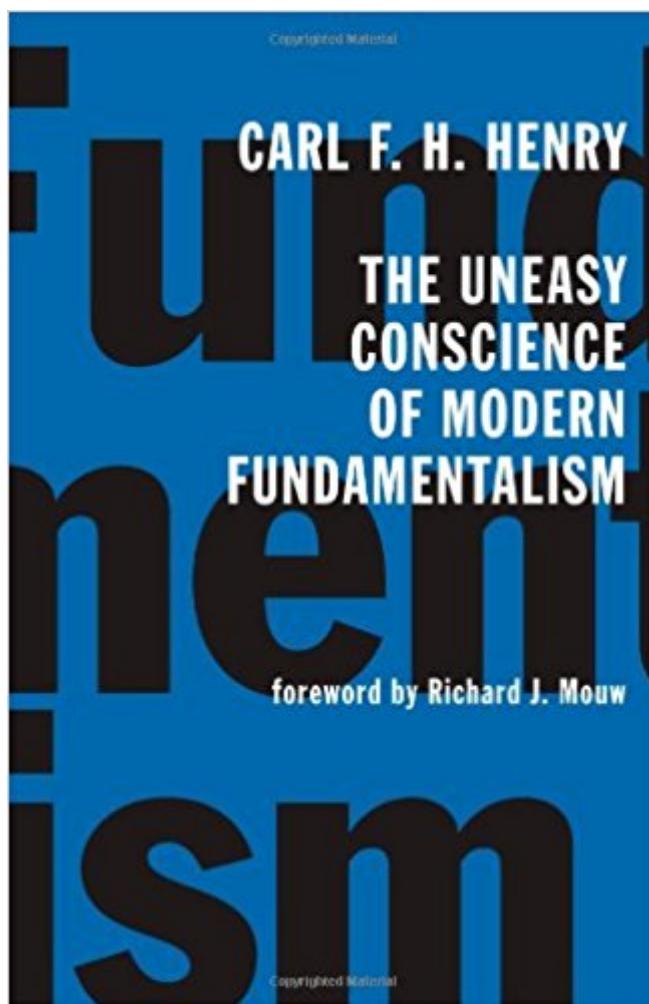


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# The Uneasy Conscience Of Modern Fundamentalism



## **Synopsis**

Originally published in 1947, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism has since served as the manifesto of evangelical Christians serious about bringing the fundamentals of the Christian faith to bear in contemporary culture. In this classic book Carl F. H. Henry, the father of modern fundamentalism, pioneered a path for active Christian engagement with the world -- a path as relevant today as when it was first staked out. Now available again and featuring a new foreword by Richard J. Mouw, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism offers a bracing world-and-life view that calls for boldness on the part of the evangelical community. Henry argues that a reformation is imperative within the ranks of conservative Christianity, one that will result in an ecumenical passion for souls and in the power to meaningfully address the social and intellectual needs of the world.

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## **Customer Reviews**

"A clarion call to theological conservatives to leave their self-imposed isolation and bring biblical convictions into the arena of modern culture"

Foreword by Richard J. MouwOriginally published in 1947, "The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism" has since served as the manifesto of evangelical Christians serious about bringing the fundamentals of the Christian faith to bear in contemporary culture. In this classic book Carl F. H. Henry, the father of modern fundamentalism, pioneered a path for active Christian engagement with the world -- a path as relevant today as when it was first staked out. Now available

again and featuring a new foreword by Richard J. Mouw, "The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism" offers a bracing world-and-life view that calls for boldness on the part of the evangelical community. Henry argues that a reformation is imperative within the ranks of conservative Christianity, one that will result in an ecumenical passion for souls and in the power to meaningfully address the social and intellectual needs of the world.

An incredibly astute book that challenges fundamentalist Christianity with a weakness in their armor - an inability and unwillingness to address social ills and evil in the world. But that can't be, fundamentalism clearly and correctly identifies the problem with the world is sin and the solution is the saving grace and transforming power of Jesus Christ in the life of an individual. While true, Henry claims that the transforming nature does not end with the individual, it only begins there! Henry's issue - that the once redemptive gospel that was a "world-changing" message has now narrowed to a "world-resisting" one. In an effort to counter a liberal theological concept of the social gospel, the idea that man can be saved by a good society, fundamentalists in Henry's opinion have sought to remove themselves from the social questions of the day isolating their redemptive message to the individual and his need of salvation for sin. The world is evil, it is fallen, but man can be redeemed is the mantra. Henry agrees, but presses the issue further - for redeemed men redeem the culture, he claims - not the other way around. Changed men change laws to reflect their newfound value of life and liberty. Henry argues that this is the pattern of history and civilizations from the beginning - regenerate men have reinvigorated cultures, dead men made alive by the power of Christ have brought dying cultures back to life as well. And they must, or at least they must try, according to Henry. Henry says that the true effect of a missionary is not solely in the number of souls saved, but also in the change in the lives of those around him - in the quality of life even for the unbelievers because they live in a transformed society infused by transformed lives. He ends with a call for Christians to engage the cultural crisis with a level of expertise in all areas of life - and to do that, he notes that evangelical schools will play a most important and pivotal role in preparing and equipping the next generation of Christian thinkers who will not isolate, but engage to the glory of God!

Though the title of this 1947 book is outdated, the major issues are not. Henry deals with the problem of keeping the major doctrines of what was then called fundamentalism and yet making an impact on the social and even global issues of that time. This reviewer was challenged to read this book to see what the issues were in those days and how they relate to today. First, Henry chides the

fundamentalists of his day since they did not explicitly sketch the social implications of its message for the non-Christian world; it does not challenge the injustices of the totalitarianisms, the secularisms of modern education, the evils of racial hatred, the wrongs of current labor-management relations, the inadequate bases of international dealings (39). But since Henry's time, many of these have been challenged by evangelicals in various ways. However, it is still difficult to discern between God and Caesar in the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of men in many of these issues. To articulate the relationships between these would take a longer review than is possible. However, there is a sense in which the children of this generation need to see how to have a conduct that is "in step with the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:14) in all these areas. However, what is the church to do? Second, Henry lays a good foundation by explaining that there needs to be, as Calvin felt, "an articulate statement not only of dogmatics but of the social implications of redemption" (39). Various groups and writings have sought to deal with these issues. Someone needs to write a concise book like this on how these issues are to be faced by the evangelical movement, a child of the fundamentalist movement. To sum up, this book is a stimulant to thought in this area and could be seminal in our present context. Where is the Carl Henry taking up the issues as he did?

Dr. Henry calls the church to action -- or better yet, evangelical fundamentalists to social action. Henry's concerns about escapism were prophetic. His criticisms of social gospel liberalism also proved right with its continued decline. Understanding the kingdom of God as not just spiritual, not just physical, not completely now, not completely withheld till the future, all help to provide the balance necessary in our witness in the world. Because of the incarnation, that Jesus came to save -- physically and spiritually -- we can also engage the world by seeking their best good in redemption, but this redemptive message must be accompanied by actions motivated out of love for their well-being holistically. Henry's treatment is a bit dated when corresponding with the theologians of his day, but this is still a helpful little book to understand the uneasy conscience of fundamentalism in that day and how Henry sought to forge a way forward. I think Henry is under-appreciated today. He was one of the greatest public theologians of the last century.

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