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The Influence of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke on Carl F. H. Henry's Kingdom Theology

Abstract

Carl F.H. Henry was a leading theologian of American Evangelicalism and prominent voice in the Neo Evangelical movement of the twentieth century. His prominent book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) persuaded conservative evangelicals to avoid the separatist inclinations of fundamentalism. He, instead, championed a biblically based brand of cultural engagement rooted in the kingdom theology found in the Gospels. Harnessing the "Already, but not yet" view of the kingdom popularized by Herman Ridderbos and George Ladd, Henry effectively engaged culture during a tumultuous twentieth century. This paper will begin with a survey of the historical legacy of Carl F. H. Henry's social ethics. It will then analyze those ethics within the context of the kingdom of God as described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This paper will end with a critical evaluation of those kingdom ethics from a cultural engagement perspective. Carl Henry's most significant contribution as a public theologian was his ability to keep the best of both arguments from the modernist and fundamentalist positions. His "already, but not yet" or "Kingdom Now, Kingdom Then" approach to God's kingdom provided an accessible philosophy of ethics that remained faithful to scripture and encouraged him an appropriate and compassionate form of cultural engagement.

Keywords

Carl F H Henry, Billy Graham, Evangelicalism, Bible, Christianity

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Introduction

In 1977, *Time* magazine called Carl F. H. Henry “the leading theologian” of American evangelicalism.¹ Henry was part of the New Evangelicalism (or Neo Evangelical) movement of the twentieth century and is considered its most prominent theologian.² He played instrumental roles in the formation of Fuller Theological Seminary, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Evangelical Theological Society, and the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies. Billy Graham recruited him as the founding editor-in-chief of *Christianity Today*—a scholarly evangelical challenge to the liberal *Christian Century* publication.

Henry’s influence as a twentieth-century public theologian can not be overstated. Henry aspired to lead Protestant fundamentalism to a greater intellectual and social engagement with the larger American culture.³ Ironically, the most pointed criticism of Carl Henry throughout his distinguished career came from separatist fundamentalists for persuading Christians to have a more united evangelical witness and from liberal evangelicals for his insistence on biblical inerrancy.⁴ His prominent book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) persuaded conservative evangelicals to avoid the separatist inclinations of fundamentalism. He, instead, championed a biblically based brand of cultural engagement rooted in the kingdom theology found in the Gospels.

This paper begins with a survey of the historical legacy of Carl F. H. Henry’s social ethics. It then analyzes those ethics within the context of the kingdom of God as described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This paper ends with a critical evaluation of those kingdom ethics from a cultural engagement perspective and shows that the biblical ethics in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke influenced the kingdom theology of Carl F. H. Henry.

Carl F.H. Henry’s Social Ethics

New Evangelicalism

New Evangelicalism emerged in the twentieth century as a response to the rift between fundamentalists and modernists. John Ockenga coined this term to describe a progressive fundamentalism that would, to quote the Youth for Christ

¹ Robert H. Krapohl, *Carl F. H. Henry: Henry Center*, Henry Center for Theological Understanding (2021), <https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/about/carl-f-h-henry/>.

² G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry—Theologian for All Seasons: An Introduction and Guide to God, Revelation, and Authority* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), xi.

³ Krapohl, *Carl F. H. Henry: Henry Center*, np.

⁴ *Ibid*, np.

motto, be “anchored to the Rock, but geared to the times.”⁵ Fundamentalists held to the “fundamentals” of the Christian faith. Supernatural elements of Christendom, such as the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, His substitutionary atonement for sinners, and eschatological prophecy, were subjected to critique and even ridiculed in modern scholarship. Modernists (dubbed “liberals” by fundamentalists) accepted the moral teachings of Christ but rejected the Bible’s supernatural content in favor of scientific methods and philosophies of their era. Modern scholarship viewed the Bible as a human book and Jesus as an enlightened teacher. To this movement, the preeminent expression of Christianity was high ethical standards and love for fellow humans. They viewed the kingdom of God as a present-tense humanitarian effort rather than a literal reign of Christ. The rift between these factions arose from increased modern influence in denominations and seminaries. During this time, fundamentalists tended to leave public life to form new religious movements and institutions. Occasionally, those who tried to stay were replaced by modern colleagues, causing discontentment. As Henry came to prominence, fundamentalists were defensive and separatist. They thought that the interaction with popular culture would deteriorate their marginalized beliefs and result in apostasy.

Consequently, they abdicated their social responsibility and influence in favor of patiently waiting for the future kingdom of God. Henry critiqued the kingdom theology of modernists and fundamentalists, finding both deficient. Modernists subscribed to an inadequate kingdom based on the limitations of humanity. By comparison, fundamentalist views of the kingdom were too detached and futuristic, neglecting present needs. Henry’s use of the kingdom of God in his social ethics corrected the authority issue of the modernists while correcting the detachment of fundamentalism.

Henry’s Kingdom Theology

Henry said of the kingdom, “The kingdom is God’s and his alone; only he has the sovereignty, authority, wisdom and freedom to rule as absolute Creator of all. Where God is present in person and in power, in righteousness and truth and love, there is the kingdom: It is wherever God holds sway.”⁶ Henry lived in a time of upheaval. The moderns questioned social, political, and ethical beliefs. While thinkers of his day dabbled in science, literature, philosophy, and comparative religion to find ethical consensus, Henry grounded his ethics in the unchanging authority of Scripture. Not known for his doctrinal writing, Henry’s main

⁵ Timothy George, *Evangelicals and Others*. *First Things* (2006), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/02/evangelicals-and-others>.

⁶ Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1980), 30.

contribution to that field was his view of the kingdom of God. Jesus spoke of the kingdom throughout the Gospels. The kingdom informs every manner of a Christian's past, present, and future life. Other ethical systems are vulnerable to cultural shifts and a constant flow of new ideas, but placing ethics under the authority of God adds a timelessness that allows Christians to orient themselves and behave ethically regardless of their circumstances or era.

Henry was not satisfied with ethics as strictly a means of good behavior or societal value. He believed that the foundation of ethics is atonement, the means by which repentant sinners acquire the vision and ability to live virtuously and honor God.⁷ Henry added, "We serve a God is both justice and justification."⁸ The kingdom of God is central to the gospel message. John Bright claimed, "The concept of the Kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total message of the Bible."⁹ Russell Moore added that the "kingdom concept relates to the consummation of all things, the salvation of the world, and the mission of the church."¹⁰ The kingdom of God is not an augmentation to the present age, nor is it exclusively a means of self-improvement. The kingdom reorients the priorities and worldview of Christians by assimilating and conforming their lives toward something beyond themselves. Unlike temporal earthly causes that fail to satisfy humanity's need for hope and purpose, Christ's kingdom offers both. The kingdom allows people to live ethical, godly lives because Christians embody the example and teachings of Christ for His glory instead of their own.

The Gospel of Matthew

The kingdom of God is a running theme throughout the Gospel of Matthew. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is near" (Matt. 3:2). Jesus echoed that sentiment by saying, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe" (Matt. 4:17). Jesus used this imagery when teaching his disciples how to pray: "your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). Jesus referenced God's kingdom in the Beatitudes: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3 and 10). And Jesus finally referenced the kingdom at the Last Supper, "I will not drink

⁷ Owen Strachan, "Carl F. H. Henry's Doctrine of the Atonement: A Synthesis and Brief Analysis, *Themelios*," 38, no. 2. (n.d.). <https://doi.org/https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/carl-f-h-henrys-doctrine-of-the-atonement-a-synthesis-and-brief-analysis/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Bright, *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 197.

¹⁰ Russell Moore, "The Kingdom of God in the Social Ethics of Carl F. H. Henry: A Twenty-First Century Evangelical Reappraisal," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 55, no. 2: (2012), https://doi.org/https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/55/55-2/JETS%2055-2_377-397_Moore.pdf, 381.

again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25). The best example of the importance of the kingdom appears in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Regarding the fluctuation in terminology, Chris Swanson says, "There is no genuine distinction between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God. The two expressions are basically two unique approaches to show the same thing."¹¹

The Gospel of Matthew carries a theme of a present and future kingdom that will influence Henry's philosophy of cultural engagement. The kingdom of God announced by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2) and inaugurated by Christ (Matt. 12–13) ushers in the present kingdom that awaits full consummation after Christ's return (Matt. 24–25; Luke 21:31). These present and future announcements give credibility and gravitas to Jesus's ethical teachings (Matt. 5–7). Christ fulfilled the law, but His example to love enemies, avoid greed and lust, give to the poor, and other teachings make Christian ethics an act of worship in addition to obedience.

The Gospel of Luke

The kingdom of God is a theme that also runs throughout the Gospel of Luke. Jesus preached the kingdom of God as good news and described that as His purpose (Luke 4:43). He includes the poor (Luke 6:20) and adds that wealth can be a hindrance to being included in the kingdom (Luke 18:24–25). This kingdom requires sacrifice and perseverance (Luke 9:62) and a high cost (Luke 14:33). Jesus compares the kingdom to a mustard seed (Luke 13:18–19) and a narrow door (Luke 13:22–30). The kingdom of God starts from within and flows out of Christians (Luke 17:21), and it requires childlike faith (Luke 18:17).

Luke, also the author of Acts, reports that Jesus spent the forty days following his resurrection and prior to his ascension teaching the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Prior to His ascension, Jesus is asked when He will restore His kingdom (Acts 1:6) to which He replies, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:7–8). Jesus's speaking of the kingdom and giving this commission at His ascension foreshadows the eventual consummation of the kingdom. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus said the kingdom of God is here now, but it is also coming (Luke 19:11; 21:31).

¹¹ Chris Swanson, *What Does It Mean the Kingdom of Heaven Is at Hand?* Christianity.com, (2021), <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/heaven-and-hell/what-does-it-mean-the-kingdom-of-heaven-is-at-hand.html>.

This is the framework that Henry used to build his philosophy of cultural engagement.

Kingdom of God Philosophies

In critiquing the kingdom theology and the ethics of modernists and fundamentalists, Henry observed that their flawed views originated in their beliefs about God's kingdom. Modernists believe the kingdom of God is an earthly kingdom that already has arrived (Kingdom Now). Therefore, the primary responsibility of the Christian is to live a life of love and morality without the anticipation of a future kingdom. Fundamentalists believe in a futuristic kingdom that will replace the evil and brokenness of this world. Therefore, the primary responsibility of the Christian is to detach from this world and faithfully wait for the coming kingdom. The following section discusses the rationale and shortcomings of these views.

Kingdom Now

The twentieth century experienced theological challenges. Henry went up against liberal views and dispensational views that he felt distorted the kingdom of God. In terms of believing that the kingdom of God was already present, Henry charged that liberalism saw only a part of God's kingdom. This view asserted that Christ's work was for society but not necessarily for individuals. They accepted the work of Jesus's redeeming society but did not believe He was God incarnate. Liberalism failed to recognize the future aspect of the kingdom and sought to bring about the kingdom without the supernatural work of Christ.

Nineteenth-century liberal theologians Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack formed these views.¹² Their "brotherhood of man" philosophy dismissed a future kingdom in favor of making a difference in the present.¹³ The infinite value of the individual soul in the ethic of love was the focus, and the actual apocalyptic elements of Christ's teaching were a kernel of His real message of love.¹⁴ These concepts advanced the idea of a present ethical kingdom. Walter Rauschenbusch took these concepts further to "Christianize the social order."¹⁵ He desired a kingdom of social justice in the present age.¹⁶ Henry criticized this

¹² Allen D. Matthew, *The Kingdom in Matthew*. Bible.org, (2004), <https://bible.org/article/kingdom-matthew>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: MacMillan, 1912).

¹⁶ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology of the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1917), 224.

view by stating that social gospel theologians “exalt the social issue above the theological, and prize the Christian religion mainly as a tool for justifying an independently determined course of action.”¹⁷ Henry added, “As Protestant liberalism lost a genuinely theological perspective, it substituted mainly a political program.”¹⁸ George Eldon Ladd, whose work influenced Henry, used the word “sociological” when speaking of liberalism. Ladd argued that good works without a higher purpose is sociology. Ladd stated that the sociological position views the kingdom as something for the church to achieve on earth.¹⁹ He wrote, “The Kingdom of God is the ideal social order in which men learn to enjoy a relation to God as sons and to one another as brothers. It is humanity organized according to the will of God, the Christian transfiguration of the social order, the establishment of a community of righteousness in mankind.”²⁰ Henry rightly critiqued the liberal view as shortsighted. It traded the eternal for a temporal kingdom that would pass away. While this view held that Christians should perform good works and advocate for justice, without religious guidance, private sins such as pride, hubris, and selfishness expanded unabated by spiritual disciplines. Personal accountability to God influenced important issues such as sexual ethics and abortion. With only an earthly kingdom in this paradigm, personal ethics deteriorated without the hope and accountability of a kingdom to come.

Kingdom Then

Joel Carpenter observed, “Defeats in the denominational conflicts of the 1920s forced fundamentalists to strengthen their institutional structures outside of old-line denominations. They responded creatively to the trends in contemporary popular culture and made a lasting place for themselves in American Protestantism. Fundamentalists and other evangelicals prospered. The outlines of a changed Protestant order began to emerge by 1950.”²¹

Justin Taylor identified four phases of Protestant fundamentalism: the irenic phase (1893–1919), the militant phase (1920–1936), the divisive phase

¹⁷ Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 24-25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

²¹ Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942,” *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, ed. Martin Marty, 55-69 (Berlin, De Gruyter, 1993), 68. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110974362.55>

(1941–1960), and the separatist phase (1960 to the present).²² Much of Henry’s work took place during the divisive and separatist phases. Reeling from the influences of modernity, A. C. Dixon, R. A. Torrey, and other contemporaries published essays called “The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth” (1910–1915).²³ They mailed these essays to ministers and missionaries worldwide, opposing all kinds of contemporary issues.²⁴ The interdenominational World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) wielded significant influence.²⁵ Heavily influenced by premillennial dispensationalism, they suggested that mainline apostasy was a sign of the coming great tribulation. Harnessing eschatological urgency, they exhorted evangelical leaders “to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3).²⁶ In a 1920 editorial published in his Northern Baptist paper, Rev. Curtis Lee Laws coined the word “fundamentalist.”²⁷ At the time, this term was a badge of honor instead of a slur.

During the militant phase of the early 1920s, battles erupted in most mainline Protestant groups between fundamentalists and those open to modern learning and advancements. In most cases, the fundamentalists faced defeat. They lost control over denominational entities, ministries, colleges, and theological seminaries. Public losses such as the Snopes Monkey Trial further emboldened the fundamentalist movement to move underground and wait for the coming kingdom. Most fundamentalists withdrew from the mainstream, forming separate ministries, churches, and denominations. According to Douglas A. Sweeney, many began to advocate “second-degree separation”—separation from sin, worldliness, and apostasy and from other Christians standing too close to these things themselves.²⁸

Henry criticized fundamentalism’s withdrawal from and rejection of the current kingdom. Of fundamentalism, Henry stated, “They have neglected the philosophical, scientific, social, and political problems that agitate our century.”²⁹ Their distaste for Modernity and the Social Gospel was strong enough that they feared that collaboration or cultural engagement could associate their ministries

²² Justin Taylor, *The 4 Phases of Protestant Fundamentalism in America*. The Gospel Coalition, (2016), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/the-four-phases-of-protestant-fundamentalism-in-america/>.

²³ Douglas A. Sweeney, *Who Were the ‘Fundamentalists’?* *Christian History* (*Christianity Today*), (2006). <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-92/who-were-fundamentalists.html>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Carl F. H. Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948),

with worldly or heretical movements. Henry said fundamentalists tended to overreact to avoid the “tendency to identify the kingdom with any present social order, however, modified in a democratic or communistic this direction.”³⁰

Henry's most stinging critique of fundamentalism was his allegation that the pessimistic fundamentalism view predicted a foredoomed failure.³¹ He stated, “In revolting against the social gospel, fundamentalism also rebelled against the Christian social imperative.” Henry further chided fundamentalists for their inability to create a positive message within their own framework. The result was a withdrawal from culture with a despairing view of world history as its only consolation.³² This bleak view of fundamentalist cultural engagement shows people detached from their personal reality in the name of protection and personal piety. Detachment and separation limit the Christian's ability to share their faith or meet societal needs in an effective or meaningful way. Like their modernist counterparts, who do good deeds but have little accountability for personal ethics, fundamentalists are often people of high moral character who neglect the Great Commission, the Great Commandment, and Christ's example of serving others.

Already, but Not Yet

“Already, but Not Yet” is a term of growing popularity in historic premillennialism and progressive dispensationalism.³³ Herman Ridderbos and George Ladd are generally considered the originators of this view of the kingdom of God.³⁴ These theologians provided a “both/and” approach to the kingdom—postulating that the kingdom of God has already arrived in an inaugural form but has not yet fully been consummated and will not be until Christ's second coming.³⁵ Henry was influenced by this view, and it became the foundation of his philosophy of cultural engagement. Grounded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, this view of God's kingdom cares for the poor (Luke 6:20) and starts from within and flows out of Christians (Luke 17:21), calls Christians to exhibit the Beatitudes (Mt. 5: 3–12) and Christ's ethical teachings (Mt. 5–7), seek God's kingdom (Mt. 6:33), and await the new kingdom (Mt. 24–25; Luke 21:31).

Analysis

³⁰ Carl F.H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947), 49.

³¹ Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 26.

³² *Ibid.*, 32.

³³ Allen, *The Kingdom in Matthew*, np.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Henry was one of the most influential voices for the new evangelical movement of the twentieth century. He received accolades and honors and was a well-known figure in terms of conservative evangelical cultural engagement. Without his influence as editor of *Christianity Today* or helming new theological schools and organizations, there is no way to know what American evangelical cultural engagement would look like. Bob Patterson said, “While serving as editor of *Christianity Today*, Henry had “much to do with shaping the message that reached thousands through its pages, and he became Evangelicalism’s foremost journalist and strategist.”³⁶ R. Albert Mohler Jr. added that Henry played an indispensable role within the New Evangelical movement.³⁷

The legacy of Carl Henry lives on in Christian leaders who engage with culture from a biblical perspective. Courage and acumen are necessary for a Christian leader to be an ethical voice in a pluralistic context. Henry’s ability to base his ethical system in the gospels, more specifically, the kingdom of God, gave a succinct and accessible concept that could guide millions in their ethics. A man of his centrist point of view was not without his critics. While considered moderate among separatist fundamentalists who resented his call for them to reengage with culture, his commitment to the inerrancy of the Bible put him at odds with those in the social gospel camp.

Phyllis Alsdurf observed, “One of the distinguishing marks of CT was its commitment to a social message that fits neither with the social gospel of the liberals nor the social disengagement of the conservative fundamentalists”³⁸ Carl Henry was willing to start something new and be part of a movement that was necessary for the twentieth century. He, along with Billy Graham and other contemporaries, started new schools and new publications because they were unwilling to accept existing methods that were not working.

Theologians provided fair critiques of Henry’s theology. In critiquing Henry’s 1946 book *Remaking the Modern Mind*, Michael Kugler argued that Henry used the notion of a worldview to “smuggle theology into an otherwise philosophical and cultural diagnosis” while asserting that Henry’s theology is “nearly indistinguishable from the fundamentalism he had abandoned.”³⁹ The kingdom of God was Henry’s primary doctrinal contribution to Christian writing.

³⁶ Bob E. Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983), 24.

³⁷ R. Albert Mohler, “The Indispensable Evangelical: Carl F. H. Henry and Evangelical Ambition in the Twentieth Century,” *Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F.H. Henry*, ed. Matthew J. Hall and Owen Strachan, 27-43. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 27–28..

³⁸ Phyllis E. Alsdurf, Phyllis, “The Founding of Christianity Today Magazine and the Construction of an American Evangelical Identity,” *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 9, no. 1-2: (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10477845.2010.510126>, 30.

³⁹ Michael Kugler, “Evangelical Scholarship as Activist Ideology: Carl F. H. Henry’s Account of Western Civilization,” *Fides Et Historia*, 51, no. 1: (2019), 154-157.

Paul House said of Henry, “Though one can certainly critique his theological vision, it is historically untenable to ignore or dismiss Carl Henry’s role in the shaping of twentieth-century American evangelicalism.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, Henry regarded skirmishes between Reformed and dispensational theology as evangelical “navel-gazing.”⁴¹ Proponents of those views would take issue with his philosophy and dismiss his criticisms. Those criticisms did not deter Henry. His was a practical theology designed to get into the hands of the masses as opposed to staying within academia. D. L. Weeks observed of Henry, “He continues to urge fellow believers to enter the political arena but insists that involvement be preceded by serious and thoughtful reflection.”⁴² Of Christians’ cultural engagement, Henry said, “I see no reason why the Christian community cannot publicly identify itself in a moment of protest against intractable social injustices. I hope we take creative steps to find such moments of evangelical identification on the public scene in a day when the mass media and symbols are important.”⁴³ Henry added, “In a secular climate, Christian ideals and virtues do not flourish; rather, they are in a defensive fight for sheer survival”⁴⁴ Henry led with a sense of urgency as “he observed what he saw as the ‘twilight of a great civilization.’”⁴⁵

Practitioners and pastors could also bristle at his parachurch background. They could affirm his concept of the kingdom of God and how that relates to the church while calling his ecclesiology into question. The rifts between churches and parachurch organizations made some people unwilling to hear his message, but his contribution was strong, nonetheless. Henry had a unique voice and platform to speak to the culture. He did not have to do so from a pulpit, nor did he have to do it from a denominational entity. This freedom, while the cause of some of the criticisms, was a unique situation from which he could be outspoken enough and bold enough without having those kinds of repercussions to contend with. Henry did not present himself as much as a scholar-theologian as he was a Christian leader and cultural engagement specialist, and he should not be treated as anything else. Clearly, there are better voices in the realms of ecclesiology and

⁴⁰ Paul R. House, “Remaking the Modern Mind: Revisiting Carl Henry’s Theological Vision,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 8, no. 4: (2004), 3.

⁴¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals in Search of Identity* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 29.

⁴² D. L. Weeks, Carl F. H. Henry's Moral Arguments for Evangelical Political Activism, *Journal of Church and State* 40, no. 1: (1998), <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/40.1.83>, 105.

⁴³ Carl F. H. Henry, “The Tensions Between Evangelism and the Christian Demand for Social Justice,” *Fides Et Historia*, 4, no. 2: (1972), 9.

⁴⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, “Christian Education and the World of Culture,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 32: (1958), 310.

⁴⁵ Andrew T. Walker, “A Forgotten Protestant Pluralist: Carl F. H. Henry’s Vision for a Church Contra Mundum pro Mundo,” *The American Conservative*, 19, no. 5: (2020), p. 11.

other theological disciplines, but in terms of cultural engagement, we are hard-pressed to find a more gifted or effective leader.

Conclusion

Carl Henry's most significant contribution as a public theologian was his ability to keep the best of the arguments from the modernist and fundamentalist positions. Henry advocated for ethics just like the modernists, but he rooted them in the kingdom of God and gave biblical foundations for his convictions. His ability to root this in the person of Jesus, not as a moral teacher but as God incarnate, provided moral stability in uncertain times. The modernists showed the capacity to demonstrate high ethical standards, but they missed the power of Christ's deity. The fundamentalists, likewise, possessed sound beliefs and doctrine but needed to have greater faith in that power to influence culture properly. Henry's use of the kingdom of God from the gospels spoke to ethical concerns in the present kingdom of God inaugurated by Christ (Mt. 12–13) while also looking forward to future glory. All the while, he provided ethics for kingdom living (Mt. 5–7) until the future glory of Christ's return (Mt. 24–25; Luke 21:31). His "already, but not yet" or "Kingdom Now, Kingdom Then" approach to God's kingdom provided an accessible philosophy of ethics that remained faithful to scripture and encouraged an appropriate and compassionate form of cultural engagement.

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