

The *SBJT* Forum: Testimonies to a Theologian

Editor's Note: Readers should be aware of the forum's format. D. A. Carson, Timothy George, Harold O. J. Brown, C. Ben Mitchell, Carl Trueman, Mark Dever and Hutz H. Hertzberg have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. The journal's goal for the Forum is to provide significant thinkers' views on topics of interest without requiring lengthy articles from these heavily-committed individuals. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

SBJT: We know that during the last quarter-century you developed a close friendship with Carl F. H. Henry and his wife Helga. Would you share any personal reminiscences?

D. A. Carson: Although my wife and I are more than a generation younger than Carl and Helga Henry, that would never have deterred them from friendship. The reason was threefold: first, they made common cause with anyone who was passionate about the gospel, and age had nothing to do with it; second, as they became more infirm, they learned, however reluctantly, to accept help from those willing to give it, precisely because they were never proud; and third, and most important, Carl and Helga were never inclined to dwell only in the past. They were always looking ahead to the future—and that meant they welcomed younger friends.

A few paragraphs cannot do justice to the shape of the friendship we forged, especially during the last twenty years—and in any case, some matters should remain private. Nevertheless, it is easy to recall things that *should* be shared. Occasional meals at our home would find both Carl and Helga quizzing our kids,

chatting them up with real interest and without a trace of condescension. My daughter's first exposure to Carl came when he was preaching one Sunday evening at Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge. Our daughter, then five years old and beginning to read and write, chose that evening to follow, for the first time, what she had observed in her parents: she decided to take notes of the sermon. The great Carl Henry delivered his soul on Ecclesiastes 12: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'"—followed by colorful biblical description of physical decay: the grinders cease because they are few (i.e., one's teeth fall out), the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades (we become deaf), the daylight fades as our eyes grow dim, and we are so arthritic that we drag ourselves around like crippled grasshoppers, clumsy and inept. The silver cord is finally severed (our spinal column falls apart). The dust returns to the ground it came from. So remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Our daughter wrote, "Grass-

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hoppers are good. Silver cords break. The ground is dusty." Carl, Carl, you may not have got through to our five-year-old on that Sunday evening, but your whole life preached Ecclesiastes 12.

Carl and Helga traveled all over the world, preaching and lecturing. But although they could tell a prodigious number of interesting stories, some of them evocative or even funny, their overriding concern was the advance of the gospel. As I started traveling a bit more myself, Carl wanted more than updates of esoteric places: he wanted to know how the gospel of Jesus Christ was faring in each place. In his declining years, even when Carl was largely confined to a wheel chair or a bed and his mind was somewhat dulled by pain-killers, our visits up to Watertown could find us talking about our respective families, places we had visited, books we had read, the ups and downs of theological education—but invariably, invariably, those discussions ended up looking forward, not backward. Invariably, invariably, that forward-look stance had a worldwide flavor. Some senior Christians only look backward; not Carl, not Helga, not ever. Some senior Christians become cranky whiners; not Carl, not Helga. Increased infirmity sometimes made them homesick for heaven, but not once did we find ingratitude or bitterness in them. And in private moments, as my wife and I took our leave, Carl and Helga would sing, in now wavering voices, one of their Christian choruses, a life-long habit springing from more than sixty years of Christian service and faithful marriage.

I suppose it would be understandable if a man who had written forty influential books had become arrogant, if a man who had walked with Christian and

world leaders had become intoxicated by his own significance, if a man who had confronted deep disappointment and excruciating bereavement in his family had become bitter. It would, I say, have been understandable. But the grace of God was strong in this man. He remained a theological thinker to the very end, but without a trace of pretension. On one memorable occasion about ten years ago, when one of our students picked Carl up from O'Hare and drove him onto our campus so that he could teach a modular course, the student, more than a little in awe of the great man, pointed to the large extension to the Rolfe Library, and asked, "What does it feel like to have your name on a great building?" Carl replied, "It feels like I should be dead!"

One of my favorite memories springs from something we organized at Trinity more than a decade and a half ago. We invited both Carl Henry and Kenneth Kantzer, then in their seventies, to lecture on the previous half-century of evangelicalism in America and beyond. These lectures, delivered to the entire student body, were videotaped. The next day, I was charged with interviewing the two men. I did not tell them in advance what questions I would ask. Inevitably I probed their thinking about many individuals (e.g., Billy Graham) and movements (even the SBC!). Invariably they replied with careful understanding, including some astute observations. Then, toward the end of the session, I asked a question along the following lines: "Many old men begin to tear down what they built. They become jealous of younger leaders coming along, or they focus on peripheral matters and lose their passion for the gospel. They frequently become arrogant and defensive. But both of you are gospel-

centered, and given to encouraging a new generation. Despite your vast influence in many quarters, you do not come across as arrogant. How have you managed that? And do not simply say, 'By the grace of God.' That is true, of course—but I want to know how this grace has worked out in your lives." Both of them sputtered for a bit, and then Carl blurted out, "How can anyone be arrogant when he stands beside the cross?" It was the best moment on the videotape.

Carl understood, as well as any of us, that the grace that saves us is the grace that sustains us and enables us to bear fruit. From this perspective, we are all, at best, unprofitable servants—even Carl F. H. Henry. Still, that same grace is heard when the trumpets sound, and a Carl Henry enters eternity, and hears the voice of the Master saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord." We rejoice with you, Carl, as with one who has fought the good fight of the faith; we rejoice with you, and we miss you more than we can say.

If I had to list a few items for which Carl should be remembered—a few items, I say, from what could be a very long list—they might include the following:

(1) In some ways Carl reminds us that God gifts certain people in peculiar ways in order to respond to specific challenges. Carl was not simply a theologian. In some ways, he was a sophisticated theological journalist, able to understand what was going on around him, read it theologically, and explain it to fellow Christians. In addition to his interest in theology, indeed because of his interest in theology, he was also an entrepreneur: hence his long commitment to *Christianity Today*, his

vision for the Berlin Congress on World Evangelism, and much more. He thought strategically, and sought to bring about the goals he clearly envisaged.

(2) Carl developed what I call a prophetic voice from the center. That is an extraordinarily difficult achievement, but one of the most important. While serving as editor of *Christianity Today*, he strove to make the "thought magazine" (as he called it) as broad as confessional evangelicalism, and broader still in its reporting, *while preserving a stance that focused on the central things, the non-negotiables, the common truths and realities*: he was prophetic from the center. This is a far cry from many would-be "prophetic" voices today that almost always focus on something at the periphery as if it were at the center. Carl was too faithful a Bible reader for that.

(3) Because of this prophetic stance from the center, he could call the church to reformation along very different lines, depending on what he saw going on, what weaknesses seemed to be prevailing at that point. Yes, he could defend propositional revelation (though his stance on this matter is today more often parodied than understood and appreciated), but he could also call the church back to massive social engagement, as in his enormously influential 1947 volume, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. He never sang only one tune.

(4) All his life, he strove to practice what he preached. The stories that are told in this arena are legion.

(5) He was a great encourager of others, not least younger men and women. His correspondence was voluminous, much of it cast in the guise of encouragement. Both he and Helga penned thousands, probably tens of thousands, of personal notes

and letters to encourage other Christians along their way.

(6) Although he learned to think strategically, and therefore valued well-placed leaders who could use their influence for good, he was never snookered by the high and the mighty—proved, no doubt, by the way he interacted constantly with the most humble and needy.

(7) He was gospel-centered and forward-looking. He was interested in preparing people for tomorrow and the next day, not merely in enabling them to understand yesterday and the day before.

And in my mind's eye, I can still conjure him up. I can still hear him exhorting us: Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."

SBJT: In your view, what made Carl F. H. Henry so great?

Timothy George: What made Carl F. H. Henry great? The answer to this question is as myriad as the varied movements, institutions, and initiatives to which this remarkable man gave himself on behalf of the evangelical church during his long and productive life. Along with Harold John Ockenga, the mover and shaker of neo-evangelicalism, Henry established a platform for Bible-believing Christians against obscurantist fundamentalism on the one hand and compromising liberalism on the other. Ever committed to the life of the mind, Henry was the "brains" behind the National Association of Evangelicals, Fuller Seminary, *Christianity Today*, and much more. His trumpet-call in *Uneasy Conscience* set the direction of evangelical social and cultural engagement for the next half-century. Henry was a journalist by training; he never

lost the common touch. He could lecture at Harvard and Yale on existentialism and process philosophy one week, and preach a revival in a country church the next week, and do both with integrity and credibility. Henry's *God, Revelation and Authority* is a monumental statement of theological epistemology that still rewards careful study today. Carl Henry was an evangelical statesman, a world visionary, a networker of unparalleled skill, and a shaper of institutions that still bear the imprint of his mind and heart. All of this, and much more, made him great.

But there is something else about Carl Henry that those who only knew him as a great mind, famous author, and evangelical activist might well have missed. He was an unflagging encourager of others. Those who knew Henry well, including some of the contributors to this issue, will have their own stories to tell. I want to mention just three incidents from my own encounters with him.

Dr. Henry came to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the 1980's to teach a short-term course while I was a member of the faculty there. His presence on the campus was opposed by some members of the faculty who resented the intrusion of a "Yankee evangelical" who was "not one of us." Henry deflected such criticism by his gracious demeanor, humble spirit, and brilliant engagement with students and faculty alike. At a time when there were few conservative scholars on the faculty, Henry modeled an intelligent, winsome evangelicalism that put to shame the kind of closed-minded "openness" of his critics. He was unstintingly generous with his time and encouraged me and others to pursue scholarly efforts in the wider academy and to seek broader contacts with Christians beyond

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our own denominational cocoon.

In 1988 I moved to Samford University to begin the work of Beeson Divinity School. I asked Dr. Henry to present the main address at my installation as dean. He spoke on “The Future of Evangelical Theological Education” challenging us to forge a unique paradigm—a community of faith and learning committed to the classical theological disciplines, a robust spirituality, and a global vision for missions and evangelism. From its inception, Beeson was intended to be an evangelical, interdenominational theological school, conservative theologically but ecumenical in its contacts and outreach across the body of Christ. More than anyone else, Carl Henry showed us how this could be done. He also encouraged us to emphasize racial reconciliation given the “stewardship of geography” presented by our location in Birmingham, Alabama.

Carl Henry felt a special responsibility to encourage younger pastors and scholars in their work for the Lord. On his subsequent visits to Beeson as a visiting professor and conference speaker, he always took time to be with students. He would preach in their churches on the weekend, eat Chinese food (one of his favorites) with them over lunch, and invite them to his apartment for “theology and tea.” The last time he preached in chapel at Beeson, he spoke from a chair as he was not able to stand. He talked about his conversion to Jesus Christ and what it meant to be born again. In his later years, Henry became more pointed in his criticism of certain trends within the evangelical community, but he never lost his confidence in the truth of the gospel, nor his hope for the future of the church whose sovereign King, Jesus Christ, reigns in glory.

Today I find myself involved in many

ministries and institutions shaped by the legacy of Carl Henry, not only Beeson, but also Wheaton College, Prison Fellowship, *Christianity Today*, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, *First Things*, and others. A few months before Carl died, Dr. Greg Waybright, President of Trinity International University, and I went to see him and his beloved Helga at the Moravian nursing home where they lived in Watertown, Wisconsin. Though he could no longer walk, his eyes still sparkled with the joy of Christ, and, in his high, wispy voice, he whispered words of encouragement and blessing to both of us. Before we left, I read Psalm 46, on which Luther’s hymn, “A Mighty Fortress” is based, we prayed, and said farewell.

Carl Henry was once asked to name his greatest treasure. He mentioned the Scriptures, the most read book of his life, his family and friends, and waiting before God in prayer. “Heaven,” he said,

will be an unending feast for the soul that basks in his presence. And it will be brighter because some will be there whom I brought to Jesus, and others whom I encouraged to become pastors and missionaries and teachers, or to invest their God-entrusted gifts in other constructive careers. The tides of history that seem to us so all-important and all-consuming in this lifetime will fade overnight into a vast panorama in which Christ and not modern celebrities will hold center-stage. It is Christ alone who will give unending meaning to a future that will become and remain ever present.

SBJT: In your view and in your life, what has been the lasting contribution of Carl Henry?

Harold O. J. Brown: The late George H. Williams, the dean of American church historians, once dreamt of writing a comprehensive church history, “The Pil-

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grimage of God's New Testament People." The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of us as "strangers and pilgrims in the earth." During that pilgrimage, there have been leaders who stood head and shoulders above the masses, so that we may call them giants. If some of us who follow them imagine that we can see more or farther, it is because we can stand on their shoulders. One such giant was Carl F. H. Henry. Perhaps those of us who stand on his shoulders do not see farther into the future than he did, but we can see the things of God and of this generation more clearly because he has lifted us up high enough to be above the fog clouds of conceit and misguided scholarship that have blinded the eyes of so many.

There have been giants of the intellect, capable of seeing more than the mass of mortal men. If we recount the names of some, we would be rash to claim that we see as well or as far. For example, think of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in ancient Greece, of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany. Their heads rise high above those of contemporaries and successors. If they could sometimes see farther, the epigones, those born later, could do so only because they stood on the shoulders of the giants. The Christian faith too has had its giants. We can identify some from past centuries such as Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cramner, and Menno Simons, to name just a few. In our own day, it is harder to be sure to identify the giants, yet among those in whose time we have lived, surely two men of the last century produced theological *opera* rivaling those of Aquinas and Calvin in scope and stature. One came from the heritage of the Swiss Reformation, of Calvin,

Zwingli, and Bullinger, one from that of the English-speaking Baptists: Karl Barth and Carl F. H. Henry respectively.

The former we may thank for checking the juggernaut of liberal theology, the latter with rebuilding the sapped foundations that the former neglected. Both of these men are so near in time to this writer that it may be appropriate to refer not to history but to his own experiences with their thought and example, and in the case of Carl Henry, with the man himself. Barth was a direct descendant of Calvin, a minister and theologian in the Reformed Church of Switzerland but it was Carl Henry, the son of the Baptist tradition, who caught the falling flag of Calvinism and carried it with vigor into the churches and seminaries of America.

Barth claimed Calvin as his guide, and like Calvin he influenced Protestant pastors all over Switzerland and Protestant theology around the world, but he could not hand the flag on to the third generation. During my own service as a pastor in Switzerland, almost all of the biblically-sound and evangelically-oriented colleagues I met were former students of Barth's, either directly or through his writings. They were all senior servants, and as they passed from the scene, Barth's direct influence declined. Today his enthusiasts are to be found among American evangelicals, who are encouraged and emboldened to find a thinker of his stature not afraid to affirm fundamental Christian articles of faith. Barth can be an inspiration, but he is less reliable as a teacher. Francis A. Schaeffer, a contemporary and critic of Barth, blamed Barth for failing to rebuild the foundations undermined by a century of biblical criticism, and this may explain why the orthodoxy of Barth's "neo-orthodoxy" is

not surviving. Who dared and knew better how to restore the foundations? Carl F. H. Henry, the man on whose shoulders younger Christians may dare to stand, assuming that they are competent to climb high enough to reach them.

A Personal Perspective

Son of an inactive Southern Baptist father and a Roman Catholic mother, given a Jesuit high school education in Florida and enabled to travel north to Harvard, I expected to find some vigorous Calvinism in the Puritan commonwealth. This expectation shows that I was more familiar with earlier colonial history than with more recent developments. Boston, once hailed as the intellectual Athens of America, was becoming its moral Corinth. I was not encouraged to study Calvin, but was required to read a good deal of Luther's writings during my college stay. I thought that I had begun to understand that salvation is a gift of grace received by faith, not earned by merit. Comprehension, however, is not appropriation.

After graduation I enrolled at the University of Marburg in Germany, which happens to be the first university founded on a Protestant basis. It was not the university itself, where Rudolf Bultmann, though *emeritus*, still preached occasionally, but a German war veteran returning after years of imprisonment in the Soviet Union who taught me to understand the need for a personal conversion and commitment to Jesus Christ, something that transformed my moralistic background of Jesuit-taught rigorism into a new gospel freedom. To understand what as a newly committed follower of His I was supposed to believe, I switched from *Germanistik* to theology, and in addition to some very pedantic instruction in the biblical languages was

introduced into the tangled web of early Christian doctrines and disputes by Prof. Ernst Benz. Sensing a call to the ministry, or at least to understanding what the ministry was supposed to be and to do, I decided to continue in theology on my return to the U.S.A.

But where should I go? A Harvard classmate, also in Germany, suggested Harvard Divinity School, which, he said, was becoming "really conservative," having called new professors, John Wild, Paul Lehmann, and Paul Tillich! My familiarity with Francis Schaeffer and his work, which was later to prove invaluable, had to wait almost twenty years. Naive in my approach to Protestantism, "based on the Bible," as I thought it to be, I was mystified, puzzled, and perplexed by teachings and teachers who seemed to treat as naive the gospel faith of my German veteran friend and who viewed the Bible as an object to be dissected. The Harvard of the late 1950s was "liberal" in the old sense. The instructors did not impose their theology, or the lack of it, but few could repress indulgent amusement at the naiveté of the few students who held to what one man called "the orthodoxy of yesteryear."

Those of us who had sought Harvard Divinity School for its reputation and other connections soon encountered theology without faith. We were not sufficiently mature to move to an academically less elegant but biblically more faithful school, of which there were very few at the time, and even the best of which seemed rude and uncouth to those intoxicated with the elegance of Harvard. As I look back, I do not think that I could have recognized the problem or understood what could have been gained by moving to Westminster or in the Golden West to Fuller. Having a tendency to intellectual

rebellion as I did, I was doubtless safer rebelling against the genteel liberalism of Harvard than against the determined doctrinal orthodoxy of Westminster, where my own local pastor sought to send me. The difficulty was that merely being skeptical was not sufficient in that liberal environment. It kept me unconvinced by the biblical and theological criticism of our often pious liberals and may have protected me from soaking up much error, but it did not teach me what I needed to know, much less where to go.

It was at this crucial juncture in several young lives that Carl Henry stepped in, not in person, but in the magazine that he had just founded, *Christianity Today* (CT). Billy Graham and J. Howard Pew had provided the means and the energy to challenge the leftward-drifting *Christian Century*. Weyerhauser and Pew furnished the money for free subscriptions to every Protestant seminary student in the country. For many of us, adrift in the liberal milieu, it was Carl Henry and the theological leaders he recruited for CT who showed us not only that we had nothing to be ashamed of in biblical orthodoxy but had much to learn from it. It was CT that brought to our desks the work of solid and brilliant Christian thinkers and doers, such as Henry himself, G. C. Berkouwer, Gordon Clark, Edward Carnell, F. F. Bruce, Wilbur Smith, John T. Muller, J. I. Packer, and many others. They did not flinch but counter-attacked. Before we grew enough to read their full-length books, we found their essays on our desks every other week. No doubt, some students quickly put CT in the wastebasket but others, including me, waited eagerly for each issue as ammunition to resist the debilitating skepticism of the school and as a source of inspiration actually to fight

back. We already knew that there was a faith worth contending for (Jude 3) and we discovered that there were men of faith and learning capable of doing it.

Harvard Professor Georges Florovsky, who was definitely not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, said, "Around here they call me a fundamentalist because I actually do believe in God." The scholars to whom Carl Henry introduced us showed that there was no need to be intellectually ashamed of being called an "evangelical." No *sacrificium intellectus* was required actually to believe in the infinite, tri-personal God and to accept the authority of Scripture as the work of the Holy Spirit. CT was a theological life-preserver cast into the troubled sea where so many of us were bobbing about.

When Carl Henry left CT in 1968 under difficult circumstances, its approach and its mission changed. Today it is no longer as necessary since now there are many more seminaries where the Bible is believed and taught; the old ones are still there, for the most part still faithful, and new ones have been founded. Seminaries, even entire denominations that were slipping have recovered or been won back: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis are stellar examples. Evangelical publishing houses are no longer little huts in cucumber fields, but huge and prosperous. At least one has become the takeover target of secular finance simply because it makes money. Sound works of evangelical scholarship are easily available everywhere. The Evangelical Theological Society has gone from a timid little band of scholars to an organization where 700 scholarly papers can be read at an annual meeting.

Is all this the work of CT or of Carl

Henry alone? No, surely not. It was not simply a matter of good articles. Before, during, and after his tenure as editor, Carl Henry himself wrote an immense number of books, including his six-volume *magnum opus*, *God, Revelation and Authority*, and these are of lasting value. However the magazine did pave the way for the spread of more comprehensive works.

I have emphasized only one feature of Carl Henry's immense life work, because it is the one that helped me when I most needed it. Together with many others, less erudite, perhaps, but equally committed, Carl Henry made contemporary evangelical faith respectable without allowing it to become empty. Former contributors, new scholars, men and women, have studied, worked, witnessed, and prayed, evangelists have preached, musicians have sung and played. The general condition of Christendom in the United States may be pale and wan; the growth of the movements that trust Scripture and are not ashamed of it represents a potentially redemptive counter-current to the drift. This is not the achievement of Carl Henry, or of any one man or group of men and women; to the extent that it is biblically sound, it is the work of God, of the Holy Spirit. When Christians today hear that God "has not left himself without witnesses," and want to know where to find one, point them to Carl F. H. Henry.

SBJT: Carl F. H. Henry has been called the "theologian of evangelicalism." Does this title aptly describe this great Christian leader?

C. Ben Mitchell: Conversations about the evangelical movement of the mid-twentieth century usually end up pointing to a remarkable triumvirate: Billy Graham, Kenneth Kantzer, and Carl Henry. Gra-

ham, of course, is the great evangelist of the century. Kantzer is remembered as the educator/networker. Dr. Henry consistently receives the title: "theologian of evangelicalism." There is a certain symmetry and propriety about this description. Like all sketches, however, this one blurs reality just a bit.

In fact, Ken Kantzer was quite a theologian in his own right. Yet, his theological contributions were mostly personal rather than prosaic. Dr. Kantzer wanted to write more than he did, but other duties seemed more pressing. In fact, while he was teaching at Wheaton, the senior class gave Dr. Kantzer a monetary gift that was to enable him to take a year off from teaching in order to write a book. Instead, Dr. Kantzer sacrificially became dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and graciously gave the money back to the students.

Likewise, Billy Graham has been not only an evangelist, but also an educator. Through his preaching and the more than twenty-five popular books he has written, he educated an entire generation of evangelicals.

That brings us to Carl Henry. Obviously, he was a first-rate theologian. His monumental six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority* remains a classic of twentieth-century evangelical theology. He was likewise an able educator, having served on several faculties, including being a member of the founding faculty at Fuller Seminary. He was also a skilled networker; a point that was not overlooked by several organizations who relied on his leadership on their boards, including Prison Fellowship, The Ethics & Public Policy Center, and the Institute for Religion and Democracy. His notion of broad-based evangelical "co-belliger-

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ency” is legendary.

His skill as a networker was made even more acute through his discipline as a letter-writer. Each morning Dr. and Mrs. Henry would retrieve their voluminous mail and spend the bulk of the morning answering letters, never with a computer, and often by hand. One friend and colleague received over 200 letters and cards from the Henrys!

Dr. Henry’s gift as a correspondent benefited me personally in many ways. In one case, while I was still in graduate school, I wrote Dr. Henry to ask if he knew any other evangelicals who were interested in bioethics. Within just a few days, Dr. Henry had introduced me to Nigel M. de S. Cameron, then a theologian at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and within a year the founder of The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity. I was privileged to be part of the founding of the Center—all because of Dr. Henry’s expertise as a networker.

Less famous, yet just as important, was Dr. Henry’s passion for evangelism. He was Chairperson of the World Congress on Evangelism held in 1966 in Berlin and spent a great deal of his life visiting mission fields on every continent. But his evangelistic passion was not only institutional, it was personal. This was evidenced by his intimate involvement in establishing Easter Sunrise Services in whatever community he lived. For instance, he was co-chair of the Rose Bowl Easter Sunrise Service from 1948-1956. And when he and Mrs. Henry moved to the little Wisconsin village of Watertown in 1992, he helped begin an Easter Sunrise Service as a way of bringing Christians together in visible witness to the power of Christ’s resurrection.

In 1999, after moving to Trinity to

teach, I received a letter from Dr. Henry, encouraging me to share the gospel with others. Urged Dr. Henry, “I wish you well at Trinity. Don’t forget—if I may exhort a colleague—to witness one-on-one to others about the Savior who met with Nicodemus and the woman at the well.”

And I will always cherish the memory of spending a crisp winter day with the Henrys in their Watertown retirement apartment, along with Paul House and Greg Thornbury. Dr. and Mrs. Henry were such kind hosts, Mrs. Henry even serving us lunch she cooked in her tiny apartment-sized kitchen. On more than one occasion during that day, even as age had weakened his voice, Dr. Henry spoke to us of the urgency of reaching the lost for Christ.

The ministry of Carl F. H. Henry rightly earned him the title “theologian.” But like every good theologian, Dr. Henry was also an evangelist; and anyone who spent much time in his presence must have felt a little like Timothy, to whom Paul famously said: “As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5).

SBJT: Carl F. H. Henry has clearly played a vital role in shaping modern day evangelicalism. What would you identify as the most significant strengths and weaknesses of the evangelical movement as a result of Henry’s influence?

Carl Trueman: The death of Carl Henry is a significant moment for evangelicalism. If Timothy George is perhaps guilty of understandable hyperbole in calling him the inventor of modern evangelicalism, Henry was without doubt one of the key figures who set the agenda for the movement, both through his writings

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and through the various institutions and organizations that he helped to found and to define.

The questions surrounding the legacy of an influential figure are always complex and the answers are rarely straightforward and unproblematic. I would suggest that, in the future when we look back on the course of evangelicalism since the 1940s, Henry will emerge as a figure more significant ultimately for his ability to mobilize others and to get things done than he will as a significant thinker beyond the bounds of his own time; and, furthermore, that his legacy to evangelicalism will be shown to have both great strengths and significant weaknesses. That these are, ironically, functions of each other is perhaps the peculiar tragedy of the new evangelicalism.

Surely the strength of Henry, beyond his incredible ability simply to “get things done,” lay in his desire to see Fundamentalism move out of its obscurantist ghetto and engage with the wider culture at all levels. The 1948 tract, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, is a classic manifesto of the new evangelicalism, and it was released at just that moment in time when, in broad terms, a post-war America was seeking to understand its place in the new world order and, more narrowly, when evangelicals were themselves trying to find their own place within the U.S. The old debates, whether on Prohibition or radical separatism, had effectively run their course and offered no foundations for a renewed church life. As Fundamentalism had retreated from the public square, so it had lost its vitality as a culturally significant force.

Henry’s vision, laid out in *The Uneasy Conscience*, and brought to fruition in his work for Fuller Theological Seminary,

Christianity Today, and the Evangelical Theological Society, was for a culturally-engaged evangelicalism, winsome and engaging in manner yet orthodox in beliefs, which would represent a popular Christian front in the challenges facing American society in the decades after World War II. Theologically, Henry saw inerrancy, and the close connection between God and the Bible, between a sound doctrine of God and a correct doctrine of scripture, as being central to the program. This received its greatest expression in his *magnum opus*, *God, Revelation and Authority*. Ecclesiastically, he saw that the transcending of old denominational boundaries and old battles was crucial to generating the critical mass of support necessary to achieve any influence. Influential movements need institutions; institutions cost money; and money is generally only found through the creation of large movements.

This is where the strength and the weakness of the new evangelical project become so evident. On the one hand, the sidelining of many issues of interdenominational disagreement in the interests of a popular front enabled the movement to overcome the kind of fragmentation and narrow factionalism that had rendered much of the old style Fundamentalism impotent, both intellectually and socially. On the other hand, the whole idea of a popular-front evangelicalism proved to be a highly unstable phenomenon in terms of theological identity, as any examination of the history of Fuller Seminary, *Christianity Today*, or the Evangelical Theological Society shows. All three were involved in making significant gains for the evangelical cause, Fuller through the pioneering of scholarship, *CT* through the articulation at a popular level of thought-

ful Christian engagement with culture, and ETS through providing a forum for intellectual exchange among those of like minds. Yet all three demonstrate the problem of building a movement on an interdenominational front.

The main problem is, of course, precisely the one that makes such interdenominational activity attractive: the sidelining of issues that divide and weaken the common Christian cause. Historically, Christianity has operated on the basis of creeds and confessions connected to specific structures of accountability, namely, denominations and churches. There is a sense in which such denominations have witnessed to the unbiblical fragmentation of Christ's body and undermined the church's witness to the world of the one way of salvation. Yet the reasons for the existence of denominations are not entirely without weight. To take the division between Baptists and Presbyterians: we can and should lament the fact that such division exists; but it would surely be even more lamentable if each side abandoned belief in the importance of its view of baptism as a basis for ecclesiastical unity. Divisions over baptism are tragic; but I would suggest they are not as tragic as any move to dismiss baptism as basically unimportant.

This, of course, is where the new evangelical project of Henry is peculiarly vulnerable: as noted above, the formation of a popular-front evangelicalism sidelined issues for the sake of co-operation; but in so doing it also embodied a certain tendency towards lowest-common-denominator theology. This kind of minimalist theology, combined with the rather flabby accountability structures to which interdenominational organizations are prone, bore strange fruit: the history

and current states of Fuller, *Christianity Today*, and the Evangelical Theological Society all bear witness to the problems to which the new evangelicalism is prone. What started out as an attempt to articulate orthodox theology in the context of the wider world has degenerated over the years into something very different. All three, Fuller, *CT*, and ETS represent an evangelical consensus that can only be described as minimal with reference to its commonly agreed upon doctrinal content and its connection to the great creedal and confessional traditions of the church; and all three, in their different ways, represent capitulations to the wider culture, whether scholarly, commercial, or therapeutic. This is most noticeable in the case of *Christianity Today*, which has moved from being a middle-brow, print-and-argument-oriented journal at its inception to a glossy, commercial-packed (and commercial-dependent) organ, a Christian alternative to *People* or *In Style*. As for ETS, the recent indecisive struggles over open theism expose the problem for all to see: if you have a minimal, sub-Christian doctrinal basis, you really have no constitutional basis to complain or to take decisive action when sub-Christian views surface among the membership.

The problem with interdenominational, popular-front evangelicalism is that, by its very nature, it serves to relativize significant theological distinctives and thus, ironically, to weaken the theological dimension of evangelical Christian identity. It is, in a sense, always doomed to be sub-Christian because it forecloses the debate on many of those things that are important to Christian orthodoxy. Now, do not misunderstand me: the new evangelical project was worthwhile, even necessary, precisely because it gave

a denominationally-fragmented evangelicalism a power-base and a momentum that was much needed; but it tended to prioritize the interdenominational over the churchly. In other words, what it lacked was a doctrine of the church. It is the church that is the normal place for theological activity; and it is the church, in its individual denominational incarnations, that allows for a truly Christian theology in terms of its creedal expression of a full-orbed doctrinal faith, not simply a theological minimalism determined by boards, commercial sponsors, academic respectability, or whatever. If the new evangelicalism is ever to be revitalized, if Henry's dream of an articulate orthodoxy is ever to be realized, I am persuaded that this will come about only in the context of a churchly evangelicalism that understands the necessary and helpful, but limited, subordinate, and handmaiden role that interdenominational evangelical co-operation must play in relation to the church. The tragedy of the new evangelicalism is that its ecclesiastical ambitions far outstripped its ecclesiological reflections.

SBJT: What impact has Carl F. H. Henry's legacy had on your life and ministry?

Mark Dever: Since Carl Henry's passing in December, 2003, writers, friends, and students have written of their appreciation for him. Reading these pieces, there emerges a perfectly consistent picture across the various authors. All reflect the life of the same man, marked by a remarkable combination of vision, energy and action, intellect, piety, and humility.

Carl Henry's legacy looms large across the evangelical landscape. Considered either historically or theologically, he has few peers and none who—at least from

this side of eternity—appear to have excelled him. Historically, his connection with envisioning, founding, or lending encouragement to so many associations and institutions is amazing. From Fuller Seminary to *Christianity Today*, from the Evangelical Theological Society to Prison Fellowship, Carl Henry was there—more often than not, providing crucial leadership.

My reflection for this forum is more personal. I share it with you out of personal indebtedness, in the interest of historical completeness, and because I assume that his legacy includes many such stories as mine. When I first met Dr. Henry, I was an undergraduate student at Duke University, and he was lecturing on the campus as the president of the American Theological Society. He was in his late 60's, a scholar of international repute, and yet, when I spoke to him after one of his lectures, he was kind and interested. Little could I have suspected when I was listening to his lecture that day that he would become one of the most influential people in my life.

Dr. Henry was, of course, influential on me theologically. His careful work sorting through the philosophical foundations of modern epistemology was useful reading for me. He was writing and publishing *God, Revelation and Authority* throughout my bachelor's and masters' studies. His careful work, combined with his journalist's sense of the important headlines of the story, aided and shaped me. This aspect of his legacy has been often recorded.

Dr. Henry was also influential on me more personally. While he, of course, had his faults, as every man does, it was his virtues that were so striking to me. And above them all—perhaps even above his

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intellect and vision—was his humility. The mere fact that over the years from 1986 until just a couple of years ago, Dr. Henry wrote me dozens of letters by hand, often reminding me of his appreciation for me, his care, and his prayers, was encouraging. Over the years, his kindnesses to me were legion. When we were together, he would typically share with me things that he felt he could learn from me, and that he regularly felt challenged by our times together. This boggled my mind! When this man in his mid-70's would share with me that being around me always made him want to be more evangelistic, I was encouraged in my evangelism, but far more encouraged to work and pray to have a heart of humility, a heart like his, willing and able to learn from anyone around me—even if they were one-third my age!

But it was his letter to me in January of 1993 that would come to shape my life more than any other personal letter I have ever received. In that letter—hand-delivered to me through a mutual friend—Dr. Henry told me of his own congregation's need for a pastor, and his desire for me to consider whether this was God's will for me.

Frankly, I was surprised by the letter. Dr. Henry had always encouraged me in my academic pursuits, and was apparently eager for me to give my life to academics, teaching either in a university, or in a Christian seminary. From 1982 until receiving that letter, that had, by and large, been my assumption for what I would do with the years the Lord would give me. I enjoyed academic studies, and had done sufficiently well in them to make me feel that it was probably God's will for me to serve in that way. My own denomination—the Southern Baptist Con-

vention—was undergoing severe theological struggles during these years, and it was my desire to be a part of the future solution to those pressing problems. A seminary seemed the most likely place for such a ministry. Dr. Henry had always agreed with me in this matter.

And then came this letter. I was surprised, and didn't immediately feel the idea was a good one. But my respect for Dr. Henry was great, and I assumed that he had wisdom that I lacked. I contacted him and another member of his church who was on the search committee and arranged to preach at the church that summer, when I would be back in the States (I was doing my Ph.D. in England). I can't say that I was excited by the opportunity, and not much intrigued by it, but felt obligated, and trusted Dr. Henry.

From that first weekend visiting the church in the summer of 1993, until I wrote accepting the congregation's call six months later, the fact that Dr. Henry had encouraged me to consider the opportunity was a significant factor. I assumed that he of all people could well understand the importance of evangelical academic work. And if he felt that I could best be used in a small, inner-city congregation, then I thought that he may be right.

I don't want to give the wrong idea—that letter from Dr. Henry didn't determine my life. The second half of 1993 was a time for me and my wife to engage in much prayer, consideration, and discussion with many friends. We had a lot of questions to be answered, and a number of concerns to be addressed. But after we considered as much as we could, both my wife and I concluded that it was the right thing for us to move to Washington, D.C., and for me to become the pastor of

what was then called the Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church. And I would become Dr. Henry's pastor.

Since going to D.C., much has happened in my own life, in my family, and in our congregation. I have recently celebrated my 10th anniversary as their pastor, and pray that God may allow me to see many more. I have no thoughts of going elsewhere, but assume that my life is to be lived out pastoring this local congregation and helping other pastors and church leaders. This will, therefore, be one part of the legacy of Carl F. H. Henry, a part Dr. Henry probably never imagined when he wrote me that letter in January of 1993.

The Lord used one letter from a great man to change the rest of my life. I am one person living out my life in a place that God assigned to me through the instrumentality of Carl F. H. Henry. Small faithfulnesses can have dramatic effects in the intricate beauty of God's providence. Dr. Henry's letter was one of those small faithfulnesses in my life. How many others had their lives so dramatically affected? God alone knows the full story of Carl Henry's legacy. My life is one part of it.

SBJT: Given the close friendship you developed with the Henrys, tell us about Carl's wife Helga and her life together with her husband.

Hutz H. Hertzberg: It has been said that behind every great man, there is a great woman. While that statement may or may not be true in general, it certainly rings true when one reflects on the life and legacy of Helga Bender Henry, wife of the late Dr. Carl F. H. Henry.

Helga Bender Henry was born in Cameroon, West Africa, on May 30, 1915,

to pioneering missionary parents, Carl and Hedwig Bender. The youngest of six children, Helga came to the United States after World War I when her parents settled for a furlough in Watertown, Wisconsin, with her father serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church. During that time, Helga attended Douglas School until the family moved to Chicago. She returned to Watertown for her senior year of high school. After graduation, she went on to earn her B.A. and M.A. degrees from Wheaton College in Illinois, and later the M.R.E. degree from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago.

For more than twenty-five years, Helga taught in colleges and seminaries. She was the Dean of Women and Instructor in German at the University of North Dakota Teachers College in Ellendale, 1937-40; Librarian and Instructor in Religious Education at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1940-47; Instructor in German at Wheaton College, 1945-47; Associate Professor of Education at Pasadena (CA) College, 1951-60; Visiting Instructor in Religious Education at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, from 1961-66, later serving on the Board.

On August 17, 1940, Helga married Carl F. H. Henry, whom she met at Wheaton College. They had two children. Paul, a United States Congressman in Michigan who was elected for five terms until his death in 1993. Their daughter Carol is a Musicologist and former Instructor at the University of South Carolina. Carl and Helga had five grandchildren.

After many years in education, Helga and Carl moved to Arlington, Virginia, where Carl served as founding editor of *Christianity Today*. Helga worked with him as an editorial assistant and continued her own interest in writing and editing.

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Helga and Carl lived in Arlington for over thirty years. Besides preparing teacher training and curriculum materials, she translated, from German to English, *History of Evangelism* by Paulus Scharpff used in numerous schools as a textbook and distributed in West Berlin at the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism. Helga also wrote a 1955 centennial history, *Mission on Main Street*, concerning the nation's then largest Gospel rescue mission located in Los Angeles.

Helga and Carl went on many overseas lecture and teaching tours, addressing groups in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Helga gave lectures at Evangelism International, Singapore; China Evangelical Seminary, Taipei; and addressed Christian women's groups in Seoul, Korea, and elsewhere. Helga and Carl also lived for a year in Cambridge, England, 1969-1970, for research and writing before traveling to Eastern Europe for a stint of teaching and lecturing, mainly in Yugoslavia.

In 1992, the Henrys moved to Watertown, Wisconsin. They continued a very active retirement of writing and editing, with Helga publishing *Cameroon on a Clear Day*, in 1999, an account of her parents' missionary work in Africa. Helga assisted Carl in many ways up to his death on December 7, 2003.

My friendship with Carl and Helga began around 1992, just prior to the death of their son, Paul. It was during this time I was serving as Dean of the Chapel at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Carl and Helga would travel from Wisconsin to the Trinity campus in order for Carl to teach a modular course each Spring. Our friendship deepened especially as Carl and Helga mourned the loss of their son at the same

time I was grieving the loss of my dad. In a serendipitous way, they subsequently "adopted" me as their surrogate son. The blessing of such a special relationship can only be attributed to God's grace to me as I became a very grateful beneficiary of Carl and Helga's love, concern, and prayers over the ensuing years.

The fruit of their special concern and interest in me resulted in, among other things, receiving more than a couple hundred letters from Helga and Carl over the years. These Henry "epistles" are priceless reminders of their personal interest in my life and ministry.

In one particular letter, Helga spoke of the "banes" and "benefits" of marriage to a famous man. In her own unique way, she described such banes as lack of privacy; loss of time together with frequent separations due to ministry commitments; the challenge of child-rearing often borne by one parent; and the need to handle many of the exigencies of life (i.e., plumbing, electricity, yard-work, automobile, paying bills, tax records, illness, etc.). Helga went on to describe how others often misperceived Henry's family life because of Carl's "celebrity" status. She bemused, "one's own family is well aware of the 'celebrity's' own weaknesses, foibles and eccentricities!"

Helga did not "sugar-coat" the banes or challenges of marriage to Carl, but neither did she minimize the great blessings of being married to a man of his stature. She indicated such blessings included seeing what God can do in a life committed to the Lord's service—past, present, and future. She went on to say that such opportunities for public ministry don't come overnight or automatically, or by "inheritance"—rather they are *earned* because of faithful adequate preparation

as well as faithful previous service.

Helga also stated that being married to Carl provided a platform to help others—both those young in the faith as well as those more mature, professionals, and others. She talked of the opportunity of being a role model in an honest, not artificial way and thus being able to disciple others with integrity. Helga was also quick to add that all these blessings come from God, and should be reinvested for God to His glory and for the nourishment of the Kingdom.

In the months after Carl's death, Helga wrote poignantly about missing Carl, "I'm thankful that Carl is with the Lord and must keep alert to my affairs, and trust God's presence and help." She wrote another time that "the Lord knows best and is in charge of the when's, why's, how's, etc. A new depth of spiritual trust and faith must and does take place."

Helga was brilliant and gifted in so many ways. She was a powerful teacher, not only in words, but in the priorities of her life. Her quick mind and witty personality made her a joy to be around. Helga served and gave herself to others without seeking attention or credit. This was true throughout her life including her later years. For example, in their retirement home she would awaken early, delivering the morning paper to other seniors.

However, perhaps Helga's greatest contribution was her lifelong support of Carl and his work. For those who had opportunity to observe their sixty-three year partnership, it is impossible not to see her significant influence on her husband and his work. Together Carl and Helga were used greatly of God and in His work. Their faithful, loving marriage committed to the Lord's service resulted in a powerful synergy and serves as example to all

of us.

In one of the last letters Helga wrote to me, and speaking of Carl's departure, she reminded herself and me that "we and others follow in the train of witness he (Carl) sought to maintain life-long to the glory of God and His Kingdom." Helga was such a witness for the glory of God and His Kingdom right up to her death on November 1, 2004. I will be eternally grateful for the powerful example of such a life-long faithful witness so lived by Helga and Carl Henry.