

# Remaking the Modern Mind: Revisiting Carl Henry's Theological Vision

Paul R. House

**Paul R. House** serves as Associate Dean and Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. A noted biblical scholar and OT theologian, he has published numerous articles and books, including *1, 2 Kings* in the New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman, 1995), *Old Testament Theology* (InterVarsity, 1998), and *Lamentations* in the Word Biblical Commentary (Thomas Nelson, 2004). Dr. House has taught at a number of colleges and seminaries, including The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he served as the first editor of The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology.

Though one can certainly critique his theological vision, it is historically untenable to ignore or dismiss Carl Henry's role in the shaping of twentieth-century American evangelicalism. His involvement in evangelical life is well known and has been well documented by himself and others.<sup>1</sup> He graduated from Wheaton College (B.A. 1938; M.A. 1941) and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary (B.D. 1941; Th.D. 1942), both evangelical institutions at the time (CT 73, 76, 102, and 107).

He taught at Northern Baptist from 1942-1947 (CT, 103-107) and then became a founding faculty member at Fuller Seminary, where he served from 1947-1956. While teaching at Fuller he taught summer classes at Gordon College and completed his doctorate from Boston University in 1950 (CT, 114-143). In 1956 he became the first editor of *Christianity Today* (CT, 144-174), and in 1966 acted as Chairman of the Berlin Congress on Evangelism, the first major international congress sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (CT, 252-262). After leaving *Christianity Today* in 1968 under difficult circumstances (CT, 264-287), he spent a sabbatical year at Cambridge University (CT, 302-322), and then taught at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School from 1969-1974 (CT, 323-351). He maintained a part-time teaching presence at Trinity until 1997. He lectured for World Vision worldwide from 1974-1986, and in "retirement" taught and lectured at several colleges, universities, and seminaries

(CT, 352-380). At one time there were precious few institutional stops Henry had *not* made. Along the way he was elected president of the Evangelical Theological Society and the American Theological Society. He participated in the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy and in the Evangelical Affirmations conference. Through years of service given, number of miles traveled, quantity of books penned, and diversity of talks given, Henry proved his dedication to evangelical life and thought. His service deserves to be compared favorably to that of other seminal American evangelical leaders such as Harold Ockenga and Billy Graham, as well as British evangelical leaders such as James Packer and John Stott.

Henry's most enduring legacy may well be his writings, which number well into the scores of books, articles, editorials, and edited volumes. His theological writing has appeared in seven decades. His most significant achievement is his six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority*, which appeared in three two-volume installments between 1976-1983, but which was never sold *as a set* until Crossway Books reprinted the volumes in 1999. Coupled with earlier works such as *Remaking the Modern Mind* (1946), *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947), *The Protestant Dilemma* (1948), and *Christian Personal Ethics* (1956), to name just a few of those early works, these later volumes demonstrate a consistent, sustained, comprehensive vision for evangelical theology and its place in the world.

This vision was comprehensive in that it considered the proposed evangelical worldview as the hope of the world, not just the way to reform straying American denominations affected negatively by modernism. This vision was a sustained one in that it remained amazingly consistent for over fifty years. It deepened and broadened, especially as it was shared in several cultural contexts, yet retained its basic shape.

Clearly, Henry's theological program deserves exploration on historical grounds alone. But his vision also merits examination now because of the situation evangelicalism faces. Now that Henry has died, there remain few luminaries from his generation. Billy Graham and John Stott are octogenarians, and James Packer is in his seventies. Institutions that were founded or rose to prominence in the last century are now experiencing theological "growing pains." The list of reasons could be extended but the point is clear: evangelicalism must examine what it wants to be and do in today's world. Its adherents need to embrace a vision fit for the times.

This article seeks to present Henry's vision as it unfolded in his lifetime and to assess its usefulness for the current situation. The goal is not only to determine whether Henry's vision *is* at the heart of evangelicalism now; the goal is to decide whether this vision *ought to be* at the heart of today's evangelical enterprise. Stated simply, Henry's vision for theology was that it be epistemologically viable, methodologically coherent, biblically accurate, socially responsible, evangelistically oriented, and universally applied. In this way theology will thereby serve the church universal, which was the view of the church most important to him.

Henry's vision was that evangelical theology be nothing less than God's means of remaking modern and postmodern minds.

### **The Shaping of an Evangelical Mind: 1913-1942**

Carl Henry was born on Long Island, New York, on January 22, 1913, to immigrant German parents. He had little Christian instruction during adolescence. He became a newspaperman while in high school and continued this career path after graduation. Due to the constant prayers of a godly woman called Mother Christie and a persistent lay speaker, Henry was converted in 1933. Besides beginning his own walk with Christ, this event affected his worldview in the sense that from that time forward he believed that if a "pagan newspaperman" could be saved from sin then it was possible for anyone to come to Christ. Though he never professed facility in personal evangelism, in time it became a way of life. When I asked him in 1999 what one thing seminarians should know he replied, "Tell them never to forget the glory of a soul saved." Throughout his career, which was dominated by scholarly theological engagement, world evangelism was always on his mind, part of his ministry goals, and a key component of his theological vision.

Based on the recommendation of friends, Henry applied to and was accepted by Wheaton College in 1935. While an undergraduate Henry came under the tutelage of Philosophy Professor Gordon Clark, who had taught at the University of Pennsylvania and who later taught at Butler University for many years. Clark espoused Calvinism, careful epistemological foundations, and serious Christian piety, all emphases evident in Henry's

writings. Henry also met future evangelical leaders and had his first brushes with denominational controversy during these years. He came to know Billy Graham, Ruth Bell, Harold Lindsell, and Kenneth Taylor, among others. Most importantly, he met Helga Bender, the daughter of pioneer missionaries to Cameroon, and married her in 1940. Wheaton College's president, J. Oliver Buswell, was involved in the Presbyterian controversies of the 1930's, and this involvement was part of the reason he was relieved of his duties in 1940. Henry also had his first preaching experiences during his undergraduate days, most of which came in Presbyterian settings.

From 1938 to 1942 Henry pursued and attained three graduate degrees, became a Baptist, and served as a pastor. He settled his denominational affiliation in 1939. After careful consideration and detailed conversation with a trusted pastor, Henry was immersed at First Baptist Church of Babylon, New York. He later wrote that his understanding of the Bible, coupled with the Presbyterian doctrinal controversies, made this a sound decision (*CT*, 84). Meanwhile, he worked at Wheaton College and studied for an M.A. in the college's fledgling graduate school, and simultaneously took courses towards the Bachelor of Divinity degree at Northern Baptist. The former degree was conferred on May 26, 1941, and the latter on June 16, 1941. Based more on his pastoral work and his newspaper years than on his philosophical explorations, Henry wrote a doctoral thesis entitled *Successful Church Publicity*, and received his Northern doctorate May 22, 1942. From October 1940 to January 1943 he was pastor of Humboldt Park Baptist Church, a congregation in the German Baptist Conference, which

was his wife's home denomination. This congregation ordained him in 1941.

These undergraduate and graduate years contributed to Henry's theological vision in several ways. First, Clark's influence (and that of other excellent professors such as Alexander Grigola) convinced Henry to seek a serious, sustained, in-depth integration between biblical faith and human reason. He refused to divorce rigorous research and personal piety. Second, he learned to assess and generally to avoid *denominational* controversy by analyzing the Buswell incident. Third, he formed a clearly evangelical, interdenominational vision. Though he remained a Baptist to his death, he viewed himself as a Christian first, an evangelical second, and a Baptist third. This list of priorities is the key to grasping his views on ecclesiology. Fourth, early classroom experiences led him to pursue a teaching and writing life. They also left him with definite ideas about what a college ought to instill in its students' intellectual lives. Fifth, having gained pastoral experience he never forgot the difficulty of local church ministry, and he never forgot to stress its importance.

### **The Expression of an Evangelical Theological Vision: 1942-1957**

By the time Henry received his Northern Baptist doctorate he had begun the transition from student and journalist to theologian, though the process was hardly complete. His first two books reflect this beginning stage. *The Pacific Garden Mission* (1942) chronicled the history of a benevolent ministry, in this case a famous rescue mission. Henry's dissertation, *Successful Church Publicity* (1943), sought to aid churches in finding effective ways to "get the word out" about their ministries. To the end of his life Henry

continued to stress the need for finding appropriate ways to advertise everything from Christian values to Easter sunrise services in Pasadena, California, and Watertown, Wisconsin. Thus, these books took a journalistic approach to Christian subjects Henry considered vital. His theological vision would come out later, but these books represented themes to which Henry returned later, as will be seen.

Henry's next three books demonstrated his promise as a theologian and offered the first indications of a maturing Christian worldview. These volumes clearly declared his theological vision, and indeed did so in a way readers of his later books will recognize as distinctly his. Each of these volumes expounded one or more crucial elements of this vision.

The first of these books, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (1946), is in many ways the most significant of Henry's seminal works. Based on his studies at Wheaton and Northern, as well as on summer studies at Indiana University and unfolding doctoral studies at Boston University, Henry sought ways to do nothing less than what his title asserts—remake the modern mind. He asserts in the introduction, "My own conviction is that the modern mind will come to maturity only when its contemporary reversals are transmuted into a return to that Christian theism which makes intelligible the scene of human activity."<sup>2</sup> To begin this remaking he assessed the decades of the first half of the twentieth century and found them to be some of the most terrible in human history. Next, he surveyed and critiqued four basic elements of the reigning worldview of the day: the inevitability of human progress, the inherent goodness of man, the ultimate reality of nature, and the ultimate animality of

man.<sup>3</sup> He followed these chapters with a critique of naturalism and then-current formulations of the definition of God, and then asserted the reasonableness of Christianity and its teachings on morality.<sup>4</sup> He concluded the monograph with a summary chapter on how the modern mind could be remade.<sup>5</sup>

As is true of many of his subsequent works, the final chapter offers a succinct summary of the book as a whole and suggests goals for further study and action. Here Henry asserts that the modern mind is built on unreasonable precepts. He suggests that the medieval mind was more rational than the modern mind, since it believed that "absolute truth has been placed revelationally into man's possession."<sup>6</sup> This revelational truth offers a plausible explanation of why human beings act as they do and a plausible way to live effectively in the world. In other words, the Christian view of redemption and discipleship is more reasonable and effective than modern naturalism or ancient idealism. The Christian emphasis on the revelation of an "eternal unchanging moral order" and on a "personal God, creator of all things, who for man's redemption had become incarnate in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, and who regenerated lost sinners and destined them to conformity to the image of His son" makes more sense to Henry than the naturalistic alternative.<sup>7</sup> This belief can lead not only to salvation, but to a better understanding of the true, the good, and the beautiful as well.<sup>8</sup> It will lead to abundant exciting life, not just the reclamation of a culture.<sup>9</sup> Halfway measures will not do. Christian moralism and mediating views of scripture and redemption are superior to Modernism, but they are not as effective as the biblical worldview.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, he predicts that the impetus for this remaking may well come from South and Latin America rather than from the United States or Europe.<sup>11</sup>

*Remaking the Modern Mind* introduced several common Henry themes. The book emphasized the need to know modern thought intimately before critiquing it. It argued for the reasonableness of the Christian faith as it is found in inerrant scripture. It concluded that the medieval mind, though not perfect, is superior to the modern mind, and called readers to go back in time for help rather than trusting to inevitable human progress. It emphasized human sin and the biblical solution to that sin. Stated simply, this volume set forth many elements of Henry's mature thought, at least in miniature. The book stressed epistemology, methodology, theological fidelity based on biblical revelation, and engagement with modern thought. It set forth what later became his standard approach to theological problems with one notable exception—it did not treat the doctrine of God in detail.

Henry thought that his next volume, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947), would simply be a "tract for the times" (*CT*, 113). After all, it began as a series of articles written for a popular magazine. But William Eerdmans, Henry's publisher, thought that people would take the essays more seriously if they had to pay a dollar for a book rather than getting them as part of a magazine subscription (*CT*, 112-113). Because of its compelling title and challenging content, however, this short book continues to exert influence today. Though it is certainly dated now because of its specific historical references, its main lines of argument remain valid. Eerdmans

reprinted it in 2003.

The book's main thesis seems disarmingly simple at first. Henry argues that Fundamentalism's conscience is uneasy because it has neglected its God-given, biblically revealed mandate to engage the major cultural issues of the day in a biblically ordered manner.<sup>12</sup> To support his thesis, Henry claims that Fundamentalism too often reduced ethical instruction to a list of "do's" and "don'ts" such as "don't smoke," "don't drink," and "don't go to the movies." This approach left the movement voiceless on social matters like sexual ethics, labor concerns, and political integrity. He noted that an overly negative view of what the church could accomplish before Christ's return partly fuelled this mentality,<sup>13</sup> and claimed that concern for social ills had been illegitimately subsumed by the legitimate desire to win lost persons and see them transformed. In other words, it was fine to help a drunkard get saved and sober, but it was not fine to take on the liquor trade as an industry or alcoholism as a social problem.

Most importantly, Henry claimed that Fundamentalism's belief in God's inerrant word compelled them to apply the scriptures to all of life.<sup>14</sup> It is this point that takes Henry's indictment from the simple to the complex. Two points illustrate this complexity. First, his assertions about the Bible force fundamentalists and evangelicals to base their movements *completely* on biblical fidelity.<sup>15</sup> Otherwise, criticizing liberals for biblical infidelity is a simple case of hypocrisy. Second, his approach forces believers into the difficult world of constantly forming a truly biblical worldview truly relevant to the times. Put another way, his claims make Christians become Bible saturated, theologically knowledgeable, applicationally

adept, and socially committed individuals who want to build a better world, not just make a better life or small community. Claiming that the Bible both commands us to act and directs those actions takes Christians out of the realm of simplistic conversionism.

Henry merely sketched a plan of action for conservatives at this time,<sup>16</sup> though he offered more details later in books like *Christian Personal Ethics* (1957), *A Plea for an Evangelical Demonstration* (1971), and *Christian Countermoves in a Decadent Culture* (1986). Still, *Uneasy Conscience* marked the beginning of Henry's consistent pleas for evangelical cultural engagement. Clearly, he believed a remade mind would strive to help remake society, not just remake individuals.

Having taken on the ambitious programs of remaking the modern mind and modern fundamentalism, Henry's next volume attempted to shape the Protestant mind. Or, at least he wished to relieve what he called *The Protestant Dilemma* (1948). This dilemma was, according to Henry, that Protestantism had embraced and generally rejected Modernism by 1948, and was now turning to the neo-supernaturalism of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. Though he was probably overly optimistic, Henry believed that evangelicals had a historic opportunity to influence theological opinion. As he writes in the preface,

The view which the mid-twentieth century man takes of God, of man, and of sin and redemption, will in the last analysis color his view of everything else. That is what makes the questions of revelation, and of sin, and of Christology, so remarkably contemporary. And that is precisely what creates the present cultural stalemate an opportunity for a vigorous proclamation of the Biblical *good tidings*, an opportunity

unrivaled in church history even by the Reformation.<sup>17</sup>

To meet this opportunity Henry surveyed the current theological scene, as well as the current view of revelation, sin, and Christ. He concluded the volume with an excellent summary chapter committed to charting a positive course for the Protestant horizon.

The initial pages of Henry's analysis of the impasse in Protestant thought covered familiar ground. He notes the weaknesses of Modernism, Naturalism, and Idealism, then posits the appropriateness of considering the option of biblical theism.<sup>18</sup> In the midst of this analysis he stressed more than in his previous works the centrality of revelation. He asserts, "The theological tensions in the mid-twentieth century concern the whole gamut of world thought. But the pivot point of these tensions is the question of revelation."<sup>19</sup> Why? Because a new view of revelation brought with it a new view of the human race and its sin and Jesus' role in the redemption of sinners.<sup>20</sup>

In his discussion of revelation Henry noted that despite the growing rejection of Modernism certain vestiges of its basic tenets remained prevalent in theological discussion. These tenets include "an evolutionary view of origins, a higher critical view of the Scriptures, and a reluctance to define revelation in propositional terms."<sup>21</sup> He adds that the Bible revealed God's great acts in history, yet he observes that the Bible also contains propositional statements about God and the authoritative interpretations of God's acts in history.<sup>22</sup> Thus, though the testimony of the Spirit is vital in Christian life, it cannot replace the words the Spirit inspired in scripture. In other words, he rejects Brunner's approach to revelation and authority.<sup>23</sup>

He considers Brunner's unwillingness to identify the Bible with God's word, his acceptance of higher critical views of the Bible's events and authorship, and his appeal to the Reformers for support for his views unconvincing.<sup>24</sup> Instead, he retains the doctrine of verbal inspiration and inerrancy, though he notes that this position, like all others, has its own set of problems.<sup>25</sup> He asserts that Christian theism may be defended without inerrancy, but states that "the problem becomes the retention of biblical authority, once inerrancy is modified, however slightly."<sup>26</sup> When discussing Brunner's insistence on the primacy of Christ, Henry observes that "there is no revelation of Christ apart from the scriptures (how does Brunner know the Holy Spirit testifies to the historic Christ?)."<sup>27</sup> He concludes this section by emphasizing that the difficulties inherent in mid-twentieth century views of revelation could best be addressed through a renewed emphasis on the unity of biblical theology, the importance of propositional truth, and the connection between revelation and authority.<sup>28</sup>

Henry touches on familiar themes in the section on sin. As in *Remaking the Modern Mind*, he emphasizes that a naturalistic, evolutionary approach to human beings negates their sinful natures, and he stresses the fact that idealistic views of people shift responsibility for sin from the person to some psychological problem.<sup>29</sup> Biblical theism, on the other hand, argues that human sin is a matter of rebellion against God that can only be atoned for by the death of Christ.<sup>30</sup> Thus much rests on the doctrine of sin. He concludes, "An adequate view of sin has implications also for the whole of Christian theology; man is a sinner indeed—so much modern thought has learned; man is the heir of the

grace of God—this it needs to learn, yet cannot until first it unlearns the non-Biblical understanding of its sinfulness."<sup>31</sup>

Henry is a bit more positive about the status of the mid-twentieth century view of Christ. He claims that mid-twentieth century scholars were moving away from humanistic views of Jesus to "higher supernatural ground."<sup>32</sup> In particular, he praises Barth and Brunner for refusing to reduce Christ to human limits, for insisting on Trinitarian formulae for Protestant Dogmatics, and for analyzing the two natures of Christ so carefully.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, he cautions that Barth and Brunner's approach to scripture might not yield the needed authority for a permanent return to orthodox treatments of Christ, or to a serious enough approach to human sin, and wonders why the ecumenical creeds are not sufficient for dogmatic purposes.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Henry notes with appreciation Barth and Brunner's arguments against Liberalism and its modernistic children, as well as their claims for Christ, but believes that a return to the full authority of scripture is necessary for the mid-twentieth century mind to find itself. He concludes,

Return to the sacred scriptures—that is the battle cry. Those who have broken in our times with some of the presuppositions of Harnack and Herrmann have not broken with it enough. They know that God is come once-for-all in Christ—to this extent they have the main trunkline of clear Christological conviction which connects the Christian centuries—but they have only a fallible revelation, and hence their God-Man must always be, to some extent, a revelation obscured as well as a revelation revealed, a *Deus absconditus* no less than *Deus revelatus*. The mid-twentieth century has a diversity of higher Christologies. Is it not tragic indeed that God's

supreme revelation should be thus obscured?<sup>35</sup>

In his final chapter, Henry discusses the centrality of biblical revelation in the answering of the human dilemma. He asks whether humanity's emotional need for God, intellectual need for reasonable faith, and desire for a complete revelation of redemption can be met together. He argues that in biblical revelation the answer is a positive one. God has done something in Christ that has been done nowhere else. Thus, he claims the exclusivity of Christ for salvation, though he observes that this claim has always been an offense to many believers and non-believers.<sup>36</sup> He asserts that human sin is such that people cannot save themselves, yet not so severe that they cannot grasp divine revelation. Thus, he claims, "God has given a rational revelation which, without setting aside human reason as an instrument, is corrective of the distorted and inadequate views which man has by virtue of moral revolt, and aims at a full surrender of human life to the divine in a redemptive relationship."<sup>37</sup> Since everything hinges on what God has spoken and how God has interpreted his own activity in and by means of scripture, a return to a truly biblical theology is the best hope for the solution of the Protestant dilemmas regarding revelation, sin, and Christ.<sup>38</sup> In short, "The dilemma of Protestantism, no less than any other dilemma of human history, cannot hope for an abiding solution, unless it comes to terms with that word which, while couched in the words of men, has been for prophets and apostles, and for the Christian community, the *word of God*."<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, the three volumes just surveyed produced in outline much of what Henry expounded later, particularly in

*God, Revelation and Authority*. *Remaking the Modern Mind* set forth his conviction that Christian theology should be philosophically grounded, and his belief that Christian theology should seek to win the entire world for the savior. *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* revealed Henry's commitment to ethical engagement as a necessary, not just a legitimate, evangelical activity. *The Protestant Dilemma* asserted Henry's conviction that explication of the implications of the full authority of the Bible is the key to the problems of revelation, sin, and the life and work of Christ. It also demonstrated that Henry did not just criticize scholars like Barth and Brunner. Rather, he appreciated their contributions and disputed elements of their thought he found lacking philosophical or biblical substance.

At the same time, his strong interest in the doctrine of God was not as prominent in these books as one might expect. This apparent "gap" was partially met by the small book *Notes on the Doctrine of God* (1948). Based on Sunday school lectures that would seem incredibly technical by typical standards of the early twenty-first century, as well as on added footnotes, this volume traced the case for believing in God and the nature of the living God of the Bible. Basic themes such as God's names, sovereignty, holiness, love, and triunity were covered. Perhaps most significantly for Henry's theological method, he stresses the importance of philosophical proofs for the existence of God, yet states that it is in scripture that God directly reveals himself and *explains* that revelation.<sup>40</sup> While showing respect for philosophy and its appeal to human reason, he writes that special revelation is necessary for fallen human beings to know God.<sup>41</sup> Human moral

revolt makes both special revelation and divine redemption necessary.<sup>42</sup> Human beings can know they need redemption and understand what God has promised, but they cannot reach God on their own or know specifically what God's grace amounts to without revelation. Thus, Henry continued to emphasize reason and revelation, this time in the context of the exposition of the nature of God.

By 1950 Henry had been teaching at Fuller Seminary for three years. He had also completed his Boston University dissertation, which was published as *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology* in 1951. Without question, these years of study contributed greatly to the depth of analysis in his previous four books. As was stated above, Henry's concluding chapters often serve as excellent summaries of the whole book. It is also true that many of his short books either provide a summary of earlier books or a glimpse into his future concerns. In 1951 Henry also published *The Drift of Western Thought*, which had begun as the Riley lectures at Northwestern College, where Billy Graham served as president. In a personal conversation, Henry told me that he wrote the lectures, and thus the book, in a matter of a few days. Though this volume said little that Henry had not already said, it served as an excellent summary of his beliefs to that time. It covered in miniature, for instance, his views on the history of thought, the modern drift into Naturalism, Fundamentalism's flaws and gifts, and the need for a return to biblical theism. He summarizes future projects, particularly *God, Revelation and Authority*, when he writes that evangelical Christianity derives its convictions from "the living God who has spoken, who has inscripturated His revelation, and enters into personal relations with men."<sup>43</sup> In his

opinion, ethics, evangelism, missions, preaching, and all else involved in the application of the Christian worldview flow from these beliefs.

From 1952-1956 Henry continued a hectic schedule of teaching, writing, traveling, and lecturing in various venues. But he did not publish a book per year, partly because he took a sabbatical year in Scotland in 1953 to read contemporary philosophy and theology, and partly because he was projecting a large volume on ethics. This treatise was published in 1957 under the title *Christian Personal Ethics*. The book included a detailed description of ancient and modern ethical systems, a biblical basis for personal ethics, and an analysis of current problems in the discipline. *Christian Personal Ethics* was the natural outgrowth of the biblical theology proposed in *The Protestant Dilemma*, the philosophical underpinnings outlined in *Remaking the Modern Mind*, and the personal and social concerns underscored in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. He hoped to pen a volume on Christian social ethics later, but was never able to do so, except in the self-confessed preliminary collection of essays *Christian Social Ethics* (1971).

During 1956-1957 Henry spent what he considered a trial year as the founding editor of *Christianity Today*. In 1957 he published a slender, four-essay book entitled *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology*. It is significant to note that he no longer stressed evangelical *opportunity*, as he had in the past. Rather, he emphasized evangelicalism's *responsibility* to preach, teach, evangelize, engage culture, and write in a comprehensive, attractive manner that brings biblical truth to bear on individuals and society. He believed that the time was particularly ripe for a

full-orbed evangelical penetration into the church, the academy, and world society. Indeed, he felt compelled to press this comprehensive theological viewpoint as widely and forcefully as possible.

To summarize this era in Henry's life, I offer the following four observations. First, by this time Henry had formed a coherent philosophical vision that took reason and human sinfulness into account. Second, he had crystallized his doctrine of full biblical authority and defended it as the most complete answer to the human dilemma. Third, he had outlined what he considered evangelicalism's ethical and theological responsibilities. Fourth, he had committed himself to disseminating evangelical theology as widely as possible, for he considered Christian theology *the* expression of God's plan for the human race. This last point is crucial for understanding Henry's next career move.

### **The Dissemination of a Theological Vision: 1956-1968**

In articles of this length it is often necessary to make hard, perhaps regrettable choices. It is necessary to make such a choice now. Despite the fact that Henry's years at *Christianity Today* may well be his most famous ones, this section of the article will be relatively brief. The reason for this decision is that during these years Henry propagated his vision more than he developed it. This comment is in no way meant to disparage his contribution to the evangelical cause or to the cause of visionary theology. It is just meant to observe that he was engaged more in activity than in writing and reflection. Still, these were fruitful years for Henry, ones in which many of his later ideas were first sketched out in lectures and talks. Besides these lectures and talks there

was at least one significant theological volume, and there were many memorable events, particularly the Berlin Congress on Evangelism. Overall, these years must be seen as ones in which Henry left few stones unturned attempting to answer his own call to arms. He did so by his work at the magazine he helped found, by editing volumes of collected essays, by writing a book devoted to the current state of theology, and by acting as the leader for a major evangelical congress.

Henry's work at *Christianity Today* represented a bold experiment in theology that cost him a great deal of personal time and energy. Because of his own sense of responsibility, however, he made the effort for twelve years. What was he trying to accomplish? Though it is unsigned, the first editorial in the magazine's history expressed Henry's goals and those of the other original editors. Without question, they were very lofty goals. The editorial states that the magazine "has its origin in a deep-felt desire to express historical Christianity to the present generation."<sup>44</sup> Believing that liberalism had failed to meet the needs of modern men and women, the editors wrote,

*Christianity Today* is confident that the answer to the theological confusion existing in the world is found in Christ and the Scriptures. There is evidence that more and more people are rediscovering the Word of God as their source of authority and power. Many of these searchers for the truth are unaware of the existence of an increasing group of evangelical scholars throughout the world. Through the pages of *Christianity Today* these men will expound and defend the basic truths of the Christian faith in terms of reverent scholarship and of practical application to the needs of the present generation.<sup>45</sup>

Further, the editors promised that the “doctrinal content of historic Christianity will be presented and defended.” They pledged to “apply the biblical revelation to the contemporary social crisis by presenting the implications of the total gospel message for every area of life.” They hoped to “supplement seminary training with sermonic helps, pastoral advice, and book reviews by leading ministers and scholars,” and they desired to counteract the “dissolving effect of modern scientific theory” by setting forth “the unity of the divine revelation in nature and Scripture.” Finally, they endeavored to do all this while upholding and stating constructively “the complete reliability and authority of the written Word of God.”<sup>46</sup>

In other words, Henry hoped to take academic theology to the masses. He wished to have a literate and informed clergy. He also desired to have one journal that would unite evangelicalism around theology and practice. In fact, he saw this magazine as part of a grand scheme for evangelical penetration. Besides the magazine, he thought that the movement required continued evangelistic breakthroughs like those represented by the Billy Graham crusades, sufficient textbook literature to challenge liberal thought, a breakthrough in Christian social action, and a community of Christian scholars thinking and working together on significant projects. Such ministries would in turn benefit the local church (see *CT*, 205).

Though it was not faultless, under Henry’s leadership the magazine maintained a high level of theological fidelity, quality writing, and discernment of the future. Readers were kept informed about major theological trends and major religious events. Associate editors eventu-

ally included evangelical leaders such as James Boice, Harold Lindsell, and Frank Gaebelien. Based at that time in Washington, D.C., the magazine operated at the heart of the American political scene. Of course, the project was always short on money. Critics often considered it too intellectually oriented or too radical in its social statements, even though Henry himself thought more should have been done in the latter area. Henry probably overestimated the actual human and financial resources at evangelicalism’s disposal. All told, however, it is hard to argue that the magazine did not fulfill much of its ambitious program.

Besides his editing work at *Christianity Today*, Henry edited several volumes of collected essays during this period. Each one was aimed at putting evangelical scholarship on a specific topic in the hands of teachers, students, and pastors. If full monographs were not available, Henry reasoned then at least a series of well written scholarly essays could fill the gap until such books could appear. Several prominent evangelical scholars contributed to these volumes. In this way Henry spearheaded the American version of what leaders such as John Stott, James Packer, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Douglas Johnston were trying to do in the United Kingdom.

Henry had one sabbatical while at *Christianity Today*. During 1963-1964 he traveled widely in Europe, Africa, and Asia. He met with such scholars as Helmut Thielicke, Rudolph Bultmann, and Karl Barth. He also stayed with Christian friends at virtually every stop. The literary fruit of this sabbatical was *Frontiers in Modern Theology* (1964).

In this volume, Henry charted, among other things, the European theologi-

cal scene from the Barthian revolution to the Bultmannian response. Henry had already assessed the strengths and weaknesses of Barth's proposals in earlier works, and his commendations and critiques remained pretty much the same. On the one hand he appreciated Barth's strong opposition to Liberalism and its reduction of biblical faith to human dimensions, and was grateful for his orthodox Christological formulations. On the other hand, he asserted that Barth's refusal to locate divine authority in the written word of scripture rather than in divine encounter would lead to a growing emphasis on existential encounter at the expense of biblical truth. To illustrate this premise, Henry noted the growth of branches of Bultmannian thought, none of which located ultimate authority in the Bible, or even confessed the sort of strong penultimate authority Barth assigned the scriptures. In other words, Barth's basis of authority was not sufficient to keep theology from moving much farther than Barth himself would wish to travel. Simply reaffirming and toning the definition of dialectic and paradox would not suffice. Ultimately, Barth's assertion of an errant Bible would not produce a suitable base for church dogmatics, even if one held the historic creeds in high esteem.

After his hectic sabbatical, Henry plunged into the planning and coordination of the Berlin Congress on Evangelism during 1965-1966. This ten-day event brought together 1200 delegates from 100 countries for theological reflection, practical instruction, and group discussion. Meeting in Berlin signaled commitment to the Reformation and to Christian brothers and sisters in communist dominated East Berlin. In his introductory remarks Henry noted that evangelicals are not

perfect, and cited the rancor over invitations to the conference itself as a sign of this imperfection. At the same time, he said, evangelicalism had a great opportunity to preach the whole gospel of God to the whole problem of mankind.<sup>47</sup> As was his habit, he affirmed that the scriptures were sufficient to deal with the social and spiritual challenges of the day. As was also his habit he did not minimize the problems that had to be faced or the ground that had to be covered. Certainly this meeting had its detractors and its faults, but overall it demonstrated the potential of broad-based evangelicalism to address a problem constructively. What remained to be seen, however, was how well evangelicalism could do in actually addressing the problem raised.

Henry discussed this matter of implementation in a series of lectures on the conference eventually published under the title *Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis* (1967). Henry claimed that the conference had brought notoriety to evangelicalism, but also that the conference had brought evangelicalism to the "brink of decision over three major concerns that impinge upon its evangelistic task in the world. These concerns are theological, socio-political and ecumenical."<sup>48</sup> As for theology, Henry argued again that though Barth had struggled to combat the existentialists through a renewed emphasis on the paradox of dialectic, "the door remained open to existentialism, with its contention that reality cannot be grasped as a rational system, through Barth's refusal to insist that the truth of revelation is given in the form of propositions universally valid for all men."<sup>49</sup> He added, "The existential and subjective outcome of neo-Protestant theology is strong evidence that Barth's principle,

namely, the self-revealing God, was too thin a premise to re-establish Biblical Christianity convincingly in the modern religious conflict.<sup>50</sup> Given the fallenness of man and the fallibility of the church and its self-derived authority, Henry concludes, "What therefore the Church now desperately needs is to recover the truth of revelation and the authoritative note whereby the Protestant Reformation recalled Western Christianity from the welter of traditions and speculation to the teaching of the Bible."<sup>51</sup>

Henry stated plainly that the time for simply addressing modernism with evangelism was gone. Now was the time for theological faculties to teach and write vigorously. Now was the time for churches to work for renewal. Now was the time for ministers to seek the kingdom of God rather than larger mailing lists. Indeed, he wrote, "The failure of evangelicalism to take the initiative theologically no longer indicates simply that they are strategically on the defensive because of a temporary religious situation; rather, it now raises the question over the present attitude and ability of evangelical forces."<sup>52</sup>

As could be expected, Henry connected his theological assertions and exhortations to other related arenas. Specifically, he thought that evangelism would be impoverished without sound biblical theology, social action would be left untouched by the average evangelical, and ecumenical activity would either die or become a mutant form of Christianity.<sup>53</sup> In other words, evangelicalism might end up where Fundamentalism had found itself by 1947, though perhaps with a better theology and fewer enemies. Thus, his book really asked evangelicals if they wanted to avoid crisis or plunge into a multi-faceted one.

The *Christianity Today* years gave Henry a platform from which to disseminate his views. They offered him tremendous access to theologians and theological discussion, and they allowed him to confirm his theological principles in a number of settings. Truly they helped him disseminate his vision. This vision continued to include the centrality of biblical revelation, the strong role of reason in theology, the problem of sin, the need for social engagement, and the priority of world evangelization. It continued to be a world, not local, vision.

What these years did not give him was time to write the sort of penetrating theological work that his abilities allowed. As a disseminator he was not a chief contributor. Also, because of their prominence these years leave some people with the notion that Henry was always a magazine editor, not a serious theologian. However unfair, the problem remains. Regardless, this era gave Henry future open doors that he would utilize effectively.

When Henry left *Christianity Today* under duress in 1968, it was a blow to him. After all, he had given twelve years to this cause, he was 55 years old, and he was looking for a job. However, his son Paul, later a congressman from Michigan, commented, "'Thank God, Dad, that you are no longer beholden to the evangelical establishment'" (CT, 275). His son may well have grasped the loss as an opportunity. If so, he proved prophetic, for his father's most creative and productive years were ahead of him.

### **The Presentation of a Mature Theological Vision: 1968-1983**

Having called for serious theological writing from an evangelical framework in *Evangelicals on the Brink of Crisis*, Henry

now set out to answer his own call to literary arms. During the next fifteen years he continued to pen essays that he gave as lectures that he then published in books. He kept writing articles and reviews with astonishing regularity, and he lectured widely. More importantly, he wrote his greatest work, the six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority*. Truly this project reveals a mature theologian at the top of his game. It constitutes the culmination of over forty years of study, reflection, engagement, and analysis, and it will be his most enduring legacy.

Before he wrote these six volumes, however, Henry had to go about the business of re-establishing his career as an academic theologian. Happily, he was able to spend the first year out of his editing duties on sabbatical in Cambridge, England. This year allowed him to read, discuss theology with British and continental theologians, and begin to plot the outline of what later became *God, Revelation and Authority*. As was true of his 1953 and 1963-1964 sabbaticals, Henry used every opportunity open to him to try to learn about current trends in theology from the theologians who were creating those trends. In the meantime, he stayed very much in contact with leaders of the worldwide evangelical movement.

By the time his sabbatical had ended, Henry had accepted an offer to become Professor of Theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. It seems from his autobiography that Henry thought that the seminary was more committed to evangelical theology than was the case. After a relatively short time there he came to the conclusion that the seminary housed professors who contended that “biblical authority and inspiration are doctrines compatible with scriptural

errancy and the affirmation of an inerrant Bible is uncritical and rests on a spurious doctrine of inspiration” (CT, 326). He noted that these professors “maintained an evangelical life of faith but considered the view of an inerrant Scripture a barrier to biblical scholarship, to which in any case they contributed little” (CT, 326). Not surprisingly, Henry began to spend some of each year teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where his good friend Kenneth Kantzer was Dean, though he did not finish his tenure at Eastern until 1974. The time at Eastern helped Henry witness firsthand how an evangelical seminary can begin to go in a broadly evangelical direction, make some strides to come back to its roots, then seek a new identity somewhere between evangelical orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy.

Though it is hard to choose from his occasional writings from the Eastern Seminary period, it may be that *A Plea for an Evangelical Demonstration* (1971) may be his most significant visionary work of that era. In this book Henry suggested ways for evangelicalism to unite in an all-out effort to take the gospel and its attendant theology to the world. He wondered what would happen if Campus Crusade for Christ and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship would work together in student ministry, each one doing what it did best. He wondered what would happen if the evangelical publishing houses constructed a strategy for printing various types of needed materials. He dreamed about what would happen if evangelical colleges and seminaries would produce serious theological literature for a searching world, and he wished to see evangelical mission boards find ways to integrate, not duplicate, their efforts. In short, he asked for a united evangelicalism to care

more about the whole work of the gospel than about their own mailing lists. Such pleas became normal for Henry in the next few years.

Starting in 1974 Henry served for a dozen years as Lecturer at Large for World Vision. This position gave him a world classroom in which to teach professors and theological students around the globe. At times he spent as many as three consecutive months lecturing abroad, quite often in Asia and Africa (see *CT*, 352-380). It was in these venues and in many in the United States that Henry first presented portions of *God, Revelation and Authority* to friendly and not-so-friendly audiences. Thus, *God, Revelation and Authority* was forged in both academic and ecclesiastical settings, though not in the traditional halls of academe.

*God, Revelation and Authority* was published in three installments of two volumes from 1976-1983. It was first projected as a two-volume work, then grew to four volumes, and finally to six. The first two volumes sold very well, the second two fairly well, and the third three less well. Oddly, their original publisher, Word Books, never sold the volumes as a set. The project was reviewed favorably by *The New York Times*, *Time*, and a number of theological journals. The volumes went out of print fairly quickly, and it became a bit of a challenge to secure the whole set, so Henry aficionados often share with one another how they collected their first set. Without question, these books best reflect Henry's mature thought.

*God, Revelation and Authority* unfolds in three parts. The first part consists of Henry's epistemological foundations for his project, and is found in volume one. The second part offers fifteen theses on revelation, which are then discussed in

volumes two, three, and four. The third part analyzes the nature of God, and consumes volumes five and six. Henry's definition of revelation and its implications are woven throughout the project.

From the start Henry had intended to begin his project with a volume on epistemology. He had long believed that the evangelical position alone could anchor contemporary men and women to divine truth, and he had long criticized scholars like Barth as much for their epistemology as for their conclusions. I am not a philosopher, so I must leave it to others to assess how well Henry succeeds in his formulations. What I can say is that after surveying the history of a century of hermeneutical and epistemological opinion Henry asserts that revelation itself is the basic epistemological axiom,<sup>54</sup> and he establishes ways of identifying and verifying it. He writes,

Divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its verifying principle; logical consistency is a negative test for truth and coherence a subordinate test. The task of Christian theology is to exhibit the content of biblical revelation as an orderly whole.<sup>55</sup>

Having offered this definition, he proceeded to expound its parts. Finally, he argued for the validity of stating presuppositions at the beginning of theological writing. Of course, it is this last assertion that has drawn a great deal of fire, as has his belief that theological truth can and should be stated in propositional statements.

With his conclusions about apriorisms in place, he proceeded to offer fifteen theses on divine revelation that he discussed in volumes two, three, and four. Having

stated the theses, he covered the first seven of these in volume two. These theses stressed, among other things, the supernatural, coherent, and historical nature of revelation. They also emphasized God's transcendence of his own revelation. Volume three, published along with volume four in 1978, covered three theses: God's personal incarnation, the mediating *logos*, and revelation as rational-verbal communication. In other words, this volume stressed Christology and the ways in which the *logos* of God may be understood in clear, understandable language. Henry argued that Christ could be discussed verbally and understood intellectually, not simply encountered existentially.

Volume four elaborated five theses. The first of these reasserted the Bible as the authoritative norm for theology. In the next two, which Henry subsumed under the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, he dealt with the inerrancy of scripture and the redeemed human being respectively. Henry's formulation of inerrancy included discussions of what inerrancy is and is not, and concluded with an appendix devoted to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, which has served as a standard definition for over two decades. In the next two theses he offered an important argument about the importance of the Holy Spirit's illuminating work. He concluded that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the texts works with the reason inherent in humanity to explain the scriptures. As is true of his comments on how God transcends scripture, these statements indicated that Henry's emphasis on reason and propositional truth in no way intended to put God in a straightjacket. The final two theses dealt briefly with the church and even more briefly with eternity. Henry's

treatment of the church seems inadequate unless one considers that the whole of his work is directed at the church universal.

Volumes five and six of *God, Revelation and Authority*, published in 1983, may well be the best in the project. Volume five dealt with the nature of God, generally in its traditional formulations, but also over against more recent studies on the role of culture and human understanding of God. Volume six completed the study of the attributes and character of God, and included extensive discussions of God and science. This volume also included excursions on God and the holocaust, God and divine election, and the notion of finding Christ in other religions. Thus, Henry's last two volumes have much to say about current evangelical theological debates on the openness of God and on inclusivism.

*God, Revelation and Authority* pulled together Henry's enduring themes. These volumes argued for the necessity of careful epistemological work as a prolegomena to theological writing. They were deeply committed to stating propositions that can be understood and explored through human reason. They insisted on the inerrancy and full authority of the scriptures as the surest ground for theology and as a logical conclusion drawn from the nature of God. They elaborated the inherent perfection of God, and stressed the uniqueness, finality, and necessity of Jesus Christ. They argued that this theology conveys God's goodness and saving grace to lost men and women, who though competent to reason, are lost without specific divine revelation. In other words, these books are the culmination of Henry's theological vision. They are his primary written legacy to academic theology, not just to evangelical academic theology.

## Persevering in a Theological

### Vision: 1983-2003

When the final volumes of *God, Revelation and Authority* were published Henry was seventy years old. He had every reason to believe that he could not count on many more years of active service. But he lectured for World Vision for three more years, and he taught at Hillsdale College for three semesters. While at Hillsdale, he noted, "I had the joy of leading to Christ a member of the faculty and also a student who had entered college as a vocal atheist and declared himself a humanist when he enrolled in my introductory religion course but later privately expressed his desire to become a Christian" (CT, 377). Clearly, Henry had not lost his joy over a soul saved. There was little if any slowing of his lecturing schedule, though he did not lecture outside of North America as frequently. He also published regularly for the next several years, though after 1986 he was more likely to write articles than books.

During 1983-1990 Henry wrote four volumes and several key articles. Space only permits a few comments on these efforts. First, Henry published his memoirs in 1986. At its best, the book reveals Henry's love for family, dedication to the ministry of theological and ethical engagement, his concern for world missions, and his first-hand knowledge of twentieth-century evangelicalism. At its worst, the book can read like a travel log, but Henry's life must have seemed like that at times. It is interesting that he spent so much time in the autobiography on *Christianity Today* and his departure from it. As I stated earlier, this departure hurt Henry and he wanted this story told. But future Henry studies will almost certainly consider this regrettable incident to be

providential, since it seems unlikely that he would have written *God, Revelation and Authority* otherwise.

Second, Henry published *Christian Countermoves in a Decadent Culture* in 1986 and *Twilight of a Great Civilization* in 1989 as warnings against what he considered the probability of social collapse. Unlike his earlier works, which called for renewing engagement, these books were more counter-cultural in the sense that they spoke of how to check "the new barbarians." Henry now apparently considered regenerative evangelical penetration far less likely than he had forty years earlier. He was hardly alone in his concerns, as David Wells's socio-theological works of the same era attest. Some readers found Henry's warnings reactionary and concluded that he had moved in a more fundamentalist direction. Others thought that he was finally taking a realistic view of culture.

Third, based on his 1989 Rutherford lectures in Edinburgh, Henry published *The Recovery of Christian Belief* in 1990. This book is particularly important because here Henry supplemented and corrected some of his epistemological views. He writes in the preface to the 1999 edition of *God, Revelation and Authority* that if he were writing *God, Revelation and Authority* now he would add material on postmodernism and narrative theology, issues he addresses in *The Recovery of Christian Belief*.<sup>56</sup> He also stated in private conversation with me that new readers of his work could start with this book and grasp his underlying presuppositions. Thus, this smaller treatise should be read as a supplement to volume one of *God, Revelation and Authority*.

Fourth, Henry wrote important critiques of key figures in these years. For

instance, he published detailed analyses of Brevard Childs's canonical method<sup>57</sup> and Hans Frei's postliberal formulations.<sup>58</sup> As could be expected, methodology was at the heart of his praise and criticism. As could be expected, the tentative nature of these scholars' approach to biblical authority was his chief criticism.

From 1990-1999 Henry served ably in the role of elder statesman, while at the same time publishing more as an octogenarian than many of us do in our prime. His essays continued to be collected and published, and he even managed two "monographellas," *Jesus of Nazareth* (1992) and *Has Democracy Had its Day?* (1996) Perhaps the best volume of this era is *Gods of this Age or God of the Ages?* (1994), which was ably edited by R. Albert Mohler, Jr. Here many of Henry's best talks and articles on such topics as education, ethics, and the role of revelation in theology appear in very clear form. During the 1990's Henry also contributed regularly to *World* and to *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, and he served on the boards of Prison Fellowship and other organizations.

January 22, 1999, dawned as a clear, sunny, and cold day in Louisville, Kentucky. It was Henry's 86<sup>th</sup> birthday, and he was in town for three special events. One was a meeting of theologians at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Another was a book signing and birthday party at the campus bookstore. The most important reason, however, was the celebration of the reprinting of *God, Revelation and Authority* by Crossway Books. Henry was clearly pleased and at times visibly moved. These events were indeed a celebration. Without question, Henry felt truly blessed that day. After all, how many theologians get to enjoy

a triumphant moment with friends who celebrate their theological vision? During the next few years Henry remained active in his church and community until he became bedfast. He died in Watertown, Wisconsin, on December 7, 2003.

### **Conclusion: The Future of Henry's Theological Vision**

As I stated earlier in this article, evangelicalism has entered a new generation even as many of its twentieth-century founders remain on the scene. Just as in Britain fewer persons now know the work of Stott and Packer, so in the United States fewer people read the works of Henry, Carnell, and that generation of evangelical scholars. The day will come when Billy Graham will be just a name in church history, and one wonders how often future generations will use standard theological works from this era. Still, it is imperative that evangelicalism build on its past as other strong traditions have done. It is especially important during years in which the movement deals with its growth. Henry's theological vision thus remains relevant for several reasons.

First, there is no question that some evangelicals now seem embarrassed by an emphasis on inerrancy. If so, then Henry's reminders that the full authority of scripture is not only reasonable, it is also practical. There is much talk today of constructive theology, which is a fine emphasis unless by that term one means an unwillingness to ever use conservative thought to address non-conservative opinions. Henry knew that creedal orthodoxy would not sustain the next generation. Only biblical authority impressed on human reason for the redemptive revelation of God and his Son could do that. Thus, his theology is constructive

in the sense that he does not merely react to Liberalism. Rather, he seeks to build on the positive foundation of biblical authority.

Second, there is a great deal of discussion today about hermeneutics and epistemology. These efforts at deriving an effective foundation for theological reflection are surely welcome. Henry's formulations may need revision at several points, but they may well at least aid the discussions.

Third, evangelicals today often discuss the value of natural theology. Though I am not as cautious about natural theology as Henry—and he was not totally negative—he was certainly correct to insist that natural theology needs special revelation to interpret it. Formulations such as “All truth is God's truth” can come to mean nothing more than “What I think is true must be God's truth” unless the Bible is the touchstone for determining truth. In particular, evangelical higher education ought to try to incorporate fully into curriculum and faculty development what all our confessions of faith say they affirm—the full reliability and authority of scripture. As the New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith (1833) asserts, the Bible is the “true center of Christian union.” Formulations of truth are only as true as they can be tied to the Bible. In other words, nature is not self-authenticating. The Bible alone has that distinction.

Fourth, Henry's belief that evangelical theology undergirds Christian mission must be reconsidered. Henry believed that the Christian faith was not just theology for our community, but that this theology was the hope of the world. Piety and evangelism mattered deeply to Henry because he took the depravity of the human race with utmost seriousness. They mattered to

him because he believed that evangelism carries the truth of God to minds and hearts in need.

Fifth, Henry's critiques of prominent scholars ought to be examined. In particular, younger evangelicals should read and digest his criticisms of Karl Barth, who enjoys special favor among evangelicals now. Henry freely and gratefully claimed that Barth was a courageous opponent of Liberalism and totalitarianism. He appreciated the fact that Barth stood for revelation when that was not popular, and that he confessed the main tenets of Christianity. However, Henry also observed that Barth did not confess that the Bible is God's word written, or that full biblical authority stands regardless of our experience of that authority. Henry noted that Barth embodies creedal orthodoxy at many points, yet his denial that the Bible is God's inerrant word leaves biblical scholars without a sufficient foundation for their work. Before evangelicals take Barth as their theological model, Henry's critiques ought to be considered.

Sixth, evangelicalism should continue to write and teach at the highest level possible. It is time for maturity. It is time for growth in intellectual endeavors, and it is time for us to be proud of our theological parents. Henry probably overestimated what was possible in the early years of evangelicalism along these lines, but surely the hour has come.

Seventh, Henry's evangelical ecumenism should be considered by denominational evangelicals such as Southern Baptists and members of the Presbyterian Church of America. These groups owe their existence to evangelical conviction. The Southern Baptist Convention in particular owes a tremendous debt to the evangelical cause. When young

conservatives looked for sound theology in the 1970's and 1980's Carl Henry, Millard Erickson, James Packer, and others like them provided it. When Southern Baptist seminaries began to shift to the right, it was made possible through the hiring of scholars from evangelical institutions. Thus, Southern Baptists have a theological debt to interdenominational evangelicalism that they can and should pay by active involvement in and encouragement of evangelical efforts, and not just when they are in charge of the event. Southern Baptists, no less than any other conservative group, have the opportunity to answer Henry's plea for an evangelical demonstration.

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Unless noted otherwise, biographical details of Henry's life are derived from Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), and are cited as *CT*.
- <sup>2</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 8.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 19-113.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 117-261.
- <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 265-301.
- <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 268.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 273.
- <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 277.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 281.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 282-83.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 293.
- <sup>12</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 23.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 40-44.
- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 87-89.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 70-74.
- <sup>17</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *The Protestant Dilemma*

- (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 10-11.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 17-40.
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 54-55.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 57-62.
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 62-72.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 72-74.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 107-21.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 125-50.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 150-60.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 160.
- <sup>32</sup>See *ibid.*, 164-85.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 194-99.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 199-208.
- <sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 207-08.
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 216.
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 217.
- <sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 217-25.
- <sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 225.
- <sup>40</sup>See Carl F. H. Henry, *Notes on the Doctrine of God* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1948), 64-65.
- <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 66.
- <sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 66-72.
- <sup>43</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 158.
- <sup>44</sup>*Christianity Today*, 15 October 1956, 20.
- <sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup>See Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, eds., *One Race, One Gospel, One Task* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967), 1:11-18.
- <sup>48</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis* (Waco, TX: Word, 1967), 1.
- <sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>53</sup>See *ibid.*, 33-120.

<sup>54</sup>See Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (6 vols.; Waco, TX: Word, 1976-83; repr., Wheaton: Crossway, 1999), 1:213.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:215.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:8.

<sup>57</sup>See Carl F. H. Henry, "Canonical Theology: An Appraisal," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 8.2 (1990): 76-108.

<sup>58</sup>See Carl F. H. Henry, "Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal," in *gods of this Age or . . . God of the Ages?* ed. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 257-276.

