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**Carl F. H. Henry's Presuppositional Theology and its  
Implications within Educational Settings**

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by  
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Approval Sheet

CARL F. H. HENRY'S PRESUPPOSITIONAL THEOLOGY AND ITS  
IMPLICATIONS WITHIN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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To my wife, Leslie, for your continual support, patience, and encouragement through these demanding years. This milestone belongs to both of us. May God, who sees what is done in secret, bless you beyond measure. I love you.

To my children: Karis, Eli, Luke, Silas, and Zoe. The vast majority of this dissertation was written while you slept because you are my first and greatest ministry.

## **Abstract**

In the mid-twentieth century Carl F. H. Henry was committed to articulating a cohesive theological understanding from an evangelical perspective. The primary feature of Henry's theology was the ultimate authority of God's Word. This presupposition impacted every area of his thinking and manifest itself in the practical outworking of theology. This dissertation argues that Carl Henry's theistic presuppositions provide a workable framework for the practice of education. This thesis will be developed in three ways: establishing the consistency of revelational theism, demonstrating the irrationality of naturalism, and analyzing Carl Henry's published perspective toward the American educational system.

This study will be strictly limited to a theological view of presuppositions with application made to educational settings. It is an inquiry into Henry's commitment to the authority of divine revelation in relation to a specific avenue of evangelical cultural engagement. This author is not attempting a pedagogical framework but a theological framework. No attempt will be made to synthesize a philosophy of education out of Henry's words concerning education, but rather it will focus specifically on his theological presuppositions. This author is focusing on the qualitative implications of Henry's theology, not a quantitative research model of educational practice or philosophy.

Henry was a trailblazer within the evangelical movement who spoke often and plainly about the necessity of presuppositional foundations essential to evangelicalism. These foundations are the ontological necessity of God and the epistemological necessity of divine revelation. With these axioms as his foundation, Henry launched an offensive campaign against the presuppositions of naturalism. Henry's passion for education is seen in his publications applying his theological position to educational situations for the sake of cultural engagement.

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## Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

### Introduction

In an era focused on secular principles and naturalistic presuppositions, the stability of a sure Word of God has been all but swept aside. A theologian named Carl F. H. Henry was aware of the personal and social chaos this has caused and became passionate about reorienting his world around divine revelation. “Everywhere around us is strewn the philosophical wreckage of those who rely on... everything but a sure Word of God.”<sup>1</sup> Henry penned these words as he reflected on the transition of American culture away from Judeo-Christian presuppositions. Carl Henry held a presuppositional view of apologetics and theology. He believed there was no neutral or objective starting place from which to begin, but that all persons view life through a set of worldview assumptions which guide their interaction with reality.<sup>2</sup> This commitment led Henry to embrace revelational theism as his lens through which to understand the world. Revelational theism is rooted in the authority of divine revelation as the ultimate source for truth. This epistemological position places every human in total dependence to God for all aspects of life and knowledge. And as such, all of humanity is accountable to God based on the revelation he has given. Henry said, “As knowers all men stand in epistemic contact with God”<sup>3</sup> and believed this epistemic contact with the divine was rooted in the *Imago Dei*. It is therefore

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<sup>1</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*. (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Henry’s seminal work, *God, Revelation and Authority*, is a six volume set written between 1976 and 1983 addressing major theological and social issues from a worldview context. This work has become a standard for defining evangelical theology and it hinges on the nature and application of divine revelation.

<sup>3</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1983, 1999), 77.

available to all people of all times. And yet, as Paul's first chapter in his letter to the Romans clearly states, humanity suppresses this knowledge despite the clear self-revelation of the Creator.<sup>4</sup> This epistemological presupposition that the Living God has communicated with humanity is within Paul's writings and is also a presupposition of Carl Henry. Henry chose to speak and act in his cultural moment to reestablish the lifeline between revelational theism and its biblical presuppositions, with educational settings as part of his greater evangelical theological agenda.

The influence of Carl Henry on the modern American evangelical identity has been described by many journalists and scholars as a key element in the history of evangelicalism.<sup>5</sup> Henry was committed to expressing a cohesive evangelical theology. The work of evangelical engagement has continued through organizations which bear his name and carry his legacy.<sup>6</sup> Henry, later referred to as the "Dean of evangelical theologians"<sup>7</sup> illuminated many distinctive

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<sup>4</sup> Regardless of religious or philosophical commitments, a reader can see the intentional, unambiguous language of Paul directly addressing the suppression of truth and the self-revelation of God to all men in Romans 1:18,19. "<sup>18</sup>...men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup>For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them." (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> At his death, the New York Times ran an article identifying Henry as "a theologian who helped move evangelical Christianity from the sidelines to a central place in American religion." (Laurie Goodstien, *Rev. Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, 90, Brain of Evangelical Movement*. New York Times. Dec. 13, 2003) The article was titled after a quote given in an interview from David Neff, the editor of Christianity Today at time of Henry's death, saying, "If we see Billy Graham as the great public face and generous spirit of the evangelical movement, Carl Henry was the brains." Dr. Albert Mohler says that Henry "devoted his long and illustrious career as a theologian to building and defending the 'intellectual struts' of evangelical theology." R. Albert Mohler. *The Life and Legacy of Carl F. H. Henry: A Remembrance*. Dec. 9, 2003 albertmohler.com.

<sup>6</sup> Henry was essential in the establishment of the National Association of Evangelicals, Fuller Theological Seminary, Evangelical Theological Society, founding editor of *Christianity Today*, and the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies. Henry has inspired several continuations of his work. Notably these are; The Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity International University, The Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Intellectual Discipleship at Union University, and the "Henry Forums" on Theology and culture annually sponsored by Capitol Hill Baptist Church. Matthew Hall and Owen Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism: The enduring influence of Carl F. H. Henry*. (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 2015), 23-24.

<sup>7</sup> "dean of evangelical theology," see Henry's obituary in Baptist Press News. Michael Foust, "Carl F.H. Henry, 'dean' of evangelical theologians, dies at 90". *Baptist Press*, Dec. 9, 2003, <http://www.bpnews.net/17234>

qualities of what it means to be an evangelical. A primary feature of his theology was the authority of divine revelation. When taken as the verifying principle for truth, God's self-revelation makes sense of reality and establishes the order of logic and morality that all humanity abides by. An under-discussed element, which was near to Henry's own heart,<sup>8</sup> is the role of teaching and how the presuppositions of revelational theism are paramount to educational settings. As the founding editor of *Christianity Today*, Henry demonstrated his fervent stance on connecting these theological presuppositions with learning. In the third issue from the magazine's inception he authored and publishing an article entitled *Christian Responsibility in Education*.<sup>9</sup> In the twenty-three years between 1944 and 1967, Henry, who approached the world from a theological perspective, would publish twenty-seven magazine and journal articles that were expressly dedicated to educational concerns.<sup>10</sup> Beyond writing articles, this critical

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Also mentioned as such by Doyle in his introduction. G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry, Theologian for All Seasons: An Introduction and Guide to God, Revelation, and Authority* (Eugene, Or: Pickwick Publications, 2010), xi.

<sup>8</sup> Henry said to Paul House in a 1997 interview that he immensely enjoyed teaching undergraduates. He added if he were to do it over again he may prefer using his gifts in a Christian college or secular university rather than predominately at seminaries. - Paul R. House, "Making Christian Minds: Carl Henry and Higher Education." *Renewing Minds*, no.1, May 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Henry, "Christian Responsibility in Education". *Christianity Today*. May 27, 1957. The prior issues of *Christianity Today* came out in Oct. 1956 and Jan. 1957, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Henry was a prolific writer. These twenty-seven articles connect the theological perspective to education, this does not include other articles which contain allusions to educational issues as well as chapters in books, reference is speaking engagements, or personal correspondence.

1. "Remaking the Modern Mind." *Watchman-Examiner* 32, no. 30, July 27, 1944, 732-733.
2. "God and the Modern Mind." *Watchman-Examiner* 33, no. 13, March 29, 1945, 300-301.
3. "Birth of a New World Mind." *Religious Digest* 29, no. 141, June 1946, 1-4.
4. "Jesus and the Classics." *Religious Digest* 20, no. 131, August 1946, 5-9.
5. "The 'Harvard Report'." (UEA Editorial) *United Evangelical Action* 6, April 1, 1947, 12-13.
6. "The Day School Crisis." (UEA Editorial) *United Evangelical Action* 6, July 1, 1947, 14-15.
7. "Neglected Science in an Atom Bomb Era." *The King's Business* 39, no. 3 March 1948, 9.
8. "Symposium by Ten Educators." *Calvin Forum* 13, nos. 11-12 June-July 1948, 231-238.
9. "Christian Education Today: The Seminary." *Christian Life* 10, No. 5 September 1948, 27, 46-47.
10. "Modern Science and Values." *The Asbury Seminarian* 4, no. 3 Fall 1949, 91-98.
11. "What Every Educated Christian Should Know." *Christian Life* 13 June 1951, 25, 78-80.
12. "Modern Education and the Secularistic Tide." *Watchman-Examiner* 39, no. 42 October 11, 1951, 965-967.
13. "Religion and the Crisis in Education." *Watchman-Examiner* 40, no. 9, March 5, 1952.
14. "The Ominous Drift from Christian Ideals." *United Evangelical Action* 11, no. 24 February 1, 1953, 18.

subject found a voice in Henry's books and lectures and was a passion he continued to promote throughout his lifetime of evangelical leadership.<sup>11</sup> Henry wore many hats, including journalist, teacher, and public speaker, but first and foremost, he was a theologian.

### *Research Question*

The research questions guiding this study are a probe into the impact the theological presuppositions of revelational theism can have on educational settings.

1. What is Carl Henry's presuppositional starting place for evangelical theology?
2. Do these theological presuppositions provide a worldview system consistent with reality?
3. How can the revelational theism of Carl Henry challenge current trends in

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15. "Moral Values in Public Education." *Eternity* 5, September 1954, 14–15, 42.
  16. "Our Public Schools—Christian or Secular?" *Christian Statesman* 98, no. 5, September, 1954, 3.
  17. "Christian Education and Our American Schools." *United Evangelical Action* 14, no. 19 December 1, 1955, 3–5, 10, 31. Reprinted as pamphlet, *Education: Dual or Centralized?* Los Angeles, Calif.: Protestants United Against Taxing Schools, n.d.
  18. "Christian Responsibility in Education." *Christianity Today* 1, no. 17, May 27, 1957.
  19. "Science and Religion." Carl F. H. Henry, ed. *Contemporary Evangelical Thought*. (Great Neck, NY: Channel Press, 1957), 245–282.
  20. "Christian Education and the World of Culture." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 32, no. 3 October, 1958, 307–313.
  21. "The Crisis in Education" (editorial). *Christianity Today* 2, no. 16 May 12, 1958.
  22. "Do We Need a Christian University?" *Christianity Today* 4, May 9, 1960, 3–5.
  23. "Public Funds for Public Schools." *Christianity Today* 5, April 10, 1961, 20–23.
  24. "Student Exposure." *Christianity Today* 8, September 25, 1964, 18–20.
  25. "Plight of the Church College." *Christianity Today* 9, May 21, 1965, 16–19.
  26. "Crisis on the Campus." *Christianity Today* 10, September 2, 1966, 4–7.
  27. "Need for a Christian University." *Christianity Today* 11, February 17, 1967, 5–8.

<sup>11</sup> Books with significant theological themes yet still engage with educational concerns are *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, *The Drift of Western Thought*, *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology*, *Gods of This Age, or God of the Ages*. Henry also used his speaking engagements to address these issues. Examples are "How to Lose a Seminary" presented September 16, 1988 in the series of Ambassadors lectures at Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland. Also these lectures were presented in the Evangelical Theology Group at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, November 1988, Chicago, Illinois. Similarly, "Jesus and the Intellectual" was an address at a prayer breakfast attended by members of the academic community of Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, on Friday, April 15, 1966.

education and can it reinvigorate evangelicals and institutions toward meaningful cultural engagement?

Carl Henry's theological commitments pushed him to be culturally attentive. Because of this awareness he understood that the higher educational system in America was an intellectually critical center of culture.<sup>12</sup> In the American cultural transition away from religion and family as the center of society, education became the nucleus from which American culture grew and received its understanding of reality. Therefore, Henry courageously and continuously presented applications of revelational theism into his evangelical strategy for cultural engagement. Henry considered education to be an essential area for that cultural engagement. In an age of professional specialization, if evangelicals are to represent a relevant belief system in the twenty-first century, they must faithfully apply biblical axioms to all of thought and life. Evangelicals must recognize and appreciate the presuppositions about who God is and what he has said, which are the control issues behind interpreting reality. Carl Henry's writings reveal a desire to reintroduce theological presuppositions, rather than naturalistic presuppositions, into the current American educational system.<sup>13</sup> This is based on the idea that logic and morality are best

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<sup>12</sup> "The college or university is the intellectually critical axis of society, and if the Christian takes seriously his citizenship in two worlds he dare not disengage from either." Carl Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*. (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 93.

<sup>13</sup> What is the current American Educational system? Modern developments in educational practice show a continuing trend toward an overt secularism. A sample of this philosophical trend is discussed in the article, *One size does not fit all: Complexity, Religion, Secularism and Education*. Here the author, Lynn Davies, connects religious views to extremist actions and affirms a secularist approach to education. Davies says, "This article argues for a secular foundation in society and school to protect against religion contributing to conflict and extremism." The complexity of the issues of religious views within education are not oversimplified, yet an overt naturalistic worldview is the unnamed presupposition guiding the conclusions. She argues, "first there should be transparency and consistency in government policies on religion or secularism, and second, that schooling should promote the critical thinking which enables religious messages to be critiqued and the rights of all upheld." While these statements promote healthy ideas, the presuppositions in place while applying these ideas will produce drastically different outcomes. Unfortunately, only the worldview of naturalistic secularism is given warrant. This example is given as an indicator of the common practice within modern American educational systems in the exclusion of the biblical worldview as a valid presuppositional starting place. Lynn Davies, "One Size Does Not Fit All: Complexity, Religion, Secularism and Education," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34, no.2 (2014).

grounded on the foundations built by revelational theism. Without such divine foundations the erosion of logic and morality surface in society, as exemplified in modern secular education. Henry's theological approach challenges evangelicals to train rising generations with a biblically informed worldview that influences every area of thought and action.

### *Relevance of the Study*

This study has relevance because a theological perspective is needed to address the metaphysical assumptions hidden within educational settings. The ability to think and act is contingent on the right starting place. United States Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, remarked in a 2017 speech about a fight against what she called the “education establishment.” She said, “The faculty, from adjunct professors to deans, tell [university students] what to do, what to say, and more ominously, what to think.” She criticized higher education of a majority liberal bias and the unconstitutional suppression of minority viewpoints. DeVos went on to describe her biggest fear saying, “the real threat is silencing the First Amendment rights of people with whom you disagree.”<sup>14</sup> The suppression of rational civil discourse is a symptom of the societal transition to naturalistic presuppositions which negate a Creator who endows certain inalienable rights. Carl Henry, and this author, approach the current educational environment from a theological perspective. When the presuppositional stance behind the issues are addressed, the real problem of irrational and faulty presuppositions, and not only the symptoms, can be confronted.

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<sup>14</sup> These comments were made on February 23, 2017 in a speech given to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, MD. US Dept. of Education transcript of the speech was accessed at: <https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/us-secretary-education-betsy-devos-prepared-remarks-2017-conservative-political-action-conference> accessed 8/19/18.

Social trends always have origins in the world of ideas. Ideas always have presuppositions. To address the social trends appearing within education from an evangelical theological perspective is to identify the presuppositions which stand in opposition to or affirmation of divine revelation. Political scientists traced data for current academic trends when they published results in a 2014 survey based on a sample of nearly 3000 scholars from representative institutions. This survey titled, *Politics of American Professorate Survey*, concluded that 44% of their respondents could be classified as liberals, 46% as moderates, and 9% as conservatives.<sup>15,16</sup> In 2016, *Econ Journal Watch* published a study looking at faculty voter registration within forty leading universities. The results uncovered Democrats outnumber Republicans by a ratio of 11.5 to 1. Out of the 7,243 professors 3,623 were Democrat to 314 Republicans.<sup>17</sup> While political affiliation is not the ultimate determiner in social or theological ideologies, it can be used as a broad scope indicator of dominate trends. This paper is not taking a political approach or even a pedagogical approach to these issues, but rather a theological approach to address the presuppositions guiding these social changes.

While the minutia and methods can be debated, the general understanding that academia is dominated by liberal ideology is implicit. Alan Bloom delves deep into the growing dysfunction of the American higher education system in his book *The Closing of the American Mind*. Here he describes how the liberal trend of higher education has paradoxically “closed the

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<sup>15</sup> Neil Gross; Solon Simmons, *Professors and Their Politics*. (JHU Press. 29 May 2014), 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> In terms of political party affiliation of the responding professors, 51% were democrats, 36 percent were Independents, and 14 percent were Republicans. Gross and Simmons compared this data to the Gallup poll on American political standings, which found that 34% of Americans were Democrats, 34% were independents, and 30% were Republicans. The conclusions depict significantly more representation of Democrats and significantly less representation of Republicans inside academia with respect to the American population.

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell Langbert, Anthony Quain, and Daniel Klein, “Faculty Voter Registration in Economics, History, Journalism, Law, and Psychology”. *Econ Journal Watch*. Vol. 13. September 2016, 422-451.



minds” of students through the adoption of relativistic openness.<sup>18</sup> Bloom says, “Openness used to be the virtue that permitted us to seek the good by using reason. It now means accepting everything and denying reason’s power.”<sup>19</sup> Bloom’s book critiquing the liberal development at the university level was eye opening in his day and still rings true today.

Carl Henry and Allan Bloom have both sounded an alarm concerning the ideas that guide institutions and subsequently culture. These ideas are the outgrowth of certain *a priori* assumptions about reality. As Bloom acknowledges, the current state of American higher education is one immersed in philosophies and pre-commitments antithetical to the Judeo-Christian worldview. The acceptance of moralistic relativism can be seen as one of the factors contributing to the disturbing statistic that 70% of teens once committed to regular church attendance will not remain engaged with traditional faith commitments between the ages of 18-22.<sup>20</sup> While the symptoms within education are clear to see, the metaphysical assumptions behind those symptoms are not. Henry challenged the cultural adoption of naturalism from the perspective of revelational theism, resulting in coherent and practical responses for real world issues, both in his generation as well as today.

Carl Henry asks this question, “Is there a way to bring together the concern for truth in private and public education without intruding a schismatic bias contrary to the American spirit,

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<sup>18</sup> Bloom attacks the American university system and specifically the approaches taken in philosophy and the humanities. He claims moral relativism has hindered critical thinking and the genuine pursuit of truth. Bloom stands as an absolutist in regards to truth and believes the major unifying theme among university students today is a commitment to relativism.

<sup>19</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 38.

<sup>20</sup> LifeWay Research conducted a survey in April and May 2007 of more than 1,000 adults ages 18-30. Each indicated that they had attended a Protestant church regularly for at least a year in high school. According to the study, 70 percent of young adults ages 23-30 stopped attending church regularly for at least a year between ages 18-22, which are the average ages for attendance in secondary education. Accessed: [http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Church-Dropouts\\_How-Many-Leave-Church-and-Why-8.07.2007.pdf](http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Church-Dropouts_How-Many-Leave-Church-and-Why-8.07.2007.pdf)

but also without despising the Christian motifs who's dynamic once rescued the West from its pagan past and the loss of which is now sinking us into a pagan future?"<sup>21</sup> Is there a guide who can navigate the presuppositional waters that shape today's social issues? This study has relevance because Carl Henry can be considered that guide for evangelicals, holding his presuppositional understanding of the Living God and his revealed Word as the bedrock for action. An in-depth study of the revelational theism promoted by Carl Henry can cut a path for evangelicals to engage American culture through strategic engagement with education.

### Thesis

This study argues that the theological position of Carl F. H. Henry, revelational theism, provides a consistent framework for education. This thesis will be developed in three ways: establishing the consistency of revelational theism, demonstrating the irrationality of naturalism, and analyzing Carl Henry's published perspective toward the American educational system.

Carl F. H. Henry was a trailblazer within the evangelical movement who spoke often and plainly about the necessity of presuppositional foundations essential to evangelicalism. These foundations are the twin axioms of the ontological necessity of God and the epistemological necessity of divine revelation. "The basic ontological axiom is *the living God*; the basic epistemological axiom is *divine revelation*. ... These axioms imply each other. Without the living God there would be no divine revelation. Without intelligible self-disclosure we would not know that God exists."<sup>22</sup> With these presuppositional axioms as his foundation, Henry launched an offensive campaign against the presuppositions of naturalism within society. He said, "The

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<sup>21</sup> Carl Henry, "Christian Responsibility in Education". *Christianity Today*. May 27, 1957.

<sup>22</sup> Carl F. H. Henry. *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*. (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway Books, 1990), 68. Emphasis mine.

Scientist has on the basis of empirical methodology no legitimate metaphysic at all.”<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, any naturalistic efforts to categorically nullify supernatural foundations also eliminate its own foundations, resulting in irrationality. Henry concluded that only revelational theism establishes the necessary preconditions for any investigation for truth and all rational discussion.

This study is non-pedagogical by design. It is an inquiry into Henry’s commitment to the authority of divine revelation in relation to his outspoken concerns for theological presuppositions within educational settings. When taken as an epistemological axiom, divine revelation provides an *a priori* foundation for the universality of logic and morality. Henry’s perspective of how the evangelical community should engage education within a greater agenda of cultural influence was expressed in many of his publications. The theology of Carl F. H. Henry contends that true wisdom is only discovered within the nature of God and his self-revelation.

### Definition of General Terms

It is important to define the usage of several terms recurring throughout this study. These definitions will attempt to capture the meaning and function of each term.

*Evangelical:* The term evangelical is a cognate from the original Greek word *euangelion*, meaning good news or gospel. The movement which bears its name has its roots in the Pietism and Puritanism of early American history. It is characterized by prioritization of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the view of the Christian scriptures as the ultimate source of authority.<sup>24</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 173.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Evangelicals in America: Who They are, What They Believe*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1987), 27-28.

evangelical movement was greatly influenced by Carl Henry in 1947 by his differentiation away from the two extremes of the social gospel of Protestant Liberalism and Fundamentalist tendency toward isolationism. This was outlined in his early published work, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.<sup>25</sup> Evangelicals are a subset of Protestantism and follow its pattern by having no centralized ecclesiology. They are a trans-denominational movement yet place a high value on cooperation. The resulting evangelical institutions bear witness to this ability to work together in pursuit of common goals.<sup>26</sup>

*Revelational Theism*: “Carl Henry expressed revelational theism as a rational world-life view grounded in revelational perspectives. What are revelational perspectives? Henry goes on to answer, “Revelational theism provides cognitive information about God and the true nature of reality and it supplies categories of thought and definitions of reality that require the replacement of philosophical conjecture.”<sup>27</sup>

The ultimate source of truth within revelational theism is divine revelation. This revelation is the self-disclosure of God to humanity. God’s Word, the Logos, is manifest in the person of Jesus Christ and in the written canon of Christian scripture. Henry confidently says, “The Logos of God is the coordinating reality that holds together thought, life and experience.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This work, published in 1947, thrust Henry into the limelight of Evangelicalism. His theologically acute understanding of the Kingdom of God as “already but not yet” and therefore having implications for current social issues as well as spiritually eternal issues gave Henry a voice as Evangelicalism was clarifying its identity against Protestant Liberalism and Fundamentalists. Russell Moore says, “*The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* is, in some ways, the most important evangelical book of the twentieth century...Henry’s critique is just as relevant now as in 1947 and should be read by all those with a serious commitment to applying a Kingdom theology to every aspect of life.” Russell Moore, “book review”. (*JETS*, 448:1 March 2005): 181–83.

<sup>26</sup> Parachurch agencies which have risen out of the evangelical agenda along a variety of denominational and non-denominational lines include InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Christian Today magazine, World vision, Campus Crusade for Christ, Moody Bible Institute, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, The 700 Club, and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

<sup>27</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 201.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

Therefore, revelational theism could be considered a biblical worldview. A worldview is defined by David Noebel as a “pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world.”<sup>29</sup> A worldview answers the most basic questions about the nature of reality needed to understand existence.<sup>30</sup> Carl Henry believes the biblical worldview is built upon the presuppositions of revelational theism.

Carl Henry took an expressly evangelical approach to defining the biblical worldview. In this endeavor he asserted that the whole of the biblical worldview system, with all its doctrines and applications, rest on two fundamental axioms. These axioms are the ontological existence of God and the epistemological necessity of divine revelation. Henry consistently promoted the idea that “the living God and intelligible divine revelation of truth [are the Christian axioms] on which all its other claims depend.”<sup>31</sup> Through these two axioms, all of reality can be assessed and understood. Questions about the nature of God, mankind, the world, afterlife, morality, human history, and beyond all find foundation in who God is and what He has said. Revelational theism stands in contrast to rational theism and philosophical theism, which attempt

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<sup>29</sup> David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews*. (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2006), 6.

<sup>30</sup> James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Guidebook to the World Views*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998). Sire outlines eight essential questions for a worldview:

1. What is prime reality—the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?
8. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

<sup>31</sup> Carol Stream, “The Concerns and Considerations of Carl F. H. Henry”. *Christianity Today*. Vol. 25 Iss. 5 (Mar 13, 1981), 18.

to build a case for the existence of God and understanding of reality from rationale independent of divine revelation.

*Logic:* While the definition of logic has been debated through history from ancient to modern philosophers, the position of this study will fall in line with Isaac Watts' colloquial definition that logic is the right use of reason in the enquiry after truth.<sup>32</sup> This author holds that logic is part of the essence of God which he has revealed to humanity. God and logic are inseparable. Gordan Clark illustrates the indivisible nature of logic and the divine.

[some analytical thinkers] may wish to separate logic and God. Doing so, they would complain that the present construction merges two axioms into one. And if two, one of them must be prior; in which case we would have to accept God without logic, or logic without God; and the other one afterward. But this is not the presupposition here proposed. God and logic are one and the same first principle, for John wrote that Logic (logos) was God.<sup>33</sup>

*Morality:* Morality is the body of principles by which actions and intentions are determined to be “right” or “wrong”. This author holds that such a body of principles can only be derived from divine existence and self-revelation. To base morality on other foundations is to open the door to relativistic views of morality. To deny a personal supernatural origin of all created things is to posit that an impersonal force is the origin of all things. Impersonal forces like time, gravity, matter, and energy cannot justify abstract obligations like “right” or “wrong”. Only a personal force can determine what “ought” to be and can impose standards to be

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<sup>32</sup> Isaac Watts, *The Improvement of the Mind, Or, A Supplement to the Art of Logick: Containing a Variety of Remarks and Rules for the Attainment and Communication of Useful Knowledge, in Religion, in the Sciences, and in Common Life* (London: Printed for James Brackstone, at the Globe in Cornhill, 1741). First printed in 1724, this textbook was the standard introduction for logic at Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Yale for over 100 years. It had twenty reprinted editions.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon H. Clark, “God and Logic”. *The Trinity Reviews*, (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Publications, 1980). Accessed: <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=16#sthash.vm0I7y0l.dpuf>

enforced. Morality without penalty for noncompliance is no morality at all. Therefore, morality must have transcendent roots making it absolute and applicable for all people of all times.

*Character:* Aristotle viewed character as “human excellence” or “excellence of the soul”.<sup>34</sup> The ancient pioneer of philosophy and ethics went on to assert that simply doing right actions alone is not enough but becoming the right sort of person is the goal of character. This understanding of becoming the right sort of person, while affirmed in Greek philosophy, finds its fulfillment through the biblical worldview which associates “the Good” as a relational being, not an impersonal philosophical ideal. This relational being is the creator God of the Bible, who put His image on all of mankind.

Character development is a process of growth just as physical growth is a process. Through the modeling of others, intentional teaching, and personal experience a learner will develop a certain type of character. The educational system is an important component during some of the most significant years of character development. This opportunity should be approached with intentionality and seriousness.

*Cultural Engagement:* Cultural engagement is the willingness to understand the viewpoints and rationale of a particular culture and enter into an interchange or dialogue to communicate a different way to interpret the world. This interchange could be by linguistic discussion, but there are other methods of engagement. Engagement can come from the production of cultural artifacts grounded in a minority worldview, therefore exposing the larger culture to new ideas, experiences, values, through the artifact.

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<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, trans. H. Rackham, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 13.

The opposite of cultural engagement is isolationism, where a homogenous group or community retreats from outside influences and surrounds itself within its singular perspective and traditions, ignoring the larger culture around it. Carl Henry took expressed effort to guide the evangelical movement away from this in his book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Here he describes how from a theological perspective, cultural engagement is part of the DNA of the Christian mission. Presuppositional axioms have implications for all of life and Henry says they must be communicated “in such a way that divine redemption can be recognized as the best solution of our problems, individual and social.”<sup>35</sup>

*American Educational System:* The American educational system is divided into public and private sectors. State governments set the general educational standards for their jurisdiction. Public education is funded through local, state, and federal sources, while private institutions raise their own financial support. In many cases the motivation behind private institutions, often founded by religious organizations, is the freedom to determine their own curriculum and staffing policies apart from government oversight. Along with this relative freedom, private educational institutions can submit to voluntary accreditation through independent regional accreditation organizations. While some state regulations still apply, private schools are in more control of the standards of admission, ethical codes of requirement, and disciplinary action of their institution. Public schools are subject to governmental oversight and obligated to provide a non-sectarian environment in accordance with constitutional principles. The elected officials over educational decisions set mandatory standardized testing,

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<sup>35</sup> Carl Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1947, 2003), 89.



attendance requirements, hiring policies, curricula, disciplinary procedures, and all other areas of educational operation.

Both public and private educational institutions will represent presuppositional worldview commitments. It is impossible to disengage the lens with which reality is understood. William Ringenberg rightly assesses the dangers of worldview ambiguity in both public and private educational environments. He says a faith-based institution must resist the temptation of being “not fair in its consideration of alternative worldviews”, but on the opposite extreme of the spectrum secular institutions can tend to ignore “the spiritual dimension of the human condition even while subtly promoting a naturalist way of thinking.”<sup>36</sup> In all educational environments presuppositional commitments are present.

## Project Outline

### *Chapter 2: Henry’s Background and Theological Influences*

Carl Henry sought to bring a cohesive evangelical theology together in his generation. His keen insight into humanity and society, rooted in the presuppositions of revelational theism, allowed him to articulate principles that would shape the emergence of an evangelical identity. This same theological insight flooded his assessment into educational settings. Henry stood in a long line of theologians. His influences ranged from the revelational epistemology of Augustine, the social engagement of Abraham Kuyper, and the logical analysis of Gordon Clark.

Carl Henry rose from meager beginnings to become one of the dominant evangelical theologians of the 1900s. This chapter will trace his growth as a student, into his years as a

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<sup>36</sup> William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College and the Meaning of Academic Freedom: Truth Seeking in Community*. (New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), xvi.

teacher and journalist, and on through his career as a published theologian. Henry used his position as a founding professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and as the founding editor of *Christianity Today* to stay in tune with cutting edge cultural issues of his day while applying theological principles. He used his many platforms to bring to light the need for a theological look at all of life, including the presuppositional framework of educational. Henry's unique experiences and sharp intellect shine through in his writings as he defines his theological presuppositions and applies them to real world concerns. Henry expressed constant concern for the practice of education throughout his career of writing and teaching.

### *Chapter 3: Establishing the Consistency of Revelational Theism*

This chapter argues that revelational theism provides the best means of understanding and engaging with reality. This will be shown by supporting the axiom of divine revelation as a genuine source for truth and through displaying the ability for revelational theism to ground the use of logic in the ontology of God and ethics in the revelation of God.

This sets up revelational theism as the worldview most consistent with humanity's experience of reality. It provides the foundation for logic and morality and sheds light on the human condition. Carl Henry held that the most foundational building blocks of the Christian religion were two things: Who God is, and what He has said. He reiterated, "The Christian ontological axiom is the living God. The epistemological axiom is the intelligible divine revelation."<sup>37</sup> Henry argues that divine revelation is the epistemological starting place for rational discussion. It is "unprovable" in the sense that from it all other things are proven, therefore other logical derivatives cannot prove an axiom without its prior existence. The

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<sup>37</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Gods of This Age Or-- God of the Ages?* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994). 209.

Christian scriptures presuppose God as such an axiom that is completely necessary for all other arguments, therefore Henry would say natural theology proofs, which attempt to verify or prove God, are unhelpful.

Though the ages the church has recognized the scriptures as the repository of divine authority. The understanding of the ultimate standard of truth coming from revelation is not a novel idea created post-reformation. An authoritative view of the bible as the orthodox view of the divine revelation. This idea is clearly seen through a brief survey of influential church fathers through the reformers.

Carl Henry evaluates the ways of knowing truth such as intuition, experience, and reason. He argues that divine revelation is also a reliable way of knowing truth and is in fact the verifying principle for all other ways of knowing truth. Any means of acquiring truth must submit to the divine revelation as the ultimate standard of truth. Intuition, experience, and reason all have extreme applications which take these methods of knowing truth out of line with divine revelation. Romans chapter one also infers that God is accepted as true by all men, even those who suppress that truth, and it is therefore a necessary first principle for believers and unbelievers alike.

The Scriptures are the divine revelation by which God allows humanity to know himself and the rest of reality. Apart from divine revelation mankind would not know anything about God. The epistemological axiom of divine revelation creates a firm foundation to assess what is known as true and how we know it to be true. Scripture is the ultimate standard of authority in revealing truth. Through the truth of scripture, the case will be argued that logic is grounded in the ontology of God. His existence and qualities are the very essence of logic. The foundation

of revelational theism provides coherence to reality, and thus a bedrock for the practice of education.

An implication of the grounding of logic for humanity through the *Imago Dei* is the acknowledgment of common ground between believers and unbelievers. While some Christian groups would deny such common ground based on a particular interpretation of scripture, it is shown in this chapter that human rationality, thought marred by the noetic effects of sin, is a universal experience that creates a point of contact between believers and unbelievers.

This chapter concludes with a discussion on “the fear of the LORD” as an affirmation of presuppositional starting places. Revelational theism holds that true wisdom is only that which is in line with God’s revealed will for humanity. In humanities sinful desire for autonomy from God they lose the path to wisdom and set up alternative avenues of knowledge as illegitimate sources of ultimate truth. According to the Scripture, the only legitimate starting place for wisdom is to begin with the fear of the LORD.

#### *Chapter 4: Demonstrating the Irrationality of Naturalism*

This chapter argues that naturalism is self-refuting based on internal inconsistency and lack of coherence to reality. This will be shown through the inability for any person to have a presuppositionally neutral starting place, a demonstration of the logical inconsistencies within naturalism, and the inability for naturalism to justify the moral code common to humanity.

Carl Henry sought to expose faulty presuppositions of other worldviews.<sup>38</sup> He would show how they deny biblical axioms in theory all the while depending on the biblical axioms in practice. In the *Drift of Western Thought* Henry covers the objections to divine revelation that

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<sup>38</sup> Faulty presuppositions are the result of incoherence to reality, internal inconsistency, contradictions, or other logical fallacies that would question the validity of the presupposition.

derive from naturalistic presuppositions. He addresses the irrationality and illogical arguments for the impossibility of special revelation, the superfluidity of revelation (or ability for reason to circumvent revelation), the immoral partiality of revelation, and finally the religious bigotry of revelation. These objections are considered and refuted showing the inability of naturalism to provide defeaters of revelational theism.

Through the influence of John Dewey and others, American education has gone through a transition of presuppositional foundations. Within the past century the rejection of the supernatural presuppositions and the acceptance of naturalistic philosophy has become the dominant worldview shaping students. The result of this transition is that the grounding for logic and morality has been weakened for current and future generations.

The grounding of logic is necessary for all rational discourse. When looking at logic in light of the axioms of God and his revelation, there is a place for the origin and stability of rationality. Because God is a rational being, one aspect of his imparted image to humanity is that mankind is wired to think rationality.<sup>39</sup> Because God speaks and communicates, mankind speaks and communicates. The laws of logic are stable because God is unchanging, providing the presupposition necessary to ground reason and logic in a way consistent with the way humanity experiences them in every moment. Without the presupposition of God, logic and reason become byproducts of evolutionary changes and not binding or stable. This is incompatible with experienced reality, and short-circuits the ability for dialogue. If the laws of logic are not absolutely binding, the ability to think and communicate would not be reliable.

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<sup>39</sup> This dissertation will not go into a full discourse on the Image of God on man. Yet it is an important element of the discussion of logic and morality. See also, Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Carlisle, U.K.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).

In the wake of the acceptance of naturalism, the loss of morality and values in rising generations has become a primary concern of government and education officials. The presuppositional approach in this study seeks to expose the insufficient ability of moral relativism and naturalistic philosophy to provide a valid rationale for values or moral obligations. This is countered by the ability of the revelational theism, as espoused in the theology of Carl Henry, to address reality as actually experienced and provide a grounded value system. The explicit teaching of morality and values only meets logical criteria when based in a theistic foundation.

Demonstrating the irrationality of naturalism provides the negative groundwork necessary for the application of revelational theism. The presuppositional stance of Henry's theology allows him to accurately understand and interpret reality. If logic and morality cannot find grounding within the presuppositions of naturalism, new presuppositions should be found which can account for reality. The theological axioms of Carl Henry should be welcomed as the starting place for serious learning. Carl Henry was a persistent proponent of a robust Christian worldview for all believers, especially the upcoming generation. Henry prophetically said, "evangelical leaders often speak enthusiastically of the prospect or hope of a 'new Reformation'. If they intend this seriously, they must face up to its educational demands."<sup>40</sup> These demands will include a direct confrontation with naturalism.

### *Chapter 5: Analyzing Henry's Published Perspective on Educational Engagement*

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<sup>40</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 96.

This chapter will analyze Carl Henry's perspective of why and how the theological view of revelational theism can engage with modern educational settings. This will be shown through his understanding of evangelical responsibility for cultural engagement, including education. It will show Henry's opinion of the theological framework undergirding the First Amendment as applied to learning. And finally it will unpack Henry's embryonic strategy for evangelical action to impact educational settings.

Henry was a strong proponent of American democracy and connected its efficacy to the acceptance of theistic presuppositions. He addressed the essential nature of the First Amendment as well as the issues regarding the separation of church and state from a theological perspective on education. Henry saw no conflict between biblical convictions and public education.

Henry penned a section in *Twilight of a Great Civilization* entitled, "Facing the Crisis in Education." He acknowledges that education is in a critical moment. He asked the question, "Can we project an evangelical agenda?"<sup>41</sup> His major points encompass the whole scope of the educational process and hinge on a set of presuppositions driving the entire endeavor.

In summary, Henry proposes a strategy for engaging education through 1) parental responsibility, 2) church heritage, 3) focus on revealed truth as universally normative, 4) intentionally presenting a cohesive world-life view contrary to humanistic ideas, 5) the penetration of secular liberal arts learning, and 6) enhanced curriculum for excellence in the overall world of ideas.<sup>42</sup> The goal of this approach is by the completion of higher educational training, institutions would be "sending seniors into our decadent society with a lucid

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<sup>41</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 88.

<sup>42</sup> Henry goes into depth on these points in *Twilight of a Great Civilization*. Each point is described in detail and shown how the educational process is not something evangelicals should abandon, but instead should embrace and seek greater involvement with the application of theistic presuppositions.

comprehension of the Christian world-life view.”<sup>43</sup> With a foundation of revelational theism Henry believes individuals will be more intellectually and spiritually grounded and prepared for the responsibilities of civil society.

Secondarily, a method of cultural engagement Henry highlights is the institutional values of evangelicals on display in society. Presuppositions are not merely the cognitive framework of individuals. They guide institutions, movements, and even cultures. Evangelical schools would do well to guard their institutional “hearts” and be aware of the motives and assumptions which drive administrations. Henry describes how the process of fundraising may lead to loss of control over the mission of the school and may lead to the introduction of heresies. This is the flip side of cultural influence. When faith-based schools embody “prosperity theology” tactics to raise funds, social influence can wane. Similarly, when an institution abandons its inherited convictions for the sake of financial security, their authority to speak to culture is weakened. Henry raises the question of whether or not Christian institutions should seek or accept donations from non-Christian foundations. The integrity with which a Christian school handles its administration and finances is a method of cultural engagement by exemplifying Christian presuppositions at the institutional level. This contrast should be seen on both ends of the theological spectrum, rejecting both a worldly business model as well as the application of prosperity theology.

Thirdly, Henry challenges institutions of higher education to take a serious look at its curriculum. A proposed curriculum should not be merely religious, but seek to develop the whole person. Henry places a high priority on engaging with the primary sources of what he

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<sup>43</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 89.



calls, “the Great Books.”<sup>44</sup> Through the great books of human history the deepest questions of a person are engaged. These sources thrust a reader into the conversations of “Who am I? Why am I? and Where am I going?”<sup>45</sup> These issues are at the heart of presuppositional theological significance. Henry contends the meaning of life must be wrestled with before the next phase of serious learning can begin. Within any reputable list of “Great Books” the Bible will surely be recognized as one of the most influential works in history, even if only for its literary, ethical, and historical value. Through this engagement with “the Great Books”, a student will be exposed to past ideas in order to engage present questions from an informed position.

## Methodology

### *Presuppositions*

Every study contains presuppositions that guide the questions asked and the interpretation of answers uncovered. Even in this study, concentrated on presuppositions, it is important to identify the implicit presuppositions guiding it. This study will presuppose the truthfulness of divine revelation. In his book, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, Henry argues cogently for a return to deductive reasoning in theology and the necessity of a divine presupposition. He quotes Alvin Plantinga in his understanding of God as a proper starting place for philosophy.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Henry suggests that all incoming freshman should engage Plato’s *Republic* in their very first course, as it deals with materialism, the tragic loss of Greek democracy, the nature of truth and good, as well as the content of ideal education. If the students are not intellectually prepared for the demands of such reading, they should have to take “remedial preparatory classes”. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 95.

<sup>45</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 95.

<sup>46</sup> “Every theology or philosophy has a starting point enabling it to get underway. ...As Alvin Plantinga put it, ‘The Christian philosopher quite properly starts from the existence of God, and presupposes it philosophical work.’” Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*. (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway Books, 1990), 26.

Just as Henry used this presupposition to guide his theological pursuits, educators have the right to presume God *a priori* in the secularly dominated field of education.

Similarly, the presupposition regarding the nature of humanity is paramount in this study. With the sin nature of man taken seriously, it is responsible to always check motives, to expect difficulties within all of life, and therefore also within scholarship. Yet the divine intention for humanity is not wholly lost. This study also presumes the *Imago Dei* is inseparably bound to each human. While humanity is twisted by sin, there is still the possibility to know truth, to hear from God, and to connect with what is right. The image of God and the depravity of human nature are both held in tension as ever-present realities within this study.

In light of the nature of man, the final presupposition to be discussed here is a theological view of education. Specifically, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Through education man can learn and grow. This presupposition implies that as humans know God more, they will revere him and progress toward his intended goal of humanity. The apostle Paul refers to being transformed by the renewing of our minds as we submit fully to God. (Romans 12:2) These presuppositions of the nature of God's Word, the nature of man, and the nature of education will be reflected throughout this study as it interacts with Henry's revelational theism.

### *Nature of the Study*

At the heart of this study is an analysis of an individual and his ideas. The lens of Henry's theology helps evangelicals grasp a greater understanding of the evangelical responsibility in education, but the nature of the study revolves around knowing Henry's words, experiences, and intended meaning. This study will look at primary sources with priority.

Like Henry himself, this study seeks to widen the umbrella for Kingdom work. This work has an ecumenical emphasis calling all believers to seek truth and impact their world. Henry's biblical axioms were not intended for one institution, denomination, or Christian subset, but toward the whole of Bible-believing Christians who feel God's call to faithfully pass along truth to the next generation. (2 Timothy 2:2)

### *Limits of the Study*

This study will be strictly limited to a theological view of presuppositions with application made to educational settings. This author is not attempting a pedagogical framework but a theological framework. No attempt will be made to synthesize a philosophy of education out of Henry's words concerning education, but rather it will focus specifically on his theological presuppositions. Henry never organized his thoughts into a cohesive philosophy of education during his lifetime.<sup>47</sup> This study merely is seeking to define presuppositions, principles, and challenge current social norms from Henry's own words. The occasion for educational discussion is purposely within the realm of theological application alone. This author is focusing on the qualitative implications of Carl Henry's theology, not a quantitative research model of educational practice or philosophy. In its most basic form, this is a study in theology, not a study in education.

The opportunities for deeper scholarship into the life and work of Carl F. H. Henry are relatively untapped and only now being appreciated by evangelicalism. Many evangelical

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<sup>47</sup> Kevin L. King rightly notes this point. "While Henry did not systematize a full-length theology of education, one can extrapolate from this work enough of his thoughts to present an emerging analysis of specific aspects of his educational theory." Kevin L. King, "Carl F. H. Henry: The Pursuit of Veritas and the Christian University" in *A Legacy of Religious Educators: Historical and Theological Introductions*. Edited by Elmer L. Towns and Benjamin K. Forrest. (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University Press, 2017), 546.

scholars are drawing attention to Henry as a necessary voice that can guide our current generation.<sup>48</sup> This study is not limited by denominational connections. While several of the institutions that bear Henry's name are denominationally tied, this work seeks to embrace the heart of Henry himself. Henry was an advocate for the Gospel, for the Bible, and for a faithful evangelical identity. He did not impose denominational requirements on that identity. Henry was a spokesman for evangelical cooperation under the umbrella of biblical faithfulness.<sup>49</sup> This work will not be limited by denominationalism and seeks to apply its findings to the greater evangelical community and beyond.

### Literature Review

Moving from the proposed thesis, outline, and methodical foundations, it is informative and instructive to review prior written material on this topic. This has two-fold value; first for understanding what has already been claimed in prior studies, and second for defending the need for further development in this area.

Carl Henry was a prolific author. In *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, Henry takes a deeply penetrating look at western culture and the rise of neo-paganism. With moral and intellectual deterioration spreading rapidly in America, Henry speaks of the true source of Christian power to impact society. This power is directly rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which transforms not only hearts, but also minds. In section four of *Twilight of a Great*

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<sup>48</sup> Gregory Thornbury stated in his book, *Recovering Classical Evangelicalism*, that one of his goals was “to make Carl Henry cool again” for a future generation of evangelicals. – Greg Thornbury, *Recovering Classical Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry*. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2013), 22.

<sup>49</sup> Henry exemplifies this idea of ecumenical cooperation in the final pages of *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Concerning Pentecostalism Henry says, “from the non-evangelical viewpoint, a baptism of Pentecostal fire resulting in a world missionary program and a divinely-empowered Christian community would turn the uneasy conscience of modern evangelicalism into a new reformation – this time with ecumenical significance.” –Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 89.

*Civilization* Henry uses three chapters to address “Education and the Quest for Truth.” He identifies what he sees as the primary crisis happening in education, the need for excellence within faith-based institutions, as well as a warning against the “root of all evil”<sup>50</sup> as regards to academic control. Henry sees the value in higher education and the vital role it plays in the shaping of American culture. Therefore, evangelicals should not disengage from higher education, but rather must develop a worldview that pushes them toward excellence rather than isolation.

Henry addresses the need for cultural interaction by evangelicals in *The Christian Mindset in Secular Society*. He establishes the solid ground provided by biblical morals as a means for interactions with a society where the morals are unstable and declining. In this book, Henry encourages political engagement and social change as the culture attempts to abandon the Christian worldview which it still depends on. One example of this is the popularization and mischaracterization of tolerance. While Henry approves of the advancement of tolerance, he adamantly proclaims that tolerance does not necessitate the decline of moral absolutes. Rather it is quite the opposite. Only with the existence of absolutes can a society maintain standards through which tolerance can be demonstrated. The presence of religious freedom, and therefore tolerance between individuals, is a cornerstone of democracy.

In chapter five of *The Christian Mindset in Secular Society*, Henry specifically addresses the field of education. He challenges the academic system, observing how it is controlled by humanistic values. To address this conflict of worldviews, Henry roots his argument in his

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<sup>50</sup> 1 Timothy 6:10 states that “the love of money is the root of all evil”(KJV). In this chapter, Henry is addressing fundraising “heresies” which empty the power of an institution’s vision for the sake of endowments and other monetary donations. When financial concerns, rather than theological ideals, control the future of a school, its days are limited as a bulwark of evangelical doctrine.

understanding of the *Imago Dei* for a true understanding of humanity. He believes the biblical worldview provides shared values between both believers and unbelievers and moves education in a more productive direction.

In *Christian Countermoves in a Decadent Culture*, Henry addresses the move of secular humanism to embezzle aspects of biblical morality. “The humanist lives by commitments borrowed from theism or he could not live as a human at all.”<sup>51</sup> Henry reestablishes the Gospel found within a biblical worldview as the source of power for true engagement with modern culture. A realistic understanding of human depravity sets the stage for the real impact of faith, hope, and love as a means for individual and societal change. While this work is primarily focused on political action, the defense of religious freedom and the function of a biblical worldview are key elements of Henry’s application to the academic world.

In his work, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, Henry defends the intellectual heritage of a biblical worldview. This worldview is the essential ingredient to transform academia and society. In this book Henry encourages believers to stand firmly on divine revelation as the bedrock of their belief system. Yet many Christians adopt alternative belief systems because of cultural pressure surrounding them. This is no more apparent than in the university. In chapter three, Henry address the prerequisite of biblical theism. Here he establishes the necessity of the God’s existence and his revelation as necessary for knowledge. These foundational understandings are essential to the biblical worldview which must be established for the purposes of this paper.

*Gods of this age or...God of the Ages?* provides a stunning look at Henry’s piercing insight into the education system. In section two Henry addresses “An Education that Matters”.

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<sup>51</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society: Promoting Evangelical Renewal and National Righteousness*. (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1984), 54.

Here his goals are straightforward: 1.) the evangelical integrity of every person involved in the academic task, 2.) the intellectual competence with which we expound biblical revelation against competing worldviews, and 3.) the moral and spiritual life of individuals as they participate in personal holiness and social justice.<sup>52</sup> The exquisite articulation of the conflict of worldviews within academic realms resounds with the thesis of this paper. Henry defends the need for a fully adopted biblical worldview by evangelicals if change is to be made in educational philosophy and practice. This adoption of a biblical worldview must first impact personal lives before it will impact institutions. Henry would argue the evangelicals embedded within society are the grassroots for change, without which the gods of this age will continue to fragment and destroy American society.

In his magnum opus, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Carl Henry has produced a standard for evangelical theology. He addresses the central control issues for evangelicals as well as addressing alternative viewpoints. *God, Revelation, and Authority* lays out the essence of a biblical worldview and then applies it to modern life. Henry speaks forthrightly about the human ability to know and understand God. This knowledge can only come from an infinite God, not the investigation of finite man. Henry addresses this fact saying, “The only confident basis for God-talk is God’s revelation of Himself. The self-revelation that God communicates provides what human ingenuity cannot achieve, namely, authentic information about the ultimate Who’s Who.”<sup>53</sup> When the authority of divine revelation is denied, any claims about metaphysical realities are unable to be verified, and therefore ineffectual.

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<sup>52</sup> Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 77-78.

<sup>53</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 2, 18-19.

In this formative work, Henry lays out two key elements of a biblical worldview. These are the ontological and epistemological axioms of evangelicalism. Apart from these axioms as the bedrock of belief, an evangelical understanding of the world would not exist.<sup>54</sup> The ontological axiom is the very being of God, His existence. He exists in his own right, completely self-sufficient and independent from anything else. The epistemological axiom is the self-revelation of this God, by which we can intelligibly know and relate to him. These two axioms set the trajectory for a biblical worldview which informs every area of life. *God, Revelation, and Authority* is an indispensable theological and apologetic analysis of reality. The impact and importance of this work cannot be overstated for the identity and development of what is known as an evangelical today.

Henry used his position as a journalist to write many articles dealing directly with theological issues within education.<sup>55</sup> In these he challenges the church to become more involved in the education system and to not ignore the crisis developing in the upcoming generations. Henry used journalism to describe the responsibility imbedded within revelational theism to take education seriously. Some of these include:

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<sup>54</sup> Henry expresses the necessity of these axioms saying, “The Christian ontological axiom is the living, self-revealed God. The Christian epistemological axiom is the intelligible divine revelation. All the essential doctrines of the Christian world-life view flow from these axioms: creation, sin, and the fall; redemption, by promise and fulfillment; the incarnation, substitutionary death and resurrection of the Logos; the church as the new society; the approaching divine consummation of history; the eschatological verities.” Henry, *gods of This Age, or God of the Ages?* ed. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., 209.

<sup>55</sup> This dissertation highlights a sample of articles written by Carl Henry and begins to establish his concern for the issue of education and the biblical worldview. These articles directly address educational topics, yet there are numerous articles that insinuate or briefly reference these topics. The amount of references given to education within other articles is staggering. Similarly, Henry will dedicate particular chapters in particular books to educational concerns, while the thesis of the whole book may be broader in nature. The presence of these direct and indirect articles, along with his inclusion of book chapters, show a deep concern for an evangelical mindset toward education.



“Modern Education and the Secularistic Tide” was published in 1951 in the *Watchman-Examiner*. In this article Henry exposes how the realm of public education is quickly becoming a hostile environment to religious commitment. He takes a selection of an editorial response he received to his previous writings to illustrate the confused state of many people emerging from the American public education system. Henry describes public education as “anti-God, anti-absolute, anti-supernatural.”<sup>56</sup> After engaging the flawed argument, Henry also provides three constructive steps for believers to engage the educational system. They are; strengthening private Christian education to be academically competent and having spiritual vitality, taking responsibility for public education through living the mission of the Gospel, and lastly to take serious the training of competent scholars in all areas of study.<sup>57</sup>

“Religion and the Crisis in Education” was published in 1952 in the *Watchman-Examiner*. Here Henry pits the stability of God’s Word against the instability of relativism. He points to the religious roots of many academic institutions and how they have drifted from their origins. He looks at the impossibility of teaching classes on religion while theoretically trying not to interject religious presuppositions. As schools take a generic stance on the person of God, they dismantle the presuppositional cornerstone of education and erode the solid foundation of the search for truth.

“Moral Values in Public Education” was published in 1954 in *Eternity*. Henry lays bare the myth that an ethical life can be built on naturalistic and evolutionary philosophy. He describes how education has swung on the pendulum of character development toward a descriptive approach to right and wrong, rather than a prescriptive approach. Schools concern

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<sup>56</sup> Carl Henry, “Modern Education and the Secularistic Tide.” *Watchman-Examiner* 39, no. 42 (October 11, 1951).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

themselves with what currently “is”, rather than what “ought to be”. Henry affirms the need for absolutes if morals are to make sense. If morality is changeable and not fixed there is no ultimate way to tell the difference between what is “evil” and what is “good”. If school boards and educational administrators continue to stress the need for character and value development in students, and yet also promote relativism of morality, the crisis of inconsistent worldviews will continue to get worse. Morality can only be based on absolute unchanging norms, anything less ceases to be morality and becomes merely preference.

“Christian Responsibility in Education” was published by *Christianity Today* in 1957. In this article Henry is ringing the alarm bell for Christians to reengage the realm of education as an essential element of the Christian mission. He tracks the changing times and loss of Christian ideals through early American history and ends where the biblical worldview has been forced underground. “In all these centers of academic influence, biblical Christianity became subterranean.”<sup>58</sup> Henry argues that both the university and the Church have restricted the relevance of the Christian confession to “religious circles” not allowing it to influence all of life. A strong challenge is laid out in this article for the biblical worldview to be advanced in all spheres of life, and especially in education. Through theological presuppositions and their implication within education, students can be equipped for every vocation in light of eternal truths and unchangeable ethical norms. Schools should not be surrendered to the secularist without a fight, but should be reengaged so the training ground for our children will not be perverted by the ever-changing standard of truth known as relativism.

“Christian Education and the World of Culture” was published in *Mennonite Quarterly* in 1958. Christianity seeks to illumine truth in every academic realm as the Creator-God is

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<sup>58</sup> Carl Henry, “Christian Responsibility in Education”. *Christianity Today*. May 27, 1957.

reflected in the move from darkness to light. To shut the light of God out of philosophy, science, literature, and art is darkness indeed. In all these areas of learning you also have the means of cultural identity. Christianity interprets and corrects culture, or else “that culture yields to the compulsion of false gods.”<sup>59</sup>

“The Crisis in Education” was an editorial in *Christianity Today* published in 1958. In this article, Henry identifies the sectarian nature of the secular worldview which stands in direct opposition to the directive of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Henry argues that the government is obligated to not establish a state sponsored religion, yet unconsciously is doing just that by excluding religious worldviews in favor of a naturalist worldview. Henry does not propose restricting the teaching of naturalism, but rather demands a hearing for the Biblical worldview within educational settings. Henry says “our problem is not sectarianism against secularism. Our problem is understanding and solving sectarianism to prevent secularism.”<sup>60</sup> If the First Amendment protects citizens from a government backing of one metaphysical philosophy, this also should apply to the naturalistic philosophy currently dominant within the current American educational system.

“The Need for a Christian University” was published in *Christianity Today* in 1967. Henry had a dream for an academically full-bodied university intentionally teaching from a biblical worldview in all fields. He remarks in this article how venues of higher education have become the places where Christianity is ignored at best, and mocked at worst. Henry casts a vision of what could be with regards to a unified effort to confront the educational system on its biases. During this discussion Henry acknowledges the debate internal to Christianity asking if

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<sup>59</sup> Carl Henry, “Christian Education and World of Culture”. *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. October, 1958.

<sup>60</sup> Carl Henry, “The Crisis in Education”. *Christianity Today*. May 12, 1958.

separation or penetration is a better strategy. The theoretical argument asks if all believing educators and students go to one school does that remove the “salt and light” from public higher education making them even more toxic environments? Henry is in no way calling for an abandonment of the public arena, but rather calling for an elite training ground, making public penetration a more effective strategy. He is unsure if such an endeavor is possible considering the fragmentation of evangelicalism specifically, and Christianity in general. Yet he affirms the need has never been greater for an answer to the naturalistic worldview, for competent publishing Christian scholars, and for alumni proficiently taking the biblical worldview to the ends of the earth.

In addition to the many primary source materials Carl Henry has produced, there are many external sources related to the topic of Christian educational practice and philosophy. These works provide a solid foundation of understanding the evangelical heritage of strong academics. The integration of faith and learning has been discussed by many and this literature review will engage several sources that speak directly to the concerns Henry also addresses in his writings.

George Marsden tackles the discrimination against religious expression within academia in *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.<sup>61</sup> In this text, Marsden vehemently challenges mainstream scholarship to be more open to explicitly faith-informed scholarship. While multiculturalism and diversity are promoted as virtues within academia, alternative views on philosophy and religion are excluded while alternative views of gender, race, politics are accepted. Marsden calls out this hypocrisy. His thesis proposes that a religiously diverse

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<sup>61</sup> George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

culture, not a monolithic secularism, will yield a higher quality intellectualism. He demonstrates the ancient relationship between religion and scholarship, as well as the American change of position on the matter, and contends that this relationship needs to be regained.<sup>62</sup> Marsden, like Henry, calls individuals and institutions who take the intellectual dimensions of their faith seriously to become proactively engaged at the highest levels of academic discussion. In this articulate discussion on the role of religion in education there is not an evangelical thrust, but more generally “religious”, as Marsden is arguing against discrimination within academia rather than for a particular subset of Christian scholarship.

*The Idea of a Christian College*, by Arthur Holmes, written in 1987, is a classic text on the implications of the Christian worldview applied to higher education. Holmes articulates the necessity of a liberal arts education and how it is deeply connected to vocational success through developing well rounded persons. He highlights the nature and purpose of a Christian worldview but raises the deeply important question academic freedom within a Christian context. Holmes lays the groundwork for solid discussion on the Christian life of the mind and the necessity of the community within academic life. This work is an important document in the discussion, by a contemporary of Henry who engages similar issues as Henry concerning a theological grounding within education.

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<sup>62</sup> Marsden shows the change from American colonial times to modern times concerning the acceptance of religious concerns within the public arena. “In many of the American colonies all the citizens were taxed for the support of the established religious group, regardless of the citizen’s religious affiliations. In the nineteenth century the Protestant establishment became informal and declared itself nonsectarian. Today non-sectarianism has come to mean the exclusion of all religious concerns. In effect, only purely naturalistic viewpoints are allowed a serious academic hearing. As in earlier establishments, groups who do not match the current national ideological norms are forced to fend for themselves outside of the major spheres of cultural influence. Today, almost all religious groups, no matter what their academic credentials, are on the outside of this educational establishment, or soon will be, if present trends continue. Americans who are concerned for justice ought to be open to considering alternatives.” Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 440.

Nicholas Wolterstorff engages the *telos* of education from a particular angle in his collection of essays called, *Education for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education*. In this work, Wolterstorff identifies human flourishing as the essence of “shalom” and at the very heart of education. This article is a product influenced equally by research, life experience, and relational interaction.<sup>63</sup> He challenges Christian educational institutions to be at the forefront of scholarship on social justice issues and to be the change agents in the world by teaching their students to seek shalom in any vocation. Christian higher education is to form students into a certain way of being, not just speaking or thinking. When Christians become the ambassadors of shalom within culture they bring flourishing to the whole community. Wolterstorff believes the formative years between 18-25 are crucial for young adults to embrace the call of shalom. Therefore, in American culture, Christian higher education has a pivotal responsibility for that development.

The “integration of faith and learning” is a catch phrase used frequently within Christian higher education. *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*, by Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustdet, engages this very idea. The thrust of this collection of essays is to bring “hope and love” into the dialogue as crucial elements within Christian educational systems. This book explores the historical origins of the “integration of faith and learning” model and attempts to expand the dialogue, especially in the area of science and faith. It provides a discussion on how to proceed into future growth within a faith-based higher education system.

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<sup>63</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff has authored several books engaging the topic of education. Including: Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion and the Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Responsible Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: CSI Publications, 1981), and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Keeping Faith: Talks for New Faculty at Calvin College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin College, 1989).

In *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education*, David Dockery edits a volume which spans the issues involved in a Christian approach to higher education. This collection of essays is aimed at the private education sector and the particular issues which face institutions attempting to function with a holistic Christian worldview informing every area of their program. Important elements are covered in select essays including the biblical and theological foundations of a Christian worldview. These elements are then applied throughout the book. Dockery explores the implications of how such a worldview could manifest within various academic disciplines.

*The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, by Mark Noll, is a scathing review of the lack of competent academic engagement by evangelicals. Noll states in the opening sentence of the first chapter, “the scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind.”<sup>64</sup> Through this work he tracks the history of evangelical scholarship from the 1800s to the late 1900s. Noll does not stop his research with an indictment only, but goes on to encourage evangelicals to use the resources they have to make valid contributions. He declares that the elements which will make evangelical scholarship vital and effective in the public square are the very foundations of Christianity which evangelicals have preserved. If evangelicals can embrace who they are, the academic implications will be multiplied, but if evangelicals are seduced by secular academic prestige, they lose their distinction and any significant voice to speak in this cultural context.

*The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* by Harry Blamires is a quality treatment of the cognitive and conceptual aspects of the Christian faith. Amid a milieu which understands the terms such as “scientific mind” or a “business mind” Blamires critiques the

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<sup>64</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical mind*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 3.

acquiescence of Christianity allowing for no such category as a “Christian mind”. While there may be still categories for “Christian ethics” or “Christian spirituality”, the modern understanding of the world has been overrun by secularism to the point that there is scarcely a remnant of the biblical worldview to guide a distinctly Christian understanding of reality. This stark reality is lamented in Blamires opening line of the book, “There is no longer a Christian mind.”<sup>65</sup> Henry concludes a similar position when he said, “the modern mind is no longer clearly a mind, but rather a temperament, a mood subject to frequent changes.”<sup>66</sup>

In part one Blamires investigates the absence of the Christian mind in society. The lack of social impact, the view of material possessions, the decline of morality are all indicators that the Christian way of thinking has been disregarded, even by Christian practitioners. Part two of the book discusses the elements of a Christian mind. Blamires identifies six categories of thinking Christianly. They are: 1.) a supernatural orientation 2.) an awareness of evil 3.) a conception of truth 4.) an acceptance of authority 5.) a concern for the person, and 6.) a sacramental cast. In both parts, the book as a whole challenges Christians to recover an authentically biblical way of thinking about all areas of life. This challenge was originally published in 1963 yet the subject is as relevant today as then.

### Conclusion

Carl Henry has much to say about the presuppositions which set the tone for interpreting all of life and reality. These presuppositions find articulation in revelational theism. Henry’s

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<sup>65</sup> Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Servant Publications: South Bend, Indiana, 1978), 19. Note: the first British edition was published in 1963 while the first American edition was published in 1978.

<sup>66</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 41.



theological axioms of the Living God and divine revelation produce a firm foundation from which to understand how the world works. These implications run deep into educational settings. Henry presents a worldview that, when correctly applied, will reinvigorate evangelical believers and institutions in the current generation to engage the presuppositional commitments that guide education.

Through the grounding of logic and morality, evangelicals have a voice that needs to be heard in the current generations set adrift by relativism and naturalism. The connection between theology and education is a little discussed, but highly impactful area of emphasis. It was an issue that Henry would not leave unaddressed throughout his career. For more than four decades Henry addressed educational concerns through his writings.<sup>67</sup> He rightly observed a painful truth for evangelicals to admit. “The plain fact is that if Christianity does not shape the university world, the university world will always frustrate the climaxing influences of Christian social ethics.”<sup>68</sup>

This study argues that the theological position of Carl Henry, revelational theism, provides a consistent framework for education. His plea for evangelicals to embrace the evangelical axioms was clear and poignant. The authority of divine revelation sets the stage for philosophical and practical application. With the advancement of revelational theism as the presuppositional starting place for all of life, Henry sought to inspire evangelicals to engage education for the growth of society and the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>67</sup> Henry addresses many of the same issues from his publication of *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* in 1947 all the way through the publication of *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* in 1990. For more than four decades Henry champions evangelical theology and activism. Education is one of those areas that received constant attention throughout his career.

<sup>68</sup> Carl Henry, “Christian Responsibility in Education”. *Christianity Today*. May 27, 1957.

To better understand Henry's call to utilize revelational theism as a worldview framework for education, it is helpful to see an overview of Henry's educational and theological journey. A summary of some of the primary influences on Henry provides insight to his theological positions. Also, detailing his career decisions through education and journalism shed light on Henry's commitment to revelational theism throughout his life. Chapter two will investigate the background and influences that shaped Carl F. H. Henry into an important evangelical voice in the twentieth century.

## Chapter Two: Henry's Background and Theological Influences

### Introduction

Carl Henry was one of the most influential evangelical theologians of his day. His efforts were crucial in bringing the evangelical movement into social prominence.<sup>69</sup> He expressed a keen awareness of the theological control issues within education that impact the world in which we live. From the beginning of his career, Henry sought to lead Evangelicalism away from the isolationism and anti-intellectualism of Fundamentalism. Through his resilient commitment to revelational theism he was willing to blaze a trail for Evangelicalism that remained true to a biblical authority and cultural engagement. This trail was integrally intertwined with educational influence. Both the education which Henry received, as well as the education Henry imparted, must be considered as his theological presuppositions behind education are investigated. The purpose of this chapter is to trace the background and primary influences of Carl Henry. This will be shown in three major areas: Henry's major theological influences, his educational experiences primarily at Wheaton and Fuller, and his journalism career culminating as the editor-in-chief at *Christianity Today*.

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<sup>69</sup> David Neff, editor of Christianity Today from 1985-2013 said, "Without his rigorous thought and his determined will evangelicalism's premiere institutions would have been clearly second-rate." Accessed 10/15/18 [https://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-Fo-La/Henry-Carl-F-H.html#ixzz5V6fJxLlb\\_](https://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-Fo-La/Henry-Carl-F-H.html#ixzz5V6fJxLlb_)

### Henry's Theological Influences

While Henry had a tremendous impact in defining an evangelical theological identity, his personal theology was tremendously impacted by several theologians. While not attempting to create an exhaustive list, three primary influences rise to the top of the list.

First is the legacy of Augustine of Hippo.<sup>70</sup> This is a direct heritage of Augustine's dependence on revelation as an ultimate source for truth. Henry says, "The Augustinian way appeals to revelation in the interest of a more fully informed reason."<sup>71</sup> Anselm's famous summary of Augustine's epistemology was "*Credo ut intelligam*" "I believe in order to understand." This shows the subordinate role of reason to that of faith and ultimately the divine self-revelation as the source and object of that faith. Henry continually showed this Augustinian commitment to revelation as the bedrock from which all else was built.

Secondly, Abraham Kuyper was a major influence on Henry in his application of worldview perspective. Henry's theology of social concern was deeply indebted to the work of Kuyper. Kuyper's work pushed Henry to recapture the Reformation passion for social engagement as an evangelical responsibility. This is the umbrella rationale for Henry's concern for education. Historian George Marsden says,

What Henry and the new evangelicals found in Kuyperian thought was a twentieth century conservative Christian articulation of a point that had been part of the reformist side of the American evangelical heritage, but which had diminished severely in Fundamentalism since the 1930's. The point was the broadly Calvinistic vision that the Christian mission involves not only evangelism but also a cultural task, both remaking the mind of an era and transforming society"<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> For a full scholarly treatment of Augustine please see: Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (1st ed., 1967; updated edition with an epilogue, California University Press, 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 183.

<sup>72</sup> George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) 79.

Henry took this incredibly seriously and one of his most influential books was the 1946 call to reengage society in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.

Lastly, while the first two influences were theologians of the past, the greatest personal influence on Henry in his theological development was Gordon H. Clark. Clark taught Henry at Wheaton and poured his ideas of logic and clear thinking into Henry. While some have critiqued Henry and Clark of being rationalists,<sup>73</sup> both would rebut that criticism saying reason alone will never reach God without His condescension through divine revelation. Clark will receive greater discussion as this study considers Henry's time at Wheaton, but the lessons in the supremely logical and rational nature of revelational theism remained with Henry all of his days.

While this list is in no way exhaustive, the qualities specifically identified here are areas key to the revelational theology of Carl Henry. The emphasis on divine revelation (Augustine), the imperative for social concern (Kuyper), and the critical use of logic and reason (Clark) will be discussed throughout this study. These influencers give some insight into the theologian Henry became and the legacy he left. This study does not take a historical approach to these ideas, but rather appreciates the theological perspective of past theologians as it considers Henry's life and thought.

### Henry's Early Life and Educational Training

Carl Henry was born in New York on January 22, 1913 to parents who were German immigrants. He attended school in Long Island and as a teenager worked as a reporter for the

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<sup>73</sup> "Perhaps the most commonly voiced criticism against Henry is that of being a rationalist, and therefore a prisoner of the now defunct modern project." Theologians who have raised this critique against Henry include Donald Bloesch, Clark Pinnock, Bernard Ramm, Gabriel Fackre and others. G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry-Theologian for All Seasons*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2010), 105.

local newspaper, eventually working into the position of editor. It was in this environment that Henry committed his life to Christ as a disciple.<sup>74</sup> Upon this commitment as a believer, Henry felt the calling to pursue Christian higher education. After a recommendation from a supervisor, Henry applied to and was accepted into Wheaton College. Before matriculation into Wheaton, Henry faced two significant obstacles; family debt left from his father after divorce, and an unexpected medical emergency.

Through considerable sacrifice Henry used the savings from his newspaper job to eliminate the family debt. While this emptied his monetary security, he wanted his mother to be in a manageable financial position after his departure. Henry was able to leave only with a meager amount of traveling money to make his transition to Illinois. Two weeks before moving, Henry was struck with acute appendicitis. The doctor informed him of the need for immediate surgery and subsequent recovery. Knowing this would impede his plans to begin classes at Wheaton, he presented an unusual request to the physician. He asked for one extra night before the surgery to pray and seek God's healing, and if nothing changed, he would return in the morning to have the surgery. The physician hesitantly granted the request with the warning of severe pain and under the condition that he remain close to the hospital if the case of a life-threatening emergency arose. Henry agreed. It was a Friday night and Henry knew there was a weekly prayer meeting at Mother Christy's house, which he went to for support. After an excruciating night of pain he describes as "broken rotor blades running amuck in my abdomen"<sup>75</sup>, and of exhausting prayer, Henry collapsed into sleep sometime after midnight.

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<sup>74</sup> Through the efforts and influence of fellow employee and proofreading partner, Mrs. Christy, later known as Mother Christy, Carl Henry was introduced to Gene Bedford, a guest speaker at the episcopal church. Through several spiritually probing conversations and a frightful thunderstorm, Carl Henry submitted his life to Christ. Carl Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*. (Waco TX: Word Books, 1986), 44-46.

<sup>75</sup> Carl Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*. (Waco TX: Word Books, 1986), 57.

Morning came with no further symptoms. Henry recalls the miraculous healing that kept him on schedule to begin as a freshman at Wheaton College in the fall of that year.

I knew there was a healing power of nature, for the cosmos owed its source and sustenance to a providential Creator. I respected the healing power of doctors and the marvels of medical science that had transformed modern hospitals. I knew there was a healing power of mind over matter, that a patient's will to recover is sometimes half the battle. But I knew something more, that the great God who is sometimes glorified by the courageous and victorious bearing of one's thorn in the flesh is on other occasions equally glorified in the direct healing of the body no less than of the soul. I left for college in good time, reassured that God would and could supply every need.<sup>76</sup>

Henry settled in to Wheaton as an undergraduate and worked his way through school with the efforts of "teaching typing" and "newspaper work" alongside his classes. His focus remained intent on an education that prepared him for a life of serving the Lord. Henry recollects, "My primary aim was to get a Christian education that opened a more comprehensive window on life and the world."<sup>77</sup> This outlook on his own education would impact the way he would approach education for the rest of his life. An education that truly opens the "window", rather than teaching a closed set of ideals, is an education worth pursuing. Henry did this through pursuing a liberal arts degree with a philosophy major and an anthropology minor. Henry graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, *cum laude*.

While in the study of philosophy at Wheaton, Henry came under the tutelage of Gordon H. Clark. Henry recognizes the tremendous impact Clark played in his development of critical thinking. He called Clark "one of the most brilliant faculty members" at Wheaton at the time.<sup>78</sup> Clark's power came from the ability to resolutely follow logic, thus knowing "how to ask the

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<sup>76</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 58.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

right questions and make the worst answers show themselves for what they are.”<sup>79</sup> This educational impact remained discernable throughout the life and teaching of Carl Henry. Henry highlights the need for logic within Christianity when he says, “Christianity does not disdain the canons of rationality. It offers a comprehensive logical network of beliefs.”<sup>80</sup> Henry continually followed the laws of logic and became proficient in exposing bad thinking in alternative belief systems. Despite being derided as a rationalist at times, Henry unswervingly applied this Clarkian heritage to all areas of life, including revelational theism.

After his bachelor’s degree, Henry remained at Wheaton to complete a Masters of Arts in Theology. Following completion of the Wheaton MA, Henry attended Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, completing both the Bachelor of Divinity (BD)<sup>81</sup> and a Doctorate in Theology (ThD). During and after his completed ThD in 1942, Henry joined the faculty of Northern to teach systematic theology and philosophy of religion. Henry turned down institutional presidency offers from both Sioux Falls College and Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, recalling these decisions as divine providence sparing him from administrative responsibilities.<sup>82</sup> Henry left Northern for further academic training from a secular institution. He pursued a PhD from Boston University, completing his dissertation in 1949. He taught summer classes for Gordon College (now Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) during this time and took personal efforts to work through the syllabi of Cornelius Van Til.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>80</sup> Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 80.

<sup>81</sup> The BD degree from Northern was the current seminary equivalent of the Masters of Divinity (MDiv).

<sup>82</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 109.



The philosophical training from Gordon Clark paired with the presuppositional apologetics of Clark's rival Van Til, broadened Carl Henry's apologetic horizons. The influence from these men, as well as lecture series by W. Harry Jellema from Indiana University, was so great that he began to formulate the framework for a future book, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, during his studies at Boston. At publication he dedicated this book to these men saying, " 'Three Men of Athens', GHC - WHJ - CVT, who have sharpened my convictions through action and reaction, in delightful philosophic interchange."<sup>83</sup> This book is important to note because of its preparatory significance. Henry takes the time to critique western philosophy and encourage philosophical literacy for evangelicals. This preparatory work provided the philosophical foundation for his socially critically work, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Current evangelical scholars attribute the research and publications by Henry as pivotal for the development of Evangelicalism.<sup>84</sup>

Henry's educational experience, ranging from Wheaton to Boston, shaped him in many key ways. His critical thinking skills, a legacy of Gordon Clark, became imperative to the future work he would do speaking to and for the evangelical movement. These skills also played a key role in his own teaching method. Henry received an education that indeed did meet up to this initial expectations of opening "a more comprehensive window on life and the world". Henry became a champion for the biblical worldview throughout the rest of his life and saw the

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<sup>83</sup> Carl Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*. (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Press, 1946).

<sup>84</sup> Matthew Hall and Owen Strachan edit the essay by Gregory Thornbury claiming "Henry's work paved the way for an entire generation of philosophically informed theologians. It is impossible to imagine the rise of scholars like Norm Geilser and E.J. Carnell, Colin Brown, and Millard Erickson, without the work Henry did to lead the way. ... In sum, Henry understood that the greatest threat to world evangelization was ideology." - Hall and Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism: The enduring influence of Carl F. H. Henry*. (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 2015), 141.

educational system as a primary means of training students to build a comprehensive and cogent understanding of reality.

### Henry the Teacher

In 1947, Harold Ockenga invited Henry to be part of the founding faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary, in California. Henry recalls an ironic interaction leading to this invitation. Dr. Wilbur M. Smith was speaking at Northern's chapel and spoke privately to Henry concerning Ockenga's soon to come invitation. Henry was unaware of such an endeavor, so Smith began to describe the founding of an evangelical seminary on the west coast, concluding with the statement, " 'I have just received pictures of the new campus and it is a veritable Garden of Eden!' 'If so' Henry remarked humorously, 'then there is a fall just around the corner.'"<sup>85</sup>

The founding of Fuller Theological Seminary was to train ministry students who could contend with ivy league schools in quality of scholarship, yet from an evangelical perspective. Henry's addition to the original faculty of the school contributed to the experiment of making an institution that was "theologically robust, evangelically ecumenical, and evangelistically committed."<sup>86</sup> Henry observed that the foundations of Fuller were, "broadly Calvinistic and stressed the importance of intellectual credentials and theological integrity above practical skill."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 113.

<sup>86</sup> Matthew Hall and Owen Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry*. (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 2015), 84 .

<sup>87</sup> Carl Henry, *How to Lose a Seminary*. Address delivered at Fourth Presbyterian Church: 1988. Bethesda, MD.

In its early years Fuller Seminary was the standard for evangelical academic institutions. Henry served as the acting dean for the first year of Fuller's existence and continued to stay on as professor for ten years of teaching experience. During this time Fuller was the brightest hope for evangelical scholarship. Henry was leading the way in teaching at this pioneering institution. One former student describes Henry as the consummate professor. "[His] inspired defense of propositional revelation (in the face of dialectical theology's onslaught), his unwavering loyalty to the fundamentals of historic Christianity, his espousal of social conscience and his avoidance of cultural isolation or exaggerated ecclesiastical separatism set the pace."<sup>88</sup> These themes embodied by Henry and witnessed by his students within an educational setting are essential to the revelational theism at the heart of this study.

Fuller would not remain the bastion of evangelical intellectual legacy that it set out to be. Masterfully traced in historian George Marsden's account of Fuller's doctrinal transition, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* follows the change of position regarding biblical inerrancy in the first few decades of its inception.<sup>89</sup> The weight of social pressure surrounding biblical inerrancy became too much for Fuller to endure while seeking socially recognized academic prestige. Another of the founding faculty members, Harold Lindsell, eventually became the mouthpiece for criticism against Fuller on this doctrinal denial. His book, *Battle for the Bible*, was a historical record of institutions and denominations that abandoned the doctrinal position of inerrancy. He wrote in unambiguous terms, "Down the road, whether it takes five or fifty years, any institution that departs from belief in an inerrant

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<sup>88</sup> Written by David Larsen, professor emeritus at Trinity Evangelical seminary, in a 2013 personal letter to John Woodbridge. John Woodbridge, "Carl F. H. Henry: A Biblically Faith Theologian Evangelist." in Hall and Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry*, 85.

<sup>89</sup> George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.)

Scripture will likewise depart from other fundamentals of the faith and at last cease to be evangelical in the historical meaning of that term.”<sup>90</sup> Henry retained his commitment to the authority of divine revelation, as expressed in his six volume set, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, and eventually left Fuller Seminary. Yet during Fuller Seminary’s genesis, Henry was a sought after constituent in the educational arsenal of emerging evangelical academicians. While at Fuller, Henry taught theology, philosophy, and ethics, all of which he would continue to pursue throughout his career.

Throughout his life Henry was constantly connected with academics. He taught at Northern Seminary and Gordon College while finishing his own degrees. As previously mentioned, he was the founding dean and a faculty member of Fuller Seminary. After his time as editor of Christianity Today ended, Henry would spend a year as a visiting scholar at Cambridge University. From there Henry took a position as Professor of Theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary for five years (1969-74). His last institutional placement was at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in part-time status until 1997. During these years Henry was a global traveling lecturer for World Vision from 1974-1986. Henry is the only person ever elected president of both the Evangelical Theological Society and the American Theological Society.<sup>91</sup>

The teaching career of Carl Henry is long and varied and it shaped him into an experienced educator. He harnesses these experiences as he speaks to the necessity of addressing the presuppositions behind education. Henry is not someone outside the field of

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<sup>90</sup> Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1976.), 120-121.

<sup>91</sup> Carl Henry was elected the president of these theological societies based on his educational and theological experience. He was elected president of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1969 (<https://www.etsjets.org/Presidents> Accessed 9/9/18.), and of the American Theological Society in 1980-81 (<http://www.amtheosoc.org/presidents> Accessed 9/9/18.)

education, but an experienced insider who has insights to offer upcoming generations of future students and educators.

### Henry the Journalist

While Henry was a teenager, he found employment selling subscriptions, and soon writing copy for a local newspaper. Reporting on high school sporting events at the rate of five cents per column inch for *The Islip Press*, Henry began a lifelong passion of writing and connecting with culture through print media at the age of fifteen years old.<sup>92</sup> After high school Henry upgraded his employment with the newspaper and began making a weekly salary of twelve dollars for reporting. He found his niche with words and became proficient at his craft, typing better than eight-five words a minute. Henry was excelling at his job and found an unexpected opportunity before him in 1932. Mr. Ed Haley, the editor, died suddenly from a heart attack and Henry was offered the editorship of *The Smithtown Star*. He reflects, “It was a remarkable entrustment. In three years I had climbed the ladder from cub reporter...to now, at 19, the youngest editor of a weekly newspaper in New York’s second largest county, and probably in the entire state.”<sup>93</sup>

This move to editorship would prove pivotal in Henry’s life. He would encounter Ms. Christy through his proofreading responsibilities, which would eventually lead to his conversion to Christianity. He would hone his skills as a communicator and as a leader. The responsibilities as editor would prepare Henry for greater tasks that lie ahead, and continually be a source of income and academic outlet in his life.

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<sup>92</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 30.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

At the time of Henry's move to Wheaton, he found his income based on two primary skills, "teaching typing and newspaper work."<sup>94</sup> He supported himself writing for several college and community newspapers and securing typing instruction classes for government agencies including the US Department of Treasury. Wheaton eventually offered Henry the opportunity to teach a journalism class based on his broad experience in the field. This connected the dots for Henry between his livelihood of journalism and his passion for teaching within the academic arena. This opportunity put Henry in contact with Wheaton president, J. Oliver Buswell, who was at the time the youngest college president in America, at thirty-one years old.<sup>95</sup> Buswell was a quoted critic of John Dewey's anti-supernatural educational philosophy. He tripled Wheaton's enrollment in less than ten years and impressed Henry with his high academic standards for Christian education.<sup>96</sup>

A major development in the journalism career of Henry came in 1955 and facilitated his exit from Fuller Seminary. Billy Graham initiated an idea which he had several years prior, of combating the liberal swinging Christian publication, *Christian Century*, with an evangelical publication of high biblical standards and practical application.<sup>97</sup> Graham tells of how the name *Christianity Today*, along with its overall vision, editorial departments, and even budget, were

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>96</sup> Buswell is credited as "the man who helped Wheaton College grow from a small family institution to be a respected institution of higher education". This was done through completing the accreditation process and bolstering academic standards. He increased the faculty percentage holding PhDs from 24% to 49%. The academic enrollment of Wheaton during Buswell's presidency increased from under 400 students to over 1,100 students from 1926 -1940. <http://a2z.my.wheaton.edu/college-presidents/j--oliver-buswell> accessed 9/9/18.

<sup>97</sup> Henry describes his interactions with Billy Graham concerning the founding of a rival publication to the *Christian Century*. Graham offered the editorship first to Wilbur Smith at Fuller Seminary. After Smith eventually declined the position, Smith and Ockenga suggested Carl Henry, who had previously been locked in as a contributor, as a potential fit for the editor position. - Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 145.

fleshed out one night around 2 a.m. after a dream he had concerning the publication.<sup>98</sup> Graham corresponded with Henry and others about editorial contributions and eventually editorial leadership of the endeavor. Henry told Graham, “Unless the magazine combined an irenic spirit with theological integrity, I could not justify stepping out of my theological responsibilities at Fuller.”<sup>99</sup> Having been given the theological reins to a grand vision of advancing evangelical credibility, Henry accepted the position as the founding editor of *Christianity Today* which published its first issue in October of 1956.

Henry identified the driving vision behind *Christianity Today* in his editorial included in the inaugural issue. The first line of the article titled *Why Christianity Today?*, expressed “a deep-felt desire to express historical Christianity to the present generation.”<sup>100</sup> Henry viewed this magazine as a voice for evangelical answers to contemporary issues. This magazine would provide a challenge to theological liberalism with evangelical scholarship, and open the door for ecumenical work for the kingdom of God. Henry intentionally steered the content toward fundamental issues of theological concern and away from ancillary and controversial issues such as eschatology or ecclesiology.<sup>101</sup> Henry would spend the bulk of his energy focusing on evangelical responses to the cultural problems facing the church. Henry consistently used his platform to promote the comprehensibility of revelational theism as the foundation from which

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<sup>98</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 145.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>100</sup> Carl Henry, “Why Christianity Today?”. *Christianity Today*, Vol 1, Oct. 1, 1956.

<sup>101</sup> G. Wright Doyle expresses Henry’s leadership in the magazine as avoiding eschatology and ecclesiology as issues that would divide evangelicalism with controversy rather than unify it. Some religious magazines majored on these issues to appeal to a niche audience. These issues were viewed by Henry as secondary concerns compared to the first tier issues of the faith. Doyle expresses Henry’s editorial work as focusing on “applying biblical truth to the complex challenges of modern society.” G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry- Theologian for All Seasons*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2010), 7.

evangelicals should be addressing the issues of their day. He wrote, “*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.”<sup>102</sup> Henry’s dependence on divine revelation was implicit from the first issue under his leadership.

The first year of work for *Christianity Today* was very labor-intensive. Henry, the editor-in-chief, was the final authority. From securing office space in Washington D.C, to approving contributors and finalizing a budget for printing, Henry described many twelve hour work days and often working Saturdays to complete his responsibilities. This was all in addition to finishing out his commitment to Fuller which concluded in May of 1956, just months before the publication of the first edition. The initial proposed budget of \$200,901.69 at the beginning of operations in 1955, blossomed by more than double into \$460,000 by the budget meeting in summer of 1956.<sup>103</sup> Thanks to the generous use of Billy Graham’s mailing list, in addition to pre-order subscriptions and lists of seminary students, the first distribution of *Christianity Today* was contracted for 200,000 copies.<sup>104</sup>

*Christianity Today* quickly became a who’s who of evangelical leaders. In the first issue a list of future contracted contributors was included to give the readership an idea of the voices speaking to evangelical causes. Among those contributors listed; F. F. Bruce, E. J. Carnell, John Stott, Harold Ockenga, John Warwick Montgomery, Harold Lindsell, Billy Graham, Walter Martin, Frank Gaebelein, and other notable pastors and authors of that generation.<sup>105</sup> One of

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<sup>102</sup> Henry, “Why Christianity Today?”. *Christianity Today*, 1956.

<sup>103</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 153.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 165.



Henry's early disappointments was the inability to secure C.S. Lewis as a contributor or monthly letter supplier for the publication. While correspondence took place, and Lewis was very sympathetic to the cause of *Christianity Today*, he declined the offer "insisting that the time had come for him to engage in theology only allusively through fiction as a medium."<sup>106</sup>

The launch of *Christianity Today*, despite early fears and uncertainty, was a success by any measure. Henry regularly received correspondence expressing thanks for an evangelical voice to the masses. He received notes from Ivy League professors sincerely appreciative for an academic witness to orthodox Christianity they could be proud of within their liberal environment. Even the wife of an editor from the *Christian Century* phoned Henry expressing gratitude for *Christianity Today's* "scholarly level and good spirit". Henry said, "The magazine had been soundly established with an intellectual dignity and theological earnestness that promoted meaningful conversations with liberal and neo-orthodox ministers."<sup>107</sup> At the June 5, 1958 board meeting, results from a survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton showed that in its first two years of existence *Christianity Today* topped all other religious magazines in polls of clergy reading preferences. It also ranked first as the most widely distributed and regularly read protestant magazine.<sup>108</sup> Henry says about the strength of *Christianity Today's* witness and his own personal increasing public identity, "Not only was *Christianity Today* the most frequently quoted religious journal, but the secular press also

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>108</sup> The June 5, 1958 Board Meeting of CT they received and reviewed an 87-page document that was compiled by Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton polling clergy reading preferences. - Carl Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*. (Waco TX: Word Books, 1986), 179.

dubbed me – doubtless to the evangelist’s rightful embarrassment – ‘the thinking man’s Billy Graham.’”<sup>109</sup>

After twelve years of intensive labor and dedicated commitment, Henry built *Christianity Today* into the cutting edge voice of evangelicalism in areas social and theological concerns. Henry was selected as chairman of the Berlin World Congress on Evangelism in 1966.<sup>110</sup> Despite an all-time high in growth and influence, led by its editor, the board of *Christianity Today* proceeded to embark on a series of miscommunications and wrong assumptions that led to the eventual dismissal of Henry as the editor-in-chief.

While on sabbatical, Henry investigated the opportunity for a research grant to coincide with his editorial responsibilities. This private correspondence was interpreted as an intention to return to the academic field. Without proper clarification and limited communication, the board met and “approved” his resignation. As the word began to spread of *Christianity Today* hiring a new editor, Henry heard second-hand of the developments. He wrote to see whether or not he was being fired. With months of miscommunication developing and potential political maneuvering by particular board members, Henry began to look at the well-being of the magazine and its evangelical influence. He responded to a board member, who had privately reached out to him trying to understand the full debacle, saying, “I would bow to the executive committee’s notice of termination. ‘Any other course, I am persuaded, would simply divide the

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<sup>109</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 181.

<sup>110</sup> The World Congress on Evangelism was the tenth anniversary project of *Christianity Today*. It was well received and harnessed the impact of the magazine into practical avenues of sharing the Gospel and engaging culture.

Board, and even the Executive Committee, and leave permanent scars. The well-being of *Christianity Today* is more important than my immediate future.’ ”<sup>111</sup>

While Henry’s exit from *Christianity Today* was less than graceful, it did open new opportunities to expand his scholarly influence. In his last “Editor’s Note” in the January 5, 1968 issue, Henry gave word to his readership of his termination and indicated his future plans, though personally described as very uncertain, were going to be dedicated to “give these next years to theological research and writing on the Doctrine of God.”<sup>112</sup> Henry would be free to study and write on what would eventually become his six volume magnum opus, *God, Revelation, and Authority*. Decisions of the executive board following Henry’s dismissal led to more focus on layman content of the magazine, rather than Henry’s concentration on social and theological concerns.

With his future unsure and his time of journalism at an end, Henry reflected on the path his journey had taken. “I had behind me almost a decade of collegiate, graduate, and postgraduate studies, a decade of teaching in the Midwest, a decade of teaching in California and more than a decade of editorship in Washington.”<sup>113</sup> Carl Henry’s life had been used for Kingdom influence and advancement at every level. His immovable commitment to historical

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<sup>111</sup> The situation is discussed at length in Henry’s autobiography, and it is unclear, possibly because of Henry’s gracious spirit, if ill-intent was at the heart of the unfolding situation or if miscommunication was the primary mover of the issue. Either way, Henry clearly recounts a love for the magazine and the painful experience it all became. While his family expressed ultimate relief to be out from under such a demanding work load, Henry himself, did not share the sentiment initially. This quote came after months of introspective searching and the heart-felt trust that God would provide opportunity and influence even in his aging years. - Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 277.

<sup>112</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 286.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 287.

Christianity and the authority of divine revelation combined in his leadership making *Christianity Today* a theologically astute religious publication during his tenure.

### Henry's Commitment to Revelational Theism

In 1947 Carl Henry published *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. This publication thrust him into the limelight of evangelical theological circles. The thesis of this work was a reaction against the shift of Protestantism toward one of two extremes, Liberal social-gospel leanings on the one hand, or Fundamentalist isolationism on the other. In reaction to the liberal drift of Mainline Protestants, Fundamentalists allowed the pendulum to swing in the opposite direction. Henry describes, "Fundamentalism, in revolting against the Social Gospel, seemed also to revolt against the Christian social imperative."<sup>114</sup> Drawing from his education under Gordon Clark and his experience as a teacher and a journalist, Henry knew that the best answers for life must comprehensively address every area of reality.

Carl Henry was a critical thinker who could identify presuppositions undergirding ideologies and the impact they would have in practical application. Henry took special effort to rightly understand opposing viewpoints before engaging in dialogue.<sup>115</sup> Henry wanted to highlight the fact that Christianity's biblical worldview, namely revelational theism, took into account every avenue of reality and addressed the individual concerns as well as social concerns of any time period. He said in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, "Historically, Christianity embraced a life view as well as a world view; it was socially as well as

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<sup>114</sup> Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 22.

<sup>115</sup> Kantzer says of personal relation to Henry while attending University of Boston together, that Henry "strove, above all, to interpret his theological opponents fairly." Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry: An Appreciation," in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 372.

philosophically pertinent.”<sup>116</sup> Henry’s conviction in this reformist book was that Fundamentalism’s problem was not one of needing to find a biblical message, but a failure to continue the heritage of historic Christianity, namely applying the message of the Scriptures to all of life.

The necessity of understanding the value of an all-inclusive worldview started in Wheaton College with his exposure to Scottish Presbyterian theologian James Orr. Henry says, “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 me a cogently comprehensive view of reality and life in a Christian context.”<sup>117</sup> After that exposure Henry would seek to consistently apply his overarching understanding of reality to his particular context. “[Henry’s] emphasis was always on the big picture... Above all he sought to think clearly and effectively, consistently and comprehensively, about the total Christian world and life view.”<sup>118</sup> Henry took this passion to rightly understand reality and poured it into all of his scholarly endeavors, most notably, *God, Revelation, and Authority*. This series was framed in terms of worldview issues addressed from a consistent, revelationally-informed understanding of Christianity.

Whether expressed in the social concerns of *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, the editorial decisions of *Christianity Today*, or the theological dialogue of *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Henry was constantly applying his belief system to all of life. Through his training and experiences he became proficient in recognizing the fundamental differences between worldviews. He became adept at identifying fallacies and inconsistencies of

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<sup>116</sup> Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 22.

<sup>117</sup> Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 75.

<sup>118</sup> Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry: An Appreciation," in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 372.

within competing worldview systems. Henry believed revelational theism provided the most coherent, comprehensible, satisfying interpretation of reality through its twin axioms of the Living God and divine revelation.

### Worldview Acknowledgment as Essential to Educational Concerns

Carl Henry was able to view all of life through a singular lens. This lens was the ultimate existence of God and His revelation about reality. This forced Henry to be consistent and comprehensive as he addressed the cultural issues of his day. Henry repeatedly took time to illustrate the need for teaching a comprehensive worldview as an essential step in the educational process. Without a comprehensive worldview there would be the tendency of students to hold contradictory ideas or fall prey to ideologies that promise one outcome but deliver another. The need for clear thinking is a critical element of education.

Henry noted that many founders of the American educational system recognized this need for a comprehensive outlook on life. He identifies Horace Mann, the driving force behind the initialization of public schools in the early 1800s, as a man fixed on more than just intellectually filled students but producing students of character. “No one did more than [Mann] to establish in the minds of the American people the conception that education should be universal, non-sectarian, free, and that its aims should be social efficiency, civic virtue, and character, rather than mere learning or the advancement of education ends.”<sup>119</sup>

The idea of building virtue and character through education can only take place outside the bounds of naturalism. When drawing from a worldview built by revelational theism, a

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<sup>119</sup> Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1919), 167.

teacher would be able to speak consistently about the foundations of virtue and character and integrate them into the educational process. Students would not only be taught the facts of reality, but also the purpose and reason for reality. Carl Henry quotes Horace Mann as boldly stating, “He would rather resign his vocation than permit the exclusion of instruction in the Bible or religion from the schools.”<sup>120</sup> Note the inclusive element of generic religion alongside the Bible in Mann’s quote. Naturalism can never shed light into metaphysical realities. It is the existence of the supernatural that allows the possibility of character or value. With a naturalistic view of the learner, an educator is left without the primary means of character development. Naturalism only allows for chemical processes and mechanistic functions to develop a “virtuous” person. This is categorically inaccessible from materialistic means. Only with metaphysical categories of “right”, “wrong”, “good”, and “beautiful” can virtue grow.

Henry’s theological commitment to revelational theism informed his views of education. To teach merely content, without teaching value, is inconsistent with the common experience of reality. Current models of education are adopting a secular view of man, omitting the existence universal norms from its curriculum. Henry agreed with the dean of Yale Divinity School in the warning “that secularization of public education not only imperiled the future of religion among the people but, along with this, the future of the nation, and emphasized that education which gives no place to religion is not neutral but exerts its influence against religion.”<sup>121</sup>

Henry proposed that theological presuppositions support the educational process of the whole person better than that of naturalism. Henry offers the “Great Books” as a proper place to start for worldview development of the student from theological presuppositions. In Henry’s

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<sup>120</sup> Carl Henry, “Moral Values in Public Education”. *Eternity*, September, 1954.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

understanding, education must communicate where mankind stands not just in view of contemporary culture, but within the history of ideas. The context of intellectual history is lost on a generation without exposure to outside sources. Because of Henry's presuppositions about supernatural sources, he suggests study of the "Great Books" begin with Plato's *Republic* and other suggestions parallel to Mortimer Adler's "*Great Books of the Western World Program*." These are the primary sources which laid the foundations for Western culture and they contain supernatural assumptions. Henry declares, "The Bible will not be missing from any worthy manifest of monumental literature."<sup>122</sup> These books are imperative to education and to worldview development because they "thrust upon the reader the perennially significant questions" of ultimate significance. If a student never engages the most basic questions of reality, what type of education is being imparted? "The Great Books underscore not only the indispensability, but also the practicality of these concerns. On the answer hangs the very nature of truth, of the good, and of human worth."<sup>123</sup> Henry was clear in his belief that a comprehensive and cohesive biblical worldview helps students understand the reality of the world around them.

### Conclusion

Carl Henry exemplifies how the proper understanding of who God is and what He has said are essential theological presuppositions critical to the educational process. To comprehend unspoken ideologies guiding administration and faculty would bring to light goals and objectives that may be driven by the motives of a particular worldview. While this may be a concern within

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<sup>122</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 95.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.



public institutions, it is also an ever present concern within religious institutions. Henry believes only a weak attempt has been made to clearly articulate the foundational elements of the evangelical value system by many institutions claiming that heritage. With a weak understanding of the presuppositional foundations, evangelical can expect a weak influence in culture.

Henry says, “The serious task of world-life view elaboration is fundamental to significant cultural impact and application. It is astonishing that evangelical campuses engaged in the battle for the contemporary mind and will should so widely have neglected it in all but elementary ways.”<sup>124</sup> One must ask, if this worldview task is “fundamental”, why is it so neglected? Carl Henry stands out as a clear theological voice with concerns about education pointing to the biblical worldview as a valid and necessary starting place for learning to begin. His educational experience and journalism background have deepened his theological perspective creating a deep care for the academic arena.

This theological perspective will be explored in the coming chapters. Henry’s background and influences led him to hold firmly to revelational theism as the best explanation of reality. Chapter three focuses in on the coherence of revelational theism with reality through Henry’s understanding of Divine Authority and the role of reason in submission to that authority. Henry anchored his beliefs on the foundation of God’s revelation as the ultimate authority. This belief provided coherent explanations of the common experiences of humanity. An essential element to be discussed in the coming chapter, directly connected to Gordon Clark’s influence on Henry’s epistemology, is the grounding of rationality and logic through submission to Divine revelation. Henry goes to great lengths to connect to the church’s historical position of the

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<sup>124</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 121.

authority of Divine revelation. When the axiom of Divine revelation is recognized as the absolute authority Henry believes rationality is consistent, common ground between believers is established, and reality makes sense. Chapter three's subject matter is a unifying feature behind Henry's life experiences explored in chapter two. The next chapter will examine why Henry believed "the Fear of the Lord" was foundational to the best understanding of reality.

### **Chapter Three: Establishing the Coherence of Revelational Theism with Reality**

The authority of divine revelation is held as an axiom of revelational theism. It reveals the standards by which to judge truth and interpret reality. This has been the standard for the church since its inception. Through the grounding of human rationality, revelational theism presents the most coherent view of logic and reason. Because reason is available to all humans this is a point of common ground between believers and unbelievers. This chapter argues that revelational theism provides the best means of understanding and engaging with reality. This will be shown by supporting the axiom of divine revelation as an authoritative source for truth, through displaying the ability for revelational theism to ground the use of logic in the ontology of God and exploring other avenues of knowing while in submission to divine revelation. For the theology of Carl Henry to be shown as a valid framework for educational settings it must have a solid grasp of the authority through which rationality is grounded and implemented.

#### **A Brief Historical Survey of Divine Authority**

Henry believed in the divine authority of the Bible and understood it as the orthodox position of the Christian church through the ages. He said, “Historic evangelical theism has insisted, no less than did the church fathers, that at no point is the Word of God to be considered a merely human phenomenon. It identifies the authority of the Scriptures with the authority of God.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 4, 257.

It has been argued that evangelicals who hold a strong position regarding divine authority are complicit in a novel understanding of the Bible as the inerrant and infallible word of God. The authors of *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: a Historical Approach*, take this position as they see post-Reformation scholarship building a new foundation of authority that is not congruent to doctrine passed down from the Early Church Fathers.<sup>126</sup> The resulting fractured ecclesial context is seen as evidence of the confusion of authority in modern denominations and churches. While other evangelicals have published rebuttals of this position,<sup>127</sup> this author would hold that a strong view of divine authority is actually a return to the original position of the Early Church Fathers. Therefore, those who have departed from a strong view of divine authority have opened the door for division in the church through the elevation of non-biblical authorities. This section attempts to argue that a belief in the full authority of divine revelation, as articulated in the revelational theology of Carl Henry, is the heritage of the Early Church Fathers passed down through the ages and faithfully expressed in Evangelical theology.

One of the oldest sources of post-apostolic extra-biblical literature is from Clement of Rome. Clement is identified as a Bishop of Rome by both Tertullian and Irenaeus in their writings.<sup>128</sup> Tradition says he was imprisoned by Emperor Trajan and subsequently executed by drowning in AD 102.<sup>129</sup> During his ministry, Clement addressed the church in Corinth through his letters. He gave clear guidance regarding the divine authority of the written Word of God.

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<sup>126</sup> Jack Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Harper and Row, 1979).

<sup>127</sup> John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1982).

<sup>128</sup> Cross, F. L. (ed.), "Clement of Rome, St.". *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

He said in I Clement 45:5-6, “Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit. Observe that nothing of an unjust or counterfeit character is written in them.”<sup>130</sup>

In this statement he encourages his readers in the study of the scriptures, but then goes on to describe why such study is necessary and beneficial. He describes the divine authorship as well as the divine truthfulness of this revelation, and therefore divine authority.

Justin Martyr (AD 105-165) was an apologist and theologian of the early church. He made strides in unpacking a philosophical view of the eternal Logos, as well as defending Christian morality. He also revealed an understanding of divine authority in the written scriptures. He was beheaded during the reign of Marcus Aurelius between AD 163-167 which was the term of the governor who made the conviction. The specific date may have been AD 165 depending on historical documents.<sup>131</sup>

Justin said in his *Apology* that “...when you hear the utterances of the prophets spoken as if they were personally, you must not suppose that they are spoken or inspired themselves, but by the Divine Word who moves them.”<sup>132</sup> Justin is affirming that the authority of the divine text is not rooted in the human author, but the divine Author. Despite the agency of the writers, it is the divine word revealed by God which is the source of authority. Justin also said, “The history of the prophet Moses, which he wrote in the Hebrew character by the divine inspiration. ... the

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<sup>130</sup> Clement of Rome, “The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 17.

<sup>131</sup> “The testimony of Eusebius and most credible historians renders it nearly certain that he suffered martyrdom in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The *Chronicon Paschale* gives as the date 165 A.D.” Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., “Introductory Note to the First Apology of Justin Martyr,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 160.

<sup>132</sup> Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 175.

Holy Spirit of prophecy taught through him.”<sup>133</sup> Here we see his affirmation of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and yet how God uses the Old Testament to still teach to later readers. This is further evidence of the divine authority exemplified within Justin Martyr’s writings.

Irenaeus (AD 140-202), bishop of Lyon, was also clear in his statements concerning Scripture. His surviving literature is written against the Gnostics. To counter their “secret knowledge” Irenaeus calls on three pillars of orthodoxy: the authority of Scripture, the traditions of the Apostles, and the teaching of the successors of the Apostles.<sup>134</sup> He affirms the unity and perfection of Scripture when he says, “all Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent; ... and through the many diversified utterances [of Scripture] there shall be heard one harmonious melody.”<sup>135</sup> He also says, “being most properly assured that the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit.”<sup>136</sup> Irenaeus’s strong view of divine authority is clear in his statement of its perfection. The singular theme despite a diversity of “utterances”, meaning genres and authors, points also to the authority and unity within divine revelation.

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<sup>133</sup> Justin Martyr, “Justin’s Hortatory Address to the Greeks,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. M. Dods, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 278.

<sup>134</sup> Gustaf Wingren, “Saint Irenaeus”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed 11/11/2018. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Irenaeus>.

<sup>135</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 400.

<sup>136</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, 399.

Clement of Alexandria (AD 150–217) said this about Scripture: “so that, having demonstrated that the Scriptures which we believe are valid from their omnipotent authority.”<sup>137</sup> His blatant statement ascribing authority of Scripture, not from any man-made source, but by its own authority fits perfectly with the presuppositions of revelational theism. Clement also says, “And the law is not at variance with the Gospel, but agrees with it. How should it be otherwise, one Lord being the author of both?”<sup>138</sup> His reference is to the divine authorship of scripture and thus its source of authority. Similarly, Clement said concerning the words of Scripture, “I could adduce ten thousand Scriptures of which not ‘one tittle shall pass away’ without being fulfilled; for the mouth of the Lord the Holy Spirit hath spoken these things.”<sup>139</sup> The divine origin of Scripture was a constant theme among the Fathers because they understood the need to establish its source of authority.

Tertullian (AD 155-224) spoke of the divine authority of the apostles which was not decreased as it was transferred in literary form to later believers. He says, “Their words, as well as the miracles which they performed, that men might have faith in their divine authority, we have still in the literary treasures they have left, and which are open to all.”<sup>140</sup> This access to divinely authoritative teaching is “open to all” in the form of God’s written word.

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<sup>137</sup> Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata, or Miscellanies,” in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 409.

<sup>138</sup> Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata, or Miscellanies,” in *Fathers of the Second Century*. 379.

<sup>139</sup> Clement of Alexandria, “Exhortation to the Heathen,” in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 195.

<sup>140</sup> Tertullian, “The Apology,” in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall, vol. 3, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 32.

Origen of Alexandria (AD 185–253), wrote in unambiguous terms regarding his view of the authority of Scripture. He clearly stated, “It seems necessary to show, in the first place, that the Scriptures themselves are divine, i.e., were inspired by the Spirit of God.”<sup>141</sup> He believed the word of God could stand on its own right when he said, “And now, what we have drawn from the authority of Scripture ought to be sufficient to refute the arguments of the heretics.”<sup>142</sup> One of Origen’s critiques against Celsus was his doubt of the authority of Scripture. “For Celsus, who is truly a braggart, and who professes to be acquainted with all matters relating to Christianity, does not know how to raise doubts in a skillful manner against the credibility of Scripture.”<sup>143</sup> Origen was clear in his confidence in a divinely inspired authoritative word of God, namely the written Scriptures.

Athanasius (AD 296-373), is known for his great role in confronting the heresy of Arianism at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. In his debates with Arius at the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius demonstrated the full authority of Scripture in his argument concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. He rested in the authority of Scripture. He said, “But this all inspired Scripture also teaches more plainly and with more authority, so that we in our turn write boldly to you as we do.”<sup>144</sup> In the authority of divine revelation Athanasius rooted his understanding of divine

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<sup>141</sup> Origen, “De Principiis,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 349.

<sup>142</sup> Origen, “De Principiis,” in *Fathers of the Third Century*, 279.

<sup>143</sup> Origen, “Origen against Celsus,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 444.

<sup>144</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, “Against the Heathen,” in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Archibald T. Robertson, vol. 4, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1892), 28.



authorship. “And that the Word of God is not a work or creature, but an offspring proper to the Father’s essence and indivisible.”<sup>145</sup> Athanasius was also a pivotal figure in the recognition of the canon as he was the earliest source containing a complete list of the twenty-seven New Testament books as used in modern translations.<sup>146</sup> In his 39<sup>th</sup> Festal Letter, Athanasius lists the books of the bible so as to commend them to his readers as canonical, trustworthy sources of divine truth. Following the declaration of biblical books he says, “In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these.”<sup>147</sup>

Augustine (AD 354–430) is considered by some scholars to be one of the most influential theologian/philosophers of the church.<sup>148</sup> His views on the inerrant and authoritative nature of divine revelation are exceedingly clear. He says in a letter to Jerome, “I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error.”<sup>149</sup> Augustine explicitly states that no author of any biblical book made any error in writing. As Augustine’s theology became the dominant view of the church for the next 1500 years it is important to note that he believed in an

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<sup>145</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, “De Decretis or Defense of the Nicene Definition,” in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. John Henry Newman and Archibald T. Robertson, vol. 4, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1892), 167.

<sup>146</sup> David Morton Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>147</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, “Festal Letters,” in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Burgess and Jessie Smith Payne, vol. 4, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1892), 552.

<sup>148</sup> Elenore Stump conveys this sentiment saying, “It is hard to overestimate the importance of Augustine’s work and influence, both in his own period and in the history of western philosophy after it...Augustine is undoubtedly the most important philosopher of the medieval period.” David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>149</sup> Augustine of Hippo, “Letters of St. Augustin,” in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustin with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. G. Cunningham, vol. 1, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 350.

inerrant authoritative word from God. In the same letter to Jerome, Augustine describes the “pinnacle of authority” which is God’s word. “Better far that I should read with certainty and persuasion of its truth the Holy Scripture, placed on the highest (even the heavenly) pinnacle of authority, and should, without questioning the trustworthiness of its statements.”<sup>150</sup> Augustine takes a presuppositional position regarding the truthfulness of Scripture. Such a view of divine revelation elevates it to the verification of all other truth, acknowledging that it alone is the standard for truth.

Jerome (AD 342–420) was famous for his work as the translator of the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible. He was an influential thinker in his time and his translation of the bible into Latin became a staple of the church for centuries after him. His intimate exposure to the Bible led him to write, “When you are really instructed in the divine Scriptures and have realized that its laws and testimonies are the bonds of truth, then you can contend with adversaries.”<sup>151</sup> To refer to divine revelation as ‘the bonds of truth’ is an indicator of the level of authority with which he viewed it.

In the Early Church Fathers the presupposition of the authority of divine revelation is crystalized in the *Regula Fidei*, or Rule of Faith. While this was a tradition of the time, it carried with it the weight of authority from the Apostles. This guideline was not a hard and fast rule, but a recognized understanding of orthodoxy which assisted the development of theology until the formalization of canon. Irenaeus first coined the phrase “rule of faith” in the second century to designate the authentic teaching of the apostles. Nathan Feldmeth describes the Rule’s essential

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<sup>150</sup> Augustine of Hippo, “Letters of St. Augustin,” 351.

<sup>151</sup> Jerome, “The Letters of St. Jerome,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley, vol. 6, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1893), 163.

role, saying, “At this early point in Christian development, the complete New Testament was not available, and thus speakers and writers appealed to the rule of faith as a source of authority.”<sup>152</sup> The Rule of Faith was generally the stance put forth by recognized creeds and later affirmed and defended in the councils. Examples of these are the Apostles Creed laying out the basic tenets of the faith, the affirmation by the council of Nicaea in 325 refuting Arianism, and the Chalcedonian Definition in 451 crystalizing Christology.

The theological tone was set for the church of the next 1500 years. While doctrine did develop in the fluctuating Catholic context, the doctrine of God’s word remained intact, if in name only. Thomas Aquinas (AD 1225–1274) is considered one of the most influential theologians of the Middle Ages.<sup>153</sup> He was greatly influenced by Aristotle as well as Augustine. He wrote these words in agreement with Augustine’s view of the authority of divine revelation over and above any human based authority.

However, sacred doctrine makes use of these authorities [philosophers] only as extraneous and probable arguments. Properly, theology uses the authorities of the canonical Scripture as the necessary argumentation. The authority of the doctors of the church is properly employed but as merely probable, for our faith rests upon the revelation given to the apostles and prophets who wrote the canonical books and not on revelation (if there be such a thing) made to other teachers.<sup>154</sup>

Thomas Aquinas makes a beautiful statement grounding all theology on the authority of the Scriptures. He places the entirety of the Christian faith squarely on divine revelation. If

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<sup>152</sup> Nathan P. Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History: Over 300 Terms Clearly and Concisely Defined*, The IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 120.

<sup>153</sup> Norman Geisler goes to great lengths to show the connections evangelicals have with Thomas Aquinas and are even in his debt. He encourages modern protestants “not to throw the Thomistic baby out with the Romanist bathwater”. Geisler highlights Aquinas’s writings and major contributions to theology and philosophy. Norman L. Geisler and Ralph McNerny, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

<sup>154</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Thomas Gilby (London: Blackfriars, 1968). Article 8, reply 2.

revelation did not have authority it would not be suitable for such an obligation. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church held the traditions of the Church in an equal authoritative position with God's revelation. This led to the sparking of the Reformation as believers reoriented themselves to the belief of Scripture's authoritative position over church tradition. *Sola Scriptura* was a call to hold up Scripture alone as the authority in the life of a believer.<sup>155</sup>

The trailblazer of the Reformation, Martin Luther (AD 1483–1546) staked his life on the authority of Scripture. His confrontation with the authority structure of the Catholic Church and confession that his conscience was captured by Holy Scripture could have cost him his life. For such full commitment Luther had to have certainty of his position regarding divine revelation. Luther declared the authority which Scripture had over his life at the famous council of Worms where he delivered his lifelong conviction. “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by evident reason—for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves—I consider myself conquered by the Scriptures adduced by me, and my conscience is captive to the word of God.”<sup>156</sup>

Luther exemplified a dynamic trust in the authority of divine revelation. He desired all people to know its truth and give Scripture its rightful place of primacy in their lives. He said, “we give to Scripture the chief place in everything, that which was acknowledged by the fathers:

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<sup>155</sup> “The Reformers taught that the Scripture alone is the final authority for what we must believe and how we must live. This view sounds commonplace to us today, but it was radical in the sixteenth century. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church had asserted its authority over against that of the Bible. The authority of the Pope, tradition and councils were all regarded as authorities along with the Bible. Against that view, the Reformers asserted *sola Scriptura*: the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our only infallible source of authority for faith and practice.” Thomas K. Ascol, “From the Protestant Reformation to the Southern Baptist Convention: What Hath Geneva to Do with Nashville?,” *The Founders Journal: From the Protestant Reformation to the Southern Baptist Convention, Fall*, no. 70 (2007): 4–5.

<sup>156</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (55 vols., St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–86), 32.112.

that is, that it is in and of itself the most certain, the most accessible, the most clear thing of all, interpreting itself, approving, judging and illuminating all things.”<sup>157</sup>

Ulrich Zwingli was the Swiss reformer who made similar conclusions as Martin Luther during the start of the Protestant Reformation. In 1519 he was a parish priest and began a sermon series teaching through the book of Matthew offering interpretation in the vernacular language. To modern readers this seems commonplace, but in a pre-reformation Switzerland this act was revolutionary. Zwingli was placing the Word of God at the center of the church experience rather than the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the year 1523, following a disputation the city council officially concluded “from then on ‘godly scripture’ should be the foundation and criterion for all sermons”<sup>158</sup> and adopted Zwingli’s plan to convert to Protestantism, leaving behind Catholic tradition. Peter Opitz, a Reformation researcher, found that the Scriptures were the defining feature of Zwingli’s reformation emphasis. He says, “The decisive impulse of the Zurich Reformation was not a particular theological tenet or the religious experience of one single reformer. It was the discovery of the authority of scripture.”<sup>159</sup> Zwingli and Luther never fully joined efforts because of a disagreement on the essence of the elements within the Lord’s Supper, but their commitment to the authority

The Anabaptists are a group that trace their origin to Zwingli, yet parted ways as they embraced a more radical viewpoint. Born from Reformation principles, this group held a high

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<sup>157</sup> Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luther’s Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe.*, trans. Georg Buchwald and Joachim Carl Friedrich. Knaake (Weimar, 1883). 7.97:19-24.

<sup>158</sup> Peter Opitz, *The Authority of Scripture in the Early Zurich Reformation, 1522-1540*. The University of Zurich; Zurich Open Repository and Archive, 2011, 7. Accessed 12/8/18.  
<https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/65837/7/ZORA65837akz.pdf>

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 1.

view of scripture. They were viewed as a radical sect of Protestantism due to their interpretation of baptism.<sup>160</sup> Anabaptist rejected the notion of infant baptism and called for the necessity of adult baptism. The Greek prefix “Ana” means “re-“, therefore the term Anabaptist refers to a re-baptism, though adherents would claim only one legitimate baptism. They also were known for a very literal interpretation of the Scripture, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, leading them to reject civic duty, not take oaths, and refuse service in the military.<sup>161</sup> Despite being a non-violent assembly, the Anabaptists faced severe persecution from both Catholics and other Protestant groups because of their commitment to adult baptism. Many were jailed or executed in the 1600s causing a decline in the denomination. Under the leadership of Menno Simons in the 1540s a group of Anabaptist survived the persecution and prospered in multiple cities to the point of being referred to as being Mennonites.<sup>162</sup> This connection makes the modern Mennonite denomination the only surviving direct heirs of the Anabaptist heritage.

Another influential reformer, John Calvin (AD 1509–1564), also make excessively clear his belief in an authoritative revelation from God. “At varying places in his writings, he refers to Scripture as ‘the sure and infallible record,’ ‘the inerring standard,’ ‘the pure word of God,’ ‘the infallible rule of His holy truth,’ ‘free from every stain or defect,’ ‘the inerring certainty,’ ‘the certain and unerring rule,’ ‘the infallible word of God,’ ‘inviolable,’ ‘infallible oracles.’”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> William Gilbert, “The Radicals of the Reformation”, *Renaissance and Reformation*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas. 1998), accessed 12/8/18. [http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/texts/carrie\\_books/gilbert/15.html](http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/texts/carrie_books/gilbert/15.html).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, *Menno Simons, 1496-1561*. Accessed 12/8/18. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Menno\\_Simons\\_\(1496-1561\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Menno_Simons_(1496-1561))

<sup>163</sup> A sampling of Calvin’s terminology describing the character and nature of divine revelation is displayed. James T. Draper Jr. and Kenneth Keathley, *Biblical Authority: The Critical Issue for the Body of Christ* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 49.

These repeated descriptions show the presuppositional commitment Calvin had to the complete authority and perfection of the word of God. Calvin spoke in many places, making abundantly clear that both Old Testament and New Testament, every genre and every word was inspired and authoritative. The Bible was a completed unit not needing to be added to its teaching or subtracted from its fullness. He said,

That whole body, therefore, made up of law, prophecies, psalms and histories was the Lord's Word for the ancient people.... He has so fulfilled all functions of teaching in his Son that we must regard this as the final and eternal testimony from him...content with the perfection of Christ's teaching, we may learn not to fashion anything new for ourselves beyond this or to admit anything contrived by others.<sup>164</sup>

Calvin was so convinced of the divine authority of God's word that he made the powerful equation between God Himself and God His word. He said, "We owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from Him alone."<sup>165</sup> As the reformation spread and grew into varied denominations, a focus on God's word as authoritative remained an essential feature of Protestant identity.

The heritage from the Early Church Fathers through the Reformers has shown a tradition of full acceptance of God's word as fully divine and authoritative. Henry affirmed this saying, "The early churches never questioned the divine authority of the Old Testament, and they never doubted that the apostolic writings crown and complete the earlier sacred literature."<sup>166</sup> This tradition has been carried through those who were connected first-hand to the Apostles up to modern day believers. As an heir of this position, Carl Henry takes a strong stance on the

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<sup>164</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of Christian Religion*, trans. John T. McNeill and Ford Lewis. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.8.5-7.

<sup>165</sup> John Calvin, *John Calvin's Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*. trans. John Pringle (Jazzybee Verlag Jurgen Beck: Deutschland, 2017), 202.

<sup>166</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 4, 436.

authority of divine revelation. The implications of the doctrine of Scripture impact every other area of Christian doctrine.

### Divine Revelation as the Ultimate Authority

Revelational theism identifies divine revelation as the ultimate authority. *In God, Revelation and Authority*, Carl Henry seeks to defend a main thesis, that “The Bible is the reservoir and conduit of divine truth, the authoritative written record and exposition of God’s nature and will.”<sup>167</sup> As the recognition of divine authority in the Bible has been shown to be a historical position of the church, the modern expression of the church should also recognize divine revelation as the best presuppositional starting place to understand reality. The question of how truth is determined is a question of presuppositional starting places.

Three basic categories emerge for epistemological foundations. These categories highlight the question of authority. There are those who emphasize reason as the ultimate authority, those who emphasize faith as the ultimate authority, and those who emphasize revelation as the ultimate authority. Henry affirms revelational theism, which emphasizes revelation as the ultimate authority. Henry starts with the aforementioned axioms, which he does not attempt to prove, as he believes they are the foundation through which all else is proved. Henry believes without the starting place of God and His self-disclosure there is no way to account for the human rationality used every day by every person.

Henry helps his readers with further insights related to divine revelation. He says that Scripture is the “verifying principle” for truth. This means that no statement contradicting the Bible should be considered to be true. Scripture is the way to “verify” all other truth as well as

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 7.



testifying to its own truthfulness. In his own words Henry says, “The inspired scriptures are the proximate and universally accessible form of authoritative divine revelation.”<sup>168</sup> He identifies the key issue. Scripture is authoritative. It has the power to proclaim what is true and what is not.

While God’s word is the “verifying principle”, human reason is a divinely crafted instrument by which truth is recognized. Henry keeps reason in a proper epistemological position and never elevates it above divine revelation as authoritative. He consistently holds that Scripture is the starting place, and God has been gracious to give us the tool of reason by which to understand and apply the truths of Scripture. Any attempts of man to overthrow revelation as the ultimate authority and assert his own autonomy through reason are rooted in pride and therefore are sinful. Henry discusses the use and abuse of reason saying, “The human spirit slants its perspectives in a manner that does violence to the truth of revelation, while its very formulations are at the same time made possible because reason is a divine gift whose legitimate and proper use man has compromised.”<sup>169</sup>

Those who elevate reason above revelation are elevating the position of man to the place of judgment rather than a place of submission. When reason is viewed as the only method to arrive at truth, such as claimed by empiricists, a responsible understanding of their own presuppositions is absent. There is no foundation for the rationality of reason within reason itself. Without a metaphysical reality grounding the rationality of reason there is no ability to verify the truthfulness of rationality. Therefore the rationalists, empiricists, and others who look within reason for the authority to determine truth, attempt to ground truth without a proper

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<sup>168</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 229.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

foundation. Man cannot create truth, only recognize it. King Solomon gives a word of wisdom, but also a word of warning, about the God who is truth and reveals it to us. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.”<sup>170</sup>

Fideism accepts a path of blind faith to knowledge without the need to verify truth.<sup>171</sup> To elevate faith above revelation is to ignore the God given faculties to comprehend truth from its source. God has given reason as a beautiful tool to use, in its proper epistemological place, to understand what God has said in and through His creation. The existential writings of Søren Kierkegaard and his “leap of faith” encourages people to believe in God and His word even in the absence of thoughtful, coherent, reasons.<sup>172</sup> Kierkegaard accepted a paradoxical nature of God and the inability of reason to grasp His nature. In Kierkegaard’s understanding, to “trust in the Lord with all your heart” is to defy logic and accept the irrational. Yet, according to Henry, this is not consistent with the reality in which we live. Religious knowledge can be found and should be tested for its truthfulness. This testing is done by observing congruency or incongruency with divine revelation. Only when the axioms of God and His Word are rightly held do we truly understand faith in light of reason, both in submission to revelation, thus creating a firm foundation through which to understand reality.

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<sup>170</sup> Proverbs 3:5

<sup>171</sup> “Fideism: truth based upon faith rather than reason.” Christopher Cone, *Prolegomena: Introductory Notes on Bible Study & Theological Method*, (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>172</sup> According to Kierkegaard, “Christian truths are neither analytic (self-evident) nor synthetic, because even if factually correct, human knowledge lacks the certainty held in Christian claims. Christian claims are paradoxical and can be accepted only by a leap of faith. There is a real transcendent God, who can only be chosen in his self-revelation. This God is meaningful and real, but paradoxical” Norman L. Geisler, “Kierkegaard, Søren,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 407.

The question of presuppositions should lead us to the source of all authority. That source is God as He has revealed Himself through the Bible. Revelation is the proper starting place for coherent thoughts about reality. Revelation centers on the person of Jesus Christ. “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”<sup>173</sup>

### Rationality Grounded through Revelation

Revelational theism takes seriously the cognitive aspect of humanity. It acknowledges the way in which man thinks in relation to God’s nature and the way in which God thinks. Contra Kierkegaard’s idea of a paradoxical God, Henry believed revelation presents a picture of a rational God. The laws of logic create the boundaries for the rational versus the irrational, order versus chaos. Henry follows the lead of his mentor, Gordon Clark, and links logic to the indispensable attributes of God. This logic is not categorically different than that of human logic. The way in which God’s mind works is logical in the purest sense, for God cannot lie as stated in Titus 1:2. Also, 1 Corinthians 14:33 asserts “God is not a God of confusion.” According to Henry, the law of non-contradiction is not qualitatively different in the divine mind or the human mind. Therefore  $A=B$  and  $A \neq B$  cannot both be true at the same time.  $1+1$  will always equal 2, for both God and man. The human mind was created in the image of God and thus bears its framework of logical thinking. Gordon Clark rightly asserts that a bias against logic is erroneous. Human reason and logic therefore are not human in origin, but rather divine in origin. Clark puts it plainly and powerfully as he says,

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<sup>173</sup> Colossians 1:16-17

It is strange that anyone who thinks he is a Christian should deprecate logic. Such a person does not of course intend to deprecate the mind of God; but he thinks that logic in man is sinful, even more sinful than other parts of man's fallen nature. This, however, makes no sense. The law of contradiction cannot be sinful. Quite the contrary, it is our violations of the law of contradiction that are sinful. Yet the strictures which some devotional writers place on 'merely human' logic are amazing. Can such pious stupidity really mean that a syllogism that is valid for us is invalid for God? If two plus two is four in our arithmetic, does God have a different arithmetic in which two and two makes three or perhaps five? The fact that the Son of God is God's reason - for Christ is the wisdom of God as well as the power of God-plus the fact that the image in man is so-called 'human reason,' suffices to show that this so-called 'human reason' is not so much human as divine.<sup>174</sup>

Clark famously uses the prologue of the Gospel of John 1:1 as a platform to display the logic of God in relation to the character of Jesus. "In the beginning was Logic."

Any translation of John 1:1 that obscures this emphasis on mind or reason is a bad translation. And if anyone complains that the idea of *ratio* or debate obscures the personality of the second person of the Trinity, he should alter his concept of personality. In the beginning, then, was *Logic*. That *Logic* is the light of men...<sup>175</sup>

This connection between the Godhead and logic is contrary to other presuppositional systems. Cornelius Van Til and his adherents would understand God to be above logic. While man must think God's thoughts after him, defenders of Van Tillian presuppositionalism hold that God's thoughts are of a different quality as well as content, and therefore man must think "analogously" after God's thoughts.<sup>176</sup> Van Til writes, "Man could not have the same thought content in his mind that God has in His mind unless he were himself divine."<sup>177</sup> That God thinks according to different standards than man creates an unbreakable barrier between the two.

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<sup>174</sup> Gordon H. Clark. *God and Logic*. The Trinity Reviews. Nov/Dec. issue (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Publications) 1980. Accessed: <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=16#sthash.vm0I7y0l.dpuf>.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> This discussion is unpacked by Greg Bahnsen in his book *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis*. (P&R Publishers, 1998). It was a point of contention between Gordon Clark and Van Til.

<sup>177</sup> Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis*, (P&R Publishers, 1998), 227.

Unanswerable questions follow of how we truly can understand the mind of God. To connect logic as an essential quality of God may be uncomfortable to some, but it is the necessary method to maintain the knowability of God and authority of divine self-revelation.

This conclusion may disturb some analytical thinkers. They may wish to separate logic and God. Doing so, they would complain that the present construction merges two axioms into one. And if two, one of them must be prior; in which case we would have to accept God without logic, or logic without God; and the other one afterward. But this is not the presupposition here proposed. God and logic are one and the same first principle, for John wrote that Logic was God.<sup>178</sup>

Henry upholds the use of laws of logic as a framework for Christianity. He would contend that Christianity best uses logic in relation to reality because of the fixed presence of a logical creator God. Christians should not disdain logic but embrace it. Henry says, “if we profess to know shareable knowledge, that belief involves us in further relationships to the laws of thought, notably the laws of identity, of non-contradiction, and of excluded middle. Christianity does not disdain the canons of rationality. It offers a comprehensive logical network of beliefs.”<sup>179</sup>

Rationality and logic are grounded in the person of God and then revealed through divine revelation. Human knowledge is therefore directly dependent on divine disclosure in every area. Henry came to this conclusion and maintained it throughout his career. Henry asserted the fact that we can know anything at all is because God wills both the possibility and the content of that knowledge. Therefore, if all knowledge comes as a divine disclosure, it is correct in a general perspective to call all knowledge revelational. Henry affirms this saying, “In a sense, all knowledge may be viewed as revelational, since meaning is not imposed upon things by the

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<sup>178</sup> Gordon H. Clark. *God and Logic*. The Trinity Reviews. Nov/Dec. issue (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Publications) 1980. Accessed: <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=16#sthash.vm0I7y0l.dpuf>.

<sup>179</sup> Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 80.

human knower alone, but rather is made possible because mankind and the universe are the work of a rational Deity, who fashioned an intelligible creation.”<sup>180</sup> Despite the sinfulness of man, God, based on his character of logical consistency, upholds our likeness as logical beings able to perceive truth and recognize meaning in reality. Henry says in his book *The Drift of Western Thought*,

Human knowledge is not a source of knowledge to be contrasted with revelation, but is a means of comprehending revelation. ...Thus God, by his immanence, sustains the human knower, even in his moral and cognitive revolt, and without that divine preservation, ironically enough, man could not even rebel against God, for he would not exist. Augustine, early in the Christian centuries, detected what was implied in this conviction that human reason is not the creator of its own object; neither the external world of sensation nor the internal world of ideas is rooted in subjectivistic factors alone.<sup>181</sup>

Henry spends much time in *God, Revelation and Authority* mapping the legitimate claims of a logical God. In volume three, Henry unpacks in six separate essays the implications of such an overlooked, yet essential, characteristic of the divine essence.<sup>182</sup>

In “The Intelligibility of the Logos of God”, Henry connects the dots between rationality of God and man. He says, “The rationality of knowledge of God implies not simply the self-rationality of the knower, therefore as if rationality has its basis in human reasoning, but a rationality relating man’s thought processes to the objectively intelligible reality of the Logos.”<sup>183</sup> Rationality is an interconnecting dynamic between both God and man.

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<sup>180</sup> Carl Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 104.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>182</sup> Essay 10 - The Intelligibility of the Logos of God, Essay 11 - The Biblically Attested Logos, Essay 12 - The Living Logos and Defunct Counterfeits, Essay 13 - The Logos as Mediating Agent of Divine Revelation, Essay 14 - The Logos and Human Logic, Essay 15 - The Logic of Religious Language. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 3.

<sup>183</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 3, 170.

Therefore, logic and reason are indispensable to the Christian life as well as the whole of reality. Rationality is the backdrop to all that God does and finds verification through His self-revelation. Revelational theism does not idolize logic above God, but recognizes this attribute as a feature of the mind of God that is transferred to humanity in the *Imago Dei*. Logic is indispensable to the character of God just as any other divine attribute, such as love or holiness or justice, is indispensable. Without logic at His very ontological essence, God would not be God. Thus the ontological and epistemological axioms of revelational theism provide a coherent framework for logic and rationality as necessarily true. Gordon Clark summarizes this notion with clarity and brevity, “Logic is fixed, universal, necessary, and irreplaceable. Irrationality contradicts the Biblical teaching from beginning to end. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not insane. God is a rational being, the architecture of whose mind is logic.”<sup>184</sup>

The firm foundation built by revelation allows reason to be trusted and exercised to its full power. Henry reminds the reader of the necessary connection between revelation and reason saying, “The revelation of the living God is the precondition and starting point for human understanding; it supplies the framework and corrective for natural reason.”<sup>185</sup> Any educational system must depend on the unchanging nature of logic to pass along knowledge. This unchanging nature of logic is only trustworthy because of the authority and trustworthiness of divine revelation. Both believers and nonbelievers have access to these truths. It is to the question of common ground between believers and nonbelievers we now turn.

### Rationality as an Element of Common Ground Between Believers and Unbelievers

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<sup>184</sup> Gordon H. Clark. *God and Logic*. The Trinity Reviews. Nov/Dec. issue (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Publications) 1980. Accessed: <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=16#sthash.vm0I7y0l.dpuf>.

<sup>185</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 183.

One area which revelational theism holds promise compared to other presuppositional methodologies is in the area of common ground between believer and unbeliever. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?” This passage, and others like it, appear to disconnect the believer from the unbeliever and can be used as support for the theory that there is no common ground between the two. Yet it is important to see the emphasis of Paul’s words. They are clearly referring to relational connections. “Yoked”, “partnership”, “fellowship”, “accord”, “[shared] portion”; all of these terms are personal relational connections. Paul’s emphasis is true that it is dangerous for a believer to be heavily invested in a deep relationship with an unbeliever. Paul is not saying there are no ontological or epistemological points of contact between the two. Henry holds that there is common ground between all humans which God uses to spread the messages of hope from one person to another.

Henry believes that an essential characteristic of God is logic.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, when God made man in His image, He created a rational, logically equipped being. Scripture recognizes the state of humanity and does not cut the ties that connect humanity together. One area of common ground for all of humanity, though twisted by the noetic effects of sin, is the common experience of rationality.

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<sup>186</sup> Henry expounds this point based on the ontology of God. He then uses an extended quote from Barth to support his claim that God is the source and example of logic which is transmitted through the *Imago Dei* to humanity. Henry says, “The God of biblical revelation is the God of reason, not Ultimate Irrationality; all he does is rational. On one of his better days Barth wrote: ‘God apprehends himself and is therefore eternal reason ... the one who under all circumstances is intelligence and reason.... He is steadfast and self-consistent ... If God is for us an abyss of chance and caprice, if as far as possible we regard the irrational as the essentially divine, we neither have nor can have any real confidence in relation to God. For confidence is based on the appreciation of reason, meaning, and order.... God ... is himself as such the source of all true logical consistency’ (*Church Dogmatics* II/1, p. 427).” Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 233.



In a cultural climate where our surrounding society is more and more suspicious of organized religion, evangelicals should not needlessly sever ties that can be biblically maintained. Some Van Tillian apologists drive a strict wedge between believers and unbelievers in all aspects of life; spiritually and cognitively. The apologetic principle issued by Van Til, “without the Christian God men could not, in principle, prove or know anything at all” at its core is affirmed by Henry and revelational theology. Yet, Van Til vehemently held the lack of common ground between believers and unbelievers. He goes on to say, “The implication of this for Christian apologetics is plain. There can be no appeasement between those who presuppose in all their thought the sovereign God and those who presuppose in all their thought the would-be sovereign man. There can be no other point of contact between them than that of head-on collision.”<sup>187</sup>

This position discourages the believer from sharing his faith for lack of connection. It caters to hyper-Calvinism, which sees no need for evangelism due to divine sovereignty of God in redemption. This mindset denying common ground could be a further hinderance if expressed to an unbeliever in the genuine hearing of the Gospel.

Henry states that all humanity has the tools by which to understand truth. The Holy Spirit is the one to engage these tools to do the supernatural work of regeneration, but this does not deny the ability for unbelievers to hear and comprehend the truthfulness of divine revelation when it is presented. Henry clearly puts the *Imago Dei* at the forefront of characteristics all humanity shares regardless of their presuppositions.

Both believers and unbelievers, being created in the image of God, possess forms of reasoning and elementary concepts of God that provide common ground and points of

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<sup>187</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel* (Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co, 1950.), 19.

contact for the gospel to be heard and either accepted or rejected. That does not mean that unregenerate people can reason themselves to a correct knowledge of God by some sort of ‘natural theology’, but that they are ‘wired’ to receive God’s revelation when it comes to them from outside.<sup>188</sup>

Revelational theism takes seriously the innate rationality that is rooted in the ontology of God and imprinted on all mankind. While there is no quarter given to those who would attempt to rationally ascend to the knowledge of God on their own, the gift of reason allows for all mankind to receive and understand God’s self-revelation.

With this admission of common ground between believers and unbelievers, the impetus for evangelism takes on new strength. Believers can accurately and effectively communicate with fellow man in the shared territory of the *Imago Dei*. Through rational conversation the biblical worldview, rooted in revelation, can be shown as the best method for interpreting reality and faulty presuppositions can be discredited. While the work of logic is universal to all, the work of redemption is alone in the realm of God’s sovereign choice and illumination by the Holy Spirit for a sinner to repent and believe on the person and work of Jesus Christ as the one hope for humanity.

Along with the implications of the *Imago Dei* on rationality, revelational theism takes seriously the general revelation that is available to all men to see. While the Word of God is understood as the ultimate authority, God does communicate through creation concerning Himself. Paul states it clearly in Romans chapter one that the attributes of God are made plain to see in creation and this revelation leads to the lack of excuse when men come before God in judgment. General revelation is truly universal in that it is available to all people of all times and places. When other apologetic methods purport a disconnect between believers and unbelievers,

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<sup>188</sup> G. Wright Doyle. *Carl Henry- Theologian for All Seasons*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers. 2010), 70.

they do not rightly assess the methods of God's communication with all men externally through His creation and internally through man's ethical makeup. All men look externally at creation and can connect with the *a priori* knowledge of a Creator. All men can look internally at their guilt connect with the *a priori* knowledge of a Lawgiver. Henry says, "In both general and special revelation—in nature and in history, in the mind and conscience of man, in written Scriptures, and in Jesus of Nazareth, God has disclosed himself."<sup>189</sup>

In light of the innate logical mind all men are created, consider this sequence challenging the assumption that there is no common ground between believer and unbeliever based on the connection between general and special revelation.

- General revelation (GR) is what can be known by all men, everywhere, at all times.
- Special revelation (SR) is redemptive knowledge, spoken by God and communicated in history.
- GR is necessary for the possibility of SR and requires SR
- SR as redemptive knowledge assumes and affirms the clarity of GR.
- Therefore appeal to SR presupposes common ground leading from GR to SR.<sup>190</sup>

A close look at each step in this sequence through the lens of Scripture leads to the conclusion that a common ground between believers and unbelievers is an assumption rooted in reality. "General revelation is what can be known by all men, everywhere, at all times." This is affirmed scripturally. As previously stated, Romans 1:19-20 states, "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." Note the general

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<sup>189</sup> Carl Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 2, 10.

<sup>190</sup> Adapted from Surrendra Gangadean, *Principle Of Clarity, Rational Presuppositionalism And Proof*. Accessed: <http://surrendra.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/PC-RP-and-Proof.pdf>.

revelation that is “plain” to everyone, why, “because God has shown it to them.” This is important because it reinforces that divine communication is available to all and yet it is still at the initiative of God who reveal Himself, not that He is discovered by man. Similarly, in Psalm 19:1 we read, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” Verse 4 states, “Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” In both the New Testament and the Old Testament, we see the affirmation that all men can know aspects of God truly through general revelation. This is an act of self-revelation by God for mankind.

“Special revelation is redemptive knowledge, spoken by God and communicated in history.” John 1:17-18 shows the historical relevance of divine communication through Moses and then most fully through Jesus Christ. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.” This revelation is specific because it is the communication of redemption through Jesus Christ who is making God known in the fullest way possible. Special revelation is essential for salvation and it hinges on the person of Jesus.

“GR is necessary for the possibility of SR and requires SR.” There must be communication ability for the truth of reality to be transmitted. Since human rationality cannot create truth, but only recognize it, general revelation is necessary to open the mind of a person to the axiom of God. Once the ontology of God is established, we learn that general revelation is pointing to more, thus the requirement of special revelation. A fuller communication is essential because of who God is. The God who speaks is required as the source of truth.

“SR as redemptive knowledge assumes and affirms the clarity of GR.” What general revelation points to is clearly known. This is seen in the aforementioned Romans one passage

that states the clarity of general revelation. Special revelation builds on the truth revealed in general revelation and assumes it as accurate communication. Whether through external creation or internal guilt, mankind knows there is a God and the fact of special revelation assumes this is known.

“Therefore, appeal to SR presupposes common ground leading from GR to SR.” To use God’s word as a starting place assumes a person will be able to accept general truth about God available to all men and move to redemptive truth about God as made known through Jesus Christ. There is an essential connection between general revelation and special revelation. This common ground is *Imago Dei*. Because of the image of God imprinted on humanity, a person is able to move from general to special revelation.

Those who deny common ground between believers and unbelievers are denying the implications of the *Imago Dei* on every human which allows anyone to recognize truth and make rational and ethical decisions based on that truth. This syllogism maps out the idea that the presuppositions of revelational theism (Henry/Clark) affirms both GR and SR, while Van Tillian presuppositionalism affirms only SR and effectively denies the effectiveness of GR with its denial of common ground. The existence of common ground is a shared experience for all mankind, despite its denial by some Christian camps. The undeniable nature of the *Imago Dei* imprinted on every person allowing them to recognize divine truth as an authoritative source of knowledge.

### Ways of Knowing Under Submission to Revelation

While divine revelation is discussed as special revelation and general revelation Henry breaks it down further to contrast revelation with three ways of knowing. Those ways of gaining

knowledge are; intuition, experience, and reason. Here he explores how these avenues of knowledge fit within revelational presuppositions, yet how, when taken as an ultimate source of truth in themselves, they break down.

### *Intuition*

Henry first addresses the idea of intuition. He describes intuition as a way of knowing that is outside physical or mental constraints. He says, “That religious reality is known not by sense observation or by philosophical reasoning but by intuition or immediate apprehension has been asserted by various thinkers who insist that God is to be found in one’s own inner experience as an instant awareness of the religious Ultimate.”<sup>191</sup>

Henry goes into great detail warning of the danger for religious intuition to quickly digress into mysticism. Mysticism is not merely an ecstatic union with a higher power, but it is a claim of knowledge internal to a person, independent of external points of reference. Henry indicts Schleiermacher for his introduction of protestant liberalism as a form of mysticism. He says, “The Absolute is to be felt, not conceived. As a result, these men wrote not of God as the Religious Object, but of their own religious sentiments. Schleiermacher, founder of Protestant liberalism, in effect substituted the psychology of religious experience for theology.”<sup>192</sup>

Sensuous intuition is a particular version of intuition that asserts the human mind has intuitive categories which can lead to knowledge, but these categories can only be engaged with an external reality that fits into a particular category. Henry points to Kant as a defender of such understanding and describes his position saying, “Human knowledge does not include innate truths, he contended, but it does presuppose innate categories of thought and forms of perception,

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<sup>191</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 70.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

which confer on sensually given objects the status of cognitive knowledge.”<sup>193</sup> An example of this is mathematics, which corresponds with an intuitive category within the human mind to produce trustworthy knowledge when engaged with propositions of that category.

Rational intuition is defined by Henry as, “insist[ing] that human beings know certain propositions are immediately to be true, without resort to inference; in other words, that all men possess certain underived *a priori* truths without any process of inference whereby these truths are derived.”<sup>194</sup> This refers to an *a priori* knowledge. Secular versions of this can be seen in Plato’s understanding of the preexistence of the soul, or Hegel’s direct identity of human and divine minds. “Early modern rationalists, like their classic Greek forerunners, viewed human reason as secretly divine.”<sup>195</sup>

Rational intuition taken from a theistic perspective roots this *a priori* knowledge in the image of God imprinted on all humans. “The one theory that combines intuitive or *a priori* knowledge with a Christian view of man (in contrast to an idealistic or rationalistic divinization of reason) is the view of preformation.”<sup>196</sup> Thinkers who held this understanding of intuition fall in line with Augustine and John Calvin. Augustine attributed *a priori* knowledge to the laws of logic, truth of morality, conscience of self-existence, mathematics, and the desire to seek wisdom. Henry says Calvin understood this type of knowledge as “the created *imago Dei* which preserves man in ongoing epistemic relationships to God, the world, and other selves.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 75.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

## *Experience*

“The empiricist rejects the mystic’s call for intuitive illumination of transcendent reality, and the philosophical rationalist’s call for human reasoning, and considers sense observation to be the source of all truth and knowledge.”<sup>198</sup> This source of knowledge has developed through the ages. With its roots in Aristotelian method, knowledge was gained through observation. By looking at particulars the observer could gain experience resulting in knowledge. Thomistic scholasticism, which was greatly influenced by Aristotle, stressed the need for causation. Aquinas would go on to require all finite realities to have an effective causal relation to something prior, ultimately driving him to natural theology arguments for the existence of God. In this view of truth, all revelational claims rest on an empirically supported theological base.<sup>199</sup>

In modern development of the experiential means to truth, the advance of the scientific method and empirically demonstrable data have become, not preliminary, but the principal means to knowledge acquisition. Knowledge comes through experimental validation of deductions and rational inferences. Unique to this new era of empiricism was that, “Even after such validation has occurred, the decisive importance of the empirical requires that the resultant hypotheses or rational explanations be considered tentative rather than final.”<sup>200</sup> This perspective has become the dominant view of truth acquisition in western thinking. It has infiltrated into more than scientific experiments, but also into philosophical, sociological, and

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>199</sup> While this is an oversimplification of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, the main thrust is their expressed desire to ground knowledge in experience through demonstrable evidence in the physical world, working backward to a metaphysical reality.

<sup>200</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 79.



religious knowledge. Henry laments, “For more than two centuries the modern mind has been empirically oriented.”<sup>201</sup>

While much respect and gratitude is due to modern man’s recognition of natural laws and command of physical environments through scientific advancement, the questions of ultimate significance cannot be answered using scientific method. If divine revelation is not authoritative because is it not empirically verifiable, seekers are left with cold, impersonal, naturalism, which is unable to satisfy the human need for metaphysical meaning. Henry says, “if divine revelation provides an authoritative basis for religious faith, does not an insistent reduction of all knowledge to empirical factors become a prideful—that is, worldly wise—justification of unbelief in a transcendent revelation?”<sup>202</sup>

### *Reason*

The rationalist considers human reason to be the ultimate guide to truth. “The underlying assumption of philosophical rationalism is that the mind of man—simply in view of its latent potentialities, or veiled divinity, or the human mind’s explicit and direct continuity with the mind of God—possesses an inherent potentiality for solving all intellectual problems.”<sup>203</sup> The rationalist rejects the mystic because of the acceptance of paradoxical claims and he rejects the empiricist because sense data can have multiple interpretations and ultimately lands on unstable tentative conclusions. Even the facts the empiricist is working within the scientific method are unintelligible without the use of reason. Rationalism entertains metaphysical realities but with

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 86.

no significant dependence on transcendent revelation. Even if divine revelation is given room, that too is subjected to the authority of human reason.

While reason is a legitimate means of gaining knowledge, it cannot be given ultimate status. When compared to divine revelation as an ultimate source for truth, reason falls short. “Human reason is not a source of infallible truth about ultimate reality. For human intelligence is not infinite and left to itself man’s reasoning all too evidently reflects his finitude.”<sup>204</sup> Revelational theism recognizes the power of reason and its necessity in daily life, but subjects it to the governing limits of the authority within divine revelation.

Regarding these other ways of knowing, divine revelation acts as a schoolmaster guiding human interaction toward truth. It avoids the pitfalls and affirms the successes of sources of knowledge. Divine revelation as the ultimate authority allows for *a priori* intuition, but excludes the ineffable and contradictory perceptions of God. Divine revelation realistically embraces sense experience and empiricism while not allowing the physical reality to overshadow the supernatural reality. It utilizes the faculty of reason without allowing for the idolatry of reason. Carl Henry identifies the critical issue of authority. “If we are again to speak confidently of metaphysical realities, the critically decisive issue is on what basis—human postulation or divine revelation?”<sup>205</sup>

### Addressing Evangelical Post-Foundationalism

With the late twentieth-century movement away from modernism to postmodernism the discipline of theology has been greatly affected. Along with this move is the rejection of

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<sup>204</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 91.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

Foundationalism as an accepted epistemological starting place. The move to post-foundationalism is a quest for new grounds for truth. As postmodernism defines itself in reaction to the absolutist ideals of modernism it often manifests as suspicion of institutions and rejection of metanarratives. It has been called “a movement characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power.”<sup>206</sup> Some evangelical theologians have attempted to unify postmodern principles with evangelical theological articulation and practice.

In *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*, Stanley Grenz and John Franke make a significant plea for the evangelical community of theologians to address their methodology. Grenz and Franke, while identifying as evangelicals, believe if evangelicals are to avoid complete theological irrelevance in their presentation of the truth of Christianity, they must do so by “set[ting] themselves to the task of grappling with the implications of our setting, lying as it does ‘after modernity’.”<sup>207</sup> Grenz and Franke embrace a non-foundational epistemology and propose a “chastened rationality”<sup>208</sup> that attempts to build meaning through the communality of the Spirit moving in the particularities of cultures and traditions over time. Carl Henry would challenge whether theology done within the proposed postmodern framework can still hold true to Evangelical distinctives.

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<sup>206</sup> Brian Duignan, “Postmodernism”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018. Accessed 12/6/18: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>.

<sup>207</sup> Stanley Grenz and John Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. 2001), 4.

<sup>208</sup> This idea is defined by the authors as a “transition from a realist to a constructionist view of truth and the world.” Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 23.

Grenz and Franke assert that contemporary Christianity is doing theology in a transitional time. Just as many cultures prior, the current society is present between major methodological changes and experiencing the tension that is inherent during that transition.<sup>209</sup> Just as Christianity developed from Hebraic to Hellenistic, Greco-Roman to Germanic, feudal system to renaissance, evangelicals live in the time moving from Modernity to Post-Modernity. Grenz and Franke see the current challenge before evangelicals as the task to embrace the cultural context God has placed them in while appropriately adapting the study and practice of theology to that cultural context to communicate the correct message.

One of the primary distinctives of post-foundational thought is fragmentation. While Mainline Protestant theology and Evangelical theology are split from each other, they also embody fragmentation within themselves. In Mainline theology there is vigorous discussion of theological methodology that has become divisive. Jeffery Stout suggests the failure of theological discourse to play any meaningful role in the unfolding of culture has led to the lack of attention or interest. The discussion of theological method has become a retreat from dealing with issues matters of cultural significance. Stout likens the discussion on methodology to a public speaking ploy. “A preoccupation with method is like clearing your throat: it can go on for only so long before you lose your audience.”<sup>210</sup>

Yet the discussion of method is more than simply a preliminary exercise to the act of theology. Method is intertwined and integrated with the construction of theology and thus influenced by its conclusions. Misroslav Volf rightly asserts, “method is message” in that “all

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<sup>209</sup> Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 28.

<sup>210</sup> Jeffery Stout, *Ethics after Babel: The Language of Morals and Their Discontents*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 163.

major methodological decisions have implications for the whole of the theological edifice and inversely all major theological decisions (such as the question of faith and reason, grace and works, church and society) shape theological method.”<sup>211</sup> Therefore, there is a balance needed between focusing on methodology as a necessary means of more accurately defining the theological process, but doing so without being bogged down in methodological discussions alone.

In evangelical theology, a danger on the opposite end of the spectrum presents itself. Where Mainline Protestant theology may linger on methodology to their detriment, conservatives may jump straight to the task of theology and application of ancient texts without adequate examination of methodological concerns. A subconscious commitment to modernity has its roots in Charles Hodge, who Grenz identifies as “arguably the most influential American theologian for evangelicals.”<sup>212</sup> Hodge represents the “Old Princeton” tradition.<sup>213</sup> Hodge’s approach to theology tends to affirm the idea that if the Bible, which he believes is the storehouse of Truth, can be ordered in a way to see everything that is said concerning a particular topic, then a synthesis of those texts must be the authoritative and full understanding of that particular topic. This rationalistic method is rooted in a framework of modernity. While this

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<sup>211</sup> Misroslav Volf, “Theology, Meaning, and Power: a Conversation with George Linebeck on Theology and the Nature of Christian Difference” in *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation*, ed. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press), 45.

<sup>212</sup> Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 14.

<sup>213</sup> For a description and critique of the “Old Princeton” tradition within American Evangelicalism see George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

approach is still the dominant evangelical approach, it is also a point of contention with some contemporary evangelical scholars.<sup>214</sup>

When theology is done in a postmodern context, Grenz and Franke believe there are three important elements that the faith community will benefit from. First and foremost, they suggest the paradigm of Foundationalism will be replaced with an epistemic web. This web will link truth not to absolute beliefs, but truth is determined by the way the pieces all fit together, supporting each other, and creating an interconnected understanding of truth. Scripture is still affirmed as the “norming norm”, but its power does not come from the sweeping metanarrative, but rather local narratives. As the Spirit moves in individuals and local contexts truth is affirmed.<sup>215</sup> Second, tradition is seen as a source for theology. Modernity passed down doctrinal formulation through time but it did not allow for the recontextualization of doctrine for new cultures and contexts. Postmodernity views tradition as a guide which informs scriptural interpretation and produces the “hermeneutical trajectory” of each generation.<sup>216</sup> Lastly postmodernity welcomes the interplay between theology and culture. Grenz and Franke refer to culture as theology’s embedded context.<sup>217</sup> They believe the contemporary insights into the rules of linguistics, such as speech-act-theory, will add more to theology. Meaning can be found in both in linguistic and non-linguistic contexts. Postmodernism allows for a mutually influencing relationship between the part and the whole. Theology is done within culture, is part of culture, and is influenced by culture. Similarly, the discussion on theological method will influence the

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<sup>214</sup> Scholars include, but are not limited to: George Lindebeck, Stanley Grenz, John Franke, Hans Frei, John Jefferson Davis, Stanley N. Grundy, Wolfhart Pannenberg.

<sup>215</sup> Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 57.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 130

conclusions of theology, just as the theology itself will influence the implementation of the method.

The post-foundationalism framework for developing theology espoused by Grenz and Franke open the door wide to postmodernity. When the tenants of postmodernity are embraced evangelical distinctives are eroded. For evangelicalism to thrive, it must make the exclusive claims of the Gospel and hold to the timeless truths of Scripture. Postmodernism does not allow for the absolutist nature that is inherent in biblical Christianity. The answer to the postmodern question is not to adopt relativism and subjectivism as a means of speaking to the contemporary culture, but to embrace the ultimate standard of God's truth and be salt and light in this generation.

Henry assumes a prophetic stance as he address the loss of absolutes and the dominance of relativism. While evangelical postmodernism may claim to hold Scripture in high regard, it subverts its authority by relegating it to a local context rather than universal significance. Similarly the openness to secular linguistic theories jeopardize Henry's cardinal claim of the propositional nature of Divine revelation. Henry addresses these word-games saying, "This linguistic development led contemporary philosophy of religion into a labyrinth from which it has not yet successfully extricated itself."<sup>218</sup> The application of the axioms of the Living God and Divine revelation to a postmodern theological context would ultimately mean the head on collision of presuppositions. Either divine ontology and epistemology are the ultimate source of truth or they are not. Simply finding oneself within a certain historical context does not necessitate the acquisition of those presuppositions. Grenz and Franke appear to implement

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<sup>218</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 3, 442–443.

postmodernism out of an implicit frustration with modernism rather on the merits of postmodernism itself.

In addition to Grenz and Franke, other authors have expressed a postmodern interpretation of evangelical theology. Of these, Hans Frei and Kevin Vanhoozer are leaders in the field. Their thoughts and critique of Henry's method are worthy of exploration and further study.

Hans Frei became a recognized voice in the theological discussion in 1974 after the publication of his work *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*.<sup>219</sup> In this work Frei proposes that an Enlightenment-driven concern for historical justification perverts the primary quality of Scripture. Frei's counterpoint to this misguided view of Scripture is in recapturing what he calls the "realistic biblical narrative."<sup>220</sup> This term developed by Frei is a return to pre-critical methods of interpretation, such as used by Reformers like Luther and Calvin. In their interpretive framework they were able to view the Bible simultaneously as literal and figurative. It was literal in that it was easily understood, but it was figurative in that it could always point to additional types, forms, and illusions of spiritual realities. With Frei's emphasis on narrative as the interpretive genre, the meaning of a text is found in the literary aspects without need for historical or metaphysical hermeneutical tools to acquire meaning. Frei rejected Henry's insistence on propositional revelation and viewed authorial intent as an insufficient guide for meaning within a text.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>221</sup> The ascendancy of post-foundationalism and the rejection of Henry is traced by Thornbury in the rise of the "new Yale school of theology," of which Frei was a leader. Greg Thornbury, *Recovering Classical Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry*. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2013), 84-97.



Kevin Vanhoozer similarly sought to disconnect revelation from a solely propositional motif. In this attempt he expresses a deep appreciation of the varied genres throughout Scripture. Vanhoozer attempts to provide a new structure for Evangelical theology when he published *The Drama of Doctrine* in 2005.<sup>222</sup> He very clearly understood his work in a postmodern context distinct from the categories in which Henry chose to do theology. He says, “The present book sets forth a post-conservative, canonical-linguistic theology and a directive theory of doctrine...”<sup>223</sup> In this work Vanhoozer utilizes the format of theater to re-envision the task of theology. With a theo-drama framework in mind, Scripture become the script of the “play” which unfolds on the stage of reality. With the Holy Spirit as the director, disciples are the actors, and churches are ensembles working together in the performance. Doctrine acts as a guide for how the actors interpret the script in new contexts.<sup>224</sup>

Vanhoozer critiques Henry’s method as being too rigidly bound to view all of revelation as propositional truth claims and thus overlooking meaning that can be found within the genre itself.<sup>225</sup> Vanhoozer believes for example when poetry or parables are used within scripture, they cannot be reduced to mere truth claims. These texts have an element of truth value communicated through the artistic speech act. Vanhoozer claims the meaning is not derived from propositions

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<sup>222</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>224</sup> "Doctrine serves the church by unfolding the canonical logic of the *theo-drama* and by offering dramaturgical direction as to how Christians today may participate in and continue the evangelical action in new situations." Ibid., 362.

<sup>225</sup> Vanhoozer says, “Carl Henry was absolutely right to stress the cognitive content of Scripture and doctrine over against those who sought to make revelation a non-cognitive experience. Is it possible, however, that in so focusing on biblical content he, and other conservative evangelicals, have overlooked the significance of biblical literary form?” Kevin Vanhoozer, “Lost in Interpretation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no.1 (2005), 100.

alone but also from the manner in which the genre speaks. Therefore, to flatten the Bible into one dimensional propositional statements would be to commit the “heresy of propositional paraphrase.”<sup>226</sup>

A restatement of evangelical theology from a postmodern framework is yet to find general acceptance within the Evangelical community. When theologians, scholars, or pastors adopt postmodern principles they quickly move into conclusions that cease to be evangelical in any historical sense of the term. Examples of this are seen in the teachings of Brian McLaren’s *Generous Orthodoxy*,<sup>227</sup> and Rob Bell’s abandonment of the doctrine of hell in his book, *Love Wins*.<sup>228</sup> Carl Henry’s call for evangelicals to recapture the authority of divine revelation is just as pertinent in a postmodern context as it was in a modern context. To abandon the very distinctives of evangelicalism for the sake of cultural acquiescence is unthoughtful with regards to wisdom, unhelpful in the propagation of the Kingdom of God, and destructive to orthodox faithfulness. Grenz and Franke address Henry directly saying, “The scholastic theological program of Hodge and Henry is clearly still the dominant paradigm in evangelical circles...[yet] the traditional evangelical commitment to objectivism and rational propositionalism has worked against an adequate understanding of the relationship between theology and culture.”<sup>229</sup> Henry would likely counter that revelation provides the proper interpretation of culture rather than vice

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<sup>226</sup> This idea is explored by William Roach. William Roach, “Evaluating Objections to Carl F. H. Henry’s Cognitive-Propositional Hermeneutic.” *Journal of the International Society for Christian Apologetics* 8, no.1 (2015).

<sup>227</sup> Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/conservative, Mystical/poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

<sup>228</sup> Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011).

<sup>229</sup> Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 14-15.

versa. He says, “Culture may surely shape the beliefs of any given period, but it cannot decide the truth or falsity of those beliefs.”<sup>230</sup> Thankfully, the Living God has spoken and such conclusions of truth or falsity can be made on the firm foundation of His Word.

### Starting with the Fear of the LORD

Carl Henry approaches epistemology from a presuppositional theology. The axiom of divine revelation affirms this move in the familiar phrase, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”<sup>231</sup> The book of Proverbs is wisdom literature designed to be practical and applicable to daily life. While this book is written for real-world function, the presuppositional nature of divine revelation presents its application for all people who would seek wisdom. Henry affirms in essay eighteen of *God, Revelation, and Authority* Vol. 3, “Wisdom as a Carrier of Revelation”, that “God is everywhere a forefront reality to the biblical wisdom writers, not simply a footnote or afterthought.”<sup>232</sup> Revelational theism supports the presuppositional means as well as the content for true wisdom through the divinely inspired scriptures.

The quest for wisdom is not purely an academic exercise. While the halls of academia focus on such pursuits, this endeavor is suited for all areas of life. Whether wisdom is attained inside or outside the classroom, the Bible establishes the fear of the LORD as the only proper starting place. The fear of the LORD is described as “to regard God with reverent awe.”<sup>233</sup> This

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<sup>230</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 4, 53.

<sup>231</sup> Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 9:10 expressly use this wording concerning the foundation for wisdom and knowledge.

<sup>232</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 3, 312.

<sup>233</sup> Jim Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2008), 28.

sense of awe flows from who God is. It manifests itself as “reverent trust, love, and obedience towards Him. Such reverent fear presupposes the knowledge of how infinite in power, majesty, and goodness God is.”<sup>234</sup>

The word “LORD” in this context is a translation of the Hebrew tetragrammaton YHWH identifying the covenant name of God. Its usage connects this passage of wisdom literature with the history of Israel and the rest of the Old Testament. The name, LORD, should carry with it a reminder of relationship. To fear the LORD, is to also be aware of the connection He has with His covenant people. Alan Carr understands the relational dimension of this context as he says, “When we truly fear the Lord, we will recognize that He is the Creator and we are the creatures. He is the Master and we are the servants. He is the Father and we are the children.”<sup>235</sup> Modern believers can claim connection to this same covenant-making God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul writes in Galatians 3:29 saying, “And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.” Therefore, when God initiates relationship with mankind, they can take part in the call to true wisdom built on the relational foundation within the fear of the LORD.

Wayne Grudem encapsulates his discussion on the fear of the LORD as the foundation for wisdom with a strong desire to not dishonor or displease God produced by a fear of “fatherly discipline”.<sup>236</sup> This reverence and respect motivates believers to adjust their lives to God’s standards and His revealed will for humanity. Furthermore, when Godly wisdom is attained such

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<sup>234</sup> A. R. Fausset, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah*, vol. 3 (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 413.

<sup>235</sup> Alan Carr, “The Fear of the Lord (Pro. 1:7),” in *The Sermon Notebook: Old Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1700.

<sup>236</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2000), 194.

wisdom is not haughty or arrogant, as worldly wisdom may be, but rather humble and peaceable. (Proverbs 11:2, James 3:13-18)

The fear of the LORD has many benefits in addition to being the foundation for wisdom and understanding. John Kitchen surveys the book of Proverbs to describe how the fear of the LORD goes into all areas of life and has implications beyond epistemology.

It is not only the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7, 29; 2:5) and wisdom (9:10; 15:33), but it instills confidence (14:26) and makes rich (22:4). The fear of the Lord prolongs life (Prov. 10:27), is a fountain of life (14:27), leads to life (19:23), and is rewarded with life (22:4). The fear of the Lord is to hate the evil God hates (Prov. 8:13; 16:6, 23:17). Though you may lose all else, gain the fear of the Lord (Prov. 15:16)!<sup>237</sup>

The pursuit of wisdom according to God's plan is a benefit on many levels of reality, yet many people reject this path of wisdom and suppress the truth of God. Proverbs describes this type of person as a fool.

Proverbs 1:7 immediately contrasts the wise path, which begins with the fear of the LORD, to the path of the fool. The verse goes on to say that "fools despise wisdom and instruction". Instead of fearing the LORD and thus setting oneself up for finding wisdom, with all of its benefits, the fool believes he can find his own way to truth and rejects Godly wisdom. In Romans 1:21-22, Paul illustrates this progression as he describes ungrateful mankind suppressing the knowledge of God and in doing so "claiming to be wise, became fools." Charles Spurgeon eloquently articulates that the connection between knowledge and wisdom is not necessarily a direct correlation. He says, "To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal and are the greater fools for it. There is no fool as great as a knowing fool."<sup>238</sup> Proverbs as well as

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<sup>237</sup> John A. Kitchen, *Proverbs: A Mentor Commentary*, Mentor Commentaries (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2006), 41.

<sup>238</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 17 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1971), p. 282.

Romans recognize the pursuit of knowledge does not result in wisdom if it is not founded in the submission to and reverence of the one true Living God.

The quest for knowledge is a noble quest, but it must begin in the right place. In light of the omniscient nature of God, there is no knowledge outside God's jurisdiction. God is the author of all truth and therefore the authority behind all knowledge. A man is wise when he comes to align his perspective of reality to that of God's revealed perspective. Henry describes how right human living falls in line with God's perspective of reality. He uses the idea of justice to illustrate this, saying, "Because human justice has no firm independent status, it ideally patterns itself after God's revealed will. Man lacks authority and wisdom to creatively forge "what is right and just and fair" but through "the fear of the Lord and...the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:5) he may in truth know "every good path" (Prov. 2:9)."<sup>239</sup> It is through divine revelation that mankind knows how they ought to live in reality, and the best life, the life of wisdom, starts with the fear of the LORD.

As Henry seeks to establish revelational theism as a functional foundation for educational settings he roots his understanding of wisdom on these theological foundations. Apart from a theistic standard for wisdom, all knowledge will be distorted by non-biblical epistemologies. This is not to say that every utterance of an unbeliever is false. But it is to say that an unbelieving worldview attempts to establish some other authority outside of divine revelation, making that worldview unreliable and inconsistent. When unbelievers do speak truth, they are tapping into the latent *Imago Dei* and the implications of the biblical worldview written on their hearts, even if they suppress that truth. When appealing to reason, sense experience, intuition, or any other avenue of knowledge as a source of ultimate authority, mankind is asserting their own

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<sup>239</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 6, 432.

autonomy and rejecting the “fear of the LORD”. According to divine revelation, any alternative presuppositional starting place misrepresents the pathway to true wisdom.

A healthy understanding of the fear of the LORD is coupled with a submission to the authority of divine revelation. Henry sorrowfully asks how absolute standards fit into an age of arrogant relativism. He says, “In an age enamored of scientific empiricism, the very idea of unalterable absolutes, changeless commands, deathless doctrines, and timeless truths seems pretentious and unpalatable. When academia pursues change and novelty...what room remains for revelation, for a fixed Word of God—in short, for divine authority?”<sup>240</sup> When man trusts in his own resources for authority he is not fearing the LORD, rather he is rebelling against the LORD. It is pride that refuses to submit to divine revelation and adopt a healthy fear of the LORD. In prideful revolt man misses the path to wisdom. The fear of the LORD is an essential first step on the path to wisdom. It prepares the way for growth in knowledge as well as love and obedience. Jim Newheiser states, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom in the same way in which a foundation is the beginning of a house: everything that comes after the foundation is built upon it.”<sup>241</sup> As Henry looks at educational settings, he sees the need for the presuppositions behind revelational theism. A correct understanding of the fear of the LORD is rooted on who God is and what He has said. This is the path to true wisdom.

### Conclusion

The authority of divine revelation is a fundamental axiom of revelational theism. It reveals the standards by which to judge truth and interpret reality. The historicity of this position

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<sup>240</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 4, 10.

<sup>241</sup> Jim Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs*, 28.

has been shown through the words of the earliest Church Fathers. By grounding human rationality revelational theism presents the most coherent paradigm for the reliability and use of logic and reason in educational settings as well as in everyday life. While there are other avenues to gain knowledge, such as intuition, experience and reason, it has been shown that they are best utilized by the framework of revelational theism. Without the boundaries set by revelation as the ultimate authority each avenue can be perverted to misinterpret truth inconsistent with reality. The foundation established in the grounding of logic and rationality through revelation is also developed as a point of common ground between believers and unbelievers. Divine revelation sets up “the fear of the Lord” as the starting place for true wisdom. In light of these topics, revelational theism provides the best means of understanding and engaging with reality. The authority of Divine revelation is the bedrock which gives all other areas of understanding consistency and grounds the use of logic and rationality in the ontology of God.

Building on the established consistency of revelational theism, Henry uses his firm epistemological position to counter inconsistent worldviews in the following chapter. Chapter four will address the philosophical position of Naturalism and its inability to answer the most important questions of reality. Henry exposes the faulty grounding of rationality and morality by Naturalism. He shows how it is inconsistent with the common experience of humanity. Yet, despite this inconsistency, this worldview has become a dominant influence in the field of education. The following chapter will identify and critique the application of the presuppositions of naturalism within the education system, from the early influences of John Dewey and into current examples.



## **Chapter Four: Demonstrating the Irrationality of Naturalism**

### Introduction

After establishing the necessity of divine revelation for knowledge, Carl Henry sought to expose the faulty presuppositions of naturalism. This chapter argues that naturalism is self-refuting based on internal inconsistency and lack of coherence to reality. This will be shown through the inability for any person to have a presuppositionally neutral starting place, a demonstration of the inconsistencies within naturalism's dependence on the rationality of logic, and the inability for naturalism to justify the moral code common to humanity.

Naturalism is the philosophical position that nothing exists except the physical universe, namely matter and energy. Innate within this philosophy is a rejection of the supernatural on the basis that it is outside the physical universe. Henry recognized the basic tenets of naturalism, saying in this understanding of the world "nature is the ultimate real and that man is essentially no more than an animal."<sup>242</sup> With this understanding of reality, naturalism cannot account for the rationality it uses to conclude that the physical universe is all there is nor can it defend the abstract idea of right and wrong universal to human experience. The introduction of naturalistic presuppositions within educational settings undercut the ability for students to be prepared for thoughtful and ethical engagement with reality.

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<sup>242</sup> Carl F. H. Henry and James Strauss, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1972), 22.

### Engaging Ancient and Modern Naturalists

Naturalistic philosophy and science is not new to the world of ideas. It has a long history which traces back to the beginning of philosophy itself. Carl Henry engages with the major proponents of naturalism throughout his theological career. His ongoing dialogue is in defense of the revelational theism promoted in biblical Christianity. This clash of worldviews has been constantly addressing the juxtaposition of the natural with the supernatural.

Henry recognizes the earliest Greek philosophers and the roots of naturalism. He points to Thales as the godfather of philosophical inquiry in the effort to seek truth to order humanity's understanding of reality.

Greek philosophy got underway in the sixth century B.C. with Thales (636–542 B.C.). At that time the Milesian school of nature-philosophy, concerned mainly with identifying the basic stuff of the world, defined the immutable ground of the universe in nontheistic terms. Thales proposed water as the ultimate source from which all else supposedly evolved, Anaximander projected an infinite indeterminate matter, and Anaximenes suggested air or mist.<sup>243</sup>

While Thales was affirming water as the base element of reality, Democritus focused more on the existence of atoms and empty space as the essential building blocks of all reality.<sup>244</sup> Another early naturalist Henry identifies is Heraclitus. Henry says, “Instead of acknowledging God as living and transcendent, Greek philosophers—notably Heraclitus and the Stoics—tended to equate God simply with the living essence of the world.”<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 5, 43–44.

<sup>244</sup> “Democritus explained all existence in terms of atoms and empty space. According to Democritus and Leucippus, the universe is divided into an infinity of immutable and indivisible fragments of matter that change only in their external spatial relationships; they considered the atoms to be unchangeable except as to position.” Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 5, 44.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

Naturalism was alive and well before the modern developments of science. Henry addresses the thoughts of David Hume as an antagonist to supernatural truth. Hume's skepticism played a significant role in the development of philosophy and modern inquiry. Henry says, "It was David Hume who first among the moderns formulated empiricism as the all-inclusive criterion of truth and applied it to theological assertions with an agnostic outcome."<sup>246</sup> This primacy of experience set the stage for scientific advance to take on a sacred position. Henry engages with Hume in many settings especially discussions of sense experience, the nature of causal relations, skepticism and doubt, as well as the nature of miracles. Henry uses Hume as a continual interlocuter as a representative of modern naturalism. He also sees how Hume sets the stage for later generations of naturalists to follow suit in skepticism. Henry explains this development, "The British empiricists, David Hume especially, prepared the way for the insistence of John Dewey and other twentieth-century naturalists, that our knowledge is limited to direct experience of contingent factors from which no implications can be drawn concerning reality as a whole."<sup>247</sup>

Henry commonly engages with the thoughts of John Dewey and his naturalistic approach to pragmatism. Because of the significant influence Dewey played in the transition of modern educational presuppositions, Henry confronts him as a representative of a larger naturalistic issue. Henry exposes his stark naturalism saying, "Dewey's basic assumption is that the scientific method alone attains real knowledge. And since scientific observation and experiment do not (and cannot) verify the supernatural, scientific experiment offers no grounds for belief in

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<sup>246</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 79.

<sup>247</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 3, 198.

transcendent Being.”<sup>248</sup> Henry is critical of Dewey’s presuppositional bias against any supernatural reality.

Henry takes a long look at evolutionary principles and enters into discussion with prominent naturalist of his day as well as from the past. He acknowledges that the concept of naturalistic evolution is not a new idea, but rather is rooted in ancient thoughts. He references T. T. Chen’s admission, “Already in the fifth century B.C. Empedocles declared earth, air, fire and water to be the primary elements, and Confucius held that all reality unfolded gradually from a simple single entity.”<sup>249</sup> <sup>250</sup> In Henry’s essay, “The Crisis of Evolutionary Theory”<sup>251</sup> he spends significant energy engaging with contemporary paleontologist and evolutionary scientist, Stephen Jay Gould. In this essay Henry allows Gould’s published positions to represent Darwin, Darwinism, as well as his own views of a naturalistic means for the origin of life. Henry quotes, critiques, and engages Gould’s words as presented in his book, *Ever Since Darwin: Some Reflections in Natural History*.<sup>252</sup>

In his engagement with the leading naturalistic scholars of his day Henry allows them to speak for themselves and represents their ideas in the best light. He attempts to engage with the best of their arguments rather than setting up a strawman. His goal is to show the ability of the biblical worldview to make better sense of the existing evidence concerning these topics. He says, “Secular philosophy today still dialogues over being and/or becoming in the setting of

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<sup>248</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 6, 31.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>250</sup> T. T. Chen, “Twenty-five Years Before Darwin.” 49-52.

<sup>251</sup> Henry, “The Crisis of Evolutionary Theory”, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 6, 156-196.

<sup>252</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Ever since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1977, 1997, 2007).

Parmenides and Heraclitus, or of Hegel or Marx and Dewey, while it largely ignores the biblical alternative posed by Moses and Isaiah and by Jesus and Paul.”<sup>253</sup> Henry wants to bring the perspective of Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul to the table in discussion with ancient and modern manifestations of naturalism.

### The Myth of Neutrality

Naturalism and logical positivism conclude that only empirically verifiable observations are meaningful. These coincided to produce the idea that scientific method was a neutral tool for truth confirmation. This notion of empiric neutrality gained dominance. “Since the end of the nineteenth century and until about the mid-1960s the great majority of historians and philosophers of science - along with the scientists themselves - believed strongly that what the scientists did was to unfold a pre-existing objective structure of nature, that the truth of the scientific ‘facts’ were universally valid.”<sup>254</sup> The idea of “universally valid” scientific facts is the idea that these facts are applicable in all situations, free from contextual bias. Simply put, science was perceived as a neutral starting place for discovering truth. While this notion of the neutrality of certain facts gained prominence within society, the truth that all facts are governed by presuppositional interpretation was a constant theme of Carl Henry.

Henry raises the question about how the interpretation of facts fit within an overarching worldview. He asks “...the question of which presuppositions most consistently explain the so-called data remains indispensably important.” Henry would not allow the idea of “brute facts”,

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<sup>253</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 5, 46.

<sup>254</sup> Kostas Gavroglu, *Questioning the Neutrality of Science*. University of Athens.  
<http://www.nnet.gr/historein/historeinfiles/histvolumes/hist09/historein9-gavroglu.pdf>.

or “universally valid” facts to masquerade as “neutral” for the purpose of discrediting a supernatural worldview. He goes on to say, “There are, to be sure, no independently existing neutral ‘data,’ since the very assertion requires intellectual interpretation. Since truth is systematic, and theorems can only be deduced from axioms, disagreements are in a sense “reduced” to the choice of axioms.”<sup>255</sup> The choice is not merely between which facts/data are true or false, because this determination is always dependent upon the perspective of the interpreter. The real choice is in the presuppositional starting place of the interpreter which will guide the interpretation of the data.

It is impossible to argue for anything without a presuppositional starting place.<sup>256</sup> The possibility of neutrality is therefore nonexistent. Those who claim or suppose neutrality for a particular view are believing a myth disconnected from reality. Rather than believing a myth, such as the possibility of a neutral epistemic starting place, the task becomes to identify the guiding presuppositions and determine the extent to which they are either recognized or subconscious.

It is impossible to reason without a criterion of truth in place. Criteria for truth can come from many sources, but ultimately all criteria refer back to a metaphysical commitment. This commitment can be either to the idea of eternal impersonal matter or an idea of an eternal personal Creator. But neutrality is not an option. The question of presuppositional starting places needs to be clearly identified. “It is theoretically as legitimate for a theist to view God as the cause (perhaps the final cause) of the universe as for an atheist to view nature as a chaos that

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<sup>255</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol 4, 337.

<sup>256</sup> “The idea of a presupposition-less observer is fictional; no observer is ever totally free of presuppositions.” Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 5, 25.

man orders.”<sup>257</sup> What is illegitimate is to refer to one’s worldview as presuppositionally neutral, as if any person were able to interpret reality independent from guiding axioms.

This claim for neutrality is a common misconception regarding the hard sciences, whether intentional or unintentional. The proponents of naturalism have bought into the idea that scientific method is an unbiased method of truth accusation. Henry highlights this fallacy. “The fact is that evolutionary humanism is a more rigid orthodoxy than is biblical religion: while professing to be empirically neutral it often views any who challenge its dogmas as heretics and tries to silence them as academic illiterates.”<sup>258</sup>

Henry views the untruthful claim of neutrality by naturalistic science to be socially deceitful and philosophically dishonest. He scathingly calls out this position on its understanding of how mankind knows truth. He says, “The modern naturalistic mind is seriously deranged by false philosophical assumptions about human epistemic power.”<sup>259</sup> Henry counters these philosophical assumptions of naturalism with his understanding of the limits of human reason. Henry makes abundantly clear that human reasoning is not a creative source for truth, but rather it is a divinely crafted instrument for recognizing truth.<sup>260</sup> This further confirms the stance that no reasoning is free from presuppositional bias. When human reasoning is kept in

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<sup>257</sup> Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief: The Rutherford Lectures*, 68.

<sup>258</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 6, 151.

<sup>259</sup> Carl Henry, “The Crisis of Authority,” in *The god of this Age or the God of the Ages* ed. Al Mohler (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 51.

<sup>260</sup> Henry in *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1 spends two specific chapters (articles) unpacking this very question. In “Method and Criteria of Theology I & II” Henry dives into the revelatory necessity of truth and how it cannot be a man-made invention. It is through divine revelation that truth is first disclosed. Any and all truth is therefore rooted in God’s revelation. Henry says, “Divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its verifying principle; logical consistency is a negative test for truth and coherence is a subordinate test. The task of Christian theology is to exhibit the content of biblical revelation as an orderly whole.” Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 215.

check by divine revelation, supernatural presuppositions are at play. When human reasoning is elevated to the level of truth formation, naturalistic presuppositions are at play. In both instances, presuppositions guide the outcome.

Henry rightly observes, “When human reasoning is exalted as the source of truth, then the content of truth is soon conformed to the prejudices of some influential thinker or school of scholars, or it may be conformed to the current consensus of opinion, sometimes dignified by the expression ‘the universal human consciousness.’”<sup>261</sup> It is more intellectually honest to admit the non-neutrality of presuppositions and their impact on the interpretation of any and all data. When this position is accepted, dialogue can then be useful for determining which worldview presuppositions can most consistently and coherently explain the data.

### The Criticism of Circular Reasoning

A criticism levied by philosophers and logicians against revelational theism as a presuppositional starting place is that it uses circular reasoning to come to its conclusion. The argument is illustrated as follows: divine revelation is true because divine revelation says it is true. While circular reasoning is a fallacy when it is articulated in the narrow sense of particulars, there is a broad sense which, when applied to axioms and ultimate considerations, the allegation of circularity does not carry the same connotation.

John Frame counters this argument against Christian circular reasoning stating that all presuppositional criterion for truth manifest in the same way: “Every philosophy must use its

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<sup>261</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 226.



own standards in proving its own conclusions; otherwise, it is simply inconsistent.”<sup>262</sup> For example, rationalists believe human reasoning is the ultimate authority. The presupposition concerning the authority of reason must be implicit within their arguments affirming rationalism. Similarly, the arguments for naturalism must presuppose the nonexistence of the supernatural to be consistent in their affirmations of a closed materialistic system.

Any philosophy sets forth a standard of truth which is consistent with its affirmation; otherwise, it is inconsistent. When arguing for ultimate criterion, all worldviews set up a standard of truth compatible with its own conclusions. Whether a theistic worldview or a naturalistic worldview, all worldviews exhibit a broad circularity in that they assume their own standard of truth.

Frame argues that Christians who adopt non-Christian truth standards are not helping themselves in their apologetic goals. To adopt standards of logic, experience, reason, or any other source of truth, to the exclusion of divine revelation, undercuts the potency of such avenues. Only with the presuppositions unveiled through divine revelation do these truth receptors reach their maximum potential. To argue without appealing to Scripture as the ultimate authority falsely encourages the interlocutor in their autonomy to reason from a neutral vantage point. While the idea of starting from the presuppositions of revelational theism to prove the truth of Scripture may have the perception of circular reasoning, it is ultimately only honest reasoning with clarity of one’s own starting place.

For believers, acknowledging the presupposition of divine authority changes the approach one takes when engaging unbelievers. One example of this is how scripture states that all humans have received a clear understanding of God at some level of consciousness. Carl

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<sup>262</sup> John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1994), 11.

Henry points out how both the Old and New Testament work from this presupposition.<sup>263</sup>

Scripture never attempts to prove the existence of God, but rather assumes it as the basis of further reasoning. Henry identifies Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:18-23 as clear indications of man's exposure to and knowledge of God's self-revelation. Yet Scripture also makes clear humanity's willful suppression of that knowledge, which is consistent with experienced reality. Psalm 14 says "A fool says in his heart 'there is no God.'" This context is clearly not an intellectual deficiency, but rather the implementation of moral blindness in his heart. The "fool" is willfully choosing a corrupt path (Ps. 14:1b, 3ff), therefore prompting the conclusion "there is no God" in an effort to rationalize the incongruency between his current moral state and his innate knowledge that there is in fact a righteous God who exists. Therefore, in dialogue, in light of these scriptures, a believer would not appeal to the non-Christian elements of epistemology the unbeliever is attempting to utilize, but rather to refer to the revelational epistemology innate within them in an attempt draw out the truth they are suppressing.

Secondly, based on a variety of scriptures,<sup>264</sup> the believer can rely on the supernatural witness of the Holy Spirit in and through the words used to accomplish God's purposes. The

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<sup>263</sup> In *God, Revelation, and Authority* vol. 1, Henry discusses what he calls the "Common Ground" controversy and dialogues at length with the thoughts of Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann on whether or not believers and unbelievers have any legitimate points of contact related to the knowledge of God. "Both Old and New Testaments alike teach God is manifested through his creation and that man is responsibly knowledgeable of his Creator." Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol 1, 399.

<sup>264</sup> These scriptures show the work of the Holy Spirit as a supernatural element in and through the natural words of men. (all quoted in ESV)  
 Rom. 15:18-19 "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God."  
 1 Cor. 2:4-5 "and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,<sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."  
 2 Cor. 3:15-18 "But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed... And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."  
 1 Thess. 1:5 "because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."

believer does not have to rely on his or her own intellectual ability, articulation, or persuasiveness as the sole means to accomplish a spiritual goal. In light of the scriptural evidence of a preeminence of the Spirit's work in revealing truth, the believer's strategy should be focused on exposure to God's Word and presuppositions supported by divine revelation, not non-Christian presuppositions.

The charge of circularity should not be a deterrent from a firm reliance on the Scripture as the authoritative source of truth. When the presuppositional starting place is presented upfront, the discussion can result in a cogent and coherent presentation of the biblical worldview. A related method to this discussion is to challenge unbelievers to state upfront why they have confidence in the ability to trust their own reasoning, or the rationality behind a moral or ethical code of conduct. It is to that discussion we will now turn.

### The Inability for Naturalism to Account for Rationality

Rationality is essential for meaningful life. Humanity relies on logical principles every day for normal decision-making. The blessing of rational thought is an assumption taken for granted most of the time. Carl Henry believed revelational theism had solid ground for the reliability of reason, and naturalism was unable to account for rationality. Ultimately, the rationale behind naturalism must inevitably borrow from the theistic presuppositions for truth in order to trust the logic it uses to discredit the existence of a supernatural reality. Henry believed an essential quality making the theistic model sustainable and the naturalistic model unsustainable was the use of propositional statements. Henry said,

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2 Thess. 2:13-14 "God chose you as the first-fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."

Christianity manifests its superiority by providing valid propositional information: God is sovereign, personal Spirit: he is causally related to the universe as the Creator of man and the world: he reveals his will intelligibly to chosen prophets and apostles: despite man's moral revolt he shows his love in the offer of redemption: he is supremely revealed in Jesus Christ in once-for-all incarnation: he has coped decisively with the problem of human sin in the death and resurrection and ascension of the incarnate Logos.<sup>265</sup>

By establishing propositional truth claims, Henry points to a reality outside of nature. If the correspondence between what we think and what we know is only within our minds, not fixed in something real, our rationality is not dependable. However, if the propositions of our language do connect with a reality outside of our own existence, then there is reason to trust our own rationality.

Naturalism is a worldview that claims there is no reality outside of nature; therefore, the final cause for all things is ultimately material. Physical entities can cause things to happen in a "cause and effect" relationship. But physical entities cannot account for rational causes. The "reasons" behind a cause cannot be explained in physical terms. For example, a person's actions may be described in a purely behavioristic manner. A particular action could be linked to the environment or upbringing of that person. But naturalism has no categories for mental causes, or rationality, outside of mechanistic chemical reactions within the brain. This lack of rational causation is unsatisfactory when related to a relational being.

J. P. Moreland writes on this same topic, "If anyone claims to know that physicalism is true, or embrace it for good reasons, if one claims that it is a rational position which should be chosen on the basis of evidence, then this claim is self-refuting."<sup>266</sup> This claim is self-refuting because naturalism, which rejects the existence of things outside of nature, eliminates the realm

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<sup>265</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 69.

<sup>266</sup> J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997), 92.

in which rationality is possible. Naturalism is unable to account for the reliability of reason yet depends on it day by day.<sup>267</sup> It does not allow for the metaphysical categories necessary for non-physical tools like propositions, laws of logic, cognitive causation, and the like, which are required for rationality. Carl Henry makes it clear that unlike naturalism, revelational theism has the ability to ground the existence of, use of, and trust of, reason. He says, “Not only is divine revelation rational, but it is, in Christian purview, the ground of all rationality.”<sup>268</sup>

In summary, the existence of rationality is not expressed in materialistic means; therefore, non-material causes must exist for rationality to exist. Naturalism depends on reason, yet cannot account for the existence of reason while remaining consistent with its presuppositions. Theism can remain consistent with its presuppositions and give an account of the reliability of rationality through the ontological status of God and the epistemological status of divine revelation.

### Henry Addresses Four Criticisms of the Rationality of Revelation

Carl Henry writes that “Christianity welcomes the honest inquiry of the doubter, for it fears nothing from investigation”<sup>269</sup> This lack of fear is because rationality finds grounding within biblical revelation. The same cannot be said for naturalism. The inability to justify the

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<sup>267</sup> Moreland states there are five factors needed for rational thought that naturalism cannot account for: (1) Minds must have intentionality capable of having thoughts about and directed towards things in the world. (2) The reasons, propositions, thoughts, laws of logic, and truth must exist and be accessible to people’s minds and thought processes. (3) One must be able to “see” how logical arguments are cogent—this means recognizing the flow and cogency of the argument, not just being physically caused to believe something. (4) An enduring self is required to follow an argument over an extended period of time, seeing the argument flow from beginning to end. (5) Some type of agent causation (that is irreconcilable with physical determinism) is needed for personal reflection and a rational evaluation of arguments. Naturalism cannot account for these five factors. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*, 92-96.

<sup>268</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 196.

<sup>269</sup> Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought*, 82.

reliability of reason itself on naturalistic means becomes evident. In naturalism's attempt to discredit the superior epistemic position of revelational theism, Henry interacts with four main critiques levied against special revelation from a naturalistic perspective.

A common objection is the denial of absolute truth. This denial is hinged on the impossibility of special revelation. If there were such a divine communication, such communication would be binding for all of humanity, but since naturalistic presuppositions discredit any supernatural realities, no such communication exists. Therefore, truth is what can be derived from the empirical observation and these understandings are continually revisable based on new observations. Truth is never absolute because science is always changing and discovering new things about nature.

The naturalist projects a version of reality that is devoid of the supernatural, and along with it, devoid of absolute truth. As Henry says, "But for all his rejection of an absolute, he persists on absolutizing his biases; he heralds the reign of tentativity and relativity, but at the same time proceeds on the latent absolute that nature is alone real, and that special revelation is therefore impossible."<sup>270</sup> This "absolute" declaration of the naturalist concerning the state of reality is far beyond the limits of empirical observation or the scientific method, and bears witness to a source of knowledge beyond nature, thereby contradicting their own foundational presupposition which denies metaphysical realities.

Revelational theism goes on the offensive and asserts the reality of an ultimate truth not verifiable by sense observation and experiment. This truth is very much verifiable, such as by the existence of miracles, the testimony of the scripture, and the internal witness of creation. But such evidences are discredited and set aside a priori by the biases of naturalism. Henry states

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<sup>270</sup> Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought*, 92.

that the rejection of this knowledge and the relegation of truth to a limited and relativistic position is a suppression of truth and rebellion against God.<sup>271</sup>

Second is the criticism that truth can be arrived at through reason alone without the need of special revelation. The superfluidity of special revelation, as Henry calls it, refers to the unnecessary position and redundancy of revelation in light of the surpassing power of reason.<sup>272</sup> This ability for reason to circumvent the need for revelation is rooted in the idea of human progress. Naturalistic philosophy refuses to view humanity's past and present in any other way than improvement. Yet it is revelational theism that introduces the idea that man has fallen from his position of glory. Henry's theology points to the reality of sin that has pervaded every aspect of humanity, even his rational capabilities. It is therefore necessary that "the sinfulness of man in Hebrew-Christian theology, goes hand in hand with the necessity for special revelation."<sup>273</sup>

It is only through submission to divine communication that man can see his need beyond the limits of reason due to his sin nature. Reason is not a source for truth, but rather an instrument for truth detection, and a faulty instrument at that. The need for clear thinking is another indication that our rationality is not able to perfect ourselves, much less society or all of reality. The biblical witness affirms a doctrine of sin and provides justification for a lack of rational clarity. Therefore, revelation is not superfluous because of reason. It is quite the opposite, because revelation keeps reason in check due to the sinfulness of man. Without revelation, finite human reason attempts to claim that which is beyond its reach and rebels in autonomous pride against its omnipotent, omniscient creator God.

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 98.

Surprisingly, the third criticism against biblical revelation from a naturalistic perspective is that of immorality. It is a claim of particularism which views the “historical disclosure, to a particular people at a particular point in space-time, in contrast to general revelation, involves God in unfairness and partiality.”<sup>274</sup> This partiality is viewed as divine favoritism and subsequently found as grounds to dismiss revelation as contradictory to the loving and just nature of God.

Henry’s reply to such a claim is a call for clearly recounted history. He claims that the concern for love and justice pervading this criticism is a direct derivative of biblical revelation. “The special disclosure of God is not a barrier to, but the very ground of our confidence in his justice and love.”<sup>275</sup> Similarly, Henry takes efforts to define the difference between divine transcendence and divine imminence. Within the biblical view, transcendence never cancels out the imminence of God. While God is utterly different and holy -separate from humanity- He is also perfectly near, intimate and caring toward His creation. The gulf between God and man is rooted in the sinful rebellion against God’s authority.

The criticism that it is unjust for God to have initial communication with one chosen people through divine revelation misses the loving action that this communication is for the whole world. Through revelation, the mission of God has been on display to extend hope and redemption to all peoples. God is the ultimate example of love in that “while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) The attempt to dismiss revelational theism on the

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<sup>274</sup> Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought*, 108.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 109.



claim of immorality “derives from spiritual pride, from man’s refusal to face the facts squarely with regard to his moral predicament in the sight of the God of holy love.”<sup>277</sup>

Henry felt the need to address a less mainstream criticism of biblical revelation which manifests itself in the writings of his contemporary, Dr. Floyd H. Ross. Ross disseminated the idea that special revelation would necessitate a “bigotry” through the demands of dogma.<sup>278</sup> He felt divine revelation ultimately would force a “logical coercive conclusion” that would disrespect personality, culture, and tolerance. Therefore, the rejection of divine revelation opens the door for both local and global community.

Henry rightly points out that while Ross is quick to denounce theistic presuppositions as absolutism, yet he never recognizes his own presuppositions guiding his dismissal of revelation as equally absolutist. For such a “champion” of “community,” Ross closes the door on discussion and dialogue on the rationale behind divine revelation. Ross displays a hypocritical snobbery toward theistic presuppositions in favor of clandestine naturalistic presuppositions.

Also, Henry points to the historical evidence that Christianity alone, not pagan religions or even syncretism, has had the track record of building a vital global community. The Judeo-Christian worldview affirmed the commitment to local society within the Old and New Testament. God’s people are to be a redeeming element of society, not a deterrent to what is good. This is exemplified in Jeremiah 29:4–5, 7.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ...But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

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<sup>277</sup> Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought*, 111.

<sup>278</sup> Floyd H. Ross, *Addressed to Christians: Isolationism vs. World Community*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951).

This sentiment is also expressed in the second greatest commandment that Christians are to love their neighbors as themselves. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount that believers are to be like salt and light in their communities. These ideals are dependent on the communication through divine revelation for implementation. Apart from the biblical teaching, society would not benefit from the redeeming influence of believers. Henry says, “Not theological particularism, but the antipathy to special revelation, turns out to be the real obstacle to a solution of sociological disunity.”<sup>279</sup>

### The Inability for Naturalism to Account for Morality

Similar to naturalism’s inability to account for the use of and trust of reason, it cannot account for the morality explicit within humanity. When all causes are reduced to physical reaction, the abstract concepts of the good, virtuous, or beautiful, lose all meaning. Apart from a metaphysical reality, ethics become a mere social suggestion without any ultimate rationale. Henry says, “Atheism forfeits the resources that sustain even the tattered remnants of morality because it strips right and wrong of their transcendent and objective authority.”<sup>280</sup> Naturalism is unable to account for the common experience of humanity which understands a basic moral code across cultures. C. S. Lewis puts it succinctly when he challenges the naturalist presupposition with regards to morality. He says, “If we are to going to make moral judgments then we must believe that the conscience of man is not a product of Nature. It can be valid only if it is an

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<sup>279</sup> Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought*, 113.

<sup>280</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 170.

offshoot of some absolute moral wisdom, a moral wisdom which exists absolutely ‘on its own’ and is not a product of non-moral, non-rational Nature.”<sup>281</sup>

### A Naturalistic Response to the Loss of Values in Educational Settings

In the American educational system, Henry highlights a recognized decline of values. This decline coincides with the ascendancy of naturalism within academic environments. Henry perceived this decline saying, “The withering of moral earnestness, the decline of ethical virility, are among the most prominent features of an age in which progressivism has dominated educational theory.”<sup>282</sup> A response from governmental agencies has been to develop educational programs designed to introduce values to the rising generation of students. Yet, this is done within the anti-supernatural philosophical framework imparted by John Dewey. Henry understood such a naturalistic worldview as an insufficient source for the grounding of moral judgments. As naturalism demands purely biological origins, humanity cannot reach beyond itself to understand the universal nature of morality, therefore morality can only be understood subjectively. Students are expected to develop ethical principles yet are taught that no principles are binding on all people of all times, therefore a seed of distrust of the ethical system is inherent within system itself. This leads to a cheapening of values in the mind of the student and the cynical perception of any worldviews which claim universality.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (San Francisco: Harper, 2013), 60.

<sup>282</sup> Carl Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”. *Eternity*: Vol 5 September, 1954.

<sup>283</sup> “To require of young people absolute devotion to ethical ideals which need not be binding on all people in all places can only lead the distrust of all moral claims. The value of values is betrayed in the very profession of devotion to values when this situation prevails. When no values are ever permitted unquestioned acceptance, the lie soon prevails that values have only a questionable existence.” Carl Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”. *Eternity*, 1954.

Two examples of contemporary value education from a naturalistic philosophy are seen in the *Positive Action Program* and *Living Values Education*. Both of these programs seek to address character development of children through the educational context and exemplify exploration of self and society as the ultimate determiner of values.

The *Positive Action Program* “centers on addressing behavioral, emotional, and academic problems by developing in individuals positive beliefs about their potential to overcome these problems. The solution lies essentially in self-belief and the development of character.”<sup>284</sup> This initiative was founded by Dr. Carol Gerber Allred. As a public school teacher in 1977, she began to develop the curriculum to address the moral vacuum seen within students. She started the Positive Action Company in 1983, and “has continuously expanded and improved the program into today’s nationally and internationally acclaimed evidence-based Positive Action Program. The program has since been used in all 50 states and internationally, reaching over 15,000 schools, community-based organizations, and other sites; over 5 million students.”<sup>285</sup>

*Living Values Education* was founded through collaboration by the UNICEF Education Cluster in New York and the Brahma Kumais World Spirituality University. The initial meetings began in 1996. In a report given at the commissioning of UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization), Director-General Jacques Delors said,

In confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom, and social justice. The Commission does not see education as a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the

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<sup>284</sup> Flay B.R., Allred C.G. *The Positive Action Program: Improving Academics, Behavior, and Character by Teaching Comprehensive Skills for Successful Learning and Living*. In: Lovat T., Toomey R., Clement N. (eds) *International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing*. (Springer, Dordrecht, 2010.)

<sup>285</sup> Positive Action Incorporated website: accessed 3/8/18. <https://www.positiveaction.net/about-us/history>

principle means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression, and war.<sup>286</sup>

As a response to the call for a “more harmonious form of human development” for the next generation, this group culminated in the official formation of Association for Living Values Education International in 2004. The organization claims an educational presence in 65 countries. One of the four foundational aims of *Living Values Education* is to provide, through the educational context, a philosophy of living that will “inspire individuals to choose their own personal, social, moral, and spiritual values and be aware of practical methods for developing and deepening them.”<sup>287</sup>

Both *Positive Action Program* and *Living Values Education* tout extensive research quantifying the growth of values where their programs are implemented.<sup>288</sup> This research reveals that value training does impact moral behavior and must be addressed. It also reveals the educational context is an appropriate environment to integrate education on moral and ethical principles. Yet, both programs, and any philosophy that rejects an absolute anchor point for its value system, undercuts its effectiveness and limits the long-term impact of its teaching. Values

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<sup>286</sup> Jacques Delors, et al. *Learning: The Treasure Within*. Report to UNESCO of the international Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. (UNESCO publishing, 1996.)

<sup>287</sup> Purpose and Aims of Living Values Education International: <http://www.livingvalues.net/purpose.html> Accessed 3/8/18. The complete list of the four institutional aims are as follows: 1.) To help individuals think about and reflect on different values and the practical implications of expressing them in relation to themselves, others, the community, and the world at large. 2.) To deepen understanding, motivation, and responsibility with regard to making personal and social choices. 3.) To inspire individuals to choose their own personal, social, moral, and spiritual values and be aware of practical methods for developing and deepening them. 4.) To encourage educators and caregivers to look at education as providing students with a philosophy of living, thereby facilitating their overall growth, development, and choices so that they may integrate themselves into the community with respect, confidence, and purpose.

<sup>288</sup> See US Department of Education, *WWC Intervention Report on Positive Action*, April 23, 2007; Australian Government Report, Department of Education and Workplace Relations, *Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience*, Univ. of Newcastle, Jan. 12, 2009; and Living Values Overview Report, 2010.

education cannot merely concern itself with how a student acts, but it must lay the groundwork of why students should act in some way rather than in others. If this distinction is a matter of personal choice, there is no reason to conclude some actions are “better” than others. If morality is a matter of learning to live within a relative social contract, there is no reason to elevate one society above another, giving Hitler, Stalin, and Mao equal right to create their own societies with their own value systems.

The rejection of the supernatural and the adoption of naturalistic philosophy within education has created a moral void in generations of students. This void has been recognized over time and has led to the procurement of programs and efforts to regain a moral and ethical conscience. If, as Henry explores, values can only be rooted in an eternal order, then the anti-supernatural worldview behind the educational system must be critiqued. Henry says,

It must be said with all candor that John Dewey was deceived when he asserted that belief in the supernatural is a stumbling block to progress. Ignorance of the supernatural is our great barrier to progress, and for this ignorance of absolute spiritual and moral realities in modern education, judgment should begin at the house of Dewey.<sup>289</sup>

With blunt honesty Henry calls out a major figure for the role he played in the transition away from theistic presuppositions and to naturalistic presuppositions within education.

### The Influence of John Dewey

The tremendous impact John Dewey had on the American Educational in the early 1900s is well documented and easily seen even today in the educational philosophy and practice in the public school system. The rudder which guided his life impact was an unswerving commitment

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<sup>289</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”. *Eternity*: Vol 5 September, 1954.

to the autonomy of the individual, particularly through democratic ideals. This conviction played out in two major areas: educational reform and social reform.<sup>290</sup>

In educational reform, Dewey blazed a trail for the educational process to actively take into account the learner. Experiential learning is at the core of Dewey's philosophy. Education was not just to be the transference of information, but it was to be the development of a certain kind of person through the educational experience. Dewey sought to prepare a student, not just to know more, but to reach their full potential for the greater good of society. Dewey's personal philosophy of education included a focus on the "future life" of a student: "To prepare him for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities."<sup>291</sup>

Yet, Dewey sought these goals and reforms from foundations built on the denial of the supernatural. Dewey was a self-proclaimed atheist and upheld liberalism and pragmatic philosophy.<sup>292</sup> His educational influence went beyond a focus on the learner and advancements in educational method to facilitate the transition of the dominant presuppositional underpinnings behind education. No longer was education to be rooted in objective truth, outside of man and ultimately found in God, but it was a pragmatic truth found within the resourcefulness of man, ultimately found in nature.<sup>293</sup>

As a devout pragmatist, Dewey rejected absolute truth and looked at the physical world for the content of education. Dewey did not regard abstract ideas as objective or transcendent of

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<sup>290</sup> Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 1997), 86.

<sup>291</sup> John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed". *The School Journal*, Volume LIV, Number 3. January 16, 1897.

<sup>292</sup> James S. Gouinlock, "John Dewey: American Philosopher and Educator", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Oct. 16, 2018. Accessed 12/8/18. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Dewey>.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

humanity, but rather as tools used by humanity. Mathematics, for example, was not rooted in timeless unchangeable truth, but was a tool created by humans to accomplish a task. He would view the statement of  $2+2=4$ , not as something true or untrue, but rather that numbers are merely tools that either work or don't work. A statement of the truthfulness of  $2+2=4$ , in Dewey's perspective would be analogous to the nonsensical question of whether or not a hammer and nail were true or untrue. Abstractions and logic are merely tools within the biological system of humanity to accomplish a goal. Reality is a closed system, not influenced by any supernatural force, or anything outside of naturalistic explanation.<sup>294</sup>

Henry expresses his discontent that this transition in American educational philosophy took place without substantive resistance by the theistic community. "The Dewey philosophy formulated within evolutionary empirical naturalism has infiltrated the school system in many of our communities with hardly a voice of effective protest from evangelicals."<sup>295</sup>

### Critique of Relativistic Values Education

When an educational system is driven by naturalistic presuppositions, it denies any transcendent absolute standards and instead promotes individual subjective standards. This rejection of a universal truth has implications for the society, the classroom, and the individual. Any such educational program projects societal claims on what is "right" by collective agreement. Yet, when peace, love, tolerance, and respect are heralded as ideals which to strive, they contradict themselves as these are relativistic standards. The implicit teaching is that all

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Carl Henry, "Modern Education and the Secularistic Tide". *The Watchman-Examiner*: Vol 38, no. 42 Oct. 11, 1951.



people should strive for such ideals, ergo they are absolute, yet the explicit teaching is that these are cultural relativistic truths, not binding for everyone.

Without a theistic grounding for value, any naturalistic system is deficient in grounding for its ethical principles. Naturalistic value education becomes restricted by its own cultural shackles. It loses the ability to speak to what “ought” to be and can only observe what “is.” In teaching a relativistic understanding of values, it also is excluding and intolerant toward the vast majority of the world which holds long-standing religious views.<sup>296</sup> This global majority potentially would not concede that values are “individually chosen” or that a “more harmonious form of human development” is found by humanistic means.

Carl Henry calls those holding inconsistent presuppositions within education to their senses, saying, “an educational program which has promoted the relativity of values, if it faces up with the crisis in values earnestly, has no alternative but to repent of its husks and to return to the home of absolute values and eternal truths.”<sup>297</sup> Namely, that “home for absolute values and eternal truths” is the theistic worldview which has firm justification for morality and ultimately

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<sup>296</sup> “There are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing 84 percent of the 2010 world population of 6.9 billion,” the analysis states conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life. <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/> accessed 11/10/18.

- 2.2 billion Christians (32 percent of the world’s population)
- 1.6 billion Muslims (23 percent)
- 1 billion Hindus (15 percent)
- 500 million Buddhists (7 percent)
- 400 million people (6 percent) practicing various folk or traditional religions, including African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, American Indian religions and Australian aboriginal religions.
- 14 million Jews
- and an estimated 58 million people - slightly less than 1 percent of the global population belong to other religions, including the Baha’i faith, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Taoism, Tenrikyo, Wicca and Zoroastrianism, “to mention just a few,” the study says.

<sup>297</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”. *Eternity*, 1954.

for all truth. Naturalism and moral relativism have been an ill-conceived experiment within education, and the homecoming to theistic-grounded absolute values is overdue.

### Irony of Relativistic Values Education

The irony of programs like *Positive Action Program* and *Living Values Education* exists on many levels. Values derived from naturalistic moral philosophy do that which they say not to do, they claim origin for that which they cannot create, and they demand that which they cannot deliver.

Relativism within the educational system is obscuring the source for values. The internally self-contradictory stance of relativism is one reason for this loss of values comprehension. Those promoting relativism are promoting the acceptance of their system as true, while saying no system is true for everyone. They reject exclusion but exclude any other systems which claim relativism is false.<sup>298</sup> Naturalistic educational programs promote the individualistic idea of being able to “choose their own personal, social, moral, and spiritual values”, but proceed to indoctrinate the student with an atheistic, relativistic, moral tradition. Carl Henry repudiates the idea that humanity can intrinsically construct values, saying, “moral values are not the products of experience, but rather the norms by which experience is to be guided and evaluated.”<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Example of this can be seen in the court case filed against University of California, Berkley in December of 2017 citing violation of free speech rights. Following a tumultuous year of free speech challenges, including the cancelation of speeches by conservatives Ann Coulter and Milo Yiannopoulos in 2017, the politically conservative campus organization, Young Americans for Liberty, filed a lawsuit against UC Berkley citing violation of free speech. The case was settled, resulting in change of policy and recuperation of court expenses. For a description of the events see: Nanette Asimov, “UC Berkley Settles Conservative Students Free-speech Lawsuit”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2, 2018. Accessed 12/9/18. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/education/article/UC-Berkeley-settles-conservative-students-13045261.php> For access to court filing document see: <http://www.adfmedia.org/files/YAL-BerkeleyComplaint.pdf>.

<sup>299</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”, *Eternity*, 1954.

Naturalism affirms the idea that individuals and communities create their own value systems. Ultimate moral standards which have been accepted throughout history in all cultures, are not created, but recognized. While there is room for cultural expression and interpretation, the bedrock of morality is unchanging and universally accepted. Government-funded educational programs may seek “the ideals of peace, freedom, and social justice,” as stated by the UNESCO director, but have no way to ground these claims to their students that these are the right goals for humanity. The abstract, non-physical truths of peace, freedom, and social justice are not created by individuals, communities, or through any naturalistic process, but through a supernatural order imposing objective reality on humanity. Moral relativism wants to benefit from the morality implicit within revelational theism, because it is the best way to live in reality, but without submission to the ‘*Theos*’ who is the source and accountability for that morality.

Lastly, it is ironic that these educational programs are seeking to shape a certain type of virtuous person, yet without providing the means to actually be virtuous. C. S. Lewis was building on Plato’s teaching that reason can rule the carnal appetites only through the spirit, when he said, “the head rules the belly through the chest.”<sup>300</sup> Meaning, “the head,” namely the part of man which innately knows what is right and wrong, “rules the belly,” namely the biological instincts of man, “through the chest,” or the seat of emotions and the orientation for just desires and right thinking. Lewis, like Henry, points out that the educational system knows what is right and wrong, and wants to produce right actions, but it has failed to nurture the link between the two, creating “men without chests and expect from them virtue and enterprise. We

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<sup>300</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools*. (New York: New York, Simon and Schuster Books. 1996), 36.

laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst...In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function.”<sup>301</sup>

Henry crystalizes this irony with a comparison between Moses and Jesus with Darwin and Dewey. He says, “Moses and Jesus have as much right to be heard in our public schools as Darwin and Dewey, and it could just be that they have even more so; if there are any absolutes, they will be found neither in the Kingdom of Darwin nor the Kingdom of Dewey. That Dewey recognized no moral absolutes and supernatural realities nobody can dispute, but that does not mean there are none; all it proves is that modern relativism can be absolutely wrong.”<sup>302</sup>

### Conclusion

Carl Henry wanted to provide a clear, theological assessment of the presuppositions of naturalism. He sought to expose the presuppositions which may go unspoken, yet which guide the trajectory of individuals, programs, and institutions. This chapter argued that naturalism is self-refuting based on inability to ground a reliance in reason or establish a foundation for morality. The reality that no person is able to have a presuppositionally neutral starting place is a necessary understanding about epistemology. Henry believed the presuppositions of revelational theism made better sense of reality than naturalism. The axioms of the living God and divine revelation set the stage for understanding the natural as well as the supernatural. C. S. Lewis echoes Henry’s sentiments about logic and morality when he says, “If we cannot prove either

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”, *Eternity*, 1954.

axiom, that is not because they are irrational but because they are self-evident and all proofs depend on them. Their intrinsic reasonableness shines by its own right.”<sup>303</sup>

Through the influence of John Dewey, and other proprietors of atheistic naturalism as a governing worldview, American schools have attempted to eliminate acknowledgment of the supernatural from the curriculum. In the wake of such pre-commitments the loss of a grounded sense of values has become a matter of American concern. Through government-aided programs, value education has been attempted without reference to any absolute guidelines. The subjective approach to moral development is undercutting the effectiveness of these efforts. Without an external metaphysical anchor, values and morals have no fixed authority, and the teaching of such values create skepticism rather than virtue. Schools are charged with aiding in building a young person’s character, yet are refused the basic tools by which character is to be judged.

The presuppositions of revelational theism provide a grounding of both values and logic. The foundational axioms of the ontological existence of a Living God and epistemological necessity of divine revelation do not hinder the educational process, but rather support it. These axioms provide the bedrock from which all areas of the educational enterprise can find success. Through the process of education, the learner finds religion is not compulsory, but rather presented within a framework of understanding reality. The supernatural does not necessarily have to be ignored or denied within public education, but rather it can be given a rightful place at the table of ideas.

Carl Henry was a champion for the cause of education rightly connected with reality. The presuppositions of naturalism today are not preparing students for a virtuous life, nor can

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<sup>303</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (San Francisco: Harper, 2013), 54.

they do so. This unpreparedness is because of the categorical rejection of the supernatural.

“Modern education is evasive about the facts of history of religion. It not only shies away from spiritual decision, but it evades the teaching of the facts of religion and morality.”<sup>304</sup> This evasion is a result of the embrace of naturalism and it opens the door for the erosion of society, while the revelational theism builds up society.

In the following chapter Henry’s writings will be examined to draw out his interpretation of a responsible application of revelational theism to educational settings. While Henry never formalized a philosophy of education he did have much to say about the implementation of biblical principles to this arena. Chapter five will look closely at Henry’s discussion of Evangelical educational strategy and the role of academic institutions in cultural engagement. It will also connect Henry’s thoughts on freedom and democracy as a theological driven motivation opening the door to educational transformation. Carl Henry was a theologian who understood that the educational system was an essential element that must be recaptured for the Glory of God if humanity is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and will all your mind.” (Luke 10:27)

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<sup>304</sup> Carl Henry, “Christian Responsibility in Education”. *Christianity Today*: Vol 17 May 27, 1957.

## **Chapter Five: Analyzing Henry's Published Perspective on Educational Engagement**

### Introduction

This chapter will analyze Carl Henry's published perspective of why and how the theological view of revelational theism can engage with modern educational settings. This will be shown through his understanding of evangelical responsibility for cultural engagement, including education. It will unpack Henry's embryonic strategy for evangelical action to impact educational settings, and finally, it will show Henry's opinion of the theological framework undergirding the first amendment. This section contends the biblical worldview provides the foundation for academic freedom in the classroom, as well as freedom in society, and without such biblical worldview foundations, both are in jeopardy.

### Application of the Axioms in Educational Settings

"The first place where Christian solutions must penetrate is in the field of learning. The Christian integration of all thought and life is still the great and transcendent priority for coordinated social effort."<sup>305</sup> Carl Henry was convinced that a return to the biblical worldview within educational ranks would be for the benefit of all of society. This return begins at the presuppositional level and would be the connective tissue to strengthen values and intellect, as

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<sup>305</sup> Carl Henry, "Christian Education and World Culture". *Mennonite Quarterly Review*: Vol 32 October, 1958.

individuals as well as a nation. Concerning the current dismissal of the Bible from public arena, Henry said, “The Bible has never contributed to the degeneracy of any culture; all the facts point the other way, and even modern educational theory stands to benefit from its regenerating message.”<sup>306</sup>

Henry counters the argument that the presence of the religious influence within educational philosophy would ultimately bring public education under ecclesial control. The existence of the separation of Church and State is an American principle which prevents the government from setting up any state-sanctioned church, and by extension, a church-governed public education. Yet, this principle does not preclude the teaching of religious or moral elements in totality. A supernatural framework within education makes the best sense of logic and morality in the quest for truth, while a naturalistic framework cannot posit logic or morality and casts doubt on the quest for truth. With the presuppositional starting place of a revelational theism, education would make the quest for truth practically and personally significant. The dependence on naturalistic presuppositions makes the quest for truth trivial and irrelevant. Revelational theism even invites the alternative worldviews to make their case as the best way to live within reality. It allows for debate, discussion, and presentation of all the facts for the students without demanding a certain outcome of belief. “To teach our students the great Christian truths is no more to coerce them than to teach the speculations of Plato and Dewey; the schools exist to familiarize students with the facts, and not to compel submission to them.”<sup>307</sup>

The axioms of the Henry’s theology are paramount for educational guidelines because they serve as transcendent anchor points in the quest for truth and the attainment of morality.

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<sup>306</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”, *Eternity*, 1954.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.



These foundations set the stage to allow the voices of history to speak for themselves. The great masters of western civilization can be engaged on their own terms. “Wholly apart from professional biases, the demand of history will get a hearing for the works of Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and Spinoza, Locke and Hume, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, Dewey and Russell, Barth and Brunner.”<sup>308</sup> Henry goes on to say that other hearings should not be excluded. Authors like Augustine and Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, have had equal impact on western civilization and should deserve examination. To ignore such great thinkers of western civilization because of their religious subject matter is overtly biased.

The axioms of the revelational theism would allow students to probe into the genesis of western civilization and beyond without fear of acknowledging the tremendous weight the biblical text had on the ideals of justice and freedom. Do the words of Moses receive equal academic investigation as naturalistic proponents when teaching the varying cosmological views in philosophy? Do the words of Jesus receive similar treatment as the words of other primary sources like Epicurus or Aristotle when teaching ethics? Henry believed the biblical worldview allows a full view of reality to be shown to students without intentional prejudice. This is possible because even when presented side by side with opposing viewpoints Henry believed revelational theism would consistently present the best way of understanding reality.

Henry was passionate for the acceptance and application of the biblical worldview in all areas of life. He believed that the regenerative message contained within the Gospel had positive implications for individuals as well as society. Divine revelation is the key in the quest for truth. Henry supported its usage in public settings because of its redemptive benefits for society. Henry wanted to see the biblical worldview of revelational theism given an appropriate hearing

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<sup>308</sup> Carl Henry, “Jesus and the Classics”. *Religious Digest*: Vol 20 August, 1946.

with the educational systems of his day and beyond. In the search for true knowledge within academia, Henry puts it plainly, “If God is God, then he must be taken seriously; he must not have simply a closet by way of academic accommodation. He must be made the cornerstone of education.”<sup>309</sup>

Henry had a goal in this desire. He wanted to engage culture with the biblical worldview through the educational system.<sup>310</sup> Carl Henry penned a section in *Twilight of a Great Civilization* entitled “Facing the Crisis in Education.” He asked the question, “Can we project an evangelical agenda?”<sup>311</sup> His major points encompass the whole scope of the educational process and contain significant implications for higher education. In this section, Henry’s published plan for cultural engagement through education is laid out in three segments: the strategy, the institution, and the curriculum.

### Henry’s Overarching Educational Strategy

“The record of fundamentalist withdrawal from social concerns and preoccupation with personal evangelism, moreover, has compounded an impression of public irrelevance.”<sup>312</sup> While fundamentalist theology may have been similar to Evangelicals, their application and impact on society was woefully lacking. Henry says, “Neither Essene caves nor radical Anabaptist

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<sup>309</sup> Carl Henry, “Religion and the Crisis of Education”. *The Watchman-Examiner*; Vol 40 March 5, 1952.

<sup>310</sup> This goal of projecting the biblical worldview is not only accomplished through the educational system, but education is an essential element for the completion of the task. The broader picture of cultural engagement is described clearly by Henry. “The Christian task in the world includes that of calling to account the cultural milieu in view of God’s revealed Word, and that of exhibiting the wisdom, righteousness, and joy of serving the one true God.” So education will certainly be one area of “calling to account” in Henry’s broad goal of cultural engagement. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 117.

<sup>311</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 88.

<sup>312</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 3, 121.

segregation from society can be a desirable option.”<sup>313</sup> For the evangelical believer, Henry’s call is not merely “be not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2), but equally to “be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within you” (1 Peter 3:15). The call for engagement is basic to the Christian Mandate. This mandate is a call to reclaim the culture with the regenerative hope of the Gospel. It is a call to realign one’s self and one’s society with God’s original created purpose. Henry saw this task as intertwined with the educational task.

### *Familial Responsibility*

In Henry’s strategy for cultural engagement, he began at the most basic of levels fundamental to any and every society; the family unit. Henry perceives the most essential trust of education as ultimately falling to parents. “Parental responsibility for shaping the ideas and ideals of the oncoming generation has priority.”<sup>314</sup> This priority, in the understanding of Henry, is not just an intellectual exercise, a passing of facts, but it is a training of how to live correctly within reality. It is the passing on of a particular worldview. It includes the definition of what is important in life and the goals of life. These are spiritual questions that deserve a metaphysical anchor. Henry defends the case that the revelational theism best explains reality and provides the best guidance on how to live with it. Yet this is best when modeled, rather than taught, particularly by parents within the context of the family unit. Through life together, conversations, experiences, and modeling, the home life is a crucial launching pad that provides the educational system the grounds on which to build and affirm.

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<sup>313</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 116.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

### *Ecclesial Obligation*

Henry points his next level of strategic engagement directly at the faith communities which foster the biblical worldview. He makes a clear distinction that the duty to transfer the Christian heritage, while first given parents, must not be shirked by churches. Churches must not give corporate generational training over fully to civic institutions. It must take seriously the connection between doctrine and practice. Through the teaching of right doctrine comes the practice of right behavior. While this is not without exception, the teaching ministry of the church should not be abandoned. The components of a biblical worldview come through teaching. The axioms of God's ontological existence and his epistemological necessity must be grappled with in the course of any serious attempt at the educational process.

A current trend in the American church is to move toward an experiential expression of worship. The emergent church movement has taken this method as its *modus operandi*. The movement is represented through the words of emergent pastor, Dan Kimball, who says, "Modern thinkers want things orderly and systematic because they learn in a logical and progressive manner. They prefer, generally, to sit and listen. Emerging post-Christian generations, on the other hand, long to *experience* a transcendent God during a worship gathering rather than simply learn about him."<sup>315</sup> While Henry would likely agree that he falls into logically-oriented mindset, he foresaw the tendency of churches toward the priority of experiential spirituality and warned of what can be lost in order to gain such experience. He says, "If the churches are doctrinally weak and experientially oriented, they will obscure the cognitive content and supports of revelatory truth."<sup>316</sup> Henry goes on to draw explicit connection

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<sup>315</sup> Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 121.

<sup>316</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 87.

between churches and the explosion of education which took place in recent history. It was predicated on the churches' conviction that there was cognitive content that every living man, woman, and child should have access to, namely the message of the biblical worldview culminating in the good news of Jesus Christ.

Henry encourages churches to not lose sight of their obligation to pass along a heritage of educational commitment and cognitive discipline. "Study to show yourself approved" is the prerequisite before "rightly dividing the word of truth." in the verse 2 Timothy 2:15. It is through propositional statements and cognitive facilities, not merely experience, that the message of truth is understood and transferred. This does not deny the effectiveness of experiential learning or the necessity to appropriately utilize learning styles, but Henry does challenge churches to take seriously their role in the educational process, providing foundational axioms that can define the presuppositions of the learner.

### *Universally Normative Truth*

An essential element in the cultural engagement strategy of Carl Henry is the proposition that there is universally normative truth. Henry insists that the biblical perspective must hold revealed truth as applicable to all people of all times and places. Without this doctrinal linchpin, the biblical worldview would slip into cultural relativism. With the trend of the American educational system moving away from theism to secular humanism, all norms are being lost and any truth claims become conditional. This promotes skepticism and disconnects the student from the way reality really works.

With this being the case in public institutions, Henry makes a strong call for private institutions to not merely “circumvent the naturalistic option by escapist alternatives”<sup>317</sup> but directly address these key issues in contemporary civilization. If truth is universally normative, this changes everything about the educational process. It gives meaning to the learning. It provides motivation for advancement. The impact of naturalistic influences must be countered rather than avoided. “Evangelical scholarship must not only maintain a stake in public learning, but also it must also illumine the control issues in the context of intellectual history from a theistic vis-à-vis naturalistic perspective.”<sup>318</sup>

The conviction for truth to be understood as universally normative cannot be an underground effort in private institutions alone. It must pervade into education at large and culture in general. The issue of truth is a “control issue”<sup>319</sup> that will guide society in the future. It is a fixed element of the revelational theism. When truth is warped or denied, the belief system effecting this change should no longer be considered in line with orthodox Christian belief. Henry saw this need for a revitalized understanding of truth, yet also saw that the “deep penetration of secular education remains an unfulfilled task.”<sup>320</sup> Addressing the post-modern relativistic understanding of truth is a major step in the cultural engagement strategy of Carl Henry, and he saw this battle waged most importantly within the context of university level academics.

### *Cohesive vs. Fragmented Worldview Implications*

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<sup>317</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 88.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

Henry's next step in his cultural engagement strategy through education involved intentional efforts to avoid internal losses within the next generation of evangelicalism to secular humanism. Evangelicals must not lose their own children to divergent ideologies. The primary means to this end is the constant exposure and skillful presentation of the cohesive nature of the biblical worldview.

Henry believed that the biblical worldview was the best representation of reality and the only valid guide to understanding our micro and macro context. Within the revelational theism a realistic explication of good and evil in this world finds root. Morality and values are justified because they are fixed on a source outside themselves. A healthy view of man is described through the *Imago Dei*. Human reason is disclosed in a manner in which it is neither denied nor idolized. All of the issues relevant to humanity find an anchor point in the stable character of God himself and his Word. When this worldview is effectively presented as a means to understanding our current times and challenges, the next generation is not set adrift without a means of navigating its own questions. Revelational theism is cohesive, not contradictory, providing a realistic method of living in today's society.

This position is in contrast to fragmented worldviews which attempt to co-opt the effect while denying the cause. A theistic worldview makes sense of realities like reason and morality, while a naturalistic worldview attempts to keep these realities, yet without the justification necessary to understand why they are so. Henry believed, "in the conflict between biblical theism and naturalism, evangelicals need most of all to vindicate the intellectual credibility of theism and to exhibit the cognitive weaknesses of humanism and raw naturalism."<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 88.

For the biblical worldview to “vindicate the intellectual credibility of theism” a battle must be fought within academia. George Marsden fights against discrimination along philosophical/religious lines within academics, stating that secular presuppositions are unquestioned while religious presuppositions are mocked and denied. The hypocrisy within the dominant culture of academia is clear with the call for tolerance but also the unqualified rejection of sincere Judeo-Christian belief systems. This fight must continue to be fought for the future generations. The acquisition of a cohesive worldview in each successive generation of evangelicals is the key to retaining internally and advancing externally the influence of biblical theism.

### *Liberal Arts Learning*

Henry is committed to the idea of holistic learning. He championed the liberal arts approach to learning, rather than a myopic career path. While some particular skills must be acquired for specific placements, these cannot come at the expense of a general grounding in our context in intellectual history. “Christians need a deepened commitment to higher education and a probing of new pilot projects to penetrate secular liberal arts learning.”<sup>322</sup>

Liberal arts learning can be argued to be the oldest educational format in the western world. With roots in ancient Greek and Latin culture, the Liberal Arts were those skills and instruction befitting for a free person, as opposed to a slave. The core curriculum came to be known as the Trivium which investigated Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. The secondary phase of education moved on to the Quadrivium which considered Arithmetic, Geometry, Music Theory, and Astronomy. These subjects, beyond merely teaching content, became the training

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 89.



ground for learning how to learn. They introduced skills that were essential to critical thinking, self-awareness, and contextual understanding.

While Carl Henry did not impose this method in the strict sense of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric, he did emphasize the need to learn how to learn. The importance of critical thinking skills to discern the reality around the learner is an indispensable ability. These skills are linked to the existence of an absolute reality that is predictable and consistent. In a culture of subjectivism, the significance of an education is devalued. Henry says, “Many students question the worth of university learning which for \$20,000 or \$40,000 equips them mostly with knowledge of space-time relativities that need to be perpetually updated but leaves graduates without moral absolutes.”<sup>323</sup> A Liberal Arts skill set can prepare students to see the big picture and find their place within ultimate reality. While specific professional training is required for many vocations, Henry’s strategy spends a significant portion of time and energy on the Liberal Arts, rooting the student in an educational, moral, physical and metaphysical context from which they can best understand reality.

### *Excellence in Education*

Henry had much to say about the quality of an education. While he acknowledges that the ideal education is a highly debated topic, it is nonetheless true that ideas are gravely important, and some are better than others. “Not to be fortified with good ideas is to be victimized by bad ones”, says Henry as he challenges educators toward more serious learning in the classroom.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 91.

The task of creating a quality education is won in the trenches of each classroom. The quality of an education is in direct correlation to exposure to quality teachers and resources. Henry explains that teachers must be philosophically sensitive. They must be alert to both the personal-narrative and the meta-narrative which are pursued in the classroom. He admits this endeavor is more challenging and complex in his day than it ever has been because of the influence of secular humanism and “a widening diversity of worldviews.” In his view, Henry sees an excellent education as “wrestling with these conflicting and competing currents and unmasking their divergent depictions of the real world and of the human predicament and its resolution.”<sup>325</sup> In other words, a quality education should identify the presuppositions of competing truth claims. Through the process of a quality education, a student will be able to cogently define the problem of evil and the meaning of good as seen by rival ideological systems in contemporary culture. This is not the goal for merely students of philosophy or theology, but a foundational element to all of education. All students must grapple with the age-old questions of what is good and right in reality to set the stage for the right kind of learning.

Martin Luther King Jr. expressed similar concerns about the content of education. He, like Henry, understood that an education could only be judged as excellent or deficient, not based on the quantity of information passed along to the students, but on the type of students which emerged from the course of that educational experience. King said, “We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate.”<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>326</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., Morehouse College campus newspaper “*the Maroon Tiger*”. (February 1947).

The strategy for cultural engagement through the means of education outlined by Carl Henry is multifaceted because there is not a silver bullet solution or approach. Henry sees the many areas that are necessary in such a process. Henry highlights the familial responsibility of education, the ecclesial obligation to pass along a heritage, the necessity of universally normative truth, the implications of a cohesive worldview, the value of a liberal arts perspective, and the need for excellence in education. These areas combine into a strategy to penetrate the system of education that is ensnared by secular humanism and therefore opposed to allowing other worldviews, which are more compatible with reality, a seat at the education table to influence the current generation of students.

### The Institutional Role in Cultural Engagement

Carl Henry was keenly aware of the importance institutions played in the role of cultural engagement. He was convinced that institutions of religiously devoted private education were in a unique place to wed desire for robust academic relevance with genuine moral courage. This desire would only come through intentional direction given at the foundational levels of an institution's mission and goals, then subsequently applied to every area of academic discipline. Henry said in *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, "As the cognitive center of the evangelical movement, the Christian campus must place promotion and funding conspicuously in the service of preserving, propagating, and vindicating truth."<sup>327</sup> Using this rubric of preserve, propagate, and vindicate, Carl Henry's ideas of the institutional role in cultural engagement can be unpacked.

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<sup>327</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 111.

*Preserve*

In an effort to preserve truth, Henry has in mind cultivating a proper perspective in the learner of their place within the history of ideas. He asserts that the mindset of modernity is a “transitory phenomenon.” He so strongly held that the biblical worldview of revelational theism best explains reality, that Henry would encourage engagement with other worldview systems for the purpose of exposing their internal weaknesses and their hijacking of, and then dependence on, biblical worldview ideas. “As the deconstruction of Western metaphysics gains momentum, it should be clear again that the enduring foundations of theology, philosophy and science rest upon the Biblical heritage.”<sup>328</sup> He goes on to describe how the loss of such a heritage would inevitably lead to the loss of an individual’s soul. As this becomes the norm it would lead to the instability of society, and ultimately as deconstruction takes root in society the bankruptcy of civilization would facilitate the loss of the intelligible universe.

Henry sees institutions who embrace the theistic view of reality as the friend of truth-discovering science, rather than scientism, which feeds an unsupported secular consciousness. These institutions are guardians of wisdom-loving philosophy, as opposed to rationalization, which erodes ethical imperatives. They see what is real through revelational-theology, rather than modern-day mythologies which distort reality, both natural and supernatural. Institutions of higher education have the opportunity to preserve truth in all its forms from the decay of wrong thinking. Augustine stated in the first century, “Nay, but let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master...”<sup>329</sup> As a popular

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>329</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*. Book II. Translated by D. W. Robertson. (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958.), 18.

paraphrase, “all truth is God’s truth” has become a guide for these institutions. Herman Bavinck masterfully describes the implications of this statement which inevitably impacts all areas of life.

He [God] is the truth in its absolute fullness. He, therefore, is the primary, the original truth, *the source of all truth*, the truth in all truth. He is the ground of the truth – of the true being – of all things, of their knowability and conceivability, the ideal and archetype of all truth, of all ethical being, of all the rules and laws, in light of which the nature and manifestation of all things should be judged and on which they should be modeled. God is the source and origin of the knowledge of truth in all areas of life...<sup>330</sup>

Bavinck, along with Augustine and Carl Henry, each express similar ideas connecting the theme that God is the “source and origin of the knowledge of truth in all areas of life.”<sup>331</sup> As developed in previous chapters, all epistemological systems must have presuppositions. To not acknowledge or be aware of the source of knowledge or truth is to not be critically aware of that person’s own presuppositions which guide his view of reality. To disregard or not acknowledge the need for a presuppositional starting place when it comes to knowledge within the educational process, is to hinder the trajectory of all learning. Institutions can preserve the essence and quality of learning by preserving the foundational starting place for learning rooted in a biblical worldview.

### *Propagate*

Secondly, Henry advocates that an institutional schema of cultural engagement should be used for propagating the truth. Henry was a proponent of finding contemporary means to expand the exposure of the biblical worldview in the culture in general through mass media and other

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<sup>330</sup> Herman Bavinck and John Bolt, *Reformed Dogmatics*. 15th ed. Vol. 2. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 209. (italics mine)

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

methods.<sup>332</sup> He was leading the cutting edge of academic evangelical mass distribution with his inaugural editorship of *Christianity Today*. The mission of this institution was to present the core beliefs of evangelical Christianity as they are applied to the current issues of contemporary society.

*Christianity Today*, under Henry's leadership, was using the most relevant means of the day to promote the biblical worldview as the best answer for the world's problems. This commitment was cultivated in Henry long before his time with *Christianity Today*. In his evangelical manifesto, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, he affirms that promoting the biblical worldview is "in the interest of individual regeneration by the supernatural grace of God, in such a way that divine redemption can be recognized as the best solution of our problems, individual and social."<sup>333</sup> It is pertinent with regard to the discussion of institutional responsibility that in this quote Henry proposes individual problems as well as societal problems both find their best solutions in the biblical worldview understanding of reality.

Institutions which function consistently with the biblical worldview have the opportunity to impact both realms, individual as well as societal. Academic institutions of higher education have the unique position to promote a consistent worldview throughout a multiplicity of fields and disciplines. With this unity of mission, the vast scope of the biblical worldview is put on display, both internally to its faculty and students, but also externally to the secular workforce and culture. An institution promoting a consistent and cohesive message, affirming the character

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<sup>332</sup> In the 1940s, 50s, and 60s the mediums of magazine publication, newsprint, radio programs, televised evangelical events and crusades, were all the latest forms of mass communication, illustrating Henry's concept of propagation of truth. To apply this principle to current context, Henry would affirm the use of internet communication and social media as new means to disseminate and propagate truth broadly.

<sup>333</sup> Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 88-89.

and calling of students and publications of faculty, can be set apart in a fractured society with a rootless value system.

Carl Henry states that the biggest assets of any a private religious college should be: 1.) its comprehensively integrated biblical worldview into all academic disciplines, 2.) the inward focus of able faculty who expound that view to its students, and 3.) an outward effort through scholarly books and articles that expose the weakness of competing worldviews while offering the logical and moral superiority of the biblical worldview in all areas of life.<sup>334</sup> Note the responsibility of the institution for the promotion of the worldview within its ranks through the means of able faculty members. While the work of the classroom is vitally important, the promotion of truth is not purely an inward effort. Imbedded in the DNA of such an institution is the necessity to be reaching out with the promotion of the biblical worldview through the encouragement of faculty engagement with contemporary scholarship. Faculty should be both teaching a biblical worldview internally to their classes, but also modeling externally how to engage the community and culture around them.

### *Vindicate*

This leads into the third means of cultural engagement that Henry envisions on the institutional level. He sees vindicating truth as a primary objective of any institution that has the courage to be grounded at its core in the biblical worldview. Before articulating this need for vindication of truth at the institutional level, Carl Henry lived it out on the personal level. Referring to the years between 1946-1956, “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

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<sup>334</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 111.

socially relevant evangelicalism.”<sup>335</sup> His formative work in 1947, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, challenged the religious leaders of the day to address the needs in society by standing up for truth. This revolutionary leader awoke not only churches but also religious academic institutions of their responsibility to vindicate truth in the culture they were placed in. Henry understood that simply knowing the truth was not enough. It must be acted upon. The biblical worldview is socially relevant because it can be applied to all areas of life regardless of cultural context. Henry was combating the growing trend that believers were not socially relevant enough to make the application of the biblical worldview to contemporary needs. The issue was not the message, but rather the messenger’s incompetence in relevant communication of that message. Henry was not changing the message of the biblical worldview but vindicating it as applicable and necessary in modern culture.

At the institutional level Henry was a strong advocate for an environment of academic excellence that could provide challenge, rebuttal, and innovation to the secular scholarship of the day through Christian scholars engaging from a biblical worldview perspective. Unfortunately, despite his unwavering call for engagement with the culture, Henry says, “significant books by evangelical academicians outside the Biblical and theological field have only recently begun to appear, although seldom are such volumes interdisciplinary in nature.”<sup>336</sup> Henry implies through the word “significant”<sup>337</sup> that such works coming out of biblical worldview-holding institutions should be able to interact at the highest levels of any field with while maintaining excellence in research and methodology. The Christian scholar should not avoid peer review format

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<sup>335</sup> Augustus Cerillo Jr. and Murray W. Dempster, “Carl F. H. Henry’s Early Apologetic for an Evangelical Social Ethic, 1942-1956.” *Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society*, September 1991, volume 34 issue 3, 3666.

<sup>336</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 112.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.



publications, because the foundations of truth are in their favor, though the cultural trend may not be.

Institutions should take the challenge to bear their doctrinal heritage proudly in a culture that claims diversity and pluralism as standards. Despite ironic discrimination against biblical Christianity in this plurality, those who stand for truth must vindicate it in the public arena. Henry acknowledges that the educational realm is a necessary component if the biblical worldview is to be a serious contender for social consciousness. He penned in 1947, “If historic Christianity is again to compete as a vital world ideology, evangelicalism must project a solution for the most pressing world problems... involving affirmations in political, economic, sociological, and educational realms, local and international. The redemptive message has implications for all of life; a truncated life results from a truncated message.”<sup>338</sup> It is noteworthy that Henry says “again to compete,” as he is acknowledging the historical dominance the Christian worldview had in the west for millennia, yet now has allowed that influence to wane to the point of not competing in the public arena of ideas for the minds and hearts of the current generation. Henry is calling individuals and institutions to once again assert, or vindicate, the explanatory nature of the biblical worldview within reality.

How is the fight for vindication of truth to be won? Henry stresses the need for quality scholars who are established in the biblical worldview to challenge the literature of the day. To publish a clear perspective of reality that corresponds cohesively with reason and morality. He says evangelicalism must “develop a competent literature in every field of study, on every level

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<sup>338</sup> Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 65.

from the grade school through the university, which adequately presents each subject with its implications from the Christian as well as non-Christian points of view.”<sup>339</sup>

In Henry’s mind, this vindication of truth would not simply impact the private schools, but it would expand all areas of learning, especially the public arena where secular thought has the deepest root. He makes it clear that by addressing the non-Christian viewpoints, truth could be addressed from a biblical worldview perspective to expose falsehood and wrong thinking. But however, institutions and individuals must first “contend”, or insist, that the biblical worldview has the right to be heard in such venues. “Evangelicalism must contend for a fair hearing for the Christian mind, among other minds, in secular education.”<sup>340</sup>

This vindication of truth is a battle. Henry prophetically challenges his contemporaries, as well as us today, to not grow weary in the fight. “The battle against evil in all its forms must be pressed unsparingly; we must pursue the enemy, in politics, in economics, in science, in ethics—everywhere, in every field, we must pursue relentlessly.”<sup>341</sup> Yet, this battle must be fought in the correct way. For example, while many in society see the need for values or character, without a biblical worldview to provide the grounding and means for such outcomes, any initiatives will be in vain. To address the symptoms without addressing the cause does not solve the problem. “Others may resist him with inadequate weapons; they do not understand aright the nature of the foe, nor the requirements for victory.”<sup>342</sup> Such victory does not come merely with the changing

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

of laws or drops in unsavory moral statistics; it comes with the changing of individual's hearts and minds.

Academic institutions of higher education have the opportunity to preserve, promote, and vindicate truth in a public context. Through this role, they engage culture through the means of education and become an agent of change in their present time but also for future generations. These are broad strokes, yet the accomplishment of such a task takes place in the details of running a multi-leveled administratively complex organization. One such detail that Carl Henry goes to special lengths to address is the intentionality necessary within curriculum choices for the various fields of academia. Curriculum decisions can be the rudder which directs the ship of an institution.

### Foundational Curriculum Choices

As a competent educator for many years, Henry was well aware of the importance of curriculum in the classroom setting as a means for cultural engagement. He was also equally aware that the proposal he was unpacking for education through his strategic steps and institutional responsibility would be nothing short of a “New Reformation”<sup>343</sup> drastic which

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<sup>343</sup> While it seems extreme, I am a proponent of Henry's terminology “New Reformation” used in this section of *Twilight of a Great Civilization*. I believe it is in the same sense of Martin Luther's initial intention when confronting the ills of the Catholic church in 1517. With his *95 Theses* on the door of the Wittenberg Church, Luther was not trying to start a new movement and break with the church, but to *reform* the church. His intention was to correct errors that had crept in over time. Historically we know the result of such action and the eventual separation of Protestantism from Catholicism. But, through much reading of Henry's works, and some familiarity with his autobiographical descriptions of himself, I sense that Henry connects more with early Luther in his desire not to break from secular education, but to reform from within errors which have eroded its true heritage. Education has always had the Western tradition of Judeo-Christian ideals as its greatest supporter. As the biblical worldview spread, so spread education. Combating illiteracy, confronting superstition, encouraging scientific discovery, has long been the modus operandum of the church through the ages, yet much has changed in the last century. A “new reformation” is needed in educational circles to regain the heritage which has been lost to secular humanism and Darwinian naturalism. Henry is not advocating a traumatic break, but an internal shift bring education more in line with reality.

would demand a level of scholarship that is currently not being achieved by scholars within Christian circles. Henry compares the laity during the Reformation as more knowledgeable of theology and more willing to engage culture, than many pastor and educators are today. (He specifically calls out the Doctor of Ministry degree in this comparison.)<sup>344</sup> Henry's objective in this section is specifically to challenge the curriculum choices of religious institutions to be more demanding and stretch the students to see their world accurately and comprehensively. Henry closes these thoughts with a brutal warning, saying, "Christian education that is not intellectually demanding may be living on borrowed time."<sup>345</sup>

The reason for a critical look at the curriculum of an institution of higher education is because everyone, the administrators, faculty, and students, comes preloaded with cultural biases. The existence of presuppositions and cultural inclinations is completely natural, yet not always helpful. Henry calls for curriculum to always pull back to primary sources to alleviate the cultural conditioning that is easily missed. Henry is in the same vein as C. S. Lewis who writes in 1946 a very similar sentiment. "None of us can fully escape [our own cultural blind spots], but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books...The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books."<sup>346</sup>

Neither Henry nor Lewis would advocate that ancient writers had fewer biases, and consequently fewer errors, than modern writers. All humans err. The important thing is that

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<sup>344</sup> "In that great turning time-time the laity knew more about theology than do many pastors today, armed as they may be even with Doctor of Ministry degrees." Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 96.

<sup>345</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 97.

<sup>346</sup> C.S. Lewis, introduction to *Athanasius: The Incarnation of the Word of God*, trans. by A Religious of C.S.M.V. (New York: Macmillian, 1946), 7.

they had different biases and made different errors. Through the exposure to different thinkers of different times we can see our own time with fresh eyes, potentially even seeing our own biases in light of theirs.

Henry made a clear statement that institutions who wish to engage their culture with a biblical worldview should engage first with what he calls “Great Books.” He insists that students be put in touch with primary sources rather than just secondary interpretations. “We stand upon the shoulders of the past, and often in unwitting ways we think with minds indebted to ancient and medieval as well as modern conceptual networks.”<sup>347</sup> This insistence of Henry is because he finds ancient works as particularly insightful along worldview lines. “These sources thrust upon the reader the perennially significant questions: *Who* am I? *Why* am I? *Where* am I going? Does human life make sense, and if so, what is its meaning?”<sup>348</sup> As an institution must make intentional efforts to build a cohesive worldview, Henry believes this can better be accomplished without the entrapments of modern cultural assumptions imposing on the students.

In his litany of curriculum recommendations Henry states his first suggested class offering for incoming freshmen would be an exegesis of Plato’s *Republic*. Here, through Plato’s discussion of the break-up of Greek democracy, Henry finds much that is of contemporary concern; materialism from a supernatural perspective, the ideal content of education, the nature of truth, and also the attempt to define goodness. While Plato was by no means an advocate of the biblical worldview, his perspective raises questions that need to be critically assessed within the classroom. Henry would argue that analysis of Plato’s *Republic* opens the door for the biblical worldview to shine as the best answers to these questions. These ideological

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<sup>347</sup> Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, 95.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid. (Emphasis done by Carl Henry)

presuppositions must be wrestled with by a generation soon to step into leadership in our own society.<sup>349</sup>

Secondly, Henry would suggest a class on the Bible as a basic starting place to confront philosophical idealism and naturalism which is rampant in our culture. This class would fall in line with the overarching goals of building students to be self-aware of the presuppositions within themselves, as well as the use of logical tests to assess metaphysical ideals. This process leads toward studies in ethics and philosophy. One component that Henry does not shy away from, but readily presents, is the study of Jesus Christ within any worthy educational institution, private or public. If Jesus is the most discussed and studied figure in human history, and his ethical system is the most influential system of all time, and his religious system the most followed according to global data, would not all students, regardless of personal religious affiliation, benefit from an in-depth historical and philosophical look at the man many people believe to be the crown-jewel of humanity?

Carl Henry challenges institutions of higher education to “look anew at their curriculums and ask how best to enhance the excitement of serious learning in the present culture context.”<sup>350</sup> He wants to re-invigorate a passion for the world of ideas as a primary focus for schools training the next generation. While practicality is important, ideas shape the society. A curriculum that focuses on test scores or job placement to the neglect of intellectual and moral perspective and heritage, does a disservice to the individual and the culture. If the institutional role in cultural engagement is to be taken seriously, responsible colleges and universities will concentrate on, as

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 89.

Henry so eloquently says, “sending seniors into our decadent society with a lucid comprehension of the Christian world-life view.”<sup>351</sup>

### Three Institutional Observations: Crusade University, King’s College, Liberty University

The vision of cultural impact through the higher educational institution is not a new idea. While most colleges and universities in America began with religious foundations,<sup>352</sup> many did not retain their religious heritage. Henry’s notion of impacting culture through the university can be seen in his own intentional, though unsuccessful, efforts to found Crusade University, a research university, on the biblical worldview. Aspects of Henry’s vision can be seen in the successful educational models currently employed in King’s College in New York City, NY, and Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. While in no way attempting to present a comprehensive case study on these institutions, this section seeks to highlight several key characteristics these two private universities manifest which Crusade University was theoretically intended to embody in its efforts to engage and impact culture from a biblical worldview perspective.

#### *Crusade University*

Carl Henry’s passion for educational excellence informed by a biblical worldview was not merely a hypothetical dream. Henry pushed hard to make this into an institutional reality. In

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> The institutions of higher education in colonial America were typically founded with religious purposes. Harvard University (1636) was Puritan, The College of William and Mary (1693) was from Church of England, Yale University (1701) was also Puritan though founded to be a more conservative alternative to Harvard, the Moravian College (1742) was Moravian, Princeton University (1747) was Presbyterian, and Rutgers University (1766) was Dutch Reformed.

the early 1950s, Henry discussed with Billy Graham the possibility of a robust Christian educational presence that would challenge the secular tide within academia. Henry's idea was of an Evangelical university functioning at the highest levels of both academics and spirituality, preparing every vocation for informed engagement with the world based on the reality of God and his revelation.<sup>353</sup>

While Fuller Theological Seminary was founded on similar priorities, Henry and Graham began to discuss what a thoroughly evangelical institution would look like for other areas of vocation beyond full-time pastoral ministry training done by a seminary. The idea developed for a research-level university, training all areas of academic scope from a committed biblical worldview, graduating alumni at all levels of scholarship from introductory undergraduate education through doctoral research. They began to garner support as their vision expanded and grew. The growth of the evangelical movement did not, as Henry scholar Owen Strachan says, “suffer from small dreams.” While Henry was championing a biblical worldview in all areas of life, evangelical institutional advances had risen in the form of a new ministerial training ground at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947, a new academic guild called Evangelical Theological Society in 1949, and a mass media outreach through *Christianity Today* in 1956, but ambition had not peaked. “They wanted still more: an Ivy League-quality research university, the scholarly holy grail.”<sup>354</sup>

Graham and Henry had regular correspondence concerning the developing vision. Henry constantly kept the conversation going and offered insights into this educational endeavor. He regularly communicated concerning the curriculum and faculty of such a university. He stated in

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<sup>353</sup> Owen Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind: An Intellectual History of the Neo-evangelical Movement*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 127-ff.

<sup>354</sup> Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind*, 129.



one such letter the need for attracting students who would “otherwise be inclined to established universities such as Harvard and Yale...in a specialized way in the various schools, e.g. literature, philosophy, physical sciences, biological sciences, education, etc, the whole proceeding from and emphasis on the Christian concept of vocation.”<sup>355</sup> This idea of a “Christian concept of vocation” is a clear indication of the biblical worldview implemented in each of these schools of study. The curriculum for each discipline would be shaped to address the cultural issues of the day and practical vocational training from a framework consistent with, not contradicting or ignoring, the biblical worldview stance.

Concerning faculty, Henry wrote to Graham, “Fundamental to the [communication of the curriculum] is a faculty composed not merely of scholars who have at one time mastered the content of their field...and a respectable PhD, but men who are working up the Christian implications for contemporary issues in their field.”<sup>356</sup> A goal Henry had for the theoretical faculty in this university would be to maintain relevance in each field of study by applying Christian thinking of the highest quality to the current issues in each field. He envisioned cultural engagement through the means of scholarly contributions. He goes on to say these faculty members would “together forge a Christian alternative to the secular interpretations of our day.”<sup>357</sup> The faculty suggested here by Henry would drive the discussions in their respectable field, rather than being purely reactive. They would seek answers to contemporary questions from a biblical perspective and introduce new thoughts which the secular educational

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<sup>355</sup> Carl Henry letter to Billy Graham, *The Henry Letters*, 1949.

<sup>356</sup> Carl Henry letter to Billy Graham, *The Henry Letters*, 1949.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

enterprise would be forced to deal with as equals in the world of ideas. Henry had lofty goals for this project of engaging culture through educational means.

The promotion and realization of such an institution was integrally linked with the legacy of Billy Graham. At a meeting in November of 1959 of the like-minded influential leading businessmen and theologians, a booklet was circulated titled “A Time for Decision in Higher Education: Billy Graham presents Crusade University.”<sup>358</sup> The booklet covered American demographics, the crisis of culture, future institutional objectives, and even location options. While Henry’s necessary application of the biblical worldview was not explicitly stated in the booklet, the intention was communicated through the identification of Christian Higher Education, and key terms like “calling” and “vocation” rather than “career” or “employment.” His influence was certainly behind ideas such as “the Christian theistic view of the world, the “absolute validity” of Scripture, and the articulation that the rising generation of believers grasp “their responsibility to the needs of the world.”<sup>359</sup> Even the direct approach of liberal arts learning can be traced to Henry’s ideal educational model. While the vision was not fully set in stone, the implications of cultural influence were clear in this embryonic stage. There was even included a “suggested campus plan” which included fifteen buildings arranged in three primary “quads,” a football stadium, and on-campus dormitory housing.<sup>360</sup> With an eye towards cultural

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<sup>358</sup> Henry and Graham had the booklet preprinted and distributed prior to the meetings. Those in attendance were twenty two men of national influence, including Billy Graham, Harold Ockenga, Carl Henry, Paul Harvey, J. Howard Pew, and Rev. Grady Wilson to name a few. A complete list of personnel in attendance is listed in the meeting notes of “November 5, 1959 meeting concerning Crusade University”.

<sup>359</sup> Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind*, 139.

<sup>360</sup> William C. Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 257.

impact and maximum public exposure, Crusade University was set to open in the fall of 1963, in time for establishment before the World's Fair came to New York in 1964.

If Billy Graham embodied the face of the effort for such a school, Carl Henry embodied the brain. Henry solidified his grandiose vision of an “interdenominational, international witness of conservative Christianity” with this verbal manifesto of Crusade University’s high calling in the meeting of November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1959. This unpolished exposition is worth quoting at length because of its systematic outline of what Henry envisioned a Christian research university to be.

More important than all considerations of ‘where and when,’ however, is the basic matter of the image of this University and the academic world. Such a school, if worthy of its purpose, must with thought and life at their highest levels in the rich context of the Bible.

It must be:

- (1) evangelical in urgency,
- (2) evangelical in doctrine,
- (3) committed to academic standards and moral purity—but, unless it is much more also it cannot generally qualify as a Christian University. Such an institution will not be too greatly interested in “the reputation of numbers,” but
- (4) will honor the importance of personal academic relationships between professors and students, and will guard even underclassmen from exposure to faculty novices. Its qualified teachers must be concerned for
- (5) the unification of all the university disciplines in the interest of a Christian world-life view which integrates the whole of life’s experiences area with an eye on tragic cultural crises of our times, they must
- (6) set forth the political, economic and social applications of Christianity, and thus expound a consistent criticism of an alternative to socialistic revisions of the social order.

Beyond a deep sense of personal devotion to the Lord, the faculty must

- (7) grasp the history of thought and systematic orientation to Jesus Christ as the revealed center of history, nature, conscience and redemption, by bringing the “ancient mind,” the “medieval mind,” the “modern mind,” the “contemporary mind” under the judgment of

divine revelation; besides interest simply in personal projects and literary excursions, such a faculty must be ready to

(8) engage in corporate conversation, research and writing, each making some minimal contribution for the production of textbooks that will enable the evangelical enterprise to challenge the initiative of secular scholars, and to penetrate the collegiate world.

If such a university is really to rise to its greatest potential, in its necessary dedication to evangelical standards of doctrine of life, it will seek also to

(9) provide a platform for the ablest evangelical scholars of all traditions, in order to solidify the interdenominational, international witness of conservative Christianity.<sup>361</sup>

This statement, while never reaching fruition, was a product of Henry's own commitment to revelational theism as seen in a biblical worldview, which like the ministry of Jesus, was personal, passionate, and yet unapologetic of grandiose plans for global impact. Crusade University's true power was that it was not to be built on endowments and pride, but on a faculty who would hold tightly to its ideological commitments. Analyzing Henry's statement reveals the embryonic presence of a people-focused university. Even in this unformalized statement, the stellar requirements of faculty are plain to see. From meaningful relationships with the student body, to whole-life integration of the biblical worldview into every discipline, and commitment to publishing, the faculty would have to be well-rounded. The "deep sense of personal devotion"<sup>362</sup> is assumed.

Maybe the most striking stipulation of the faculty is articulated in point (7) of Henry's grandiose vision. He calls for a "grasp the history of thought and systematic orientation to Jesus Christ as the revealed center of history, nature, conscience and redemption."<sup>363</sup> This is a

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<sup>361</sup> meeting notes of "November 5, 1959 meeting concerning Crusade University".

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

powerful statement would set apart any professor, not to mention an entire university of professors. A foundation as such would transform every discipline into more than career training, but training for life as a disciple of Christ. There would be no place in Crusade University for myopic focus and specialization to the neglect of its appropriate place within the tapestry of reality. Henry's Christian world-life view would challenge every professor to make the connection from their discipline with all other areas of life, and to impactfully communicate that connection in class, thus producing well-rounded students.

Ironically, the failure of Crusade University was not for lack of vision. It was not for lack of unity of doctrinal position, even though this was an interdenominational effort. The true breakdown came at the discussion of moral standards to be implemented in the university code of conduct. The debate was fierce between a highly detailed list of prohibitions (alcohol, tobacco, cards, movies) and a more liberal view of the possession of certain positive virtues. Would the school demand adherence to an outlined moral code or merely suggest ethical behavior? Also, there were the semi-political moves within the think-tank as to how closely Crusade University would resemble Fundamentalist institutions, rather than being distinctly evangelical, thereby looking too "progressive" in its time.<sup>364</sup>

In the quagmire of campus moral standards, the group lost sight of the grand purpose. The lines of communication broke down and a figurative "wet blanket" was introduced on this once white-hot excitement. Plans for securing facilities halted. Potential matriculation dates were indefinitely postponed. Financial backers subtly began to disappear. Over the next two years, little correspondence happened. Henry wrote to S. H. Mullen in September of 1962 and lamented the incomplete task. He viewed this failure as a detriment to the Christian community

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<sup>364</sup> Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind*, 135.

specifically in New York. He said of the 20,000 converts from the Graham crusade at Madison Square Garden, “where are they now, they were ‘thrown to the wolves’ so far as their collegiate learning is concerned in as much as there is no Christian college in the New York area that has full accreditation.”<sup>365</sup>

While the grand plans of Crusade University ultimately never came to be, what can be seen is the drive of evangelicals, in the heritage left by Carl Henry, to continue to pursue large scale cultural impact. The stage for future generations to dream big for institutional impact had been set but not conquered. The vision that propelled Henry to pursue changing the status quo of the educational system within American culture has been captured in his writings and feeds a new generation of evangelicals who are willing to listen.

### *King’s College*

One such institution which embodies some of the same principles that Henry longed to see realized have manifested in King’s College in New York City. The principles of influential locational positioning and biblical worldview impartation are clearly evident in this school. Gregory Thornbury, president of King’s College from 2013-2017, and now Chancellor of the school, is a self-proclaimed protégé of Carl Henry. During his PhD studies at The Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville KY, Thornbury, along with three other colleagues, contacted Henry about republishing his work *God, Revelation, and Authority*. After an initial meeting at

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<sup>365</sup> Carl Henry to S. H. Mullen, *The Henry Papers*, Sept 25, 1962.

Henry's home in Wisconsin a friendship began and Henry and Thornbury began corresponding.<sup>366</sup>

Thornbury's connection to the ideological heritage of Carl Henry is clearly seen in the positioning of King's College, both geographically and philosophically. Henry's vision for Crusade University included being in a major metropolitan environment, preferably on the east coast, so as to be influential in the cultural shaping of American and global society. King's College is located in the heart of New York City, on Broadway next to Wall Street in the financial district. This institution recognizes its influential location and intentionally harnesses it for cultural impact.

At our Christian college in New York City, we believe we should be shaping culture at its heart. Here in the heart of the metropolis, we believe we have that chance. King's offers academic immersion at a small liberal arts college, amazing internships and job opportunities – plus the chance to truly influence secular society in the world's most global city.<sup>367</sup>

The intentional effort of engaging society is emphasized twice in this short description under the student life heading of King's. Carl Henry would commend the efforts to influence secular society from the inside out.

Not only is King's using its location to further institutional cultural engagement, but it is also serious about imparting a biblical worldview to its students for the same goal. It is teaching the all-inclusive nature of the Christian belief system as a transformative agent within society influencing both the private and public sectors.

Our Mission: Through its commitment to the truths of Christianity and a biblical worldview, The King's College seeks to transform society by preparing students for

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<sup>366</sup> Some details of this relationship are shared in the opening chapter of his book, where Thornbury acknowledges that he is no unbiased observer of Henry's monumental influence in what he calls Classic Evangelicalism. Greg Thornbury, *Recovering Classical Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry*. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2013), 15.

<sup>367</sup> <https://www.tkc.edu> accessed 6/26/18.

careers in which they help to shape and eventually to lead strategic public and private institutions, and by supporting faculty members as they directly engage culture through writing and speaking publicly on critical issues.<sup>368</sup>

Similar to the desire of Crusade University, Henry's passion to see faculty engaging outside of the classroom within their own academic disciplines as they "directly engage culture" is exhibited in the mission statement of King's College. Henry would have applauded this effort to not only produce quality graduates, but also to allow the institutional influence of its faculty to challenge the secularization of their particular fields of expertise. Henry said "Evangelicals tend to speak mostly to evangelicals rather than to the larger world."<sup>369</sup> King's College is attempting to break this mold and engage the larger culture in New York City and by extension, the world. All students are versed in the biblical worldview as applied to their particular area of study for the purpose of influence. "Rather than sheltering our students from mainstream society, we empower them to change it through growing in wisdom and character."<sup>370</sup>

### *Liberty University*

Liberty University embodies the principles of societal influence and a commitment to Christian excellence which Henry desired to see in an evangelical institution. Jerry Falwell Jr. comments on the passion of his father's founding of Liberty.

My father believed that a university could remain true to Christian values and still have world-class facilities, academic excellence that would allow students to work in almost any profession, NCAA Division I athletics competing at the highest levels, and all the other activities and programs found at big universities. Many believed it could not be done, but he believed that if it was Christian, it ought to be better.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> <https://www.tkc.edu/about-kings/#mission-vision> accessed 6/25/18.

<sup>369</sup> Carl Henry, "Why We Need Christian Think Tanks". *Christianity Today*: Vol 29, issue 5 March 15, 1985.

<sup>370</sup> <https://www.tkc.edu/academics/> accessed 6/25/18.

<sup>371</sup> Jerry Falwell Jr., <http://www.liberty.edu/news/index.cfm?PID=26726> accessed 6/25/18.



The idea that excellence should be pursued, not for worldly approval, but for Godly representation drove Liberty University to be a national leader in many areas. It holds the title as the nation's largest non-profit university.<sup>372</sup> This has been accomplished with a resolute stance of preserving, promoting, and vindicating the biblical worldview in all of its academic disciplines. The desire for excellence in the classroom and beyond has propelled Liberty to be a case study of online learning for the nation to follow. This institution has been a consistent example of the integration of faith and learning as it is "Training Champions for Christ" in every area of study.<sup>373</sup> In the quest for excellence, Liberty has established six hundred and ninety-five unique programs of study in the residential and online formats, through seventeen schools and colleges within the University.<sup>374</sup>

Liberty has also exhibited an unprecedented level of social influence through its history. It is a common stop for high profile speakers, including three US presidents and a host of political and judicial figures. Henry says that the Christian university is an undeniable key to implementing the biblical worldview throughout society.<sup>375</sup> Through the university, the social

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<sup>372</sup> Though Liberty was recently supplanted as the nation's "largest university" by Grand Canyon University, but GCU's for-profit status can place it in a different category when using different metrics, allowing LU to legitimately claim the title "largest non-profit University". <https://www.liberty.edu/online/nonprofit-online-university/>.

<sup>373</sup> "Training Champions for Christ has been Liberty University's tagline since its founding in 1971" - Liberty News, <http://www.liberty.edu/news/index.cfm?PID=18495&MID=241074> Accessed 6/29/18.

<sup>374</sup> Liberty identifies 346 residential programs: 224 undergraduate, 117 graduate, 5 doctoral, and 349 online programs: 87 undergraduate, 217 graduate, 7 postgraduate, 38 doctoral, as unique offered programs of study. This information is available online for prospective students. <https://www.liberty.edu/aboutliberty/index.cfm?PID=6925> Accessed 6/29/18.

<sup>375</sup> "A crucial key for unlocking and releasing this Christian contribution to social order is the Christian university...To confront conflicting social forces with a view to intelligibly integrating man's total experience requires knowledge of modern culture's weaknesses. The Christian academic world must exhibit these alongside the ennobling features of redemptive revelation and must demonstrate and inspires confidence and dedication in

weaknesses can be addressed from a biblical perspective as Christian solutions are initiated, polished, and implemented by students, faculty and alumni. Liberty has been a solid example of social influence and academic excellence that Carl Henry aspired to see come into existence in Crusade University.

### Summary of Henry's Call for Cultural Engagement Through Education

Carl Henry's call to engage culture through education is nothing short of a call echoed from the teaching of Jesus to be salt in our cultural setting. Jesus's analogy of salt brings to mind the preservative nature within society as well as the flavoring quality within culture.<sup>376</sup> The biblical worldview when rightly applied, both by individuals and institutions, will be a restraining force on the decay of society. Through the grounding of moral standards and the inclusion of our intellectual heritage, the biblical worldview, like salt, has a redemptive and restorative effect when it is embraced. Education is a vehicle for biblical worldview formation and implementation for the good of all of society.

The salt analogy also hints at a flavoring and enhancement of society. When the biblical worldview is embraced within an educational setting, students find freedom to engage with new thoughts, experiences new things, and flourish in mind, body and spirit. The biblical worldview benefits families, grows community health, and creates an intricate and beautiful flavor in a free society. Henry tirelessly called for a serious look at the biblical worldview as the operating

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developing Christian solutions." Henry, "Christian Education and World Culture". *Mennonite Quarterly Review*: 1958.

<sup>376</sup> Jesus uses the salt and light parable in Matthew 5:13-14 to instruct believers on their influence on communities and culture which they are a connected. While this is not explicitly focused on education, the implications of Christian social influence extend into the educational realm.

system within America's educational system. Henry picks up on this from in the founding of the nation as well.

### Henry's Publications Connecting Democratic Freedom and American Education

Academic freedom is the idea that the freedom of inquiry of an educator is essential to education in a free society. It holds that educators have the freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts without being targeted for discrimination, employment loss, or legal repercussions, even if those ideas are controversial or inconvenient to external groups or authorities. The idea of academic freedom is a derivative of the First Amendment right of free speech. The legal counsel to the Association of American University Professors, Donna Euben, writes, "The First Amendment safeguards expression from regulation by public institutions, including public colleges and universities, expression on all sorts of topics and in all sorts of settings."<sup>377</sup> If revelational theism were to be given serious consideration as a framework for educational settings it would depend on a robust view of academic freedom for believing educators and students.

This natural flow from the Constitution of the United States greatly impacts the quest for truth in academic settings. The freedom to pursue and promote truth within academia is protected by an educator's right of free speech. Since the connection between freedom of speech and academic freedom is derivative, there are limits and implications which the courts must decide. These implications manifest in multiple ways including: educator vs. institution, educator vs. state, and institution vs. state. In all these cases, the principal matter is the ability to

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<sup>377</sup> Donna R. Euben, *Academic Freedom of Professors and Institutions*. (Published May, 2002)  
<https://www.aaup.org/issues/academic-freedom/professors-and-institutions> accessed 8/1/18.

freely pursue and propagate truth without fear of repercussion. In this perspective the concept of academic freedom is a legal and constitutional device. Yet Carl Henry holds a higher standard for education and roots his understanding of academic freedom, as well as free speech, in the presuppositions of revelational theism.

Henry said, “There is a widespread notion that academic liberty is preserved only when nothing is taken for granted and everything is subject to doubt; as a result, any affirmation of finalities...seems highly presumptuous.”<sup>378</sup> Henry is stressing the role of presuppositions in the perpetuation to true academic freedom. If there is no bedrock belief guiding the quest for truth and doubt is the final rubric, academic freedom will decline because of the inability to delineate between dissenting opinions. If in the quest for truth, man seeks to throw off all authority and be completely autonomous, man becomes a slave to secular humanist philosophy, denying the quest for truth all together. Yet within the revelational theology understanding of reality, true academic freedom flourishes precisely because it is anchored in ultimate finalities, namely God and his Word. In the quest for truth, the educational system is strong enough for dissenting beliefs because the quest itself is not abandoned. Truth is to be pursued. It is to be acquired. Henry is clear that while human acquisition of truth will never be exhaustive, it can be true nonetheless.<sup>379</sup> This section contends the biblical worldview as espoused by Carl Henry provides the foundation for both academic freedom in the classroom, as well as freedom in society.

### A Brief History of Academic Freedom

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<sup>378</sup> Henry, “The Need for a Christian University”. *Christianity Today*, 1967.

<sup>379</sup> “Man can indeed know the God of creation and created reality-not exhaustively, to be sure, but nonetheless truly.” Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 1, 160.

The beginnings of academic freedom did not arise during the Enlightenment or Renaissance periods, as some may assume. While these eras of change provided great times of growth in academic fields, these were the culmination of a long developing understanding of academic freedom. In the Middle Ages, at the height of ecclesial dominance, the church took the first formalized stance on the educational freedom to think and teach apart from outside governmental pressures. Aquinas was a champion of scholastic thought, and he was greatly impacted by an even earlier source. The idea that true learning is done in an environment of leisure, and truth is pursued for truth's sake, apart from any outside compulsion, dates back to the teaching of Aristotle.

The first known explicit mention of academic freedom in Western history occurs in 1220 in an official document by Pope Honorius III, that he wrote in response to a request from the students at the University of Bologna. In a conflict between the local civil authorities, the Pope encouraging the university to defend its "scholastic freedom" (*libertas scolastica*) and to take intentional measures to resist the attempts of the city government to undermine the independence of the university by requiring students to vow an oath of allegiance to the city.<sup>380</sup> The understanding and development of academic freedom continued to take shape as institutions of learning needed to articulate freedom from outside coercion and solidify the ability to pursue truth in an everchanging cultural context.

In the early 1900s, the question of academic freedom and academic tenure began to draw public attention in the United States. In 1915, the America Association of University Professors (AAUP) drafted a statement of principles outlining securities offered to teachers and institutions.

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<sup>380</sup> Charles E. Curran, "Academic Freedom: The Catholic University and Catholic Theology". *Academe*. Vol. 66, No. 3 Apr., 1980, 126-135.

This statement was adapted and shortened in 1925 by the Association of American Colleges (AAC)<sup>381</sup>. In the 1930s, in joint collaboration by both associations, a series of conferences were held to produce a mutually affirmed understanding of the boundaries of academic freedom and academic tenure. The resulting outcome was publication of the *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. This statement has become the standard of reference for the academic industry.<sup>382</sup> The basis for these definitions are rooted in the rights of freedom of speech outlined in the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the US Constitution.

The United States Supreme Court would continually make decisions to affirm and define more clearly the limits of academic freedom. In the case of *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* Chief Justice Warren of the United States Supreme Court wrote that without academic freedom “our civilization will stagnate and die.”<sup>383</sup> The majority decision further opined that, “Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust.” The plurality reasoned that

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<sup>381</sup> Now known as the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

<sup>382</sup> The statement on academic freedom consisted of three points.  
<https://www.aaup.org/file/1940%20Statement.pdf> accessed 7/25/18.

1. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.
3. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

<sup>383</sup> *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 250 (1957).  
[https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_case?case=10026374859124601238](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=10026374859124601238) accessed 8/6/18.

educators must be able to “feel free to inquire, to study and to evaluate” and “to gain new maturity and understanding” without fear of consequences.<sup>384</sup>

The Supreme Court would make a clear connection between academic freedom and the First Amendment rights outlined in the United States Constitution in the 1967 case *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*. In this case, the Court identified academic freedom as “a special concern of the First Amendment, which does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom.” The Court reasoned, “Our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us and not just the teachers involved.”<sup>385</sup>

As described in the *1940 Statement* and through the development of court precedent, academic freedom has not been seen in the public eye as a biblical concept, but rather a political one situated in the American understanding of freedom. As an outspoken proponent of democratic freedom, Carl Henry would not deny this. Yet he would anchor his understanding of constitutional freedoms, and thus his understanding of academic freedom, in the biblical worldview.

### Theological Roots of American Educational Freedom

While academic freedom can be debated in the legal sense, Carl Henry wanted to show the foundations of such freedom as rooted in the biblical worldview. Freedom is a biblical concept that has become a cornerstone in Western culture. Henry acknowledges this dependence and says, “The younger generation today scarcely realizes the staggering debt that Western

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> *Keyishian v. Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York*. 385 U.S. 589 (1967) [https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_case?case=15934266528750676067](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=15934266528750676067) accessed 8/6/18.

thought owes to the Biblical heritage or how far modern culture has drifted from the scriptural foundations, even if many parents and grandparents still cling to broken fragments of that inheritance.”<sup>386</sup>

John 8:32 has dramatic implications for educational philosophy as well as this understanding of academic freedom when the Gospel writer says, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Implicit in this verse is the learner, “you”, as well as the content of education - “the truth” - and it gives the effects of learning in the phrase, “the truth will set you free.” Jesus identifies Himself as the truth, in John 14:6 when He proclaims He “is the way, the truth, and the life.” Another connection to the freedom concept is directly shown through Jesus as seen in 2 Corinthians 3:17 saying, “where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” For a scholarly discussion of the theological concept of freedom in Pauline theology see Scott Hafemann’s work, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*.<sup>387</sup>

The question remains if a theological understanding of freedom entails academic freedom. A direct connection between the two would be difficult to establish, yet the underlying principle of freedom does have indirect implications. The Christian scripture makes multiple connections mandating a believer to speak the truth. Jesus commands his followers to “let your yes be yes, and your no be no” in Matthew 5:37. The implication for this within education is academic honesty within research and publication. Academic freedom corresponds to the biblical idea of integrity as to not tolerate social, political, or institutional pressure to change the conclusions from one’s research findings. Also there is a direct command to “speak the truth” in

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<sup>386</sup> Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 17.

<sup>387</sup> Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2005).



Ephesians 4:15, yet this command is followed by a conditional description. As believers are to “speak the truth in love.” With regards to academic freedom, the *1940 Statement* coincides with this principle acknowledging that educators and scholars must recognize,

Their special position in the community [which] imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.<sup>388</sup>

Therefore, any government, institution, or individual which acknowledges academic freedom as a protection to teach and research truth, apart from outside pressure, is aligning with biblical principles inherent in the biblical worldview of revelational theism. By the same token, any government, institution, or individual which suppresses academic freedom is in direct contradiction to the principles inherent in the biblical worldview. The biblical worldview creates the preconditions for which academic freedom can thrive in society. As a society moves away from the biblical worldview, the protections of academic freedom erode because they have no foundational epistemic supports. While academic freedom does not guarantee that truth will be found, it provides the ability for truth to be taught and published when found. Therefore, while academic freedom is not a direct theological derivative, it rests on the foundations and principles established by the biblical worldview.

### Theological Roots of American Democratic Freedom

As mentioned previously, the basis for academic freedom, while theologically rooted in the biblical worldview, legally stems from the constitutional rights established by the organizing documents of this country. The founders of the United States of America were profoundly

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<sup>388</sup> *1940 Statement*, point 3.

influenced by Christianity. While not all were professing believers,<sup>389</sup> the cultural milieu of the day was dominated by a Christian morality framework which impacted all areas of life. Out of this culture, Thomas Jefferson penned in 1776 that all mankind, not simply one nationality, ethnicity, or class of man, were “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness...”<sup>390</sup> Under the umbrella of “Liberty” falls the understanding of freedom of speech. So great was the concern for such liberty that the First Amendment specifically protects a citizen’s ability to exercise his freedom of speech free from fear of outside repercussion.

Politically motivated, the founding fathers assumed a supernatural external being, the Creator, as the foundation of rights to liberty and freedom. Carl Henry recognizes the theological foundations on which the American experiment was founded. How can truths be “self-evident” or man have “unalienable rights” which were “endowed by their Creator” if the Divine is not ontologically essential? How would we know “these Truths” if God has not spoken in a way to reveal his nature and our nature, and therefore our rights, to us? Henry is quick to disarm the weak notion of a generic “god” and points not to the language of the Bible, but to the language of the Declaration of the Independence, to engage worldview assumptions. In the semantic tradition of these founding documents, the existence of a supernatural Creator is the ultimate source of morality and ultimately the basis of any unalienable human rights. Henry warns future generations about the shift away from acknowledging a Creator within education

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<sup>389</sup> While some of the founding fathers were committed to the Judeo-Christian worldview, such as Patrick Henry, John Jay, and Samuel Adams, others were strongly influenced by the Enlightenment religion of Deism which was focused on nature and reason, relegating the supernatural to a uninvolved, background role. This influence of Deism had a spectrum ranging from a conservative right (George Washington, John Adams) to the skeptical left (Ben Franklin, James Monroe).

<sup>390</sup> Declaration of Independence (US 1776).

and society. Henry writes, “I rather think the founding fathers would have warned us that the loss of the Creator would sooner or later involve us—by the most rigorous logic—in the loss also of unalienable rights, and of enduring moral and spiritual values.”<sup>391</sup>

Henry recognizes the attempt to establish the foundation of human rights through man-made efforts rather than divine ontology. In Henry’s historical context, the formation of the United Nations in the Post-WWII world was making great impact globally. On December 10, 1948 the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The document consisted of thirty articles concerning individual rights. This paved the way for the International Bill of Rights was issued in 1976.<sup>392</sup> While the UDHR was not a legally binding document, it has outlined a unifying standard in international discussion, peace treaties, and diplomatic talks.

While the UN produced a standard of human rights, unlike the United States Constitution, it did not expressly ground any of the language in divine ontology. Without this grounding, this designation of human rights was based on the autonomous authority of the UN. Henry points out, “if the United Nations are the ultimate sanction for rights, then we have no rights against the United Nations, since the United Nations defines our rights.”<sup>393</sup> Yet if there is a supernatural reference point for human rights, the authority of the UN would be derivative, not absolute. In the case of the biblical worldview, the existence of human rights is based in the ontology of God, and therefore are eternal and unchanging as God is, because man is the special

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<sup>391</sup> Henry, “Christian Responsibility in Education”. *Christianity Today*. May 27, 1957.

<sup>392</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/sections/history/history-united-nations/> accessed 8/7/18.

<sup>393</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”, *Eternity*, 1954.

creation bearing the *Imago Dei*.<sup>394</sup> Henry argues that the UN or any other man-made entity cannot be viewed as a source of human rights, but only as either friend or foe of the rights and freedoms granted to mankind implicitly by its status as a unique creation of and for the living God.

The educational system cannot be unconcerned with the ultimate foundations of human rights. While the connection to academic freedom rises or falls in this discussion, more importantly the endurance of democracy itself is determined by what authority is the ultimate source of human rights. In non-democratic systems, the governing entities define the rights and privileges of its citizens. Yet at the heart of democracy is a refusal to acknowledge the government as an absolute authority to define human rights. The American Declaration of Independence aligns itself with the biblical worldview in the presupposition that human rights are founded on a divine creator alone, not on any government, and therefore are inalienable.

This fundamental distinction on the philosophical foundations of human rights draws a stark contrast between the documents of the United States and those of the United Nations, even though the actual contents may consist of similar language. The worldview issues at stake set the trajectory of nations. Carl Henry clearly states his belief that the future of democracy and the free world are inextricably linked to understanding that “no state or super-state, not even the United Nations, is the ultimate source of human rights, and that the Creator God alone is the supreme source of man’s dignity and rights.”<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> “Flushing Meadows (NYC) is no Mount Sinai, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights is no Sermon on the Mount; both the Mosaic law and the sermon of Jesus make it plain that God is the ultimate source of man’s rights and responsibilities, whereas the United Nations document attempts to legislate rights which belong to man while the whole matter of his creation in the divine image and the revelation of the will of God are unmentioned.” Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”, *Eternity*, 1954.

<sup>395</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”, *Eternity*, 1954.

## The Separation of Church and State

The combination of the American academic heritage connected with religious values and the marked downturn of character development with the rise of naturalistic philosophy within education call strongly for the return to the teaching of moral absolutes within public education. Yet some opponents of this return would cry foul and use the wall of separation of Church and State as the basis of their argument. This idea that the separation of Church and State is a license to eliminate any religious understanding or teaching from public education is an erroneous understanding of the principle. The founding fathers were products of a society established on western ideology rooted in biblical principles. Revelational theism is the greatest influencer on western culture, even if many of its heirs would deny this heritage.

The words of Thomas Jefferson, which inaugurated the idea of separation of Church and State, were not based on the dispensability of biblical worldview, but rather the opposite. The separation of Church and State testifies to the biblical worldview's indispensability. If the biblical worldview became conscripted by the government as a state religion, it inevitably would undergo corrosion and a twisting toward the ways of man. But because there is a separation of church and State, the biblical worldview can be free to establish moral guidelines and seek truth within society, and education, apart from governmental coercion or control, as well as apart from the government giving preferential treatment to any metaphysical perspective.

Thomas Jefferson penned the famous words, "a wall of separation of Church and State", in a letter written to the Danbury Baptist Association in Danbury, Connecticut on January 1, 1802.<sup>396</sup> While Jefferson is directly addressing the implications of the First Amendment, he is

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<sup>396</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists: The Final Letter, as Sent*. (The Library of Congress Information Bulletin. June 1998, Vol. 57 No. 6).

doing so as a way to affirm religious liberty. With the wall analogy, Jefferson was encouraging the Danbury Baptists, who were a religious minority afraid for their rights, to practice their beliefs unhindered by the local establishment. They made their appeal directly to President Thomas Jefferson, and his response was to show clearly that government would not show preference to one belief system over another. He made the analogy of a wall that would separate government from the church, thus protecting any religious minorities from a government sanctioned order of practice.

While governmental interference would not be tolerated in church beliefs, it was not stated that religious values could not influence governmental systems. The idea that the separation of Church and State prevents any religious representation within publicly-funded agencies is a misunderstanding of the context of the analogy. The separation of Church and State allows for a multiplicity of religious and philosophical positions to be represented in the public square without governmental interference or preference. Henry explicitly believed Thomas Jefferson understood the implications of the separation of Church and State and, were he alive today, would be quick to affirm Henry's interpretation. Henry believed Jefferson would point out modern American education's hypocritical, even un-American, stance of excluding Judeo-Christian presuppositions within education while giving preference to naturalistic philosophy's presuppositions.<sup>397</sup>

In light of the beautiful protections inherent in the separation of Church and State, Henry does not call for the abandonment of public educational institutions, rather he insists that

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<sup>397</sup> Carl Henry said, "Thomas Jefferson, who emphasized 'the wall of separation of Church and State', would not have hesitated today to apply to humanistic or idealistic teaching his declaration that 'to compel a man to furnish contributions of money [as every public-school tax payer does] for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical.'" Henry, "The Crisis in Education". *Christianity Today*, 1958.

academic freedom and separation of Church and State go hand in hand. Teachers with religious convictions should not avoid the public school systems. Because of academic freedom within the American educational system, teachers with religious convictions theoretically should be allowed to research and publish without discrimination because of their worldview.

Yet theory and practice often do not align. Henry exposes the preference given to the Naturalistic philosophy. "...because of the doctrine of separation of Church and State, even when interpreted to exclude religious all views, ought to give no comfort for the naturalistic view of religion."<sup>398</sup> The separation of Church and State, in the view of Henry, is a protection granting equal exposure to a variety of worldview perspectives, all the while not allowing any established religion to become the government endorsed perspective. When wrongly viewed as a means to eliminate religious ideals from public institutions the separation of Church and State misses the original intention of this principle. Henry displays his belief as he writes that the separation of Church and State "is not committed thereby in principle against the teaching of religious and moral truth in the public schools."<sup>399</sup> What is principally opposed is the acceptance of a state sponsored perspective. Academic freedom goes hand in hand with the guarantees granted by the separation of Church and State, that the government will not dictate what can and cannot be taught, but the convictions of teachers and institutions will be honored.

Henry sees the ideal of separation of Church and State as a "precious heritage of democracy." He sees this vital aspect of academic life weakened by what he calls the "evasion of the facts." He critiques modern education on the lack of perspective on its own history. He says the history of religion is a necessary competent of understanding the value of education.

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<sup>398</sup> Henry, "Modern Education and the Secularistic Tide". *Watchman-Examiner*, 1951, 966.

<sup>399</sup> Henry, "Moral Values and Public Education". *Eternity*, 1954.

When the facts of religious heritage within academics are evaded, faith is depreciated and naturalism is given a preferential philosophical position. Henry argues,

I do not say that the public schoolroom should be used to enlist students in this or that church or denomination or religion; the wall of separation between church and state is too precious a heritage of democracy to see it thus endangered. ... an American classroom that yields irreligious students, and ignores the facts of the Hebrew Christian religion and its heritage, is neither the friend of democracy nor the foe of totalitarianism.<sup>400</sup>

Henry advocates for fair treatment of the historical facts, not for proselytizing, but for the sake of understanding the bedrock of democracy and providing the opposing arguments to alternative social systems used in other parts of the world which try to impose their views within American education. Henry believes the student who leaves the realms of academics having discarded his or her faith in favor of an “irreligious” philosophy is not supporting the presuppositions of democracy and opening the door for totalitarianism to undermine the American experiment. Thus, exposure to the facts, rather than the evasion of the facts, concerning the religious and moral heritage embedded within academics should be taught as a regular aspect of historical reflection. Denial of the data is a detriment to well-rounded students. “To teach our students the great Christian truths is no more to coerce them than to teach the speculations of Plato and Dewey; the schools exist to familiarize students with the facts, and not to compel submission to them.”<sup>401</sup>

### The Renewed Need for Academic Freedom

Carl Henry viewed with almost prophetic accuracy the progressing state of the American educational system. He describes the hopelessness of a rugged naturalism where chance and

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<sup>400</sup> Henry, “Christian Responsibility in Education”. *Christianity Today*, 1957.

<sup>401</sup> Henry, “Moral Values and Public Education”. *Eternity*, 1954.



irreducible natural processes account for everything in reality; where man is nothing more than a mere accident whose future is unsure and ultimately irrelevant. Henry laments, “this is nonetheless the perspective that now seeps through to the masses of students and shapes their vision of life and reality more than any other worldview.”<sup>402</sup>

While Henry affirms the rights of secularists to hold their own views, he resists the inclination of the academy to adopt the precepts of naturalism to the detriment of academic freedom which is ensured through the first amendment. Henry exposes one of the subversive tenets of naturalism which “pretentiously mythologizes all other perspectives while it claims to provide the secret gnosis through which everything else is to be properly understood.”<sup>403</sup> As educational theory increasingly buys into this ideological position, it undermines the academic freedom which allowed naturalism’s propagation in the first place. This understanding of naturalism creates a god out of chance and random processes, whose priests and preachers are educational administrators and professors. This god of the classroom is as dogmatic as any Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, or Hindu doctrine. Naturalism, in the opinion of Henry, “reflects the thinking of a philosophical sect and it is as sectarian as any denomination or religious alternative.”<sup>404</sup>

There must be a renewed interest in academic freedom among the evangelical community to regain its voice in academic circles. By constitutional decree, the Christian teacher is entitled to equal rights of personal religious identification, yet when naturalism is confronted

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<sup>402</sup> Carl Henry, “The Challenge of Christian Higher Education”. *Vanguard*, Vol. 5. September-October 1975, 3.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Carl Henry, “The Crisis in Education”. *Christianity Today*, May 12, 1958.

discrimination is commonplace. The Christian teacher is entitled to as much voice as the teacher who is dedicated to the modern naturalistic gods.

Just as Paul proceeded to use the cultural milieu of his day in the discussions on Mars Hill in Acts 17 to address the philosophers and public square, Christian educators today can boldly use the language of the Declaration of Independence to speak of a supernatural Creator as the source of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights are anchored in a biblical worldview that has differentiated Western culture from the rest of the world and is continually refining it. The biblical worldview has a place in the American educational system and the essence of academic freedom allows for an equal presentation of this worldview view in dialogue with competing systems.

#### Summary of Henry's Published Views on American Educational Freedom

The history of academic freedom in the American educational system shows how the concept is rooted in the application of the First Amendment protections of free speech. Yet the concept of academic freedom preceded the US Constitution. Its roots in the medieval period and beyond link it to a much great source of authority. Carl Henry is right to advance the foundations of academic freedom solidly on the biblical worldview. In like kind, the constitutional freedoms enjoyed in the United States of America are similarly rooted in the biblical worldview. With ideals like the separation of Church and State guarding against a government-sponsored religion, yet allowing for religious morality to influence society, educators can take action rooted in their belief systems.

Academic freedom cannot be neglected if the biblical worldview were to assume its former place as a foundational philosophy within academia. William Ringenberg rightly

assesses the abuses of academic freedom in both the Christian and secular environments. He says when a faith-based institution gets academic freedom wrong it is “not fair in its consideration of alternative worldviews.” On the opposite end of the spectrum, when secular institutions abuse academic freedom, they exclude “the spiritual dimension of the human condition even while subtly promoting a naturalist way of thinking.”<sup>405</sup> Both extremes must be avoided in the quest for truth. The biblical worldview deserves accurate representation within the public school, just as non-Judeo-Christian worldviews deserve fair treatment within the private education sector. Carl Henry rightly appraises the times when he says, “education is caught squarely in the middle of dilemma because of the crisis introduced by the dominance of modern relativistic ways of thinking.”<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College and the Meaning of Academic Freedom: Truth Seeking in Community*. (New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016) xvi.

<sup>406</sup> Henry, “Religion and the Crisis of Education”. *The Watchman-Examiner*; 1952.

## Chapter Six: Summary And Conclusions

This dissertation argues that the theological position of Carl F. H. Henry, revelational theism, provides a consistent framework for education. This thesis was developed in three ways: establishing the consistency of revelational theism, demonstrating the irrationality of naturalism, and analyzing Carl Henry's published perspective toward the American educational system. Henry poignantly exposed the root issue behind the symptoms, "Secular learning is at best agnostic about the reality of the supernatural; the prevalent mood in educational circles is explicitly or implicitly naturalistic."<sup>407</sup>

In demonstrating the consistency of revelational theism the presupposition of divine authority of God's Word was shown as a heritage of the church. This authoritative Word from God grounds the use of rationality and provides a framework for all ways of knowing to meet their full potential without overstepping their capabilities. When intuition, experience, and reason are utilized in submission to divine revelation as the ultimate criterion of truth, each avenue becomes a reliable source for truth. Apart from revelation as the guiding authority, these avenues can convey non-biblical messages, idolatry, and incompatible views of reality. When rationality is established within the bounds of revelation an element of common ground is established between believers and unbelievers. Henry speaks to the post-modern context with his call to an unchanging, absolute authority. As evangelical post-foundationalists seek to build

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<sup>407</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 214.

an alternative source of epistemic stability, Henry communicates the constant reminder that God has spoken.

Addressing the irrationality of naturalism began with Henry's engagement with both ancient and modern naturalists. The inability for any person to approach reality from a neutral epistemological position is acknowledged. Yet, with this acknowledgement is the challenge for presuppositional positions to be thoughtfully identified, even if unstated within an argument. Henry address the inability for neither rationality nor morality to be adequately epistemologically grounded by naturalism. Without this grounding, naturalism attempts to coopt the benefits of the biblical worldview, namely its consistent use of logic and ethics, without embracing its foundations. Henry says, "Official educational programs isolate the younger generation from religious claims; providing no rationale whatever for goodness and honesty,"<sup>408</sup> Without a metaphysical reality guiding morality, the call for adherence to any ethical system is impotent. This leads to the irony inherent with naturalistic presuppositions guiding educational settings. While attempting to teach truth, the proposition that there is no truth subverts their effort. While attempting to build character in students, they are taught no ethical norm is universally binding. The irrationality of naturalism manifests in education in the demand for a certain type of harvest, all the while refusing to plant the corresponding seed.

Henry published his perspective on education in a variety of ways. He outlined an evangelical engagement strategy for education. He challenged evangelical institutions to preserve, propagate, and vindicate truth. And he sketched a pattern for foundational curriculum choices that would invest students with the tools for success. While some of these ideals manifest in current institutions, such as King's College in New York City and Liberty University

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<sup>408</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 1, 581.

in Lynchburg, Virginia, Henry's dream of Crusade University never came to fruition. Henry spoke often about the academic freedoms guaranteed allowing a continued effort to pursue these lofty goals. Because of the rights guaranteed in the United States, educators and students should be able to pursue education from a theistic presupposition without fear of repercussion. Despite the dominance of naturalism the biblical worldview has a voice in the marketplace of ideas. All Christians are called to be salt and light in the world around them. A battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation is being fought within educational settings.

Henry asks, "What do we say then of Christian duty – of the responsibility of devoutly committed believers – in education?"<sup>409</sup> Henry outlines this duty in three ways. 1.) "We must bear our witness in this as in all spheres of life and culture." It is the job of believers to live out the truth of God's revelation so the world may see. As we bear our witness, others may recognize their incongruence with God's reality. 2.) "We must remember that the vision for private colleges and universities has been predominantly spiritual and Christian." Henry does not want the hard fought heritage of past generations of believers to be swept away in the rising tide of secularism. Religious institutions must remember their roots and their prime directive. And lastly 3.) "We must remember, too, that public education in this land does not belong to the secularists."<sup>410</sup> In a free democracy with protections for religious liberty and academic freedom there is room for healthy debate about worldview differences. In the public arena evangelicals must articulate the biblical worldview with skill and passion. The truth of reality is on the side of revelational theism. Its ability to ground rationality and morality make it superior to irrational

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<sup>409</sup> Henry, "Christian Responsibility in Education". *Christianity Today*. May 27, 1957.

<sup>410</sup> Points one through three are the direct words of Henry expressing his understanding of the Christian duty within education. Henry, "Christian Responsibility in Education". *Christianity Today*. 1957.

worldviews which attempt to co-opt the implications of biblical axioms, without submitting to the axiom. With the rising tide of secularism and naturalism, theists must take a stand within schools against the sectarian bias poised against them.

This is the duty, as Henry puts it, of every Christian. This dissertation has engaged the topic of metaphysical presuppositions within education, not from a pedagogical framework, but from a theological framework. With a clear understanding of Evangelicalism's theistic foundations, a course can be charted to "train up a child in the way he should go."<sup>411</sup> Evangelical believers should embrace the axioms of the Living God and Divine revelation and allow the implications of these presuppositions to infiltration every thought and action.

In conclusion, this research opens further questions in three primary areas. 1.) How can the penetration of the American educational system with the biblical worldview be moved forward in a meaningful way? Do private religious institutions or parachurch ministries within secular institutions do a better job of conveying the basic tenets of a biblical worldview? 2.) Second concerns the application of revelational theism to other areas of social engagement. As Henry expressed great concern for education, can the same application be made to business, politics, or the arts? How can the presuppositions of revelational theism shape the way American culture is developing for future generations in these arenas? And lastly 3.) How best can the axioms of the Living God and divine revelation commutate to a postmodern society?

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<sup>411</sup> Proverbs 22:6

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