

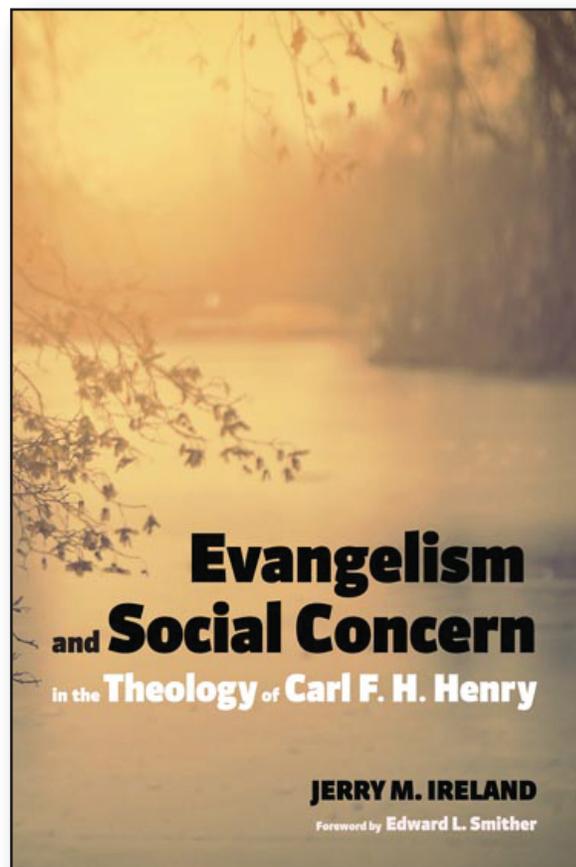
Evangelism and Social Concern in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry

JERRY M. IRELAND

Foreword by **Edward L. Smither**

How do evangelism and social concern relate to one another in the mission of the church? How should the Old Testament's emphasis on social justice inform the praxis of modern believers? Does the Bible emphasize individual salvation, or does it teach a broader, more inclusive concept?

Theologians, missiologists, pastors, and educators have wrestled with these questions for centuries. But especially since the early part of the twentieth century, this debate has increasingly become a point of contention among evangelical Christians, with few indications that a consensus may soon be forthcoming. Yet few have offered so thorough an answer to these questions as has Carl F. H. Henry. Henry's generational model of evangelism and social concern stands on the shoulders of Augustine and many others, and offers what may be the best way forward. This book explores Henry's thoughts on this subject and sets him in dialogue with numerous others who have written on these topics. Thus it will prove a valuable resource for all interested in this topic.



Jerry M. Ireland is the director of Africa AG Care, an organization that facilitates compassionate ministries for the Assemblies of God for all of sub-Saharan Africa. He has a PhD in Theology and Apologetics (Liberty University).

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“Carl F. H. Henry was a prophetic voice who offered keen insight to resolve the twentieth-century bifurcation over the missional necessity of word and deed. Jerry Ireland's work presents a renewed opportunity to see the genius of Henry. This book cannot come at a better time, as twenty-first century American evangelicals demonstrate continuing propensity to polarize around key missional themes.”

—**BYRON D. KLAUS**, President, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO

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FOREWORD BY
Edward L. Smither

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EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL CONCERN IN THE THEOLOGY OF
CARL F. H. HENRY

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To my wife, Paula, and daughter, Charis

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Foreword

IT IS ALWAYS EXCITING when someone is writing from the context of Christian mission. Theological reflection in the midst of engaging in the *missio Dei* is a challenging but ultimately rewarding endeavor that will surely benefit the church. Jerry Ireland is a missionary and theologian burdened with mission and its activities—evangelism, church planting, and humanitarian aid among others—on the continent of Africa. Historic Christian mission has always been in Word (proclaiming the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, discipling, church planting) and deed (compassionate service) and for centuries the relationship was a rather intuitive one. Basil of Caesarea (329–79), Ephrem of Syria (306–73), and Columbanus (543–615) acted in a manner that said, “of course we preach the gospel; of course we feed the poor.” Yet, in the last century, the church has pondered more deeply the relationship between Word and deed ministry. What takes precedence? What is ultimately the most important? This question has been bugging evangelicals in particular since the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization as the literature attests.

In this book, Ireland has taken a wise approach to resolving the question by conversing with Carl F. H. Henry, the leading voice of new evangelicalism in the latter half of the twentieth century and the one who helped evangelicals to think best about appropriate cultural engagement, including evangelism in the modern world. As the reader will see, Ireland has adequately raised the Word vs. deed issue, narrated Henry’s own spiritual journey, and navigated Henry’s thought to offer us wisdom for our times on this important question. Though Henry was not a cross-cultural missionary himself, his theology is certainly valuable to the evangelical missionary movement. Thankfully, Ireland, who is a cross-cultural missionary has immersed himself in the storehouse of Henry’s thought and emerged with an accessible argument to aid those pondering mission in

Word and deed. In short, this is a careful study that is sure to help us be better equipped as the people of God participating in the mission of God.

—Edward L. Smither, PhD
Professor of Intercultural Studies
Columbia International University

Preface

I BECAME A CHRISTIAN through the compassionate outreach of the church. It was through the ministry of Teen Challenge, started by David Wilkerson in the late 1950s, that I was able to leave behind a ten year drug addiction and discover the abundant life that Christ promises. Because of this, I've always had strong feelings about the importance of these types of ministries. As one might imagine, then, when I became a missionary with the Assemblies of God in 2007, I was shocked to discover that some of my colleagues were highly skeptical of compassionate ministries, and in some cases, saw them as a dire threat to the true mission of the church.

As I began reading widely on this topic, I found myself, at first, somewhat taken in with the holistic mission/mission as transformation movement. It seemed that these were the only folks giving sufficient attention especially to the Old Testament (OT) emphasis on caring for the least well-off. In fact, it seemed as though some of the priority advocates were ready to excise the entire OT because it went against their perspective. But, over time, the more I read, the more I began to notice some excesses by those in the holism camp, and began to see that some, not all, but some, of the suspicions regarding holism were justified. Increasingly, I noticed a general tendency within the holism camp to overstate their argument, and at times, to misrepresent the meaning of certain crucial passages of Scripture.

Then I came across the writings of Carl F. H. Henry. When I first read Henry, I suspected that he was inconsistent because he seemed to speak the language of both holism and prioritism. He frequently spoke of evangelism as the church's top priority, and yet, no one who has read Henry can miss his strong and thorough emphasis on the necessity of compassion and social action. I wondered if perhaps he was addressing himself differently to different groups, trying to "be all things to all people," as it were. But the more I read of Carl Henry, the more I discovered

that he was anything but inconsistent. What I discovered instead, was that Henry had more than any other writer faithfully balanced the evangelistic and cultural mandates of the church. He had indeed appreciated what the OT prophets so frequently emphasized about social holiness, and understood how this was implicit in much of the New Testament's reference to care for the poor and needy. Furthermore, in advocating for evangelical social concern he labored more extensively than others to preserve the ancient Christian doctrine of individual repentance and salvation, and keep the verbal proclamation of God's Word as the central feature of Evangelical identity. A favorite phrase of his, "The God of the Bible is the God of justice and justification," perfectly encapsulates this Henrian perspective.

I would like to take a moment to address some potential criticisms of this work. For example, I suspect that some may charge me with letting Henry do all (or most) the heavy lifting, since the bulk of this project is given to presenting Henry's thoughts in some detail. On this, I plead guilty as charged. One of the primary goals of this work is to present in an accessible form the bulk of Henry's thoughts as they relate to evangelism and social concern. This is because Henry's contribution to this debate has not been fully appreciated and the only way to correct this is to show what Henry said and why. Beyond that, when I disagree with Henry I have said so. It just so happens that I find many of his arguments convincing. Second, some may want to fault my approach for not setting Henry in contrast to another writer on this topic. Yet, this assumes that there is someone out there who is Henry's equal in this debate. Such an assumption is simply misguided. Of course, others have written on this subject from a number of theological perspectives. But no one has produced works comparable to Henry's either in sheer volume, or in depth of thought. It is simply a historical fact that on this topic, Carl Henry has no equal. By that I do not mean to say that Carl Henry is always right, but only that no one else has worked out the theological foundations to the degree that Henry has.

As I have already indicated, I don't agree with everything that Carl Henry has said. He was a Reformed Baptist and I am an Arminian Pentecostal. We have our differences. But herein lies the value of Carl Henry. In 2009, a panel discussion at the annual meeting of the *Evangelical Theological Society*, consisting of Russell D. Moore, Richard Mouw, Craig Mitchell, and Peter Hetzel, all reflecting on the life and legacy of Carl F. H. Henry, agreed that Henry probably died a disappointed man. And the

primary reason given for Henry's disappointment was the fact of an increasingly divided and fractured Evangelicalism. Yet, Russell Moore has shown in his excellent book *The Kingdom of Christ*, how Henry played a pivotal role in advocating an evangelical consensus on inaugurated eschatology. My belief is that Henry may yet play a similar role on the issue of evangelism and social concern. I have written this work with that very hope in mind, for I too share Henry's dream of seeing Evangelicals find more ways to come together. I only hope the pages that follow shed some light on Henry's expansive efforts in this area, and move this discussion in that direction.

Acknowledgments

MANY PEOPLE DESERVE THANKS for the genesis of this book. First, I would like to thank those with whom I had sometimes heated discussions on this topic. Those conversations stirred in me a passion to pursue this further in search of a biblical solution.

Second, the faculty and staff of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary deserve special mention, as this project has emerged from my dissertation done through this fine institution. Especially influential in the production of this work were the members of my PhD committee, Drs. Kevin King Sr., Ed L. Smither, and Daniel R. Mitchell. These, along with Dr. Leo Percer, were instrumental in helping me to think through some of these issues. Their critical reflections on this work have made it better than it would have otherwise been.

Third, thanks also is owed to Assemblies of God World Missions, for giving the freedom to pursue this project and seeing it as a valuable asset to our work in Africa. I pray that this work honors the trust they have bestowed on me.

Fourth, I want to thank the fine folks at Wipf and Stock for seeing promise in this project and agreeing to publish this work. Especially helpful have been Laura Poncy, Matt Wimer, and Dr. Charlie Collier. Finally, much thanks is owed to my sweet wife, Paula, and precious daughter, Charis, who have without complaint endured and supported my academic pursuits and writing projects.

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|---|
| <i>AG</i> | Assemblies of God |
| <i>BGEA</i> | Billy Graham Evangelistic Association |
| <i>CD</i> | <i>Church Dogmatics</i> (Barth) |
| <i>CP</i> | Conservative-Propositional [approach to theology] |
| <i>CT</i> | <i>Christianity Today</i> |
| <i>CRESR</i> | Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility |
| <i>ETS</i> | Evangelical Theological Society |
| <i>GRA</i> | <i>God, Revelation, and Authority</i> |
| <i>JETS</i> | Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society |
| <i>LCWE</i> | Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism |
| <i>LXX</i> | Septuagint |
| <i>NAE</i> | National Association of Evangelicals |
| <i>NICNT</i> | New International Commentary on the New Testament |
| <i>NICOT</i> | New International Commentary on the Old Testament |
| <i>NCC</i> | National Council of Churches |
| <i>NIDNTT</i> | Brown, Colin, ed. <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975–1985. Accordance. |

Abbreviations

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- NIDOTTE* VanGemeren, Willem, ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997. Accordance.
- NT* New Testament
- OT* Old Testament
- SOM* Sermon on the Mount
- SWJT* *Southwestern Journal of Theology*
- TDNT* Kittel, Gerhard and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967.
- WCC* World Council of Churches

Evangelism and Social Concern

CARL F. H. HENRY’S legacy, at least in part, centers on his efforts to promote a balanced view of evangelism and social concern.¹ In one of his earliest works, in fact, the one that gained him widespread recognition as an important emerging twentieth-century theologian, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, Henry especially tackled the issue of social malaise among Fundamentalists.² Beyond that, though, Henry unapologetically called the church to uphold the “most urgent task” of world evangelism.³ In both, Henry demonstrates a keen ability to study and evaluate both current trends and future horizons.⁴ As Carl Trueman has said, “indeed, Henry’s unerring ability to see the big picture, to focus

1. His evangelical defense of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, rooted in a revelational epistemology is his greatest single contribution, especially in his six-volume *God, Revelation, and Authority* published variously between 1976 and 1983 (hereafter, *GRA*). As Carl R. Trueman, says, “without a doubt it is the most exhaustive evangelical statement on these issues to have been produced in the twentieth century”; “Admiring the Sistine Chapel,” 48. Yet, as Cerillo and Dempster observe, Henry, “more than any other individual, led the way in formulating the apologetic for a socially relevant evangelicalism”; Cerillo, and Dempster, “Carl F. H. Henry’s Early Apologetic,” 366.

2. While Henry upheld the Fundamentalist assessment that sin constituted humanities greatest problem, he also noted that Christianity is ill-served by uncritically jettisoning the social relevance of the Gospel in reaction to liberal theology; Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience*, 16.

3. Henry, *Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis*, 2; see also *GRA*, 2:22, wherein Henry says, “the unmistakable priority of God’s people, the church in the world, is to proclaim God’s revealed Word.”

4. This is evident for example, in a number of Henry’s works, including *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*; *Remaking the Modern Mind*; *Faith at the Frontiers*; and *A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration*.

on issues of real substance, and to communicate the significance of these issues to the theological public is not open to debate.”⁵

One finds in examining Henry’s writings on the subject of evangelism and social concern a multi-layered, revelation-centered approach that carefully and biblically seeks to balance these two mandates of the church. Henry skillfully navigates the opposite extremes of cultural retreat, and, the more pressing danger of losing evangelistic fervor. One must read Henry with care, though. There are points when he seems not far from the Fundamentalist paradigm he sought to challenge.

For instance, he says in *The Uneasy Conscience*, “the evangelical task *primarily* is the preaching of the Gospel 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.”⁶ Yet, in the very next breath, Henry calls for Evangelicals to “outlive” their pagan neighbors as part of their evangelistic outreach.⁷

The relationship between evangelism and social concern continues to divide Evangelicals.⁸ In light of this, few in recent history have more to offer this debate than Carl Henry. A full study of Henry’s writings

5. Trueman, “Admiring the Sistine Chapel,” 48–49.

6. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience*, 88, (emphasis added). It is a well-known hallmark of Fundamentalism to withdraw from social concern altogether in the interest of individual regeneration. As Ro observes, this derived from the belief that, (1) regenerate humanity would naturally change social norms, and (2) social concern specifically constituted a deviation from the church’s primary mandate of saving souls; Bong Rin Ro, “The Perspective of Church History,” 32. Also, as Dollar observes, social gospel advocates such as Washington Gladden called for the Christianizing of society “at a time when Fundamentalists saw society as doomed and were busy in the task of winning individual souls out of the wickedness around them”; Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism*, 69. This, however, as Henry himself observes, is not to say that Fundamentalism was unilaterally without a social program, or that liberalism always embodied a social consciousness; see *Uneasy Conscience*, 4.

7. Henry, *Uneasy Conscience*, 89. Throughout this work, terms such as “Evangelical” and “Fundamentalist” will be capitalized when used as nouns, but “evangelical” or “fundamentalist” when used as adjectives.

8. A divided and disjointed Evangelicalism was a chief concern of Henry’s; c.f. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 31, 178. As to the diversity of views among evangelicals, David Hesselgrave identifies three broad approaches to the issue, (1) Liberation Theology, (2) Holism Theology, and (3) Prioritism Theology. Evangelicals mostly fall into the one of the latter two categories, which Hesselgrave, as we shall discuss in this chapter, even further divides; see Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 117–40. Henry outlines his prospectus for evangelical ecumenism in Henry, *Faith at the Frontiers*, 92–103.

demonstrates that Henry sought to move past fruitless debates over minor points of Christian doctrine and focus instead on broad themes capable of uniting a fractured Evangelicalism. For Henry, that meant first, humanity's greatest need was for supernatural regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Second, it also meant that social concern was not optional.⁹ Regarding the latter, he says, "the temptation to stress evangelism only as 'the Christian answer' and to withdraw from social confrontation is dangerous and one that Protestant orthodoxy best avoid."¹⁰ He also describes the "evangelistic mandate" broadly in some of his later works. For example, he describes the early church's mission "to recall men to their created dignity, to rescue them from sin's hell and death, to renew them in salvation's grace and power, to awaken their sense of eternal destiny, and to renew them in the image of God," as all part of the Great Commission and the church's "Number One task in the world."¹¹ That is, here the "number one task" sounds like more than simply preaching, with the diverse concepts of "recalling," "rescuing," and "renewing." Elsewhere he states, "the church of Christ *must in life and word* be the global echo of the Risen Christ's invitation to turn from judgment to joy. This address to the world is not only in audible words, but also in compassionate demonstration of the gospel truth."¹² Clearly, Henry believes that evangelism and social concern constitute vital components of biblical Christianity. But precisely how do they fit together, and how should they be defined both individually, and in relation to one another? What theological considerations prove crucial in the pursuit of these answers? The answer to these questions will emerge from this study, described more precisely below.

Key Questions

Though Henry's impact on Evangelical social concern has been well noted and lauded, his theological foundations for both evangelism and social concern have not to date been sufficiently examined. Frequently, references to Henry's contribution to an evangelical social agenda tend to

9. Cf. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience*, 39; also Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 307.

10. Henry, *A Plea for Evangelical*, 43.

11. *Ibid.*, 64–65.

12. *Ibid.*, 88. Similarly, in *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*, Henry says the church's task is "essentially redemptive *and* benevolent, alert to man's spiritual needs"; Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*, 47 (emphasis added).

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focus primarily on his early work, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.¹³ This study, as a corrective to that lacuna, examines Carl Henry's theological foundations and numerous writings as they relate to evangelism and social concern, with a goal of answering the following questions:

1. What are the foundations and key features of Carl F. H. Henry's theology of evangelism and social concern?
2. How precisely does Henry relate evangelism and social concern to one another in the mission of the church, and on what basis does he prioritize evangelism?
3. How might Henry's theology of evangelism and social concern contribute to the ongoing evangelical debate on this topic?

Though Carl Henry never wrote a systematic theology, he did write a great deal on the foundations of Evangelical theology, especially in *God, Revelation, and Authority (GRA)*. The goal of this study is to better understand Henry's view of those foundations for his theology of evangelism and social concern and to shed light on the current debate, as it continues to occupy evangelical theologians, and often gets bogged down in polemics and caricature.¹⁴

This study presents a three-fold thesis: First, Henry's theological foundations for social concern ultimately present an integrated relationship between evangelism and social concern that maintains the priority of evangelism. This is especially significant since most discussions on this

13. For instance, Budziszewski observes, "The influence of *Uneasy Conscience* can hardly be overstated; it has become an epitome of the evangelical social ethos"; *Evangelicals in the Public Square*, 44; see also Charles, *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism*, 57–60; Collins, *The Evangelical Moment*, 37; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 405; Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 28–29. The point here is not that each of these writers are unaware of Henry's more in-depth works, but that their discussion of his contribution to social concern almost always begin and end with the publication of *Uneasy Conscience*. Given that history has proven Henry somewhat prophetic on this issue in that the Kingdom consensus he sought after has become reality, it seems axiomatic that a fuller, more robust discussion of Henry's contribution is in order. Two important works, however, do address this topic indirectly: Miroslav Kis's 1983 PhD dissertation entitled "Revelation and Ethics: Dependence, Interdependence, Independence: A Comparative Study of Reinhold Niebuhr and Carl Henry," (McGill University), and Russell D. Moore's 2002 PhD dissertation entitled, "Kingdom Theology and the American Evangelical Consensus: Emerging Implications for Sociopolitical Engagement," (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary).

14. Cf. Little, *Polemic Missiology*, Kindle edition, chapter 1.

topic stress that integration and priority are mutually exclusive.¹⁵ Henry though shows that one can prioritize evangelism and proclamation, without sacrificing the integrated nature of social concern. Second, Henry's contribution to this debate have been under appreciated and largely overlooked. Many studies of Henry have often focused on his revelational epistemology or solely on his social concern, but none have yet appeared that address this specific aspect of Henry's theology.¹⁶ Third, and most crucially, Carl F. H. Henry may offer a way past this time-consuming debate that tends to pit Evangelical against Evangelical and distracts from more pressing issues by his focus on core theological foundations capable of bringing about Evangelical unity (such as the doctrine of revelation, the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God, and a redemptively-focused ecclesiology). Henry's model can best be described as "a regeneration model" in that it underscores the unique role of the church in God's plan to offer the gift of salvation to sinful humanity.

A Settled Matter?

David Moberg once observed that, "some Christians may see the issue of the relationship between evangelism and social concern . . . as an old and settled matter." However, Moberg adds, "the minister who is caught in the crossfire of the conflict on the subject will certainly not agree with them."¹⁷ Indeed, this controversy took center stage at a fairly recent General Council of one of America's largest Pentecostal denominations. At the 53rd General Council of the Assemblies of God (AG), U.S. (Orlando, Florida, 2009), a resolution was put forth to add to the Assemblies of God constitution a fourth reason for being. The existing reasons for being prior to this council were: to (1) glorify God, (2) seek and save the lost, and (3) make disciples. The suggested change would add: (4)

15. For evidence, see latter part of this chapter, under "Priorism-Holism Debate."

16. For studies of Henry's epistemology, see especially Carswell, "A Comparative Study of the Religious Epistemology of Carl F. H. Henry and Alvin Plantinga"; Jones, "Revelation and Reason in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry, James I. Packer, and Ronald H. Nash"; Thornbury, "Carl F. H. Henry: Heir of Reformation Epistemology," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*; Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism*; Wagner, "The Revelational Epistemology of Carl F.H. Henry"; Waita, "Carl F. H. Henry and the Metaphysical Foundations of Epistemology"; King Sr., "The Crisis of Truth and Word in the Revelational Epistemology of Carl F. H. Henry"; Dempster, "The Role of Scripture in the Social Ethical Writings of Carl F.H. Henry."

17. Moberg, *The Great Reversal*, 11.

demonstrate [God's] love and compassion for the world. The purpose of adding this fourth reason was to "align our mission more exactly with that of our Lord while also accurately reflecting what the Assemblies of God is presently engaged in." Though the resolution eventually passed, some who feared it would place the AG on the "slippery slope" toward a social gospel nearly derailed the resolution.¹⁸ Thus, as Henry himself once observed, "Perhaps no problem has distressed the modern churches more than determining the legitimacy of claims made upon Christian loyalties by champions of personal evangelism on the one hand and by those who call the church to social involvement on the other. These tensions now vex the church as never before in recent history."¹⁹

Few people have played a more crucial role in advancing this discussion in recent times than Carl Henry, and yet the full weight of his contribution remains largely unappreciated.²⁰ The re-awakening of the modern evangelical social conscience can especially be traced to Henry, who following WWII challenged the Fundamentalist community for its turn away from social concern.²¹ In fact, Henry stands as *the* pivotal figure in the development of modern evangelical social thought.²² Henry, more than any other theologian of his day, challenged the Fundamentalist retreat from social engagement and called the church back to an active role in society. Yet, Henry did so from a purely bibliocentric perspective. He achieved this by keeping Scripture and its teachings central to his views regarding the church's role in society and in understanding its task in effecting social change. Plus, he did so without ever minimizing or diminishing the need for individual regeneration and the necessity of evangelism. Henry never divorced his call to social ethics from the reality of sin and judgment, and the attenuating need of personal salvation. Thus,

18. See Assemblies of God, "Resolution 1, Reason for Being" http://ag.org/top/Events/General_Council_2009/Business/index.cfm (accessed March 10, 2011).

19. Henry, "The Tensions between Evangelism and the Christian Demand for Social Justice," 3.

20. Cf. King Sr., who observes, "the formal historical study of Carl Henry, his methodology, and its role in the rise and development of evangelicalism has a remarkable dearth of attention given the magnitude of his contributions"; "The Crisis of Truth and Word," 8; also, as Doyle points out regarding *GRA*, "this [work] is a major contribution to Christian theology, covering a broad range of subjects, but hardly anyone reads it"; Doyle, *Carl Henry*, xi.

21. Cerillo and Dempster, "Carl F. H. Henry's Early Apologetic," 369.

22. Cf. Tizon, *Transformation*, 29.

Henry's thoughts on the subject prove highly instructive for Evangelicals searching for a sound footing on this issue.²³

At the heart of this study is the issue of precisely how the church frames its doctrinal positions.²⁴ Some claim that the language of priority, especially as it concerns evangelism, is necessary in order to keep the church from losing its focus on the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20). Others have pointed out that the very notion of priority opens the door for a dichotomized and one-sided approach to making disciples. For example, the late South African missiologist David Bosch, who applauds Henry's contribution to the evangelical awakening to social needs, makes the following observation regarding the notion of priority:

The moment one regards mission as consisting of two separate components, one has, in principle, conceded that each has a life of its own. One is then by implication saying that it is possible to have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social involvement without an evangelistic dimension. What is more, if one suggests that one component is primary and the other secondary, one implies that one is essential, the other optional.²⁵

Whether Bosch is correct or not on the issue of priority, his observation raises an important point: namely, when it comes to the formulation of doctrinal statements (and the relationship between evangelism and social concern is surely that), individual words prove extremely important. The difference between heresy and orthodoxy is often a matter of degree.²⁶ History abounds with evidence demonstrating that the way in which the church states and thereby understands its mission and objectives has

23. For instance, Richard Mouw, in his forward to the 2003 edition of Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), notes that even though "the notion of a socially active evangelicalism is taken for granted . . . Bible-believing Christianity still suffers to some degree from an uneasy conscience." His point here is that the issue of Christian social concern continues to be a point of debate; Kindle edition, under "Foreword."

24. I use the word "doctrine" here to refer to the exposition of Scripture in the life of the church, and distinguished from Dogma, as the officially endorsed ecclesiastical statements of faith, especially as they relate to the ecumenical councils of the early church.

25. Bosch, *Transforming Missions*, 405.

26. For example, in the early church's christological controversies, the difference between the positions of Leo I and Nestorius highlight the reality that orthodoxy and heresy can be separated by the slightest nuance.

profound implications regarding the way in which it functions—or does not function—in the world. Therefore, how one both defines and states the relationship between evangelism and social concern often determines the importance given to each in the mission of the church.²⁷

The Approach of This Text

This study begins with an in-depth analysis of Henry's own writings on the subject of evangelism and social concern. Topically, this study will examine Henry's work first in relation to his views on evangelism and second with regard to his thoughts on social concern. In this, the focus will be on major works wherein Henry addresses these issues. In stating Henry's position, effort will be made whenever possible to set Henry's position alongside alternative evangelical positions. Since much of Henry's writing was directed at opposing approaches, which he often deemed problematic, at times these opposing views will be critiqued by Henry himself. Where that is not the case, secondary sources will be introduced to elucidate various options. Before unfolding the rest of the methodology in this study, a brief word is in order about the potential bias of the author.

A Note About the Author

No one comes to the study of theology from a purely objective position. All have some prior theological commitments. By stating and thereby recognizing these commitments though, one can minimize the degree to which those commitments hinder objectivity. First, I am an Evangelical in the Pentecostal tradition, ordained in the Assemblies of God, USA. I am theologically conservative, and the more I study theology the more I am convinced that it will be this form that endures.²⁸ Second, my work centers on equipping churches in Africa for compassionate outreach. Thus, Evangelical social concern constitutes the bulk of my daily work and livelihood. Third, and this may seem odd given my differences with

27. Cf. Adeyemo, "A Critical Evaluation," 48–59.

28. By "conservative" I mean to refer to Evangelical Christianity that upholds the fundamental doctrines of classic orthodoxy, especially the Trinity, virgin birth, substitutionary atoning death of Christ, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and the necessity of all persons to repent and trust Jesus for salvation, made available through his historical death and bodily resurrection, and realized through the work of the Spirit in the lives of individuals.

Henry on some important theological issues, but I find myself increasingly convinced that Carl Henry needs to be heard again.

The following is a historical-theological study. A chief objective of this study will be to allow Henry to speak for Henry. That is, before asking if Henry was right or wrong about this or that argument, we shall first endeavor simply to understand “why he says what he says.”²⁹ There are a few reasons for this. First, as we shall see, Henry has been frequently misinterpreted and misrepresented. It seems therefore that the surest way to overcome this is to whenever possible let Henry speak for himself. Plus, Henry’s theology of evangelism and social concern is rather unique in its thoroughness. In this arena, he simply has no equal. No one has spilt more ink, or devoted more of their scholarly reputation to the task of working out this issue than has Carl Henry. Because of this, his arguments are worthy of some in-depth exploration. Second, Henry’s work relevant to this topic alone spans well over a dozen books and nearly half a century. This fact alone makes the Henry corpus inaccessible to nearly all but those with ample time to tackle so ominous a mountain of work. That said, one of the goals of this project is the dissemination of Henry’s thoughts on this topic into a more manageable form, while at the same time presenting the most important features of his arguments. This constitutes the historical part of this study.³⁰ Third, Henry’s theology of evangelism and social concern holds forth promise for an evangelical consensus, and the evaluation of his theology will focus especially on this issue. Henry was right when it came to advocating a consensus on the Kingdom of God, and he may be proved right again.³¹ This is the theological part of this study.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 will set the stage by describing the research problem and goals. Then, prior to examining Henry’s work, attention will be given to his historical setting. An understanding of the fundamentalist-modernist

29. Cf. Bradley and Muller, *Church History*, 50.

30. As Trueman observes, because of his chosen interlocutors, such as the sixties counter culture, the Jesus Movement, and the logical positivism of A. J. Ayer, all of which are now defunct, even though in some cases their effects remain, Henry’s *GRA* is now interesting primarily, though not exclusively, for its historical importance; Trueman, “Admiring the Sistine Chapel,” 52.

31. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 31.

controversy, featuring so prominently in Henry's writings will prove crucial to giving Henry a fair hearing, as will various conferences that addressed evangelism and social concern in which Henry participated, such as the Berlin Congress in 1966, and various Lausanne World Congresses on Evangelism.³² Henry, like all persons, was a product of his time. In other ways, however, he also appears as something of an evangelical prophet, seeing clearly the disasters that lay ahead for the church if she fails to correct her course. In order to fully appreciate both the times that shaped the man and the man who shaped the times, a survey of the major events that defined Henry's life will be necessary. This will be the topic of chapter 2.

Chapter 3 will focus on Henry's epistemological and methodological assumptions as a necessary first step in evaluating and exploring Henry's thoughts. Here the goal will be to pursue the way in which Henry's revelational epistemology figures into his approach to Scripture and thereby into his formulation of doctrine. This proves most helpful, in that Henry carefully articulates his own theological method, especially in volume one of his magnum opus, *God, Revelation, and Authority*. Henry's articulation of his methodology aids not only in the evaluation of his work, but also importantly distinguishes Henry among Evangelical theologians, who have at times been (rightly) accused of bypassing methodological questions.³³

Chapter 4 discusses Henry's views on evangelism. This section will draw heavily on *GRA*, wherein Henry outlays much of his theological foundations as well as the evangelical impetus derived from them. Other key works in this section will include Henry's commentary on the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, *Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis*. Also, one is hard pressed to find a work of Henry's that never gets around to the topic of evangelism, and thus, many other works will be included here as well. Especially important here will be the links that Henry establishes between the doctrine of revelation and the task of evangelism.

Chapter 5 examines Henry's views on evangelical social concern and how it relates to the mission of the church. What biblical foundations

32. Cf. Bradley and Muller's observation that "without a grasp of [the relevant] context, the contents of the document will either remain utterly puzzling to us or they will be assimilated to, and therefore misinterpreted by, our own cultural and intellectual milieu." Bradley and Muller, *Church History*, 59.

33. Franke, *The Character of Theology*, 88; see also, McGrath, "Evangelical Theological Method," 15–16. Other works in which Henry deals with method will also be considered, including *Frontiers in Modern Theology*.

support this type of work in the church? Furthermore, should the church as a whole engage in social concern or only some individual Christians? Is social concern secondary to evangelism, or an integral but separate part? How do these two functions of the church stand in relation to one another, and on what grounds? What theological foundations might keep evangelicals from drifting toward a social gospel? Key works here will be *GRA* (especially volumes three and four), *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*, *Christian Personal Ethics*, *The God Who Shows Himself*, *A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration*, and *The Ministry of Development in Evangelical Perspective*, and others.

Finally, chapter 6 will offer an assessment and conclusion in light of ongoing discussions relating to this topic among Evangelicals. This will include a synthesis of Henry's main thoughts on how evangelism and social concern relate to one another, and then briefly, how these views might be helpfully applied in a twenty-first century context.

In the study of Henry's work, each of the areas relevant to this study will be examined across the corpus of Henry's writings. What did Henry have to say about the nature, function and place of both evangelism and social concern in the church's mission, and how did he defend those statements theologically?

Also, the following items will be particularly watched for. First, does there exist internal consistency in Henry's writings on these topics? Or, does Henry demonstrate a development or nuancing in his description of the relationship between evangelism and social concern? Second, does Henry's work display logical consistency?³⁴ Does he contradict himself? Do his theological foundations support his conclusions? Third, are his theological foundations sound? Do they faithfully represent the teachings of Scripture, or are they dependent upon *a priori* philosophical or other assumptions? The study concludes with an evaluation of Henry's total argument regarding the relationship between evangelism and social concern and its application to the contemporary church.

34. As we shall see in chapter 3, these are criteria Henry himself considered fundamental to true knowledge.

Definitions and Key Terms

Definitions prove to be a key issue in the debate over evangelism and social concern.³⁵ While this study will focus on Henry's articulation and definition of the various terms relevant to this study (especially *Evangelicalism*, *evangelism*, and *social concern*) it is necessary at the outset to define the key concepts. This will of course not be a comprehensive study of every relevant term, but only those most crucial for understanding the present topics.³⁶

What Is an Evangelical?

Carl Henry defined Evangelicals as those "to be known in the world as the bearers of good news in message and life—the good news that God offers new life on the ground of Christ's death and resurrection in the context of a biblically controlled message."³⁷ Others have defined the Evangelical movement as one in "modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency."³⁸ As such, this movement is both a historical and a theological movement. It is thus impossible to define this term without at least a brief discussion of these two facets.

Historically, during the Reformation the term was used first for Lutherans, and later Calvinists as well, who sought to refocus the church on the Gospel and its message. This same desire to recapture biblically faithful and culturally relevant Christianity also became a hallmark of

35. This is evident for example, in the tendency among members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to equate social action with proclamation of the Gospel, and thereby say that social concern *is* evangelism; cf. Pickard, "Evangelism and the Character of Christian Theology," 140.

36. The terms defined here are selected on two criteria. First, they are endemic to the topics of evangelism and social concern. That is, the terms "evangelism" and "social concern" cannot be understood without some understanding of how these specific terms (and closely related ideas) function in Scripture. Second, these also prove fundamental to Henry's writings on these topics, as shall be evident in the course of this study. The goal here will be to, at least minimally, understand these concepts in their biblical context. Where there is major disagreement among scholars on how to best understand these terms, those disagreements will be addressed.

37. Henry, *Conversations with Carl Henry*, 8.

38. Pierard, "Evangelicalism," 379–82.

renewal and revival movements across the globe, including German Pietism, Methodism, and the Great Awakening.³⁹ In all of this, evangelicalism was seen as a return to the practices and beliefs of the apostolic church. Through missionary outreach evangelical Christianity spread from Europe (back) to the global south and other places, especially during the missionary fervor of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In America too, Evangelicalism took hold through revivalist movements led by men such as Charles Finney and D. L. Moody. However, in the early twentieth century, owing to challenges from modernity, Evangelicals began to withdraw from cultural engagement into fundamentalist enclaves.⁴⁰ Following WWII, a new breed of Evangelicals emerged, led by individuals such as Carl F. H. Henry and Harold Ockenga, who sought to renew Evangelical passion for social concern and cultural relevancy.⁴¹

David W. Bebbington, who understands Evangelicalism as originating with Wesley, Whitfield, and the Enlightenment, and not as representing classic orthodoxy, describes Evangelicalism according to his now famous quadrilateral: (1) biblicism—giving preeminent place to the Bible, (2) crucicentrism—making central the atoning work of Christ on the cross, (3) conversionism—emphasizing that all humanity needs conversion from being in sin and rebellion against God, and (4) activism—wherein the Gospel demands human effort in its expression.⁴² Similarly, Alister McGrath defines Evangelicalism according to the following six “fundamental convictions:”

1. The supreme authority of Scripture as a source of knowledge of God and a guide to Christian living.

39. Ibid., 380.

40. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 4. This historical development will be more fully discussed in subsequent chapters, especially two, four, and five. It will also suffice to note here that Fundamentalism can be defined as a militant opposition to modernity and liberal theology, coupled with a pessimistic view of the world that generally manifested itself in a neglect of social concern; *ibid.*, 10.

41. A fuller discussion of Henry’s pivotal role in the emergence of neo-Evangelicalism will take place in chapter two.

42. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2–17; see also Bloesch, who explores the question of “how distinctive is evangelicalism?,” Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* vol. 2, 235–59. For responses to Bebbington’s claim regarding the Enlightenment origins of Evangelicalism, see Haykin and Steward, *The Advent of Evangelicalism*.

2. The majesty of Jesus Christ, both as incarnate God and Lord and as the Savior of sinful humanity.
3. The lordship of the Holy Spirit.
4. The need for personal conversion.
5. The priority of evangelism for both individual Christians and the church as a whole.
6. The importance of the Christian community for spiritual nourishment, fellowship and growth.⁴³

Yet, we might rightly wonder how a movement that includes Charismatics and Pentecostals, Calvinists and Arminians, dispensationalists and covenant theologians, high church and house church believers, can possibly be grouped together in any legitimate way?⁴⁴ Does not this vast diversity seem to strain the possibility of definition beyond credulity? To answer this, George Marsden offers “three distinct, overlapping senses in which evangelicalism may be thought of as a unity.” First, it is a “conceptual unity” encompassing a group of Christians that “fit a certain definition.” Second, Evangelicalism can be thought of as a broad organic unity that, despite some significant differences, tend to move in “a common direction.” And third, within these broader understandings, there exists a core group that self-identify as Evangelical. These include both individuals and institutions that tend to think of themselves as a transdenominational community.⁴⁵

What Is Evangelism?

Evangelism in this study relates to the witness of the church in society.⁴⁶ Some see this as an entirely, or mostly, verbal activity, while others

43. McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, 55–56.

44. Cf. Marsden, *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, viii.

45. *Ibid.*, ix; see also Ellingsen, who takes a sociological approach to identifying Evangelicalism, first looking at those who self identify as Evangelicals, and the secondarily looking at the various theological distinctives of those who make up the movement; Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement*; 46–48. For a helpful discussion of the “nature and method of evangelical theology, see Davis, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, 43–72.

46. See Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39.

prefer to define it more broadly.⁴⁷ Roger Olson has minimally defined evangelism as “the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in order to facilitate conversions to Jesus Christ and to Christianity.”⁴⁸ At times, one finds evangelism described in terms of a broader scope of activities. As Warner says, “although verbal proclamation of Jesus’ message of salvation remains at the heart of evangelism, throughout the Gospels the ministry of evangelism is consistently embodied.”⁴⁹ Even in Henry’s day some advocated the idea that evangelism included the concept of witness, and that witness went beyond what the church says to include what the church does.⁵⁰

At the very least though, it may be said that evangelism is the effort by which the church seeks to invite others to come to faith in Christ. “Motivated by an overwhelming spirit of thankfulness and gratitude, evangelicals are eager to proclaim the good news of the gospel, what God, through Christ and by means of the Holy Spirit, has done for their bodies and souls.”⁵¹ Evangelism, therefore, especially refers to the outward reaching efforts of the church to share its faith and thereby lead others to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Or, as Quebedeaux observes, “evangelical is something you are, evangelism is something you do.”⁵²

NT Terms for Evangelism

To aid in our evaluation of evangelism, and in our understanding of the term, a look back at the key terms that the first-century church used for this practice will prove helpful. That is, how did the first believers understand the task of evangelism, and what terms especially defined the practice? In answering this question, we will look at a whole complex

47. For example, Flemming says, “Evangelism means the invitation through word, deed and example, for people to follow Christ with their whole lives as part of the Christian community”; Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God*, 18.

48. Olson, *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology*, 175; see also the discussions on the relationship between proclamation and evangelism in Litfin, *Word Versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance*, especially chapter 2.

49. Warner, “Evangelism,” 288.

50. See Pierce, who observes “we are deluding ourselves if we think that witness is all talk,” “Commissioned to Communicate”; Pierce, *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, 20–21.

51. Collins, *The Evangelical Moment*, 57.

52. Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelical*, 52; cited in Collins, *The Evangelical Movement*, 57.

of terms related to preaching and evangelism. In doing so we will see that though preaching and evangelism *per se* are in some ways unique to Christianity, the term “gospel” was used in the Greco-Roman world prior to it being coopted by Jesus’ followers. And so, we will briefly examine the non-Christian notion of “gospel” and then look at how Christianity transformed the term.

The Gospel

Carl Henry famously remarked on several occasions that “the Gospel is only Good news if it gets there on time.”⁵³ The terms “good news” and “gospel” come from the Greek word *euaggelion*. This was an important word among Greeks prior to the advent of Christ.⁵⁴ The “good news” referred to everything from the emperor’s birthday to his coming of age, and often these events were spoken of in salvific terms. The empire itself was believed to bestow a kind of salvation upon its citizens in providing them with security and the benefits of civilization. Christianity though took over this term and transformed it by applying it uniquely to Christ.⁵⁵

Several NT writers make use of the term “good news” or “Gospel,” though at times with slightly different emphases. Importantly though, the good news came to refer both to the events of Jesus’ life and ministry, but especially to the proclamation of those events. For example, Mark 1:1 refers to “the Gospel (*euaggelion*) of Jesus Christ,” denoting the whole of Jesus’ life and ministry. Later, Jesus himself refers to the Gospel (*euaggelion*) as the message that must be preached to the whole world (Mark 13:10). Paul uses some form of the word over seventy times in his thirteen epistles.⁵⁶ In light of these different emphases, Michael F. Bird helpfully

53. Cf. Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism*, 175.

54. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 87. In order to maintain consistency throughout this study and with Henry’s own approach, Greek and Hebrew terms will be expressed as transliterations rather than in original languages in the main body of this study, although biblical languages will occasionally be used in the notes. Concerning the Gospel, “εὐαγγέλιον” is most frequently used by Paul (over sixty times), and it is likely that Paul took over the term from its common usage and employed it to especially define the Christian message; see “εὐαγγέλιον” in *NIDNTT*.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Plummer, “Paul’s Gospel,” 45; NT references to *euaggelion* (or some form of) include—Matt 4:23; 9:35; 11:5; 24:14; 26:13; Mark 1:1, 14–15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15; Luke 3:18; 4:18; 7:22; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1; Acts 8:25, 40; 14:7, 15, 21; 15:7; 16:10; 20:24; Rom 1:1, 9, 15–16; 2:16; 11:28; 15:16, 19–20; 16:25; 1 Cor 1:17; 4:15; 9:12, 14,

describes six aspects of the biblical Gospel that prove fundamental to the NT understanding:

1. The Gospel is the message of the Kingdom of God (Isa 52:7; Matt 4:23).
2. The Gospel includes the story of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and exaltation (Mark 1:1; Luke 24:26)
3. The Gospel announces the status of Jesus as Son of David, Son of God, and Lord (Acts 2:36; Rom 1:2-4; 2 Tim 2:8)
4. The Gospel proclaimed by the apostles is intimated in the OT (1 Cor 15:3-4; Rom 1:2-3).
5. The response that the Gospel calls for is faith and repentance (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21).
6. Salvation is the chief benefit of the Gospel (Rom 1:16; Eph 1:13).⁵⁷

Related to this notion of proclamation, two other terms found in the NT are important. The words *kērussō* and *kērygma* both relate to the concept of proclamation and to heralding the good news. *Kērussō* means to proclaim as a herald, and *kērygma* as a noun refers to the precise message. Both terms share a semantic affinity with *euaggelion*. Thus one encounters phrases such as *kērussein to euaggelion*, or “preach the good news,” as well as *euaggelizesthai ton Iēsoun*, or “telling the good news of Jesus.” Because Jesus both proclaimed the good news of God's deliverance and salvation (Luke 4:18–19), and was himself the source of good news, the content of the Gospel and the preaching of the Gospel became inseparable concepts.⁵⁸

16, 18, 23; 15:1; 2 Cor 2:12; 4:3–4; 8:18; 9:13; 10:14, 16; 11:4, 7; Gal 1:6–9, 11; 2:2, 5, 7, 14; 3:8; 4:13; Eph 1:13; 3:6; 6:15, 19; Phil 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15; Col 1:5, 23; 1 Thess 1:5; 2:2, 4, 8–9; 3:2; 2 Thess 1:8; 2:14; 1 Tim 1:11; 2 Tim 1:8, 10; 2:8; Phlm 1:13; 1 Pet 1:12; 4:6, 17; Rev 14:6.

57. Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 47–52. As concerning point number six, Bird defines “salvation” further as “sharing in the new heaven and new earth, which awaits God's people.” Thus, salvation is not here defined narrowly as merely escaping the coming judgment, but rather rings aloud with present tense implications. Yet, Bird also cautions against preaching “another gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal 1:6), and cites an imbalanced approach to social concern as a real danger. However, “this is not to say that pursuing justice and helping the poor is not an important task for God's people; it is part of our mission to be salt and light”; *ibid.*, 53.

58. Green, *Evangelism*, 91–92. The NT uses *kērygma* infrequently, but importantly in Paul, especially Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:4; 15:14; et al. The verb form, *kērussōis* the more common term, occurring over sixty times; cf. “κήρυγμα” in *NICNTT*.

Crucial to understanding the essence of the *kērygma* of the early church is that it centered especially on Jesus' ushering in the new messianic age, the promised coming Kingdom. This is evident in that at several points the NT writers also explicitly link the Gospel to the Kingdom of God, as in "the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matt 4:23; 9:25; 24:14; Luke 16:16; cf. Mark 1:15). The NT pictures Jesus not only as preaching, but more precisely preaching that the Kingdom of God has come/is coming/will come in full.⁵⁹

Finally, a third word proves crucial in understanding proclamation in the early church. The term "witness" (Gr. *marturēo*) in the NT derives much of its impetus from usage in the LXX, wherein, first, God is the main referent to the verb form of the word, as Scripture records God's self-witness and revelatory acts. "Accordingly, the NT frequently speaks of God or the Spirit or the Scriptures bearing witness. Without this witness there would be no revelation."⁶⁰ Second, though, not only does God graciously and sovereignly provide witness of himself, but God also calls his people to be his witnesses, especially in Isaiah (43:10-12; 44:8). Jesus likewise calls his followers to be his witnesses (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). "Supremely, it is witness to Jesus which is required, and this includes his earthly life, his cross, and particularly his resurrection."⁶¹ So complete was the early church's dedication to this concept of witnessing to Christ that many of Jesus' disciples would follow Him in paying with their very lives to make known the hope of the Gospel. Scripture itself records the deaths of Stephen and James in this regard, and it is widely attested by the early church fathers that the other disciples as well died a martyr's death.

Conversion/Repentance

Repentance (Heb. *šûb*) is one of most dominant themes of OT prophets (Isa 31:6; 44:22; Jer 3:14; 18:11; 25:5; Ezek 18:30, 32; Hos 3:5; Zech 1:3;

59. cf. Matt 4:17, 23; 9:35; 24:14; Luke 4:43; 9:2; Acts 8:12; 28:31; Batson, *The Treasure Chest of the Early Christians*, 29.

60. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 106; also, as Snyder points out, the words *marturēo* and *euaggelizesthai* (or some form of), appear over twenty times in Acts; thus, "the great concern and dynamic of the early church was to tell the good news about Jesus and the resurrection; to bear witness to what had been seen, heard, and experienced"; *The Community of the King*, Kindle edition, under chapter six, "The Evangelistic Mandate."

61. Green, *Evangelism*, 106-108.

et. al.). “In the OT this term designates both a movement away from and a turning toward.”⁶² This idea is furthermore carried over into the NT, where the primary words are *metanoia* (“repentance”) and its cognates, and *epistrophē* (“a turning around”).⁶³ As Erickson points out, there are therefore two aspects of conversion, repentance and faith. “Repentance is the unbelievers turning away from sin, and faith is his or her turning toward Christ.”⁶⁴ Also, “conversion in the NT often entails recognition of and participation in the Kingdom of God.”⁶⁵

What Is Social Concern?

Social concern in this study refers to those aspects of the Christian faith variously referred to as compassionate ministry, Christian ethics, and/or social justice. It encompasses personal ethics, ethics for the community of God’s people, and the church and individual Christians in relation to justice issues and human rights.⁶⁶ It relates primarily to how believers relate to and serve the poor and needy. Social concern can then be said to be the *diaconal* function of the church, as it seeks to love God and neighbor.⁶⁷ As defined in the Lausanne Covenant, social concern then is based on the following affirmation:

62. Markham, “Conversion,” 176.

63. For *metanoia* see for example Matt 3:8, 11; 9:13; Mark 1:4; 2:17; Luke 3:3, 8; 5:32; 15:7; 17:4; 24:47; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 13:24; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor 7:9–10; 2 Tim 2:25; Heb 6:1, 6; 12:17; 2 Pet 3:9; for *epistrophē*, see, for example, Acts 15:3.

64. Ibid.; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 946; cf. Ezek 18:30–32; 33:7–11; also, in some instances in Scripture conversion seems to be instantaneous (e.g., Lydia; Acts 16:14), and for others more of a process, as seems the case with Nicodemus (John 19:39); *ibid.* 946–47.

65. Markham, *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, 176. Also, as Markham says, in Luke-Acts especially, “conversion is cast in the form of a ‘journey’”; cf. Luke 1:79; Acts 9:2; 16:17; 19:9, 23; 22:4; et al.; see also Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming*, 31.

66. Though some writers may distinguish between “social action,” defined generally as compassionate ministry or development-type work, and “social justice” which directs its efforts towards political structures, such a distinction is unnecessary at this point in this study, as both can be included in the broader category of “social concern.” For an excellent and accessible discussion on defining the term “rights,” see Wolterstorff, *Journey toward Justice*, 42–56.

67. See Luke 10:27 (and parallels); Acts 6. Though not found in the Gospels, *diakoneō* and its cognates features prominently in Acts, but even more so in the

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all. We therefore, should share his concern for justice and reconciliation through out human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex, or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited.⁶⁸

The Lausanne Covenant also helpfully distinguished between social concern and evangelism and warns against confusing the two. “Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both our Christian duty.”⁶⁹ Often social concern is described as part of the church’s cultural, or creation mandate, in contrast to her evangelistic mandate.⁷⁰ Within the broad theme of the biblical Kingdom of God, these two mandates are generally seen as in someway intertwined.⁷¹ Ott and Strauss helpfully delineate the church’s mission in the world by distin-

Pauline corpus, and generally means “to serve,” “to wait on,” “to take care of.” It is also used for the proclamation of the Gospel and for Christian mission (Acts 6:4; 20:24; 2 Tim 4:11); NT references include: Matt 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43; Luke 22:26–27; John 12:26; Acts 6:1, 4; Rom 12:7; 13:4; 15:8, 25, 31; 16:1; 2 Cor 3:7–9; 6:3; 9:12; Gal 2:17; Eph 3:7; 6:21; Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Tim 4:6.

68. See Lausanne Covenant, Article 5, “Christian Social Responsibility,” Lausanne Covenant. <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed Sept. 11, 2013).

69. Ibid.

70. Ott and Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 159; Miles, *Evangelism and Social Involvement*, 27; DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church*, 208.; cf. Snyder, who says “there is a cultural mandate for the Christian as well as an evangelistic mandate”; *The Community of the King*, chapter one, “Kingdom Consciousness.”

71. As Moore explains, in Jesus the incarnate King, “the purposes of creation, redemption, and consummation are seen holistically as God’s purpose to glorify Christ by fulfilling the Adamic creation mandate, the universal Noahic promise, the patriarchal covenants, and the Israelite monarchy in Him, thus exalting Jesus as preeminent over the entire cosmos as the agent of creation, the true *imago Dei*, the Davidic subjugator of all rival powers, the firstborn of the eschatological resurrection from the dead, and the atonement through whom final cosmic peace is found at last (Col 1:15–23)”; *The Kingdom of Christ*, 108; also, as Miles explains, the cultural mandate comes especially from Gen 1:26–31, “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over . . . every living thing”; the evangelistic mandate is based especially on Matt 28:16–20, the Great Commission; Miles, *Evangelism and Social Involvement*, 27.

guishing its three-fold nature: Doxology—the Great Calling; Evangelism and Discipleship—the Great Commission; and Compassion and Social Concern—the Great Commandment.⁷² The primary NT term for social ministry is *diakonia*, or service.⁷³

Who Are the Poor?

Christian social concern may be described as endeavoring to understand and practice what God commands regarding the poor and needy. One of the primary areas of debate when it comes to social concern centers around how the term “poor” should be understood in Scripture. Is this primarily a spiritual designation, or primarily a physical one, or both? To answer this we will look briefly at how these terms are used in the OT and NT.

Concerning the OT, a few important things emerge in looking at references to poverty in the Hebrew Scriptures. First, there are several terms used for poor/poverty, and the meaning can be either spiritual poverty or physical lack. Often there is at least a tangential connection between the two. As H. Kvalbein points out:

Hebrew has many terms for “poor”: *anî* (76 times, 29 in Ps), *ebyôn* (61 times, 23 in Ps), *dal* (48 times) *rwš* (21 times, 14 in Prov), *miskēn* (4 times, only in Eccles., but common in the Talmud and Midrash). The word *anî* has a broad meaning, including “weak,” “miserable,” “helpless,” and “suffering.” It can refer to the socially and materially poor who are dependent on support from other people (Exod 22:21–27; Lev 19:10; Isa 3:14–15; Hab 3:14). But in the psalms of lament, where a common self-designation is “I

72. Ott and Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 157; Miles too equates the cultural mandate with the Great Commandment to love one’s neighbor (Matt 22:37–40); Miles, 28; similarly, also, John Stott, too, distinguishes the various elements of the church’s mission according to the Great Commission of Matt 28:18–20, and the Great Commandment; see Stott, *Christian Mission*, 45–48. Importantly, also, Ott and Strauss’s discussion centers especially on mission, and this is, therefore, not to suggest that mission and evangelism are synonymous. For helpful surveys on the relationship and differences between mission and evangelism, see Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, 3–27; Chilcote, *The Study of Evangelism*, 6–17.

73. Iosso, “Social Service, Social Ministry,” 739. Iosso describes NT dimensions of ministry according to four themes, *kerygma* (proclamation), *leitourgia* (worship), *konōnia* (community), and *diakonia* (service); *ibid.* As already noted, *diakonia* is also used to refer to evangelistic activity, as in Acts 6:4 and the reference there to “the ministry (*diakonia*) of the word” (NASB95).

am poor and needy,” the “need” is never material poverty, *e.g.* lack of food or clothing or other necessities for life; it is persecution by enemies, illness and bodily weakness, or guilt. The supplicants present themselves as helpless beggars before God. In some contexts the *ani* is contrasted with the “proud”; “humility” is presented as a positive moral quality (Prov 3:34; Ps 18:27; Zech 9:9; Zeph 2:3).⁷⁴

The physical aspect is evident in numerous texts, including those that commend having an “open hand” toward the poor (Deut 15:11), and the more explicit command to leave the corners of the fields from which the poor may glean (Lev 19:9–10; Deut 24:17–22). In addition it was forbidden that Israelites should take advantages of the poor through unfair loans (Exod 22:25–27; Deut 24:12–13). Also, the OT prophets frequently denounced injustice against the poor,⁷⁵ indicating that they especially suffer at the hands of others. Also, widows, orphans, the handicapped (or “afflicted”), and strangers are often identified as victims and in need of special provision or protection.⁷⁶

That the term “poor” has spiritual/religious conations is evident in several passages, especially those wherein the writer self-identifies as the poor (Ps 35:10) and in other places where the poor are equivocated with the righteous (Ps 18:27; Zeph 3:12). Plus, the poor are often contrasted with those whose confidence is in themselves, or even with the wicked (Prov 15:16; 30:11–14).⁷⁷ Also, the OT links true religion with an active concern for the poor (Isa 58:5–10).

In the NT, *ptochos* is the primary term used for “poor,” and it too carries both senses of material and spiritual deprivation. According to Craig Blomberg, NT scholars have, since about 1980, generally tended away from a strictly materialistic meaning of “poor,” in Luke’s Gospel especially, and a new consensus has emerged defining the “poor” as “those

74. Kvalbein, “Poor/Poverty,” Accordance electronic ed., n.p.

75. Amos 8:4–6; Is. 10:1–4; 32:6–7; Mic 3:1–4; Jer 5:26–29; Ezek 18:12–13.

76. Exod 22:22; Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13; 27:19; Job 22:9; 24:3; Ps 94:6; Isa 1:17, 23; 9:17; 10:2; Jer 7:6; 22:3; 49:11; Lam 5:3; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5; see also Hoppe, “Poverty and the Poor,” 608–11.

77. Cf. Harrison, “Poor.” Harrison observes regarding the “non-economic meaning” of “poor” that within national Israel “the faithful minority . . . regarded themselves rather introspectively as the poor, harassed remnant of spiritual fidelity in a vast morass of Hellenistic paganism. Thus the ‘poor’ also meant ‘the faithful;’” *ibid.*, 515.

who are both pious and disenfranchised.”⁷⁸ NT passages that do support the material sense include warnings in James against exploitation of the poor.⁷⁹ As with the OT, James singles out the vulnerability of orphans and widows, and relates true religion to concern for these groups.⁸⁰ Also, Jesus, John the Baptist, and the disciples embraced a lifestyle of poverty.⁸¹

Jesus’ inaugural sermon in Luke 4:18 and its reflection of Isa 61:1, referring to the Gospel being preached to the poor, is also cited in reply to John the Baptist’s question from prison (Luke 7:22). In Isaiah 61 the context is the salvation of Israel, and this must therefore inform the Lukan usage. As Kvalbein says:

In Nazareth it is applied to the congregation in the synagogue; in the answer to the Baptist it concludes a list of Jesus’ healing miracles which includes terms used in Isaiah to refer to the salvation of Israel. The ‘poor’ are the people of Israel. In Isaiah 61:1 and in later texts alluding to it the meaning cannot be narrowed to people in social and economic need; the term denotes the whole people of Israel, in need of God’s acts of mercy.⁸²

In the Gospels Jesus and his disciples gave to the poor (John 12:5; 13:29) and encouraged almsgiving (Matt 6:1–4). Jesus’ reference to the poor in spirit in the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3) focuses on “human distress and the need for God,” and not so much on economic poverty, though the two can be and often are related.⁸³ In the Lukan parallel (Luke 6:20), the emphasis is not on the poor in general but on Jesus’ disciples.⁸⁴

78. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 222.

79. Jas 1:27; 2:1–7; 4:13–17.

80. Hoppe points out that James especially reiterates in the NT the OT prophetic concern for the poor, denouncing any injustice toward the poor by inveighing against the excesses of the rich (James 5:1–6); *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, 610.

81. Mark 1:6, 18, 20; 3:8–39; 2:23–25; 11:12.

82. Kvalbein, “Poor/Poverty,” n.p. Also, Green observes, that although economic depravity is not entirely out of view, the broader meaning of diminished status “is paramount”; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, n.p.; see also Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 128–135. Plus, as Leon Morris observes, the focus on the year of the Lord indicates the coming of God’s salvation; Morris, *Luke*, n.p; cf. Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God*, 103.

83. As France observes, reference to the poor in Matt. 5:3 recalls the poor of the Psalms and OT prophetic books, where the term includes economic poverty but especially focuses on spiritual poverty and the need of God. This is evident in Isa. 66:2, wherein the poor are those who “tremble” at God’s word; France, *Matthew*, n.p; cf. Kvalbein, “Poor/Poverty,” n.p.

84. See “πτωχός” *NIDNTT*. This is evident in Luke’s usage of the second person

Other important NT references include Paul's concern for the poor expressed in his collection for the famine afflicted in Jerusalem (Gal 2:10; Rom 15:26), and by encouraging the wealthy to be exceedingly generous (2 Cor 8–9). From these, it becomes apparent that the poor in the OT and NT are both the economically poor, but also those who recognize their need of God and look to Him for salvation. In conclusion:

In God's sight all people share equally in the image of God, but some people, on account of their physical, psychological, or socioeconomic situation, are singled out for an extra measure of the protection of God. They are those whom society has undervalued, ostracized, and often rendered powerless. They are the victims of oppression, discrimination, and exploitation. The rich and strong are often able to silence them, to make them weak, and to banish them to obscurity. The God of the Bible, however, sees all things and hears even the voice of the poor and the oppressed. Following the paradigm of the Exodus, God acts to set oppressed people free, both spiritually and physically. The task facing the church today is to locate itself within God's initiative, to protect those who have no protector, to feed those who have no breadwinner, to abolish oppression and discrimination, and, in turn, to allow the poor to evangelize the church with a full message of spiritual and physical redemption.⁸⁵

plural. As Kvalbein says, the message of the Lukan beatitudes "is not that everybody who is poor is blessed, but that the disciples, in spite of their suffering now, are blessed because they are the recipients of the Kingdom of God. Matthew's general blessing of the metaphorically 'poor' ('poor in spirit') is here applied to the disciples as a word of comfort in their sufferings or literal 'poverty'"; *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, n.p. There is some disagreement though as to the precise identity of the poor in this passage in Luke. For example, Green argues that the focus of Jesus' discourse, even though he turns to his disciples in v. 20, is directed toward the larger gathered crowd. This is because no textual markers differentiate the "you" in v. 20 from the "you" in v. 24, directed toward the rich. Thus, it seems best to understand that those who choose to follow Jesus find comfort from their marginalized status, whatever that may include; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, n.p.

85. Domiers, *ʿebyôn*, *NIDOTTE*. On the issue of whether the Jerusalem collection (referenced above) evidenced a general concern for the poor by Paul, or if by contrast, Paul demonstrates no significant interest in caring for the poor, as some would claim, see Longenecker, who concludes that Paul's understanding of the Jesus movement was that it was marked by a constant regard for the poor, rooted in a crucicentric understanding of grace and love. As Longenecker says, concern for the poor then "lies at the very core of the Judeo-Christian tradition, having been showcased in Israel's scriptures, in Jesus' proclamation and ministry, and in the best practices of the early Jesus-movement—including those Jesus-followers whose corporate life had been nurtured by Paul"; Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 205.

The Kingdom of God

Another key concept in understanding both social concern and evangelism is that of the biblical Kingdom of God.⁸⁶ Though this has not always been true, there exists today a broad consensus among Evangelicals regarding the nature of the Kingdom of God and its importance to understanding Jesus' message and ministry.

For example, as George Eldon Ladd said several decades ago, "Modern scholarship is quite unanimous in the opinion that the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus."⁸⁷ Scholars continue to affirm that the Kingdom of God constitutes the focal point of Jesus' ministry.⁸⁸ This theme unites the messages of both the OT and the NT.⁸⁹ Furthermore, it encompasses both the evangelistic and social mandates of the church.⁹⁰ Thus, the reign of God especially informs both Jesus' ministry and the purpose of the church (see Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; Acts 8:12; 28:31).⁹¹ The scholarly consensus on the meaning of the Kingdom can be defined as inaugurated eschatology, or, the Kingdom as partially but not fully present. The best is yet to come. As Grenz observes, "Recent theological discussions have been fruitful in that most scholars now agree that eschatology focuses primarily on the Kingdom of God. They also speak of this kingdom as in some sense both a present and a future reality, so that ours is the time of the already and the not yet."⁹²

Justice, Righteousness, and Peace

The key biblical terms for understanding social justice are the Hebrew terms, *mišpāt*, *sedāqā*, and *šālôm*. The most common of these terms is *mišpāt* and most often refers to some aspect of justice. In this, two usages dominate. The first reflects a judicial or legal understanding of the term

86. For example, see Snyder, *The Community of the King*; Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*; Dempster, "Evangelism, Social Concern, and the Kingdom of God," 22–43; Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*.

87. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 57.

88. Fee, "The Kingdom of God," 8.

89. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 20.

90. Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 82.

91. Chilton and McDonald, *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom*, 3.

92. Grenz, "The Deeper Significance of the Millennium Debate," 20; also cited in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 36.

and is often related to those in power or authority. Often this concept carries the connotation of certain rights.⁹³ The second sense though refers to moral principles and ethical ideals. This sense pervades the Psalms and prophetic books.⁹⁴

An important development in the OT concept of justice is the coupling of *mišpāt* with *sedāqā* (“righteousness”). These two words appear together thirty-nine times, again especially in the Psalms and prophetic literature. Especially important, is the use of this coupling to describe the essence of God’s reign, as these qualities describe the foundation of his throne (Ps 89:14; 97:2). Thus, “throughout the OT, it is clear that the foundation for any human exercise of justice is the understanding that the identity and the action of God are characterized by justice.”⁹⁵ The presence of *šālôm* then evidences God’s own justice realized in human social relationships and in every area of life. “Although never fully realized, *šālôm* is made visible to the degree that justice is done, righteousness shown, faithfulness demonstrated, and steadfast love returned in response to God.”⁹⁶

The Prioritism-Holism Debate

In order to understand and evaluate Henry’s priority model, it will be helpful to set it in the context of the controversy surrounding evangelism and social concern among Evangelicals. Most evangelicals do not deny that Christian social engagement and demonstrations of compassion are part of the biblical mandate for the church. Where the differences lie, however, is in precisely defining social concern in relation to evangelism. For example, David Hesselgrave has identified three primary positions

93. Exod 15:25; Lev 5:10; Deut 5:1; concerning rights, see Deut 18:3–5; 24:17; concerning power and authority, see 1 Sam. 8:11–18; Birch, “Justice,” 434–435.

94. For example, Ps 9:7–12; 10:17–18; 82:3–4; 106:3; Isa 1:11–17; 5:7; 10:2; Jer 22:3, 15–16; Amos 5:7; Micah 6:6–8; *ibid.*, 435.

95. Birsch, “Justice,” 435; cf. McGrath, who points out, “It is virtually impossible to read the Old Testament without being aware of the social dimensions of the faith. The Old Testament prophets in particular stress that the privilege of being the people of God carries with it social responsibility—such as demands for social justice”; McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, 165. Also, as Seifrid points out, “in biblical thought, ‘righteousness’ is simultaneously moral and creational, having to do with God’s re-establishing ‘right order’ in the fallen world which he has made”; “Righteousness, Justice, and Justification,” 741.

96. Birsch, *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, 435.

that might be applied in describing evangelical alternatives. Those positions are “revisionist holism,” “restrained holism,” and “traditional prioritism.”⁹⁷ The revisionist perspective emphasizes ministry to both society and individuals and rejects as false and unbiblical any dichotomies between the physical and spiritual needs or between body and soul. Bryant Myers serves as an example of this approach.⁹⁸ The second position, restrained holism, characterizes the approach of John Stott and, in this writer’s view, Carl Henry as well. This view emphasizes the necessity of social responsibility but upholds the priority of evangelism. Finally, traditional prioritism gives strict priority to evangelism, and holds social action to be a secondary task of the church.⁹⁹

Hesselgrave’s options are also similar to the proposal made by the Grand Rapids Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR) in 1982, which sought to resolve ambiguities in the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, and which ultimately declared that there are three viable options for biblically faithful Christians. Specifically, social action can be seen either as: “(1) A consequence of evangelism—one of the principle aims of a changed life is to serve others; (2) A bridge to evangelism—with no need of manipulation, good deeds naturally create opportunities to share the Gospel; (3) Partner with evangelism—the church must witness Christ in the world by both word and deed.”¹⁰⁰

That fact that this consultation did not arrive at a consensus, but deemed several options as legitimate solutions, attests to the complexity of the issue. Indeed, in many ways, the current debate on this topic can be traced by looking at the issue within the context of the Lausanne Congresses on World Evangelism and its various ensuing Consultations. Few individuals figure more prominently in the Lausanne Congresses as it concerns evangelism and social concern than John Stott. First published

97. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 118–38.

98. Cf. Myers, *Walking With the Poor*.

99. Though by and large helpful and accurate, Hesselgrave’s ensuing critique seems problematic, especially his implication that holism (of any sort) is less biblical. The problem with this assertion becomes obvious when one notices that Hesselgrave’s critiques in favor of prioritism in no way mitigate against a restrained holism (which again gives priority to evangelism) more than they do against traditional prioritism; see Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 135–38; cf. Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 38; Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant*, 5.

100. Tizon, *Transformation After Lausanne*, 49; Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 181–82.

in 1975, following Lausanne I, Stott's *Christian Mission in the Modern World* addressed this issue.¹⁰¹

Stott, who underwent a transformation in how he understands this,¹⁰² believes that the way forward to a more biblical approach begins with a biblical understanding of the Great Commission. Specifically, he says that social responsibility is not only a consequence of the Great Commission, but that the commission itself "must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus."¹⁰³ What he means by this is the most general way of stating Jesus' purpose is to say, in accord with Jesus himself, that he came to serve (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27). This, then, ought to generally characterize our understanding of what it means to make disciples. In other words, everything that Jesus did can be understood as service, whether it was healing the sick or preaching a sermon. Therefore, "our mission, like his, is to be one of service."¹⁰⁴ Stott goes on to define the precise relationship between evangelism and social concern as "partnership:"

As partners the two belong to each other and yet are independent of each other. Each stands on its own feet in its own right alongside the other. Neither is a means to the other, or even a manifestation of the other. For each is an end in itself. Both are expressions of unfeigned love.¹⁰⁵

Stott argues that the Great Commission, despite its importance, is not all that Jesus commanded of his followers. One must also consider the Great Commandment to love one's neighbor (Matt. 22:39), which Jesus expressly declared to be second in importance only to loving God.¹⁰⁶ Stott observes regarding one's neighbor:

Our neighbor is neither a bodiless soul that we should love only his soul, nor a soulless body that we should care for its welfare

101. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. The Lausanne/1974 International Congress on World Evangelization was the vision of Billy Graham, who enlisted Carl Henry and Christianity Today to join as the primary sponsors. As Henry observes, this event included over 2700 representatives from over one hundred countries, with the main plenary sessions translated into five languages; Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 349.

102. Cf. Little, "What Makes Mission Christian," 67-69.

103. Stott, *Christian Mission*, 37.

104. *Ibid.*, 39.

105. *Ibid.*, 43.

106. *Ibid.*, 46.

alone, nor even a body-soul isolated from society. God created man, who is my neighbor, a body-soul-in-community. Therefore, if we love our neighbor as God made him, we must inevitably be concerned for his total welfare, the good of his soul, his body, and his community.¹⁰⁷

Stott does believe that evangelism is the church's top priority. Despite the sorrow we may feel over social inequality or oppression, Stott rhetorically asks, "is anything so destructive of human dignity as alienation from God through ignorance or rejection of the gospel?"¹⁰⁸

Stott was instrumental in drafting the Lausanne documents relating to the relationship between evangelism and social concern. In *Making Christ Known*, Stott provides the text of the Lausanne Covenant of 1974, plus later documents, along with commentary. Section 5 of the original covenant, titled "Christian Social Responsibility," does not explicitly mention the priority of evangelism, although the later (1982) CRESR chaired by Stott, does make that assertion. But the framers of the original 1974 document express repentance for having neglected social concerns, and "for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive."¹⁰⁹ Stott's commentary, however, notes that "a large group at Lausanne, concerned to develop a radical Christian discipleship, expressed themselves more strongly, 'We must repudiate as demonic the attempt to drive a wedge between evangelism and social action.'" Stott also points out that the Covenant bases social concern on four main doctrines: the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, the doctrine of salvation, and the doctrine of the Kingdom of God.¹¹⁰

Christopher R. Little more recently has strongly defended the priority model and criticized the idea of holism. First, he says the idea that evangelism and social responsibility are inseparable cannot be sustained by the primary "missional models" in the NT, namely Jesus and Paul. As to Jesus, Little says he refused to allow followers to persist in following him without first submitting to his Kingship (cf. John 6:1ff). That is, Jesus explicitly made the issue of salvation, not justice, preeminent. Plus, though mission may include word and deed, deed needs an explanatory word, whereas the opposite is not true. Second, Paul, like Jesus, focused

107. Ibid., 47.

108. Ibid., 57.

109. Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 24.

110. Ibid.; cf. Tizon's discussion of the "radical discipleship" element from the Global South at Lausanne I; Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 40–43; *ibid.* 25.

far more on evangelism than on social justice (Acts 11:26). Little also notes that compassionate outreach is not unique to Christianity, and therefore in itself offers nothing that cannot be found outside Christianity. As to the holistic emphasis on the Kingdom of God, Little, following Köstenberger, argues that Jesus' disciples do not model their ministry on his, as his is that of the unique Son of God. As such, Little completely downplays any identification of Kingdom qualities with the people of God, except as "a spiritual experience."¹¹¹

A Modern Debate?

While some would claim that the discussion regarding the relationship between evangelism and social concern is an entirely modern one and solely the product of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy,¹¹² there is evidence that even the early church was also aware of the dangers of de-emphasizing evangelism in favor of social action, even while upholding and advocating for a socially relevant faith. For example, in his third homily on 1 Corinthians, John Chrysostom argues for the weightiness of

111. Little, "What Makes Mission Christian," 207–17; several prominent scholars have criticized Little's approach on numerous accounts, but especially (1) Robert McQuilkin's reply that Little has not given adequate attention to justice and compassion as they relate to the church's mission, (2) Paul McKaughen's reply that Little has wrongly understood the impetus for holistic mission as not Liberation Theology, but that the poor are the largest demographic of the lost, (3) Steven Hawthorne's response, noting Little's fairly tenuous support for his arguments, while ignoring other Scriptures that would contradict, but especially Little's option for denying the importance of the Kingdom of God to understanding the church's mission, as though the Kingdom of God were not a genuinely prominent biblical theme, (4) Ron Sider's critique emphasizing that Paul's role as evangelist and missionary cannot be said to solely define the mission of the church, as Little suggests, (5) René Padilla's point that no advocate of holistic mission holds to Little's description of it, thus amounting to a straw man argument, (6) Ralph Winter's observation that Little's citation of Jesus feeding the five thousand confuses missionary deeds with the expectation of deeds by the hearer, and that words also need deeds, as much as deeds need words (that is, words refer to reality—here Winter gives the example of healing a withered hand, noting that if one says this tells us about God, it means nothing without the act of healing); plus Little's statement that "before there can be a Wilberforce there must be a Wesley," apparently ignores the vast amount of time and effort Wesley gave to social concern; see "Responses to Christopher Little's 'What Makes Mission Christian,'" 75–85. Plus, it would seem from Little's argument that he is unaware of either Henry, Stott, or Hesselgrave's restrained holism category since he attributes to holism the inherent neglect of evangelism; Little, "Christian Mission Today," 88.

112. Heldt, "Revisiting the 'Whole Gospel,'" 151.

eternal matters and simultaneously understands that one's actions make a forceful argument in leading others to Christ. He says, "Let us win them therefore by our life." Adding, however, "there is nothing to weigh against a soul, not even the whole world. So that although you give countless treasure unto the poor, you will do no such work as he who converted one soul."¹¹³

Long before Chrysostom, the church evidenced passion for both evangelism and social concern. For example, in perhaps the church's earliest document on discipleship, *The Didache*, there exists an emphasis on both evangelism and compassion, especially in the area of peace-making.¹¹⁴ This is especially important given this document's believed connection to the Twelve. Though a full discussion of social justice and evangelism in the early church lies beyond the scope of this study, this brief reference helps to show that the need to clarify how these issues relate to one another has long occupied the church's thinking.¹¹⁵ Without a doubt the fundamentalist-modernist controversy sharpened the divisions over this issue. But the issue cannot be said to be entirely recent. As Henry, too, observes, "it may be well to remind ourselves that the ancient biblical writers also had to wrestle with the tensions between personal evangelism and social justice."¹¹⁶

113. Chrysostom, "Homily 3 on 1 Corinthians," 136. John Chrysostom was born in the middle of the fourth century in Antioch, in Syria. He first served as a priest in Antioch and later became bishop of Constantinople in 397. His eloquence as a preacher earned him the nickname, "Golden Mouth." He was also a strong advocate for social reform.

114. Batson, *The Treasure Chest of Early Christians*, 50. Batson points out that *The Didache* refers to both evangelistic, itinerate missionaries, and an emphasis on compassion; for a translation of the text of *The Didache*, see <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html>.

115. Cf. Clement of Rome, *Epistle to Corinthians*; Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philipians*; Justin Martyr, *First Apology*; Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*; Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*; Clement of Alexandria, "Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?"; Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*; Basil, "In the Time of Famine and Drought"; Basil, "Against Those Who Lend at Interest"; Augustine, Sermon 56, et al.; the point here is that all of these ancient texts in some significant way connect evangelism or word ministry to either charity or some other specific act of social concern, or deed ministry.

116. Henry, "The Tension Between Evangelism and the Christian Demand for Social Justice," 5.

The Revolt against Prioritism

Those who reject any notion of priority are uneasy with separating the two because they feel it opens the door for the neglect of social concern. This fear has led to a revolt among many Evangelicals against the very notion of establishing hierarchical priorities. For example, we have already noted David Bosch's critique, wherein he claims that the very notion of priority inherently makes one thing necessary and the other optional. Andrew Kirk, a British Evangelical with an admitted appreciation for liberation theology, agrees. He says, "some Christians establish a list of priorities for the church as if by paying attention to the top of the chart one could justify the neglect of items further down."¹¹⁷ Kirk is especially concerned about attempts by the original Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism (LCWE) in 1974 and its subsequent ad hoc committees. As Kirk points out, the 1974 Lausanne Covenant declared, "In the church's mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary."¹¹⁸ Yet, the covenant went on to affirm the necessity of social concern. However, the follow up Consultation to this in Pattaya, Thailand (1980), was, in Kirk's view, hijacked by church growth advocates from North America who too narrowly defined evangelism as a strictly verbal task.¹¹⁹ Thus, in an effort to overcome any confusion, and to mollify participants from the global south who were unhappy with the 1980 statement, yet another Consultation was convened, this time in Grand Rapids in 1982. The Grand Rapids Report articulated two main ideas:

First, evangelism comes logically first, for 'Christian social responsibility presupposes socially responsible Christians, and it can only be by evangelism and discipling that they have become such.' Secondly, 'evangelism relates to people's eternal destiny'. This means that if ever one was obliged to chose 'between satisfying physical and spiritual hunger, between healing bodies and saving souls' one would have to opt for evangelism, for 'a person's eternal, spiritual salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal and material well-being.'¹²⁰

117. Kirk, *The Good News of the Coming Kingdom*, 57; cf. Kirk, *Liberation Theology*; also for a summary of the development of integral mission, essentially another term for holism, see Padilla, "Integral Mission and Its Historical Development," 42–58.

118. *Ibid.*, 90.

119. *Ibid.*, 15; cf. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 350.

120. *Ibid.*, 90–91.

In his response to this, Kirk proves especially useful for providing context to our topic, as he articulates what are probably the most common responses to the priority position. First, Kirk argues that the first claim rests on a too narrow definition of evangelism as strictly verbal. Second, he argues that there are indeed eternal consequences for neglecting social concern, at least for the person who fails to do it. He rests this latter argument on Matt 25:31–46, and the separation of the sheep and goats, and argues that Jesus is here making the point that a failure to care for the poor will lead to judgment.¹²¹

Similarly, Delos Miles describes evangelism and social concern as “two wings of the same gospel bird,” as well as “two sides of the same coin.”¹²² Miles understands the relationship between the two to be that of “partnership.” He denies social concern by the church should ever cease, at least prior to the return of Jesus. Nor does he see social concern as a distraction from evangelism, or as equivalent to evangelism. Rather, he advocates an approach modeled on Jesus, whose ministry was characterized by both proclamation (*kērugma*) and service (*diaconia*).¹²³ Scott J. Jones goes further and minimizes the differences between evangelism and social concern, implying that both are equally important in the church’s mission. In this, he claims that liberation theologies from Latin America have helpfully contributed to a broadened understanding of evangelism to include “politics, social justice, and economics.”¹²⁴

More recently, Duane Litfin, President Emeritus of Wheaton College, has written on this topic in his text, *Word Vs. Deed: Resetting the Scales to a biblical Balance*. Here he argues first, that evangelism is a verbal task, and second, that compassionate deeds are primary means by which we “enact the gospel.” He also argues that determining which is

121. Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming*, 91–92. However, as many commentators have pointed out, this passage almost certainly refers not to the poor in general, but rather, Jesus’ reference to “the least of these” is directed toward his disciples; cf. Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, n.p.; Blomberg, *Christians in an Age of Wealth*, Kindle ed., under chapter four, “Jesus and the Gospels,” n.p.; Morris adds that Jesus’ reference to the disciples specifically, of course, does not give believers license to neglect the poor, as this is abundantly commanded elsewhere in Scripture; also, as Keener observes, the “popular view that this text refers to the treatment of the poor or those in need,” is not exegetically compelling, even though such an interpretation would be consistent with other teachings in Scripture and with biblical ethics in general; cf. Keener, *Matthew*, 361.

122. Miles, *Evangelism and Social Involvement*, under “preface,” n.p.

123. *Ibid.*, 22.

124. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor*, 60.

most important, word or deed, ultimately depends on circumstances. His primary concern may be described, though, as warning against confusing evangelism with social action or vice versa.¹²⁵

With a more robust emphasis on biblical foundations than Litfin's text, Dean Flemming's *Recovering the Full Mission of God* also addresses the relationship between word and deed. Flemming says of his approach, "Instead of contrasting word and deed, therefore, I prefer to talk about the connection between *telling* and *living* the good news."¹²⁶ Flemming defines evangelism as both proclamation and living authentically as the people of God. He argues that in both the OT and NT witness as word and witness as lifestyle go together. Similarly to Litfin, he too argues that in the church's mission, the issue of priority is determined by the realities one is confronted with.¹²⁷

Flemming addresses the priority issue at some length and makes several points that will aid in our study of Henry. Though he affirms that the term "gospel" centers on a "message to be told and heard," he nonetheless finds the language of priority problematic. Like Bosch and Kirk, he too fears that priority language will lead to considering social concern as optional. He further argues that Jesus' mission for his disciples included both word and deed as means of evidencing the Kingdom (Acts 10:36-38). Second, he argues that the notion of priority places the work of the church in a hierarchical order, even before one becomes aware of the real life situation to which one must respond. That is, could not circumstances dictate that at times social concern should come first? Yet, would not giving unequivocal priority to evangelism preclude this? Third, Flemming argues that the issue of priority must also take into account individual callings and gifts. To prioritize evangelism is to force some into a paradigm that is out of line with their particular gifts. Finally, Flemming argues, following Christopher Wright, that more important than priority

125. Litfin, *Word versus Deed*, Kindle edition, especially chapters three, six, and the conclusion. Though a valuable text in many ways, Litfin's lengthy discussion of abstractions will seem tedious to those mostly concerned with ascertaining the scriptural foundations.

126. Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God*, 14.

127. Cf., Flemming's comment that "this does not mean, however, that speaking, practicing, and embodying the gospel always function in equal balance. At times, due to the needs of the context, one takes a leading, and another a supporting role"; *ibid.*, 256.

is “ultimacy.” This means to place evangelism as the ultimate goal, even if it cannot always take priority in everyday practice.¹²⁸

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that Carl F. H. Henry’s statements on evangelism and social concern deserve further investigation. Second, we have shown that to be an Evangelical is to give primary place in the theological task to Scripture, and to uphold the necessity of conversion and the importance of a faith actively lived out in the world. The NT terms for evangelism especially highlight that God has revealed a verbal message for human redemption that stands in constant need of proclamation. Yet, this Good News must also accompany a transformed life exhibiting full commitment to Christ. Third, Christian social concern must balance biblical references to the material poor with those that equate poverty with spiritual need. Furthermore, God’s ethical demands can be located in God’s own character and reign as King. It is the biblical Kingdom of God that especially informs the ministry of Jesus and the purpose of the church.

The debate over prioritism or holism has at times set these two options against one another as mutually exclusive. Hesselgrave’s descriptions, though, are helpful in understanding evangelical options: traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism. Support for all three can be found among contemporary theologians. Finally, the primary criticism against the priority model has been that it inevitably leads to the neglect of social concern. Our ensuing study of Henry, which will begin in the next chapter, will examine the degree to which Henry agreed with, challenged, or modified these points.

128. Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God*, 264–69.