

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

There are times when a certain individual enters onto the stage of history who forever changes the drama that is life. No one more so than Martin Luther, who changed history by his fidelity to the Word of God and his willingness to confront his culture at the point where the difference was most acute. In fact, it was Luther who famously said, “That the true test of a disciple’s loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ is not merely found his professing the truth of God with the loudest voice and clearest exposition, but doing so precisely at the point where the world and the devil are at that moment attacking.”¹

In an editorial article, Stephen J. Wellum makes the comment that sadly many theologians in the history of the church have failed at this very point. Theologians in the twentieth century sought ways to communicate the Gospel in a specific cultural context. In doing so, two extremes were commonly manifested. The first extreme was to fixate on truths of God’s Word that are important but not central to the current debate. Second, the all too common attempt to engage contemporary culture was in a way that undermined and compromised the truth of God’s Word.² It is in this type of theological context that Carl F. H. Henry emerged. With the publication of his first major book, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (1946), Henry served notice that he would

¹ Stephen J. Wellum, “Editorial Remembering Carl F. Henry (1913–2003),” *The Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 8, no.4 (Winter 2004): 2.

² Ibid.

engage the culture where the battle was the fiercest, and do so without capitulating to the culture. In *Remaking Modern Mind* (1946), Henry served notice that he would engage the culture where the battle was the fiercest, and do so without capitulating to the culture. It would be said of Henry in retrospect:

In an age of declining theological vigor and few theological giants, Carl F. H. Henry has emerged as one of theological luminaries of the twentieth century. His experience as journalist, teacher, theologian, editor, and world spokesman for evangelical Christianity ranks him among the very few individuals who can claim to have shaped a major theological movement.³

Bob Patterson, the editor of the *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* series, said in making the choice for the outstanding American evangelical theologian that the decision in choosing Carl Henry was easy. According to Patterson, Henry “is the prime interpreter of evangelical theology, one of its leading theoreticians, and . . . the unofficial spokesman for the entire tradition . . . and the prime mover in helping evangelical theology in America reassert its self-respect.”⁴

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role that revelational epistemology played in the theological method of Carl F. H. Henry from a historical perspective. Carl Henry has long been regarded as one of the foremost theologians in evangelicalism. This study will examine those factors historical, philosophical and theological that enabled Henry to emerge, as *Time* magazine called him in 1978, as

³ Albert Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 518.

⁴ Bob E. Patterson, *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: Carl F. H. Henry* (Waco: Word, 1983), 9–10.

“Evangelicalism’s leading theologian.”⁵ The period under review will be from the time that Henry came onto the theological scene in the United States with his release of three major works in the 1940s: *The Remaking of the Modern Mind* (1946), *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947), and *The Protestant Dilemma* (1948) to the publication of *Toward A Recovery of Christian Belief* (1990). These works in many ways laid the philosophical and theological foundation for all of Henry’s work that would follow in the ensuing years. The importance of these books is that it is here Henry lays out, as he sees it, the mistakes made philosophically and theologically that led to the then current demise of the impact of the Protestant church in the United States of America. The review continues in that it looks at the rise and development of neo-evangelicalism and Henry’s role and guiding hand in what would become evangelicalism. Other seminal events during this time will be examined, such as Henry’s role in the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary, the founding of *Christianity Today*, the context of the writing of *God, Revelation and Authority*, the defense against neo-orthodoxy, and its import for evangelicalism. Henry was a major force in developing the shape of more than a few of Evangelicalism’s more institutional forms such as the National Association of Evangelicals and the Evangelical Theological Society. Finally, the study will examine Henry’s lasting impact and relevance for evangelicalism today as it wrestles with a myriad of issues at the start of the twenty-first century. Henry addressed issues in whole or in part, such as the authority of God’s Word, the capacity of the human mind and language to

⁵ Ibid., 9.

grasp trans-cultural, timeless and absolute truth, the very existence of absolute truth, the nature of propositional truth, and the inerrancy of God's Word.

1.2 Reason for the Study

Today, evangelicalism finds itself in turmoil. There are discordant voices that produce a cacophonous sound in the ears of contemporary culture. With the ascendancy of a postmodern paradigm, evangelicalism finds itself facing daunting questions:

- 1) Is the Bible authoritative-functional or ontological?
- 2) Is language an effective medium of communication that transcends time and culture?
- 3) Is religious pluralism a viable expression that is grounded in and consistent with the Bible?
- 4) Are the laws of logic relevant in the postmodern context?
- 5) Can God be known and does the Bible present Him reliably and accurately?
- 6) Is Open Theism an accurate interpretation of the information presented in the Bible of God's relationship to the world?
- 7) Does inerrancy really matter?
- 8) Is truth personal or propositional? Is the nature of truth functional or ontological? And what difference does it make?
- 9) What is the proper understanding of gender roles?⁶

These are but a few of the questions that evangelicals face and must answer. Furthermore, in a day that has all but deified tolerance, how does the exclusive and absolute nature of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ make its presence felt? Is there still something distinctive to be said about Jesus Christ that makes a difference

⁶ Issues such as these are raised all across the evangelical landscape but for a sampling see A. B. Caneday, "Critical Comments On An Open Theism Manifesto," *Trinity Journal* 23, no.1 (Spring 2002), 103–107; D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1999); Stanley Grenz, "From Liberalism to Postliberalism: Theology in the 20th Century," *Review and Expositor* 96 (Summer 1999): 385–404; Harold Netlan, "Religious Pluralism and Truth," *Trinity Journal* 6 (Spring 1985): 74–87; Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004); Francis Schaeffer, "He Is There and He Is Not Silent," *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 129 (January 1972): 3–19; Roy B. Zuck, ed., *Vital Theological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994).

to this post modern context? Carl Henry would answer these questions in much the same way as the Reformers, Augustine, and the writers of the New Testament would. The answer is to be found in the two basic axioms on which Henry based his theological method: the true and living God (the ontological axiom) and divine revelation (the epistemic axiom). It is on these two foundational pillars that the answers to aforementioned questions can be found. It is for this reason that Carl F. H. Henry is a worthy subject of this study.

1.3 The Issue at Hand

In his Rutherford Lectures in 1989, Carl Henry lays out in summary fashion his theological method. At the end of his long and distinguished career, these lectures raise again his challenge against all competing claims against Christianity, and how his particular theological approach is the appropriate methodology to meet the challenges of contemporary culture. Henry described in succinct fashion the effect of the “contemporary forfeiture of the public significance of Scripture [that]has negated the necessity and possibility of the Biblical world explanation. The search for an alternative model is beset with confusion and Western society drifts indecisively toward chaos. Secular scholars seem unable to tell us where we are.”⁷

In answer to the question, “Where are we?” Henry proposes what Wellum calls “revelational epistemology” as the guide to find where modern man is and as the

⁷Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward A Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 16.

appropriate road map for where he should go.⁸ In the Rutherford Lectures, Henry expounds the virtue of presuppositionalism. He refers to himself as an evangelical presuppositionalist: “If presuppositionalism implies that anyone who thinks has presuppositions, then I am unapologetically an evangelical presuppositionalist.”⁹ Henry anchors his presuppositionalism in the true and living God and in divine revelation. Henry asserts that every Christian should assume these axioms. In doing so, the Christian is able to account for reality and the intelligibility of existence.¹⁰

Henry writes in defense of his basic epistemic postulate:

In appealing to transcendent revelation as its basic epistemic axiom, Christianity casts its truth claims comprehensively over all areas of human life. The fact that Christianity postulates first principles and affirms fixed core beliefs does not rule out the propriety of rational test. Neither does the appropriateness of rational test imply that Christianity must be regarded as only hypothesis.¹¹

Al Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote following the death of Henry about the challenges he faced, of the criticisms he received, and of his influence. In telling fashion, Mohler remarked that Henry left a legacy for those evangelicals that follow him, which include a magnificent defense of divine revelation and of the rationality of Christianity. He quoted Henry’s comment on the importance of the Bible in that as:

divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its

⁸ Wellum, “*Editorial*,” 3. For an introductory look into apologetic methodology see Stanley N. Gundry and Steven B. Cowan eds., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

⁹ Henry, *Toward A Recovery of Christian Belief*, 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

verifying principle; logical consistency of a negative test for truth and coherence a subordinate test. The task of Christianity is to exhibit the content of biblical revelation as an orderly whole . . . the divine reservoir and conduit of divine truth, the authoritative written record and exposition of God's nature and will.¹²

Henry includes in this process the use of the Law of Non-contradiction and writes, "A telling test of universal validity and of truth is logical consistency . . . logical inconsistency sacrifices plausibility and . . . cannot be valid or true. Logical consistency may not decisively establish the truth of intellectual claims, but it is nonetheless a potent negative test."¹³ It is at this point that a problem arises. The charge that is leveled at Henry is that he is "overly rationalistic"¹⁴ and that he is too influenced by Enlightenment models of rationality.¹⁵ William McClendon charges that Henry's theological method fits neatly into the modern paradigm, and his philosophy is marked by the "four marks of the modern paradigm: human centered, universalizable, reductionist and foundationalist."¹⁶ It is to these issues that this study looks to address in the context of the cultural milieu in which Carl Henry addressed them.

¹² Albert Mohler, "The Life and Legacy of Carl F. H. Henry: A Remembrance," December 9, 2003, <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/weblogs/mohler/1234999.html?view> (accessed June 1, 2004).

¹³ Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 53.

¹⁴ Mohler, "The Life and Legacy of Carl F. H. Henry," 1.

¹⁵ Chad Owen Brand, "Is Carl Henry a Modernist? Rationalism and Foundationalism in Post-War Evangelical Theology," *The Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 8, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

1.4 Hypothesis

The development of Carl Henry's theological methodology is based in presuppositionalism.¹⁷ His presuppositions are: 1) the true and living God (the ontological axiom) and 2) divine revelation (the epistemic axiom). It is the second axiom that will be developed in this study. Henry's presuppositionalism is developed by the use of logical consistency (law of non-contradiction as a negative test for truth), the law of correspondence and consistency as positive tests for truth, the role of *imago Dei*, the role *Logos* of God, and the relationship of reason and revelation in concert to give man the ability to understand his world and to know God. It is stated that in lieu of being captive to an Enlightenment or modernistic paradigm, Henry's approach is a methodology that faithfully expounds the historic and orthodox Christian worldview.

1.5 Study Goals

Evangelicalism is a well studied phenomenon here in the United States. The body of literature is extensive and dates within a few years of its inception as a movement. However, the formal historical study of Carl Henry, his methodology, and its role in the rise and development of evangelicalism has a remarkable dearth of attention given the magnitude of his contributions. The subject of this study was a prolific author, and his literary production spans seven decades.¹⁸ The study will look at the historical context that led to the development and the impact of revelational

¹⁷ N. L. Geisler, "Presuppositional Apologetics," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 607–608.

¹⁸ Henry Center, "The Writings and Publications of Carl F. H. Henry, A Preliminary List by William H. Bates," Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, July 2006. http://www.henrycenter.org/carl_henry_pub_works.php (accessed September 17, 2007).

epistemology used by Henry, and the effect it had in American evangelicalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. It is also appropriate to examine the potential for lasting influence at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

1.6 Methodology

Meaning is found in context, as the taking of isolated events and trying to piece together their meaning often results in erroneous conclusions. To combat that possibility, the methodology employed by this study is intended to give proper historical context to the work of Carl Henry. Surveying the cultural and theological milieu that existed before Henry's rise to prominence; then following the contemporaneous theological developments during Henry's long career, will develop a setting that establishes the impact of his life. Henry left a rich depository of theological production. That literary depository, along with his the writings of his major influences and contemporaries, will allow for the use of primary sources as the main focus of this study. Along with those primary sources are secondary sources that provide valuable commentary on the impact of those primary works. This study will draw heavily from both primary and secondary sources.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 will examine Henry's rise to theological prominence, which began as a reaction to theological compromise that he detected in the works of A. H. Strong. Under the influence of Gordon Clark, Henry would emphasize the rationality of the Christian faith. Strong attempted to find a mediating position between orthodoxy and liberalism. But the failure in Henry's view was a dependence on modern critical

philosophy and post-Kantian epistemology. Henry masterfully illustrates the failures of the mediating theological positions at the time, with a careful analysis of the theology of Tertullian, Augustine, and Aquinas. He offers Augustine as a *via media* between the abandonment of reason (as seen in Tertullian) and the elevation of reason above revelation per Aquinas. The Augustinian tradition, which can be identified with Calvin and Luther, presents an alternative to an independent natural theology that places reason prior to revelation or to a theology of the absurd; this places faith outside of the realm of rational discourse.

Chapter 3 will focus on the influence that Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* had on the fundamentalist world in America. A brief survey of the Fundamentalist/Modernist Controversy, including a discussion on *The Fundamentals*, sets the stage for the impact of Henry's first book. The effect of this book would be the birthing of the movement that was to be called "neo-evangelicalism," and the book would serve as the burgeoning movement's manifesto. A survey of the major tenets of neo-evangelicalism will comprise the remaining part of the chapter.

Chapter 4 will examine the growth of the movement, now known just as "evangelicalism," and the influence that Henry had on it. From the early days of the founding of Fuller Seminary to the publication of *Christianity Today*, Henry set the tone for the evangelical engagement of the culture, and laid the foundation for the movement's key theological tenet that is the authority of Scripture. Following the Reformers, Henry's influence on evangelicalism can be seen in his defense of the revelational nature of Scripture, which ensures its truthfulness and trustworthiness.

Chapter 5 will focus on Henry's major theological work, *God, Revelation and Authority*. It is here that Henry becomes a primary proponent of the evangelical doctrine of revelation and scriptural authority. The basic epistemological foundation that Henry operates from is divine revelation. Revelational epistemology posits that God's communication to man is rational, conveyed in intelligible ideas, and meaningful words. A major emphasis of Carl F. H. Henry is propositional revelation, which validates biblical authority. As will have already been shown, to deny propositional revelation is to reduce faith to faith in the absurd. It is at this point that a critique of Henry's emphasis on human reason and its receptivity to divine revelation and the distinction he draws between reason and rationalism. Since Henry's defense of biblical inerrancy has had a major influence in the evangelical world, his argument and influence will be critiqued and analyzed.

Chapter 6 will highlight the rise of neo-orthodoxy and the contribution of Karl Barth. Neo-orthodoxy would constitute the second major theological movement that Henry would combat, and he would do battle on several fronts with rival to orthodoxy. He would refute the basis of Barth's system (as Barth was the major threat in Henry's view of neo-orthodoxy) Kantian epistemology, which in Henry's view led to much of the theological confusion of the day. The major weakness, in Henry's view, was the non-propositional character of special revelation.

Chapter 7 will detail the legacy that Carl F. H. Henry has left. Charges of Thomism will be analyzed, as well as accusations of being "a rationalist" in his defense of scriptural authority. Carl F. H. Henry has left no doubt regarding his reliance on propositional revelation. As such given the great weight of his influence,



he reasserted the vital role of theology in the church. Another aspect of Henry's influence has been aggressive engagement with the culture at large. From the publication of his first major work in 1946, Henry has always been at the forefront of leading evangelicals in the larger public arena. However, his most enduring legacy may be the return to the Reformation principle of the authority of Scripture.

CHAPTER 2 THE STAGE IS SET

Once upon a time there was a great religion that over the centuries had spread all over the world. But in those lands where it had existed for the longest time, its adherents slowly grew complacent, lukewarm, and skeptical. Indeed many of the leaders of its oldest groups even publicly rejected some of the religion's most basic beliefs.

In response, a renewal movement emerged, passionately championing the historic claims of the old religion and eagerly inviting unbelievers everywhere to embrace the ancient faith. Rejecting the skepticism the leaders who no longer believed in a God who works miracles, members of the renewal movement vigorously argued that their God not only had performed miraculous deeds in the past but still miraculously transforms all who believe. . . . Over time, the renewal movement flourished to the point of becoming one of the most influential wings of the whole religion.¹

The above two paragraphs are not the beginning of a fairy tale. Rather they chronicle with some literary flair the as yet unfinished story of evangelicalism.

Sider finishes his opening introduction of his book by hinting at the rising political influence and affluence of the evangelical movement. However, the point of his book is not to lavish praise on the evangelical movement, but rather to call evangelicals to return to their moorings and foundation. What started out as a great renewal movement now has the trappings of a failed renewal effort. Evangelicals now are as “likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered, and sexually immoral as the world in general.”² Sider adds that whatever

¹ Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 11–12.

² *Ibid.*, 13–17.

the issue that is faced in life, the polling data indicates that widespread and blatant disobedience of the clear biblical demands on the part of the people who allegedly are evangelical, born again Christians. The statistics are devastating.³

The world stage looked very different in the first half of the twentieth century that it does now as the beginning of the twenty-first century. That much is obvious. What is important for this study is that Carl F. H. Henry, one of the shapers of the movement that came to be known as evangelicalism, commented on the sad state of affairs that evangelicalism now faces in 1976, the very year that *Newsweek* magazine reported that 1976 was the “Year of the Evangelical.”⁴ Henry wrote, “If evangelical Christians do not join heart to heart, will to will and mind to mind across the multitudinous fences, and do not deepen their loyalties to the Risen Lord of the Church, they may become—by the year 2000—a wilderness cult in a secular society with no more public significance than the ancient Essenes in their Dead Sea cave.”⁵ Henry would write further in that same book that “twenty-five years ago there were signs that the long-caged lion would break its chains and roar upon the American scene with unsuspected power. The evangelical movement’s mounting vitality baffled a secular press, beguiled by ecumenical spokesman for liberal pluralism into regarding conservative Christianity as a fossil-cult destined to early extinction.”⁶ Henry concludes his opening chapter in *Evangelicals in Search*

³ Ibid., 17–29.

⁴ Carl F. H. Henry and Kenneth S. Kantzer, eds., *Evangelical Affirmations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 19.

⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals in Search of Identity* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 16.

⁶ Ibid., 19.

of *Identity* by saying, “Having burst his cage in a time of theological default, the lion of evangelicalism now seems unsure which road to take.”⁷ If current trends are any indication, the lion of which Henry wrote is still looking for which road to take. However, that was not the case in the early 1940s.

2.1 The Shaping of a Theologian

What were the factors that gave rise to the situation in which Carl Henry would emerge as one writer referred to him as the “Michelangelo of the evangelical renaissance.”⁸ It is the answer to that question that this paper now turns.

There are times in history when a convergence of events come together that leave a lasting impact, and the world is changed forever. Such was a time when a young theologian published his third book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.⁹ The theological scene in America was still smoldering in the aftermath of some theological infernos. The embers of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy were still burning.¹⁰ Presbyterians and Northern

⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁸ Carl R. Trueman, “Admiring the Sistine Chapel: Reflections on Carl F. H. Henry’s God, Revelation, and Authority,” *Themelios* 25, no.2 (2000): 48–58, under “Theological Studies.Org.UK,” http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/article_henry_trueman.html (accessed October 18, 2007) who was quoting Gabriel Fackre. Trueman went on to say that Henry was perhaps the central intellectual figure of American evangelicalism this century, position symbolized by the fact that he was the only evangelical selected for the extended treatment in the series *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind*, where he took his place alongside such luminaries as Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard and Panneberg as those who have exerted profound influence on the shape of various theological traditions. Henry is also placed alongside G. C. Berkouwer and Helmut Thielcke in Ray S. Anderson’s article in “Evangelical Theology,” in *The Modern Theologians 2d* (ed. David F. Ford; Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

⁹ Henry, Carl F. H., *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947, 2003).

¹⁰ Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 85–94, 125; Bradley Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalist, Modernist & Moderates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Baptists were greatly affected by the controversy, and the fall out had yet to be fully assessed. The 1920s in the United States were a tumultuous time in both the cultural and religious context. Indeed they were the “Roaring Twenties.” In addition to the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy, of which more will be said later, the effect of that controversy saw the formation of several organizations all within in the decade that lead to the turmoil of the period. The World Christian Fundamental Association (1919), The Fundamentalist Fellowship (1920), The Baptist Bible Union (1923), and The Auburn Affirmation (1924).¹¹ The Scopes Trial in 1925 was an event that had left conservatives reeling under the backlash of a trial in which their views had been misrepresented and caricatured.¹² Consequently, there had been a withdrawal from cultural engagement that at one time had been a hallmark of evangelicalism on both sides of the Atlantic.¹³ The founding of Westminster Seminary (1929) with J. Gresham Machen and three other seminary professors of Princeton Seminary that had left after a defeat for conservatives in the reorganization of Princeton seminary could be construed as another withdrawal from the cultural battlefield.¹⁴ The impact of Neo-orthodoxy, while beginning to

¹¹ Rolland D. McCune, “The Formation of The New Evangelicalism (Part One): Historical and Theological Antecedents,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Theological Journal* 3 (Fall 1998): 3–34.

¹² Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 4, 13. George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6, 184–88.

¹³ Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitfield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003); John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wiberforce, More, Chalmers, and Finney* (Downers Gove: InterVarsity, 2007); David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005).

¹⁴ McCune, “The Formation of The New Evangelicalism,” 30.

subside a bit in Europe, was still effecting the American theological scene significantly. And the impact of Liberalism, while in some quarters had dissipated, was still a force with which to be reckoned.¹⁵

It was into this very turbulent scene that a young theologian from Long Island, New York, made his entry onto the theological stage and would emerge as one writer put it “arguably the most significant exponent of the new evangelicalism.”¹⁶ Mohler would not be the only one to extol Henry as evangelicalism’s theologian of note. In 1978 *Time* magazine named Henry as “evangelicalism’s “leading theologian.”¹⁷ But just as a word needs context to have meaning, so does the life of an individual. The life of Carl F. H. Henry has a broader context, but it also has a more narrow context that in many ways is the more significant of the two. This paper has touched on briefly some of the events that would play a major role in the development not only of Henry but also of the context that he would enter and provide the backdrop of the stage on which Henry’s gifts would be so dramatically displayed.

¹⁵ Peter Toon, *The End of Liberal Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1995); Carl F. H. Henry, *Frontiers In Modern Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1964, 1965); Edward John Carnell, *The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950, 1960), 13–93; Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, & Modernity 1900-1950* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

¹⁶ R. Albert Mohler, “Evangelical theology and Karl Barth: Representative models of response” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 108.

¹⁷ Ray S. Anderson, “Carl F. Henry” in *The Modern Theologians 2d* (ed. by David F. Ford.; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 489.

2.2 Long Island Beginnings

On January 22, 1913, Carl Henry was born to immigrant German parents in New York City. Henry was the oldest of eight children and in good Prussian fashion was given two middle names: Carl Ferdinand Howard Heinrich. In the World War I years German families in New York anglicized their names. In 1917 when the United States entered the war, the Heinrichs became the Henrys. Henry makes the comment in his autobiography that due to growing hostility to German immigrants that his family stopped speaking German, even in private.¹⁸

Growing up Henry would say that religion was a matter of private indifference to his parents.¹⁹ His mother was a Roman Catholic and his father a Lutheran. So religion for Henry's early years was not nominal at best. Growing up in the Depression, money was difficult to come by. So in addition to doing a variety of jobs to make money, Henry displayed an early talent for the typewriter. By his junior year in high school, he could type eighty-five words a minute.²⁰

His typing skills enabled Henry to secure a job at *The Islip Press* in 1928. In 1932 he was promoted to serve as the editor of the *Smithtown Star* on Long Island. This editorship brought along with it an associate editorship of the *Suffolk Every Week*. Before becoming the editor of the *Star*, Henry's ample literary skill and his work ethic brought him rewards that he could not have imagined as a child of a

¹⁸ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 15–16.

¹⁹ Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry*, 19.

²⁰ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 29–30.

German immigrant family struggling to make ends meet. His pay increased from \$12 a week to \$15 per week. Soon he was given a daily gas allowance.²¹

The new editorship, the financial increase, the perks (complimentary tickets for boxing, wrestling events, auto races, county fairs, summer theatre, flower shows, restaurant openings, stage events in New York and the like) directed Henry's attention on the secular world. As Henry says in his autobiography, "My heart and mind were geared to the secular world and knew little of religious things."²² That was about to change.

On Henry's editorial team was Christy, a widow, who would become an endeared figure in Carl's life. Christy was responsible for proofreading and correcting the galleys. Henry had developed a close relationship with Mrs. Christy and had made the offer that should she ever need a ride, all she had to do was call him. It was as a result of this standing offer and the developing friendship that Carl Henry would meet Gene Bedford, and it be would Bedford that would introduce Carl Henry to Jesus Christ. Christy managed to get Henry to a meeting where Gene Bedford was speaking. After the meeting Bedford extracted a promise for a meeting the following Saturday from a very reluctant Carl Henry. The topic of the meeting would be to discuss God's plan for the newspaperman's future. Bedford had no way of knowing but the summer had been a particularly anxious time for Henry. He was greatly troubled over not only his temporal future but also his relationship to God. Before the meeting with Bedford Henry would have a profound experience:

²¹ Ibid., 34.

²² Ibid., 36–37.

I had driven to the quiet shorefront at Blue Point, and there had meditated and prayed and wrestled with God. I still felt as when reading accounts of Jesus' resurrection, like a moth circling a flame, daring neither to believe nor to disbelieve. . . . But then a sudden squall followed by a furious storm sent me driving homeward through earth piercing lighting and thunder. As I parked momentarily for the raging rain to sub-side before opening the large barn door for car entry, a fiery bolt of lightning, like a giant flaming arrow, seemed to pin me to the driver's seat, and a might roll of thunder unnerved me. When the fire feel, I knew instinctively that 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.²³

After a three hour conversation with Gene Bedford, Carl Henry knelt down in the front seat of Bedford's car and accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Henry would never be the same and neither would the Protestant world.²⁴

Henry would write of his conversion in his autobiography:

By the end of the prayer the wonder was wrought. I had an inner assurance hitherto unknown of sins forgiven, that Jesus was my Savior, that I was on speaking terms with God as my Friend. A floodtide of peace and joy swept over me. My life's future, I was confident, was now anchored in and charted by another world, the truly real world . . .

I waited and wept before God as the minutes passed, silently asking for guidance and direction and committing to him the whole panorama of future vocational possibilities. I know knew God to be King of my life. Had he dispatched me, I would have gone that very day to China or anywhere else in his cause.²⁵

Truer words were never written. At the age of twenty in 1933, Carl F. H. Henry's conversion to Jesus Christ was radical and changed the direction of his life.²⁶

²³ Ibid., 45–46.

²⁴ Ibid., 46.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Anderson, *Carl F. H. Henry*, 489.

Even as his journalistic career looked bright with promise, Henry felt an ever increasing conviction that he needed to enter college or a university to prepare for full-time Christian service. He wrestled with the idea. No one in his family had ever went to college. College cost money. In the mid 1930s money was tough to come by. He had a paying job and to walk away from that was daunting to say the least. However, “if God directed . . . he would doubtless provide. But how would he provide?”²⁷ It was during this struggle of determining God’s direction in his life, that Henry discovered a last principle that would not only guide him in the many years to come, but a principle that would serve as a foundational axiom in his life and work:

I have always been open to some so-called mystical aspects of the Christian life, if in fact mysticism is really a term appropriate to the New Testament. Too many theologians have hastily dismissed the apostle Paul’s teaching on “union with Christ.” To be sure, the New Testament doctrine is remarkably different from what in philosophical circles is generally meant by mysticism. The Christian’s relationship to Christ involves no absorption or disappearance of the self into the Infinite; distinctions of personality are not cancelled, but rather are intensified in man’s relationship to the Deity. Equally important is the fact that Bible anchors the most intimate divine-human relations in redemption, even if that experience rests upon Christ’s prior mediation in creation and revelation. Scripture knows nothing of a sinful humanity with immediate access to the holy God in man’s own right or on man’s own terms; communion with God presupposes the God who speaks and saves. God has revealed his nature normatively to the inspired prophets and apostles as set forth in Scripture. That does not mean, however, that he enters into no significant relations today. New truth about God there is not; a novel God about whom we must affirm only revisable predications is a modernist invention. But when God becomes *my* God, when divine revelation penetrates not only the mind but rather the whole self, when the Spirit personally illumines the believer, dynamic fellowship with God opens possibilities of spiritual guidance in which the Holy Spirit personalizes and applies the biblical revelation individually to and in a redeemed and renewed life.²⁸

²⁷ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 51–52.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

2.3 A Theological Quest

With this new insight in the relationship with “the God who speaks and saves” Henry enrolled into Wheaton College in 1935. His program of study was philosophy where he studied under Gordon Clark.²⁹ This relationship would have a profound and a lifelong effect on Henry.³⁰ The influence of Clark is easily seen in Henry’s work and the latter would write of the former:

I am deeply indebted to scholars of various traditions, especially to competent philosophers under whom I have studied like Gordon H. Clark, W. Harry Jellema and Edgar S. Brightman. . . . To no contemporary do I owe a profounder debt, however, than to Gordon Clark, as numerous index references will attest. Since the thirties when he taught me medieval and modern philosophy at Wheaton, I have considered him the peer of evangelical philosophers in identifying the logical inconsistencies that beset non-evangelical alternatives and in exhibiting the intellectual superiority of Christian theism.³¹

Wheaton was gaining a reputation and would become known as the “Harvard of the Bible Belt,” the foremost fundamentalist college in the nation and a producer of such future leaders as theologians Carl F. H. Henry, and Edward John Carnell, and evangelist Billy Graham.³² Henry’s Wheaton years were not only instrumental in academic preparation but also formative denominationally and relationally.

²⁹Richard A. Purdy, “Carl F. H. Henry,” in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 260.

³⁰ R. Albert Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 280.

³¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority, Vol. 1* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, , 1999), 10.

³² Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 22.

While at Wheaton, Henry worked his way through college doing a variety of jobs. One of those jobs was as a typing instructor. This job would introduce him to another great life long influence. He met Helga Bender, who was a student of his and whom he would marry August 17, 1940. Their family would eventually include “a daughter, Carol Jennifer, an expert musicologist and a son Paul Brentwood, United States Congressman.”³³ Helga was a priceless treasure to him and when they met at Wheaton College a goal of his was to persuade her that she “ought not to marry any of the others already in line” ahead of him.³⁴

Wheaton also had other major influences on Henry. Wheaton was an interdenominational school, and even though Gordon Clark was a Presbyterian (Clark was a major influence in the shaping of Henry’s theology), he found himself leaning toward Baptist views of Scripture. Henry wrote that it was during his student days he was “propelled . . . toward Baptist views as I studied Scripture, interacted with campus associates and reflected on contemporary religious life.”³⁵ While returning for a short visit to Long Island to see family, Henry went to Babylon Baptist Church on Long Island and was baptized on profession of faith in 1937:

I returned to Long Island for a few weeks with my family, and made an important contact with the First Baptist Church of Babylon. Bible study had convinced me that New Testament baptism was by immersion, and is intended for believers only. I asked Pastor Burgess E. Brown to explain

³³ Timothy George, “Inventing Evangelicalism,” *ChristianityToday.com*. Located at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/global/printer.html/ct/2004/6.48html>. (Accessed February 14, 2005).

³⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, *Conversations with Carl Henry: Christianity for Today* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 116.

³⁵ Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry*, 21.

believer's Baptism to me in detail, as if I were hearing about it for the very first time. He made clear its significance as an open personal identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and as one's witness to the world at large of new citizenship in the kingdom of God. I was immersed at the next midweek prayer meeting. My option for future theological studies now looked specifically toward Baptist ordination.³⁶

He graduated from Wheaton in 1938 and immediately started theological studies at Northern Baptist Seminary in Chicago and concurrently enrolled in the newly formed John Dickey Memorial Theological Seminary at Wheaton College.³⁷

He was ordained to the Baptist ministry as pastor of Humboldt Park Baptist Church.³⁸ During these days of academic preparation and study Henry would say that the persuasion of the Baptist views would be strengthened and deepened.

Bob Patterson in his book on Carl Henry lists those Baptist distinctives that made such an impression on the theologian in the making:

Henry lists them in this order: (1) the final authority of Scripture above all creeds and speculation; (2) the priesthood of all believers; (3) believer's baptism by immersion; (4) the autonomy of the local church; and (5) the separation of church and state. Henry says that while "I might not use this precise order of tenets now, I would surely insist on the inclusion of each one" . . . Respect for the authority of Scripture may be the key to understanding the Baptist witness, and why this witness so strongly appeals to Henry. He says: "Reliance upon Scripture to reveal the saviourhood and lordship of Jesus Christ, and his plan and purpose of mankind, is more than the first tenet of authentic Baptist belief; it is the foundation stone for the other principles which, if unsettled, jeopardize the total Baptist spiritual

³⁶ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 84.

³⁷ Steven Mark Hutchens, "Knowing and being in the context of the fundamentalist dilemma: A comparative study of the thought of Karl Barth and Carl F. H. Henry" (Th.D. diss. Lutheran School of Theology, 1989), 66.

³⁸ Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry*, 21. Henry also served as interim pastor of the First Baptist Church of Elmhurst, Illinois. Cf. James Emery White, *What is Truth? A Comparative Study of the Positions of Cornelius Van Til, Francis Schaffer, Carl F. H. Henry, Donald Bloesch, Millard Erickson* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 86.

structure. Henry finds most appealing the Baptist confidence that the New Testament revelation is the climax of divine disclosure.³⁹

This emphasis on divine disclosure contained in the Scripture would emerge as a foundational axiom for Henry that would anchor his theological work for the rest of his life.

2.4 Henry's Objection to Strong's Compromise

In 1941 Henry received his B.D. from Northern Seminary and Th. M. from John Dickey Memorial Seminary. He received his doctorate from Northern in 1942. His dissertation was on church publicity. He also published his first book, *A Doorway to Heaven, a history of the Pacific Garden Mission*. He was hired by Northern Seminary to teach English, American Literature, and religious journalism.⁴⁰ Henry was also a charter member of the National Association of Evangelicals that organized in 1942.⁴¹ While teaching at Northern, Henry enrolled at Boston University's doctoral program and studied under personalist philosopher Edgar S. Brightman.⁴² Henry received his doctorate from Boston University in

³⁹ Ibid., 21–22.

⁴⁰ Hutchens, "Knowing and being in the context of the fundamentalist dilemma," 65.

⁴¹ Ibid., 66. More will be said of the development of evangelicalism in various forms later.

⁴² Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, & Modernity 1900-1950*, 298–325. "Personalism holds that reality is personal and that persons are the highest-not the only-intrinsic values. It is a type of idealism which maintains that the PERSON is the supreme philosophical principle that principle without which no other principle can be made intelligible. It is the view that the universe is a society of interacting and intercommunicating selves and persons with God at the center." Jr. Rufus Barrow, "The Personalism of John Wesley Edward Bowen" *Journal of Negro History* 82 (1997), 1, <http://www.questia.com/read/5001524396>, (accessed on January 21, 2008). Brightman studied under Bordon Parker Bowne and eventually held the Bordon Parker Bowne Professorship of Philosophy at Boston University. Brightman's, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1940) expanded what came to be known as Boston Personalism. Brightman followed Bowne's personalism that "corrected Ritschl's theory of religious knowledge by a personalism (of Professor's Bowne's type) that recognizes the unity of the subject, and looks on the harmonious, consistent realization of the total personal life as the ultimate criterion of truth."

1949. His dissertation which was later published, *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology*⁴³ showed the influence of Brightman who argued that modern Christianity needed to critique the reigning philosophies and provide an alternative.⁴⁴ Henry concluded that due to Strong's "halfness and hesitancy, because of his conviction that the old and new could be retained as two phases of a deeper truth" lead to a revision of traditional doctrines.⁴⁵ Whereas Brightman would take a personalistic emphasis in his critique of deficient worldviews, Henry following Gordon H. Clark, would insist on the priority of divine revelation and the true and living God.⁴⁶ Clark would also insist that a proper theological method would discover those weaknesses in competing claims. Clark called this method the apagogic method—the

Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal*, 299. Bowne was a Methodist who thought that Methodism needed to be totally rethought. Bowne's view was a blend of epistemological realism and idealism. His major work in this area was *Metaphysics: A Study in First Principles* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, 1882) and *Theory of Thought and Knowledge* (New York: American Book Company, 1897).

⁴³ Carl F. H. Henry, *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1951).

⁴⁴ Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology*, 301.

⁴⁵ Henry, *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology*, 229. Grant Wacker writes that Henry concluded that this tendency by Strong to try and find a middle way between modernist and fundamentalist ultimately weakened his theology because he "tried to build traditional doctrinal positions on post-Kantian premises." Grant C. Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 9.

⁴⁶ Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 49. In this publication of his Rutherford Lecture of 1989, Henry would emphasize the fundamental axiom of his theological method: "The Christian's primary ontological axiom is the one living God, and his primary epistemological axiom is divine revelation." Henry, *GRA. Vol. V*, 381. Also Henry, *Carl Henry At His Best* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1989), 167. See also Gordon H. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961); and Clark's, *A Christian View of Men and Things: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952, 1981).

method of *reduction ad absurdum*.⁴⁷ Clark provides an example of how this method is employed:

Logical Positivism and the Oxford school of Analysis hold that religious statements are meaningless because they are not susceptible to sensory verification. Aside from formal tautologies, such as the principles of mathematics, no statement is meaningful (true or false), unless verifiable. But this axiom of verification reduces to absurdity because it violates itself. The principle is not subject to sensory confirmation and hence is nonsense. Granted this is not all a Christian evangelist should say to a Logical Positivist; it is not all that he should say about Logical Positivism; but the apagogic method must remain basic apologetic procedure.⁴⁸

Henry would use this method with great precision.⁴⁹

Another influence that would surface in the Henry's approach would be the assertion of Bowne that one need not apologize, compromise or make excuses for basic philosophical axioms. Bowne would say that the personalistic school had a "perfect right 'to be loyal to its own insights, to acknowledge, with pride and gratitude, its debt to Bowne, in short, to be a school.'"⁵⁰ Brightman would write, "I do not see that we need apologize for having convictions, or for believing that Bowne's fundamental insights are a permanent contribution to philosophical opinion . . ." ⁵¹ Henry would echo his Boston professor:

Each worldview has its distinctive starting point or touchstone thesis through which it attempts to unify and explain human experience. The

⁴⁷ Gordon H. Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method* (Philipsburg, NJ: Trinity Foundation, 1963, 1997), 96.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 96–97.

⁴⁹ Henry, *GRA*, Vols. 1-6, *The Drift of Western Thought*, and *The Remaking of the Modern Mind* are three prominent examples. It is an irony of sorts that two of Henry's major influences would be involved in the apagogic method. Gordon Clark applies this methodology to Brightman in Clark's, *A Christian View of Men and Things*, 232–46.

⁵⁰ Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology*, 302.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Christian philosopher is under no intellectual compulsion, therefore, to accept rival premises, however fashionable, as the starting point for advancing his or her theistic worldview. And the nonbeliever cannot object that the axioms of Christian theism are derived from a source other than sense experience or mystical intuition or philosophical conjecture. The evangelical's confidence that Biblical theism is comprehensively explanatory is as legitimate a pre-philosophical assumption for formulating his or her truth claim as is the logical positivist's notion that only empirical confirmability rescues the term God from meaninglessness.⁵²

Henry in the same address stresses this principle even more:

Christian philosophers are ill-advised if, to make Biblical theism as palatable as possible to secular philosophers, they conform Christian claims to the alien and often hostile principles of non-Biblical thinkers. The validity of Christian theism does not depend on whether unbelievers find its presuppositions acceptable, or upon espousing only those beliefs that dissenting philosophers approve. Alvin Plantinga puts it, "[T]he Christian philosopher is entirely within his rights in starting from belief in God. . . . He has a right to take the existence of God for granted and go on from there in his philosophical work just as other philosophers take for granted the existence of the past, say or of other persons, or the basic claims of contemporary physics."⁵³

Of axioms more will be said later.

2.5 Theological Foundations

As he was working on his doctorate in Boston during the summers, Henry would find time to write and publish his first attempts at formulating a Christian worldview, and it also showed the promise of the young budding theologian. In 1946, Henry published *Remaking the Modern Mind*. It has been said that in many ways this book was "the most significant of Henry's seminal works."⁵⁴ Henry

⁵² Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 65-66.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵⁴ Paul R. House, "Remaking the Modern Mind: Revisiting Carl Henry's Theological Vision," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology: Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003): A Tribute*, 8, no 4 (Winter 2004): 7.

wrote in the introduction that it was his conviction that the modern mind will only come to maturity when its contemporary reversals are transmuted into a return to that Christian theism which makes intelligible the scene of human activity.”⁵⁵

Henry surveys and critiques the modern mind and then makes a succinct evaluation of the problem that modern man faces in the first half of the twentieth century: “the modern mind is built on unreasonable precepts.”⁵⁶ One of the aspects of the book is

that it introduced several important themes that surface consistently throughout

Henry’s lengthy theological career: it stressed epistemology, methodology, theological fidelity based on biblical revelation, and engagement with modern thought.⁵⁷ Another professor would have a impact on the development of Henry’s

thought during this period of his life. Henry would write in his autobiography that while taking graduate courses at Indiana University he sat under W. Harry Jellema.

Jellema in Henry’s words was

a master teacher who taught history of philosophy. . . . He lectured methodologically and magisterially, sweeping over the broad cognitive vistas of Western thought with special alertness to the dilemmas of modernity. His interest in ontology and epistemology was at the same time an interest in moral philosophy and spiritual reality. He not only held Christian world-life intellectual convictions, but promoted Christian perspective as well, that is the need to think and live Christianly.⁵⁸

Jellema would make valuable suggestions on *Remaking the Modern Mind*.⁵⁹

Henry would dedicate this volume to the “Three Men of Athens”—Gordon H.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁸ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 109.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Clark, W. Harry Jellema, and Cornelius Van Til.⁶⁰ The reason for the dedication Henry would write that he was “inspired by correspondence with Gordon Clark . . . by Jellema’s lectures . . . by a continuing reading of some of Van Til’s syllabi. The dedication was to these three men who have sharpened my convictions by action and reaction, in delightful philosophical interchange.”⁶¹

Remaking the Modern Mind was published in 1946. Important as this first volume was, in 1947 Henry would publish the *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, which would launch Henry onto the national stage. In reviewing the book, John F. Walvoord of Dallas Theological Seminary wrote that “Dr. Henry’s book may well prove to be one of the most provocative volumes to come from the evangelical press for some time.”⁶² The reason for the characterization was that in light of the fundamentalist adherence to the authoritative Word of God, they (the fundamentalist) “ought to have an uneasy conscience in regard to their silence concerning the Christian answer to the political, social, and moral problems of our day.”⁶³ Henry would take this charge to heart and this small work would serve as the clarion call for evangelical engagement with the culture. The significance of this book cannot be overstated. “One of the few matters of evangelical historiography that all sides of the evangelical debates can agree on is the role of Carl Henry’s 1947 manifesto *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern*

⁶⁰ Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 5.

⁶¹ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 111.

⁶² John F. Walvoord, “Book Reviews: *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 104 (July 1947): 363.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Fundamentalism in shaping the theological definition of the founding era.”⁶⁴

Chapter 3 will undertake a more thorough examination of the historical and theological significance of *The Uneasy Conscience*.

In that same year Henry would leave Northern Baptist Seminary for the newly formed Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.⁶⁵ Joining the faculty of Fuller was significant in that Fuller was started with the intention of becoming the flagship institution of a revitalized and intellectually respectable fundamentalism.⁶⁶

Henry’s role in the founding of Fuller and its impact on evangelicalism will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 4. Rolland McCune would write that it was

the prodigious pen of Carl F. H. Henry that in the 1940s and 50s did the most to raise the issue of fundamentalism’s intellectual want and tried to elevate the standard of evangelical/fundamentalist scholarship and the intellectualism of the day. And it was Henry who did as much or more early on to set the scholastic tone and academic standards of the new evangelicalism’s flagship of learning—Fuller Theological Seminary.⁶⁷

McCune was correct in saying that the pen of Henry was prodigious. During this period Henry wrote significant volumes that elevated the respectability of the

⁶⁴ Russell D. Moore, “The Neo-Fundamentalism of the Evangelical Left: Post-Conservative Evangelical Proposals as Reversal of Evangelical Doctrinal Development” [paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Atlanta, GA, November 21, 2003].

⁶⁵ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, 1995), 56, 57, 59, 75–82. In this volume Marsden provides a comprehensive account of the role of Fuller Seminary in the early development of evangelicalism.

⁶⁶ Hutchens, *Knowing and being in the context of fundamentalist dilemma*, 66–67.

⁶⁷ Rolland D. McCune, “The Formation of The New Evangelicalism (Part Two): Historical Beginnings,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 (Fall 1999): 123–24.

growing neo-evangelical (later to be called simply evangelicalism) movement.⁶⁸

Henry would publish fifteen books during the 1940s and 1950s. He would serve as editor on two other series during this period as well.⁶⁹ Henry released a book in

1948 titled *The Protestant Dilemma*.⁷⁰ The dilemma that Henry analyzed was “that Protestantism had embraced and now generally rejected Modernism by 1948, and now was turning to the neo-supernaturalism of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner.”⁷¹

Henry would critique the liberal view of revelation, sin, and the person of Christ.

Walvoord again would give Henry high praise for his latest book. . . . “With unusual insight, the author unmasks the inadequacy of liberal concepts of revelation and demonstrates the necessity and importance of Biblical revelation.”⁷²

⁶⁸ Cf. William Bates, “The Writings and Publications of Carl F. H. Henry: A Preliminary List,” Henry Center, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. http://www.henrycenter.org?carl_henry_pub_works.php (accessed September 17, 2007).

⁶⁹ Gale Reference Team, “Contemporary Authors-2004 Biography – Henry, Carl F(erdinand) H(oward) (1913-2003), <http://media-server.amazon.com/exec/drm/amzproxy.cgi/MjgwIlTvfUj4om38Kzcr2z/03gK> (accessed April 12, 2007).

⁷⁰ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Protestant Dilemma* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948).

⁷¹ House, “Remaking the Modern Mind: Revisiting Carl Henry Theological Vision,” 9.

⁷² John F. Walvoord, reviews of *The Protestant Dilemma* by Carl F. H. Henry,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 106, no.423 (July 1949): 377. A criticism of Henry’s *The Protestant Dilemma* is found in a review by Earl E. Zetterholm, review of Carl F. H. Henry: *The Protestant Dilemma*,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 12 (November, 1949): 117. The reviewer criticizes Henry in “his almost complete refusal to deal with dialecticism’s divorce from history from the Christian faith and to deal with the theology of dialecticism on the basis of that divorce. . . . But are the dialectical views . . . any higher than their liberal predecessors? Liberalism was at least somewhat willing to rest its case on the dictates of history. . . . But the dialecticians refuse to take any cognizance of history. Such a procedure involves them in an even baser denial of the high doctrines of orthodoxy. This is the thing that Dr. Henry apparently, in company with the greater part of fundamentalism, has failed to appreciate.” What may have been in weakness in Henry’s critique of neo-orthodoxy in the present work under review was certainly rectified in *GRA* as neo-orthodoxy and its anti-historical bias was treated at length.

Augustus Cerillo Jr. and Murray W. Dempster write incisively of Henry's shaping influence and his importance to the development of evangelicalism: "During these formative years of evangelical renewal Carl F. H. Henry, more than any other individual, led the way in formulating the apologetic for a socially relevant evangelicalism. His early writings are routinely cited as the main instigators in the awakening of contemporary evangelical social concern."⁷³ Cerillo and Dempster would go on to say that:

More important than Henry's NAE involvement for the long-term resurgence of social and political concern among evangelicals was his scholarly work. . . . Henry gave formative intellectual direction to the evangelical cause. Appalled that the Biblical world-life view no longer shaped modern cultural, intellectual and political thought, Henry in 1946 wrote *Remaking the Modern Mind* to confront the naturalistic and humanistic assumptions underlying much of modern life. . . . If in *Remaking the Modern Mind* Henry challenged the philosophic assumptions of modern thought, in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) he summoned his fellow evangelicals to develop Biblically-based contemporary worldview and social ethic. This volume covets for the whole evangelical movement Henry wrote, a new life and vigor on the destitute world front.⁷⁴

House writes, "*The Protestant Dilemma* asserted Henry's conviction that 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."⁷⁵ These were the major issues that Henry addressed in the book. *Remaking the Modern Mind*, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* and *The Protestant Dilemma* set the ground work and laid the foundation for much of what would follow in *GRA* These three

⁷³ Augustus Cerillo Jr. and Murray W. Dempster, "Carl F. H. Henry's Early Apologetic For An Evangelical Social Ethic, 1942–1956," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no.3 (September 1991): 366.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ House, "Remaking the Modern Mind: Revisiting Carl Henry's Theological Vision," 11.

books also set his conviction that Christian theology should be philosophically tenable and applied in a worldview that intersects life at the crossroads.⁷⁶ In this fundamental commitment of Henry one can see the influence of Brightman⁷⁷ and also the influence of James Orr:

It was James Orr's great work, *The Christian View of God and the World*, used as a Senior text in theism, that did the most to give a cogently comprehensive view of reality and life in a Christian context. . . . What I do maintain is that all Christian learning must be for the sake of worship and service to God in the world, and that we are deceived if we think that our own schematic skills or speculative theories or politico-economic proposals make the Bible meaningful and credible to the contemporary world. The case for Christianity does not rest upon our ingenuity; it rests upon the incarnate and risen Lord. The Bible is meaningful as it stands; it is we, not the Scriptures, that need to be salvaged. Unless evangelical education understands Christianity's salvific witness in terms of the whole self-intellect, volition, emotion, conscience, imagination-and of the world in its total need-justice, peace, stewardship and much else-it cannot adequately confront a planet that has sagged out of moral and spiritual orbit.⁷⁸

This understanding would guide Henry for the rest of his remarkable career.

2.6 Theological Maturation

The 1950s would continue to be a very productive time for Carl Henry. His William Bell Riley Lectures at the Northwestern Schools would be released at *The Drift of Western Thought*.⁷⁹ In this book Henry reiterates in a much tighter fashion much of what he had written his earlier three volumes that have been addressed. Also in 1951 his dissertation from Boston University was published. In this volume entitled *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology*, Henry identifies the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Cf. pp 12–15 of chapter 2.

⁷⁸ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 75–76.

⁷⁹ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951).

philosophical underpinnings (neo-Kantian presuppositions) that opened the door for theological compromise.⁸⁰ Henry in the introduction would say that “Augustus H. Strong had sought to at the turn of the century of to mediate between the two spheres, by an appeal to the idealistic tradition as well as to the Christian revelation.”⁸¹ Strong attempted to meditate “orthodox rationalism and historicism.”⁸² Unfortunately, his attempt failed; and in part due to his apparent fuzziness, he has in many ways been left to the dustbin of history.⁸³ Henry’s analysis of Strong’s theological method really brought into focus for Henry the importance of epistemology. As Hart brings out in his review of Wacker’s book on Strong;

⁸⁰ Grant Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 8. See also *The Drift of Western Thought*, 53–54. See also Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1982), 17–34. Nash gives a condensed but very helpful view of the history of the philosophical development starting with Hume and ending with Kant and Ritschl. Nash shows the effect that their thinking had on the theological world. Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 14–46. Dorrien highlights the effect that Kant’s philosophy had on theology. He chronicles the development of liberal theology that eventually lead to the development of neo-orthodoxy. Barth would lead the break from liberal theology by the development of “crisis theology.” But it would Barth’s teacher, Herrmann who had a thorough going commitment to neo-Kantian epistemology who set the stage for Barth’s attack on liberalism. “Herrmann adopted an outright Kantian account of the kinds of knowledge knowable to philosophy while insisting that the reality known to true religion is another kind of knowledge. Kantian philosophy saved a place for religion by reducing faith to a postulate of morality, but this strategy rendered reality known to religious faith as an object of human creation” (p.19). Henry would react strongly to this type of theology. It will be taken up in more detail in a later chapter.

⁸¹ Henry, *Personal Idealism and Strong’s Theology*, preface. Mark Noll adds to this observation of Strong in *Between Faith and Criticism* when he writes that Strong, a theological idealist, who under the influence of Borden P. Bowne adopted a view that all reality was personal, and God was the ultimate person. Bowne opposed all forms of evolutionary naturalism or simple materialism as violating the essential nature of reality. But he also opposed dogmatism or literalism. What really mattered was the development, expression and realization of personhood. Strong adopted this perspective and in doing so became less reliant on static-mechanistic apologetic theories of the 18th and 19th centuries. Strong wrote “ideas of development, so long as they could be tied to the divine, were no threat”, (49).

⁸² D. G. Hart, “Book Review: Grant Wacker: *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness*,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (Spring 1986): 202.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 201.

The real source of Strong's theological elusiveness is the clash in epistemic assumptions that was raging throughout the western world: the conflict between orthodox rationalism and historicism. This conflict is the focus of Wacker's study and Strong serves as the proving ground. The historicist belief that "all creations of the human mind and heart are products of the historical processes that fashioned them; that all ideas, values, institutions, and behavior patterns known to human beings are produced by human beings, and therefore bear the imprint of the historical setting in which they emerge, posed a fundamental challenge to American Protestants, especially concerning the nature and authority of Scripture." Amplifying George Marsden's argument that the modernist-fundamentalist controversy was actually an epistemological rather than a doctrinal quarrel, Wacker uses Strong to demonstrate the antagonism between the ahistorical assumptions of Protestant orthodoxy and the historicist presuppositions of modern thought.⁸⁴

This disjunction in presuppositions will be addressed in greater detail in chapter 3.

Henry saw that in Strong's thought there were two distinct periods of theological development. The first stage that encompassed the years (1876–1894) were beliefs that were "uncompromisingly fundamentalist." The second stage in the years (1894–1922) placed greater emphasis on "divine immanence which characterizes idealistic thought."⁸⁵

Henry traced in chronological order the development in Strong's thought. *Strong's Lectures on Theology* (1876) was his first effort at a systematic theology. Henry observes that Strong was "essentially fundamentalist in its insistencies, to which he adhered at that time."⁸⁶ Strong's *Systematic Lectures* underwent numerous revisions until 1907, which was the final revision. The 1907 revision showed the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 201–202.

⁸⁵ Henry, *Personal Idealism and Strong's Theology*, 15–16.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 13.

definite influence of the personalistic approach. Henry took careful pains to define Strong's understanding of personalism:

The designation of "personalistic idealism" is applied with some reserve, but it will appear, nonetheless justifiably. The reserve grows out of the circumstance as the specific time of Strong's idealistic affinities, personalism or personalistic idealism was not a common designation, and Strong himself assigned the phrase "ethical monism" to his view. But in our day the words "personalistic idealism" serve to identify one's position almost at once as involving a spiritual view of reality, whereby all existence is regarded as the nature of conscious experience, and an insistence that individual selves are not parts of God, as attested by man's freedom and his moral failure. Since this combination of "metaphysical monism" and "psychological dualism"—to use Strong's characterization—is represented today by the personal idealists, and since it was espoused influentially in Strong's day by Borden P. Bowne, who applied the term "personalism" to his system in 1905, the designation "personalistic idealism" is employed in the interest of clarity from a contemporary perspective.⁸⁷

It is at this point that Henry identifies the weakness that Strong's embracing of personal idealism becomes most apparent. It is in Strong's epistemology that paves the way for the eventual eroding of sure theological footing. Henry consistently asserted the sure footing of a world-life view anchored in biblical theism. In *Remaking the Modern Mind*, Henry writes that in some "forms of idealism the Absolute is identified as the world as a whole, transcending each particular part, but not transcending the natural universe, and in some writers the identification of the Absolute and the world is not so clear. They will speak of God as creative; they will allow God to have thoughts that are not part of external nature;

⁸⁷ Ibid., 12–13.

and thus they will try to preserve the concept of transcendence.”⁸⁸ He will go to identify that idealism is, in fact, an inconsistent form of humanism.⁸⁹

This change in mooring from biblical theism to one of the variant forms of humanism has resulted in a replacement from prayer to a supernatural Person to a harnessing of natural forces by human cooperation. The effect is that religion is excluded from the human experience and human values are found in science, morality and art.⁹⁰ Henry goes on to develop his argument that in spite of the fact that the temper of the day (1940’s) was overtly humanistic, there were calls for religious instruction in public schools. This, however, brought with it a serious question; what religion should be taught? In the United States at this point in history the largest segment of American Protestantism was modernistic in its philosophical/theological moorings.⁹¹ In Volume V of *GRA*, Henry traces the effect of personalism:

Yet the epistemological priority of special revelation is obscured even by some evangelical theologians who avoid the errors of Aristotelian conceptualism and Brightman personalism. Hodge, who frequently invokes the common consensus of mankind on philosophical issues, and even more notably A.H. Strong, in view of his later concessions to personalism of the Lotzean-Bowne variety, detail the divine attributes by a mixed appeal to general and to scriptural revelation, leaving us unsure whether the nature of God can be adequately expounded through both approaches and whether either of has priority in the definitive exposition of the divine nature.⁹²

⁸⁸ Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 19–118; *The Protestant Dilemma*, 17–29. See also Toon, *The End of Liberal Theology*, 45–80.

⁹² Henry, *G.R.A.*, 5:134.

It was the ability to penetrate deeply to the foundational issues that gave Henry a rising voice in the development of neo-evangelicalism. Henry would toward the end of his long and distinguished career put in a condensed form the essence of disparate forms of theological approach that led to the cacophony of theological voices that were heard in the twentieth century. Henry's skill in dissecting the views of the competitors of orthodox Christianity will be given more attention in chapter 5. However, in light of his penetrating critique of the weakness of Strong's theology, and the effect that Orr had on Henry in making the case for the Christian life-view, it would behoove one to look quickly at the relationship between revelation and reason. The exposition of this relationship would occupy considerable space in the theological writings of Henry throughout his career. Henry offers a more viable way to do theology and after critiquing to deficient views proffers what he considers to be the "3rd way."⁹³

2.7 A Theological Via Media

In his Rutherford Lectures (1989), Henry discusses the three prominent views of looking at the relationship of revelation and reason: "the Tertullian way, the Augustinian way, and the Thomistic way."⁹⁴

The so-called Tertullian view . . . excludes rational tests as inappropriate to revelation; indeed revelation, it is said, confronts human reason as an absurdity or paradox and must be accepted solely on its own intrinsic ground. Accordingly to this fideistic approach, to seek in any way to justify revelatory faith on the basis of reason is to misconceive its nature; divine revelation calls for sheer faith in what necessarily confronts human reason

⁹³ Henry, *GRA*, 1:392

⁹⁴ Henry, *Toward A Recovery of Christian Belief*, 103.

as a paradox. Christianity requires belief, so fideists claim, in what confronts the unregenerate mind as essentially absurd. In the fideist view, divine revelation cannot and must not be rationally tested for validity and truth. No preliminary validation is proper that admits or allows revelation only on rational or logical grounds.⁹⁵

The Tertullian way was never typically Christian until it was appropriated by neo-orthodoxy and existential theologians. Tertullian's famous statement, "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" was answered by Henry in his book *Remaking the Modern Mind*. In that volume Henry dedicated it to the "Three Men of Athens." Those three men as already mentioned charted a course that Henry followed that Christians need to interact with the culture, and in principle philosophical engagement was a vital component of that interaction. Henry notes that Tertullian's emphasis falls not merely on the priority of faith but insists on a "radical disjunction between faith and reason: Christianity requires belief in what to the unregenerate mind seems absurd."⁹⁶

Henry first proffered this view in *Remaking the Modern Mind* when he wrote that Christianity has long insisted on the intelligibility of its worldview. Tertullian's statement, "*Credo quia absurdum*" (I believe in the absurd) was never the dominant position of the early Christians. Christianity has never placed a premium on irrationality. Henry wrote, "Religious faith does not demand the cessation of reason, but lifts reason beyond the confinement of an intellect limited by finitude and darkened by sin."⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Henry, *GRA*, 1:182.

⁹⁷ Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 223.

The second view—the Augustinian way—lifted the intellect by working in concert with faith and revelation. The Augustinian way was followed broadly by Anselm, Luther and Calvin. It affirms that revelation and faith have a working relationship. Augustine’s axiom of “*Credo ut intelligam*” (I believe in order to understand) highlights the implications of the biblical view. Henry writes, “Augustine emphasizes both the priority of belief and its incompleteness without understanding (or reason). Faith is a step on the way to understanding.”⁹⁸ Like the Tertullian way, the Augustinian way begins with faith, but it steers clear of fideism. This view does not embrace the earlier position that there is a disjunction between faith and reason. Further it does not hold that divine revelation confronts human reason in a paradoxical way. The Augustinian way asserts that “humanity can comprehend God’s revelation and moreover, can comprehend it prior to regeneration or special illumination by the Holy Spirit. Mankind in its present condition is capable of intellectually analyzing rational evidence for the truth value of assertions about God.”⁹⁹

I believe in order to understand succinctly summarizes the Augustinian view of the relationship between faith and understanding. “Believe in order to understand” is the emphasis; without belief one will not understand. Reason still has its task, but on a new foundation and within a new climate. The revelation of the living God is the precondition and starting point for human understanding; it supplies the framework and corrective for natural reason.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Henry, *GRA*, 1:183.

⁹⁹ Henry, *Toward A Recovery of Christian Belief*, 105. In this volume Henry does address *a priori*, as he does in *GRA*, vol 1 as methodology. At this point we do not want to delve into the theological methodology that will be examined in chapters 4 and 5.

¹⁰⁰ Henry, *GRA*, 1:183. This impinges on Augustine’s *Logos* doctrine. It will be addressed in chapter 5. For a more detailed treatment of the *Logos* doctrine, cf. Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press, 2003); and Gordon H. Clark, *The Johannine Logos* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1972, 1999).

The third view is known as the Thomistic way. The statement that summarizes this way is “*intelligo ut credam*” (I understand in order to believe). Henry writes that “the Thomistic way . . . made room for natural or philosophical theology as preparatory for revealed theology.”¹⁰¹ Thomas invokes philosophical theology or metaphysics that is open to anyone as the starting point for faith in God. Thomas uses a natural theology to argue for the existence of God. All of his arguments are based on sense observation with no reliance on divine revelation.¹⁰²

Henry makes this comment on Aquinas:

Thomas Aquinas affirmed that, by reason alone, man can attain to the knowledge of the existence of God, the existence of the soul, and immortality; his “five-fold proof,” developing Aristotelian premises, by which he sought to mediate Christianity to the Gentiles, provided a logical demonstration of God’s existence, he affirmed.¹⁰³

Henry makes this sobering observation of the Thomistic way:

The modern mind by and large finds the Thomistic proofs unconvincing; those who hold them are, in the great majority, identified with a church which makes a denial of their cogency a serious offense. . . . Once the Thomistic “mediating proofs” lost their power of logical demonstration, many of those whose thinking was colored by Thomistic tradition felt Christianity was without further defense. In its appeal to natural reason, the Thomistic pattern contained within itself the seeds of its destruction.¹⁰⁴

Given Henry’s commitment to revelational epistemology and the effect that it could have in evangelicalism if asserted as a fundamental axiom offers a rival to the current emphasis on evidentialism that is in vogue within evangelicalism:

¹⁰¹ Henry, *GRA.*, 1:184.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 231.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*



The time is ripe to reconvass evangelical rational theism with its emphasis on the revelation and manifestation of the Logos as the critical center of theological inquiry. A new prospect for systematic theology is at hand, and a growing demand exists for a comprehensive world-view that does full justice to the real world of truth and life and experience in which man must make his decisions. In the Western world today only three major options survive. Sooner or later one of these will carry off the spiritual fortunes of the twentieth-century world. Each of these views, significantly, holds that man can know the ultimately real world. But each differs from the others in important ways about ultimate reality. One view is Communism, which dismisses the supernatural as a myth. The other views, to which neo-Protestant agnosticism has forfeited the great modern debate over the faith of the Bible, are Roman Catholicism and evangelical Christianity. The really live option, in my opinion, is evangelical rational theism, a theology centered in the incarnation and inscripturation of the Word (a theology not of the distorted Word but of the disclosed Word). This, I feel, offers the one real possibility of filling the theological vacuum today.

Evangelical Christianity emphasizes:

The universal as well as once-for-all dimension of Divine disclosure.

Authentic ontological knowledge of God.

The intelligible and verbal character of God's revelation.

The universal validity of religious truth.¹⁰⁵

Henry makes this following application in light of the assertion of “evangelical rational theism:”

For Americans, the problem of God is more decisive for human life, liberty and happiness than the issues of the American Revolution two centuries ago. For Protestants, the problem of God is more decisive than the issues of the Protestant Reformation four and a half centuries ago. For Christians the problem of God is as decisive as the confrontation by Christ's disciples of the polytheistic Greco-Roman culture of their day, and of their own preparatory Hebrew heritage. For modern man come of age, the problem of God is no less decisive than was that ancient conflict between man's trust in the gods of pagan superstition and trust in the revelation of the sovereign Creator-Redeemer God. The problem of God now stands before us as the critical problem of the next decade, and it is the fundamental issue for all mankind.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, “Where is Modern Theology Going?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11, no.1 (Winter 1968), 11–13.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 13.

As Henry was writing this article in 1968, he may not have known how prophetic his words could be at the beginning of the twenty-first century when post-modern man still struggles, and maybe even to a greater degree, with the problem of God.

2.8 Institutional Development

Aside from Henry's early theological works that served notice of the rising theologian's acumen and influence, it would be two other events that would accelerate his growing influence: becoming a founding faculty member of Fuller Theological Seminary and later becoming the founding editor of *Christianity Today*. While these two ventures will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, it is necessary that they are mentioned here. It was the publication of *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* that launched Henry into national prominence. But it would be his participation and influence in these two early evangelical ventures that would give Henry a platform for lasting influence. It is to the founding of Fuller that focus now turns.

2.8.1 Fulfilling Fuller's Vision

Charles Fuller articulates his vision to Wilbur Smith in the following letter:

I agree with you perfectly that if this school is to be, it should be the best of its kind in the world. It should stand out first, as being absolutely true to the fundamentals of the faith and second as a school of high scholarship. It note the four suggestions you mention which should dominate-particularly the study of the atoning work of Christ. I agree with you perfectly. Oh, brother, God has so laid on my heart the need for this type of school for training men for the preaching of the Gospel in these terrible days but I am not qualified to plan such a curriculum. I see this great need but I am not an educator. I must have help of men of like vision.

Charles E. Fuller to Wilbur Smith, October 7, 1946.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 13. Marsden here in this volume provides a

Charles E. Fuller was an internationally known evangelist who had a vision of a first rate academic institution committed to the fundamentals of the faith. Fuller acting on this vision to have a school that affirmed the fundamentals of the faith and coupled with a commitment to excellence in scholarship, found the cadre of academics that would launch Fuller Theological Seminary.¹⁰⁸ Fuller was a renowned radio evangelist who counted a nationwide radio listening audience. Fuller ministered for decades on the radio and in evangelistic meetings held across the United States. It would be late in his ministry that Fuller believed he was being led by God to start a school that would be first rate in scholarship and at the same time hold to the fundamentals of the faith.¹⁰⁹

There were also other factors at play that lent itself to the timing being right for the launch of the new school. Fuller's biographer records, "A common complaint in the 1940s during the developing new evangelicalism was fundamentalism's lack of scholarship and general lack of ability."¹¹⁰ In light of the scholarship that just a generation or so earlier was displayed by Hodge, Warfield, Machen and the publication of *The Fundamentals (1910-1915)*, it is in fact shocking that the perception could have shifted so dramatically in such a relatively

comprehensive account of the founding of Fuller Seminary, the many personalities involved in its founding and its impact in evangelicalism. Marsden notes (ix) that Donald Dayton criticizes his work for "giving too much emphasis to the doctrinal controversies over 'orthodoxy,' especially the battle over the battle." Donald Dayton, "The Search for the Historical Evangelicalism: George Marsden's History of Fuller Seminary as a Case Study," *Christian Scholar's Review* 33 (September 1993): 12—33.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel P. Fuller, *The Story of Charles E. Fuller: Give the Winds a Mighty Voice* (Waco, TX: Word, 1972), 189–227.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 116–96.

¹¹⁰ McCune, "The Formation of the New Evangelicalism (Part Two): Historical Beginnings," 121.

short period of time.¹¹¹ There are several factors that attributed to this perception.

On the popular level the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, had a lasting impact on fundamentalism. The press coverage was intense, on par with the coverage that Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight received. While John Scopes was found guilty of teaching evolution, a violation of Tennessee state law, a decision that was reversed on appeal; the real losers were those that held to fundamentalist doctrine—namely, the Genesis account of the creation of the universe. Clarence Darrow, an ACLU lawyer who represented John Scopes, embarrassed William Jennings Bryan during the trial. A more lasting and damaging outcome of the trial was the “press's caricature of fundamentalists as rubes and hicks and discredited fundamentalism and made it difficult to pursue further serious aspects of the movement.”¹¹²

In covering the trial, H. L. Mencken painted a picture of the fundamentalist position that misrepresented it to the degree that it would not recover. Marsden notes,

¹¹¹ Mark Knoll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 11–46. The relationship of fundamentalism and the new evangelicalism will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

¹¹² George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 60. This popular notion that Scopes Trial had the major negative effect is disputed. Gerald Priest, a professor of Historical Theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary writes, a “careful examination of the facts indicate that this stereotype is undeserving of both Bryan and the fundamentalist movement. In his masterful evaluation of the trial, Paul Waggoner documents the fact that during the first few years following Dayton (1925-1931), ‘critical observers did not regard the Scopes trial as a turning point in the fundamentalist controversy.’ It was not until what he calls the ‘second phase,’ running from 1931 to about 1965, that the critical view, or ‘new consensus’ view as he calls it, came into vogue” cf. Gerald Priest, “William Jennings Bryan and the Scopes Trial: A Fundamentalist Perspective” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 (Fall 1999): 72. Mark Noll writes that more significantly for the change in the perception of fundamentalism was that change in the universities and colleges in the United States from 1865 to 1900. Additionally, the internal effect of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy that had two parts—first general legacies left to the intellectual life by fundamentalism and second, the specific intellectual problems created by the widespread adoption of Holiness, Pentecostal and dispensational theologies. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 109–45.

Two things had changed in the image of fundamentalism now presented by Mencken. Its meaning had expanded considerably. “Fundamentalism” now applied to almost every aspect of American rural or small-town Protestantism. Only those facets that might include a modicum of intellectual respectability, integrity, or social value were excepted. Fundamentalism thus ceased to refer to specifically to groups within identifiable Protestant traditions and organized in opposition to modernism. . . . Another consequence of the Menckenesque caricature of fundamentalism that held sway after 1925, was the obscurantist label that would ever after stick to fundamentalist. . . . Whatever they said would be overshadowed by the pejorative associations attached to the movement by the seemingly victorious secular establishment.¹¹³

To combat this widespread perception, Fuller knew he needed to find the right man. What compelled this successful radio evangelist to want to start a theological school? Fuller’s answers in this quote, “When Fuller was asked what the great ambition of his life was he often replied, ‘My ambition is to see the world evangelized in this generation. I believe two things must be done before my responsibility has been fulfilled. First, to seek to be as effective as possible in preaching by radio; and second, to train other to preach.’”¹¹⁴

Fuller was a man of vision and action. However, he was also a man who knew his limitations. Driven by what he considered to be a mandate from God to start a theological school to train men to preach the Gospel, he was realistic about his self perceived qualifications. In a letter in 1946 Fuller solicited suggestions for the “right man” and even at times would suggest to those to whom he wrote was in fact “the right man:” Fuller’s passion is clearly evident in this quote, “Oh, brother God has laid so heavily on my heart the need for this type of school for training

¹¹³ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 187–88.

¹¹⁴ Fuller, *The Story of Charles E. Fuller*, 188.

men for the preaching of the Gospel in these terrible days, but I am not qualified to plan such a curriculum. I see this great need, but I am not an educator. . . . But I am confident this is God’s plan, but it may not be His time.”¹¹⁵ But in time Fuller would meet the right man who would undertake the task of starting a theological school for the training of men to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Harold John Ockenga, pastor of Park Street (Congregational) Church in Boston (1936–1969) would be that man.¹¹⁶ Ockenga was a man uniquely qualified for this task in Fuller’s opinion.

In February of 1947 in the Palm Springs home of the Fullers, Ockenga and his wife spent three days of rest and relaxation with the Fullers. While on this holiday, Fuller took the time to show Ockenga property in Pasadena that would be the future home of the school, and then drove the Ockengas to Palm Springs. While there the two men talked about their vision for the school. It was apparent that the two of them were in harmony on what they believed to be essential for the school: scholastically sound training in scriptural exegesis, theology, and church history coupled with a vision for missions and evangelism. Ockenga believed that “the needs of the school would be served best by providing postgraduate theological training on the seminary level.”¹¹⁷ When questioned whether or not there were men available with the necessary academic credentials to start a seminary, Ockenga

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 197.

¹¹⁶ Harold Lindsell, *Park Street Prophet: A Life of Harold John Ockenga* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1951); and Joel A. Carpenter, ed., *Two Reformers of Fundamentalism: Harold John Ockenga and Carl F. H. Henry* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).

¹¹⁷ Fuller, *The Story of Charles E. Fuller*, 198.

listed off a dozen or so men who would more than meet the necessary qualifications.

Ockenga was an energetic and capable leader. He had the academic credentials. He had attended Princeton Seminary and graduated from Westminster Seminary in 1930. At Princeton and Westminster, Ockenga studied under J. Gresham Machen and Corneilus Van Til. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh in 1939. He had been an assistant to Clarence MacCartney at First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh and was then called as pastor of Park Street Church in 1941.¹¹⁸ Ockenga's fundamentalist credentials were concrete. He was concerned about the future of fundamentalism and developed a plan to carry it in to the future.

In 1942 Ockenga and J. Elwin Wright co-founded the National Association of Evangelicals. Leading up to this time there had been several associations or unions that had formed in an attempt to carry forward the fundamentalist doctrine that had come under attack during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and the ensuing cultural fallout of the Scope Trial.¹¹⁹ Ockenga and Wright did not want to perpetuate the separatist line that others had continued by separating from each other. Rather the NAE would still stand fast for orthodox doctrine but do so without the separatist mentality that had come to characterize and identify their fundamentalist brethren.

¹¹⁸ McCune, "The Formation of the New Evangelicalism (Part Two): Historical Beginnings," 111. For an informative account of Clarence MacCartney, see Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹¹⁹ Rolland D. McCune, "The Formation of the New Evangelicalism (Part One): Historical and Theological Antecedents," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 3 (Fall 1998): 19–35.

Ockenga had a deep desire and strong passion to see an evangelical revival take place not only in his city of Boston but also across the nation. He was one of the organizers in 1939 and 1941 of Charles Fuller's radio rallies in the nation's largest cities and arenas.¹²⁰ He had formulated a plan that was to meet this need for revival: "First, unity; fundamentalism faced a terrible indictment for its failures, divisions, and controversies. Rugged individualism was a millstone that must be repudiated. Second, doctrinal purity, an emphasis on the cardinal evangelical doctrines of Christianity. And third, consecrated love."¹²¹

As might be expected the NAE was criticized from both the right and the left. However, this criticism served to solidify in the hearts and minds of Ockenga and others that the time was ripe for those "who were convinced that the fundamentalism of the 1920s and 1930s was not suitable for the new generation of evangelicals and their vision for the future."¹²² McCune quotes Weber:

By the 1940s . . . many more moderate fundamentalist were convinced that their movement had become needlessly marginalized. They longed for the days when evangelical religion really mattered in American culture and decided to rid fundamentalism of its excesses and negative image and create a new evangelicalism.¹²³

2.8.2 Finding the Right Men-Fuller Seminary

The focus shifts to Ockenga and Carl Henry as they along with a few other "Fundamentalist Stars" form Fuller Theological Seminary. "In May of 1947, radio

¹²⁰ Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 189.

¹²¹ McCune, "The Formation of the New Evangelicalism (Part Two): Historical Beginnings," 112.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 114.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 115.

evangelist, Charles E. Fuller, Harold John Ockenga, Wilbur M. Smith, Everett F. Harrison, the New Testament professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, and I met at the Palmer House in Chicago to talk and pray about launching an evangelical seminary in California in September of 1947 or 1948.”¹²⁴ Those talks would turn into substantive action that would change the face of the movement known as neo-evangelicalism:

"Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave in the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena. While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many Evangelicals. . . . It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life."¹²⁵

Carl Henry would reflect back on this time during his autobiography and write of this time by saying:

At that time Ockenga coined and approved the term neo-evangelical which in short order Bob Jones, Sr., and Carl McIntire and other fundamentalist critics targeted for abuse. The term, they argued, signified a compromise of biblical orthodoxy and so-called “old-time religion.” I myself have previously written of a “new evangelicalism: that reaffirmed cognitive and apologetic concerns and social engagement, although I used the term “evangelical” in and of itself adequate, preferable and noncontroversial. In the series of essays on “The Vigor of the New Evangelicalism” that appeared in *Christian Life and Times* between January and April of 1948, I noted: “The new evangelicalism voices its plea for a vital presentation of redemptive Christianity which does not obscure its philosophical implications, its social imperatives, its eschatological challenge, its ecumenical opportunity and its revelational base.” Apart from such emphases, I added, fundamentalism’s “forward march” will merely “mark time.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 114.

¹²⁵ Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), foreword.

¹²⁶ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 117.

That Henry and Ockenga were in lock step on their vision for what would become Fuller is evident from a famous sermon that Ockenga preached entitled “Can the Fundamentalist Win?” Ockenga very cleverly borrowed from Henry Emerson Fosdick’s sermon title of 1922 “Shall the Fundamentalist Win?”¹²⁷ In doing so, Ockenga did for the neo-evangelicalism what Fosdick did for the liberals of his day. Both sermons were a call to arms. Ockenga’s opening left little room for reconciliation when he said that “fundamentalism had been weighed in the balances and found wanting.”¹²⁸ Ockenga’s complaint with the old guard fundamentalist was not with their doctrine, but rather with their attitude. The separatist mood of the fundamentalist camp has left the movement “alone and aloof.”¹²⁹ Ockenga’s preface to *Henry’s Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* furthered cemented the break between the two groups:

Fundamentalism in two generations will be reduced either to a tolerated cult status or, in the event of Roman Catholic demoniation in the United States, become once again a despised and oppressed sect. The only live alternative, it appears to me, is a rediscovery of the revelational classics and the redemptive power of God, which shall lift our jaded culture to a level that gives significance again to human life. . . . Those who read with competence will know that the “uneasy conscience” of which I write is not one troubled about the great Biblical verities, which I consider the only outlook capable of resolving our problems, but rather one distressed by the frequent failure to apply them effectively to crucial problems confronting the modern mind.

¹²⁷ Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 9-11. In this brief account, Longfield sets the stage for the explosive sermon preached by a liberal Baptist preacher at the First Presbyterian Church of New York City, New York. Longfield cites a biographer of Fosdick that in the preaching of the sermon it launched the Presbyterian controversy. See also Robert M. Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹²⁸ Jack Heberer, “Evangelicals on the Ockenga Trail,” *Presbyterian Outlook* guest view point of February 10, 2003. <http://www.pres-outlook.com/HTML/heberer021403.html> (accessed February 4, 2008).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

It is an application of, not a revolt against, fundamentals of the faith, for which I plead.¹³⁰

Ockenga elaborated further on the distinction of evangelicalism:

The new evangelicalism breaks with . . . three movements. The new evangelicalism breaks first with neo-orthodoxy because it (evangelicalism) accepts the authority of the Bible. . . . He (the evangelical) breaks with the modernist . . . in reference to his embrace of the full orthodox system of doctrine against that with the modernist has accepted. He breaks with the fundamentalist on the fact that he believes that the Biblical teaching, the Bible doctrine and ethics, must apply to the social scene, that there must be an application of this to society as much as there is an application of it to the individual man.¹³¹

Ronald H. Nash would say of evangelicalism, “It is our contention that evangelicalism is not ‘new.’ On the contrary, evangelicalism is a contemporary movement that is rooted deeply in the foundations of historic Christianity. It is simply and plainly Christian orthodoxy speaking to the theological, social and philosophical needs of the twentieth century.”¹³² Ockenga would underscore this point in an article where he would list the objectives of evangelicalism:

- (1) Evangelicals want to see a revival of Christianity in the midst of a secular world which, because of its loss of contact with God, is facing imminent destruction.
- (2) Evangelicals want to win new respectability for orthodoxy in academic circles. This requires the production of dedicated scholars who will be prepared to defend the faith on the intellectual’s own ground.
- (3) Evangelicals want to recapture denominational leadership from within the larger denominations rather than completely abandon these denominations to the forces of contemporary liberalism.
- (4) Finally, evangelicals want to make Christianity the mainspring in societal reforms that it once was and that it ought to be.¹³³

¹³⁰ Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, xv, xviii.

¹³¹ Ronald H. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 14.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 177.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

With this distinction in mind and a firm commitment to academic excellence, Fuller Theological Seminary opened its doors in September of 1947.

As with most endeavors they are started with excitement, enthusiasm and great prospects for the future. This one was no different. Many things were still unsettled in May of 1947— Ockenga was non-committal on being a resident president, no registrar, the recent of purchase of the Cravens Estate, Henry and others were still in other positions on the other side of the country (Fuller was to be located in Pasadena, California). Henry wrote, years later albeit, of those days in anticipation of the opening of Fuller:

A common conviction gripped us of the need for what we envisioned: an evangelical seminary of uncompromising academic and spiritual priorities, and that granted professors built-in time for research and writing. Each of us knew that only the sovereign God could create such a seminary *ex nihilo* in less than four months. A spiritual imperative urged us on.¹³⁴

Fuller Theological Seminary would play an important role in the development of evangelicalism, a treatment that will await chapter 4. However, it would soon be clear that the founders of Fuller Theological Seminary would exert a great influence on evangelicalism and Carl Henry would be an architect in chief.

Henry would stay on at Fuller until 1956. It would be his move to be the founding editor of *Christianity Today*, a new magazine venture that would propel Henry to the very center of evangelicalism and give him a major platform in shaping evangelicalism.¹³⁵ The idea for *Christianity Today* was Billy Graham's. The seed had been planted by Wilbur Smith, a member of the founding faculty at

¹³⁴ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 115.

¹³⁵ Mohler, "Evangelical Theology and Karl Barth: Representative Models of Response," 110.

Fuller Theological Seminary. In 1951, Smith wrote in a letter to Graham giving him the vision for what would become *Christianity Today*: “We need a periodical so important that it would be absolutely indispensable for every serious minded Christian minister in America.”¹³⁶ Smith may have planted the seed, but it would be Graham in conjunction with his father-in-law L. Nelson Bell, that would put water on the new venture. The new magazine would be modeled on the *Christian Century*. Graham, who was receiving heavy criticism from both the right and the left in 1953, said that he was awakened in the middle of the night and went to a desk and outlined his plans for the new magazine. It would be an evangelical counterpart to the *Christian Century*. It would give “theological respectability to evangelicals” and show that among other things that there was a “concern for scholarship among evangelicals.”¹³⁷ Graham and Bell approached J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil in regard to financially backing the proposed magazine. With Pew in financial support, the magazine began to take shape. Wilbur Smith had turned down the initial offer of being the founding editor. Smith and Henry were on the faculty at Fuller, and Henry records that Smith volunteered to him that Smith thought he [Henry] has the necessary training and gifts to “make it go.”¹³⁸

Henry took a one year’s leave of absence from Fuller to become the founding editor of *Christianity Today*. Located in Washington D.C., theological

¹³⁶ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 158.

¹³⁷ Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 48.

¹³⁸ Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 145.

conservatives now had a vehicle to promulgate their theological perspective. In the first issue, Henry outlined the magazine's goals:

It 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. *Christianity Today* will apply the biblical revelation to the contemporary social crisis, by presenting the implications of the total Gospel message for every area of life. This Fundamentalism has failed to do. The new publication will set forth the unity of the Divine revelation in nature and Scripture and will further seek to supplement seminary training with sermonic helps, pastoral advice, and book reviews by leading ministers and scholars.¹³⁹

2.9 Conclusion

Carl F. H. Henry had arrived on the theological scene in the United States of America at a very opportune time. Having experienced a radical conversion, the young journalist set off on a career in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Henry pursues theological education in the context of the aftermath of the Fundamentalist/Modernist Controversy. The effects of the controversy were probably more pronounced in the Northern United States, affecting the Northern Presbyterians and Baptists to a greater degree than elsewhere in the country.

The controversy centered over the proper view of the Bible and its authority. The influence of the divine immanence (which annulled the distinction between the natural and supernatural), evolutionary theory and a higher critical view of the Scriptures caused a fissure in the foundation of Protestant Christianity in America.

While pursuing his theological education, Henry would meet, what would become his life long mentor, Gordon Clark, his wife, Bill Graham, and Edward John Carnell. These people would play a prominent role in the life of the

¹³⁹ McCune, "The Formation of the New Evangelicalism (Part Two)," 143.

developing theologian. Henry's theological education, combined with his keen mind and journalistic skills would uniquely prepare him to meet this challenge to orthodoxy.

Henry would obtain degrees from Wheaton and Northern Baptist Seminary but it would be his study at the Boston University, studying under personalist philosopher Bordon Parker Bowne, that would serve to give Henry the academic standing that was, in his opinion, so desperately needed among those of a fundamentalist persuasion. Henry's Ph.D. dissertation critically examined A. H. Strong's wedding of orthodox theology with the new advances of contemporary theology (e.g., influence of the divine immanence, evolutionary theory and a higher critical view of the Scriptures). Henry's view was that Strong made too many concessions to the new theological theories that seriously eroded the foundations of scriptural authority.

Even before graduating from Boston University, Henry begins work on the first of three major works that would establish him as a leader in what would become known as neo-evangelicalism. The first work, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (1946), and the third work, *The Protestant Dilemma* (1948), established Henry's basic theological position and highlight his acute ability at critiquing decisively competing views that are divergent from the historic orthodox Christian position. It would be the second book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) that would launch Henry onto the scene of national prominence.

The Uneasy Conscience issued a call for fundamentalist to re-engage culture in fulfilling the Great Commission. As a consequence of the

Fundamentalist/Modernist Controversy, fundamentalists had withdrawn from the culture. As caricatured by the Scopes Monkey Trial, fundamentalists were seen as obscurantist and uneducated. Henry, in *The Uneasy Conscience*, called for a re-engagement of the culture through social ministries and pursuit of theological education.

Two other events that would involve Henry would further cement his role as a leading evangelical theologian and leader. Henry became a founding faculty member of Fuller Theological Seminary and would be the founding editor of *Christianity Today*. Fuller was to be a theological school of the highest order. It would provide the theological status that was lacking in the fundamentalist world. Likewise, *Christianity Today* was founded as a conservative counterpart to the liberal magazine, *The Christian Century*. Carl Henry was an integral part in both new developments.