavior from this faith, but he also held within himself more secular principles. He believed in liberal democracy and an unregulated economy. He strove to reconcile these often conflicting principles but not always successfully. I wish to explore the conflict within Wayland as he struggled to harmonize his Christian beliefs with his liberal views. He failed to create a lasting synthesis, and today he is largely forgotten. After the Civil War, liberals rejected his facile religious certitude, and the faithful found too much reliance on reason and too much trust in secular values in his work. He was a moderate and a systematizer in a culture which was rapidly becoming polarized and radicalized. Yet in his time he was a respected sage and an influential educational and religious leader. My concern is with the way in which the religious faith of Wayland shaped his liberal political and economic beliefs, and in turn was shaped by them.

It is important to remember Wayland because he attempted to address the beginning of modern America with a comprehensive moral vision. He suggested that

democracy, the market economy, education, care for those who were unable to cope in the new nation, and that most important issue of all, slavery, were fundamentally moral issues. It is not the philosophical sophistication with which Wayland went about his task that makes him important; it is the effort itself that is of interest. He attempted to shape a comprehensive moral vision for the new America. His textbook on moral science was widely read, as were his other writings.¹⁵ His project received a large hearing, but it failed. He could never grasp the limits of individual voluntary action, the importance of political parties, the conflict between the new science and his Scottish Common Sense philosophy, the impersonality of the emerging industrial order, or the impossibility of ending slavery, short of war. However, he struggled with all these issues in a mainstream setting. Wayland is interesting and important because even though he failed, he attempted to organize the new political and economic order according to moral and religious principles in an era when such an attempt could receive a truly mainstream hearing.

In the first two chapters of this study, attention will be given to the religious faith and the liberal elements of Wayland's experience and thought. Chapter I will address his faith, and Chapter II will explore his liberal principles. At the end of Chapter II, I will discuss the way in which he attempted to harmonize these two poles of his life. In Chapters III, IV, and V, I will examine the way in which the conflict between his faith and liberal principles manifested itself in the major activities of his career. Chapter III will look at his work as president of Brown University. Chapter IV will focus on his twenty-five year struggle to facilitate a peaceful end to the slavery controversy; Chapter V will explore his life-long involvement with the Baptist denomination. In Chapter VI, I

¹⁵ Francis Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science*, ed. Joseph Blau (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963).

will speculate on Wayland's legacy for American culture. It is my conclusion that there is much to learn from Wayland and from his effort to provide an intellectual foundation for a moral ordering of the new liberal political and economic culture. In both his effort and his failure, we can learn much about the making of the American civilization.

The argument developed in this study is that Wayland offered to his generation a way to reconcile their received Christian faith with the political and economic forces that were emerging in the new American republic. His organizing principles were religious and moral, not political or economic. Obedience to the commands of God and love of neighbor took precedence over political party alignments or social class. He affirmed the democratic and free market developments but feared the potential excesses that they were threatening to generate. Much of his ambivalence regarding the liberal developments in the American republic grew out of his attraction to and repulsion from these secular forces. Wayland understood the free market forces loose in the panics of 1837 and 1857 and the democratic impulses which energized the Dorr Rebellion, but he feared them and translated the issues into religious and moral terms. In the end, he failed to create a lasting synthesis between his Christian beliefs and the liberal forces that were shaping the nation, but his vision of a peaceful, tolerant, and egalitarian society is one that still appeals to many modern Americans. He believed that such a vision was only possible in a society where the organizing principles were grounded in a religiously based moral philosophy. Only persons who were motivated by principles drawn from religious faith could insure the blessings of liberty for all. Wayland was neither a liberal nor a conservative; he was a moderate. Unfortunately for his vision for a Christian and liberal

culture — and perhaps for the nation — America could not hold the poles of his vision together.

CHAPTER I THE FAITH OF FRANCIS WAYLAND

In times of grief or personal challenge, Francis Wayland drew on his Christian faith to sustain him. But it was not just in times of crisis that his piety was manifested; he spoke to his children in the language of faith. He wrote his books and delivered his discourses from the standpoint of a man of faith. When he gave advice to his brothers and sisters or made plans for Brown University, he drew on principles which originated in his faith. His faith provided the language and interpretative framework with which he addressed his world. He viewed the world through the lens of belief.

He grew up in a pious Baptist family. Prayer and Bible reading were everyday activities in the Wayland household, and Sunday evening family worship was a regular element of the young family's routine. Francis Wayland Sr. and his wife, Sarah Moore Wayland, emigrated from London in 1793. They knew other Baptists with whom they had worshiped in England and quickly became united with the Fayette Street Church in New York City. Francis Wayland Sr. left his successful leather trade to become a minister, only making the family religious commitment more intense. Upon the death of the senior Wayland in 1849, his daughters asked their oldest brother, Francis Wayland Jr. to write a reminiscence of their parents. The following passage captures the religious quality of the family life of this early American household of three sons and three daughters.

On the Lord's Day, the rule of the family was for all the children to learn a hymn before dinner, and a portion of the Catechism before tea. The former was repeated to my mother; the latter to my father. It was not his custom to attend the evening meeting. After tea, or at candle lighting, we were all assembled in the parlor; my father, or one of the older children, read some suitable passage of Scripture, which he explained and illustrated, frequently directing the conversation so as to make a personal application to some one or other of us. Singing and prayer followed. Occasionally some little refreshment was introduced, and we retired, at an early hour, to bed. This domestic religious service was never interrupted until my father became a preacher, and spent most of his Sabbath evenings in public worship.¹

In 1826, Wayland was on the verge of the most significant career move in his life. He had left his pastorate at First Baptist Church in Boston and taken a professorship at Union College, but soon after moving to Union, he was approached to take the presidency of Brown University. As is often the case, the decision of the trustees at Brown dragged on, and he and his wife were anxious over the outcome of the decision. Lucy was still in Boston with their infant son and he was in Schenectady. Wayland concluded a discussion of their situation by writing, “But all this is in vain. It is uncertain whether we shall live here or whether we shall live at all. May God direct us. I desire to have no choice at all but to follow the indications of Divine Providence, & hope that it will be ordered not for our temporal happiness but for our spiritual welfare.”² Hundreds of similar statements can be found throughout Wayland’s letters and published texts. Often, as in this passage, one can read the ambition, or pain, or pride between the lines, but these human emotions are folded into a humble statement of Christian faith.

¹Francis Wayland, Jr., and Heman Lincoln. *Wayland, A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1867), 1:15.

² Francis Wayland to Lucy Lincoln Wayland, from Theodore Rawson Crane, *Francis Wayland and Brown University 1796-184: A Thesis presented in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Harvard University* (March 1959), 293.

The Christian faith which Francis Wayland held was consistent with many of the evangelical beliefs of the era. He asserted the centrality of the Bible, the importance of a conversion experience to provide security concerning one's salvation, the atoning nature of the crucifixion of Christ, the importance of upright moral behavior which flows from one's faith, and the providence of God. He continued to hold a few uniquely Baptist views throughout his life. Most important of these were his commitment to a doctrine of believer's baptism and a congregational approach to church polity. He used the elements of this faith to develop a world view which served as an interpretive frame and guide for action for his life and work. I will now turn to a discussion of how his faith ordered his world view.

However, before examining in detail the elements of Wayland's faith, a general comment on the fundamental orientation of faith, as he understood it, needs to be made. Faith was the method by which the believer aligned his or her character with the moral character of God. The fruit of faith was obedience to divine moral law. Writing in a sermon delivered to his students at Brown University, he stated the doctrine clearly:

If the preceding remarks be correct, we easily learn what is meant by the prayer of faith, and the efficacy that is ascribed to it. Faith is a moral disposition of the creature in harmony with the divine character. The prayer of faith is the prayer of a soul in whom this moral disposition predominates, and is such prayer just in so far as our desires are in harmony with the attributes of God. That prayer shall be answered in proportion to its conformity to the will of God, is a matter of necessity.³

Faith, then, is not assent to a set of propositions, nor is it membership in a select body of believers, it is conformity with the moral character of God. Only through moral action can the person of faith experience the efficacy of faith. It is not being in a state of grace,

³ Francis Wayland, *Salvation by Christ* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1859), 184-185.

but rather it is moral action that defines one's faith.

The Authority of the Scriptures

Francis Wayland read his Bible daily. It provided him with the final authority in his proclamations on the political and economic issues of his time. While he believed that moral knowledge could be accessed through the study of nature, he argued that the complete knowledge of God's law for mankind was available only through the language of revelation which is contained in the Bible. He wrote:

Let us, then, turn from these human authorities, and inquire for the teachings of the Scriptures upon this subject. If God himself has revealed to us the moral character of man, we have the means of arriving at the truth with absolute certainty. In appealing to the Scriptures in order to ascertain the moral character of man, you will, I trust, believe me, when I say, that I have no desire to teach you the doctrine of any particular sect. We desire to teach not what the sects have inculcated, but what the Bible reveals. Nor shall I attempt to illustrate or confirm the views of any class of theologians; this they are abundantly able to do for themselves. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are our ultimate and only authority in all questions touching our moral relations to God. If we can ascertain what they teach us, we shall arrive at pure truth. If we present to you the dogmas of men, we shall at best set before you the truth, commingled with the results of human infirmity and error.⁴

For Wayland, as well as for many of his contemporaries, the Bible provided a direct and objective path to God. This way bypassed sectarian beliefs, theological systems, or the errors of human knowledge. He sought to avoid religious controversy. Brown University was to be a tolerant environment where moral conduct could be taught, using the authority of the scriptures. If one read the Bible carefully, the truth, free from distorting interpretation, would emerge.

Ardent piety, humility, and religious purity led to the reception of the truth of

⁴ Francis Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science* ed. Joseph Blau (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963).

scripture. He stated clearly his evangelical and democratic view of who could best perform the teaching mission of the ministry, when he wrote that

many men, holding the noiseless tenor of their way in the uneducated walks of an unregistered and unenumerated ministry, destitute of the help of libraries, and ignorant of the name and of the being of commentators and scholastics, and lexicographers and interpreters, guided only by the dictates of common sense, illuminated by a sanctified conscience, are deeply acquainted with the revealed will of God, are mighty in bringing the truth to bear upon the consciences of men, and are abundantly successful in winning souls unto salvation.⁵

The teacher of the truth of the Bible need only practice an elevated piety, listen humbly, and teach only what God said, and not teach what was not said.

Wayland believed deeply in the authority of the Bible. It was the revealed truth of God for man. The Bible was without error. It required purity of heart and commitment to God's moral laws to hear the truth of the scriptures, not learning, but he placed an important limit on the knowledge revealed in the Bible. It did not address all things. It was as much a mistake to claim Gospel truth for an idea upon which the Bible was silent as to fail to recognize a revealed truth. He used his understanding of the authority of the Bible to assist him to form moral positions on some of the most difficult political and social issues of his era. The Panic of 1837, the Dorr Rebellion, and the overriding issue of slavery are but three examples of issues which he addressed using the authority of scripture.

It was common for the presidents of antebellum colleges to offer to the senior class a course in moral philosophy. Wayland took very seriously this responsibility. Shortly after assuming the presidency at Brown he began developing a set of lectures which in 1835 he published in textbook form. *The Elements Of Moral Science* became

⁵ Francis Wayland, *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833), 209.

the most widely used textbook on moral philosophy in America before the Civil War.⁶

While his book was popular and went through many editions, it was not without its controversy. Central to this controversy was his position on slavery. Supporters of slavery argued that the Bible sanctioned slave owning, while abolitionists argued the opposite.

Wayland sought a middle ground. He argued:

The following will, I think, be considered by both parties a fair statement of the teaching of the New Testament on this subject. The moral principles of the gospel are directly subversive of the principles of slavery; but on the other hand, the gospel neither commands masters to manumit their slaves nor authorizes slaves to free themselves from their masters; and also, it goes further, and pre-scribes the duties suited to both parties in their present condition.⁷

Wayland believed that he could appeal to the Bible for an authoritative position on slavery. Masters had an obligation to free their slaves, but slaves had a duty to obey their masters. Abolitionists could appeal to the conscience of the slave owner, but the scriptures did not support active efforts to force the emancipation of the slaves. While neither slave owners, nor abolitionists, nor slaves were satisfied with his reading of scripture, he thought his reading of the Bible was honest, straight forward, and true. If it was not pleasing to others, then that only reflected God's choice to reveal his will for mankind in his own way. Wayland believed that emancipation required changes in society that could only be accomplished by change in the hearts of slave owners. Patience was the best strategy. God knew best, and humans would do well to try to understand why He had stated the principles in the scriptures as He had. In 1837, the national economy fell into a monetary crisis. Providence was one of the most advanced economic centers in America, and the economic downturn was felt especially hard. The people of

⁶ Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

Providence invited President Wayland to address them on the issue of the Panic. On May 14, 1837, he delivered his discourse entitled *The Moral Law Of Accumulation*.⁸ He was an appropriate choice for this distinction because in addition to being a well-known minister and moral philosopher, he was a leading academic economist. His text, *The Elements of Political Economy*, would be published in the same year and would be used in the education of several generations of economists, including William Graham Sumner at Yale.⁹

He began his address with a number of comments which drew on economic concepts, but went on to make clear his true purpose. He told his audience,

Now, the cause of these disasters may be sought for in various directions, according to the views of the inquirer. The political economist would probably seek for it in the ruinous extension of credit which has of late taken place, and in the enormous issues of paper money with which it is said that some districts of our country have been flooded. The politician would seek for it in the measures of government, which some affirm and others deny to have had a bearing upon the financial operations of the nation. But the present is neither the time nor the place for these discussions. . . . The minister of the Gospel looks beyond these immediate causes to a more ultimate cause. He inquires what have been the moral tempers which have led men into courses that have been so injurious to themselves. These are the causes with which he has to deal. If he can develop these, he may easily ascertain why God hath wrought evil in the city. His duty as a religious teacher requires him with faithfulness and affection thus to trace the evil to its source, and to deduce from it those lessons of moral wisdom which it is intended to convey.¹⁰

Francis Wayland, the moralist and preacher, told the business community that their

⁸ Francis Wayland, *The Moral Law Of Accumulation: A Discourse Given In Providence On May 14, 1837* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1837).

⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 51-66.

¹⁰Wayland, *The Moral Law Of Accumulation*, 7-8.

calamity had been brought on by their desire to accumulate wealth too rapidly, depending on speculation instead of honest work to acquire their riches, and then to use it selfishly. The panic was the judgment of God for their breaking of the moral law of accumulation which was set forth in scripture. They had speculated in land and commodities, and then they had forgotten to be benevolent with their falsely gotten wealth. They had argued that they were gathering up wealth for the benefit of their children, but the only assurance that could provide their children with future security lay in conformity with the moral law:

The Scriptures teach us to act always as though conscious of the presence of the all-seeing God; to banish from our minds every desire of gain of which he would not approve; to think not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others; to set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; and to be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known unto God. Now, every one must see that he who is actuated by these tempers must be delivered from all over-anxious desire for accumulation, and that his prospect of success for this world is at least as good as that of any other man, to say nothing of his hope for the world that is to come.¹¹

In other words, only skill, character, and hard work could yield wealth approved by God, and only the benevolent use of a portion of that wealth could assure the economic security of the community. The best economic strategy for individuals and for the community was to obey the moral law of accumulation, as God had given it in scripture.

Rhode Island had not yet fully recovered from the economic crisis of 1837 when, in 1842, its political order was rocked by another crisis. The Rhode Island state constitution was among the oldest in America and had the most restrictive suffrage provisions. For some time, the democratic forces within the state had been agitating for a new constitution and broader suffrage. The issue came to a head in May 1842. A group of protesters, led by Thomas Wilson Dorr, marched on the U.S. Capitol to install an

¹¹ Ibid., 28.

alternative government. The protest movement had written a new constitution and held an election, electing Dorr governor. Dorr's supporters may have been armed. Local militias gathered in Providence and dispersed the Dorrites. Following this encounter, the state legislature was called into session to amend the state constitution, but the Dorrites were impatient and gathered again. This time, the militia attacked the rebels in their own camp. Once again, Wayland was asked to interpret the events of the moment for the citizens of the city.

In his first discourse, delivered on May 22, 1842, he presented the biblical argument against revolution. He concluded that no Christian could have supported the protesters, and he called upon anyone in his audience who had provided support for the Dorrites to repent. He thought it to be an act of tyranny for a minority to attempt to overthrow by force a lawfully constituted government. Such an attempt as the Dorrites had undertaken clearly violated the moral law of Christ:

The New Testament teaches us that government is an ordinance of God, and that God himself commands us to obey it. Thus, Rom. xiii. 1: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not for wrath, but for conscience' sake." Thus, also, Titus, iii. 1: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." Again, 1 Pet. ii. 13: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well. As free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." These laws of the Savior are as expert as language can make them, and they derive a greater stringency from the fact that the government under which they were written, and to which they immediately referred, was neither just nor paternal. Such, do I assert to be the law of God in this matter. We are not at liberty to enter a society and enjoy its advantages, and then conspire to overturn it; to swear allegiance, and when

we please, to violate it.¹²

Whether in his private life or in his public proclamations, Wayland looked to the Bible for moral laws that could guide his action. Piety involved the practical application of these laws to the totality of one's life. The moral law possessed a simplicity for Wayland. He summarized it in two parts. First one must love God with all one's heart, and second, one must love one's neighbor as oneself. Obedience to the moral law was the only proper behavior for the Christian. He applied his understanding of biblical teachings to the major issues of his day and his interpretations had a rather conservative ring. He chose to emphasize the limits of action in the public arena. The Bible in the hands of Wayland was a moderate document.

The Conversion Experience

Key to the faith of an evangelical Christian was the conversion experience. Conversion represented a visible proof that the believer was chosen by God. It was understood to mean that the Christian was born again. Such assurance gave comfort and security to the believer and testified to his or her qualifications to enter into the communion of consecrated believers.

As Francis Wayland approached adulthood, he became concerned about the state of his soul. After he finished his college course, he studied with a local doctor, Eli Burritt, in Troy, New York, but he determined that he did not want to practice medicine. Without a conversion experience he faced personal and professional difficulties in entering the ministry, an obvious career choice for him. He went to his room determined to read the

¹² Francis Wayland, *The Affairs Of Rhode Island: Two Discourses Delivered In The Meeting House Of First Baptist Church, Providence, May And July, 1842* (Boston: William D. Ticknor, 1843), 29-30.

Bible and pray until the emotional experience of conversion came upon him, but after days of this discipline, he still had not experienced conversion. He finally decided that conversion would be for him a more gradual experience and that he was at fault for trying to guide the process. In a long reminiscence published by his sons after his death in a two-volume memoir entitled *The Life And Labors Of Francis Wayland*, he wrote:

I had marked out for myself a plan of conversion in accordance with the prevailing theological notions. First I must have agonizing convictions; then deep and overwhelming repentance; then a view of Christ as my Savior, which should fill me with transport; and from all this would proceed a new and holy life. Until this was done, I could perform no work pleasing to God, and all that I could do was abomination in his sight. For these emotions, therefore, I prayed, but received nothing in answer which corresponded to my theory of conversion. I devoted I know not how much time to prayer and reading the Scriptures, to the exclusion of every other pursuit. This, however, could not be continued always. I recommenced my usual duties, making this, however, my paramount concern.¹³

He never experienced the strong emotional experience that is usually associated with conversion, but he believed he did have assurance that he was in harmony with God. Following his attempt at self-induced conversion, he continued to pursue meaningful religious experience. He attended services, talked with ministers, and finally heard Luther Rice, the well-known missionary, back from preaching the Gospel to the heathens in South Asia. He was struck by the nobility of the self-sacrificing missionary enterprise, a theme that he would return to in a few years in his famous sermon on “The Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise.”¹⁴ Writing more than 45 years after the event, he described it as follows:

¹³ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland*, 1:52.

¹⁴ Francis Wayland, “The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise,” in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833).

In looking back upon this period of my life, I perceive that much of my doubt and distrust was owing to the pride of my own heart. I had formed my own theory of conversion, and I did not like to confess that I was wrong. I wished to have a *clear* and *convincing* experience, so that I might never doubt of myself, nor others doubt concerning me. I desired to be the subject of a striking conversion, and was not willing to take with humility and gratitude whatever it should please God to give me.¹⁵

Inspired by Rice, Wayland felt his life change. Previously he had looked to a career in medicine as the source of worldly success, but now he gave his income from his practice to charity. He taught a class of African American children in a newly opened school and converted a sick girl. While he had not experienced conversion as he thought he should, he began to believe that he was a “Child of God.” Having worked out his conversion, he was free to change his professional goal. He resolved to enter the ministry, a decision which his parents warmly affirmed.

Francis Wayland wrote that he had gone through seasons of doubt and painful times, when he felt the absence of God. He never achieved a warm emotional conversion experience which he believed God gave to many others.¹⁶ Yet he thought that he could minister better to those who, like him, lived with doubt. In the end, he professed some doubt about the conversion experience. He wrote in his reminiscences,

Of one thing, however, I am certain. I used to think that from one's exercises at conversion, it was possible to determine, without doubt, the reality of a work of grace. I have learned that this is perfectly illusory. I have known several persons, whose exercises seemed of the most marked and satisfactory character, yet who soon fell into open sin, and died the avowed enemies of God and of all goodness. I see the necessity of cultivating with assiduous care the first dawnings of religious feeling, and of insisting strongly on practical obedience to God, ever remembering that this is the love of God, that we keep

¹⁵ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland*, 1:56.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 2:360.

his commandment.¹⁷

More important than the conversion experience was the life-long obedience to the commandment of God. For Wayland this meant living the moral life. This was the fruit of the religious life and the true sign of conversion.

The position which Wayland took on conversion varied significantly from that of his father, especially when the son was struggling with his own conversion. Francis Wayland Sr. was at that time a strict Calvinist. He preached that conversion depended exclusively on the election of the individual by God. Humans could do nothing to bring about their salvation. One could only wait for God's action. The son showed his opposition to this doctrine when he tried to take his salvation into his own hands. Far from passive in the process, he actually shut himself up in his room with the purpose of producing a conversion experience. His later belief that a true conversion depended on continued moral action was a further departure from his father's doctrine and from the Calvinist orthodoxy. One might not be able to choose to have a conversion experience, but one could choose to obey the moral law. This alone demonstrated love for God and true piety. The true saint was neither the spiritual athlete nor the Puritan Calvinist; rather, he or she was the person of good moral character who obeyed God's commandments to love God and one's neighbor.

The Atonement

To use a William James term, the atonement was the cash value of Protestant Evangelical Christianity. The doctrine provided the answer to the question of the purpose and meaning of Christ, and it provided the basis for a Christian moral order. It is safe to

¹⁷ Ibid., 1:56.

say that for Francis Wayland, as for other evangelical believers, the atonement was the central pillar of the Christian belief system.

Wayland drew his understanding of the atonement primarily from the Pauline literature, especially Paul's letter to the church at Rome. His doctrine began with a particular understanding of the nature of humanity. Humanity fell from grace when the first couple disobeyed God's commandment. From this formative event, humanity was incapable of obedience to the divine moral law. Men and women were free to choose obedience, but they did not. They justly deserved the divine punishment for their wickedness, but because of God's mercy, He chose to offer mankind another chance at salvation.

Crime had been committed, and God in His justice required that the debt for disobedience to the moral law be paid. However, God was also merciful; so he gave His son, Jesus, as a substitute for all of humanity. Wayland often preached on the theme of Christ crucified. He quoted Paul that the crucifixion was a stumbling block for both Jews and Greeks. The path to salvation offered in the crucifixion neither led through strict adherence to Jewish law, nor through participation in a Platonic ideal. The Christian believer found salvation in accepting that Jesus was God and that he had died to free mankind from the curse of Adam. God had paid the debt of man's disobedience, and through faith in Christ as the redeemer of a lost humanity, a new dispensation was possible.

Christ was neither a military leader come to free an oppressed people, nor a teacher of a new truth, nor a model of perfection to be copied by humanity. He was fully God, who had become fully man to suffer the just punishment for the sins of mankind.

The philosophers were baffled by the logical inconsistency of the two natures of Jesus, nonbelievers considered the whole story to be fantastic, but Wayland considered it to be the only possible truth. He wrote:

Thus it is that Christ crucified, though to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, is yet to them that believe, Christ the power of God, and Christ the wisdom of God. Hence is the cross of Christ so often spoken of as the grand means both of converting and of sanctifying the world. Thus you see how the death of Christ is the grand centre of the whole system, the only means whereby the law of God could be magnified, the only means by which the enmity of our hearts can be slain.¹⁸

The law did not lead to salvation because mankind had in its heart an enmity to obedience. The law showed the way of righteousness, but it could not change the hearts of humankind. Only the atoning act of God could do that. God's atonement for man's sins opened a new possibility for social life. This new possibility bore fruit first in the early period of the new religion, as it spread through the Roman Empire, finally gaining supremacy. However, the original vision was distorted by the Catholic Church. Only with the Reformation did the pure teaching of Christ crucified once again shape human society. Only a true doctrine of the atonement possessed the power and energy to suppress the sinful passions of mankind and restore a society which could implement the moral law. Of this new dispensation Wayland wrote:

Very much the same may be said of the second great period of the development of the power of the Gospel, the Protestant Reformation. It delivered the human mind, a second time, from a most appalling tyranny. From a debasing and frivolous sensuality, it again raised man to the high purpose and the undaunted energy of him who is living for eternity. Wherever it entered, it again changed the hearts of individuals, and imbued them with the love of what so ever things are pure, and peaceable, and lovely, and of good report. Going onward from thence, it has ever since been spreading its conquests over man as a society. As these conquests have been extended,

¹⁸ Francis Wayland, "The Moral Efficacy of the Atonement," in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833), 136.

people have become free, and governments at the same time stable. And hence it is to the promulgation of these very doctrines that we trace the origin of every civil, and intellectual, and moral blessing which we now enjoy. For, let it be remembered, that the very doctrines for which Luther specially and most earnestly contended were those of the sole efficacy of the atonement, and justification only by faith in the merits of a crucified Redeemer.¹⁹

Wayland located the sinfulness of humanity in its inability to control the passions. Such lack of control led to intemperance, pride, lust, and the selfish pursuit of accumulation. A social order that did not have a way to control the passions would be unjust and would come to ruin. Protestant Christianity offered a method of social control. The atonement provided the power and energy to transform the sinful hearts of humanity and create a people who wanted to obey God's law. The pious Christian was also the good citizen. Freedom, democracy, and economic justice depended on the success of Protestant Christianity to convert humanity to the belief in Christ crucified.

The doctrine of the atonement and its meaning for Wayland's faith was so important to his way of thinking that he built his theory of the ministry around it. Late in his life, he questioned his choice to become an educator. He wondered if the most important role he could have played might have been as a minister. He wondered if saving souls was not the most crucial calling. Such a calling would have prepared men and women for both eternal life and proper citizenship in the American democracy. He believed that a proper education for persons entering the ministry would teach them to win souls for Christ and ministers in the churches should never forget that this was their primary task. Wayland was a man of integrity. He was driven by his faith, and his faith taught him that the atoning act of Christ performed on the cross had a claim on him that

¹⁹ Francis Wayland, "Objections to the Doctrine of Christ Crucified," in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833), 284-285.

required his commitment.

Individual Moral Responsibility

Modern critics of Francis Wayland have objected to his emphasis on individual responsibility at the expense of more collective forms of moral action. In his own time, this characteristic of his faith also created controversy. He first set out this dimension of his thought in an 1838 publication entitled *The Limitations OF Human Responsibility*.²⁰ Modern critics such as Norman H. Maring argued that Wayland undercut a positive moral role for the Church in social issues, condemning it to irrelevancy on the important issues of his time, as well as the present.²¹ In his own time, English Baptists refused to invite him to preach in some of their churches during his 1841 visit. They objected to what they believed to be his equivocation on the issue of slavery. The Baptists in Britain were among the leaders in securing the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Whether or not the judgment of his critics has been correct, his emphasis on individual moral responsibility is an integral part of his faith. It is one of those elements of his belief system that created ambivalence in the conflict between his Christian faith and his liberal democratic vision.

In 1835, Wayland published his textbook on moral action, *The Elements of Moral Science*.²² He clearly called slavery a sin and called for slave owners to free their slaves. The Southern reaction was rapid and harsh. Southern churchmen rushed to attack him in

²⁰ Francis Wayland, *Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1838).

²¹ Norman H. Maring, "The Individualism of Francis Wayland," in *Baptist Concepts of the Church*, ed. Winthrop S. Hudson (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959).

²² Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science*.

the pulpit and in the press. His 1838 publication once again addressed the slavery issue, but as always, he answered in the language of faith.²³ His response did not take up only the slavery controversy. He also addressed a broad range of contemporary issues, including temperance, the methods of the revivals, ecclesiastical organization, the role of voluntary associations, and freedom of speech and the press. Both his Christian and his liberal tendencies were on exhibit in this little volume.

He began by arguing that moral fervor was a source of genuine evil. When nations go to war, they cloak their cause in moral terms. Religious persecution is carried out under the cover of high moral claims. When groups claim the right to enforce their moral beliefs on others, they exceed the limits of their moral responsibility, and they commit horrible deeds. He concludes his book with these words:

And lastly, if this be so, it will be seen that moral questions cannot be decided by majorities, nor can the law of God be ascertained by the votes of conventions. Every man must give account *of himself* before God. We cannot shift the responsibility of our conduct upon others. Public opinion can make nothing either right or wrong. If we would be the servants of God, we must learn, each one for himself, to ask the question, Lord, what would *thou* have *me* to do? and uninfluenced by fear or by favor, by allurements or by opposition, do *that thing*, and *that only*, let others do as they may.²⁴

Each person must be his or her own moralist. The individual, depending on his or her conscience and on the Bible for direction, must decide what God's will is in each unique situation. This moral decision cannot be relinquished to a church, voluntary association, public opinion, or state. When persons give up their duty to make these moral judgments by accepting the directions of collective organizations, they cease to be servants of God and become the servant of the group. One's moral responsibility was

²³ Wayland, *Limitations of Human Responsibility*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

defined by the law set down in scripture. It included the positive directives and the prohibitions of the Gospel; however, where the Bible is silent, there was no moral mandate to act. In the case of slavery, there was a clear commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself. However, there was no command from Christ to actively abolish slavery. One could encourage the slave owner to free his slaves, but the Bible did not support forceful abolition.

Additionally, Wayland argued that when humankind entered into an organization for protection, it made a contract. This contract was specific and limited. In more complex social orders, the principle of contract still held. Whether in a church, or voluntary association, or government, the actions of the organization were established by the constituting agreement into which the individuals entered. In the case of American slavery, individual states joined the union under the terms of the U.S. Constitution, and those terms did not permit the national government to abolish slavery in the individual states. Only in the District of Columbia could such action be taken. At this time, Wayland still believed that if Southerners were left alone and not made overly defensive by northern attacks, they would voluntarily end slavery. He feared the moral fervor of northern abolitionists because he believed it would drive the South into an unnecessary defensive posture. In time he gave up this position, but he held it for another decade.

Rev. Wayland believed his position on individual moral responsibility was good Baptist doctrine. He wrote, "For the sake of removing all cause for misconception, I take this opportunity to state that I am a Baptist and an Independent; holding that believers alone are entitled to church membership, and that each church is independent of every

other, and competent, in itself, to all the purposes of government and discipline.”²⁵ Only those who were capable of choosing for themselves to have faith in Christ could be church members, and individual congregations could preserve the responsibility and freedom of the individual believer. These principles directed his individualism. Others argued that this position limited the ability of moral persons to join together for common action. But his rejoinder was that wrong action could never make right. Only with the action of free, responsible individuals could the social wrongs of the era, or of any era, be corrected.

Whether the revival with its emphasis on mass pressure on the individual, or the convention with its emphasis on majority rule, or the social movement with its emphasis on mobilizing public opinion, unlimited moral zeal robbed the individual of his or her moral duty and freedom. These collective forms, far from improving the society, undercut any real moral progress.

Wayland’s plea was for a moderate and tolerant approach to moral improvement. He wanted slave owners to be left free to make moral choices. He wanted unconverted persons to be left alone to make up their own minds. Those who believed that they knew the truth had the right, even the duty, to offer their truth to others, but if they were rejected, they had no responsibility for the moral judgments of others. If others chose to act from different principles, that was acceptable, as long as they did not violate the rights of others. This was, of course, the problem with his argument concerning slavery. The slave owner did violate the rights of the men and women that he or she held in bondage.

The vision which Francis Wayland held for a moral society was tolerant,

²⁵Ibid., 120-121.

individualistic, and liberal. It called for restraint, and it called for a free market of ideas. His liberalism was not popular in a world of moral zealots. He himself would struggle with its implications throughout his life, but it was a continuing element of the structure of his faith. He stood between the immediatists, who called for immediate abolition, and the supporters of the peculiar institution. He thought that slavery was wrong, but he opposed the effort to bring about abolition by compulsion. He hoped that slave owners would free their slaves voluntarily. Only later did he become disillusioned and take an activist stand in the struggle to free those held in bondage. In the end, he could satisfy neither the slave holders nor the abolitionists. His influence was diminished because his moderate stance could not be sustained. He supported the war and turned to Christian evangelism for hope. At the end of his life, he still dreamed of a Christian and a liberal America; but he no longer believed that the tools of liberal change could contribute to a moral order. Liberal America could only be realized as a byproduct of the triumph of Christian America.

The Providence of God

Francis Wayland believed that God worked in the lives of individuals and that He also worked in history. Humanity possessed the capacity to choose to have faith in the saving grace of God which was revealed through Christ, and then its members could choose to act in accordance with the moral laws of God. Yet amidst all this freedom, God had a plan, and His directives for the world transcended the plans of humanity. One could freely choose to follow the will of God, but if one did not make the moral choice, God would punish the wrongdoer, be it an individual or a city or nation. The punishment was God's means of teaching wrongdoers about the evils of their ways and was always

accompanied with the offer of forgiveness, and the promise of reward for right action. A person of faith could only trust in the love of God and accept that the events of one's life or community occurred in accordance with God's providential plan.

In February 1827, Wayland moved to Providence to take up his duties as president of Brown University. On February 23 he wrote to his wife, "Nothing unfavorable has yet occurred here. God only knows how soon it may come, and he only can prevent it."²⁶ Comments of this nature can be found by the hundreds in Wayland's letters and published writings. One can only conclude that they represent a deeply held belief concerning the relationship of God to the lives of His creation.

During the winter of 1834, Wayland's faith received a severe test. His wife, Lucy, contracted a mortal illness. On April 3, 1834, she died. The following day he wrote to his parents:

It has pleased God in his holy providence to take dear Lucy to himself. She was released from her great distress last evening, at about half past five o'clock. Her sufferings were severe; but, so far as we could discover, her mind was clear, and her last word was, 'Pray.' I cannot say more at present, but will soon write to you all. I can only beg a renewed interest in your prayers that I may be sustained, and especially that I may be sanctified and made more humble and holy.²⁷

Wayland and Lucy Lincoln had been married in 1825. She was the sister of Heman Lincoln, a close friend and colleague. Lucy Wayland bore three children: two sons who survived childhood to become successful men in their own right, and a daughter who died at fifteen months. While Francis went about his work at Brown and in

²⁶ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 1:219.

²⁷Ibid., 1:363.

the community, Lucy worked with the women of her acquaintance. Her sons wrote of her,

Her type of piety was earnest and active, leading her — notwithstanding her constitutional timidity — to make untiring efforts for the conversion of souls. She was greatly interested in the young, particularly those who were students in college, and improved every opportunity to direct their attention to the way of salvation, or, if they were professors of religion, to urge upon them entire consecration to Christ. There were, probably, very few of her young friends with whom she did not have personal and serious conversation on the subject of preparation for eternity. She assisted in the formation of the "Maternal Association," in the church with which she was connected, and her labors to promote the success of this society undoubtedly hastened her final illness.²⁸

Lucy Wayland shared her husband's faith and piety. She gave herself to the role of motherhood and to private evangelism. It would appear that she was an ideal wife for a president of a religious college and community leader. His letters show a deep bond and a sincere grief. Her loss challenged his faith because he could not understand why God would take her from him. He could not accept that a good and providential God would act in such a way.

His request to his parents for their prayers goes to the core of his faith. The death of his wife challenged his faith that God was acting according to a principle of love. He wished to understand that Lucy's death had a purpose. It could be sanctified only if it played a role in God's plan for him. Only such a faith could sustain him. His desire was to humbly accept her death as a gift of grace from God, but he had difficulty in making that connection. The providence of God controlled even the smallest event. The death of his wife was a part of that providence, but if he could not view it as a good and loving act of God's providence, his faith would be profoundly challenged.

²⁸ Ibid., 1:361.

In the end, he reconciled his grievous loss with the loving will of God. He had written to his parents three weeks prior to his wife's death, expressing the understanding of her illness that would in time give him comfort in his faith. He told them:

I needed this affliction. There is not a single bearing of it that I have not needed. I hope it is the correction of a Father, and that he in faithfulness afflicts me. Although his hand presses me very sore, I think I would not have a finger removed unless as God wills. I believe that my prevalent desire is, that this sorrow may be sanctified to me, to my family, to the college, to the church, and to the world. Let me entreat you to wrestle with me in prayer that this correction may not be in vain.²⁹

In the year following Lucy's death, Francis wrote to his parents, sisters, and friends of his depression, loneliness, loss of interest in his work, and failure to find sanctification in his suffering. He feared that his suffering would cause him in his anger to curse God. He identified his sin in his concern for worldly things, neglecting religious piety. He prayed that he could become dead to things of the world. However, in a letter written to his parents approximately a year after Lucy's death, he summarized his condition:

As for myself, I have to sing of mercy and of judgment. I hope that this affliction has been sent, by the chastening hand of a covenant-keeping God. It seems to me, if I do not deceive myself, that my will is somewhat more subdued than formerly; that I long more for holiness, and see more desirableness in the Christian graces. I hope that I have some clearer views of the holiness of the law of God, and of the way of salvation by Christ, and a more prevalent desire to go out of myself, and to be found alone in Him who loved me and gave himself for me. If these are the fruits of affliction, it surely ought not to be grievous, but rather joyous. And although these blessed results are infinitely less than they should be, and much less than others have enjoyed, yet I would bless God for his faithfulness in answering my poor supplications in the day of my trial.³⁰

²⁹Ibid., 1:364-365.

³⁰Ibid., 1:368-369.

The deep pain which Wayland experienced at the time of his wife's death challenged his faith, but no such challenge was associated with the public calamities that rained down on antebellum America. Through economic depression, civil rebellion, war, and the growing crisis over slavery, he affirmed the justice of God. The wickedness of mankind was not his wickedness. He did not identify with economic speculation, civil disobedience, empire building, or the enslavement of others. Rather, he viewed these phenomena to be the sins of others, which were justly punished by a righteous God. It was the role of the religious leader to explain the purpose of God in bringing suffering on the community, and he vigorously played that role. He preached the need for repentance, but it was not he who was in need of repentance and forgiveness. In the end, it was only Abraham Lincoln who understood that all America was implicated in the evil that had brought on the Civil War, and that the providence of God did not divide humanity into a righteous and an unrighteous camp and reward or punish according to this division.

Concluding Remarks

The Christian faith of Francis Wayland had in it elements that supported the development of liberal America, but it also possessed qualities that put it at odds with the new order. The individualism of his belief corresponded with the emerging democratic spirit of the era. He held that the inspired individual could interpret the Scriptures apart from the authority of scholars or ecclesiastical hierarchies, that individuals possessed the freedom to choose faith in Christ, that the atonement was for all believers, and that the teaching providence of God was for all humankind. He professed the Baptist doctrines on the baptism of believers and the independence of the church congregations. These doctrines elevated the individual to the central place in the moral life of the community.

Each individual must make the moral decisions that, when aggregated, would determine the moral character of the collective. Laissez-faire reigned in morals as in economics and politics. Each individual was responsible for improving himself or herself. Each individual must be allowed the freedom to pursue his or her own moral perfection.

Yet Wayland remained ambivalent about liberalism. He feared the uncontrolled masses. The hierarchy that he supported lay not in social class or organizational discipline but in the individual faculties. He preached that the moral behavior of humanity depended on the rule of conscience and intelligence over that of the passions. Only Christianity could convert the individual to the higher life of the rule of conscience. The democratic individual, alone, without the saving grace of Christ, would follow self-interest and neglect the divine commandments to love God and one's neighbor. He feared what he believed would be chaos if citizens were not obedient to civil authorities, but he also feared the tyranny that would flow from a government that took on the responsibility for the moral behavior of its citizens. He feared the free market that was not regulated by the moral law of accumulation, and he feared the way in which political parties compromised the moral conduct of their members. He hoped that Christian America could check and regulate liberal America, but at times he despaired over its likelihood.

Wayland confessed the pull of ambition, egoism, pride, and desire for material gain, and his worldliness troubled him. He often felt the absence of God and failed to experience the deeper emotions of the religious life. He failed to experience a standard conversion, realizing that he was too self-directed and disciplined to abandon himself to the unconscious coming of the experience. The self-assertion, self-improvement, and

self-initiation of the liberal vision competed with his Christian vision of obedience, humility, and altruism. His Christian piety conflicted with the secular liberal values which emphasized this worldly success. He felt the liberal pull of his era, and yet affirmed, in spite of his doubt, the transcendent values of his Christian faith.

CHAPTER II THE LIBERAL VISION OF FRANCIS WAYLAND

Liberalism is a complex concept. Among its key elements are commitments to limited government, civil freedoms, equality before the law, opposition to established privilege, and in some formulations, a commitment to a public good and civic virtue. Robert E. Shalhope has reviewed the historiography of the early republic and concluded that there were diverse positions in America after the Revolution that combined republicanism and liberalism, that incorporated religious beliefs and secular ideologies, and class and economic elements.¹

Francis Wayland was an evangelical Baptist, the son of an artisan father, a college graduate, a recipient of the economic support of the Providence merchant and manufacturing classes, and a successful author. He experienced much of the cross cutting class, regional, religious, and economic forces that blended republicanism and liberalism in early America. In the end, his liberal vision cohered with a religious and republican variety of the concept. He favored religious freedom, individual responsibility, limited government, equality of opportunity, common education, and public virtue based on religious faith. He opposed self-interested politics, economic self-aggrandizement, the South's aggressive claim for the right to own human property, and national expansion.

¹ Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 39, no. 2 (April 1982): 334-356.

He feared liberalism that was not checked by virtuous citizens, but he also thought free liberal institutions were essential for the realization of God's kingdom. His American identity was profound. It was ambivalently liberal, and it brought him in conflict with many of his colleagues and the institutions to which he dedicated his life.

The linchpin of liberalism is the concept of the autonomous individual. John Locke envisioned a state of nature in which individuals mixed their labor with nature to produce a livelihood for themselves and their families. In this act, the individual earned a right to the property that he or she created. In due time, several individuals entered into a contract to secure mutual protection, but the contract limited the authority of the collective over the individual. In this formulation, the individual created rights through labor. The individual earned his or her rights, and the government existed to protect the rights of the individual.

Thomas Jefferson, drawing on the work of the Scottish Enlightenment, famously stated, "We hold these principles to be self-evident; that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, other concepts became part of the liberal vision. Included in these concepts were the ideas that the people could establish a limited constitution by which they could be governed, that through the use of reason and science humanity could improve its living conditions, and that men and women could make progress toward a better life for themselves and their children. Education became an important tool in the effort to better humankind. The concept of equality drove the effort to create a democratic political order. Reform efforts attempted to improve the criminal, the poor, and the person with a disability. Many

liberals believed that a laissez-faire economic policy would eliminate privilege and free the individual to maximize his or her economic potential. In antebellum America, Whigs and Democrats battled to implement somewhat different versions of the liberal vision.²

Wayland summarized his liberal biases in his discussion of slavery, when he postulated that, “Every man has a right to himself.”³ This bedrock concept recognized the centrality of the autonomous individual. Neither kings, nor the Catholic Church, nor slave owners had the right to direct the action of the individual beyond the point that the individual voluntarily granted to the group. Of course, Wayland allowed that criminals might be punished, voluntary associations and churches might operate within pre-established limits, and slave owners might control their slaves, as long as it was in the best interests of the slave and done from a sincere spirit of benevolence. Wayland embraced much of the liberal vision, but at the same time he feared its anarchic tendencies. He struggled his entire life to harmonize some of its most basic themes with his faith, only to question if he had labored in vain. His Christian vision of humanity and of the social order conflicted in crucial ways with his liberal vision. He tried to reconcile these conflicts, but his ambivalence and moderation limited his success. Unfortunately, he lived in an age that valued certainty and extremes. War, not Christian benevolence and liberal progress, ended slavery. Political parties, not deliberative action, controlled the political process. Class conflict and governmental privilege, not Christian benevolence and shared economic goals, shaped the development of the American industrial order.

² John Ashworth, *Agrarians and Aristocrats: Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837-1846* (Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

³ Francis Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science* ed. Joseph Blau (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963).

In the following sections of this chapter, I shall examine Wayland's liberal nationalism, his commitment to education and reform, the philosophical basis for his liberalism, and his concerns with the liberal vision. His effort to create a working system of beliefs from his Christian faith and his liberal principles provides this chapter with its core theme.

The Liberal Nationalism of Francis Wayland

Homesick, depressed, removed from his work, lonely, and trapped for several more months in Europe, Francis Wayland wrote in 1841 in his journal:

I love the cities, and far more the fields, the woods, the rivers, the waterfalls, the clear blue sky, the interminable horizon of my native land. And I love them, I trust, as sincerely as a Frenchman loves his old chateaux or his splendid Paris. But more, far more, I love her free institutions, her universal education, her spiritual liberty and her religious observances, her moral purity and her simple manners, the perfect freedom with which mind is there suffered to develop, and the means afforded to foster that development. These are the attributes which awaken my love of country.⁴

Later in the same passage he wrote,

I am more and more a Puritan. I love simple manners, simple tastes, a simple government, which has very little to do, which leaves everything possible to be done by the individual, and which stimulates talent of every kind, not by patronage, but by giving talent free exercise, and leaving it to its own resources; a government of which the constitution may remain firm as adamant, while the men who administer it may be changed every year by the popular will. This is the country for me, and may it be the country for my children ; and may it please God that such a country long may be the United States of America.⁵

What caused Wayland to love and miss his country was the vision which he had of its liberal institutions. His patriotism and nationalism rejected the monuments of France and

⁴ Francis Wayland, Jr., and Heman Lincoln. *Wayland, A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1867), 2:23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:24.

England, the splendor of their aristocracy, and the inequality of their social order. He affirmed small government, individual talent and initiative, civil liberties, and universal opportunities. He asked for God's blessing on the simple Puritan republic. Such was the hope for the United States of America which Wayland fervently held.

Wayland first developed his thoughts on liberal nationalism in his Fast Day sermon of April 1825, entitled "The Duties of an American Citizen."⁶ He examined three questions in this discourse. First he asked, What is the state of European society? Then he asked, What is the relationship of America to Europe? Finally, he asked, What is the duty of an American citizen? In the first case, Europe was divided between rulers who govern by will, imposing their arbitrary commands on the lower and middle classes, and a liberal movement which sought to institute a rule of law in which the governed would make laws by which they might be regulated. America was the first nation to institute a rule of law and to build a living model for the liberal forces around the world to replicate. Finally, American citizens had the duty to create and maintain a national republic of virtue. This required a citizenry that was both educated and converted to the moral principles of Christianity. Schools and the Holy Scriptures must be made available to all the citizens of the nation.

"The Duties of an American Citizen" set forth Wayland's understanding of the relationship between Protestant Christianity and civil liberty. Freedom came into the world with the protestant reformation and the invention of the printing press. In the lands where these two advances in civilization were widespread, the middle and lower classes were able to become educated, to read the Bible, and to become responsible citizens.

⁶ Francis Wayland, "The Duties of an American Citizen," in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833).

Governments of law replaced one's of will. The people replaced the monarch, and men of conscience dominated over governments that were voluntary associations.

Civil freedom and the Protestant religion went hand and hand. Religion provided the moral virtue needed to discipline the indulgences of sinful man, and civil freedom permitted the exercise of the freedom of conscience. The two greatest duties of an American citizen were to promote the intellectual development of the people through education for all and to promote the moral development of the nation through the universal distribution of the Bible. In this way, America would become a model of a virtuous republic for all the people of the world.

Wayland believed that America would receive gratitude and praise from the world's freedom-loving people if it provided the moral power for change as they struggled to overthrow oppression. America would lead the world toward freedom and virtue. No greater force in the pursuit of perfection existed than a well-educated citizenry in possession of the Bible and the Protestant religion. The virtuous citizen fulfilled his duty when he rejected party affiliation and thought about the well being of the nation. Independent, educated, moral citizens guided by their consciences were the hope for a virtuous America and a redeemed humanity.

During the 1820s, America was optimistic and expansive. Wayland reflected the national mood. He thought that a great and moral nation was taking shape in a new land, and man and God were collaborating to bring about the rule of moral law throughout the nation and soon, the whole world. He summarized his liberal Christian vision for America with the following words:

To sum up in a few words what has been said. If we would see the foundations laid broadly and deeply, on which the fabric of this country's

liberties shall rest to the remotest generations; if we would see her carry forward the work of political reformation, and rise the bright and morning star of freedom over a benighted world; let us elevate the intellectual and moral character of every class of our citizens, and especially let us imbue them thoroughly with the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷

Independent citizens must be educated so they can discharge their responsibilities as citizens in a competent manner, but competence, alone, was not enough. They needed moral direction, and that direction could come only from the Bible. Liberal America could endure only if Christian America provided the foundations for its continuing virtue.

Wayland continued the development of his theme of liberal nationalism in an 1826 sermon delivered to commemorate the death of the two presidents, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. While for a time Adams and Jefferson were political enemies, Wayland chose to emphasize their common efforts to create a great nation. He discussed in detail the differences in their personalities and character. Adams was logical, legalistic, better in opposition, and concerned with ethics. Jefferson was alert to self-evident truths, imaginative, open to alternative courses of action, and philosophical. Wayland thought many of their differences could be attributed to their places of origin. In spite of their differences, they were great men who used their unique talents to create the American nation. Their differences were long since forgotten, leaving only their unity of purpose.

Wayland devoted a long passage in this address to an attack on political parties. At one time, he argued, both presidents were the heads of a political party. But they transcended that connection. Parties distorted the public arena. They placed the good of factions over the good of the nation. They called for loyalty to the positions of the party, whether or not those positions were good for the nation as a whole. Fortunately for the

⁷ Ibid., 76.

reputation of both Adams and Jefferson, their party affiliations were forgotten as the nation passed into an era absent of the erosion of public virtue brought about by the party system.

Once Wayland cleansed Adams and Jefferson of the taint of party involvement, he was free to commemorate them as great men of history. Their talents were dedicated to the common cause of creating a nation of liberty. They, as the nation, were disinterested as they pursued the common good. Such men and such a nation served as beacons of liberty for the generations to come both in America and around the world. He told his congregation and his readers:

We are taught by these events the true basis of political reputation. The meteor glare which once shone upon the names of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson is extinguished, but these names are yet resplendent with glory. No one thinks of them as politicians, and they are remembered, and will be remembered forever. They lived for their country, and although they were by accident the leaders of party, they loved not their party, but their country. They conferred substantial benefits upon man, and man will never forget them. On this adamant basis rests their hope of earthly immortality.⁸

Perhaps the most ebullient yet ambivalent statement Wayland ever made of his enthusiasm for the liberal-Christian national synthesis came in his 1832 address to the Sunday School Union. He told his audience America was the beneficiary of forces and events that had their origin in the Reformation of Martin Luther. The Reformation occurred at the point in history when great changes were taking place in the culture of Europe. Technological advances made it possible to establish trade with the entire world, America was discovered, and the printing press was invented. The value of labor increased, allowing for the emergence of an independent middling class. But what made

⁸ Francis Wayland, "On the Death of the ex-Presidents," in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833), 92-93.

this era significant in the history of humanity was the presence of a new moral impulse. This new morality was Protestantism, and its importance lay in the degree to which it allowed its adherents to take advantage of social and technological changes to create freedom and progress. He asserted that this did not occur in the Catholic lands. The new dispensation grew out of the new protestant morality.

Wayland went on to argue that the circumstances that led to the improvement in human existence at the time of the Reformation were then in effect in America. The development of water power and especially of steam had increased the value of labor. A few workers could now do what in the past took armies. The efficiency brought on by technological advances had created the opportunity for more leisure time among the lower classes. This, in turn, had increased the demand for education for both workers and their children. Improvements in the skills of teaching now increased the potential of education to advance the character of the human race. Wayland concluded:

From these facts, the tendency of the present movements of society is obvious. It is, to furnish more leisure than formerly to the operative classes of society, to furnish them more extensively with the means of education, and to render that education better. They must, from the very nature of things, become both positively and relatively far richer, and much better informed, than they have ever been before. Now, as social power is in the ratio of intelligence and wealth; the astonishing progress of the more numerous classes, in both these respects, must be at present producing more radical changes in the fabric of society than were witnessed even at the period of the Protestant Reformation.⁹

God in His great providence had blessed the American nation with the capacity to realize the liberal vision. It was possible to have widespread abundance. The people of the nation could possess the leisure time to pursue the improvement of their minds and participate, as never before, in the higher social, economic, and political life of the nation. But it was

⁹ Francis Wayland, "Encouragements to Religious Efforts," in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833), 142-143.

not just natural resources that made America the cutting edge nation for human progress.

Wayland wrote of the cultural advantages of the new society:

This country, also, presents peculiar facilities for intellectual development. The political institutions of other countries rather retard than accelerate the progress of mental cultivation. With us, the absence of all legalized hereditary barriers between the different classes of society, presents to every man a powerful inducement to improve himself, and especially his children, to the utmost. In other countries, the forms of government being unyielding, they do not readily accommodate themselves to a change in the relations of society. Ours are constructed with the express design of being modified, whenever a change in the relations of the social elements shall require it.¹⁰

So God has done His part, the conditions are present, and promising progress has been made toward the conquest of the nation by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The nation has wealth, freedom, education, and the Protestant religion. It was left to the evangelical action of the Christian believer to make the effort needed to finish the task and bring the Kingdom of the Messiah to earth. He wrote, "It is for us to say whether the present religious movement shall be onward, until it terminate in the universal triumph of Messiah, or whether all shall go back again, and the generations to come after us shall suffer for ages the divine indignation, for our neglect of the Gospel of the grace of God."¹¹ Christian believers stood at a crossroad. They could embrace the social changes and create a millennial society; or, they could neglect their duty and fall back into barbarism. The Catholic Church was gathering its forces to make a counter assault and the forces of tyranny threatened to overturn the progress of the previous three centuries; however, these were not the greatest dangers to the liberal-Christian synthesis.

America was a unique nation. Immediate action was required. In other nations, the will of rulers held the society together, but in America there was no ruler. The people,

¹⁰ Ibid., 143.

¹¹ Ibid., 145.

alone, ruled. If the people were unwise or if they ruled by ungoverned passion, the tyranny of public opinion would create a tyrannical order whose oppression had never been seen before. He stated his fear clearly:

With us, there is but one class, the people. Hence, our institutions can only be supported while the people are restrained by moral principle. We have provided no checks to the turbulence of passion: we have raised no barriers against the encroachments of a tyrannical majority. Hence, the very forms which we so much admire, are at any moment liable to become an intolerable nuisance, the instruments of ultimate and remediless oppression. Now, I do not know that history furnishes us with reason to believe that man can be brought under subjection to moral government, in any other way than by the inculcation of principles, such as are delivered in the New Testament. You see then, that the church of Christ is the only hope of our country.”¹²

Liberal, democratic America with all its advantages faced the possibility of falling into chaos and tyranny if Christian America could not inculcate the moral principles needed to ensure social justice and the continuation of the very elements of freedom that had promoted progress in the first place. Left alone, liberalism had in itself the seeds of its own destruction. The American nation could be an example of freedom for all the world; or, it could be the location for a new and terrible oppression.

Education and Charitable Reform

If America was to be the location for the new millennial dispensation, the people needed to be improved. They would have to understand the laws of God and control their passions. Virtuous obedience must uniformly replace vicious disregard of God’s commandments. The future of humanity swayed in the balance. What could be done?

Francis Wayland turned to three strategies to improve the citizens of the nation. At times these strategies were in opposition to one another, yet he wrestled with each of

¹² Ibid., 147.

them throughout his adult life. The three approaches to progress among the people were education, social reform, and the saving of souls. As we shall see, at times Wayland wondered if he had made wrong choices concerning which of these strategies he employed. It was not just a question of which might be the most effective; it was also an issue of whether or not they were compatible with one another. I shall first take up his efforts regarding education and reform and in the following section of this chapter review his thoughts on the strategy to improve the populace through saving their souls.

Wayland was president of Brown University for 28 years. During his presidency he struggled mightily to balance education and salvation for his students. The following chapter will be dedicated to an examination of his work at Brown, but here I will discuss his work in the community. He promoted the improvement of the science of instruction, public education for all children, the development of adult education and public libraries for the whole community, and an education which was appropriate for the needs of the working classes. He joined governmental boards and commissions that sought to improve education, the management of prisons, hospitals for the mentally ill, and correctional facilities for youth. He contributed to voluntary efforts aimed at providing homes and education for poor and orphaned children, and he promoted temperance. His involvement in community activities was almost a career in itself.

Soon after arriving in Providence, Wayland was appointed to chair a school committee charged with making recommendations for improving local schools. As would be the pattern over the next three decades, he wrote the committee's final report. Writing in the memoirs of his life, his sons said,

In this report the attention of the municipal authorities was earnestly directed to the principles which should control a system of public schools, the

expenses of which were to be defrayed by a general taxation of the property of the community. The report also considered the character and quality of schools demanded by the nature of our republican form of government; the defects of previous and existing systems of public education, with reference to the gradation of schools; the measures proper to be adopted with a view to the removal of these defects; the mode of instruction suitable to such schools; the beneficial results to be anticipated from a system of rewards; the kind of text-books required for the wise instruction of the young; and the importance of maintaining a careful and constant supervision of the schools by a competent board of visitors. The report was accepted, and its recommendations were favorably received and promptly put in practice.¹³

Written in 1828, this report anticipated most of the elements of public education which still shape our system of schooling. Among his proposals that were slow to gain acceptance was that of the creation of high schools for the whole population, yet in time this recommendation became a commonplace of American education.

Wayland worked throughout his life to promote libraries for the public use. Upon arriving at Brown University he began a campaign to improve the library. A library fund was raised and a building constructed. Members of the community were invited to use the new building. In 1838 the Athenaeum Society of Providence built a library in the community. Addressing the Society at the opening of the new facility, he said,

We must render knowledge — valuable knowledge — accessible to the whole community. We must collect the treasures of science and literature, and throw them open to all who are disposed to avail themselves of their benefits. We must provide the means by which the light of intellect shall shine into every house, and pour its reviving beams into the bosom of every family. And, still more, we must act for the future. In our present state, no great object can be accomplished, unless we act for posterity. We must, therefore, lay the foundations of this institution in such principles that it will grow with the growth of intelligence, widening and deepening the channels of its influence, as it passes on from age to age, more and more thoroughly imbuing every

¹³ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 1:323.

successive race with admiration of all that is great, with love for all that is beautiful, and with reverence for all that is holy.¹⁴

Later in his life, he became involved in an effort to create a public library system in Massachusetts. Working with a number of townships in Middlesex County, he raised \$534, which the community matched, to start a library. From this project a town was formed and given the name of Wayland. The library opened on August 7, 1850. The representative from Wayland to the Massachusetts General Assembly introduced legislation that permitted local communities to levy taxes to pay for a library. This led to the creation of the statewide system.

Wayland served on the Rhode Island School Committee in the 1840s and worked with Henry Barnard, the well-known common school advocate and Rhode Island's commissioner of education. In the 1830s he was the president of the Institute of Instruction, an early professional association for teachers. He gave one of his best statements of his educational philosophy in an address to the Institute on its formation. It is possible to view in capsule form the entire working of Wayland's effort to synthesize natural philosophy and revealed religion, faculty psychology and educational philosophy, and liberal visions of progress with Christian obedience. Here he makes the case for the harmony of science and religion and of education and democracy.

Wayland told his audience of educators they were attending a unique event. For the first time, they had gathered not to venerate their Puritan ancestors but to address the needs of future generations. As educators, they were challenged to ensure that if future generations fell into decline, it would not be as the result of their failure to provide them with the best possible education. He told them that the universe was governed by God's

¹⁴ Ibid., 329.

constitution. The law of God had two dimensions. First there was the law of cause and effect. The apple fell, the planets revolved, steam expanded according to exact laws. But in the case of humanity, God had provided understanding and conscience. Men and women could choose to obey the moral law or not. Rewards and punishments followed the actions of human moral agents. Knowledge of the laws of nature could bring great material advances in the well being of humanity, and knowledge of the moral law offers the possibility for true happiness. Educators must assist the students under their charge to understand God's laws in both senses.

Drawing on the faculty psychology in vogue at the time, which divided human action into the faculties of perception, the passions, and mind, Wayland argued that education should train the mind. The mind was made up of intellect (or understanding), will, and conscience. Perception linked the individual to the outside world, passions provided action with its energy and motive, and mind made action efficient and, most important, tested it for its congruence with the moral law of God. The intellect assisted humanity to act in accordance with the physical laws of the universe, while conscience policed the concordance of human action with God's moral law. It was the task of educators to develop the intellect and conscience in their pupils.

Wayland believed that through education the mind could become a sharp tool for achieving human progress. Progress could best be made by emphasizing reason over imagination. Reason was scientific, while imagination was poetic. Reason gave useful results, imagination was frivolous. The regular nature of the universe facilitated the discovery of its laws when philosophers used observation, discrimination, and induction. Scientific method had been defined by Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton was its reigning

saint. It was well suited for advancing knowledge of God's well governed universe. But human progress required more than discovery. It also depended on application of those laws through invention. With invention the human community converted knowledge into material abundance. Mind should be cultivated to further progress. He summarized this point by saying, "The mind may be rendered a fitter instrument for obeying the laws of the universe. This will be accomplished, when men, first, are better acquainted with the laws of the universe, and secondly, when they are better disposed to obey them. That both of these may be accomplished, scarcely needs illustration."¹⁵

The improvement of humanity, Wayland believed, would occur when men and women knew the laws of God and obeyed them. Education held the key to human advancement. He lectured,

It would not be difficult, did time permit, by an examination of the various laws, physical, intellectual, and moral, under which we are placed, to show that the principles which I have been endeavoring to illustrate, are universal, and apply to every possible action of the most eventful life. It could thus be made to appear, that all the happiness of man is derived from discovering, applying, or obeying the laws of his Creator, and that all his misery is the result of ignorance or disobedience; and, hence, that the good of the species can be permanently promoted, and permanently promoted only, by the accomplishment of that which I have stated to be the object of education.¹⁶

Both science and religion were related to the discovery of God's laws. The promotion of one inevitably led to the advancement of the other. Education sharpened the mind for discovery and obedience. It taught the laws and provided reason to obey them. It promoted the intellectual and moral progress which was so necessary for a republic of free citizens. Two decades later, he extended his republic to an even broader set of issues.

¹⁵ Francis Wayland, "Discourse on Education," in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833), 301.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

He addressed in a discourse delivered at Union College on the fiftieth anniversary of the presidency of Elephalet Nott the subject of what is an appropriate education for a democratic people.¹⁷ This is one of his most optimistic statements on the viability of the American democracy.

He continued his theme from twenty years before. Education should both communicate knowledge and train the faculties. The enormous growth in transportation facilities, technology, the discovery of natural resources, and overall wealth of the nation was creating a greater necessity for all the people to receive a high quality education. The whole people were paying for the nation's educational system and they deserved an education that met their needs. In a passionate passage he stated the demand of the people:

We should commence with the self-evident maxim that *we* are to labor not for the benefit of one but of all; not for a caste, or a clique, but for the whole community. Proceeding upon this ground, we should provide the instruction needed by every class of our fellow-citizens. Where ever an institution is established in any part of our country, our first inquiry should be, what is the kind of knowledge (in addition to that demanded for all) which this portion of our people needs, in order to perfect them in their professions, give them power over principles, enable them to develop their intellectual resources and employ their talents to the greatest advantage for themselves and for the country? This knowledge, whatever it may be, should be provided as liberally for one class as for another, Whatever is thus taught, however, should be taught, not only with the design of increasing knowledge, but also of giving strength, enlargement and skill to the original faculties of the soul. When a system of education formed on these principles shall pervade this country, we may be able to present to the world the legitimate results of free institutions; by pursuing any other career we may render them a shame and a by-word.¹⁸

¹⁷ Francis Wayland, *The Education Demanded by the People of the United States: A Discourse Delivered at Union College, Schenectady, July 25, 1854, On the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Presidency of Eliphalet Nott* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1855).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

All persons deserved education, but not an education that was designed for the literary classes. Each person deserved an education that fit his or her unique circumstances. Each person, mechanic or farmer, lawyer or preacher, had a contribution to make to the community. A national education system should respect the worth of each person and prepare him or her to make his or her unique contribution. Here Wayland displayed no concern for the sinfulness of humanity or the chaos of democratic passions. Here, he affirmed the value and the worth of the democracy. He spoke for equality, justice, and universal improvement. It is among his most liberal statements.

The second strategy to which Wayland lent his efforts was social reform. It must be said initially that he was often ambivalent about reform and, especially, about reformers. It straddled the line between liberal and Christian America, and as with abolition, he often rejected it out of hand. He feared that social reformers who attempted to use government authority to control the behavior of citizens by prohibiting the sale of alcohol, or abolishing slavery, or remaking the personalities of prisoners through behavioral modification measures would undercut the moral choices of individuals and, therefore, destroy the possibility of a moral society. Still, in his pronouncements on temperance, his work with prison reform, and his support for the humane treatment of the mentally ill, there were efforts made to improve the lives of persons who were socially marginal, using liberal means. It is also true that his motivations were grounded in his faith. Because his approach to social reform was so much a composite of liberal and Christian elements, an analysis of his reform efforts offers an opportunity to view the conflict between these two value systems.

On October 20, 1831, Wayland addressed the Providence Temperance Association.¹⁹ Recently a riot had disturbed the tranquility of the town. The law enforcement officials had finally quelled the disturbance with gunfire. Some of the rioters were killed. Wayland believed that the civil disturbance was the result of excessive use of alcohol. He reminded his audience of this recent event and of how unsettling it was to the community. He described the devastating effects of drink on the individual and the family, the economic loss brought about by the consumption of alcohol, and the damage which intemperance brought down on the whole social order. He asked his listeners to consider what must be done. He challenged them to ban the sale and use of alcohol in the city.

Wayland feared civil disorder. The providence riot shook him, and he wanted to eliminate the cause. He believed that drink destroyed the capacity of the individual to function effectively as a spouse, parent, worker, or citizen. Temperance would restore the drunkard to the position of a self-directed autonomous individual. It would, perhaps more importantly, prevent others from falling into the grasp of alcoholism, and it would free the merchant of the guilt of sharing in the consequences of the sale of the “poison.”

Almost three decades after his speech to the Providence Temperance Association, he stated his ambivalence in a letter to a minister. He wrote:

I am much perplexed about the Maine Law question, and do not see my way clear. All our efforts thus far seem failures, and I fear we are on the wrong track. What is the use of trying to punish Irishmen for selling liquor, when mayors, judges, and the highest men in social standing make people drunk at parties? No law can be effective which does not strike all alike. The 'rummies' (I mean the poor ones) have the best of the argument. I do not know what to

¹⁹ Francis Wayland, “An Address on Temperance,” in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833).

do. Church members are as much in the wrong as others. In such a case, what can law effect?²⁰

He still believed that intemperance was an evil, but by 1860 he had turned to a strategy of personal persuasion. He saw the Maine law and attempts to copy it to be disproportionately directed toward Irish Catholic immigrants. He opposed the inequality inherent in this strategy. His liberal impulse conflicted with his fear of disorder and loss of self-direction. His commitment to equality before the law trumped his desire for civil order. While he supported Lincoln and the Republican Party, and at times he voted for the Whigs, most notably in 1844, when he supported Clay because of the issue of the annexation of Texas, he was neither a political temperance man nor a Know Nothing. He held to the laissez-faire individualism of the Jeffersonian Democrats to the end of his life.

In 1857, Providence residents felt the effect of the economic panic that swept the nation. Wayland responded by establishing an agency directed to the assistance of unemployed persons to find work. The community was divided into regions, and agency operatives coordinated the effort to connect the unemployed with job opportunities. He acted as chairman of the effort for several years until his health caused him to withdraw. The organization did not try to change the character of the unemployed, nor blame the poor for their problems. It merely aimed at matching job seekers with job openings, applying a liberal free market approach to the crisis.

He also served on the board of directors for the Butler Hospital for the Insane, but his most demanding reform effort after 1851 was with the Rhode Island Board of Inspectors, which had authority over the state prison and the Providence County Jail.

²⁰ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2:334.

Specifically, Wayland during the 1840s volunteered with the chaplain's program at the state prison. In June 1851, Governor Allen appointed him to the Board of Inspectors and he was selected to be the board's chairperson. For the rest of the decade, he took an active role in the management of the prison and wrote the annual reports.

When he joined the Board of Inspectors, the prison was among the worst in New England. It was severely over crowded, lacking in opportunity for employment or self-improvement, a health hazard for its inmates, and a school for criminal activity. It was costly to the state to operate and possessed inadequate security to prevent the escape of numerous prisoners.

Coming into what must have been a miserable situation, Wayland had clear reform goals. He wanted to improve the comfort of the prisoners, reduce the financial burden to the state for maintaining the prison, and provide opportunities for the inmates to experience intellectual and moral improvement. He wrote in the 1856 report:

The inspectors are happy to report that the state prison has now become what the General Assembly has always intended to make it — a valuable means of reformation. Men who have been seduced into habits of vice have here the opportunity of acquiring the means of self-support, a taste for intellectual improvement, and a knowledge of their duty from the Word of God.²¹

A new wing had been built to provide relief from over crowding and improve the light and warmth that were consistent with better prisoner health. The quality of the food was improved. The prisoners were given productive employment, turning a financial deficit into a profit; a library was established, and a chapel was included in the new construction. Throughout the 1850s, while he was attempting to institute sweeping changes at Brown, publishing the memoirs of Adomeram Judson and his textbook on intellectual

²¹ Ibid., 2:334.

philosophy, lecturing widely, nursing his invalid son, retiring from Brown and assuming the pastorate at First Baptist Church of Providence, he dedicated a substantial amount of his time to prison reform. He neither attempted to reform the prisoners through harsh punishment nor severe reprogramming methods; rather, he sought to reform them by treating them more humanely, providing them with useful employment, and offering them the opportunity for self-improvement. He attempted to restore a sense of individual autonomy and competence to the inmates. His Christian charity had a strongly liberal understanding of what made for personal improvement.

Wayland supported educational and social reform because they provided strategies for improving individuals and for protecting the nation from the chaos of the passions of an unchecked populace. He was a sincere democrat, seeking to create an educational system that would serve the needs of all the people. He sought equality before the law, educational opportunity for all classes and occupations, and an opportunity for rehabilitation for those who had fallen into drink, crime, unemployment, or illness. For the most part, he wanted government to refrain from the attempt to impose morality. Individuals should be left alone to choose to act morally. He supported small government, voluntary improvement, social change through education, and human institutions of limited control. His social vision was rather liberal, but he doubted that the liberal vision could sustain itself without Christian obedience. Something had to hold in check the anarchic passions of humanity, and nothing surpassed the willing obedience to the laws of God to achieve the necessary balance needed to maintain a free society.

Toward a Balance of Christian and Liberal Values

When Francis Wayland Sr. and his wife, Sarah Moore Wayland, immigrated to America in 1793, they brought their Baptist faith with them.²² The Baptists were dissenters in England and had experienced some persecution in the century and a half since their beginnings in the ferment of the English Civil War. They quickly joined other immigrant Baptists in New York City and became strong supporters of Thomas Jefferson. They opposed religious establishment and appreciated Jefferson's support for religious liberty. The Baptists were independent sectarians. They wished to withdraw from the world and form congregations of adult believers. They were pious souls who believed that the lives of men and women should be lived in obedience to the word of God. In many ways this faith was consistent with the rising tide of liberalism in antebellum America. The Baptists prospered in nineteenth century America. They, along with the Methodists, were the fastest growing denominations after 1790. Francis Wayland Jr. reflected the success of the Baptists in his enthusiastic liberal nationalism. His Baptist faith and his personal success predisposed him to have a liberal social vision, but by the mid-1840s he was disenchanted.

He had hoped that men of good will would liberate their slaves, but they had not. He believed that the economic depression of 1837 had been brought on by the unchecked greed of sinful humanity. He had experienced what he believed to be the anarchic forces loosed by the Dorr Rebellion, and he was outraged by the imperialism of the slave powers who had turned liberal nationalism into the sinful and illegal prosecution of the Mexican War. Liberalism promoted economic greed and failure, destructive revolution,

²² Ibid., 1:11-60.

and imperialistic war. Voluntary associations, political parties, ecclesiastical bodies, and oppressive government were challenging the right of independent individuals to make moral decisions. Genuine liberalism was in danger of destruction from the unchecked forces released by that very value system. Wayland sought to provide an answer to the questions to which unchecked liberalism gave rise. He was a liberal and a Christian, and he hated the excesses that he believed were destroying both freedom and Christianity and bringing the country to ruin. He offered a consolidation of Christian and liberal values, as an answer to the secular, imperialistic, corporate society that was taking shape around him.

Wayland fashioned his response to secular America in a series of publications beginning with his discourse entitled *The Moral Law of Accumulation*.²³ This was followed by *The Limitations of Human Responsibility*, *The Affairs of Rhode Island*, *A Memorial to the Hon. Nicholas Brown*, and, in 1847, *Obedience to the Civil Magistrate*.²⁴ He set forth in these publications his thoughts on how a Christian can live authentically in a society overrun by economic speculation and greed, the usurpation of individual rights by corporate organizations, the use of extralegal means to bring about social change, and illegitimate war. The concept which tied Wayland's faith to his liberal vision was his belief that the duty of the believer is to be obedient to the will of God. The will of God can be known in the two laws which can be learned both from nature and from Scripture.

²³ Francis Wayland, *The Moral Law of Accumulation*, 2d ed. (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1837).

²⁴ Wayland, *Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1838); Wayland, *The Affairs of Rhode Island: A Discourse Delivered in the Meeting House of First Baptist Church of Providence* (Providence: H. H. Brown, 1843); Wayland, *Obedience to the Civil Magistrate: Three Sermons Delivered in the Chapel of Brown University, November 2, 1841* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1841).

The first of these laws was to love God, and the second was to love one's neighbor. The pious moral person applied these two laws to every action and thought of his or her life. Every action and thought must be judged by one's conscience to determine if it proceeded from the truth of God's laws. The heart of the moral universe was the pious individual who submitted to the will of God and exercised his or her conscience to keep his or her moral life pure. It was against this moral system of thought that Wayland judged the calamities of his age.

In 1837, Wayland believed God had brought on a calamity to chastise His people for their wrongdoing. The people had violated God's law as it applied to the accumulation of wealth. In fact, they had violated the law in two ways. In the first case they had gotten their wealth inappropriately; and in the second place they had used it irresponsibly, failing to share with those in need. God's law permitted the accumulation of wealth when it occurred as the result of effort which added value to the community. But the people had become too involved with the rapid accumulation of wealth and had turned to speculation, which added nothing to the value of the economic product. For several years, speculation had replaced production as the major economic activity of the people. Ignoring the Bible, they speculated in land and commodities in hopes of making a large profit, but the bottom had fallen out and many were bankrupt.

The rapid accumulation of wealth did not add to the benevolence of the people. It had actually had the opposite effect. The wealth had been spent on large houses and lavish furnishings, fancy clothing and luxurious living, and to keep the children of the wealthy in a dissolute state. The poor as much as the rich pursued material goals at the expense of spiritual ones. The suffering brought on by the panic was God's way of

punishing the people for their wrong doing and reminding them of what the proper way of conducting their economic life truly was.

Wayland reminded the citizens of how God wanted them to live. He told them:

The calamity, though wide-spreading, has been limited in many respects to particular classes. It now threatens to become universal. Should the currency of the country be prostrated, and thus the whole circulating medium be rendered worthless, no one could by possibility escape. And if to this should be added the calamity of a scanty harvest, I know not how to measure the universal misery that would ensue. On the contrary, should our currency be sustained, should a spirit of stern and unbending honesty, on the one hand, and of kindness and forbearance, on the other, be shed abroad upon our citizens, and should the fruits of the earth be abundant, business will soon resume its natural channels, and we shall again enjoy all the prosperity that is really for our good. Now, every one must see that God alone by his almighty power can avert the evils which we have reason to dread, and bestow the blessings which we so imperatively need.²⁵

A return to prosperity depended on repentance, honest dealing in business, kindness, and charity. The community hung in the balance. Worse calamities could occur, but God could save a humble people. The people had turned away from God to pursue wealth, but if they would but return to obedience to the will of God, their businesses could prosper again.

Nicholas Brown, 1768-1842, was the son of Moses Brown, one of the founders of Rhode Island College.²⁶ He attended Rhode Island College and in 1792 was named to its board of trustees. For the next fifty years he was a benefactor and guiding force in the affairs of the college. In 1804, he made a significant contribution to the school, and in appreciation its directors renamed it Brown University. Nicholas Brown was instrumental

²⁵ Wayland, *The Moral Law of Accumulation*, 2d ed.

²⁶ Theodore Rawson Crane, *Francis Wayland and Brown University, 1796-1841: A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Harvard University in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Ph.D.* (March 1959).

in Wayland's hiring, and after Wayland came to Brown, he provided constant political and financial support for Wayland and for the school. He was a leading businessman in the community, and he had other benevolences besides Brown. When he died in 1841, Wayland lost a friend and an important pillar of support.

Wayland was called upon to preach the memorial sermon at the commemoration service.²⁷ He portrayed a man who was a model of a Christian saint, who combined the liberal values of the new economic order and the Christian obedience necessary to sustain a democratic society. According to Wayland, Brown was completely honest. His word was his bond. He was a successful business man because he followed God's moral law for accumulation. He was equally scrupulous in his use of his wealth. He quietly gave support to worthy causes and needy individuals. He supported religion, education, and private charity. He, in short, was an exemplary man for the times.

The Mexican War presented another type of challenge for Wayland's Christian liberal vision. He had taken a hard law-and-order position at the time of the Dorr War, and in his book on the limits of human responsibility he argued against political activism. His liberal nationalism and patriotism predisposed him to support the policy of the nation. He was committed to the preservation of the nation, the constitution, and the union. Yet the Mexican War, in his view, was wrong. He set forth his position in a pamphlet entitled *Obedience to the Civil Magistrate*.²⁸ The publication included three sermons delivered in the chapel of Brown University in 1847 and clearly demonstrated Wayland's growing

²⁷ Wayland, *A Discourse in Commemoration of the Life and Character of the Hon. Nicholas Brown*.

²⁸ Wayland, *Obedience to the Civil Magistrate*.

alienation from the slave power, American imperialism, and the self-assured, aggressive, new political order.

He began by stating the essentially spiritual and private approach of Christianity toward the improvement of individuals and society. He said,

I do not say that Christianity does not create a tendency to free institutions. I firmly believe that it does. Teaching universal equality of right, it could not do otherwise. All the true freedom on earth springs essentially from the Gospel. It is intended, however, to improve the condition of civil society, not by revolution and bloodshed, but by instilling into our bosoms a spirit of piety towards God, and of justice and mercy towards men. While Christianity is doing this, it is rendering good government necessary, and bad government impracticable. In the mean time it treats every existing government in obedience to the precept given in the text.²⁹

He argued that the improvement of civil government should be in normal times an indirect concern of the Christian believer. Good people would in time create free institutions. Saving souls, not political revolution, should be the mission of the Christian minister.

Guided by his faith, Wayland searched in the Bible for his justification for opposing the government's war on Mexico. His answer was Christian and it was also liberal. His starting point was the liberal commitment to limited government.

Government was constituted for specific purposes. It did not have the authority to go beyond those constituted purposes. In Christian terms one should render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's:

The authority of the magistracy is conferred for definite and specified objects, and it must accomplish these objects by innocent means. So long as it confined itself to its appropriate objects, and sought to accomplish them by innocent means, Jesus Christ commanded us to yield to it implicit obedience. When, on the other hand, it undertakes to accomplish objects for which no authority has been conferred upon it, or attempts to accomplish them by

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

means which Christ has forbidden, the gospel imposes upon us no obligation to obey it, nay, it may command us to disobey it.³⁰

The proper role of government, as Wayland saw it, was to protect the God-given rights of each person to fully exercise the powers that he or she had been given; the most important of these gifts was individual moral conscience. Each person had the right to his or her own labor, to religious freedom, and to freedom of speech. The only limit to the exercise of one's powers was the necessity to respect the rights of others. However, human beings were self-seeking and they did greedily encroach on the rights of others. Government must protect the rights of the innocent and restrain the guilty. Humanity entered into civil government to prohibit the war of all against all, and the proper role of civil society was to act as an umpire among conflicting elements.

At times, governments may have to enter into war to protect the rights of its citizens. Wayland supported the conduct of genuine wars of self-defense, but all too often wars have been conducted for evil ends. There is little doubt that he considered the Mexican War to be one conducted for evil purposes. Of this, he wrote:

Of late, millions of men have been slain in the contest between monarchy and republicanism. Such was the character of the wars of the French Revolution. Still later it has been urged that a war may be waged by one nation upon another in order to enlarge the area of freedom, and it has also been pleaded that freedom may most successfully be extended, by enlarging the domain of slavery. . . . Again, wars are sometimes waged for the sake of conquest. The soil of a neighboring nation is rich, or her harbors are commodious, and our power may be increased by adding them to our possessions. If we are the stronger party we can generally find pretexts to cover our all-grasping covetousness; and if all other reasons fail, we may always plead our irresistible destiny, and thus cast the blame of our wickedness upon the perfections of the Most High. But can such a transaction, though it could be perfected without bloodshed, be designated by any other name than robbery, and is there any more predestination about robbery than about any other crime? Does our desire for our neighbor's possessions give us any right to our

³⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

neighbor's possessions? If desire confer right, it confers it upon all nations, and to admit this would be to admit the right of universal destruction. What shall we say, then, when this iniquitous passion for territory is gratified at the expense of indiscriminate slaughter? Can we conceive of a more diabolical wickedness, than a war waged in the cause of national robbery?³¹

Wayland believed that the Mexican War had been waged to expand slavery and to aggrandize the American nation. He rejected the claim for manifest destiny and considered the whole effort to be nothing more than simple robbery. The nation which he had written about so lovingly in Paris six years before had become an international criminal. The free institutions and liberal spirit of the nation were being sacrificed to build a slave empire.

What should a Christian do? Wayland honored government when it performed its legitimate functions, but when it went beyond what it was created to do, he felt he had a duty to resist its evil doing. The citizen had an obligation to use constitutional means to try to change the government's policies, but if this failed, disobedience was appropriate. The citizen should refuse to participate in any of the benefits that might be derived from an unjust war, and when God brought his punishment down on the sinful nation, the Christian citizen should share in the devastation. But whether or not it was successful, the Christian citizen must speak out against the nation's transgressions against the law of God, no matter what the consequences might be. He concluded his condemnation of American greed by saying,

We see then, that this whole discussion tends to one very simple practical conclusion. A virtuous man is bound to carry his principles into practice in all the relations of life. He can no more do wrong in company than alone, and be guiltless. If he be a true man, he must love right and justice and mercy, better than political party, or personal popularity. If he fear God, he must obey God rather than man, and this fear must govern his conduct universally. In this

³¹ Ibid., 25.

matter every man must begin not with his neighbor, but himself, and if he wish our country to be reformed, let him begin the work immediately. Let us all then lay these things solemnly to heart, and may God grant us grace to carry them into practice.³²

In 1848, Wayland voted for the Free Soil Party, and in 1856 he supported John C. Fremont. He spoke out against the Nebraska Bill in 1854 and assisted in the transport of fugitive slaves. He voted for Lincoln and encouraged one of his sons to be a chaplain in the federal army. Although by the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 he had suffered a stroke and was substantially impaired, he did what he could to support the war effort. He continued to speak out against secularization, the worship of material indulgence, and the rule of political parties until the end of his life. As we shall see in later chapters, he became skeptical of the capacity of education and reform to improve humanity. More and more, he placed his hope for humanity in the Christian effort to save the souls of individuals. He continued to hope that his synthesis of Christian faith and liberal freedom could save the nation, but his fight to turn back the growth of corporate America cost him popularity and hastened his death.

Concluding Remarks

Francis Wayland was a Christian, and he was a liberal; but he was a liberal of a particular variety. His Christian faith harmonized more easily with republicanism than it did with Lockean liberalism. Early in his career, he sang the promise of the American nation to lead the world to a universal happiness grounded in personal freedom and ruled by equality before the law. He hoped for a virtuous nation that preserved its freedoms because it was obedient to the law of God. He wanted to educate and convert humanity so it could use intellect and morality to establish an order that was obedient. All the people

³² Ibid., 40.

deserved equal opportunity to education and self-determination, but these freedoms were positive only if they were informed by God's moral law.

To a very large extent Wayland opposed liberalism that emphasized an absolute right to property, the pursuit of self-interest, and the creation of corporate structures to promote economic and political goals. He viewed the Panic of 1837 to be an example of liberal greed. He was appalled by the national claim for the right of self-aggrandizement exhibited in the Mexican War and the extremes to which slave holders pursued their claim of property rights in fellow human beings. He condemned the political parties for being tools for personal gain. The republican virtue that fused so well with his Christian beliefs was inadequate to curb the liberalism that drove the market economy, the political party, the advance of slavery, and the quest for empire. He spoke out on behalf of a Christian moral conscience, but the nation rejected conscience in favor of an invisible hand, self-assertion, and self-interest. A Christian/republican America lost out to a liberal America, and Wayland's moral voice fell silent in the aftermath of the Civil War.

CHAPTER III FRANCIS WAYLAND AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

By modern standards, Francis Wayland's credentials were not outstanding when he arrived at Brown University in February 1827 to assume the duties of president of this little Baptist college, but he was the best qualified among the candidates within the denomination. He was a college graduate and had four years of college-level teaching experience. Eliphalet Nott, president of Union College, had been his mentor, advising him in both teaching methodology and college administration. He had been the minister at First Baptist Church in Boston for five years, had participated in Baptist affairs at the state and national levels, and had edited *The American Baptist Magazine*.¹ Two of his sermons — “On the Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise” and “The Duties of an American Citizen,” — had brought him to the attention of a national and even international literary audience.² He was young at thirty years of age, but old enough to have achieved some maturity. He was married with an infant son, and he had strong support from the leaders within the Baptist sect. Nicholas Brown, the leading figure in Providence and within the clique that governed Brown University, supported him. He had a largely happy prospect as he assumed his duties, but he also faced some major

¹ *The American Baptist Magazine & Missionary Intelligencer* 1-4 (1817-1824).

² Wayland, “The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise,” in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833); Wayland, “The Duties of an American Citizen,” in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833).

challenges. For the next twenty-eight years, he struggled to make Brown an institution which provided its students with a moral and a practical education. It was that struggle that presented him with his continuing challenge.

In the years before Wayland became president of Brown University, the community had been torn by controversy. Asa Messer had been president since 1803, and while much of his presidency had been prosperous, in the later years he lost control of the college. It appears that he had two major problems. First, he was too compatible with the Unitarians of Harvard for the local Baptists, who clustered around Stephen Gano, the minister at First Baptist Church of Providence. The second problem which plagued Messer was student discipline. The controversy surrounding Asa Messer was argued in the local press. His supporters defended his right to express himself freely on matters of religion, while his detractors condemned the lax and licentious ways at Brown. In the end the Baptists won, Messer resigned, and Wayland was selected to head the college. Wayland quickly took control of the school. He removed the barrel of ale from the basement of the student residence hall, enforced discipline, and eliminated some faculty positions that were part-time. He required all faculty members to be on campus and to be available to monitor student behavior during study time. His growing prominence in the First Baptist Church and the community, his continuous stream of publications, and the solid enrollment of students at Brown consolidated his leadership. While often controversial, Wayland was never in danger of losing control of the University.

The vision which Wayland held for Brown University was made up of three basic elements. He wanted the students to receive a quality education that included both instruction in the moral Christian life and in the skills needed to be a successful citizen

and worker. He also wanted Brown to become economically viable. He believed that economic viability depended on offering an educational product that met the needs of the people. If education was useful, students would be willing to pay for it. Education should be moral and practical and marketable. Wayland, the Brown faculty, the students, and alumni spent the next twenty-eight years trying to implement his vision. In what follows, I will examine how the Brown University community worked with its president to achieve the goals that he set for it.

President Wayland and the Brown University Community

When Francis and Lucy Wayland came to Providence in 1827, Brown University had two college buildings and a home for its president. University Hall and Hope College served as dormitories, classroom buildings, administrative offices, library space, and faculty offices. In 1834, Manning Hall was added to provide a chapel and a library, and in 1840, Rhode Island Hall opened to house the science program. A new home for the president was completed soon after Rhode Island Hall opened. In the first few years of Wayland's presidency, enrollment declined, reaching a low point in 1830 of 95, but by 1834, it rose to 130, and in 1836 it reached 195. The first decade of Wayland's administration was prosperous and reflected growth and stability. However, after 1840 the consequences of the economic depression, Wayland's growing pessimism about the state of American politics and culture, and his growing desire to reform the institution, gave rise to near bankruptcy, conflict with the faculty, and falling enrollment. After 1850, the Brown governing body gave the president the opportunity to experiment with the reform which he advocated. Accordingly, for five years he strove to implement a new

college system, but in 1855 he gave up and retired. Soon after, the Brown Corporation reversed his reforms and he withdrew from contact with the university.

For twenty-eight years, Wayland, his family, the faculty and students, and the Brown University Corporation and community struggled to define and bring to fruition a vision of higher education that met the needs of a changing nation. Looking back at Brown in the decades before the Civil War, one cannot help but be impressed by how small it was. It never had more than 200 students and ten faculty members. Still it strove to provide an educated ministry, to meet the need for professionally trained persons for local business and government, and to prepare a corps of teachers and missionaries for the improvement of the world. This little community lived and died, disagreed and rebelled, and produced a great deal of educational work. They attempted to maintain their evangelical fervor while struggling with the growing secular demands of the scientific and technological society which was coming into being all around them. Such was the challenge of the college in antebellum America.

Francis, Lucy, and their children lived on campus. Much of their family life was lived in public. She bore two of their children after they came to Brown, and one of them died while they lived on the campus. He was especially fond of this child who died at fifteen months. Lucy Wayland wrote of this relationship, “It was delightful to observe her father’s increasing fondness for her. She was overjoyed whenever he entered the house, and always, when I told her that her papa was coming, she would run across the hall, holding out her little hands to embrace him.”³

³ Francis Wayland, Jr., and Heman Lincoln Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1867), 1:360.

Lucy cared for their children and led an active life on campus and in the community. She counseled with the students on matters of faith, visited the poor and sick in the community, and started a maternal association among the women of First Baptist Church. She was humorous and more lighthearted than her husband, and when she died in 1834, he sincerely grieved her loss.

In the year after his wife's death, Wayland fought his depression with work. He completed the text of *Elements of Moral Science*, continued his teaching, and managed the college. His mother and sisters and brothers came to visit him, and he cared for his sons. He wrote to his father:

For the kind provision which God has made for my dear little boys, I ought to be very grateful. I give thanks to God that I am able to have them with me, instead of seeing them scattered abroad, as some children have been under similar circumstances. I desire also to be thankful that God inclined me to take the charge of them myself, rather than entrust them to the care of others. This has been, I think, a blessing to them and to me. They are more attached to me, and I am to them; and I believe that they have improved in character and conduct, notwithstanding their irreparable loss.⁴

Wayland carried his sons on his shoulders across the campus and wrestled with them on the living room floor of his home. As they grew up, he worried if they were pious enough. His oldest son, Francis Wayland Jr., caused him serious concern when he attended the theater and wasn't as careful with his money as his father thought he should be. He worried that his second son, Heman Lincoln Wayland, was slow to find a vocation and was too scholarly. Incidentally, Francis Wayland Jr. became an attorney, served in government, and spent the last thirty years of his career as the Dean of the Yale Law School. Heman Lincoln Wayland became a minister, served as a Chaplain in the Union

⁴ Ibid., 1:369.

Army, served for a short time as a college president, and held a professorship for over twenty-five years.

On August 1, 1838, the widowed Francis Wayland married Hebsi Suzanne Howard Sage. They had one son, and for the next twenty-seven years she shared his life. There is little record of this son. Wayland makes reference to him only as an invalid who was near death during the 1850s. Wayland slept in a chair near him so as to be close in case of an emergency, but the boy outlived his father and was in the room with his brothers and a sister-in-law when Francis Wayland died. It is possible that this child was developmentally disabled (there are no letters to him or mention of him, except as to his fragile health), but there is no evidence that this is true.

Until their deaths, Wayland's parents were sources of support and advice. His mother died in 1836, and his father lived on until 1849. At the time of Wayland's first wife Lucy's death, his parents came to Providence from their retirement home in Saratoga Springs to be with him, as did a number of his brothers and sisters. Each of them offered a thoroughgoing Christian perspective on his problems and especially on his grief. What we know of these relationships comes almost entirely from Wayland's letters to his parents and siblings. We get a glimpse into the respect and affection which Wayland felt for his mother in the following passage written to his father on the death of Sarah:

How thankful should we be to God for giving to our dear mother so superior a mind, so accurate and discriminating a judgment, so strong and expansive a thirst for knowledge, such tender and enduring affections, so warm and self-denying a charity, and, above all, that he sanctified all these excellent qualities by calling her so early to a knowledge of himself! How can we be sufficiently grateful to him for that grace which he bestowed upon her in causing her path through life to be that of the just that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, and throughout her whole course rendering her so bright, so illustrious an

example of the Excellency of his grace, so that, wherever she lived, wherever she was known, in public or in private, among Christians or men and women of the world, among the young or old, every one loved, every one venerated her, every one was willingly constrained to confess that she was an Israelite indeed, a chosen and much beloved disciple of Christ! How great reason have we to be thankful that she has been spared to us so long, and has been in so many cases our guide and counselor, that all her children have grown up to love and honor her, and that we have all had for so long a time the blessing of her advice, her example, and her prayers!⁵

In addition to his family, Wayland built a close working relationship with his faculty. His closest confidant among the faculty was William Giles Goddard, but Goddard died in 1844. Goddard was a Brown graduate and son-in-law of Thomas Ives, the business partner of Moses Brown and a co-founder of Rhode Island College, later Brown University. Thomas Ives was the treasurer of the Brown University Corporation until his death and a constant supporter of Wayland. Goddard initially taught moral philosophy, but his primary interest was in modern language and literature. He, more than Wayland, believed in the importance of a literary education. Goddard was deeply conservative on political issues and perhaps voiced the political views of the Providence business community. He opposed universal suffrage and was highly critical of the democratic forces that supported Thomas Wilson Dorr. He was less critical of slave owners than Wayland and urged President Wayland to suppress the abolition movement on campus. While he supported Wayland's early reforms, Goddard did not agree with the underlying democratic nature of the president's thought. It is doubtful if he would have supported the direction Brown University took in the 1850s had he lived to see the full extent of Wayland's plans for a democratic practical college education.

⁵ Ibid., 1:375.

Other long-term faculty members included Romeo Elton, William Gammell, George Ide Chase, and Alexis Caswell. Elton was a carry-over from the Asa Messer era and taught Latin classics. He was by all accounts rather easygoing and uninvolved in college affairs. Wayland forced him out in 1842 for reports of his poor teaching. He retired to a life of literary pursuits and continued to support Brown with financial contributions.

Gammell, Chase, and Caswell were Baptist evangelicals, as was Wayland. Chase and Caswell were his former students. They represented the president's effort to surround himself with like-minded men who shared his vision for a moral college environment. As shall be discussed in a later section, they were somewhat less supportive of his attempts to tie faculty salaries to a classical economic model, requiring salaries to be paid largely from fees from students who enrolled in their classes.

Early in his presidency Wayland employed his brother, John Wayland, as a tutor. It is not entirely clear if this was to provide a family member who was having trouble establishing himself in a career with a job, or an attempt to supply himself with a political ally. Perhaps it was a little of each. In any case, John only stayed for a few years and then moved on to a pastorate, but he failed to achieve anything like the success of his older brother. Some questions of nepotism were raised, and these questions may have played a part in John's departure.

Wayland demanded that his faculty work hard, share a common religious orientation, and support his vision for the school. In the years after 1850, when he attempted to implement his practical and democratic vision for Brown, he requested that

two dissenters, Green and Potter, leave. His concept of democracy did not run to the governance of the college.

A major accusation made against Asa Messer was that the president could not manage discipline at the college. Twice Wayland faced major rebellions, but in neither case did these outbreaks of student displeasure become dangerous to the administration. In the first year of his presidency, a group of students threatened to withdraw and go to other schools if his reforms were not reversed. Their concerns were likely tied up with Wayland's dismissal of part-time faculty. This action ended the medical program and the class in oratory which was taught by Tristram Burgis, a Rhode Island congressman and Brown graduate. Wayland said that he was prepared to dismiss the entire group of protesting students and withhold information concerning their completion of courses or success in those classes. The students backed down.

Again in 1836, Wayland faced displeasure from some of his students. The issue for which these students threatened to leave revolved around graduation. Students were assigned parts in the commencement ceremony based on their class standing. In an egalitarian outburst, the best students declined to participate and refused their diplomas. In the following years, they relented and were given their degrees. There was little doubt that Wayland was in control of the college.

On campus and in the classroom, Wayland projected a presence that was dominant and often inspiring to the students. Many found his discipline, religious sensibility, and personal concern to be crucial factors in their intellectual and moral development. One student speaking many years after his education at Brown University said,

I never knew an instructor who was so perfectly master of the subject he handled, or who left the impress of his own mind so ineffaceably upon the

minds of all susceptible of receiving it. He was free from all pedantry, his movements in the realm of science and thought were quiet and unostentatious. His manner was simple and childlike. There was no indication of special concern that others should assent to his views. Yet the mind that was not quickened by contact with his, that did not gird itself for more strenuous and elevated endeavors under the inspiration of his presence and teachings, must have been hopelessly dull. The recitation-room was his empire, and he reigned with imperial dignity.⁶

One of the most successful aspects of the instruction which Wayland offered to his Brown students was the development of his textbooks. He published textbooks in moral science, political economy, and intellectual philosophy. These books came from his lectures. Beginning in 1830, he took over the course in moral philosophy. Initially he used the text written by William Paley but, unsatisfied with Paley, he developed a set of lectures which he presented to his students.⁷ He said of his textbook (*Elements of Moral Science*),

I thus relinquished the work of Dr. Paley and for some time have been in the habit of instructing solely by lecture. The success of the attempt exceeded my expectations, and encouraged me to hope that the publication of what I had delivered to my classes might in some small degree facilitate the study of moral science. From these circumstances the work has derived its character. Being designed for the purposes of instruction, its aim is to be simple, clear, and purely didactic.⁸

In the preface to the second edition of *Elements of Moral Science*, he gives advice concerning how the book should be used. Neither student nor professor should take the book to class. Students should prepare an analysis of the assignment which they could recite from memory. The analysis should address an outline of the parts, discuss how they

⁶ Ibid., 1:248.

⁷ William Paley, *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Selections in Natural Theology*, ed. Frederick Ferre (New York:1963).

⁸ Francis Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science* ed. Joseph Blau (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 3-4.

were related, and point out the relevance of the illustrations. Each student should have a turn at presenting the analysis. Following the presentation of the analysis, frequent reviews should be conducted, including larger parts of the book. This methodology is reminiscent of modern mastery learning strategies. There is no better guide to the content of the classes which Wayland taught than his textbooks. Students practically memorized their content. They are the sum and substance of the knowledge which he wished to pass on to his students.

The Textbooks

Francis Wayland is not generally considered to be an original contributor to the American philosophical tradition. Rather, he is a systematizer. He wrote textbooks that were widely used in the colleges and secondary schools through out the nineteenth century. Joseph Blau, the twentieth century editor of his textbook on moral philosophy, estimates that by 1900, over 100,000 copies of *The Elements of Moral Science* were in use, and another 25,000 copies of an abridged version of this book were in circulation at the secondary level.⁹ It was translated into French, German, Turkish, and Hawaiian. According to William Herndon, Abraham Lincoln studied it intensely. His textbook on political economy was also used widely; however, his last text on intellectual science came too late. It was outdated and too close to the outbreak of the Civil War to be successful. These three textbooks, along with his small volume, *The Limits of Human Responsibility*, provide insight into the systematic thinking of Wayland. If his sermons and discourses focused on specific occasions and called upon him to interpret the events of the day, his textbooks gave him the opportunity to organize and structure his thought

⁹ Ibid., xliii.

concerning the nature of God, humankind, and the moral universe. The textbooks give us an opportunity to view the world as Wayland saw it and taught it to his students.

The Elements of Moral Science was by far his most successful textbook. It, as did his other textbooks, grew out of his class lectures. It was the duty of the president of the antebellum college to teach the seniors a course in moral philosophy. The course was expected to provide the student with a systematic understanding of how one should conduct his life. It concluded the college's attempt to produce students of good character who, in Wayland's case, would be devout Christian men. They would be honest in all their dealings, benevolent, respectful of the rights of others, responsible for their share in personal relationships and the well being of the society, and guided by conscience. Not happiness but duty motivated the moral person. Virtue and true moral action derived from obedience to the will of God. Knowledge of the will of God was available through natural religion in a partial form, but was perfectly revealed in the Bible. Everyone had the capacity to know and obey the will of God and by so doing to achieve genuine happiness in this life and eternal bliss in the next. For this reason, it was imperative that Christians share with their fellow beings their knowledge of God's plan for salvation. Nothing was as immoral as to hold back knowledge of God from one's fellow man, thus condemning him or her to eternal damnation.

The primary moral element in mankind was conscience. Wayland built his philosophy on the prevalent faculty psychology. Humans had the faculty for perception, intellect, the passions, and conscience. Perception connected human beings to the outside world. Intellect allowed them to understand the laws of nature. The passions provided action with its motivating force, and conscience judged right from wrong action. Each of

these faculties had its role to play, but conscience kept them all in balance. The faculties were known through natural science. Conscience, or the moral sense, existed in all persons. Natural science or religion could not provide complete knowledge of the laws by which the moral life should be governed, however. This knowledge depended on directly revealed religion founded only in the Scriptures.

Natural religion was consistent with the Bible, but it was not complete. Nothing in nature told of God's saving action in Christ, or life after death, or the requirement to love one's neighbor as oneself. Humans knew God's law partially in nature but completely through the Bible. It was God's will that human beings lived in obedience to His will. Moral action depended upon the knowledge of God's law and the action of conscience to judge and direct specific behavior. True moral behavior depended on the voluntary action of the independent conscience of the individual person. A truly moral society could only arise when individual Christian converts voluntarily chose to follow the will of God. This moral vision is highly individualistic, but it assumes that the individual is in relationship with God. The single person is by no means an autonomous individual. Every moment of his or her life is lived in relationship with God.

Two types of relationships characterize human existence. There is the relationship which the person has with God and the one which he or she has with fellow humans. The proper relationship with God is one of obedience, piety, and devotion. God gives humanity life and the possibility for eternal happiness. He demands obedience to His will. He requires that mankind love and obey Him, and that they love their fellow man. The appropriate relationship among humans is one of reciprocity. All persons are created equal in value in the eyes of God. Each person has a right to his or her own self. Each

person must be free to exercise his or her own conscience. Each person must respect the equality of every other individual. A person may not be interfered with in the practice of his or her freedom, as long as he or she is not interfering with anyone else. The freedom of the individual may be limited by the group only to the extent that the individual has freely entered into a contract to relinquish a portion of his or her freedom. The law of reciprocity only permits the society to protect the freedom of the individual or to prohibit the individual from interfering with another's freedom. The primary relationship which humans have with God also directs the reciprocal relationship which humans have with one another. It is God's commandment to love one's neighbor. Obedience to the will of God requires love of neighbor.

During the 1830s, the liberal concept of self-interest as a proper motivating force became popular. Wayland found this concept to be abhorrent. He addressed this issue in a section of *The Elements of Moral Science*, entitled "Self-love."¹⁰ Wayland argued that for the purposes of morality the human faculties are arranged hierarchically. The appetites and passions are necessary for life and to provide a basis for happiness, but their pleasures are momentary. Self-love is, on the other hand, grounded in reason. The individual can assess possible actions and evaluate their potential for providing long-term and complex happiness. For these reasons, it is superior to the immediate satisfaction which is associated with gratification based in the passions alone. The highest faculty in the moral order is, however, conscience. When conscience is used to arbitrate among possible actions, right and wrong, guilt and innocence appear. Self-love only considers the happiness of the individual, but this is inadequate. Only if one considers the happiness

¹⁰ Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science*, 95ff.

of others can one experience the happiness of virtuous action, avoid the feelings of guilt, and act in accordance with the will of God. While it can be argued that one can act benevolently from self-interest, such action still lacks the happiness derived from true virtue which is disinterested and carried out in obedience to the will of God. Only true virtuous action is obedient to the guidance of conscience and free from guilt. In this instance, Wayland rejected the Lockean version of liberal America in favor of Christian America, although he acknowledged that Lockean America did occupy an intermediate position on the morality scale.

In spite of the popularity of Wayland's textbook on morality, it was controversial. The primary controversy which it provoked was over slavery. Based on the principle that each person is entitled to his or her own body and that one must have the freedom to follow his or her own conscience in obedience to the will of God, he asserted that domestic servitude, slavery, was opposed to Scripture.¹¹ He also argued that slavery was economically unsound, in violation of the law of reciprocity (what white man would agree to be a slave?), and likely to call out the worst behavior in both the master and the slave.

He went on to argue that the Bible did not instruct that slaves should be freed. He concluded that masters should follow their conscience and free their slaves. Slaves, on the other hand, should be obedient to their masters, only disobeying when it was a matter of conscience. Slaves should be prepared to suffer punishment for their disobedience passively. This resolution pleased no one. Southerners rejected the idea that slavery was inconsistent with the Bible, abolitionists were angered by the conclusion that the Bible

¹¹ Ibid., 181ff.

did not support the freeing of the slaves, and the slaves could not have been pleased to hear that they must bear their bondage passively and in a spirit of love and obedience. In the end, he reconciled with the abolitionists and supported the war against the South.

His second textbook, *Elements of Political Economy*, continued the debate between liberal America and Christian America.¹² Wayland drew on Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, and David Ricardo to develop his economic analysis. He recognized the importance of self-interest in driving economic activity, the right of individually held property, the sanctity of voluntary contracts, and a minimal role for government in economic affairs. He affirmed the beneficial role of competition, but insisted that competition must be curbed by moral rectitude. Liberal America could only work when it was regulated by Christian America. Liberal America, left to its own devices, created speculation, luxurious living, fraud, and a generational weakening in moral character. Christian America could tame the excesses of the market, harmonize the conflict among the classes, and ensure that the economy be established on a free yet honest and solid basis.

Wayland divided his topic into four elements: production, consumption, distribution, and exchange. Production involved the wedding of capital and labor. Each was absolutely necessary to produce the goods which human life demanded. Each depended on the other to be productive, and therefore should be partners, not adversaries, in the work place. The category of consumption required balance. There needed to be enough consumption to feed, clothe, and house humanity in a just way, but too much consumption depleted the capital resources and reduced the capacity to produce.

¹² Francis Wayland, *Elements of Political Economy* (New York and Chicago: Sheldon and Company, 1886).

Distribution was more problematic. Too many of the world's people were under fed, clothed, and housed. Too often, governments and economic elites controlled more than their fair share of the wealth of the world, leaving labor in poverty. Exchange dealt with money, banking, and credit. In these areas, fraud, speculation, and government mismanagement and malfeasance were constant threats to a healthy and just economic order. Each of the four elements of political economy were essential to a market economy, but in each area much could go wrong.

While Wayland's economic textbook broke little new ground, it did have one controversial point. He lived and worked in Providence, Rhode Island, one of the centers of the industrial revolution in America. The capitalists of the state were among the strongest advocates for a high tariff, but Wayland was very outspoken in favor of free trade. His friends and donors supported protectionist legislation, but they seemed not to punish him for his heretical position. His free trade position revealed much about his thought. Tariffs created two major problems. They artificially raised the prices on commodities for the majority of the citizens, and they corrupted the morals of the business elite by allowing them to get something for nothing. It was bad economics, but it was worse morality. Free trade required the efficient use of capital and labor. It discouraged waste and corruption, and it caused a premium to be placed on the development of skills and character, while promoting technical innovation. Protectionism promoted international conflict, which had the potential to lead to war, but free trade contributed to harmony among nations. It encouraged the economy of each nation to concentrate in those areas where it had natural advantages. In the case of free trade, liberal sentiments were consistent with Christian beliefs.

His economic textbook shows Wayland's ambivalence over the emerging American culture very clearly. Self-interest, the rights of property, innovation, and laissez-faire government policies are affirmed, but the invisible hand integrating the whole system is problematic for him. The liberal economic and cultural order too easily falls into chaos and corruption. Only a well-educated moral citizenry which has a strong Christian character can provide the discipline needed to provide order in the new culture. The qualities for the new society which were needed were hard work, discipline, skills, cooperation with others, benevolence, and obedience to God. Unchecked liberalism produced persons with opposite qualities. A liberal culture not regulated by a Christian faith promised only ill.

If Wayland feared a run-away liberal individualism, he also feared the fervor of a run-away Christian evangelicalism. He published in 1838 a small volume entitled *The Limitations of Human Responsibility*.¹³ Therein, he took up the question of how to limit the claims of morality to tyrannize over the lives of humanity. The strongest claims, he argued, are those which are grounded in high moral sentiment. Whether the behavior sought is patriotism in the time of war, or the termination of a social evil, such as the consumption of alcohol or the emancipation of the slaves, an unlimited moral claim destroys the soul liberty of the individual. Drawing on his Baptist heritage, Wayland asserted that true morality depended on the act of conscience of each independent individual. Neither the proclamations of strong moral leaders, nor the influence of public opinion, nor the resolutions of voluntary associations, nor the orthodoxy of ecclesiastical bodies could replace the individual moral actor. He feared men and women would

¹³ Francis Wayland, *Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1838).

relinquish their soul liberty to collective groups and opinions, and by so doing give up the Protestant and republican culture that he had praised so highly in his address, “On the Duties of an American Citizen.”¹⁴

Wayland looked for independence and objectivity in moral matters. He believed that both were in danger. He opposed the enthusiasm of the churches with their use of the anxious bench, the great benevolent empire with its voluntary associations directed toward national moral reform, and especially the abolitionists’ efforts to mandate the end of slavery through what he believed to be unconstitutional means. No matter how right the cause, no one nor no group had the right to impose its moral beliefs on another. Each person had to make his or her own moral judgments. In this way, both independence and objectivity could be guaranteed. The objectivity of moral judgments was maintained when the individual, in private communication with his or her own conscience, used the Bible to ascertain the law of God, and then acted in obedience to that law. It was this independent moral action that made a person fully human. To abdicate it to another person, or group, or church, was to sacrifice one’s very humanity.

At the heart of Wayland’s moral vision was the independent individual who attempted to discern the law of God from the natural order and from the Scriptures. Using his or her intelligence to understand the situation at hand, and his or her conscience to make judgments that were obedient to God’s law, the actor could be a moral person. Wayland feared that charismatic leaders, or tyrannical public opinion, or benevolent associations, or church bodies would interfere with the independence of the individual moral actor. He wrote his book to set forth the dangers to the moral life that were present

¹⁴ Ibid.

in evangelical Christian America. He wanted to place limits on the scope of human responsibility, because if the case could be made that large scale organizations were needed to efficiently bring about the Kingdom, individual moral action could be replaced by group action. He resisted the creation of a mass society. God, not man, was responsible for the coming of the millennium. Whether southern slave owners, or drunkards, or criminals were the objects of reform efforts, the moral truth had to be comprehended by the individual. One could present the truth, but each individual had to voluntarily incorporate it into his or her own life. Morality could not be mandated. One was not responsible for what he or she could not do. God, not man, had ultimate responsibility for the coming of the Kingdom. Truth could be offered, but not imposed, and an over-zealous pursuit of moral ends could destroy the basis for all moral action. A more humble, limited approach to moral betterment was, in fact, more likely to achieve the end of encouraging a virtuous society.

The last of Wayland's textbooks, *Elements of Intellectual Philosophy*, appeared in 1854.¹⁵ He set forth in this text his theory of knowing. It covered many of the topics that today's students are likely to find in a psychology textbook. The elements of an intellectual philosophy that he addressed were perception, consciousness, original suggestions, abstraction, reason, imagination, and esthetic taste. Two foundational concepts guided his treatment. In the first place, he asserted the Common Sense Philosophy position that certain fundamental concepts were self-evident, and second, he tied his elements of knowing to a faculty psychology. He drew heavily on Thomas Reid and Doogald Stewart for his discussion.

¹⁵ Francis Wayland, *Elements of Intellectual Philosophy* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1858).

While it is generally agreed that this book was the least successful of his textbooks, both from the perspective of its economic success and its quality of intellectual work, it nevertheless provides insight into his epistemological assumptions. The entire schema began with the belief that mankind was created by God with a particular set of faculties which, when used properly, could produce knowledge of the truth. God created both the material and the moral worlds with specific laws. It was the task of human beings to discover what those laws were and then to obey them. Each of the faculties played a role in building up knowledge. Troublesome philosophical questions such as causality were solved by pointing to their self-evident truth. It was self-evident that change in an object could not occur without a cause. After thinking about this phenomenon, all reasonable persons agreed that this truth was self-evident. Intuitions were helpfully granted to assist the human effort toward knowing. Higher functions, such as abstraction, reason, and imagination were additional faculties which completed the intellectual toolbox. Mental functions such as perception, abstraction, and reason were defined as capacities or things in themselves. They were the faculties with which humankind had been endowed by the Creator. If Humans reason, it is because God created them with the faculty for reason. Therefore, if they reason, they were carrying out God's plan.

Wayland's argument has a highly circular quality to it. Human knowledge developed from the use of the faculties which were the gift of God. They were as they were because that was the way God wanted them to be. Human knowledge represented the progressive discovery of God's laws. Both material laws, such as the law of gravity, and the moral law, such as the law of love for one's neighbor, were discoverable through

the demonstrations of reason. God made the universe and then gave humans the faculties necessary to know it. There was a harmony between the external world and the mind. Humans possessed a common sense that made it all self-evident. This system of thought proved very vulnerable to other explanations of the origin of human knowledge. Evolutionary theory replaced the fixed concepts of natural theology, and faculty psychology was replaced by a variety of models which included dynamic, organic, and functional starting points. Scientific and experimental definitions of method replaced the philosophical and Common Sense approaches of Wayland and the generations of scholars he represented. Wayland believed that persons of good character using the gifts of God could discern the truth of the material and moral order. They only needed to be left free to exercise their own individual endowments. Since his generation, humanity has become far less certain of the capacity of the human mind to possess “the truth,” or even if such truth exists.

Reform at Brown

From the time that he assumed the duties of president until he retired, Francis Wayland worked to reform Brown University. He had some success, but most of his reform proposals lacked the resources, were too vague, or met too much resistance to be fully implemented. Still, much of his vision for higher education was realized in later years. Among his most enduring ideas were the substitution of elective courses for the classical curriculum, the introduction of practical studies, and the elevation of entry requirements beyond what now would be considered the high school level. Some of his least successful proposals included his efforts to pay faculty with fees from students who chose their classes, the creation of financial incentives to students for outstanding

academic achievement, and vocational programs that offered partial degrees.¹⁶ This latter proposal has taken root in our contemporary vocational-technical schools and in many junior college programs. He sought to blend moral development with practical education. His vision was both benevolently authoritarian and democratic. He wanted a residential school where morality could be taught and behavior controlled and, at the same time, where practical popular education could be offered to classes of citizens who never before had been considered worthy of higher education. His reform vision was a combination of evangelical Christianity, classical economics, and American middle-class democracy.

Wayland considered proper discipline to be key to the moral development of Brown students. His first impulse was to move the campus out of Providence so that students could be separated from the temptations of the city. This proved to be impossible because the college lacked the resources to construct an entirely new facility, and the idea died in committee. He was determined to improve discipline, however, and enacted a new code for the college. Theodore R. Crane, the most thorough student of Wayland's presidency, writes:

Wayland's new regulations for student conduct had a stunning impact on an academic community used to the easygoing ways of Asa Messer. The Laws of 1827, which were the basis for the government of the University during the rest of his presidency, were much more elaborate than the previous code, enacted in 1823. Their significance is to be found less in their proscriptions and penalties, however, than in the host of new duties which they required.¹⁷

¹⁶ Wayland, *Thoughts on the Present Collegiate System in the United States* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1842); Wayland, *Report to the Corporation of Brown University on Changes in the system of Collegiate Education* (Providence: George H. Whitney, 1850).

¹⁷ Theodore Rawson Crane, *Francis Wayland and Brown University, 1796-1841: A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Harvard University in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Ph.D.* (March 1959), 376.

The new regulations were meant to be kind and just and restore paternal control to the campus. Faculty members were to reside on campus and visit the rooms of the students frequently. They had the right to enter a student's room, even if it was locked, and students could not hold meetings without approval of the agenda for the meeting. The strategy of the new regulations was to eliminate idle, unsupervised time. Harsh penalties were to be avoided by providing structured activities. Independent, student-led activities of both a formal and informal nature were to be discouraged.

Wayland forbade Brown students to attend the theater and the lecture of abolitionist Charles Sumner. He also discouraged church attendance in the community. He did not want the youthful students to mix with adults of all classes and backgrounds. Bible study classes and worship services were offered on campus. He even reprimanded his own son for attending the theater. He also discouraged Greek-letter fraternities, arguing that such organizations distracted students from the pursuit of more pious activities. His goal was to create an environment where disciplined study and the pious obedience to God's moral law could be carried out without competition or distraction from worldly secular diversions.

In his 1850 reform proposals, Wayland indicated he would favor eliminating the dormitories at Brown.¹⁸ By this time, he had concluded that the best moral training for youths could take place in private homes. He suggested that students live in the community with families of good moral character. However, this proposal was not acted upon. After two decades of attempting to govern youthful students, he determined that it

¹⁸ Wayland, *Report to the Corporation of Brown University on Changes in the System of Collegiate Education*.

was very difficult to control their lives when they lived in groups, separated from normal family life. The college could provide Bible study, chapel services, appropriate textbooks and classes, and faculty supervision, but these were not enough. The student needed parental figures in a normal setting, who could be kind, and at the same time be firm. Teaching morality was a constant thing.

Brown University, as other colleges, struggled to establish financial stability. It was common at the time for the president of a school to solicit funds from alumni and other constituencies of the institution. Wayland was always reluctant to follow this course. He believed that a college should be financed through competitive market mechanisms. He also thought that faculty members should be paid through similar devices. When he returned from his European visit in 1841, he attempted to move Brown toward a classical economic model of financing.¹⁹ During the 1840s, Brown fell into financial trouble and, in 1849, Wayland submitted his resignation. The board of directors refused to accept the resignation and he agreed to stay on, if his reforms were accepted.

Wayland stated his financial critique of higher education, when he wrote

It is manifest . . . that the movement of civilization is precisely in the line of the useful arts. . . . Our colleges are not filled because we do not furnish the education desired by the people. We have constructed them upon the idea that they are to be schools of preparation for the professions. Our customers, therefore, come from the smallest class of society; and the importance of the education which we furnish is not so universally acknowledged as formerly, even by this class. We have produced an article for which the demand is diminishing. We sell it at less than cost, and the deficiency is made up by charity. We give it away, and still the demand diminishes. Is it not time to inquire whether we cannot furnish an article for which the demand will be, at least, somewhat more remunerative?²⁰

¹⁹ Theodore Rawson Crane, *Francis Wayland: Political Economist as Educator* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1962).

²⁰ Wayland, *Report to the Corporation of Brown University on Changes in the System of Collegiate Education*.

In the five years after 1850, he strove to create a practical, democratic education that would meet the needs of workers and farmers. He wished to serve the middling classes from which he believed the Baptist evangelical people had always come.

In the 1840s, the Brown faculty and corporation encouraged Wayland to raise funds to endow professorships and to provide scholarships for the students, but he refused. He felt such funding would undercut the moral fiber of the institution. Education should be thought of as a commodity, and its consumers should be willing to pay for it, just as if it were a pair of shoes. It should not be the object of charity. If faculty and students were subsidized, they would be tempted to do less work and lose the drive to be useful. Instead of scholarships for the students, he set up a premium system. Awards were paid to students for outstanding achievements. Students could earn money by writing high-quality essays or by demonstrating other academic skills of superior accomplishment. While faculty members were provided with an initial salary, they were expected to round out their earnings with fees paid to them by students who took their courses.

In a letter dated September 7, 1848, three of Brown's most loyal faculty members, Alexis Caswell, George Ide Chase, and William Gammell, requested that the Corporation of Brown University provide funding for faculty salaries.²¹ They argued that higher education throughout America and the world depended on charitable giving and that Brown should do the same. The Board of Fellows voted to raise \$50,000 for this purpose,

²¹ Crane, *Francis Wayland: Political Economist as Educator*, 36.

but a year later Wayland reported that the fund drive had been a failure, and he submitted his resignation.

Not only Wayland's faculty rebelled against his policies. In 1846, the Baptist members of Brown University Corporation agitated for the use of funds to provide scholarships for students who were studying to enter the Baptist ministry. Wayland turned back this initiative, but it contributed to a growing split between him and the national Baptist leadership. Not until after his retirement did Brown offer scholarship assistance to its students.

The Brown Board of Fellows refused to accept Wayland's resignation and instead appointed a committee to be chaired by Wayland which was instructed to prepare a report addressing the reforms needed at Brown if the university was to be restored to health. On March, 28, 1850, Wayland presented his report. Crane summarizes the wide-ranging changes suggested in the report:

Brown University was now committed to drastic changes in its curriculum, degree requirements, and fiscal policies. The public was promised a more "useful" curriculum: specifically new courses in pedagogy, agriculture, chemistry applied to the arts, applied science, and law. Inauguration of the "new system" was made dependent on the success of an appeal for \$125,000, more than double the University's resources in 1850. Thus it was imperative for Francis Wayland to become a fund raiser, though this activity had always been distasteful to him. Now, however, he felt morally justified in assuming the role because his new curriculum would provide training Brown had never previously offered, and the additional students he hoped to attract, rather than being lured away from sister institutions, would be young men who would never have enrolled in a required liberal arts course at any college.²²

Wayland's report did not just seek to solve the financial crisis at Brown; its proposals sought to change the very nature of higher education. Finally. Brown University could serve the needs of the community. Persons who never before were

²² Ibid., 38.

thought to be consumers of a college education could come to Brown and receive training in practical subjects. Courses in applied science and agriculture could provide the new student with information that he could use in his vocation. It would be an education for the middling classes.

Wayland never more clearly stated his vision for a practical and democratic education than in his address at the fiftieth anniversary of the presidency of Eliphalet Nott of Union College. He said:

Did God manifest himself in the flesh, in the form of a carpenter's son, to create an intellectual aristocracy, and consign the remaining millions of our race to daily toil? . . . When our systems of education shall look with as kindly an eye on the mechanic as the lawyer, on the manufacturer and merchant as the minister; when every artizan, performing his process with a knowledge of the laws by which it is governed, shall be transformed from an unthinking laborer into a practical philosopher; and when the benign principles of Christianity shall imbue the whole mass of our people with the spirit of universal love, then, and not until then, shall we illustrate to the nations the blessings of Republican and Christian Institutions.²³

Wayland retired from Brown in 1855. Within two years, his reforms were reversed. Scholarships were once again offered to students and the non-degree programs were discontinued. He resigned from the corporation and broke off his relations with the university. All that remained of his post-1850 efforts was the \$125,000 endowment which provided financial stability for the university for some time into the future. His liberal Christian vision for education had proved impractical. Brown could not be both an intellectual center for professionally oriented students and a workers' college. It was neither the first nor the last time that the two cultures failed to find educational

²³ Francis Wayland, *The Education Demanded by the People of the United States: A Discourse Delivered at Schenectady, July 25, 1854, on the Occasion of the of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Presidency of Eliphalet Nott* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1855), 29.

compatibility. Industrial, corporate America would require educated managers and unskilled and semi-skilled operatives, and they would be alienated from one another.

Wayland's vision for an intellectual democracy was the victim of corporate America as much as it was of the classical curriculum.

CHAPTER IV
FRANCIS WAYLAND AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER SLAVERY

Francis Wayland did not choose slavery as an issue to which he would devote time and reputation, but he could not escape its persistent presence in his life and in the life of the nation. He tried to mediate the conflict within the Baptist Church and to repress its discussion among his students, but in spite of his efforts, as one of the nation's leading moralists, he could not escape the growing storm. For a Christian moralist and liberal democrat, the evil of the peculiar institution could not be escaped. He moved from reluctant opponent in the 1830s, to hopeful mediator in the 1840s, to outraged spokesman in the 1850s, and finally to willing supporter of the war in the 1860s. There is no other area of Wayland's thought and action that more completely combines his Christian faith and his liberal philosophy than his progress toward war and emancipation by the force of arms.

Bruce Laurie has tracked the progress of middling people in Massachusetts from antislavery moderates to Republican Party supporters.¹ These are the very people with whom Wayland was most allied. Laurie argued that the farmers, artisans, and small-town leaders who made up what he called "Yankeedom," along with African American civil rights activists and industrial labor, provided the political force that made Massachusetts

¹ Bruce Laurie, *Beyond Garrison: Antislavery and Social Reform*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the most liberal state in the Union before the Civil War. As did Wayland, they opposed Garrisonian radicalism for more moderate means and opposed the Fugitive Slave Act and the Kansas-Nebraska Law. However, while Massachusetts Yankees worked in the political arena, Wayland placed his efforts, especially in the 1840s, in the Baptist Church. Laurie analyzes the effect of temperance, the Know Nothing movement, African American civil rights agitation, the Mexican War, and the aggressive actions of the Southern slave power in the evolution of the citizens of the Bay State toward support for abolition. These are all important elements in the evolution of Wayland, who took the same evolutionary journey. However, Laurie left out one very important dimension of Wayland's development, and probably of many of the Massachusetts groups that he studied. That element is his evangelical faith. Laurie acknowledged that most of the Yankees he studied were Protestant evangelicals, but he failed to inquire concerning the meaning of their faith for their antislavery position. Certainly in Wayland's case, such a failure would neglect the most important aspect of his commitment to emancipation.

Wayland was a temperance advocate, but he did not support the Maine Law solution for controlling alcohol consumption. He was anti-Catholic, but he was not a nativist. He wanted to preserve the Union, but he was not a Cotton Whig or doughface. He was paternalistic in his attitude toward African Americans, never believing that they were equal in natural endowments to Europeans, although he did believe that they were equal in the rights that were given to all men by God. He opposed the Mexican War, the Fugitive Slave Act, and the Nebraska Bill (Kansas-Nebraska Act), and supported Lincoln. He sent his son to war, and he and his wife made bandages to send to the front. In all these issues and commitments he grounded his actions in his faith. He understood

his antislavery position to be drawn from Biblical teaching, and his action to be obedience to the word of God. His faith was neither a barrier to action nor a reason to forsake the problems of this world for other worldly peace; it was the driving force behind his evolution toward support for the war.

The 1830s

Francis Wayland thought slavery was a sin, but he feared the volatility of the issue. He thought it could destroy the order and unity in his university, his church, and the union. He therefore walked a narrow line. He stated his opposition to slavery while seeking grounds upon which southern slave owners could be held sinless. He trusted to voluntary action on the part of Southerners to, when possible, emancipate their slaves. Early in his career he supported colonization and segregated public facilities. He received criticism for this stance, but he stuck to it well into the 1840s.

Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, surveying Wayland's antislavery witness, wrote:

In his opposition to the new immediatism, Wayland also tangled with other abolitionists who, prior to formal organization of new antislavery chapters in Rhode Island, had attended a local meeting of the American Colonization Society. There Wayland disavowed any knowledge of the new abolitionism, arguing that he wished to focus solely on his support for "colonization principles."²

In 1835, he placed a gag order on the discussion of slavery at Brown. His conservative colleague, William Giles Goddard, the professor of belles lettres and rhetoric, assisted in the implementation of this restriction on free speech. Students were only allowed to speak

² Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, "Suffering with Slave Holders: The Limits of Francis Wayland's Antislavery Witness," in *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, eds. John McKivigan and Mitchell Snay (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 196-216.

publicly after they had submitted written copies of their proposed remarks. Goddard read these documents, censoring their content. A Brown student reported Wayland had stopped him in the middle of his remarks when he had made a reference to the oppressive nature of slavery.³ Such incidences conflict with the antislavery passage in Wayland's textbook on moral science, but they point to his efforts to find a solution to the slavery issue that would not break apart the institutions for which he felt a personal responsibility.

In the 1835 first edition of the textbook and then in the 1837 second edition in which he actually expanded the treatment, he stated his opposition to slavery and called it a sin.⁴ Slavery was in violation of scriptural principles. The Bible, far from approving slavery, instructed the believer to free himself from its sinful ways. He wrote:

The moral precepts of the Bible are diametrically opposed to slavery. They are. Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself, and all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them. The application of these precepts is universal. Our neighbor is everyone whom we may benefit. The obligation respects all things whatsoever. The precept, then, manifestly extends to men as men, or men in every condition; and if to all things whatsoever, certainly to a thing so important as the right to personal liberty.⁵

The Bible called for human reciprocity, a direct indication that slavery is sinful, but it also provides indirect instruction. The Gospel is to be taken to all men. The marriage relationship is to be honored, no one is to separate husbands and wives, and children and parents have mutual obligations that cannot be ignored. Slavery totally

³ Ibid., 197.

⁴ Francis Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science*, ed. Joseph L. Blau (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 188-198.

⁵ Ibid., 191.

disregards these family duties. Families can be broken apart at the will of the slave owner. Wayland argued that the antislavery principle set down in the Bible was rather indirect, perhaps because God recognized that slavery was imbedded in a societal evil which could best be corrected by the inculcation of the principles of reciprocity rather than by direct admonitions which would lead to violent reaction. In the interim, while society is catching up to the teachings of the Gospel, masters should prepare their slaves for liberty and protect them from exploitation from unscrupulous men who would prey on slaves who were prematurely emancipated. Slaves, on the other hand, should be obedient and loyal to their masters, disobeying only when an act of conscience is involved, and then bearing silently any punishment which falls upon them. If the slave owner holds the slave for the good of the slave, he or she is innocent of the sin of slavery.⁶

Wayland consistently refuted the Southern claim that the Bible approved of slavery. However, he also opposed the effort by Garrisonians who agitated for the immediate end of slavery. He wrote to Garrison in 1831, canceling his subscription to *The Liberator*.⁷ But his most direct challenge to the abolitionists came in his 1838 publication, *The Limitations of Human Responsibility*.⁸

He argued there that movements claimed moral superiority for their causes in order to give them credibility, but this moral claim all too often subverted true moral action. True moral action belonged to the self-determining individual, and voluntary

⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁷ G. Thomas Halbrooks, "Francis Wayland: Influential Mediator in the Baptist Controversy Over Slavery," *Baptist History and Heritage* 13 (1978): 23.

⁸ Francis Wayland, *Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1838).

movements had a tendency to overrun the conscience of the individual, replacing the thoughtful obedience of the individual to the laws of God with the social pressure to conform to the dogma of the association. He believed that this was the situation with the abolition movement. The compelling moral cause of antislavery had led to actions that had closed off debate and worsened the conditions of the enslaved. He wrote:

The very attempt to multiply votes, on this question, cannot but beget in the minds of the South, the suspicion that we intend to interfere in this very manner: that is, in a manner at variance with our constitutional obligations. The least suspicion of this nature, must, from the necessity of the case, render all our argument useless, and make our very appeal to men's understandings and consciences, a positive annoyance. And in so far as I have been able to discover, such has been the effect of the system of affiliated abolition societies. They have already become the tools of third rate politicians. They have raised a violent agitation without presenting any definite means of constitutionally accomplishing their object. In the mean time, as combination on the one side, always produces combinations on the other, they have embittered the feelings of the South. They have, for the present, at least, rendered any open and calm discussion of this subject in the slave-holding States utterly impossible. They have riveted, indefinitely the bonds of the slave, in those very States in which they were, a few years since, falling off; and, every where throughout the South, they have rendered the servitude of the enslaved vastly more rigorous than it ever was before. While, therefore, I would speak with respect of the motives of those of my fellow citizens who are enlisted in abolition societies, (the political intermeddlers both small and great, always excepted), I must come to the conclusion that their efforts must be unwisely directed, or else they would have led to a more salutary result.⁹

Wayland offended both Southern advocates of slavery and Northern abolitionists.

Southerners responded first. Stephen Taylor of Union College in Richmond wrote a book in 1836 reviewing *The Elements of Moral Science* and offering a positive argument for slavery which he drew from his reading of the Bible.¹⁰ Jasper Adams of Charleston,

⁹ Ibid., 183-184.

¹⁰ Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science*, xlvii.

South Carolina, published an alternative textbook for the South which affirmed slavery.¹¹ The danger of the Wayland textbook was it challenged the Southern claim that scripture affirmed slavery. Southern religiosity was at the heart of the defense of the institution and Wayland denied the claim was justified.

Northerners were no less offended. Writing in his *Memoirs*, his sons apologized for his position taken in *The Limitations of Human Responsibility*.¹² In their otherwise worshipful account, they argue that in an attempt to keep open communications with Southern slave holders, he went too far and failed to challenge them enough. They believed that he corrected that error in the years ahead and by 1861 had proven himself to be an authentic voice of morality on this issue. Guy Thomas Halbrooks wrote in the Baptist publication, *Foundations*:

Some of the abolitionists assailed it as being "inaccurate in statement, sophistical and deceptive in reasoning," and as being widely circulated and adopted as a textbook by slaveholders in the South. Although this was an exaggerated statement, it was obvious that *The Limitations of Human Responsibility* more favorably impressed Southerners than abolitionists.¹³

In a letter to his father, Wayland reported that his little book had been received well among reasonable people, but that ultras had "assailed him in public on a number of occasions."¹⁴

Throughout the 1830s, Baptists in England agitated to end slavery in the

¹¹ Ibid., xlvii.

¹² Francis Wayland, Jr., and Heman Lincoln. *Wayland, A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1867), 2:390.

¹³ Halbrooks, "Francis Wayland: Influential Mediator in the Baptist Controversy Over Slavery," 26.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26.

British Empire. They also encouraged their American Baptist brethren to take up the cause. In 1834, the American Baptists responded with resolutions and a letter which asked their English counterparts to stop agitating and to understand why they could not follow their lead. Guy Thomas Halbrooks believes the letter was written by Wayland.¹⁵ It argued that slavery was a matter of state jurisdiction, and therefore nothing could be done at the national level, that at least one state had begun efforts to emancipate its slave population, that in some states slaves could not be emancipated, and that the aggressive pursuit of emancipation would destroy the Baptist unity needed to carry out its evangelical mission at home and abroad. A year later, the English Baptists sent Francis Cox and James Hoby to America to engage the Americans again on the slavery issue. They met with Wayland, and he persuaded them to not create a public furor over the slavery controversy. They met privately with Baptists leaders from both the North and the South to present their position. After these meetings, English pressure ceased.¹⁶ In 1840 and 1841, Wayland toured England. At least some of his hosts remembered his anti-abolition positions taken in *The Limits of Human Responsibility* and in his interactions with them in the past decade. He was not invited to preach in their churches.¹⁷

While Wayland tried to calm the turmoil over slavery and at the same time call it a sin and contrary to Biblical teaching, he intervened on behalf of two African American

¹⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁷ Wayland, Jr., and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2:12-14.

sailors from Rhode Island who were in danger of execution in Mobile, Alabama.¹⁸ His friend, Basil Manly, was president of the University of Alabama. Wayland wrote to him, asking that he try to prevent the execution of the sailors who were charged with trying to help slaves to escape. The cook of the ship had already been hanged. It appears that the two men were spared; whether or not Manly played a role is not determined. As did the middling people in Massachusetts, Wayland hated the injustice which African Americans were forced to endure. He was willing to do what he could to prevent it, but he could not accept the full equality of his fellow Black brethren. He had paternal sympathy for their plight but did not believe they could live in harmony on equal terms with white Americans. The abolition of slavery was not as pressing an issue to him as was the issue of converting a sinful humanity to the rule of Christ.

The 1840s

During the 1840s, Francis Wayland became a power in the Baptist Church, based to some degree on his attempt to mediate between Northern and Southern forces. He failed to keep the church together, but he was successful in rewriting the constitution for the church in the North. He continued to oppose slavery but not to condemn the slave holder. However, the Mexican War pushed him into the Free Soil Party, and by the end of the decade, he spoke out against the Fugitive Slave Act. Southern Baptists still had more trust in him than in any other Northern leader, and he maintained his personal friendships with several Southern Baptists ministers. The three elements of the decade that influenced his thought on slavery were his book on domestic slavery written with

¹⁸ Van Broekhoven, "Suffering with Slave Holders: The Limits of Francis Wayland's Antislavery Witness," 206.

Rev. Richard Fuller, the division in the Baptist Church, and the Mexican War.¹⁹ The decade was marked by a developing mistrust on Wayland's part of the desire of Southerners to end slavery. By the end of the decade, he began to see the conflict in terms of the aims of the South to limit the liberty of white Northerners. The conflict was no longer just about the enslavement of African Americans. It had a personal meaning for white persons, as well. This argument would become fully articulated in the following decade, especially in his speech on the Nebraska Bill.²⁰

In 1844, the Baptist denomination met in its triennial meeting in Philadelphia. Many addresses were given which had a distinctly abolitionist tone. After the meeting ended, the largest of the Baptist publications, *The Christian Reflector*,²¹ asked Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, South Carolina, to respond to the charge that slavery was in all circumstances a sin and a moral evil. Fuller did respond and, in his letter to the paper, he objected to the argument which Wayland had made on the subject in *The Elements of Moral Science*. Therein Wayland had argued that slavery was a sin, according to the Bible, but that masters had not been instructed to emancipate their slaves. Fuller characterized Wayland's explanation for this contradiction to be expediency on the part of Christ and his disciples. Fuller ridiculed this characterization. He also attacked the extremism of the abolitionists, pointed to the disaster that disunion and civil war would

¹⁹ Francis Wayland, and Richard Fuller, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution in Correspondences between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, R. I.* (Boston and New York: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, and Lewis Colby, 1845).

²⁰ Francis Wayland, *On the Moral and Religious Aspects of the Nebraska Bill: A Speech at Providence, Rhode Island, March 7, 1854* (Rochester: W. N. Sage, 1854).

²¹ *Christian Reflector* (1840-1848). A publication of the Baptist Denomination.

bring on the nation, and argued that the Bible, indeed, did affirm the right of Christians to hold slaves. Fuller asserted that not slavery but cruelty was the crime, and that he, as well as many Christian slave holders, deplored the abuse of slaves. He placed his faith in conservative religion to tame the zealotry of the North, to promote a true understanding of Southern morality, and to prevent the break up of the Baptist Church and the nation.

Wayland responded to Fuller's letter in eight letters of his own. Since Fuller had singled out Wayland's argument in *The Moral Science*, his responses were made as the author of *The Moral Science*. Two factors were dominant in Wayland's responses to Fuller. First, he stayed to his position that the Bible branded slavery a sin and, second, he remained solicitous of the good will and brotherhood of Fuller.

Wayland began his responses with a slap at the over-zealous behavior of the abolitionists. However, he argued, as bad as the abolitionists were, their overbearing statements did not justify Southern reaction. The South at the time of the founding of the new nation had seemed to be on the threshold of voluntarily abolishing slavery, but in recent years they had hardened their position. It was no longer possible to even discuss the issue in the South. Free speech had been destroyed and men who once admitted that slavery was an evil had either been silenced or were now aggressively defending the institution.

Fuller argued that slavery meant only that one person had the right to demand work from another without a contract or the other's consent, but Wayland answered that this definition implied the right to enforce the relationship and to commit all the atrocities connected with Southern slavery. He argued that all persons had been given by God the intellectual and moral faculties and each person had the right to develop those faculties.

This right had been recognized in the Declaration of Independence. Neither skin color, nor the texture of one's hair, nor any other physical characteristic could compromise that fundamental right. The African was no less a human and no less eligible for the guarantees of God and the Declaration of Independence than Fuller's own wife and children. They were all equally endowed with the right to freely develop their intellectual and moral faculties, even if those endowments were not equal. Wayland spoke both as a Christian and as an American. Christian America and liberal America were one in his rejection of Fuller's claims.

Wayland went on to argue that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament supported modern slavery. To the extent that Israel was given the right to hold its neighbors in slavery, this was a special dispensation given specifically to them and not generalized to all persons and nations. If it was a general right, then why did not Africans have the right to hold white Southerners in bondage or white Northerners have the right to enslave white Southerners? He acknowledged that the New Testament did not prohibit slavery, but he believed that the principles set forth in its pages made it very clear that slavery was a moral evil. These principles applied universally to humankind. They called for universal brotherhood, and grounded it in the relationship between God and mankind. God had chosen to make His will known through principles rather than precepts so that a permanent rule could be established which would not be challenged in every situation that might occur.

In spite of his strong position against slavery, Wayland asserted that he wished to remain in Christian communion with Fuller and all other Southern Christians. He concluded his eighth and last letter by writing:

If a word that I have uttered has been designed to give the slightest pain to a Christian brother, you will believe me when I say it is not merely unintentional, but directly in opposition to my most thoughtful and vigilant intention. I have desired to address the understanding and conscience of my brethren, and to avoid every allusion that would even remotely tend to deter them from examining this subject in the light of what seems to me to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.²²

As unrealistic as it might seem, he thought (perhaps hoped) that it might be possible to settle the question of slavery with an agreement that the Bible taught that it was wrong. He believed that his interpretation was correct and that anyone who allowed their intellect and conscience to freely operate would come to the same conclusion. He sought to present his arguments in such a way as to prevent Fuller and the other Southern Christians from becoming defensive and closing down their intellects and consciences. Unfortunately for him and for the nation, the exchange only gave each man a forum for stating his position and little reflection resulted.

The exchange of letters with Richard Fuller was a part of a larger conflict going on within the Baptist denomination. The Baptists had almost separated in 1841, but a compromise engineered by Wayland postponed the break-up for another four years.²³ In 1841, abolitionists among the denomination were purged from leadership and a group made up of Southern slave holders and Northerners who supported institutional neutrality, including Wayland, were elected. Both Fuller and Wayland were selected to serve as vice presidents of the Baptist board. At the next triennial convention in 1844, Wayland was elected president. Fuller continued to serve as a vice president.

²² Wayland, and Fuller, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution*, 124.

²³ Halbrooks, "Francis Wayland: Influential Mediator in the Baptist Controversy Over Slavery," 27.

In the intervening years between the 1841 and 1844 conventions, Northern abolitionist Baptists issued a statement calling for Southern Baptists to free their slaves and agitate for emancipation.²⁴ If it were not possible for them to safely oppose slavery in the South, they should move to the North. The statement threatened that if Southerners did not denounce slavery, they would be denied the hand of Christian fellowship. Southerners, on the other hand, pressed to be allowed to take their slaves with them to mission assignments. Wayland's friend, Basil Manly, brought the conflict to a crisis when he presented a set of resolutions to the Alabama Baptist Convention in 1845.²⁵ The resolutions called for full equality for slave holders in all boards and commissions of the Baptist Church, recognition of the right of slave holders to take their slaves with them to the mission fields, and a return of all Southern financial contributions, until their rights were granted. Wayland wrote in his exchange with Fuller:

It may here be proper for me, specially in connection with the office to which I was unwillingly chosen at the late Triennial Convention, to state my own views on this subject. I do it without unkindness and without reserve. I am perfectly willing to have it understood, that whatever may be my view as expressed in my third letter of the connection between the holding of slaves, and profession of religion, in a state of society where the institution has become long established, I never could, with-out doing violence to my conscience, do any thing towards the establishment in a heathen land of a church into which slavery could by any means find admittance.²⁶

While some Southern leaders, notably Jeremiah B. Jeter and Richard Johnson, criticized Manly for his resolutions, Wayland offended him. While he disagreed with the thrust of Manly's position, he affirmed his right to clarify the issue. Wayland recognized

²⁴ Ibid., 27.

²⁵ Ibid., 31.

²⁶ Wayland, and Fuller, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution*, 122-123.

that reconciliation was impossible and supported the separation of the Southern churches. He had paid a price for his decade-long attempt to mediate the conflict between the northern Baptists and Southerners, but as hard as he had tried, the issue was too enormous for him to manage.

At the same time that Wayland was attempting to mediate the slavery issue within the Baptist denomination, the nation was embarking on its venture into Mexico. Wayland supported the candidacy of Henry Clay in 1844 in hopes of avoiding the annexation of Texas,²⁷ and in 1848 he voted with the Free Soil Party.²⁸ He stated his feelings toward the war in a letter to a New York editor:

I read your article on the war, in the main, with pleasure; but I thought that it did not take high ground enough. The whole war is so bad, that arguing on the conduct of it is a compliment, take what view you please. It is, aborigine, wicked, infamous, unconstitutional in design, and stupid and shockingly depraved in its management. Were I you, I would have a few short articles, setting forth, first, the causes in their naked deformity; second, the cost of the war in blood and money; third, the guilt of it as resting on the nation.²⁹

He thought the purposes of the war to be the pursuit of unneeded territory, greed on the part of war profiteers, and the extension of slavery.³⁰ For these purposes, the nation was causing both Mexican and American citizens to die. The integrity of the nation was being sacrificed, and the dream of a Christian and liberal society based on

²⁷ Wayland, Jr., and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2:55.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:58.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:55.

³⁰ Francis Wayland, *Obedience to the Civil Magistrate: Three Sermons preached in the Chapel of Brown University* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1847), 34-35.

love for God and man was passing into less-attractive dreams of slavery and empire. The preparation of a moderate for war was underway.

The 1850s

The 1850s were for Francis Wayland, as for all Americans, a tumultuous decade. It began with the Compromise of 1850, which included the Fugitive Slave Act and then went on to see the collapse of the second-party system, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the caning of Charles Sumner, the battle over the Kansas constitution, the Dred Scott case, and John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Wayland engaged all of these issues and some of them publicly and prominently. He took an active role in the 1856 election on behalf of the emerging Republican Party, his addresses on the Nebraska Bill and the caning of Sumner were widely circulated, and his opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act was well known.³¹ During these years, he entered into the most vigorous reform period of his entire presidency at Brown University, worked on prison reform, published three major books, retired from Brown and took up the pastorate at First Baptist Church of Providence, and experienced the illness that marked the end of the active portion of his life. His antislavery witness must be placed in the context of all the other demands that were pulling at his attention and time. That he engaged it in such a lively way testifies to the depth of his feeling on the issue. He was outraged by Southern slave power and fearful for his country, but a growing acceptance of the inevitability of disunion and probably war crept into his thought about the impending crisis.

³¹ Wayland, *On the Moral and Religious Aspects of the Nebraska Bill*; Wayland, Jr., and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2:154.

Wayland and his wife kept a fugitive in their home, clothed him, and gave him money, but he did not take an active and public position in opposition to slavery until 1854. On March 7, 1854, he addressed a large gathering at Beneficent Congregational Church in Providence. The meeting's purpose was to protest the introduction of the Nebraska Bill, and for the first time, Wayland clearly stated his opposition to Southern slave power.³² He protested as a human being, as a citizen of a free state, as a citizen of the United States, and as a Christian. Some of his positions had been stated before. Each person is entitled to control over his or her own body. Slavery was a state issue, according to the U.S. Constitution, but the Nebraska Bill made slavery a national institution. The Declaration of Independence and the Bible spoke against human bondage, but new ideas also appeared. The Nebraska Bill would destroy the reputation of America as a model of liberty for all the world, it would degrade the value of the union, and it would justify the request of God's intervention on the side of the North.

Of the first of these new positions Wayland exclaimed, "The question ceases to be whether black men are forever to be slaves, but whether the sons of the Puritans are to become slaves themselves."³³ White free labor would be devalued and the right to free speech, to choose whether or not to have slavery in a Northern state or territory, and the right to majority rule would be destroyed. The issue would be the civil rights of all Americans.

Wayland had argued for many years that the Union was near sacred, but in his protest he moved away from this position:

³² Wayland, *On the Moral and Religious Aspects of the Nebraska Bill*.

³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

I value the Union as much as any man. I would cheerfully sacrifice to it every thing but truth and justice and liberty. When I must surrender these as the price of the Union, the Union becomes at once a thing which I abhor. To form a union for the sake of perpetuating oppression, is to make myself an oppressor. This I cannot be, for I love liberty as much for my neighbor as for myself. To sacrifice my liberty for the sake of union is impossible. God made me free, and I cannot be in bondage to any man. These I believe to be the sentiments of the free States, and therefore it is, as a friend of the Union, that I protest against this bill.³⁴

Freedom and liberty emerged as higher values than union.

If Wayland protested the Nebraska Bill on behalf of liberal America, he all the more objected on behalf of Christian America. African Americans and Native Americans who were Christians and sat at the communion table with their white fellow communicants would be destroyed by the legislation. He believed that there were still white Christians in the South who would celebrate the defeat of the bill, but in any case, a Christian could not support it. He concluded his address with a call for God's assistance: "Let us cease not to beseech the God of our fathers to defeat the counsels of misguided men, and if the worst shall come, that he will grant to the free States the wisdom, temper, patriotism, and union which may be needed in this grave emergency."³⁵ Now Wayland was acknowledging that the worst might come, and if it did, he beseeched God to assist the free states to meet the emergency with wisdom, temper, patriotism, and union.

Wayland, as did many of his evangelical brethren, moved a long way toward the acceptance of regional action, disunion, and war, as they responded to the proposed Kansas-Nebraska Act.

³⁴ Ibid., 5.

³⁵ Ibid., 8.

His address, according to his sons, was published in almost all the secular and religious press across the northern states. He did not speak publicly again in 1854. William Lloyd Garrison criticized him for failing to follow through on his initial proclamation, but he was finishing his book on intellectual philosophy and preparing to retire.³⁶ The year was a turning point for him, however. Schools in the South stopped using his textbook on moral science and he gave up on the idea that the South might take the lead in the emancipation of the slaves.

During the summer, he was aroused by the case of the fugitive, Anthony Burns.³⁷ Burns had lived and worked in Boston before being captured and returned to his master in Richmond. The Burns case became a notorious example of the government's willingness to use massive force to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act and collaborate with the slave power. Wayland wrote to his son and to a former student who had become a lawyer. To his student he wrote:

From all I can learn of the whole country, the feeling is such as I never knew before. What we want is, to deepen it, place it on fixed principles, extend it, and give unity to it. If this is done at the north, we shall see some change. The southern men are doing all we could desire in ripening this state of public opinion. May God prosper the cause of justice and humanity.³⁸

Yet for all his outrage over the slavery question, he still remained convinced that the true mission of the minister was to preach the Gospel. In a letter to another minister, he opined that if slavery was profitable, Northerners would have slaves. He wrote:

³⁶ Van Broekhoven, "Suffering with Slave Holders: The Limits of Francis Wayland's Antislavery Witness," 211.

³⁷ Wayland, Jr., and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2:134.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:135.

What you say of free institutions is true and important; but then I am opposed to uniting this, or anything else, with the preaching of the gospel. These other and more externally impressive ideas undermine and subvert the preacher as such. The Christian view is to look up to God, and to arouse the Christian feeling in men. To abolish slavery is a good thing, but it is not religion. Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. Read the corresponding passages, and you observe that Christ places preaching the gospel above every other thing.³⁹

He believed that only a religious revival among the people could save the nation.

At this time, summer 1854, Wayland was near a physical breakdown. He still had his important address to give at Union College, "On the Education Demanded by the American People," his book, *Elements of Intellectual Philosophy*, was due at the printer, and he was still struggling to make Brown a model educational facility. His son was ill and he was nearing 60 years of age, so he may have been overly pessimistic. It is more likely, however, that this is a truly revealing point in the life and character of the man. He could not give himself to any enthusiasm, even if he believed in its correctness. This comes through very clearly in a letter to a student. He writes:

The times look grave. I hope that .the spirit of the north is at last aroused. It seems to me that the thing to be done is not to be committed to any rash or sudden measure, but to deepen, extend, and unite the anti-slavery feeling. I never before have been deeply moved by any political question. May God direct it all to the advancement of truth and righteousness. Do not be anxious to take extreme, but rather solid ground, and thus carry all sober men with you.⁴⁰

He remained enough of a Calvinist to believe that no side could be fully righteous. One should not take extreme positions, but rather be clear headed and carry sober men with one. Even when most affected by an issue, and even when he had argued that it was condemned by the Bible, he held back. Religion transcended politics. He would not

³⁹ Ibid., 2:136.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2:134-135.

sanctify the North. Perhaps this was his Baptist individualism at work; perhaps it was his chronic depression breaking through; or perhaps it was a profound religious insight. He was not naive about the likelihood of the creation of a liberal Christian democracy, but he was aware of the danger of a morally self-righteous Northern empire, and he feared it. When he considered the alternatives, he chose to make the conversion of sinners his first priority. It was a defining moment for Wayland and for the nation.

On June 2, 1856, he again addressed the citizens of Providence on the occasion of an outrage.⁴¹ This time, it was the caning of Charles Sumner. Using a distinction that he had made thirty years before, he compared a government of force with one of law. Sumner's caning represented the decline into a tyranny of force.⁴² Such was the principle of government affirmed by the Southern slave power. He went on during the summer and fall to support and write to his friends on behalf of the candidacy of John C. Fremont. When Fremont lost, he was not discouraged. A win, he thought, would have brought the Republican Party to power prematurely. Now it could build and mature and be ready at the next election to take control of the government. The important thing was that there was a party of the North that could unite the antislavery forces. Only one more layer of states was needed to win the next election. When the election of Lincoln came, Wayland was ill, perhaps as the result of a stroke, but he was ready for change.

⁴¹ Ibid., 2:154-155.

⁴² Francis Wayland, "Duties of an American Citizen," in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833).

The 1860s

Francis Wayland believed the war was just and necessary, but terrible.⁴³ He believed slavery was evil but not the only evil in the world. His second son joined an army regiment as its chaplain. He and his wife prepared bandages, and he gave funds to help the war effort. Wayland gave to the relief effort for the Union supporters in East Tennessee and the project in Beaufort, South Carolina, aimed at creating a community of freed slaves. He marched with soldiers who were embarking for the battlefields and prayed for those in danger. He was ill and impoverished by retirement, illness, and the slow sales of his books, but he did what he could to support the war. Yet he maintained a critical edge. It is this affirming yet critical stance that is most characteristic of Wayland's position on war, slavery, and reconstruction in the years after 1860.

Wayland had mixed feelings concerning the extent of the sin of slavery. He thought it was evil, but not the only evil in America, even within himself. Yet it did have its own unique horror for this evangelical believer. He stated some of his ambivalence in a letter to his sister:

Slavery is a very wicked thing; but I know not that it is any worse than idolatry, and shutting God out of his own universe. I do not feel guilty on account of slavery, but I do on account of my forgetfulness of God, and disobedience. He has made use of the slavery question to bring about his judgments. He will chastise and humble us; and then he will pour out his wrath upon those who, in addition to sins in common with us, must answer for the sin of slavery, and for laying it at the door of the Holy One.⁴⁴

⁴³ Wayland, Jr., and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2: Chapters XI and XIV. These chapters document Wayland's engagement with the Civil War.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:267.

The war was punishing the entire nation, but the South would receive a special punishment for attributing slavery to God. One hears in these words the debate which he carried on with Richard Fuller. Fuller argued that the Bible sanctioned slavery. Wayland feared God. He thought He was just, and he could not help but believe that attributing the evil of slavery to God would bring down a terrible wrath upon the religious Southerner. Still, the Northerner was not innocent either. This is not Lincoln, saying that God has His own ways, and both North and South bear the guilt of slavery and the war, but it is closer than most other Northerners could get.⁴⁵

He was horrified by the slaughter of the war. Victories seemed little cause for celebration because they meant the death of enemies whom he did not hate. He feared that soldiers and even chaplains would allow the horrors of war to drive out the love of God from their hearts and replace it with the love of the army and the nation. He spoke with two former slaves who told him that they had prayed to God for deliverance when their children had been taken from them.⁴⁶ He believed that God listened with special care to the oppressed and that their prayers were receiving an answer in the war. He believed that the war was eradicating special evils from the American nation that could, after it was over, clear the way for the fulfillment of the promise of liberal Christian America. On April 18, 1865, three days after the death of Lincoln, Wayland wrote to his son:

The event is overwhelming. The crime is atrocious beyond expression. It seems as if God has given over the south and their friends to work all iniquity

⁴⁵ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 366.

⁴⁶ Wayland, Jr., and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University*, 2:269.

with greediness, and to make themselves an insufferable abhorrence to the civilized world. The moral sense of mankind rises against them. They stand without a defense to meet the condemnation of humanity.

But I never felt more sure that God has taken all this work into his own hands. He has left the rebels to work out the wickedness of the human heart, intensified by the practice of slavery. And he will glorify himself out of this overwhelming disaster. The mind of this whole people, even of the thoughtless and irreligious, has been brought to acknowledge God, and to believe that he has done it. They have never before wept or prayed so much or so earnestly.

Is not God thus preparing us for a universal revival of his work? He has swept over the whole land in a few hours, so that all men had but one thought. Now, why should not his Holy Spirit, as a rushing mighty wind, visit the soil thus prepared for his influences? How would God be glorified, and all heaven rejoice? Cease not to pray for this. Urge others to pray for it.

". . . Let us lay aside all malice and all revenge, and let us firmly do justice to the high as well as the low. Let the moral principle of this people, be strengthened. God has made us the leading nation in the world. Let us act as it becomes us. Let our example lead other nations in the way of peace and holiness.⁴⁷

Less than six months after the war ended, he was dead. He did not live to see Reconstruction or the rise of corporate America. He recommended that the freed men be taught that work and education yielded positive consequences. The only empowerment for former slaves would be self-dependence. The freed men must be taught to teach others. He had no insight into the long road ahead for civil rights in America or for equal educational and economic opportunity. Rather, his hopes and dreams and prayers lay in the belief that God had acted in history, through the war, to give America another chance to be an example of peace and freedom for the whole world. The people should put away malice and reconnect with the simpler vision of a liberal and Christian America. Unfortunately for America, the dreams of Lincoln and Wayland died with them.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2:274.

CHAPTER V FRANCIS WAYLAND AND HIS BAPTIST CONNECTION

When Francis Wayland Sr. and Sarah Moore Wayland landed in New York City in 1793, the Baptist denomination was a small group of worshipers scattered along the eastern seaboard. When their son, Francis Wayland Jr., died in 1865, the Baptists, along with the Methodists, dominated American Church membership.¹ Francis Wayland played a large role in shaping Baptist thought and practice in the 40 years before his death. Many modern critics believe that his influence was harmful to the Church, but few doubt its reality.² Three concepts stand out in his thought and work within his Baptist connection. Wayland focused his moral and religious teaching on the obedience of each individual to the law of God. He believed that the most important priority for the Church was foreign missions, and he viewed the task of the ministry to be that of the salvation of souls.

His Christian piety, moralism, and individualism blended with his liberalism to create a vision of America that caused him great disappointment, but he died in hope. He hoped the Baptist Church and the nation could remain a simply organized society, where individual moral decisions could determine the actions of the order. He believed that progress could only occur as individuals made personal moral decisions, and he believed

¹ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 164-165.

² Norman H. Maring, "The Individualism of Francis Wayland," in *Baptist Concepts of the Church*, ed. Winthrop S. Hudson (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1959), 156ff.

that those moral decisions depended on the conversion of humanity to Christianity. He set these principles against what he believed to be the growing American evils of material greed, slavery, a desire for war and empire, and a rapidly growing population of unconverted Catholic-American voters. Wayland went to his death fighting the emerging corporate America and hoping and praying that it would be wiped from the nation by the awful suffering of the Civil War. His work with the Baptist Church gives us the opportunity to study his strategy for creating a Christian and liberal America against longer and longer odds and with more and more unpopular methods.

Wayland grew up in the Baptist Church. After a successful career in the leather trade, his father left the family business to become a Baptist minister. He became the pastor at First Baptist Church of Boston in 1821 and for the next 37 years worked exclusively in Baptist institutions—first at the Boston Church, then from 1827 to 1855 as the president of Brown University, and then after his retirement as the pastor at First Baptist Church of Providence, 1857–1858. His first wife, Lucy Lane Lincoln Wayland was the younger sister of Heman Lincoln, a prominent Baptist layman from Boston. In 1844, Wayland was chosen to preside over the national Baptist Triennial Convention. He was a leader in Baptist missionary activities, educational endeavors, and administrative matters. In the last decade of his life, he published two books, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of the Baptist Church* and *Letters to the Ministry*, that addressed important issues in the denomination.³ He was an advocate for local congregational autonomy, a mediator in the controversy over slavery, and an outspoken voice for an apostolic

³ Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of the Baptist Church* (New York: Sheldon and Blakeman and Company, 1857); Wayland, *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1863).

ministry. Although Wayland had a long and diverse career, undoubtedly his longest and deepest commitment was to his Baptist connection.

Baptist Organization

The Baptists grew out of the dissent of the English Civil War. Along with the Congregationalists, they believed that the congregation was the proper governing body for the church; but to this expression of independence they added the concept of adult, or believer's, baptism. The church was the gathered believers, and they, meeting face to face, alone could speak for the body of Christ. They opposed the baptism of children. In their view it represented the making of the church into a society, rendering it no longer the body of Christ, but instead, an impure association, little different from a civil government. The Baptists believed that these simple principles were drawn directly from the New Testament. Attempts to veer from them were considered to be Romanism. Francis Wayland held to this narrow view of proper church organization and advocated it through a long and influential career within the denomination.

The Baptist Church in America was a part of what Mark A. Noll called the "Evangelical surge." In 1790, there were 858 Baptist churches in the new nation; by 1860 the number had increased 14.2 times to 12,150.⁴ Its growth was second only to the Methodist denomination. As Wayland recognized, they were a middling people, made up of farmers, artisans, small town semi-professionals, and small business operators. They were republican, democratic, individualistic, moralistic, and evangelistic. They feared God and trusted that they had been saved. They believed that they were right in their faith, that they were the true disciples of Christ, and that the Bible justified them. They

⁴ Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 166.

did not compromise well; nor did they form general bodies to provide governing authority for the denomination. They often separated over doctrine. They were difficult to govern. Yet they held together, perhaps because their beliefs were compatible with the democratic culture of which they were a part in the decades before the Civil War.

Wayland was among their most influential spokespersons. Guy Thomas Halbrooks, the leading scholar of Wayland's contributions to Baptist Church concepts, writes:

Francis Wayland actively participated in Baptist affairs from the beginning of his first pastorate in 1821 until his death in 1865. He became nationally famous in 1824 as a result of his sermon, *The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise*. Consequently, he made his influence felt in the national Baptist body, the Triennial Convention. He played a major part in reorienting the Convention in 1826 and was almost personally responsible for its reorganization in 1845. Moreover, because of his important position among Baptists, his numerous writings were influential throughout the denomination.⁵

Wayland was both an involved leader and an intellectual force within the denomination. Its rapid growth challenged all involved to provide a competent ministry, support its missionary outreach, and mediate among its regional diversity. While slavery was the most explosive regional issue, it was not the only one. Westerners resented the effort on the part of the east to send educated home missionaries to their churches. They viewed an educated ministry as an insipient aristocracy. The group argued about how to participate in ecumenical collaboration and how to finance its common efforts. Let us examine how Wayland addressed the difficult task of maintaining enough organizational structure to allow the Baptists to flourish, while remaining true to the decentralized principles that were so cherished by the denomination.

⁵ G. Thomas Halbrooks, "Francis Wayland: Influential Mediator of the Baptist Controversy over Slavery" *Baptist History and Heritage* 13 (1978): 21-35.

When Francis Wayland arrived at First Baptist Church of Boston on August 9, 1821, it had just under 200 members. It was the oldest Baptist church in the city, dating back to May 28, 1665.⁶ It had been without a pastor for some time and was divided between those who wanted a charismatic preacher and those who wanted a more scholarly minister. In the five years that he served the congregation, he was able to unite it behind his leadership. He never became a charismatic preacher, but he did win a national reputation with his two published sermons, “The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise” and “On the Duties of an American Citizen.”⁷ During the time that he served at First Baptist Church, he became involved with the Baptist denominational organization.

There were three leading older ministers in the Boston area who would have an important influence on Wayland’s life for many years to come. Thomas Baldwin, Lucius Bolles, and Daniel Sharp were older men, already established in Boston and in the larger denominational life of the Baptists. As had been Francis Wayland Sr., Sharp was an immigrant from England. He and the senior Wayland were friends. He preached the ordination sermon when Francis Wayland Jr. was installed as pastor at First Baptist Church. Thomas Baldwin also participated in Wayland’s ordination service, as did Lucius Bolles. Wayland lived in the home of the Baldwin family and soon became Baldwin’s assistant in the publication of the *American Baptist Magazine*, the national

⁶ G. Thomas Halbrooks, *Francis Wayland: A Contributor to Baptist Concepts of Church Order: A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (1971), 48-90.

⁷ Wayland, “The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise,” in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833); Wayland, “The Duties of an American Citizen,” in *Occasional Discourses* (Boston: James Loring, 1833).

publication of the denomination. Lucius Bolles was the minister of the Baptist Church in Salem, and he played a leading role in Baptist missionary efforts. These three men formed a powerful connection for the younger man who, with his college and seminary education, his obvious ability as a writer and his regular evangelical faith, was both helpful to them and a good choice for higher office.⁸

Soon after reaching Boston, Wayland became active in the Warren Association, which was made up of Baptist Churches from the New England area and had an independent history. Separatist Baptists, led by Isaac Backus, were active in its formation. They emphasized that each congregation was an independent body, and association was for collaboration on common goals, but created no authority above the congregation. All participation was voluntary and all direction was advisory. Wayland wrote the 1822 circular letter for the association on the theme of brotherly love, and he joined and soon became president of the Young Men's Education Society, a group which promoted education for those who wished to enter the ministry.⁹ He became active in the Massachusetts Baptist Association and the Boston Missionary Society. He helped Baldwin edit *The Massachusetts Baptist*, and became its editor when Baldwin died in 1825. His publications, his patrons, and his talent marked him as a rising star in the Baptist denomination.

Wayland's first venture into church politics occurred in 1826.¹⁰ The complex issue which emerged involved both matters of principle and personnel. Luther Rice had

⁸ Halbrooks, *Francis Wayland: A Contributor to Baptist Concepts of Church Order*, 48-90.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 91-148.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91-119.

been an early Baptist missionary, going to Burma with Adoniram Judson, but he soon returned to raise funds for the enterprise and promote missions throughout the Baptist denomination. However, when Rice became involved with the development of Columbian College in Washington, D. C., his interests drifted away from missions and toward the college. The New York and Massachusetts leaders opposed this priority. The Southern churches supported an increase in home missions, and western Baptists resented the implications that they were a backward lot in need of an educated ministry to civilize them. In the decade prior to 1826, the Baptists had experimented with a triennial convention, which drew together representatives from their local associations throughout the nation. In the interim years, a board selected by the convention made decisions on behalf of the denomination. Although the convention had originally been called for the purpose of developing support for foreign missions, it had gradually moved into other areas and was moving toward becoming a general convention which could address a broad range of church concerns. The issue was whether the triennial convention should be a general governing body for the denomination, or only a single issue society with limited jurisdiction. In 1826, the Triennial Convention needed to deal both with an unsatisfactory employee (Luther Rice), and a matter of far-reaching principle.

Wayland's mentor, Thomas Baldwin, had been a strong supporter of the creation of a general governing body, and Wayland had written in support of a plan which would create state organizations that would select representatives to the national convention. The convention would be general in purpose, representative of the whole nation, and democratically chosen. The proposal seemed to have support, and most believed that some version of the Wayland plan would be adopted at the 1826 Triennial Convention.

However, in what is known in Baptist history as the “Great Reversal,” the convention stripped Rice of his position and reversed the trend toward a general organization, creating a missionary society instead.¹¹ Wayland drafted a key committee report on financial management of college funds and never again supported a general convention.

At the conclusion of the convention, a new board was elected. Lucius Bolles, Daniel Sharp, Heman Lincoln, and Wayland were chosen to serve. For the first time, Wayland joined the board of the Triennial Convention. In a motion passed just before adjournment, the convention went on record stating that it would not do anything to interfere with the independence of a congregation. The plan for equal representation had not been introduced. The office of the convention had been moved from Washington to Boston. The Massachusetts delegates had completely taken over the convention, and Columbian College had been removed from organizational patronage. The death of Baldwin in 1825 had silenced the most creditable voice for a general convention, and Wayland followed his older colleagues in a different direction.¹² Baptist principles, the embarrassment brought on by Rice and Columbian College, and the overwhelming lack of political support for a general convention made the reversal quite easy for him. In future years, he would adopt the single-issue society as a fundamental principle of Baptist polity.¹³

The following year, Wayland began his long tenure at Brown University. Brown provided him with a vantage point from which to exercise influence in the Triennial

¹¹ G. Thomas Halbrooks, “Francis Wayland and the Great Reversal,” *Foundations* 20, no. 4 (1977): 196-214.

¹² Halbrooks, *Francis Wayland: A Contributor to Baptist Concepts of Church Order*, 120-147.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 245-246.

Convention and, through it, the entire Baptist denomination. Brown was the leading Baptist college in America. As the years passed, its alumni became influential in their own right. At the same time, Wayland's stature as a writer and moral philosopher grew accordingly. His home became a conference location, as he hosted hostile representatives from the English Baptists and Southern slave holders. Indeed, in the years that he was at Brown, his concerns for the Baptist Church were largely expressed in the two areas of foreign missions and the battle over slavery. Much of the story of his antislavery journey has been traced in Chapter III above, but its effect on the Baptist organizational structure remains to be delineated. Wayland's contributions to Baptist foreign missions will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Guy Thomas Halbrooks has called Wayland an influential mediator in the slavery debate.¹⁴ The first serious threat of division between Northern and Southern Baptists occurred in 1840, when a group of abolitionist Baptists formed the American Baptist Antislavery Convention. They called on Southern Baptists to denounce slavery, and if they could not safely continue to live in the South, they should move to the North. Southerners, led by the Georgia Baptist Convention, asked for clarification from the Board of the Triennial Convention. Wayland was in England, but he worked through his friend and brother-in-law, Heman Lincoln, who was an influential layman and treasurer of the Triennial Convention.

Lincoln went to Georgia to explain the position of the board. The board maintained its neutrality on the issue. While this was not entirely satisfactory to the

¹⁴ Halbrooks, "Francis Wayland: Influential Mediator of the Baptist Controversy over Slavery," 21.

South, it provided the basis for a compromise worked out at the 1841 Triennial Convention meeting in Baltimore. At this meeting, a Southerner, William B. Johnson, was elected president and Richard Fuller, who would a few years later engage in debate with Wayland, was elected a vice president. All abolitionists were purged from the board, and a motion was adopted which stated that no new test would be created for membership in the Triennial Convention.¹⁵ Unfortunately, this compromise did not end the controversy, as Wayland and his colleagues had hoped. It just put it off for three more years.

In an effort at compromise, the 1844 Triennial Convention replaced President Johnson with Wayland. The convention once again affirmed its position of neutrality on slavery, but the pressures were too great to hold the Triennial Convention together.¹⁶ Specifically, a Baptist missionary, Jesse Busheyhead, was a slaveholder. Abolitionists within the convention asked the secretary to revoke Busheyhead's certification, but he died before the issue could be resolved. Soon thereafter, the Georgia Convention asked to have a home missionary, James Reeve, also a slaveholder, commissioned. The board refused, responding that this was an obvious effort to insert the slavery issue into the convention in opposition to its policy of neutrality. This was the contentious issue that led southern Baptists to withdraw from the Triennial Convention and form a separate denomination.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., 26-27.

¹⁶ Halbrooks, *Francis Wayland: A Contributor to Baptist Concepts of Church Order*, 173-176.

¹⁷ Ibid., 176-177.

Basil Manly, Jeremiah B. Jeder, and Richard Fuller, all close friends of Wayland, led the Southern separation. He gave them his blessing. After Southerners left to form the Southern Baptist Convention, Wayland moved to reorganize the Triennial Convention. He believed that the concept of representation was the cause of the convention's troubles. Because delegates thought they represented state and local associations, he thought they believed that they could bring the issues from these organizations to the national level. They wanted to make the Triennial Convention the forum for debating all the issues of the time. Whatever the merits of these causes, they had torn the denomination apart, and he wished to see that it didn't happen again.

Wayland wrote a new constitution for the Triennial Convention and successfully pushed through its adoption. The new document renamed the convention. It would from that point be known as The American Baptist Missionary Union. Representation was eliminated. The only function for the convention was to elect the board. It had no authority to debate any issue, and the board would conduct all business on behalf of this single-issue society.¹⁸

With the adoption of the new constitution, the active role which Wayland had played in American Baptist organization and politics began to diminish. Soon he was involved in the attempted reform of Brown, prison reform, writing, and his own declining health, but his work left a lasting impression on Baptist polity. In future years, he would provide a conceptual framework for the denomination that would raise issues that still have not been completely resolved. Norman H. Maring has argued that Wayland

¹⁸ Ibid., 179-192.

weakened the Baptist denomination and left it unable to act in a concerted manner.¹⁹

Wayland's answer to his twentieth century critic would have been that it is not the purpose of the church to address social issues. It is the Church's mission to save sinful humanity from eternal damnation. Other societies can attack social evils, but let the church save souls.²⁰ Wayland believed that liberal America could only exist if Christian America provided the moral stability for its fragile hope of freedom.

The Missionary Enterprise

It is not possible to understand Francis Wayland without grasping just how important the missionary effort was to his life's work. His first brush with notoriety came as the result of his aforementioned sermon, "The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise." He worked to keep the Triennial Convention a single issue missionary society, and when the famous missionary Adomiram Judson died, his widow wanted Wayland to write his biography.²¹ Wayland's vision for a converted world depended on the missionary movement for its fulfillment. Only as missionaries converted the heathen one by one to Christ would the world make progress toward freedom and prosperity. The missionary effort was the most important thing that Christians could do. On its success depended the value of America as a light to the nations and the progress of humanity toward knowledge of nature and moral righteousness. His commitment to missions and

¹⁹ Maring, "The Individualism of Francis Wayland," 156ff.

²⁰ Francis Wayland, Jr., and Heman Lincoln Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1867), 2:136.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2:127.

the eloquence with which he proclaimed its urgency made him the leading advocate for foreign missions within the Baptist denomination before the Civil War.

The best known of the early Baptist missionaries was the aforementioned Adoniram Judson. At the request of Judson's widow, Emily C. Judson, and the American Baptist Missionary Union, Wayland published in 1853 a two-volume memoir of Judson's life. The missionary movement among the Baptists began in the early nineteenth century, and Thomas Baldwin initiated the publication of the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* in 1803, in which he published journals and letters of missionaries, and accounts of news events and business related to the missionary enterprise. In 1812, the Salem Bible Translation and Foreign Mission Society was formed under the leadership of Lucius Bolles. This interest in missions led to the formation of the General Baptist Convention which, by the middle years of the decade, was coordinating financial support for Baptist missionaries.²² A turning point in the history of Baptist missions came when Judson and Rice applied for support for their missionary service in Burma.²³ Judson and Rice had been sent out to British India by the American Missionary Society, a Congregational and Presbyterian organization, along with Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, and Gordon Hall. In transit, Judson and Rice concluded that infant baptism was not scriptural. They converted to the Baptist faith and wrote to the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, requesting sponsorship. Their requests were granted, beginning a long and, in Rice's case, not always pleasant relationship.

²² Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson in Two Volumes* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1853), 1:49ff.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1:110-114, and 1:121-122.

Wayland kept up a correspondence with Judson and met him on two occasions, when the missionary returned to America for rest and recovery from illness. Judson and his wife, Ann Hasseltine Judson, went to South Asia in 1811. After a long challenging decade in Burma, Ann returned to America for her health. At this time, Wayland was beginning his ministry at First Baptist Church of Boston. He met her on numerous occasions and became enthralled with her. In a much-quoted passage from the Judson memoir Wayland wrote:

It was my good fortune to become intimately acquainted with Mrs. Judson during this visit to the United States. I do not remember ever to have met a more remarkable woman. To great clearness of intellect, large powers of comprehension, and intuitive female sagacity, ripened by the constant necessity of independent action, she added that heroic disinterestedness which naturally loses all consciousness of self in the prosecution of a great object. These elements, however, were all held in reserve, and were hidden from public view by a veil of unusual feminine delicacy. To an ordinary observer, she would have appeared simply a self-possessed, well-bred, and very intelligent gentlewoman. A more intimate acquaintance would soon discover her to be a person of profound religious feeling, which was ever manifesting itself in efforts to impress upon others the importance of personal piety. The resources of her nature were never unfolded until some occasion occurred which demanded delicate tact, unflinching courage, and a power of resolute endurance even unto death. When I saw her, her complexion bore that sallow hue which commonly follows residence in the East Indies. Her countenance at first seemed, when in repose, deficient in expression. As she found herself among friends who were interested in the Burman mission, her reserve melted away, her eye kindled, every feature was lighted up with enthusiasm, and she was every where acknowledged to be one of the most fascinating of women.²⁴

Ann Judson visited America from September 25, 1822 to June 22, 1823. Wayland was among the party of Boston Baptist ministers who took her on board the ship that took her back to Burma, where she died a decade later.

²⁴ Ibid., 1:304.

Inspired by Ann Judson, Wayland wrote “The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise,” that launched him on his successful rise in the Baptist denomination.²⁵ He delivered the sermon at his home institution, First Baptist Church of Boston, for the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. A little over a week later, he gave it again before the Salem Bible Translation and Foreign Missions Society. This sermon was widely distributed in America and Europe. It went through numerous printings and was printed as a tract and distributed by the American Tract Society. He was transformed from a little-known, youthful minister to a widely recognized expert on the missionary movement. He maintained his interest in missions, and his reputation in the field of missionary work contributed to his influence within the denomination. Missions were important enough to the Baptists that it was the only issue upon which they could agree to collaborate at a national level. Every attempt to create a general convention was defeated and the single-issue of missions was restored to one of single priority. The name of the Triennial Convention was changed at Wayland’s urging to The American Baptist Missionary Union. Wayland’s famous sermon provides insight to why missions were so important to the Baptists.

It is difficult to imagine a vision more grand for humanity than the one Wayland drew for his listeners in the small Boston church on that cold and rainy night in 1823. He preached in his overcoat, but his words were filled with the fire of inspiration. “Man is provided with a sense of sublimity,” he told his audience:

This sense recognizes a person, a cause, a quality of nature to be sublime, when it is vast, irresistible, and lasting in its impression. If a human enterprise was to be sublime, it must be vast in purpose, arduous in execution, and efficient in its means of completion. A humble youth on a sailing ship may

²⁵ Wayland, “The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise.”

experience the sublime alone at night in the middle of the vast ocean; or a great reformer who gave himself to the cause of ending slavery in the British empire, as did Clarkson, may inspire sublimity in the soul of one who contemplates his work.²⁶

However, no human activity could inspire more sublime feelings than the missionary enterprise.

Wayland wanted a tool for perfecting the whole world and missions was the answer. The world was seven-eighths heathen, filled with evil, and in need of salvation. Infanticide, the killing of the newly widowed mother by her son, and the slave trade were examples which he gave of the fruits of the world's idolatry and evil.²⁷ Not until the entire world knew Christ could peace and love for one's fellow man shape the lives of the world's people. Wayland took the attendees at First Baptist Church on a visualized tour of the world. He asked them to think of the Americas, Africa, and Northern, Western, and Southern Asia, so that they could grasp the vastness of the task at hand. He asked them to imagine how difficult it would be to learn the languages and challenge the civil and religious authorities in all the places where the missionary must go. But he assured them that this enterprise was commanded by Scripture, and its ultimate success was guaranteed. The task was at hand, the execution would be arduous, but the means were simple. One need only to preach Christ, and Him crucified, to carry out the mission. No effort possessed more moral dignity than that of saving immortal beings from the evil of this world and eternal suffering and damnation in the next. Missions were the greatest benevolence that could be done. Both its scope and its ends were sublime in the extreme.

The following passage captures some of Wayland's passion on this subject:

²⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁷ Ibid., 34.

And now, my hearers, deliberately consider the nature of the missionary enterprise. Reflect upon the dignity of its object; the high moral and intellectual powers which are to be called forth in its execution; the simplicity, benevolence, and efficacy of the means by which all this is to be achieved; and, we ask you, does not every other enterprise to which man ever put forth his strength dwindle into insignificance, before that of preaching Christ crucified to a lost and perishing world? Engaged in such an object, and supported by such assurances, you may readily suppose, we can very well bear the contempt of those who would point at us the finger of scorn. It is written, In the last days there shall be scoffers. We regret that it should be so. We regret that men should oppose an enterprise, of which the chief object is, to turn sinners unto holiness. We pity them, and we will pray for them; for we consider their situation far other than enviable. We recollect that it was once said by the Divine Missionary, to the first band which he commissioned, He that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.²⁸

In other words, the Christian believer did not have to go to Burma, as did the Judsons. He or she could stay at home and pray and support the movement with his or her financial contributions. Everyone had a role to play. The missionary enterprise promised assured progress, emotional inspiration, national recognition, and democratic participation. It affirmed the superiority of Christian liberal American culture and Baptist sacrifice and holiness.

Wayland sought to make the world over in the model of a New England village.

He proclaimed,

In a word, point us to the loveliest village that smiles upon a New-England landscape, and compare it with the filthiness and brutality of a Caffrarian kraal, and we tell you that our object is to render that Caffrarian kraal as happy and as gladsome as that New-England village. Point us to the spot on the face of the earth where liberty is best understood and most perfectly; enjoyed, where intellect shoots forth in its richest luxuriance, and where all the kindlier feelings of the heart are constantly seen in their most graceful exercise; point us to the loveliest and happiest neighborhood in the world on which we dwell; and we tell you that our object is to render this whole earth,

²⁸ Ibid., 21.

with all its nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people, as happy, nay, happier than that neighborhood.²⁹

The vision here was of a Christian, liberal, happy world. There is harmony between the intellect and morality, between material security and spiritual experience, and between personal liberty and obedience to God. All human beings have access to this utopia, but they must accept the atoning grace of God, given in the crucifixion of Christ, if they are to gain that access. It is Wayland's evangelical faith that drove him to focus his efforts within his denomination on the missionary enterprise. It was also his faith that in 1823 made him a liberal nationalist. The God of Protestant America had given His people the New England village, where each individual possessed the liberty to develop his or her intellect and moral sense in obedience to the Divine law. Possessing such a gift, the fortunate American Protestant Christian was duty bound to share the knowledge of God's gift of saving freedom with the whole world.

In 1826 and again in 1845, Wayland played a leading role in turning back attempts to create a general organization for the Baptist denomination. Wayland provided a brief history and rationale for the actions of the denomination in an 1859 pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Missionary Organizations of the Baptist Denominations*.³⁰ Herein, he recounts the development of the Triennial Convention leading up to the aforementioned "Great Reversal" of 1826, the reorganization of the Convention after the division over the slavery question, and states the reasons for a single issue national organization. The purpose of this publication was to make a proposal for further limiting the reach of the

²⁹ Francis Wayland, *Thoughts on the Missionary Organizations of the Baptist Denomination* (Providence: 1859). No publisher named.

³⁰ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland*, 2:327.

American Baptist Missionary Union, the national organization of the denomination. His starting point was that the state of Baptist missions was in decay. Limited resources had forced cut backs in the number of missionaries in the field. Differing ideas about how to conduct missions had led to harmful conflict among missionaries and the Church in America, and illness and aging threatened to reduce even more the ranks of those in the field. The attempt to control conflict within the denomination through the creation of an executive board with power to act on behalf of Northern Baptists had been overturned by the convention, leaving the board irrelevant. As Wayland saw it, only a radical simplification of the denomination's organization of its missionary enterprise could restore the effort to one of commitment among the home churches and expansion in foreign lands.

Wayland argued that no matter how hard the Baptists tried, they were not capable of sustaining general organizations at the national level. The Baptist emphasis on individual liberty and congregational authority always led to unmanageable conflict when they tried to form a general organization. While other denominations may have successfully created general governing bodies, that was not the Baptist way. But this need not be a failing of the Baptist Church. It was closer to the New Testament way of church organization and it could be a more efficient way to manage the enterprise. He proposed that missions be taken over by individual churches, district associations, and state conventions. Collaboration should occur only as each level ran up against the limits of its resources. In this way the missionary enterprise would be more rooted in the membership of the denomination. The membership could vote with its dollars and actually work for

those activities that were desired, and a general renewal of the mission spirit could emerge.

It was not only in the American part of the missionary enterprise that Francis Wayland opposed centralization, top-heavy administration, and a sophisticated educated approach. He also spoke out against the creation of a complex cultural presence in the field. He wrote to a colleague in the American Board of Missions, an interdenominational association:

The business of the foreign missionary is to sow the seed, establish a church, and then go on to regions beyond, thus following in the steps of the apostles. This puts a wholly new aspect on the work, and breaks up effectually the tendency to make every station a little Christian city, with translators, periodicals, presses, schools, and every element of European civilization.³¹

He advocated for uneducated but spiritually committed ministers in both foreign and home missions to carry the larger burden of preaching the Gospel to their own people. He believed the life of the missionary was sublime, because it was simple, filled with sacrifice, and committed entirely to the salvation of a sinful heathen humanity. The perfection of the world would come through the acceptance of Christ and not through the establishment of European civilization in heathen lands. He fought to sustain a vision of Christian humanism, individualism, and democratic populism in the Baptist missions program and the larger denomination. Some scholars argue his vision had a more lasting effect among Southern Baptists, especially through the Landmark movement.³² In any case, it set too high a standard for ordinary, church-going Baptists. Perhaps a few

³¹ Halbrooks, *Francis Wayland: A Contributor to Baptist Concepts of Church Order*, 266; Maring, "The Individualism of Francis Wayland," 156ff.

³² Kenneth R. M. Short, "The Francis Wayland-Barnas Sears Debate of 1853," *Foundations* 11 (1968): 227-234.

missionaries such as Judson and his two wives could rise to the level of sublimity, but for the average person, such a goal was not possible. The denomination concluded that centralization at some level was needed in missions and in general affairs. European and American civilization won out over saintly simplicity.

The Apostolic Ministry

The Church was a society for the conversion of sinners, and the minister was the leader of this society. His task was to teach and preach the single message of Christ and Him crucified. Neither learning nor cultural sophistication could replace a sanctified conscience. True piety, upright moral behavior, and concern for preaching the Gospel were the authentic marks of the minister who was truly called to his office. While the minister had a leadership role to play in the church, his role was not different in kind than that of the layperson. Each belonged to a church society which was dedicated to saving souls, and each was called to that task. The minister needed to feel an inner religiosity, but that inner feeling had to be matched by a confirmation of his qualifications to serve, which the church membership certified. Jointly, the minister and the membership should go about the task of converting sinners in their own locality and supporting missions around the world. Such was Francis Wayland's vision for the ministry. It was a vision about which he wrote and preached extensively during the last decade of his life, but it was one that was not universally accepted and often brought him in conflict with other Baptist leaders.

On July 11, 1853, Baptist leaders met in Rochester, New York, to observe the first graduation ceremony of Rochester University and Rochester Theological Seminary. The New York Baptist Ministerial Education Union was also to use the occasion for a

meeting of its members. The week-long celebration featured a speech by Wayland and a response by Barnas Sears. Wayland and Sears were the two most prominent educators in the Baptist denomination. Wayland was president of Brown University and Sears would be his successor. Sears had succeeded Horace Mann as the secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education and was a member of the Brown Board of Fellows. The high-profile issue under consideration in this confrontation was what should be the appropriate education for the ministry. Wayland spoke for three hours and Sears took two hours to respond. They differed in their evaluation of the state of religion, the nature of the problem which faced the nation, the role of the minister, and the importance of an educated ministry. Each man was well respected and highly competent. They simply had very different views of the ministry and of American culture and society.³³

Wayland believed that religion was in decline. Spiritual values had been replaced by material ones. New converts could hardly keep up with the losses caused by deaths, and a concern with social status among the clergy had replaced a zeal for evangelism. Sears, on the other hand, believed that the church had made great progress, its membership was growing, and its ministry was exerting important leadership throughout the society. Wayland believed that the nation was at a critical turning point in its history.

He wrote:

Within the life-time of men who now hear me, the question will probably be decided, whether the kingdom of Christ is now to proceed to universal victory, or ages of intellectual and moral darkness are again to overspread the earth. It is for such a crisis as this that the disciples of Christ are now called upon to prepare. But more than this. It is obvious that this question is really to be decided in our own country. So long as the light of true Christianity shines brightly here, the rest of the world cannot be enveloped in darkness. Hence it

³³ Francis Wayland, *The Apostolic Ministry: A Discourse by Francis Wayland, President of Brown University* (Rochester: Bake & Brother, 1853), 75.

is that the intention is publicly avowed of overturning our systems of universal education, and thus bringing us under the power of a foreign hierarchy. In aid of this design, immigrants by hundreds of thousands are annually arriving on our shores, who are at once admitted to all the privileges of citizenship, while they are conscientiously bound to obedience to a foreign ecclesiastical potentate. At the same time the press is scattering broad-cast over our land the seeds of frivolity and licentiousness. Unbounded prosperity is providing for every class of our people the means of sensual gratification. The rise of prices, consequent upon the increase of the precious metals, is stimulating to yet greater excess the desire of acquisition already sufficiently rife amongst us.³⁴

Catholic immigration, the mass media, and greed for material possessions were the symbols of a cultural decline. The forces of darkness were tearing at the republic, and the battle for the Kingdom was underway. The times were dramatic and the necessary armies of Christians to confront these evils were far from ready to do combat.

If Wayland viewed the crisis in American culture to be that of the triple threats of Catholicism, mass culture, and materialism, Sears understood the challenge to be intellectual and scientific. Christians were unprepared to cope with the challenge of science to their theology. They lacked the knowledge to compete in the intellectual market place. Ministers did not possess the intellectual skill or credibility to represent their faith or followers in the academic and scientific communities, where the future of the American culture was being determined.³⁵

Wayland argued that the minister should go into the streets and homes of the people and discuss with them the condition of their souls. He should preach Christ and Him crucified to the populace. His job was to save souls. Anything else was a diversion from his true calling. He and his church members must enlist in the Army of Christ, if the

³⁴ Short, "The Francis Wayland-Barnas Sears Debate of 1853."

³⁵ Francis Wayland, *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1863).

darkness was to be averted. Sears argued that, while the apostolic model of ministry which Wayland advanced might have been relevant for the early church, the needs of Christianity had changed. A broader role for the minister had evolved. The church was a part of the society and needed to speak to the intellectual developments which were profoundly changing American culture. The minister needed to lead in the culture of the community. He needed to engage the intellectual and scientific changes that were radically challenging Christian life and theology. Such different visions finally played out in the differing approaches that the two men took to defining the appropriate education for the ministry.

Wayland did not totally reject an educated ministry. Each person should be educated to the extent that his circumstances permitted. But many men who were truly called to the ministry were too old for college, or too poor, or inadequately prepared for higher education. Nevertheless, they had an authentic calling and should be given the opportunity to serve. Both college-trained young men and the older men who were called from secular occupations, as had been his father, should apprentice with established ministers. The best education for a person entering the ministry occurred at the hands of an experienced practitioner. Sears saw the need differently. A college education and then seminary training were necessities. The minister needed to be educated at a level comparable to the best-educated persons in the community. Only if they were equals to the best educated could they gain the respect of their secular colleagues and successfully engage the intellectual challenges confronting the church. Piety alone could not convert the growing skepticism generated by the press and rising levels of education among the common folk. The nation had heard the word of God preached, and now it had to be

convinced if America was to become a fully Christian culture. The challenge was not so much to convert the individual as it was to Christianize the national culture.

The positions taken by Wayland and Sears in Rochester in 1853 can be seen as crucial to the cultural debate in America. This debate reoccurs in the conflict between reason and intuition, enlightenment rationalism and romantic idealism, republican virtue and democratic equality, and secular humanism and evangelical Biblical inerrancy. Wayland spoke for democratic equality, authentic piety and feeling, and the truth mediated by a pure moral conscience, while Sears looked to reasoned intelligence, wise and thoughtful debate, and the competitive open ended discussion of ideas in the pursuit of truth. This conflict then and now may be viewed as between the claim for a merit-based elite versus a morally righteous middling people. This debate appears to be deeply imbedded in American culture and a permanent part of the nation's life. While early in his career Wayland had argued for republican virtue, an essential role for education, and a positive place for the intellect in social progress, by 1853 he had adopted a populous and democratic position. Not reason but piety held the key to saving humanity and the nation.

Wayland continued his critique of the Baptist ministry in his last book, *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel*, which was published in 1863, after illness had largely ended his active participation in denominational affairs.³⁶ His brother-in-law and lifelong colleague, Heman Lincoln, requested that he write a series of letters for publication that addressed the duties of the ministry. Wayland sent Lincoln ten letters. In these documents, he addressed the proper calling of the ministry, the purpose and style of

³⁶ Ibid., 200.

preaching best suited for the apostolic ministry, duties other than preaching which the ministry must execute, the need for moral leadership on the part of each minister, and the extent to which he himself had carried out his prescriptions in his own ministry. His tone was critical. In his opinion, the ministers of the time fell far short of what they should be doing. The crux of the matter was that Wayland believed that the task of the ministry was in word and deed to bring sinful humanity to a commitment to Christ. In their preaching and visitations, in their social life and personal behavior, they should prepare persons for eternal life. The sinner must repent and take Christ for his savior. The minister must confront each person with the seriousness and urgency of this reality. To do otherwise would be to forego his duty. However, the ministry was overly concerned with its acceptance by the wealthy, its scholarly status, its economic well being, and its acceptance as professional colleagues alongside doctors and lawyers. They had turned away from being ambassadors of Christ and taken on ordinary worldly pursuits. As a result of forgoing their duty, the ministry had lost its relevancy. Serious persons acknowledged religion had no great claim on their lives. The church might be a source of entertainment or social control for the masses of humanity, but as a living, existential reality in the nation's life, it had faded into obscurity.

Wayland acknowledged he had been less than perfect in his own ministry. He worked hard and tried to serve his people, but he had spent too much time with denominational activities that took him away from tending to the souls of his congregation. He left the ministry when he failed to understand how much he meant to his membership. He took a position at Union College and then at Brown University. He wrote, "In thus exchanging the ministry for the work of education, though I acted with

the sanction of all my brethren, I think I erred. It was wrong to place anything in comparison with the work of saving souls. Had I been more solemnly devoted to the labor to which the Master appointed me, I should have escaped this error.”³⁷ In the early optimism of his career and the long tenure at Brown, he placed the moral cultivation of the conscience and the development of intelligence nearly on an equal plain. Teachers, as well as preachers, promoted the progress that would lead to the Kingdom; in fact, they reinforced one another. Obedience to God allowed the intelligence to achieve its highest level of perfection, while the pious pursuit of knowledge only confirmed the truth of religion. But now late in his life, after he had broken with Sears and Brown, and in the midst of the suffering brought on by the Civil War, he felt differently. Now saving souls seemed to him to be the primary, perhaps only, way to reform the world.

He concluded his book with these rapturous words:

In spite of sneers and obloquy and reproach, let us declare the whole counsel of God. Let us cast away all desire of reputation for scholarship, all love of distinction and be content to preach the simple truths of the New Testament in all their breadth and length, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. "While" doing all this, let us in humble faith rely upon the aid of the Spirit of God, which is promised everywhere to accompany the truth as it is in Jesus. "We are nothing and can do nothing; but when we faithfully utter the truth of God, he can do everything. Oh, what a reformation would follow such a baptism of the Spirit among the ministers of Christ! Our country would fall down before God in humble penitence, confessing its sins and pleading for pardon through the atonement of Christ. The chastening of God would have accomplished its purpose, and he would restore to us the blessings of peace on the principles of righteousness, which we by our sins have forfeited. Out of the infinite misery of this fearful contest, he would, in his own way, cause such an improvement in national character as should be more than a compensation for all that we have suffered."³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., 209.

³⁸ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland*, 2:281-282.

Many in the ministry thought Wayland was blaming them for the suffering of the nation. It was a bitter pill and not all of them swallowed it willingly. His sons recognized the controversy which the little book created. They wrote:

His mind continued deeply impressed with the need of a revived spirituality and an increased efficiency among the ministry. Fully convinced of the power of the gospel of Christ to regenerate the world, yet seeing that in a country blessed with absolute religious freedom, it failed to produce its legitimate results, he was compelled to believe that there was need of much searching of heart on the part of those charged with the proclamation of the gospel, to learn whether the responsibility lay in any degree at their door. The result of these impressions was his little work, published in 1863, entitled " Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel." This volume was, by some persons, severely criticized as a distorted picture of the state of religion, and as proceeding "from a morbid condition of mind."³⁹

Wayland believed that liberal America had created a nation, where religion could be practiced freely, but the Christian forces had not kept their side of the bargain. Christians had failed to authentically preach the Gospel. They had failed to evangelize the society. Because of these failures the nation had slipped into the most horrible evil, pain and suffering. Only the grace of God could restore the harmony between Christian America and liberal America which was necessary for the people to live in happiness and prosperity. He believed that God might use the war to restore this balance. He hoped that the ministry and the laity would do their part to respond to the justice and love of God.

³⁹ Wayland, Jr. and Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland*, 2:282-283.

CHAPTER VI
FRANCIS WAYLAND: THEMES AND ECHOES

In the years after the Civil War, Christian moralists grew silent on issues of social concern. Evangelicals turned to private moral transgressions, as leaders such as Dwight Moody preached private salvation; more liberal representatives of the tradition, such as Henry Ward Beecher, allied with the capitalistic forces that were reshaping America. The new evolutionary science provided an intellectual climate that generated the philosophy of social Darwinism, justifying a competitive tooth-and-claw economic and political order. Commentators opined that the choice lay between the survival of the fittest and the survival of the unfit.¹ New technologies drove industrialization, urbanization, and immigration as new-comers flocked to the cities of America to work in the new industries. In such an environment, the quaint call for a benevolent use of wealth and concern for one's neighbor seemed naive, if not harmful to the true law of nature. Francis Wayland's law of moral accumulation became superseded by the law of competition and survival.

The radical abolitionists' dream for racial equality failed to be realized, as southern violence, state's rights, and federal and state laws and court rulings consigned African Americans to another century of oppression and inequality.² New definitions of

¹ George M. Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Reckoning with the Past*, ed. D. G. Hart (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 223-224.

² C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3d rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

race identified many European nationalities as nonwhite.³ Concepts of disability were used to deny opportunity to women and immigrant minorities.⁴ Exclusionary laws enacted racial quotas against Asian immigrants.⁵ Mexican workers experienced discrimination in the Southwest, and the continuing efforts at Indian removal almost entirely eliminated Native American populations.⁶

In 1898, America entered the Spanish American War, taking the nation into the age of empire. Cuba and the Philippines replaced Texas as the imperial target. The nation conducted a colonial war to subdue Philippine resistance, Theodore Roosevelt engineered a global naval presence, and an assertive America manipulated events in Central America to gain control of land through which to construct the Panama Canal.⁷ The moral dream of a democratic, free, and moral nation which gave life to Wayland's liberal nationalism and drew his bitter criticism when he believed it was being compromised, was only a fiction in the tool kit of the empire builders. His advocacy for racial and economic justice and for humane nationalism were lost from the religious dialogue in America.

It is not entirely true, however, to argue that none of the themes and echoes of Wayland's work existed after 1865. In what follows in this chapter, the treatment of those

³ Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁴ Douglas C Baynton, *American Culture and the Campaign Against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁵ Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

⁶ Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, 44.

⁷ McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America*.

themes and echoes will be selectively considered. The argument is not that in many cases later thinkers drew directly on the Wayland legacy. It is rather that Wayland addressed, powerfully, concerns that reoccurred in later times, and that those themes remain a significant part of the American culture, even though at times they are themes of protest and dissent. Many others have grappled with questions of justice in the social context. Some of them were Christians, but others were secular in their orientation. Two such thinkers will be considered to demonstrate the lasting concern for social justice which Wayland voiced. Walter Rauschenbusch, the Christian theologian of the Social Gospel movement, and John Dewey, the American philosopher most often associated with secular humanism, will be discussed in light of the themes most dear to Wayland.

But there is also a faith based critique of the work of Wayland that some contemporary Christians suggest is important to the understanding of the American culture. George Marsden, the noted historian of American religion and culture, has criticized the inadequacy of the philosophical base of Wayland's thought, suggesting Wayland contributed to the failure of Christianity to maintain a central place in American higher education.⁸ A second critic, Gregory Alan Thornbury, a Southern Baptist historian, also objects to the Scottish Common Sense philosophy of Wayland's religious vision. Thornbury has made the claim that Wayland's inadequacy as a theologian and philosopher has contributed to the secularization of American culture.⁹ The faith based critiques suggest internal flaws in Wayland's own work contributed to the failure of the

⁸ Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia."

⁹ Gregory Alan Thornbury, *The Legacy of Natural Theology in the Northern Baptist Theological Tradition: A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (2001).

attempt to create a Christian/liberal synthesis in American culture. Liberal advocates for a more just America and faith based critics, who hope for a more religious America, testify to the continuing themes and echoes of the voice of Wayland in American life and culture.

Francis Wayland and Walter Rauschenbusch

Walter Rauschenbusch, 1861–1918, was the son of a German immigrant Baptist minister and seminary professor. After completing his own theological training at Rochester Theological Seminary, he took a church near the Hell’s Kitchen part of lower Manhattan. He served the German-speaking congregation for over a decade, returning to Rochester Seminary only after illness left him almost completely deaf. For the next two decades, he taught at the seminary and published the leading books which defined and explained the Social Gospel movement. His two most influential books were *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 1907, and *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 1917.¹⁰ In these texts, he argued that to be relevant to the twentieth century, Christianity must address the social crisis in western culture. His central theme was that the Kingdom of God began on earth and that Christians should be, above all else, concerned with Christianizing the social order. Sin and salvation and freedom and justice had their meaning in the social context. Christian evangelism should not be exclusively individually oriented. It should include a primary interest in converting the society. The gospel of Jesus was this-worldly, public, and concerned with the development of loving, social solidarity. A comparison of the

¹⁰ Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Rauschenbusch, *Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1945).

faith of Rauschenbusch with that of Wayland reveals monumental shifts in the religious paradigms of the two men, but it also highlights a similar moral sensibility.

Both Wayland and Rauschenbusch were evangelical Baptists. They looked to the Bible as their guide for understanding their faith. Wayland sought to derive precepts for action, while Rauschenbusch sought to identify with the life and actions of Jesus.

Wayland thought the Bible provided knowledge of the laws of God, and obedience to those laws would initiate the Kingdom of God. Rauschenbusch, on the other hand, believed that following the actions of Christ into the public and social order was the path to God's kingdom. Each believed that the primitive church taught the true gospel, but organized Catholicism strayed from the true path. They believed that their own time was crucial to the success or failure of the Christian message, and that only a return to the true gospel could save the nation and the world. Wayland saw the solution to the challenges of the world in individual obedience to the law set forth in the Bible, while Rauschenbusch saw it in obedience to the social action demonstrated by Jesus.

The conversion experience was a very important part of evangelical faith, but for both Wayland and Rauschenbusch conversion was less a single experience than it was a developmental process. The believer grew in faith and obedience as he or she practiced his or her faith in everyday life.

There is perhaps no area of their faith where they differed more than in their understanding of the atonement. Wayland understood the atonement in legalistic terms. Humanity had broken the law of God in the fall of Adam and could not, alone, recover from this sinful stain. God was owed a debt, but he chose to pay that debt Himself. The death of Jesus on the cross freed humanity from the sin created by Adam. The believer

was saved from sin and hell by the atonement of Christ. This was the meaning of Jesus for history and humanity.

Jesus had a far different meaning for Rauschenbusch. He considered the two theological concepts of ransom and vicarious suffering to completely miss the atoning meaning of Christ. The death of Jesus represented God's experiencing of the social sins of the world. It showed the way for humanity in its battle to take on these sins and work to bring into being the Kingdom of God. God Himself demonstrated that salvation for humanity lay in the obedient struggle to oppose religious bigotry, economic and political exploitation, and all the other social causes of oppression. Gone is the helpless sinner, and in his or her place is the selfish individual and an oppressive social order. The meaning of the atonement and of Christ is the call to oppose personal and social evil in the struggle to initiate the Kingdom of God on earth.

Wayland's evangelical creed held as one of its central tenets the importance of the individual conscience. He opposed collective action through political parties, voluntary associations, and ecclesiastical bodies because he believed that these organizations would replace the individual moral conscience and prevent the individual believer from acting in moral obedience to the laws of God.¹¹ Rauschenbusch believed that it was absolutely necessary for the Christian to become involved in collective action in order to be obedient to the word of God. For Wayland, no moral arena existed outside the obedience of the individual to God's laws, while for Rauschenbusch, the true moral arena was the social arrangements that structure the lives of every individual.¹² The problem faced by the

¹¹ Francis Wayland, *The Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1838).

world, in Wayland's view, was the unfaithfulness of each individual, while in Rauschenbusch's opinion it was the social order that corrupted the individual. Wayland sought to save individuals. Rauschenbusch wanted to redeem the social order.

Finally, Wayland believed that God had established material and moral laws by which the universe was to be governed. Humanity could choose whether or not to obey the moral laws, but He would, through His providence, reward and punish human action, and He would intervene in historical events to bless righteous action or punish the wicked. The righteous could anticipate eternal life, while the disobedient could look forward to ever lasting punishment.¹³ Rauschenbusch openly rejected this view of God's providence. The kingdom called humanity to act for its development. The oppressor and evildoer could expect to participate in something like moral retraining in eternity. In this world, freedom, justice, and solidarity were their own rewards. While selfish personal behavior and social injustice plagued the human community, God did not intervene to punish evil. Evil was its own punishment, as good was its own reward. The development of the kingdom was the Christian calling and his or her reward.¹⁴

These two Baptist ministers, educators, and writers were the leading Christian moral voices of their eras. Wayland was individualistic, moralistic, and pietistic. Rauschenbusch was collectivist, concerned with social morality, and drawn to democratic participation in the realization of the kingdom, rather than humble obedience to a

¹² Francis Wayland, Jr., and Heman Lincoln. *Wayland, A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, the Late President of Brown University* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1867), 1:136.

¹³ Francis Wayland, *The Apostolic Ministry: A Discourse Delivered in Rochester, New York, by Francis Wayland, the President of Brown University* (Rochester: Bake and Brother, 1853), 1-2.

¹⁴ Rauschenbusch, *Theology for the Social Gospel*, 279.

beneficent but authoritarian God. Where Wayland sought a working relationship between Christian America and liberal America, Rauschenbusch used liberal thought to reshape his Christian vision. For Wayland, God demanded obedience, while for Rauschenbusch God led the way to the kingdom, but human beings worked in collaboration with God to usher in the kingdom. Concepts of human depravity, divine anger, and humble submission to the rule of God were transformed in Rauschenbusch to those of human moral evolutionary development, divine participation in the growth of the kingdom, and possible human progress. Wayland believed that the moral life of the nation depended on individual Christians obeying moral law and then acting morally in the secular order. Rauschenbusch believed that Christians must Christianize the secular order, and only in that way could they participate with God in the coming of the kingdom.

Daniel P. Rogers has argued that in the period between 1870 and 1950 a common culture developed in the nations surrounding the North Atlantic. This community ran from Berlin to San Francisco and was held together by its concern over the way in which technology, industrialization, and urbanization were transforming the culture. They jointly struggled with the social problems that this historic transformation was creating. The common culture was marked by large numbers of exchanges and borrowings among the various nations. Scholars, politicians, planners, and reformers freely traveled within the area to learn from others. Their common quest was for solutions to the social crisis, especially the problems created by poverty, urban slums, migration and immigration, economic inequality, and political autocracy.¹⁵ Rauschenbusch is described well by the Rogers analysis. He studied in Germany and with the Fabian leaders, Sidney and Beatrice

¹⁵ Daniel T Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

Web in England. He saw the crisis of modernity to be the social crisis, and he sought reforms that would alleviate its worst effects. Rauschenbusch was, himself, a thoroughly bilingual American. His ministry was to a German-speaking congregation, and for many years he taught German-speaking students at Rochester Theological Seminary. In a somewhat less pronounced way, Wayland was also the product of Atlantic crossings. His parents were immigrants. His philosophy drew heavily on the Scottish enlightenment, and he never lost the Baptist beliefs which came to America from the English Baptist dissenting congregations. Although different in many ways, not the least of these being the great consequence of evolutionary thought on the thinking of Rauschenbusch, there is a common sensibility which must be recognized.

There are themes and echoes of Wayland's sensibility in the writing of Rauschenbusch. Both men deplored the inequality which the economic revolution was creating. They affirmed a middling democracy of morally engaged citizens. They believed that greed on the part of corporate America was destroying the harmony of a purer America. They believed that poverty, disease, the exploitation of women and children, and the crippling of masculine self-worth were the great sins of the nation. In Wayland's opposition to the Mexican War and Rauschenbusch's to World War I, each man stated his horror over war and his concern for the religious meaning of American imperialism; in their opposition to racial oppression they affirmed the solidarity and fundamental equality of the entire human community. Wayland was a liberal of the small government, individual rights, personal charity variety, while Rauschenbusch was a self-proclaimed socialist. Yet, each saw in the economic order of their time a serious threat to the American democracy. They saw in American militarism a challenge to the basic

American desire to be a beacon of freedom for the rest of the world's peoples, and they saw in racial oppression a contradiction in the Christian and secular principles upon which the nation was founded. Each man spoke from a deeply felt Christian faith which they desired to make relevant to a nation whose liberal principles they feared to be in danger of destruction.

Francis Wayland and John Dewey

Many consider John Dewey, 1859–1952, to be America's greatest philosopher.¹⁶ Dewey was also one of the nation's leading moralists. Unlike Francis Wayland, he was not a Christian. However, he shared with Wayland a commitment to the democratizing power of education, the importance of moral choice in the development of character, and the underlying importance of commitments of faith to a healthy society. Dewey, as Wayland, opposed ecclesiastical structures that interfered with the functioning of individual intelligence and moral decision making; but unlike Wayland he believed that human intellect and morality were highly social products of the human experience. As was Rauschenbusch, Dewey was separated from Wayland by the influence of the post-Darwinian evolutionary paradigm. Although different in many ways, Dewey shared with Wayland a moral and ethical sensibility that can easily be recognized.

Dewey set down most clearly his religious beliefs in a little book entitled *A Common Faith*, 1934.¹⁷ This little volume includes three lectures given at Yale University. He argued that there was a common faith held by a majority of people that is

¹⁶ Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), ix.

¹⁷ John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974).

operative in the lives of humanity. This faith was religious, but it did not involve religion. The object of the religious sentiment was the unified ideal values of the human community. The location of these ideals was in the every day reality of the social experience. The religious function provided the values and ends to guide moral action. It organized the affections and the intelligence of the community for the implementation of collective goals. Faith in and devotion to the ideals of the community united humanity for social progress. Religious faith so defined was an essential aspect of human society and provided the justification for social relationships and institutions. It also provided the critical tool by which social conditions could be evaluated and social progress made.

Wayland and Dewey were very different. Wayland believed in a supernatural God, Christian redemption, and fixed moral laws that were revealed in nature and in the Bible. He believed that obedience to the laws were essential to a just society, while Dewey rejected all of these propositions. They shared a common perspective on the relationship of faith to society and culture, however. They both rejected the idea that religion and society should be separated into a religious and secular sphere. Each man argued that religious faith was an integrated aspect of a social order. Faith provided the unifying dimension of moral social action. Each believed that if the nation was to progress toward a higher level of economic justice, equality, and freedom, the social relationships and institutions of America would have to be infused with religious values. In Wayland's case it would be the commandment to love one's neighbor, and for Dewey the unified ideals of the American nation. These ideals included genuine democracy, economic security for all, civil liberties, and equal access to education. For both Wayland

and Dewey, the hope for a free and liberal America was grounded in a comprehensive and integrating faith.

Both Wayland and Dewey wrote important textbooks on the subject of morality.¹⁸ Each book went through numerous editions and was widely used in the colleges of their day. Both believed that morality could be studied in a scientific context, but they had very different understandings of science. Each believed that morality was a function of a constant character. For Wayland, that character took shape in obedience to the established moral law of the universe which was given by a transcendent God, while Dewey grounded the moral self in the social and evolutionary nature of human experience. Both Wayland and Dewey saw the individual self as a part of an integrated whole. The self found wholeness in moral action. Only as the self pursued benevolent ends, practiced reflective consideration of what was right action, and demonstrated genuine concern for others, could true freedom and responsibility guide moral conduct. Wayland trusted in conscience, while Dewey placed his faith in intelligence, but each man believed that human beings could make moral choices, and in making those choices they formed the moral character that was the only path to true happiness.

Both Wayland and Dewey were deeply concerned about the American democracy. They feared that the pursuit of economic power and profit would create an economic elite that would make a mockery of the hope for a equal and democratic society. They doubted the value of large economic, political, and social organizations. They mistrusted mass political parties, and mass communications that distorted the ability

¹⁸ Wayland, *Elements of a Moral Science*, ed. Joseph L. Blau (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963); Dewey, and James Tufts, *Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1945).

of the individual to practice intelligent rational decision making, and they especially opposed American militarism. They saw in capitalism, militarism, and mass society the potential destruction of American liberal democracy, and they looked to education as an important tool in the realization of the American democratic dream. Although they were grounded in different philosophical positions, and they differed on their beliefs about a transcendent God, they had a surprisingly similar view of what a proper education would be for a democratic people.

In the reforms of 1850 which Wayland proposed for Brown University and in his 1854 address on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Presidency of Elephalet Nott, he set forth his thoughts for a democratic education.¹⁹ Such an education should be available to all the people, relevant to the diverse needs of the citizenry, and broadly humanistic for everyone. It should not create an educated elite, but rather a well-educated middling class. The farmer's son and the son of the artisan, as well as the son of the professional man, should be educated. A democracy could only succeed if all the people had the knowledge and interest to competently evaluate the political issues which faced the nation. The development of technical skills was as important as the classical studies. Education was not for leisure and esthetic pleasure, it had a practical value which all youths had a right to incorporate into their lives. The liberal democratic impulse in Wayland's thought is nowhere more obvious than in his educational philosophy and later reform efforts.

¹⁹ Wayland, *Report to the Corporation of Brown University on Changes in the Collegiate System of Education. Read on March 28, 1850.* (Providence: George H. Whitney, 1850); Wayland, *The Education Demanded by the People of the United States: A Discourse Delivered at Schenectady on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Presidency of Eliphalet Nott* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1855).

Dewey wrote about education for most of his professional life, but his magnum opus was *Democracy and Education*, written in 1915.²⁰ He argued that education, far from just schooling, is the defining activity of human existence, and a proper education is the crux of a democratic society. Human existence is moral when it is truly educational. The human being has evolved in nature. Lacking many of the adaptive characteristics of other animals, humanity depends on culture, language, and intelligence to survive. These human qualities are not inherited, but rather passed on from generation to generation through education. Life is evolution and change. Knowledge handed down is only the starting point for a new generation to reconstruct, in relationship with nature and society, a new and more efficient body of knowledge. It is the integrated self, using active intelligence, that binds together existing knowledge, future goals, interaction with nature and society, and directed action to create education, new knowledge, and moral conduct. In a democratic society, all persons have the opportunity to use their intelligence to choose their own goals and determine appropriate conduct needed to realize them.

The standard with which Dewey measured education and democracy was that of growth. Growth occurred when individuals could use active intelligence to solve problems, increase their knowledge, and more completely integrate relationships with nature and society. When growth occurred, education also took place. Genuine education corresponded to the natural evolutionary ability of humanity to learn and transmit that learning. That natural process was initiated when the individual recognized a problem in the environment. This was followed by an assessment of existing knowledge concerning the problem. Then a hypothesis was formed to guide action directed toward overcoming

²⁰ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1944).

the problem. Next the action was tried and its efficacy tested. Finally, the consequences of the action were evaluated. Its success or failure in solving the problem was noted and added to the existing knowledge base. This process was the essence of education. It had become refined into the formal structure of science. The application of science in either its primitive or advanced manifestation Dewey called thinking. Thinking, or the use of active intelligence, was the crucial element of democracy. Only in a democratic society could all persons be free to think and apply their intelligence to ends that they held for themselves. The essence of education was learning to think. The essence of democracy was applying thought to one's own intrinsic goals. Undemocratic societies restricted individuals from thinking through mechanisms of class oppression, or authoritarian government, or religious dogma.

For Dewey, freedom is thinking, and thinking is education. A moral character can only develop as it thinks, and thinking can only occur in a democratic society, at least for all the people. Education for all was morality for all, and morality for all was the definition of a democratic society. Wayland and Dewey feared a class-based education. They opposed the division of education into liberal and vocational curriculums. They believed that the success of American democracy depended on an education that prepared all individuals to freely choose their conduct for their own ends. However, these ends were not subjective or personal. In Wayland's case they were to be chosen in obedience to the commandments of God, and in Dewey's case, ends grew out of the experience of humanity in interaction with past knowledge, new challenges, and the assessment of future consequences. Wayland and Dewey shared a liberal vision for education, because each of them believed in the equality of all persons. They believed that all men and

women should actively participate in genuine direction of the social order, and this could only occur responsibly when each person was prepared to act competently and morally. Wayland hoped for a Christian and liberal America. Dewey labored for an America that was secular and liberal, but each man believed deeply that a democratic education was essential to the accomplishment of his dreams for the nation.

The Faith Based Critics

Many of the themes which Francis Wayland addressed were picked up in a later generation by Christian liberals, such as Walter Rauschenbusch, and secular liberals, such as John Dewey. Among these were the damage which corporate America was doing to the dream for a democratic society, the importance of an appropriate style of education for the creation of a democratic social order, the liberation and activation of the individual citizen for moral action, and the evil brought about by the pursuit of empire. These liberal thinkers affirmed Wayland's belief that a public morality should shape public policy and that public morality was grounded in a common faith, even though they disagreed on what that faith should be. Faith based critics have taken a very different approach to Wayland and the civilization that he represented. The examination of two such critics, George Marsden and Gregory Alan Thornbury, provide insight into this perspective. Marsden and Thornbury are epistemological conservatives. Their perspective holds that knowledge must be grounded in a prior truth. This *a priori* knowledge depends on the revelation of God to His human creatures. For Marsden, this revelation begins in theology, while for Thornbury it is given in the inerrancy of the Bible. Each critic opposes Wayland's belief that the orderliness of the world can give certainty of the reality of God.

Marsden, writing in an essay entitled, “The Collapse of Evangelical Academia,” asserted that Wayland was representative of a ubiquitous mode of thinking which dominated American academia before the Civil War.²¹ He argued that internal weaknesses in this way of thinking led to the total collapse of credible evangelical academic thought in the seventy-five years after 1875. Marsden traced the development of Scottish Common Sense philosophy through Francis Bacon, John Locke, and Thomas Reid to the American academy. He described its primary elements, which included the belief that truth can be derived from foundational certainties, that these certainties can be established by objective empirical observation and commonly held and unquestioned self-evident truths, that science can provide certain knowledge of the laws of the physical and moral universe, and that science and religion are compatible and mutually reinforcing. In this view, harmony existed between the natural order and the capacity of human beings to have certain knowledge of the universe. The mental faculties with which God had endowed humankind were perfectly attuned to comprehend the laws of God for the universe. However, this harmonious system collapsed in the face of the new science which was associated with the evolutionary work of Darwin.

Marsden argues that the fatal flaw in the Scottish Common Sense perspective lies in its failure to understand that unstated presuppositions support its harmonious and certain beliefs. The whole framework depended on the presence of a God that was much like the Christian God. Without this assumption the whole system collapsed. The new science had a different explanation for knowledge. Process, not structure, characterized the evolutionary epistemology. There was not a need for a beneficent law giver in the

²¹ Marsden, “The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia.”

background to account for creation and the subsequent development of life and knowledge. Once and for all, fixed principles interfered with the research and learning of the new science. The work of Wayland and his colleagues was irrelevant and those who clung to its outdated and discredited teaching were shunted to the sidelines of American culture.

Marsden asserted that even though the Scottish Common Sense philosophy of Wayland and his contemporaries failed to stand the test of new scientific paradigms, evangelical America had other intellectual traditions upon which it could draw and, in fact, some value might still remain in the discredited philosophy of the antebellum generations. He suggested that in the thought of the Dutch theologian and political leader, Abraham Kuyper, there was an alternative epistemology capable of offering intellectual credibility to evangelical Christians.²² As the founder of a Dutch university and prime minister of Holland, Kuyper had managed to keep evangelical Christianity in the mainstream of Dutch society. He propounded the belief that knowledge, including scientific knowledge, depended on faith assumptions. The Christian depended on revelation to provide the foundation for knowledge, and the pervasiveness of sin distorted general knowing. The initial faith upon which all future knowledge was based came from the revelation of God, and it, alone, could overcome the distorting effect of sin. The harmony of subject and object, humankind and the universe, God and man, came from a knowledge of God given in faith, not demonstrated empirically or through self-evident truths. In the end Christian knowledge in general and of science in particular would look

²² Ibid., 247ff.

different from non-Christian forms of knowing. Each was grounded in faith, but it was a different faith.

Marsden recommended that evangelical intellectuals could gather from the Common Sense philosophy the insight that believers and non-believers, alike, could communicate and share many common traits of mind, that there were evidences of the presence of God in the world which were recognizable, and that many of our beliefs arise out of our nature. On the other hand, the Kuyperian insight reminds Christians that sin separates and distorts human knowing. Christians and nonbelievers will see things differently. Christians should not be embarrassed by this reality. The Christian/liberal synthesis of Wayland and his contemporaries failed because it leaned too much toward the common, universal, and therefore liberal dimension of knowing. Kuyper offers a needed conservative correction. Christian America must assert without embarrassment that liberal claims for universality fail to recognize the uniqueness of Christian belief and the damaging quality of a faithless science.

In a doctoral dissertation prepared for the Southern Baptist Seminary in 2001, Gregory Alan Thornbury continued with the Marsden theme.²³ Thornbury focused his analysis on four Northern Baptist theologians—Francis Wayland, Ezekiel Gilman Robinson, Augustus Hopkins Strong, and Walter Rauschenbusch. He argued that these thinkers dominated Northern Baptist theology from the 1830s to the 1920s, and that over the four generations of their supremacy, their dependency on natural religion and the legacy of the Common Sense philosophy caused a decline in the integrity of their theology that by the 1960s led to the proclamation of the Death of God theology by

²³ Thornbury, *The Legacy of Natural Theology in the Northern Baptist Theological Tradition*.

Baptist theologian William Hamilton. Robinson was a student of Wayland, Strong of Robinson, and Rauschenbusch of Strong. Each successive generation became more liberal as they tried to make their natural theology responsive to the developments of modern science and culture. The erosion of their theological position was associated with their rejection of revelation. In the end, Rauschenbusch gave up on natural theology and revelation to ground his faith in sociology and anthropology. Natural theology became, simply, naturalism.

Thornbury wrote from the perspective of contemporary, conservative evangelical scholarship. According to his introduction, he met his wife at Messiah College, his father is a Godly pastor and church historian, and he is a graduate of Union College in Nashville.²⁴ He drew heavily on conservative scholars, such as Carl A. H. Henry, and holds up biblical inerrancy as a doctrine which the Northern Baptists neglected with dreadful consequences.²⁵ This is relevant to my study because it helps to clarify the reason for the intensity of the faith based critique of liberalism. As did Marsden, Thornbury argued that Wayland and those who followed him suffered from internal flaws in their thought. Marsden pointed to the idealistic tradition represented by Kuyper as a corrective to the Common Sense philosophy which structured the thought of Wayland. Thornbury based his critique of Wayland in the Protestant Reform tradition and particularly in its doctrine of revelation and biblical inerrancy. The central issue is epistemological methodology. How does the believer know God? The Common Sense philosophers held that knowledge of God came from empirical knowledge of the material

²⁴ Ibid., 1ff.

²⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1951).

world and from self-evident intuitions. This knowledge could be supplemented by revelation from God through the Scriptures, but the starting point was human perception and reason.

The faith based critics believe that the empirical starting point opens the Christian theologian to an unanswerable critique from modern scientific forces. Natural theology can be traced back to the great chain of being argument of Aristotle. The new science rejected that chain of causality, leaving the Wayland style of natural religion vulnerable to the modernist criticism. For Thornbury, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy protected Christian theology from this critique. One knows the reality of God because God revealed Himself to humanity in the Bible. When one begins with revelation, the initial assumption is that God is the basis of all being and the Bible is the authority from which one affirms the reality of God. Liberalism too easily leads to naturalism, secularism, immorality, and cultural decline. Liberalism is tolerant, pluralistic, and focused on material progress. The modernist emphasis on evolutionary science and historical interpretation of the Bible undercuts the claim that natural theology can provide certainty with regard to the reality of God. If the integrity of the biblical revelation is not preserved, liberal relativism can weaken and destroy Christian America. Contemporary evangelical conservatism of the variety set forth in Thornbury's analysis rejects the effort at a Christian/liberal synthesis. Such a synthesis, as attempted by Wayland and the Northern Baptist theologians, only led to atheism and cultural decline.

Concluding Remarks

Walter Rauschenbusch and John Dewey rejected the claim to certainty and the reality of a fixed physical and moral order that was at the heart of the vision of Francis

Wayland. Yet their concern for a tolerant, just, and democratic community was very much in the moral tradition of Wayland. Their concern with economic exploitation and the industrial tendency to turn human beings into nothing but means for the capitalist enterprise reflect themes that Wayland articulated a half century earlier. Both Dewey and Rauschenbusch believed that faith, as they understood it, was necessary to achieve a progressive and just social order. In this belief, they echoed Wayland. Americans of a liberal mind may find the Christian evangelicalism of Wayland too restrictive for the pluralistic and secular life style that they desire, but they will find a kindred spirit in his opposition to racial inequality, American militarism, capitalist expansion, and the domination of mass culture.

Contemporary Christians, on the other hand, often find in Wayland a thinker who was too worldly. His genuine evangelical faith does not overcome the epistemological flaws in his world view. He failed to provide an intellectual basis from which the major challenges of scientific modernism can be addressed. While his tolerant liberalism may have been practical in a rather homogeneous, antebellum America, it was unable to cope with Darwinism, technological change, and pluralism. Contemporary evangelical Christians have turned to other traditions for help. They have attacked the Scottish Common Sense philosophical tradition for its attempt to create an empirical epistemology, and they have embraced European idealism and the Protestant Reform tradition in search of intellectual tools with which to do battle with modern secular liberalism.

Many of the themes of the life and work of Wayland remain in contemporary America. We still struggle to find an education that is likely to promote a democratic

economic and political order. We wonder how we can produce a citizenry that will take responsibility for its community, reject the soul withering influence of mass culture, and recreate the next generation. We struggle with how to promote freedom around the world without building a military empire, and we strike out against the power of big government and big business to overwhelm the self-determination of the individual man or woman. American liberals believe that science and public action are the best tools to use to overcome the challenges of modernity, while conservatives believe that obedience to God and personal moral action are the true path to progress. Wayland would have agreed with both positions, but he would have also disagreed with them in many ways. He believed that science and education could be used to improve the lives of humanity, but he distrusted collective action. He believed that obedience to God and individual moral action was the only way to achieve true human progress, but he also believed in a less defensive Christianity. He affirmed tolerance toward even the non-believer, and he supported a democratic educational system. Wayland sought to create a Christian and liberal society. His failure to create such a moral synthesis is a testimony to just how much America changed in the years after he passed from the scene.

CONCLUSIONS

At times it seems that evangelical Christians and liberals are divided by an unbridgeable chasm. Each group feels deeply committed to a world view that they believe to be true and morally righteous. Liberals affirm personal self-determination; the right to control one's own body, including reproduction and sexual preference; first amendment freedoms; and at least some level of economic and social equality. Liberals are pluralistic, inclusive, tolerant, and meritocratic. They look to the public arena to solve social and economic problems, they believe that American foreign policy should be generous and that the American culture should be offered to the peoples of the world on a voluntary basis. In other words, the national values should be demonstrated by example and not spread militarily. This description of liberalism may be called, the civil libertarian position, but there is also a second liberal position.

This second liberal tradition looks to John Locke for inspiration. This perspective advocates for the rights of property, self-interest, small government, laissez-faire economics, private corporate autonomy, and competition. Lockean liberals emphasize the freedom to pursue private economic goals and oppose government attempts to regulate economic activity. Free trade, a market economy, and a foreign policy based on national interests characterize this perspective's international outlook.

At times there may be conflict within and among these liberal perspectives. For much of the first century and a half of American national life, Lockean liberals supported

a high protective tariff, while civil libertarians advocated for a free trade policy. Lockean liberals argued that the rights of property, economic growth, and international self-interests required government action; while libertarian democrats viewed the tariff to be a threat to economic, political, and social equality. In modern times, the positions have shifted, as Lockeans favor free trade and civil libertarians seek government protection.

The complexity of the debate over the meaning of liberalism makes it difficult to understand American culture. Differing principles may generate policy positions that seem to contradict liberal principles, as the tariff battles so aptly illustrate. Moreover, changing social problems and class interests redefine policy positions, further confusing the understanding of the meaning of liberalism in American culture. Yet the civil libertarian position, emphasizing equality, inclusion, and public responsibility for social progress on the one hand; and a Lockean perspective, emphasizing property rights, the pursuit of self-interests, and private solutions to social concerns on the other, do seem to persevere in the nation's cultural, economic, and political life.

But if the meaning of liberalism is difficult to determine, the meaning for American culture of Protestant evangelicalism is equally controversial, generating a significant amount of attention from historians who have and do view it from a variety of very different perspectives. This interest is not surprising if, as Richard Carwardine argues, at least 40 percent of the American population in antebellum America was influenced by Protestant evangelical culture, making it the most important subculture in the political life of the nation.¹ He believes that, in general, this had a negative effect on the ability of the nation to deal with the political issues that led up to the Civil War,

¹ Richard J Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 43.

because evangelicals polarized the political culture of the nation, preferring church-going leaders to ones who perhaps had more political skill.

Historians Nathan O. Hatch and Daniel Walker Howe have argued that the evangelical movement was a pillar of the development of a democratic, forward thinking, and hopeful new culture.² In his influential study, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, Hatch has set forth the thesis that the evangelical movement interacted with the larger American culture to create a permanent democratic populace. Evangelicals rejected eastern religious elites to create their own leaders and institutions and infused the American culture with their spirit. In *The Political Culture of American Whigs*, Howe offered an alternative view of Whig political culture, arguing that Whigs as much as Democrats contributed to the formation of the American democracy, and that evangelical religion was a significant part of the Whig culture. He emphasized the efforts of the evangelicals to unite the nation in the face of Catholic opposition, to work for social reform, end slavery, and create a hopeful and future oriented faith in national progress.

Paul E. Johnson and Christine Heyrman have argued, on the other hand, that evangelical Christianity was a tool of social solidarity among Northern elites for social control of the industrial working classes, and provided an ideological validation for a racist, sexist, violent, and undemocratic Southern culture.³ Specifically, Johnson, writing in *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, took a much different view of the new religion. He argued that the evangelical religion, far from being democratic, acted to unite the

² Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989); Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whig* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

³ Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

emerging capitalist elite around a belief in their moral superiority, and to oppress the working classes through its monopoly on acceptable ideas and behaviors. And in *Southern Cross: The Making of the Bible Belt*, Heyrman examines Southern evangelicalism, asserting that evangelical religion prospered in the South only after it compromised with preexisting Southern culture. It is her contention that whatever democratic impulses evangelicalism originally possessed were given up as it became acculturated into a culture of racism, sexism, violence, and paternalism.

Mark A. Noll, writing in *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, presents an interpretation of evangelicalism that argues for a perspective that is different from any of the other historians.⁴ He has asserted that evangelical religion, American republicanism, and Scottish Common Sense philosophy were woven into a synthesis that dominated the culture of antebellum America. However, while this cultural form was highly successful, it ended tragically. The very success of evangelical Christianity in almost converting the whole nation caused it to be so completely identified with the culture that it had no space from which to raise a transcendent voice in the conflict that ended in the tragedy of the Civil War. Noll believes that evangelicalism in the antebellum era evolved into a unique new religion, combining Protestantism, American republicanism, and Common Sense philosophy to create a new belief system. It had democratic elements, but also met the needs for social integration. It was affirmative and hopeful, but it became too acculturated, becoming a regional voice for either the North or the South, and tragically failed to have a transcendent place from which to speak, when considering the issues that led up to the tragedy of the Civil War.

⁴ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

These quite different interpretations of evangelical religion in contemporary American culture arguably mirror the modern culture wars. Indeed, Protestant evangelical religion has been controversial throughout its history in American culture. While it has provided millions around the world with comfort, three tendencies in the faith often put it at odds with those who do not adhere to its belief system. Its Manichean world view divides persons and institutions into categories of good and evil, and the evangelicals are on the side of good. Second, evangelicals aggressively attempt to convert others to their faith and, finally, they often attempt to use government power to enforce their behavioral code. These tendencies often run counter to the democratic, tolerant, and pluralistic tendencies of a liberal society.

That being said, such differing interpretations of a historical era can probably only be fully understood by analyzing the starting point of the historian. Further, the divided perspectives of historians may not be the only way to view evangelical religion in the antebellum period, and the case of Wayland suggests that liberalism may be at least as much a cause of the failure of American culture as was the evangelical movement.

Wayland was an evangelical Christian and a liberal at a time in American history when cultural categories of identity were not so rigidly set. He lived in a time when it was still possible for a serious mainstream thinker to be both a liberal and an evangelical. He struggled to make compatible the two sources of American cultural identity. While his efforts ended in failure, his struggle is instructive. It can help us understand better the roots of our current conflicts, and perhaps give us a sense of what we have lost in the century and a half since he sought to set American culture in moral terms.

In the decades before the Civil War, Americans struggled to forge a cultural identity. Amidst enormous geographic expansion, technological innovation, population

growth, and ideological ferment, the American people struggled to establish a moral foundation for their community. They grappled with the issues of slavery, the treatment of the Native American peoples, the rise of political parties and the market economy, and wars of expansion. The two cultural resources with which they worked to create a moral basis for their new nation were the Protestant religion and liberalism. This study has explored the way in which one prominent Northern moralist, Francis Wayland, struggled to create a Christian and liberal moral synthesis for the new nation.

Wayland combined his Baptist evangelical faith and Scottish Common Sense philosophy to create the most widely used moral textbook in America in the decades leading up to the Civil War. He believed that there was no conflict between the science of his time and his Christian faith. The laws of nature that Newtonian science revealed were consistent with the laws that he derived from the Bible. One could know through science the physical and moral laws of the universe and then confirm and expand those laws through the reading of the Scriptures. One could know with certainty the truth of one's beliefs, using the dual proofs of science and Biblical revelation. At an epistemological level, liberal science and religious faith were mutually reinforcing. As we have seen, this synthesis was not to last. Evolutionary science injected a new scientific paradigm into the balance, and the Christian/liberal synthesis collapsed. Yet for a time, the Wayland synthesis was persuasive.

Early in his career, Wayland spoke for a position that united his Baptist faith and republican liberalism. He preached a doctrine of American nationalism that combined personal liberty, equality, and laissez-faire economics with Christian obedience to the command of God to love one's neighbor. He called for voluntary moral restraint, benevolence in the administration of wealth, and tolerance of others in religious matters.

He opposed the tariff, slavery, and the Mexican war. He supported democratic education and social reform, and became more and more hostile to Lockean liberal measures, as the pursuit of self-interest, an expansive foreign policy, and the aggressive promotion of slavery polarized the nation. He never gave up his belief in the possibility of a synthesis between evangelical Protestant Christianity and republican liberalism, but he bitterly opposed the development of Lockean liberal policies. He hoped that the victory of the North in the Civil War would provide an opportunity for a new start. He prayed that the suffering of the war would purge the nation of its sinful behavior, restore the simple moral injunction to love one's neighbor, and bring the pursuit of economic gain under the discipline of Christian faithfulness. He did not live to see his hopes and prayers smashed in the following years, but his vision for a moral America has continued to resonate in both Christian and secular liberals of the civil libertarian variety.

Wayland inherited a strong bias toward religious liberty from his Baptist parents. He never lost his belief that the central player in a moral social order was the moral individual. As an advocate for the missionary enterprise, an opponent of slavery, and as a Baptist Church leader, he labored to maintain a tolerant and voluntary environment. One might urge his neighbor to act morally, but genuine progress depended on the free choice of the individual. The good society would come into being only as obedient individuals voluntarily chose to act according to the moral laws of God. Freedom of religious choice, the limitations of moral responsibility, and limited power in the hands of corporate organizations were essential elements in the efforts to maintain freedom for the individual to act morally. Christian moral choices could only occur in social settings where civil libertarian guarantees of personal freedom existed, and such guarantees could only exist where Christian faith governed the conscience of men and women. In a society where the

people ruled and where privilege had been discredited, moral order depended upon humble obedience to the law of God. The Christian/liberal synthesis alone could preserve the new nation from chaos.

Following the lead of Noll's argument, Stewart Davenport has suggested that evangelical Christianity, Common Sense philosophy, and republicanism came together after 1800 to form a dominant cultural form in early America.⁵ The synthesis that I have described in the thought of Wayland is very similar to the Noll formulation. Davenport further suggested that this synthesis often conflicted with Lockean liberalism. He hypothesized that the conflict was present within individuals, and that Wayland might be worth viewing in this light. While Wayland clearly did find himself in conflict with Lockean liberalism, he simultaneously confessed a desire for literary recognition, for success in his presidency of Brown University, and for public approval, all sins in his opinion. These sins were, of course, positive values in the emerging liberal ideology. Ambition, self-promotion, and worldly accomplishment were aspects of the liberal value which was placed on the independent self. Not humility, but self-assertion and self-worth were the core values of this new creed. Wayland prayed for humility, but he recognized that he also desired the fruits of self-interested success. His Christian values were threatened by his liberal impulses, and he fought to overcome them. It is possible that he found in the concept of duty a way to reconcile the conflict. He worked extravagantly in all his endeavors. The result of his work was a large amount of success and recognition, but he explained his work not in terms of ambition but in the language of Christian duty.

⁵ Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*; Davenport, "Another Conflict or Consensus: Christian America/Liberal America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (Summer 2004).

Such was the internal synthesis that found its way into much of his moral and philosophical writing and preaching.

The Noll argument is relevant to this analysis, because he argues that the Christian/republican synthesis caused Christian republicans to lose their distance from American political culture and thus fail to offer a transcendent critique of the events that led to Civil War. He also said that Wayland was, from time to time, an exception, because he did judge critically the American Nation. My analysis of Wayland leads me to the conclusion that Noll was correct in seeing Wayland as a critic who was able at times to transcend American nationalism to lodge a prophetic protest; but I believe that Noll missed the dynamic at work. The Christian/republican synthesis, or the civil libertarian/Christian synthesis of Wayland, was the ground from which he launched his protest. Wayland's synthesis provided a critical set of beliefs from which he could judge the growing dominance of Lockean liberalism. The Southern Lockean version which affirmed slavery and the Northern version which was giving rise to market capitalism became locked in a tragic race to war. In the end, Wayland was pulled into the conflict on the side of the North, although he hoped for a restoration of Christian and republican virtue after the war had purged the nation. Indeed, the relationships among evangelical Christianity, republicanism, and Lockean liberalism are among the most complex relationships of that era, and of American history, but it has endured.

I began this study with a question. Why did the citizens of Providence ask Francis Wayland to address them at the time of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln? I will conclude this narrative with a suggested answer. Wayland had always addressed the citizens of Providence in traumatic situations, and this must have played a part in their request, but it doesn't answer why they had listened to him in the past. They had great

respect for him, but why did they honor this stubborn, frail old man? Perhaps it was because he had always worked as hard as he could for what he believed was in the best interests of their community. He spoke on behalf of what they believed to be the best in them, and he spoke for the unity of their two most valued cultural resources. He offered a Godly Christian perspective, but he also spoke in the language of the democracy. He told them when he believed that their behavior had brought the judgment of God down upon them, and he told them when he thought they deserved praise. He helped them to make sense of their calamities with the two languages that they understood. His evangelical Protestant Christian faith and his liberal impulses defined the public arena and, for a generation, helped to define American culture. The citizens of Providence turned to Wayland because they believed that he possessed the personal integrity, democratic empathy, and religious hope which was needed to understand their anger and grief, and to comfort them in their time of trial.

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VITA

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He moved to Boulder, Colorado, in 1974 to take a position with the University of Colorado as Director of the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities. He was also an adjunct professor in the Graduate School, teaching for eighteen years in the School of Education.

For over thirty-five years, Homer Page has been a disability rights advocate, a consultant on disability issues, and a writer and publisher. He is currently the Executive Director of Disability Media Inc. and Chairperson of the Columbia [Missouri] Disabilities Commission. He is a life-long Democrat and political activist who, while in Boulder, served two terms as a Boulder City Council member and two terms as a Boulder County Commissioner.

In 2004, Homer Page realized a long-standing dream to seriously study American history. He enrolled in the graduate program in history at the University of Missouri and this dissertation is the end product of his studies. He plans to continue researching and writing in search of a clearer understanding of the meaning of the American past for the nation's present and future.