



MATTHEW J. HALL &
OWEN STRACHAN

Editors

The Enduring Influence of
CARL F. H. HENRY

ESSENTIAL
EVANGELICALISM

“Henry’s commitment to both social justice and evangelism called a generation of Christians to engage the world. This book will deepen your understanding of how Carl Henry sought to place all aspects of life under the banner of the gospel.”

Richard Stearns, President, World Vision US; author, *Unfinished* and *The Hole in Our Gospel*

“It has been a marked blessing of God in my life to have known Carl and Helga Henry personally. I do what I do and live where I have lived now for over twenty years in no small because of Carl Henry. Carefully reading each of these essays has left me feeling like I’ve just spent time with him again. Careful research, clear writing, and shared concerns mark the chapters in this book. The authors are to be commended.”

Mark Dever, Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC;
President, 9Marks

“It would be hard to overstate the importance and ongoing relevance of the writings of Carl Henry, one of the fathers of modern evangelicalism. Henry was a close friend of my organization’s founder, Chuck Colson. His impact continues to be felt on our board of directors, in the Christian worldview ministry he helped to inspire, and in the hundreds of thousands of men and women behind bars who have also been impacted through his teaching. This book belongs on the must-buy list of today’s evangelical readers.”

Jim Liske, President and CEO, Prison Fellowship Ministries

“Too many evangelical churches today are enamored with a therapeutic gospel and pander after yet another spiritual experience. What we need is a good dose of the theological depth and intellectual rigor of the likes of Carl Henry. You don’t have to agree with everything he wrote, but you will be wise for having wrestled with his great mind.”

Mark Galli, Editor, *Christianity Today*

“Carl F. H. Henry is a writing mentor to me. Like Francis Schaeffer, I fear losing him to a generation that desperately needs to hear both their voices. This book will help contemporary evangelicals understand why they need to know this man and delve into his writings. It will stretch them intellectually. It will guide them spiritually. And it will greatly aid them in not repeating mistakes from the past—mistakes already uncovered and handled by this princely theologian.”

Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“The brilliant essays found in *Essential Evangelicalism* provide readers with a masterful and comprehensive look at the life and work of Carl F. H. Henry. So much more than a historical reflection, this timely and extraordinary volume not only presents Henry’s massive thought to a new generation of readers, but carefully explores the identity and theology of the evangelical movement with remarkable insight. With great enthusiasm, it is a privilege to recommend this outstanding publication.”

David S. Dockery, President, Trinity International University

“Carl Henry was a giant on whose shoulders all contemporary evangelicals stand—whether or not they know that. This volume represents another significant contribution to celebrating, assessing, and reclaiming Henry’s massive influence. One need not agree with every aspect of Henry’s thought (or this volume’s claims about Henry) to rejoice in this multivoiced wrestling with Henry’s huge role in shaping contemporary evangelicalism.”

Ronald J. Sider, Senior Distinguished Professor of Theology,
Holistic Ministry, and Public Policy, Palmer Theological Seminary,
King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

Essential Evangelicalism

ESSENTIAL EVANGELICALISM

The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry

MATTHEW J. HALL AND
OWEN STRACHAN, EDITORS

Foreword by Timothy George

 **CROSSWAY**
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry

Copyright © 2015 by Matthew J. Hall and Owen Strachan

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Cover design: Josh Dennis

Cover image: Richard Solomon Artists, Gary Kelley

First printing 2015

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-4726-3

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-4729-4

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-4727-0

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-4728-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Essential evangelicalism : the enduring influence of Carl F. H. Henry / Matthew J. Hall and Owen Strachan, editors ; foreword by Timothy George.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-4726-3 (tp)

1. Henry, Carl F. H. (Carl Ferdinand Howard), 1913–2003. 2. Theologians—United States.

3. Evangelicalism—United States—History—20th century. 4. Theology—United States—History—20th century. I. Hall, Matthew, 1980– editor.

BX4827.H38E87

2015

230'.044092—dc23

2015008948

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Foreword by Timothy George	9
Editors' Preface	15
1 The Indispensable Evangelical.....	27
CARL F. H. HENRY AND EVANGELICAL AMBITION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	
<i>R. Albert Mohler Jr.</i>	
2 Toward a Full-Orbed Evangelical Ethic.....	43
THE PIONEERING CONTRIBUTION OF CARL F. H. HENRY	
<i>Richard J. Mouw</i>	
3 Carl F. H. Henry's University Crusade	59
THE SPECTACULAR PROMISE AND ULTIMATE FAILURE OF CRUSADE UNIVERSITY	
<i>Owen Strachan</i>	
4 Carl F. H. Henry	81
A BIBLICALLY FAITHFUL THEOLOGIAN EVANGELIST	
<i>John Woodbridge</i>	
5 The Compleat Christian	103
THE MASSIVE VISION OF CARL F. H. HENRY	
<i>D. A. Carson</i>	
6 Hope, Discipline, and the Incarnational Scholar	115
CARL F. H. HENRY'S MOTIVES, METHODS, AND MANNERS	
<i>Paul House</i>	

7	Vain Philosophy?.....	135
	CARL F. H. HENRY'S PLEA FOR A PHILOSOPHICALLY INFORMED MINISTRY	
	<i>Gregory Alan Thornbury</i>	
8	The Modern Mind and the Uneasy Conscience	149
	CARL F. H. HENRY AND POSTWAR EVANGELICAL SOCIAL ETHIC	
	<i>Ben Peays</i>	
9	The Kingdom of God in the Social Ethics of Carl F. H. Henry ...	175
	A TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY EVANGELICAL REAPPRAISAL	
	<i>Russell D. Moore</i>	
	Selected Bibliography.....	201
	Contributors	203
	General Index.....	204
	Scripture Index.....	215

Foreword

American evangelicals and *serious theology* are terms that do not just naturally snuggle up to each other with easy equipoise. That, despite the fact that Jonathan Edwards, the greatest theologian America has produced, stands at the headwaters of the evangelical tradition. The diminution of the evangelical mind since Edwards—and not only in theology—has been often rehearsed. The lure of pragmatism, individualism, revivalism (not to be confused with revival, about which Edwards knew a thing or two), expressivism, and fissiparous fundamentalism have all taken their toll when it comes to the nurturing of a theological tradition that is wise and deep. But in recent history, there is one evangelical theologian who stands above others in depth of insight and clarity of vision: Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry.

Born in New York City in 1913, Henry came of age at a time when the modernist-fundamentalist battles were going strong. But he heard no talk of these struggles, or of anything else religious, at the family dinner table. His father, a master baker from Germany, was a nominal Lutheran; his mother, a nominal Catholic.

Skilled in typing, Henry landed a job as a sportswriter. He eventually became a reporter and then an editor of the small newspaper on Long Island while also writing stories as a stringer for the *New York Times*. By all accounts, he was a hard-nosed journalist given to pagan pleasures, with no knowledge or use for God, much less the church.

His conversion to Jesus Christ was dramatic, unexpected, and unforgettable. Sitting alone in his car in 1933, he was startled by a violent thunderstorm—shades of Luther. He later described this event in this way:

A fiery bolt of lightning, like a giant flaming arrow, seemed to pin me to the driver's seat, and a mighty roll of thunder unnerved me. When the fire fell, I knew instinctively the Great Archer had nailed me to my own footsteps. Looking back, it was as if the transcendent *Tetragrammaton* wished me to know that I could not save myself and that heaven's intervention was my only hope.¹

Henry the convert became Henry the evangelist and Henry the student. He went on to earn two degrees from Wheaton College (where one of his classmates was the young Billy Graham) and eventually the PhD from Boston University under Edgar S. Brightman.

Soon after the National Association of Evangelicals was formed in 1942, the *Christian Century* announced in a headline, "Sectarianism Receives New Lease on Life." But sectarian retrenchment was the last thing Boston pastor Harold John Ockenga, the ringleader of the so-called New Evangelicalism, or the far-thinking Carl Henry had in mind. In 1947, thirty-four-year-old Henry published *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, a seventy-five-page booklet that sold for one dollar per copy. Henry called on his fellow evangelicals to leave behind the legalism, obscurantism, and judgmentalism that had left a blight on conservative Christianity in the twentieth century. Sectarian isolation, Henry said, must give way to evangelical engagement. The new movement had its manifesto.

In 1956 Henry was invited to become the first editor of a new publication, *Christianity Today*. *CT* was to be "a magazine of evangelical conviction," a thoughtful conservative alternative to the more liberal *Christian Century*. In his first editorial, Henry told his readers that he could see the lawn of the White House from his office. He was saying, in effect, that evangelicals would no longer be confined to the gospel ghettos of the culture. The mission of the evangelical church was both personal and public. The aim was to capture minds as well as to save souls, to struggle for a just social structure, and to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

To accomplish these goals, Henry not only wrote editorials, but he also published serious theology. He wrote more than forty books in his

¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 45–46.

lifetime, dealing with a range of issues from theological ethics to higher education and human rights. One of his most interesting essays was called “Christian Fund-raising Heresies.” But his magnum opus was a massive six-volume study, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, published from 1976 to 1983. It contains more than three thousand pages, and none of them is meant for light bedtime reading. *God, Revelation, and Authority* is not a systematic theology proper but rather a sustained theological epistemology offering a comprehensive overview of revelation in biblical terms—the living God who speaks and shows, who stands and stays, who stoops and saves.

God, Revelation, and Authority is an extended discourse built on fifteen principal theses. Luther had ninety-five; Henry had fifteen. The first of Henry’s fifteen theses is the most important, the basis for all the others: “Revelation is a divinely initiated activity, God’s free communication by which he alone turns his personal privacy into a deliberate disclosure of his reality.”² He argues that all merely human affirmations about God that are based on something other than his divinely initiated, freely communicated, and deliberately disclosed reality will inevitably curl into a question mark.

The awesome disclosure of God precipitates human surprise. Perhaps thinking about his own encounter in the thunderstorm, Henry declares that divine revelation is “like a fiery bolt of lightning that unexpectedly zooms towards us and scores a direct hit.” Or, it is like an earthquake that suddenly shakes and engulfs us. Or, it is like “some piercing air-raid siren” which sends us “scurrying from life’s preoccupations and warns us that no escape remains if we neglect the only sure sanctuary.”³

During the latter years of his life, Henry became *theologus non gratus* within large sectors of the evangelical academy. In far less nuanced fashion than the postliberal criticism he had received from Yale theologians Hans Frei and Brevard Childs, postconservative, postevangelical, and semi-post-Christian critics blasted Henry for what they called his pure propositionalism and conformity to the canons of Enlightenment rationalism. But Kevin J. Vanhoozer, an evangelical theologian whose own work is marked by

² Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 2, *God, Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part 1* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 8.

³ *Ibid.*, 17.

acuity and insight, has been much more balanced. Using speech-act theory as an aid to understanding biblical discourse, Vanhoozer criticizes Henry for his lack of interest in genre along with some of his hermeneutical presuppositions. But Vanhoozer is a friendly critic and openly admits, “Carl Henry said the right thing at the right time.”⁴

In a tribute I wrote on Henry at the time of his death in 2003, I predicted that despite his eclipse at the time, a new generation of evangelicals would arise to rediscover “Uncle Carl” and once again find his work vibrant, provocative, and relevant to the issues of the day. Now, more than twelve years after his death, my prediction is coming true. The essays in this volume are among the firstfruits of a harvest of renewed engagement with the most significant American evangelical theologian since World War II.

There is a sense that postmodernism with its stops, gaps, and radical breaks with all traditions of received wisdom is suffocating in its own exhaust fumes. This is a good time to affirm something truly awesome: that the God of eternity, the creator and Lord of time, has come among us as one of us in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that this God still speaks to troubled and confused human beings using “comprehensible ideas and meaningful words.”

I applaud and welcome the Henrician renaissance now under way, with this one caveat: what we need is not a repristination of Henry, nor a new defense of his methods and views in every respect, but rather a renewed commitment to doing theology in the service of the church, and to doing it with a Henry-like passion for truth and with love for the God who is both the source and object of truth.

In the closing paragraph of *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Henry describes the wonder and joy that is the true calling of every theologian and of theology itself. He points us to the contemplation of the living God of creation and redemption, the God who stands and stoops and speaks and stays:

He it is who preserves and governs and consummates his cosmic purpose. But the awesome wonder of the biblical revelation is not

⁴<http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/vanhoozer-responds-to-my-review/> (May 8, 2007).

his creation and preservation of our vastly immense and complex universe. Its wonder, rather, is that he came as God-man to planet Earth in the form of the Babe of Bethlehem; he thus reminds us that no point in the universe is too remote for his presence and no speck too small for his care and love. He came as God-man to announce to a rebellious race the offer of a costly mercy grounded in the death and resurrection of his only Son and to assure his people that he who stays will remain with him forever and they with him. He is come in Christ incarnate to exhibit ideal human nature and will return in Christ glorified to fully implement the Omega-realities of the dawning future.⁵

Beyond all of his accomplishments, two things about Carl Henry stand out in my mind. On his last visit to Beeson Divinity School, he spoke in chapel about his conversion to Christ. He never got over the sheer wonder and joy of having been chosen and rescued by God's surprising grace. He knew what it meant to be born again. The other thing that stands out was his extraordinary humility and kindness toward others. His commitment to the orthodox Christian faith was solid as a rock, but I never heard him speak in a bitter or disparaging way about anybody, not even those with whom he disagreed.

I shall never forget my last visit with Carl. Dr. Greg Waybright, then president of Trinity International University, and I made a pilgrimage to his bedside at the little Moravian nursing home where Henry and his dear wife, Helga, lived. He could not walk and could barely talk, but his mind was abuzz with ideas and plans and new ventures for the advance of God's kingdom. We prayed and read the Scriptures together. Even though he was in pain, his eyes still sparkled with the joy of Christ. Carl loved to quote Vance Havner's prayer: "Lord, get me safely home before dark." Although Carl Henry has been home for some years now, his legacy lives on and still illumines the path we tread toward that Light, which can never be extinguished.

Timothy George

⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 6, *God Who Stands and Stays* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 513.

Editors' Preface

We begin a book about a Long Island–born theologian with a quote from a Swiss scholar reflecting on a French churchman. In 1922, writing to his friend Eduard Thurneysen, Karl Barth said the following about John Calvin:

Calvin is a cataract, a primeval forest, a demonic power, something directly down from Himalaya, absolutely Chinese, strange, mythological; I lack completely the means, the suction cups, even to assimilate this phenomenon, not to speak of presenting it adequately.

What I receive is only a thin little stream and what I can then give out again is only a yet thinner extract of this little stream.

I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life just with Calvin.¹

Barth's words are memorable on their own terms. It is not every day that a magisterial theologian is described by another master scholar as "something directly down from Himalaya," after all.

Descriptive gymnastics aside, our real interest in Barth's description is his effort to take the measure of a man whose varied life and voluminous work defy easy summation. So it is with Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry, a man so eminent he bore two middle names. Carl Henry is a distant reality for many modern Christians. Perhaps we should amend that: to a good many folks, he is unknown. He is recognized primarily among scholars, seminarians, and some pastors. Those who are aware

¹Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 57.

of Henry know him to be a formidable theologian, a sometimes impenetrable writer, and an evangelical-at-large of the postwar twentieth century.

These senses are correct. Henry was all these things. But he was more: a tireless evangelist, an incurable optimist, a gifted administrator, a loving father, a devoted husband, a fierce opponent, an eternal journalist, an unstoppable-hatcher-of-grand-schemes, a Sunday school teacher, and a primeval forest. The last of these does not in truth apply; it is true, though, that one could profitably set down with Henry and spend a very long time following his trail of thought.

As two young evangelical scholars, we ourselves are committed to some form of this program. Like many of our peers, we have found ourselves drawn, even mythologically, to Henry. Our lives overlapped to a relatively significant degree with his; he died on December 7, 2003, when both of us were recent college graduates. While we shared an understanding of the massive loss his death represented to evangelicalism, neither of us had a full appreciation of the extent of this man's singular contribution to the shaping of much of the world we inhabited. We had seminary professors, pastors, and mentors who spoke of their own firsthand dependence on Dr. Henry's influence and guidance. We heard the stories and legends of his influence in the genesis of Fuller Theological Seminary and in the launch of *Christianity Today* and of his place in the galvanization of postwar neo-evangelicalism.

Owen was a church member at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, while Henry was a "watchcare member" of the same congregation, living in Watertown, Wisconsin. That secondhand connection aside, we never actually knew the man. We never met him, much as we wish we had. But we are convinced that there are few better or more urgently vital models for young evangelicals interested in theological engagement of an unsteady church and a secular age. As historians, we believe that we are best positioned to thrive when we face the future with the wisdom and training of the past, not when we engage in create-your-own-evangelical-polity-and-theology. We are young, but we actually *like* the past. We like, furthermore, faithful leaders who would train us in thinking and living unto God. We're eager to learn from their successes and failures, their strengths and weaknesses.

This book represents our best effort to collect reflections and essays from some of those who knew Henry or who have dedicated significant time and effort to assessing his influence and place in the story of American evangelicalism. To be even more pointed, we count ourselves among the tribe of evangelicals who routinely survey the landscape of American religion and lament the absence of Henry in our own day. Yes, in case you're wondering, we'd love to hear the answer to, "Dr. Henry, what do you make of Joel Osteen?" though we would have his heart medication close at hand in posing the query.

We'll assume for a moment that you're not that different from us. You know you're *supposed* to respect, admire, and appreciate the legacy of someone like Carl Henry. But, if pressed, you'd have a hard time explaining why. And you might not even have a clear sense of where to begin if you did want to learn more about this titan of American evangelicalism. Before you launch into this book and are introduced to Henry from several individuals who did have the privilege of knowing him and working alongside him, allow us to lay out a few reasons we find Henry to be as urgently relevant for evangelicals in the twenty-first century.

FIVE REASONS TO ENGAGE CARL HENRY TODAY

First, Henry provides a model of orthodox theological engagement with an unorthodox world. Henry grounded his entire program in divine authority mediated through divine revelation. If you know nothing about Carl Henry, mark this. Henry's six-volume trilogy, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (or GRA), is a masterwork, the most serious contribution to a synthesis of evangelical hermeneutics and first theology of the twentieth century. No other work by one of Henry's fellow evangelicals even tried for this title. In GRA, and in numerous other works less well known, Henry set out to define, delimit, and defend divine truth. In the 1970s and 1980s, at the end of his career, he saw that humanity had entered into a "crisis of word and truth," as he put it.² He believed that it was his call to address the crisis and to do so by reattaching that

² Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, *God Who Speaks and Shows, Preliminary Considerations* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 21.

which modernity had sundered. The Word was the Truth; the Truth derived from the Word.

GRA sets out this vision in six volumes that total nearly three thousand pages. Let us be clear: GRA is to the Christian academy what Tolstoy is to the literary guild. His books may in past days have served more as doorstops in the office than as doorways into another realm. It has become somewhat fashionable to drop into conversation at an evangelical seminary that one has acquired GRA, but to read him is another matter altogether. We are happy to commend GRA to those whose interest in Henry is whetted by this volume. It is true that the prose can at times grow thick. It is correct that he never lost his quick-fire journalistic instincts and that this can lead to digressive sections. Yet it is also the case that Henry was a brilliant mind. He was, as all the best theologians are, in regular conversation with the guild. He argued with the living and the dead and engaged them, sometimes multiple scholars in one paragraph, in his masterwork. What is more, he accomplished something in GRA: he showed that the Christian faith is rationally defensible yet spiritually vital. In Henry, one sees that word and truth, heart and mind, authority and piety are one, joined as they must ultimately be not in an abstract concept but in a flesh-and-blood person: Jesus Christ.

Second, Henry's philosophical engagement can provide young evangelicals with the framework for navigating the perils of encroaching secularism. Somehow, we suspect Henry would be neither surprised nor intimidated by the so-called new atheism, deconstructionist theories, or challenges to ideas of revealed truth. In fact, his own work seemed to have a nearly prophetic ability to foresee some of the most vexing intellectual challenges to the Christian worldview. Are you wrestling with understanding the Christian tradition of moral ethics? Henry wrote on that. Troubled with understanding ideas of epistemology and philosophy? He wrote on that too. And if you cannot quite seem to wrap your mind around concepts of biblical revelation, truth, and inspiration—well, as mentioned, we have a six-volume magnum opus just waiting for you.

This is a promise that has real weight and depth. One of our colleagues and contributors to this book was helped enormously by Henry's work. Gregory Thornbury was a budding intellectual at a Northeastern

college whose Christian piety crashed into the wall of higher criticism in one survey class. Thornbury, now the president of a resurgent The King's College in Manhattan, read Marcus Borg's *Jesus: A New Vision* and "reeled" at the materials.³ He was trained in faithful Christian living, but Greg was knocked off his game by a "well-studied and persuasive scholar with an Oxford DPhil." who brought him "within a whisker" of losing trust in the Bible.⁴ In God's kind providence, Thornbury remembered the name of Carl F. H. Henry, a scholar his father, a pastor, greatly respected. He began devouring Henry's writings and recovering his trust in God's Word. It was, he later reflected, "a turning point for me."⁵

We suspect that there are a good number of bright young thinkers out there much like the collegiate Thornbury. Their evangelical upbringing was warm and even rich, but in their educational years, they have encountered influential voices that threaten to overwhelm their own understanding of the faith. Where this is the case, we want to freshly commend Henry's work. It is not perfect; it will not answer every question; it is, like every body of texts ever crafted, a product of its time. But its depth of thought, its level of scholarly interaction, and its abiding zeal for Christ lift it out of the half-priced bookstore consignment bin and beckon us to take and read once more.

Third, Henry provides young evangelicals with a vision for gospel-centered social justice. Of the making of arguments about the connections of the *evangelion* and the call to peace and justice, there shall be no end. But we believe that Henry provided more light than heat, offering evangelicals a vision and ethic of the kingdom of Christ that managed to affirm the centrality of the atonement and resurrection for sinners, but to also understand that the church must play a part in calling for peace, justice, righteousness, and virtue. What Henry rightly knew, and what evangelicals in our time so easily miss, is that social justice and the gospel must be tethered together closely if there will be true justice and if there will be much of a gospel that really is "good news."

³Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (New York: HarperOne, 1991).

⁴Gregory Alan Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 14.

⁵*Ibid.*, 15.

Henry made this case in his best-selling *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, the most widely read of all his books. Clocking in at eighty-eight pages, the text is almost shockingly ahead of its time, anticipating both a secularizing society and the desperate need for Christians to love their neighbor in tangible ways in such a society. Henry came up in a time when to be a conservative Christian meant accepting cultural marginalization, and perhaps even taking cold comfort in it. He walked a fine line in sociological terms, for the fundamentalists of his day were ready to brand him as a gospel-softening deed-doer, while the liberals of his day were ready to denounce him as a backwater brimstone evangelist whose charitable work was only a means to an end.

Henry was far closer to the fundamentalists in his theological commitments, but he could not tolerate cultural retreat. His sense of idealism and his love for his fellow man impelled him to do everything he could to stir up the church to love and good deeds. So it is that he popped up in surprising places, including the organizing meeting of the 1973 Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, a project championed by Ron Sider and others. Henry's interest in gospel-shaped social justice led him outside his normal circles. It is for this and other reasons that it is thoroughly unfair to label Henry. He was an unabashedly conservative theologian who offered the most forthright defense of biblical authority of any thinker of the twentieth century—and yet he was also powerfully motivated by the need to love justice and pursue righteousness. He is as inspiring as he is iconoclastic.

Fourth, Henry models a broad evangelical ecumenism that is framed by confessional identity. While seemingly paradoxical, Henry managed to reconcile a vision for a broad evangelical coalition with a commitment to necessary theological first principles of orthodoxy. We suspect Dr. Henry would be delighted by some of the broadening coalitions within some corridors of confessional evangelicalism. As cultural Christianity evaporates before our eyes in Western Europe and the United States, the necessity of cooperative efforts among evangelicals of diverse traditions and denominations becomes increasingly imperative. But, as Henry would have warned, these coalitions must be framed by and held in check by the truth of Scripture and the message of the gospel of Christ.

We recognize that some may push against this vision of Henry as a “confessional” thinker. Wasn’t he the man, with Harold John Ockenga and Billy Graham, who was most responsible for minimizing traditional ecclesiological boundaries in the mid-twentieth century? There is some truth to this characterization, we admit. But we must also think carefully about Henry’s identity and his role. With his peers, he made a major contribution to the Christian church in his day. He helped it to see that unity in the gospel was a more powerful unifying force than separating from one’s foes. This, in truth, is what the neo-evangelical project was. It was a referendum on gospel unity, not an attack on meaningful confessionalism.

With many young friends, we are grateful for the example of Henry and his friends. We believe that their recovery of an evangel-driven identity was a contribution for the ages, akin to the pioneering work of Edwards and Whitefield in the First Great Awakening and of Luther and Calvin in the Reformation. We ourselves are happily evangelical. But none of this should distract us from the reality that Henry was a Baptist. Perhaps we see this most clearly in his churchmanship, which is, after all, vitally important to laying hold of a person’s truest, deepest commitments. Henry was a faithful member at Capitol Hill Baptist Church and a longtime Sunday school teacher there. Years after his passing, he was warmly remembered by congregants. He did not carry himself like a world-class scholar but like a fellow worshiper at the feet of Jesus.

Henry would very likely have struck much deeper roots in Baptist theological territory than he did, save for one thing: not all Baptists of his era liked him. He was an outspoken evangelical. In sectors of the Southern Baptist Convention, this was not the pathway to making friends and influencing people. It was the opposite. When R. Albert Mohler Jr. first encountered Henry in the 1980s, he was shocked to find that the best-known evangelical Baptist theologian of his day was not permitted to speak in his graduate seminar at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Henry, we should reiterate, was very much a Baptist. He worked out of his tradition in ways obvious and obscure. But he came unto his own, and his own received him not. It is our delight to, in a very small way, redress past wrongs in a volume of this kind. It is a particular point of pleasure that, alongside other similarly

denominated academic centers, the Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement is alive and flourishing on the campus of Southern.

Fifth, Henry understood that theology and evangelism are inseparable. It is now the stuff of legend, but Henry famously once told a group of seminarians that the most important theological question of our time is, Do you know the risen Christ? Henry understood that the gospel was only good news if it got there on time. And this conviction and commitment to the truth claims of the gospel undergirded and animated his urgent commitment to global evangelization. As evangelicals become a shrinking minority in the West—and a surging group in the southern hemisphere—we could learn much from Henry's vision and hope. If the gospel really is true and the promises of God are reliable, then the church universal has good reason to be hopeful and confident in its task.

Here we see how important it is to understand Henry's theology as a body of thought. Too often we approach theologians in discrete terms, dividing up their work into nicely spliced seminars and reading groups. In reality, there is a straight line between Henry the GRA writer and Henry the evangelist. Biblical authority mattered for the man. He knew what it was to walk through life a lost soul, to have no foundation for hope, to possess no direction for the soul, no light for the mind. He was himself saved by a traveling evangelist when a young man. He never lost his sense of the serendipity of conversion. It could strike at a moment's notice, giving no warning to a lifetime of unbelief and sin. It is no accident that some of Henry's closest associates, including the prison reformer Chuck Colson, came from similarly non-Christian backgrounds. Like Colson, Henry understood the convulsive power of the gospel, a gospel that rushes over the most formidable of personal barriers to redeem the depraved in heart.

Any theologian or philosopher who lived by his or her convictions is to be granted special consideration. Henry falls in this category. Not everyone who reads this volume will come away agreeing with him. They cannot fail, however, to find in the stories and reminisces and theological reflections that he was a man who lived what he believed. To be most specific, he believed what divine revelation teaches as a unified message: that the God who speaks does so to save a people for himself.

For his teaching, writing, and living, he deserves commendation. Not only this, though—he deserves emulation, the ultimate honor.

THE BROADER CONVERSATION

We publish this book recognizing that it is part of a broader conversation. The discussion of Henry is not waning; it is growing apace. There was an earlier period of Henry-related publishing some twenty-five to thirty years ago. One thinks of works such as the following: Henry's own *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986); Bob Patterson's *Carl F. H. Henry, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983); R. Albert Mohler Jr.'s chapter "Carl F. H. Henry," in *Baptist Theologians*, edited by Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 518–38; and a number of the more personal essays in *Henry's Gods of This Age or God of the Ages?*, edited by R. Albert Mohler Jr. (Nashville: Broadman, 1994).

The second wave of books interacting with Henry appeared about fifteen years ago. These included Kevin Vanhoozer's *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2005); Stanley Grenz and John Franke's *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2001); and most sympathetically and extensively, Russell D. Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004). In 2004 the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* devoted its entire Winter 2004 edition to evaluating and honoring Henry.⁶ We may group two more recent volumes in this later school: Gregory Alan Thornbury's *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), and G. Wright Doyle's *Carl Henry—A Theologian for All Seasons: An Introduction and Guide to Carl Henry's God, Revelation and Authority* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010).

In terms of institutional commitment, Henry's name has graced the nameplates of no less than three scholarly centers: the Carl F. H. Henry

⁶ <http://www.sbts.edu/resources/category/journal-of-theology/sbjt-84-winter-2004>.

Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; the Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Intellectual Discipleship at Union University; and the aforementioned Henry Institute at Southern Seminary. Capitol Hill Baptist Church of Washington, DC, has for over a decade sponsored “Henry Forums” on theology and culture in honor of its former member, Sunday school teacher, and mentor to pastor Mark Dever.

CONCLUSION

We began this preface by reference to the words of Karl Barth on John Calvin. Barth was one of Henry’s most frequently referenced sparring partners. The two men labored in the same task from different theological poles. Both wished to vindicate Christianity as a system of revelation in a century that viewed the Word as outmoded. Barth, though a churchman, championed the neoorthodox position, claiming that the Bible-in-itself was not the Word of God, but contained the Word of God; Henry, though recognizing Barth’s prodigious gifts—he called his writings an “epochal contribution to theology”⁷—sided with the evangelical tradition in identifying the Scripture as the revealed mind of God itself.

The two men did not cross paths on many occasions. In 1962, Barth came to America from Switzerland for a lecture tour. Henry attended his lectures at the McCormick Divinity School in Chicago and engaged him in the question-and-answer session. The exchange that followed, recounted by Henry in his *Confessions*, captured perfectly the differences between the two theologians.

“The question, Dr. Barth, concerns the historical factuality of the resurrection of Jesus.” I pointed to the press table and noted the presence of leading religion editors or reporters representing United Press, Religious News Service, Washington Post, Washington Star and other media. If these journalists had their present duties in the time of Jesus, I asked, was the resurrection of such a nature that covering some aspect of it would have fallen into their area of re-

⁷Carl F. H. Henry, “The Dilemma of Facing Karl Barth,” *Christianity Today*, January 4, 1963, 27–28.

sponsibility? “Was it news,” I asked, “in the sense that the man in the street understands news?”

Barth became angry. Pointing at me, and recalling my identification, he asked: “Did you say *Christianity Today* or *Christianity Yesterday*?” The audience—largely nonevangelical professors and clergy—roared with delight. When countered unexpectedly in this way, one often reaches for a Scripture verse. So I replied, assuredly out of biblical context, “Yesterday, today and forever.”⁸

Wherever one lands, this is one of the all-time great trading of wits of the Christian church. Henry’s last response—which Barth followed up with a question about whether photographers would take pictures of the virgin birth—crystallized his optimism about the future God directs. The church would suffer violence, and violent men would seek to destroy it. But they would fail. The kingdom of God might suffer violence but never defeat.

We need many things in our day, but this kind of God-centered hope is paramount. As future chapters will show, Carl Henry did not only quip about his confidence in God’s promises. He made good on it. He fashioned a life by it. He produced a body of thought according to it. We young evangelicals may never have had the privilege of knowing Henry in the flesh. We can, however, encounter both his piety and his theology, profiting from the meeting, discovering in it a godly man who lived what he believed and a Christian theologian who wrote what he had seen: Jesus high and lifted up, the Word once and for all delivered to the saints.

Books like this one are by necessity collaborative efforts. We therefore owe a debt of gratitude to many who have contributed to its completion. We are especially grateful to the various institutions and organizations that collaborated in one form or another to mark the occasion of the centennial of Carl Henry’s birth in 2013. Two conferences in particular, hosted at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, provided venues for many of this book’s chapters to be delivered first in address form.⁹

⁸ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 210–11.

⁹ We were especially delighted to see the broad constellation of evangelical sponsors behind the event in Louisville, including Beeson Divinity School, *Christianity Today*, Fuller Evangelical Theological Seminary,

We also note our appreciation to the administration at Southern Seminary, including President Albert Mohler and Provost Randy Stinson. Both have provided keen institutional leadership and influence, fostering an environment that reflects the best virtues of Carl Henry's vision for theological education and scholarship. We are thankful to call that place home.

Deep thanks are especially due to the wonderful team at Crossway. We found it to be a particularly sweet providence that Lane Dennis and Justin Taylor would support this project, especially in light of the long history and partnership between Crossway and Dr. Henry. Jill Carter and Lydia Brownback provided outstanding editorial assistance along the way, and Lauren Harvey led the effort to produce the book's extraordinary cover.

We are particularly grateful to our wives, Jeannie Hall and Bethany Strachan, who always lovingly and patiently endure our academic enterprises and broadly eccentric scholarly pursuits.

American evangelicalism now faces, as it has at various points in its complex history, something of a crisis moment. In the face of stiffening cultural opposition and the evaporation of cultural Christianity, the movement is once again required to return to its first principles, those convictions and beliefs that anchor our faith and direct our mission. We remain optimistic and hopeful. The faith once for all delivered to the saints remains as true and steadfast as ever, because the God "who speaks and shows" remains unchanging, and his promises are sure. We pray you sense that hopefulness even as you read this book and are strengthened afresh for the task at hand.

Matthew J. Hall and Owen Strachan

The Indispensable Evangelical

Carl F. H. Henry and Evangelical
Ambition in the Twentieth Century

R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Historians often overplay the term *indispensable*. Charles De Gaulle once quipped that cemeteries are filled with “indispensable” men. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that some men are indeed indispensable in the stories of nations, movements, and institutions. Historians of the founding era of the United States, for example, increasingly understand the indispensability of certain men whose lives proved consequential in the founding of the American nation. James Thomas Flexner, for example, wrote a Pulitzer Prize–winning biography entitled *Washington: The Indispensable Man*, a monograph that describes Washington’s indispensable role in the birth of America.¹

Carl Henry had a similar stature within the evangelical movement in the United States during the twentieth century. His role in the neo-evangelical movement was, without overstatement, indispensable. Just as the story of America’s founding is impossible to tell without the indispensable George Washington and his network of collaborators, so

¹James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1994).

also it is impossible to tell the story of the evangelical movement in the twentieth century without the indispensable Carl Henry and his fellow laborers Harold John Ockenga and Billy Graham.

In 1983 Word Publishing released a monograph on Carl Henry in their series *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind*. Bob Patterson, the general editor of the series, chose to write the volume on Carl Henry. He explained in the book's foreword, "As the editor of this series . . . I had to select an (or the) outstanding American evangelical theologian about whom to write a book. That choice was simplicity itself—Carl F. H. Henry, of course. Carl Henry is the prime interpreter of evangelical theology—one of its leading theoreticians and now in his seventies, the unofficial spokesman for the entire tradition."² Later he wrote, "Carl Henry has been the prime mover in helping evangelical theology in America re-assert its self-respect."³ In 1978, *Time* magazine named Carl Henry evangelicalism's leading theologian. In his obituary in the *New York Times*, published on December 13, 2003, Laurie Goodstein described Carl Henry as the "brain of the evangelical movement"—a line that served as the headline of the obituary.⁴

The description of Henry as the "brain" of the evangelical movement was not original to Goodstein. She adopted the phrase from none other than David Neff, the then-editor of *Christianity Today*. Neff told the *New York Times*, "If we see Billy Graham as the great public face and general spirit of the evangelical movement, Carl Henry was the brains." Goodstein also said, "In more than 40 books he wrote or edited, Dr. Henry laid out an intellectual defense both for a literal understanding of Scripture and for the imperative of spreading the faith." She went on to conclude, "Dr. Henry helped start several of the institutional pillars of the evangelical movement: Fuller Theological Seminary, where he was the first acting dean, and the National Association of Evangelicals, in addition to *Christianity Today*." Greg Thornbury later added a similar assessment of Henry's role in the neo-evangelical movement: "It would be fair to say that if Billy Graham was the heart of evangelical-

²Bob Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 9.

³*Ibid.*, 10.

⁴Laurie Goodstein, "Rev. Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, 90, Brain of Evangelical Movement," *New York Times*, December 13, 2003, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/13/us/rev-dr-carl-f-h-henry-90-brain-of-evangelical-movement.html>.

ism, Carl F. H. Henry was its head. The man with a massive brain, a journalist's pen, and an Athanasian fortitude."⁵ Paul House also noted, "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."⁶ My own assessment of Henry already published in *Baptist Theologians* is in accord with the statements above: "In an age of declining theological vigor and few theological giants, Carl F. H. Henry has emerged as one of the theological luminaries of the twentieth century. His experience as journalist, teacher, theologian, editor, and world spokesman for evangelical Christianity ranks him among the few individuals who can claim to have shaped a major movement."⁷ I continue to stand by those words and the assessment made in that essay.

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

HENRY AT SOUTHERN SEMINARY

I first encountered Dr. Henry in his theological literature. *Remaking the Modern Mind* was the first of his books I read. This work and others on the modern mind were written a generation before I read them. These books, however, described exactly what I was seeing and experiencing both in the modern world and in classrooms at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary during the 1980s.

I met Dr. Henry personally when he visited Southern Seminary at the invitation of the Student Evangelical Fellowship (SEF) in the 1984–1985 academic year. This was a critical time for both the seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention. Just one year prior (1983), Glenn Hinson, one of the most influential professors on the campus of Southern Seminary, and James Leo Garrett of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary participated in a literary project that asked the question, Are Southern Baptists evangelicals? Garrett was more open to the notion

⁵Gregory Alan Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 22.

⁶Paul R. House, "Remaking the Modern Mind: Revisiting Carl Henry's Theological Vision," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8/4 (2004): 4. Paul House's sentence is strategically written. Winston Churchill once said, "History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it"! Dr. Henry intended to do very much the same.

⁷R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Carl F. H. Henry," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 518.

that Southern Baptists were evangelical of a sort. Hinson, however, was adamant that Southern Baptists were not evangelicals. Evangelicals were not only a different theological tribe but of a different species! As both he and other SBC moderates saw it, *evangelical* was an undesirable adjective and a noun they did not intend to be.

Furthermore, in 1984 Jimmy Draper, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention, published *Authority: The Critical Issue for Southern Baptists*. That the president of the SBC was writing about serious theological issues within the church was an important achievement for the convention. Draper's book is also notable because it was largely dependent on the work of Carl Henry. Further, Draper, as president of the convention, included Henry and other prominent evangelicals in many important conversations taking place in Southern Baptist circles.

When Dr. Henry arrived on campus at Southern Seminary, I was serving as the assistant to my predecessor, President Roy Honeycutt. Dr. Honeycutt called me and indicated that we were facing an institutional challenge due to Henry's presence on campus. Henry, the most distinguished evangelical theologian of our time, had come to Southern Seminary, and yet no faculty member would host him.⁸ In light of this crisis, I was asked to host Henry. This was an experience that, for me, was a bit like discovering one had been asked to have breakfast with a visiting head of state!

Dr. Henry's arrival proved an intimidating experience—a massive, titanic theological presence had been delivered unto me for hosting. Having admired Henry's work and having listened to so many audio recordings of his lectures, I wondered what he was going to do with this twenty-something who had been appointed as his official host simply because the members of the faculty did not want to host him.

Dr. Henry accompanied me to my PhD theological colloquium, where I introduced him to Dr. Frank Tupper, the chairman of that colloquium and a senior faculty member at Southern. The faculty, having met prior to my arrival with Henry, had decided that Henry was certainly welcome to participate as an observer but was not allowed to

⁸I want to absolve Dr. Timothy George who also contributed to this volume and taught at SBTS during this time. He was unavailable during this time to offer assistance to Dr. Henry.

speak. As usual, Henry was incredibly gracious. He folded himself into a chair among the students, took out a tattered, leather briefcase with “C. H.” in gold on the clasp, retrieved some notes, and listened quietly.

The student presenting in colloquium that day was Charles Scalise, who now serves as professor of church history at Fuller Theological Seminary. Scalise had written a very incisive paper on Brevard Childs’s pioneering work on canonical theology. After roughly thirty minutes of cross-examination from the students, the faculty entered the conversation with a very lively debate about Hans Frei, James Barr, and Brevard Childs. Though I could almost feel the energy coming out of Dr. Henry, he exercised restraint and said nothing. At the end of the colloquium he privately made some very kind comments to Scalise about the paper.

Later that day Dr. Henry pulled three large manila envelopes out of his briefcase and handed them to me. The first was dated two weeks previous and labeled “Debate with Brevard Childs—Yale University.” The next envelope was also dated very recently and labeled “Dialogue with Hans Frei.” The final envelope was also recently dated and labeled “Debate with James Barr, Tyndale Fellowship, Edinburgh.” Each of these conversations had taken place just within the past few weeks! The PhD colloquium and faculty had just been discussing Brevard Childs, Hans Frei, and James Barr, and here was the man who not only had written about them but had just engaged them in public conversation. Yet he was not allowed to speak in colloquium. Of course, that did not keep him from speaking thereafter.

As readers may imagine, Dr. Henry and I had a great deal of conversation thereafter, particularly during the time he delivered an address to the SEF. During this time I learned that Henry could talk and walk at equal pace. He was a torrent of conversation. He had an unusual ability to put so many places and people on a theological and intellectual map of conversation. He connected so many dots into a cohesive theological worldview. I often wish I could now replay all of those conversations.

His conversation was also challenging. During his visit, I was writing my dissertation on Karl Barth and American evangelicalism. At one point, he decided to grill me on my reading of Karl Barth. Those who have read portions of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* will know that there are sections in large print and sections in small print (the *minuscula*).

Thankfully, due to my attention to the *minuscula*, I was able to respond to each of Dr. Henry's questions to his satisfaction. Henry concluded the conversation by reminding me, "Always read the *minuscula*. That's where Barth is at his greatest and most dangerous."

He grilled me with other theological questions as well. He had a knack for posing the most challenging theological questions in casual conversation. Though he was enormously kind, he was not a man given to many pleasantries. Conversations almost always seemed to end with a discussion of epistemology. On one occasion as we drove to dinner, he turned to me in the car and asked, "Which is prior, correspondence or coherence?" At the time I was more concerned about which is better, Italian or Thai? However, after being thrust into the deep end of the epistemological pool, I had to either sink or swim. My answer: "Correspondence is prior, coherence is meaningful only after correspondence." He simply responded, "We can eat now."

As his autobiography, *Confessions of a Theologian*, makes clear, Dr. Henry had something of a "vagabond ministry" during this time. His travel schedule was quite rigorous. Thankfully, his next engagement after his trip to Southern Seminary turned out to be some time away, so he continued to stay on campus. This time was a tremendously rich experience for me. One of the most important encounters I had with Henry during that time came as we walked across the seminary lawn after lunch. I can still remember exactly where we were on the seminary lawn when Henry asked me, "What is your position on women in the pastorate?" Until then, I had happily been an egalitarian. In fact, in 1984 the Southern Baptist Convention had adopted a resolution stating that the office of pastor was limited by Scripture to qualified men. In response, I instigated a public statement and bought a full-page ad in the Louisville *Courier Journal* to write a manifesto about how wrong the Southern Baptist Convention was on that issue. I do not know if Henry was aware of that information, but my guess is that someone in the SEF had informed him. After I stated my convictions, Dr. Henry looked at me over his glasses and said "One day, you'll be embarrassed to have made that argument."

Of course, I found Dr. Henry's statement rather devastating. That night, I went to Southern Seminary's library and tried to find everything

I could on the issue of the ordination of women—which was not much. This, of course, was before publications such as *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* and other literature upholding modern evangelical complementarianism. As a matter of fact, the only book I could find that opposed women’s ordination was *Man and Woman in Christ* by Stephen Clark, a rather eccentric Roman Catholic. Both Clark’s book and a fresh evaluation of Scripture’s teaching on the issue forced me to realize I had the wrong position—a position that was inconsistent with other theological commitments I had made. The experience now feels something like when Apollos was taken aside and instructed more accurately. Henry had a way of doing just that. I am very grateful for these experiences.

THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED

Dr. Henry and I remained in contact, especially as I was writing my dissertation. In 1987 he came as a visiting professor to the campus, as part of a Pew Charitable Trusts’ funded project on Southern Baptists and American evangelicals. This experience allowed me to spend more time with him and witness how he worked—an experience for which I am profoundly grateful. In 1989 I was elected editor of the *Christian Index*, the oldest newspaper serving the Southern Baptist Convention and now the oldest religious periodical in America. Carl Henry was the one man whom I had as a role model for editorial work, and we corresponded regularly. Henry never offered a critical word about my editorials, though he would often suggest other issues that should have been addressed. His letters regularly included statements such as, “You could have said such and such . . . but you’re always going to run out of space”—a final sentence that he would usually write in tiny script at the end of the letter because he himself had just run out of space. Henry’s *Christianity Today* was the standard I hoped to accomplish at the *Christian Index*.

In 1993, I was elected president of Southern Seminary. During my inauguration, a time of volatility almost impossible to describe, one of my goals was to make a statement about the direction that Southern Seminary needed to take. I asked several people for help in that task. The first was Billy Graham, who not only came and spoke at my

inauguration but also allowed us to name our graduate school of missions and evangelism after him. It remains the only graduate school that bears his name. I asked Henry to deliver the inaugural address at lunch, to which he graciously agreed.

Dr. Henry's address at the inaugural luncheon was entitled "Theology in the Balance." His address was both profound and incisive.

At this turning time in the history of Southern Seminary . . . the institution can exert enormous influences in view of its role in the denomination and the manner in which theoretical and practical studies are coordinated and in which the great heritage is perpetuated. There are always free spirits who think theologians, like magicians, need only carry a special bag of tricks or think that a pastor's main asset is his ready effervescence and his discharge of charismatic dynamism. Instead of looking to God and his self-disclosure and to the Bible and God's enduring promises, they look to self-esteem, to humanity, and its potential. . . . The time is right therefore to emphasize that truth is the highest asset the Christian religion can have. Nothing else much matters: the nature of God, the content of the Christian faith, redemption, regeneration, resurrection, and heaven and eternal bliss. If we remain only in the realm of myth, none of this matters. . . . Yet theology once again hangs insecurely in the balances . . . it is once again at a crucial stage, at a decisive juncture, at a critical turning point. We who profess to be its champions, and who welcome it for what it authentically and genuinely presents, need more aggressively to herald the direction it gives, and the truth and justice it affirms. The grace and moral energy it offers needs a larger sounding board. . . . Even an inaugural occasion like this reminds us that Baptists were among the earliest in founding Christian universities and seminaries. They've also had one of the poorest records in preserving their theological stability. We need more than two hands to count up the number of Baptist institutions that have gone down the drain doctrinally. . . . There are gratifying signs, however, of a recovery of academic heritage. . . . Even the launching of a large Christian university in the New York/New Jersey area is again being discussed, sixty years after it was first seriously probed. If a com-

prehensive Christian alternative to a turbulent secular outlook is to arrive, it will come from a Christian academia. The foes of Christian education can hardly be expected to respond critically to their own theories. The time has come to put things right again. Theology may no longer be king or queen of the sciences, but that is not reason for demeaning it to a bargain basement closeout.

From you for whom the Word of God has come alive, the world waits for a message that throbs with the heart of God. It is time for all of us to do theology in the dark again. It is not too late for America, if we stay true to the Savior and remain dedicated to his Word. Neither politics, nor the media, nor science, nor public education will make us truly happier or better or wiser. May the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary be a theological terrain where the Book and the Redeemer and the Returning King become the source of our theological preoccupations and moral power. It's time for revelry, and Louisville can lead the way again.⁹

Those words were marching orders. They were both bracing and challenging at the same time.

In 1994 Dr. Henry and I were invited to a think tank at Geneva College sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals. The two of us were asked to deliver papers about how evangelicals should think about the increasingly relevant and controversial issue of homosexuality. After presenting our papers, Henry asked if we could travel home together. It was then that I realized he was not able to get himself around as he once did. On this same occasion, I lost Henry in the airport. After paging him several times, I eventually had to enlist the aid of airport security. We finally found him sitting on a bench, wearing an overcoat, with his briefcase and book open, and jotting notes. I said, "Dr. Henry, we've been looking for you." He simply responded, "I've been here reading."

In 1994 I also served as the general editor—at Dr. Henry's invitation—for one of his final books, *The Gods of This Age or God of the Ages?* On this occasion, I discovered that Henry, though no longer serv-

⁹ Carl F. H. Henry, "Theology in the Balance," inaugural luncheon address, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, October 15, 1993.

ing in an editorial role, was still very much an editor. Not only did he edit his own work; he also edited my editing of his work. On one occasion, he chided me for nearly publishing a sentence that, in his estimation, inappropriately used the word *indicate* instead of *demonstrate*—even though it was Henry who had written the sentence using the word *indicate*. He wrote me a few paragraphs on the difference between what it would mean merely to *indicate* something as opposed to what it would mean to *demonstrate* something. While I was tempted to send back Henry’s original draft to show that he had used the word *indicate*, I decided to simply make the change and not mention the issue again. Not so with Henry. The next time we met, he asked, “Do you really understand the distinction between ‘indicates’ and ‘demonstrates’?” I assured him I did.

On January 22, 1999, Dr. Henry came back to Southern Seminary. That same day was also his eighty-sixth birthday. At that point, Southern Seminary named him senior professor of Christian theology. We hoped he would be able to have at least an episodic classroom ministry. Regretfully, Henry was never able to take a lectern at Southern. We were, however, able to celebrate that Henry’s six-volume magnum opus, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, was republished under the cosponsorship of Southern Seminary and Crossway—an achievement I now look back on with incredible satisfaction.

AN EVANGELICAL AMBITION

My friendship with Dr. Henry is one of the kindest gifts he could have given me. His interest in me, my ministry, the ministry of Southern Seminary, and Southern Baptists was generous. Our friendship continued all the way to his death. In the conclusion to my essay on Henry in *Baptist Theologians*, I wrote: “[Dr. Henry] has been recognized by evangelicals and non-evangelicals as the premier theological representative of the evangelical movement in the last half of the twentieth century. As E. G. Homrighausen of Princeton Theological Seminary remarked, Henry ‘has championed evangelical Christianity with clarity of language, comprehensiveness of scholarship, clarity of mind and vigor of spirit.’ Baptists and their fellow evangelicals stand in his debt.”¹⁰

¹⁰Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 531.

Now, over one hundred years after his birth, I continue to stand by that assessment. There is also a sense in which I understand my own words even more. As we look at the twentieth century, the only conclusion we can draw is that Carl Henry is an “indispensable evangelical.” Even his personal achievements reveal something of the importance of his influence: Wheaton College, Fuller Theological Seminary, *Christianity Today*, and beyond. This list is only more impressive when one thinks of his associations: Pacific Garden Mission, Moody Bible Institute, Prison Fellowship, World Vision, the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, and many other events, movements, and organizations he helped organize.

Part of what made Carl Henry an indispensable evangelical was his relentless ambition. The roots for this ambition are found prior to World War II in the wreckage of American fundamentalism. The neo-evangelical ambition was driven by a sense of urgency mixed with opportunity. In fact, it is difficult to understand which was greater, the opportunity or the urgency. Carl Henry’s birth in the very year before World War I placed him in one of the most transformative periods of human history. It also placed him in one of the most urgent moments of the history of American Christianity.

Suggesting that fundamentalism was entirely a failed project is churlish and condescending. If nothing else, the status of “fundamentalist” was forced upon many simply by the fact that they were cast out of denominations, removed from institutional structures, and eliminated from the opportunity of influence or engagement. Yet there are good reasons for understanding fundamentalism as a failure. Those who would become the leaders of the New Evangelicalism recognized that this failure was rooted in an anti-intellectualism, cultural disengagement, doctrinal eccentricity, pugilistic infighting, and the assured marginalization of a movement that complained about being marginalized but worked hard at times, seemingly, to be marginalized.

Thus, New Evangelicals were looking in two different directions. As they looked backward, they saw the collapse of obscurantist fundamentalism. They understood it was not only a failed project, but a closed option. There was no mode of moving forward. Readers can find in the writings of these early neo-evangelicals a sense of near desperation

as they struggled to find a way to perpetuate classical Christianity in a modern world without all of the shackles and the embarrassments of fundamentalism.

As the neo-evangelicals looked backward at the collapse of fundamentalism, they looked forward to the future and saw the collapse of liberal Protestantism. In reviewing their literature, I am amazed again at just how prescient the neo-evangelicals were about the collapse of liberal Protestantism. While the perpetual decline of mainline, liberal Protestant denominations is familiar to us now, the notion that these denominational crashes were coming was anything but obvious in the mid-twentieth century. Evidence of the optimism about the future of mainline denominations during this time can be found in Will Herberg's book *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, the National Council of Churches, and conciliar Protestantism after World War II. Yet during his editorship at *Christianity Today* Henry recognized that the foundations of liberal Protestantism were beginning to crack. He argued that liberal Protestantism simply could not provide compelling answers to the questions modern society was asking. The result of the collapse of liberal Protestantism would be not only the abandonment of biblical authority and doctrinal essentials, but also a retreat from mission fields, and a perpetual mode of cultural accommodationism. In this light, a New Evangelicalism became the dream of Henry and his colleagues. Their ambition was to project a reinvigorated Christianity that was truly orthodox, biblical, and comprehensively, even boldly, engaged.

It could be argued that Carl Henry arrived at Wheaton College as a student in 1935 with at least the embryonic form of this ambition. He was driven by his Christian passion but also by his experience as a young journalist. As a journalist, he witnessed an era that saw the rise of international organizations with both deep structural integrity and far-reaching influence. If Henry arrived at Wheaton with this ambition already brewing in his mind, it may explain why he networked and made the friends and associations he did. It may explain why he shared with Billy Graham and others an institutional, organizational, and Great Commission ambition that gave fruit to so many ministries. At Wheaton, Henry met friends who, with him, would become the luminaries of the New Evangelicalism. Their shared vision was marked by an almost unbridled ambition.

Carl Henry drove, shaped, publicized, edited, advertised, criticized, rationalized, and institutionalized that ambition. The neo-evangelical ambition was an ambition to reawaken and rescue conservative Christianity, to reengage the mind of the age with the revealed truths of God's Word, to marshal the finest minds and seize the intellectual opportunity, to build a great evangelical empire, and to organize evangelicals worldwide into a massive, world-changing Great Commission movement. Together these neo-evangelicals intended to meet the theological liberals on their own ground—the ground especially of academia and elite intellectual centers.

Carl Henry went beyond that, of course. He argued in *Christianity Today* that it was not enough to change minds—you had to change policies. Repeatedly within his editorials he would make the argument that we needed to change policies and reshape institutions. It was not enough to agree on cognitive issues if it did not have a practical effect. At the same time, he always knew that cognitive issues came first. The ambition of the New Evangelicals was to meet theological liberals on their own ground and beat them at their own game, especially in the arenas of theology and philosophy. They wanted to build greater institutions than liberal Protestantism had built and, unlike the mainline Protestants, they intended to retain them for evangelical faithfulness. They wanted to do more than engage the culture. They wanted to reshape it.

Without Carl Henry, the story of evangelicalism would be a very different story. To speak of Carl Henry is to tell the story of evangelical ambition and all of its glory—the conferences, colleges, seminaries, publishing houses, evangelistic organizations, youth movements, mission agencies, and congregations. To tell his story is also to speak honestly about the failures of that evangelical ambition—its overreach, its personality conflicts, its celebrity culture, its unfulfilled dreams, and its own accommodations, both cultural and theological.

The institutional ambitions were not without tremendous effect. Glancing at the contributors to this volume and their associated places of ministry is itself evidence to the fact that those evangelical ambitions were realized, even if they were not completely fulfilled. Fuller Theological Seminary, *Christianity Today*, the National Association of

Evangelicals, and the Evangelical Theological Society all live because of the ambition of the New Evangelicals.

One dream of the New Evangelicals and of Carl Henry that never materialized was a great evangelical university in a major metropolitan area. Dr. Henry insisted that the school could be established only in one of two places: Boston or New York. Evangelicals, he argued, needed to be located in the great centers where culture was being shaped. Even as late as my inauguration as president in 1993, he was still talking about that idea and engaged in conversations about the possibility of building this university. Several years ago, one evangelical leader told me, “Most of those conversations were going on in Carl Henry’s brain.” The man had a dream he simply would not let die.

This dream for a university was, in historical perspective, too late. There are very few major universities, evangelical or otherwise, that have emerged *de novo* out of the mid-twentieth century. As a matter of fact, a recent major volume on higher education points out that it is now virtually impossible to found what would be a major research university. For example, research institutions such as Stanford University or the University of Chicago were built upon the foundations of grants given by philanthropists such as John Rockefeller and others—men who at the time individually controlled 1 percent of the gross national product or gross domestic product of the United States.¹¹

While the ambition to see an evangelical university never materialized, Dr. Henry’s dream lives on in the lives of scholars and scholarly organizations that produce rigorous academic work with evangelical commitments. This dream also lives on in institutional representations such as King’s College and others in the New York/New Jersey area.

Many of Dr. Henry’s institutional ambitions live on. Some of them would please him more than others, but, frankly, it is something of a miracle that they actually do exist. When you consider what the evangelical founders established that has lasted, it is astounding—even if all their dreams were not realized. Henry’s theological ambitions were just as staggering. As I once again look at dozens of books written by

¹¹ See Alison R. Bernstein, *Funding the Future: Philanthropy’s Influence on American Higher Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education), 2013.

Carl Henry, I realize that few of his successors (if any) have written anything of that stature. The evangelical movement we know today would not be what it is had Carl Henry not written that library as a singular individual.

In all of his personal ambitions, what drove Dr. Henry ultimately can be boiled down to one word—*conversion*. He knew himself “to be completely owned by a Savior.”

In 1986, in his memoir, *Confessions of an Evangelical Theologian*, he said:

I have two main convictions about the near-term future of American Christianity. One is that American evangelicals presently face their biggest opportunity since the Protestant Reformation, if not since the apostolic age. The other is that Americans are forfeiting that opportunity stage by stage, despite the fact that evangelical outcomes in the twentieth century depend upon decisions currently in the making.¹²

Our ambitions may be somewhat different from those of the evangelical movement’s founders, but they are no nobler. Chastened by the realities of a new century and its challenges, I identify without hesitation or compromise upon the theological tradition or confession that Carl Henry and his friends so capably defined, defended, and declared. We stand not only in their debt but in their shadows. In an age that will require an even greater theological clarity and theological wisdom from us, may we be worthy to pick up the mantle they have handed to us.

Shortly before his death Dr. Henry wrote:

Our weak batteries can be recharged by a jump cable that reconnects believers to the divine current held in store for us by our supernatural Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. We rely too much on our own finite power and world energy; we are dazzled by technology more than by theology and morality. To gain God’s empowerment for mission we must first acknowledge our vulnerabilities and our

¹²Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 381.

spiritual immaturity. Beyond our lifetime, if Christ tarries, others will run the relay and carry the torch. For us, in the rocky terrain of the present-day cultural conflict, the time is now, and the race is now.¹³

The race has been over for Carl F. H. Henry for some time now. But it is not over for us. The real question is this: Will the present generation of evangelicals run the race or run from it?

¹³Carl F. H. Henry, *Gods of This Age or God of the Ages?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1994), 43.

UNSHAKABLE TRUTH IN AN UNSTEADY WORLD

In an age that is increasingly conflicted about evangelical identity and theological truth, Christians need a foundation for navigating the shifting culture. Although forgotten by some, twentieth-century theologian Carl F. H. Henry stands as one of the most influential leaders of modern evangelicalism. In this collection of essays written by leading theologians, readers will discover the extraordinary legacy that Henry left behind—a legacy desperately needed in our world today. Highlighting Henry’s unshakable confidence in the truth of God’s Word, these essays demonstrate how a renewed commitment to theology will lead to a greater love for God and others.

“This book will deepen your understanding of how Henry sought to place all aspects of life under the banner of the gospel.”

RICHARD STEARNS, President, World Vision US; author, *Unfinished* and *The Hole in Our Gospel*

“It would be hard to overstate the importance and ongoing relevance of the writings of Henry, one of the fathers of modern evangelicalism. This book belongs on the must-buy list of today’s evangelical readers.”

JIM LISKE, President and CEO, Prison Fellowship Ministries

“So much more than a historical reflection, this timely and extraordinary volume not only presents Henry’s massive thought to a new generation of readers, but carefully explores the identity and theology of the evangelical movement with remarkable insight.”

DAVID S. DOCKERY, President, Trinity International University

MATTHEW J. HALL (PhD, University of Kentucky) serves as vice president of academic services at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

OWEN STRACHAN (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is associate professor of Christian theology and director of the Center on Gospel & Culture at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also serves as president of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

THEOLOGY / BIOGRAPHY

