CHAPTER 5   REVELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

The contributions of Carl Henry have been noted and the debt the evangelical

world owes Henry is probably no greater, or certainly just as great, in the area pertaining

to the defense of divine revelation. Henry's articulate defense of the historic conservative

Protestant view of divine revelation is the basis of *God, Revelation and Authority*. It is

here that Henry leaves a lasting testament to those who follow him about the vital

importance of Biblical authority. Henry answers the challenge of the day, "the crisis of

the west," that has become a "crisis of the truth and the word." In Ronald Nash's book,

Evangelicals in America, he notes the contribution of Henry in writing *GRA*:

> According to Henry, the time has come to be done with nebulous views of the
> Christian God and with skepticism about either human-kinds ability to attain
> knowledge about God or God's ability to communicate truth. In Henry's view, the
> entire enterprise of Christian theology must be grounded on God's self-revelation
> . . . Revealed religion is possible because God has made humankind in his image
> and has given him a rational ability to perceive the truth that God has revealed.[1]

This chapter will examine the issues that Nash raised in his commentary on

Henry's contributions to evangelical theology. In examining Henry's revelational

epistemology,[2] this chapter will address Henry's views on epistemology and its

relationship to divine revelation. Related subsidiary issues such as rational

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[1] Ronald H. Nash, *Evangelicals in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 90.

[2] Revelational epistemology is defined as "the epistemological foundation for the Christian faith is divine revelation." Henry goes on to say that the ontological foundation of the Christian faith is the one, living God. "On these basic axioms depend all the core beliefs of Biblical theism, including divine creation, sin and the Fall, the promise and provision of redemption, the Incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, the regenerate Church as a new society, and a comprehensive eschatology." Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 49.

communication by God to man (conceptual verbal communication), the Logos, the *imago Dei*, propositional revelation, inspiration and inerrancy, are all addressed by Henry in *GRA*.

5.1   *GRA*—A Landmark Project

GRA was a fifteen–year long project that Henry completed in 1983. *GRA* provides the most complete introduction to systematic theology in the evangelical world. In *GRA*, Henry lays out his apologetic method of Reformed presuppositional apologetics.[3] As Henry develops his conception of knowledge he combines presuppositionalism with rational inquiry, as another writer labeled it "apologetic presuppositionalism."[4] Another element of Henry's theological method is the use of the apagogic method. Henry learned this from his mentor Gordon Clark. This method calls for the establishing of Christianity on epistemological and ontological foundations. After establishing the foundations of Christianity, Christianity is then shown to be logically consistent and other belief systems are shown to be inconsistent. This strategy reveals that Christianity is far superior to alternative systems of belief.[5] As Carl R. Trueman writes, "Henry's entire work—of which *GRA* is the greatest single example—must be understood as an attempt to restate conservative Protestant theology in a manner which takes seriously the epistemological

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[3] Richard Wade, "Rationalistic Presuppositionalism: An Exposition and Analysis of Carl F. H. Henry's Apologetics" (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1990), preface.

[4] Mohler, "Evangelical Theology and Karl Barth: Representative models of response," 123.

[5] Wade, "Rationalistic Presuppositionalism: An Exposition and Analysis of Carl F. H. Henry's Apologetics," iv. Wade makes the evaluation that as a result of his analysis of Henry's method that it "is an excellent tool for the advance of the Christian truth. In addition to answering objections, he forces the unbeliever to analyze more closely his or her own beliefs. His goal is not simply to show that Christians are not unreasonable in their beliefs, but also to persuade the unbeliever to abandon his false beliefs and accept truth."

concerns of the Enlightenment without surrendering the content and truth claims of orthodox Christianity."[6]

5.1.1 Responding to the Crisis

Henry makes this dramatic statement in *GRA* volume 1, "No fact of contemporary Western life is more evident than it growing distrust of final truth and its implacable questioning of any sure word."[7] With this statement, Henry begins his quest to "contend for the faith once delivered to all the saints." Henry starts with this statement that questions the reality of truth and whether there is an authoritative to be heard. He will write over three thousand pages in six volumes giving the historic Christian response to the question of whether God has spoken. And if He has, what has He said?

Henry's definition of what in this paper is called revelational epistemology is as follows:

> In a sense, all knowledge may be viewed as revelational, since meaning is not imposed upon things by the human knower alone, but rather is made possible because mankind and the universe are the work of a rational Deity, who fashioned an intelligible creation. Human knowledge is not a source of knowledge to be contrasted with revelation, but is a means of comprehending revelation. . . . Thus God, by him immanence, sustains the human knower, even in his moral and cognitive revolt, and without that divine preservation, ironically enough, man could not even rebel again God, for he would not exist. Augustine, early in the Christian centuries, detected what was implied in this conviction that human reason is not the creator of it own object; neither the external world of sensation nor the internal world of ideas is rooted subjectivistic factors alone.[8]

In 1968 Henry wrote of this essential core in *GRA*, when he wrote:

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[6] Trueman, "Admiring the Sistine Chapel: Reflections on Carl F. H. Henry's God, Revelation and Authority," 50.

[7] Henry, *GRA,* 1: 17.

[8] Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought*, 104. For an insightful analysis of Augustine's thought in this regard see Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of The Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge*; and *The Word of God and The Mind of Man*, 79–90. B. B. Warfield also provides an analysis of Augustine's theory of knowledge in *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1932, 2003), 135–228.

The time is right to recanvass evangelical rational theism with its emphasis on the revelation and manifestation of the Logos a the critical center of theological inquiry. A prospect for systematic theology is at hand, and a growing demand exists for a comprehensive world-view that does full justice to the real world of truth and life and experience in which man must make his decisions. In the Western world today only three major options survive. Sooner or later one these will carry off the spiritual fortunes of the twentieth-century world. Each of these views, significantly holds that man can know the ultimately real world. But each differs from the others in important ways about ultimate reality. One view is Communism, which dismisses the supernatural as myth. The other views, to which neo-Protestant agnosticism has forfeited the great modern debate over the faith of the Bible, are Roman Catholicism and evangelical Christianity. The really live option, in my opinion, is evangelical theism, a theology centered in the incarnation and inscripturation of the Word (a theology not of the distorted Word but of the disclosed Word). This, I feel, offers the one real possibility of filling the theological vacuum today.
Evangelical Christianity emphasizes:
The universal as well as once-for-all dimension of Divine disclosure.
Authentic ontological knowledge of God.
The intelligible and verbal character of God's revelation.
The universal validity of religious truth.[9]

In *The God Who Shows Himself*, Henry sounded the alarm over the problem of the truth of divine revelation; "In facing the modern world the prime problem of contemporary Christianity is not the unfortunate proliferation of denominations but the unbearable divergence over the truth of revelation perpetuated by the hydra-headed ecumenical colossus."[10] Henry would meet this challenge in way that would cement his legacy as "the dean of evangelical theologians."[11]

In an interview with *Sojuners Magazine* in 1976, Henry was being questioned on a variety of topics. One of those topics was the nature of evangelical identity. At the time Henry was writing a series of articles on this topic for *Christianity Today* (later these

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[9]Carl F. H. Henry, "Where is Modern Theology Going?" *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 11 (Winter 1968); 11.

[10] Carl F. H. Henry, *The God Who Shows Himself* (Waco, TX: Word, 1966), 22. This phrase would re-emerge in the subtitle of *GRA*, albeit slightly altered "God Who Speaks and Shows."

[11] Kenneth S. Kantzer, review of *God, Revelation and Authority* 6 vols., by Carl F. H. Henry, *Christianity Today* 20 (May 1983): 72.

individual articles were released as the book *Evangelicals in Search of Identity*). During

the questioning Henry was asked what would a comprehensive view of God's revelation

begin to look like? His response was most telling as it foreshadowed *GRA*:

> It would involve, certainly, the priority of the truth God declares. If revelation isn't intelligible, we're at a loss to say anything about God and his purposes for man. Secondly, it must include the righteousness that God demands, both public and private righteousness, personal holiness and social injustice. Thirdly, the grace God offers, the evangel, would be included. . . . The biblical emphasis falls first and foremost on the authority of Scripture. After that, the emphasis falls, it seems to me, on the inspiration of God's word. It is what God has spoken; that's why it is authoritative. The notion of an authoritative word that isn't God's word, or that isn't inspired, is out of view. Inerrancy seems to me be an inference from the inspiration the Bible teaches. If one denies inerrancy, and affirms errancy, he raises all sorts of questions about inspiration. The affirmation of the errancy of Scripture introduces a principle of instability into the authority of Scripture that leads to a lack of agreement as to what parts of Scripture are to be considered authoritative and what parts are not.[12]

In that same year, Henry sat down for another interview, this time with *Scribe*

magazine. Harold Lindsell's book *The Battle for the Bible* had been released (more will

be said in relation to this book when Henry's view on inerrancy is discussed). Henry was

asked to give his own position on the doctrine of inerrancy:

> "My position today is precisely what it has been through the years, I hold unequivocally to the authority, the inspiration, and the inerrancy of Scripture; and I think that any questioning of one or all of those emphases represents a departure from what the Bible teaches, explicitly or implicitly, a departure from the perspective of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and a departure from the historic Christian position."[13]

Henry went on to answer a question regarding inerrancy that will illuminate the

forthcoming discussion on the method of Henry's revelational epistemology. The

question was as follows: "As one of the founders of the modern evangelical movement,

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[12] Henry, *Conversations with Carl Henry: Christianity Today*, 7–8.

[13] Ibid., 23.

does the present situation in regards to inerrancy cause you great concern about the future

of the movement?" Henry's answer is illuminating in several aspects:

> "First, I disown that I am one of the founders of the movement, because I don't
> think its roots are modern, they are biblical. Nor do I think that inerrancy is a
> recent commitment of the Church, inspired by Hodge and Warfield, as some of
> the young socially active evangelicals seem to imply. It is implicit in the New
> Testament, it was the doctrine of the early Church, it was held by the Roman
> Catholicism at least until Vactican II, and the Protestant Reformers are on that
> side."[14]

A summary statement of Henry's position that will be detailed in the pages to follow

would be:

> Thus, according to Henry, God circumscribes and determines what can be known.
> Nonetheless, the world remains knowable because God himself is an intelligent
> deity. Contrary to the trajectory of rationalism, no autonomous standard for
> reason can be offered since reason itself loses meaning apart from the divine
> character. Since the divine discloses himself as person, revelation is personal in
> nature and can therefore speak to all of humanity. Consequently, revelation both
> coheres and corresponds to reality because God is one. It is not a truism to say
> therefore that divine revelation is communication that we can trust. Thus, as
> Henry declares, "Only the fact the one sovereign God, the Creator and Lord of all,
> stands at the center of divine disclosure, guarantees a unified divine revelation."[15]

5.1.2   Truth Is the Issue

Truth is of essential importance as Henry starts to answer "the crisis of truth and

word." Henry recognizes, as should all, that whether intentional or not, the media by in

large is indifferent to the truth of truth and have ignored and abandoned God given

morality over to the skeptics.[16] Why is truth of such importance to Henry? Henry

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[14] Ibid., 26.

[15] Gregory Alan Thornbury, "Prolegomena: Introduction to the Task of Theology," in *A Theology for the Church*, (ed. Daniel L. Akin; Nashville: B&H, 2007), 2–70.

[16] Henry, *GRA,* 1:18–19. Henry quotes Malcolm Muggeridge: "The media are not the cause, but the expression of contemporary vacuity," Malcolm Muggeridge, *Esquire* (Jan 1973), 52.

answers because of the skepticism that captivates the western mind about even the

possibility of knowing truth:

> For Henry the essential problem of the modern western mind is that in its escape from the controlling stringencies of medieval Christianity it has adopted a non-revelational world and life view, a declension which has been abetted by its theology. The result is a "crisis of truth and word" marked by 'growing distrust of final truth and . . . implacable questioning of any sure word."[17]

The modern temperament is characterized by skepticism, relativism and illogicity which

permeate the modern culture. A major contributor and purveyor of this modern

temperament is the media:

> Enhanced by color and cunning, television or radio or the printed page makes every last human soul a target of it propaganda. So astonishingly clever and successful have been these media in captivating the contemporary spirit—haunted as it is by moral vacillation and spiritual doubt—that Yahweh's ancient exhortation to beware of visual idols would seem doubly pertinent today . . . Whether they profess to tell the unadorned truth or to be necessarily indifferent to the truth of truth, the media seem in either case to abandon God and morality to the skeptics. Television has often been suspected of breeding violence and of carrying commercials that are misleading; it has seldom if ever been accused of breeding incisive theologians and ethicists. In many respects the crisis of truth and word shapes up as the conflict between the Logos of God as the medium of divine revelation and the modern mass media as caterers to the secular spirit.[18]

Mass media expresses the values of the modern age and with great impact. What

people consider to be the ideal image is a reflection of their God and ultimate values. The

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[17] Henry, *GRA*, 1:17. Mark Hutchens makes the following observation on this passage: "Henry sees this escape in two phases. The first was the attempt, beginning with Descartes, to construct an autonomous philosophy, freed not only from the strictures imposed by medieval Catholicism, but eventually from any demands which Christian revelation might attempt to make upon it. The second is that of the disarray which has resulted from the manifest failure of the first. In Henry's early writings there is some hope that the fall of modern philosophy will sober the western mind enough to turn its gaze to what is valuable at its roots in ancient and medieval western thought, to evaluate its own thinking accordingly, and make way for a new world mind more open to the claims of revelation. Near the end of his career, however, the confusion which he perceived at the beginning no longer looks like a phase, but a fixed condition in which the only real choice for modern man is between Christianity and nihilism. Cf. *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 20–27 and *GRA* 1:41." Hutchens, "Knowing and being in the context of fundamentalist dilemma," 84.

[18] Henry, *GRA*, 1:18–19.

globe spanning influences of mass media, while as of yet have not produced a new

humanity, has left an indelible mark on the modern mind as his mood, social customs and

even the modern man's morals have been impacted.[19] The consequences of which

direction man goes will affect not just human culture but human destiny as well. Will

human speculation carry the day and provide a meandering sense of supposed direction

or will the Word and Truth of God find expression in the contemporary setting? Henry

states,

> Few times in history has revealed religion been forced to contend with such
> serious problems of word and truth, and never in the past have the role of words
> and the nature of truth been as misty and undefined as now. Only if we recognize
> that the truth of truth—indeed, the meaning of meaning—is today in doubt, and
> that this uncertainty stifles the word as a carrier of God's truth and moral
> judgment, do we fathom the depth of the present crisis.[20]

Here then is the motive for writing *GRA*. From the very beginning of Henry's

theological work, he has been concerned about engaging culture where the battle was the

most intense. Christianity affirms and asserts that God has spoken to mankind in an

intelligible form of communication and in doing so has given man objective truth.[21]

Contrary to neo-orthodox interpretations of the day, and especially the Bultmannian use

of language, whereby "myth" becomes a functional device that alleviates the burden and

restrictions of the assertion of knowing the factual and literal truth about God, Henry

offers a corrective of this defective view of language. In Henry's view the mistake

emanated from the "epistemic pretenses" that started with Kant and ran through

Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Barth, and Bultmann that viewed truth that "is distinctively

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[19] Ibid., 1:22.

[20] Ibid., 1:24.

[21] Ibid., 1:213.

religious is to be regarded as (at most) paraverbal and parahistorical and who consequently resist and downgrade any interpretation of religious reality in which the objectively valid proposition is advanced as the elemental medium of a revealed truth based on factual, historical encounters of men with God."[22]

Historic Christianity is the antithesis of the aforementioned modern alternative. Its special merit is found in that it delivers man from speculative and mythical notions about God. Additionally, Christianity provides precise knowledge about religious reality. Historic Christianity distances itself from mythical statements about God. Instead it offers literal and factual knowledge about God, and in doing so is superior to all competing claims that reduce Christianity to symbolic imagery and representations of ultimate reality.[23]

5.2   Knowing that You Know: Revelation– The Basic Epistemological Axiom

Henry asserts that it is essential for Christianity to state its method of knowing and verification for knowing its objective truth claims so that men everywhere can be persuaded personally. In this way Christianity answers the non-Christian when he asks, "What persuasive reasons have you for believing?"[24] In answering this question Henry proposes an evangelical method between the fideism of the absolute presuppositionalist and the empirical evidentialism of the rationalists.[25] This *via media* finds its basis in

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[22] Hutchens, "Knowing and being in the context of fundamentalist dilemma," 88.

[23] Henry, *GRA*, 1:69.

[24] Ibid., 1:213.

[25] Mohler, "Evangelical theology and Karl Barth: Representative models of response," 123. For another view of theological method from two contemporaries of Henry's, cf. Edward John Carnell, *An*

three long held ways of looking at the role of revelation and reason as sometimes designated at the way of Tertullian, Augustine, and Aquinas.[26]

The Tertullian way was never typical of Christians until recent times. Tertullian has an often quoted line, "What has Jerusalem with Athens?" The statement emphasizes the disjunction between faith and reason. In essence Tertullian's emphasis is that Christianity requires belief in what to the unregenerate mind seems absurd.[27]

> The so-called Tertullian view (based on some of Tertullian's comments) excludes rational tests as inappropriate to revelation; indeed, revelation, it is said, confronts human reason as an absurdity or paradox and must be accepted solely on its own intrinsic ground. According to this fideistic approach , to seek in any way to justify revelatory faith on the basis of reason is to misconceive its nature; divine revelation calls for sheer faith in what necessarily confronts human reason as a paradox. Christianity requires belief, so fideists claim, in what confronts the unregenerate mind as essentially absurd. In the fideist view, divine revelation cannot and must not be rationally tested for validity and truth. No preliminary validation is proper that admits or allows revelation only on rational or logical grounds.[28]

The second method that has traditionally found expression in Christianity is known as the Augustinian way. The method was followed broadly by Anselm, Luther, and Calvin and appeals to revelation in the interest of a more fully informed reason. The Augustinian way fuses both the priority of belief and its incompleteness without understanding or reason. Anselm's famous dictum *Credo ut intelligam* (I believe in order to understand) concisely summarizes the Augustinian method of combining faith and reason. Henry writes, "Believe in order to understand is the emphasis; without belief one

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Introduction to Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 29–64; Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 69–104.

[26] *Henry, GRA*, 1:182.

[27] Ibid., 1:182–83.

[28] Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 103. More will be said as Henry applies this method to the Neo-Orthodox and Karl Barth in chapter 6. Tertullian's formula *credo quia absurdum* (I believe what is absurd) is according to Henry, representative of the neo-orthodox method (p. 40).

will not understand. Reason still has its task, but on a new foundation and within a new climate. The revelation of the living God is the precondition and starting point for human understanding; it supplies the framework and corrective for natural reason. . . . The way to truth was found in the inspired Scripture and not philosophical speculation."[29]

The third method is known as the Thomistic way. The Thomistic way can be expressed as *Intelligo ut credam* (understand in order to believe). Aquinas approached the existence of God from the observations of ordinary experience and special revelation as the starting point. In doing so, Aquinas employed a natural type of knowledge, available to anyone, as the foundation for faith. As Henry points out, all the arguments that Thomas puts forth for the existence of God appeal to sense observation without reliance of divine revelation. Thomas taught that the Scriptures gave supplementary information about God and mankind. Through Scripture man could only learn information for such doctrines as the Incarnation, the Trinity and so forth. Henry explains, "But the truths for the existence of God and the existence of the immortality of the soul are not grounded on religious considerations but are considered inferences from sense observations, and philosophical reasoning is viewed as capable of supplying a demonstrative proof."[30]

> Rational presuppositionalism differs from fideism in that the former welcomes while the latter rejects the application to revelation of any tests of rational consistency and validity. It parts company with the emphasis often attributed to Tertullian—not always fairly—that divine revelation confronts human reason as paradoxical. Rational presuppositionalism, in contrast to fideism, does not sponsor a disjunction between faith and reason. It insists that all humanity can comprehend God's revelation and, moreover, can comprehend it prior to regeneration or special illumination by the Holy Spirit. Mankind in its present condition is capable of intellectually analyzing rational evidence for the truth value of assertions about God. Over against Thomistic espousal of natural

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[29] Henry, *GRA*, 1:183–84.

[30] Ibid., 1:184.

theology, both Augustinian rational presuppositionalism and Tertullian fideism insist that divine revelation is the only way to know transcendent religious reality. The Thomistic way, by contrast, is evidentialist. It affirms that speculative understanding should precede faith/revelation.[31]

The differences are stark. The way of Tertullian believes in irrationality.

Thomism, in opposition to the irrationality, places too much confidence in the unaided reason of man. Man, based on his unaided empirical observation can arrive at transcendent reality. The Augustinian way, or rational presuppositionalism, opposes both such views. Given the construction of man (to be discussed later in this chapter), transcendent divine revelation (the source of truth) coupled with reason as a gift from the Creator, man has the capacity to recognize truth. "Revelational theism provides the cognitive information about God and the true nature of reality and it supplies categories of thought and definitions of reality."[32]

As has been mentioned before, chapter 2 and page 15, the Christian is within his rights, philosophically, to state his belief in God as his starting point and then proceed to quantify the means of verification. In what should be read as the introduction to *GRA*, in *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, Henry states in no uncertain terms his preference for presuppositionalism versus the empiricism: "If presuppositionalism implies that anyone who thinks has presuppositions, then I am unapologetically an evangelical presuppositionalist." Henry makes the case that everyone has presuppositions whether they admit them or not.[33]

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[31] Henry, *Toward A Recovery of Christian Belief*, 105–06.

[32] Henry, *GRA*, 1:201. For more discussion on presuppositionalism cf. Stanley N. Gundry and Steven B. Cowan eds. *Five Views on Apologetics*. For a more detailed examination of rational presuppositionalism as used by Carl Henry; cf. Wade, "Rationalistic Presuppositionalism: An Exposition and Analysis of Carl F. H. Henry's Apologetics."

[33] Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 42.

5.2.1   The Validity of the Deductive Method

Another facet of Henry's theological method is his belief that deduction is the better method of making the theological case than induction. Evidentialism is bound to induction and attempts to make the case from particulars to universal explanatory principles. Henry believes this approach is hopeless flawed. In a telling expose on the limits of evidentialism, Henry notes that those who follow the evidentialist approach have left the historic method of deduction that was long in use in church history:

> It was Origen (A.D. 250) who, in his *peri archon* (Latin tr., *De principiis*), expounded the implications of divine intelligence and simplicity over against Neo-Platonism's projection of radical transcendence and who deduced theological knowledge of creation of and salvation. Ever since the beginning of the Christian era the operative methodology for systematic theology has been mainly deductive. Augustine and Anselm championed theological deduction. Not until Thomas Aquinas proposed an empirical alternative in the twelfth century was the deductive method seriously disputed in some respects it prevailed until the nineteenth century, when Schleiermacher decisively challenged it. The Protestant Reformers employed deduction, although evidentialist currently render this problematical by blending the Reformers' emphasis on general revelation into an empirical approach.[34]

With no qualification or hesitancy, Henry proffers the legitimacy of deductive theology. In the same breath he views the evidentialist method as an invalid alternative. There are two main reasons for this position. Evidentialism falls back to probabilities. Henry views the "so-called" theistic proofs as "providing no conclusive demonstration of the existence of the self-revealing God."[35] Furthermore, to maintain that the evidentialist is not reliant on presuppositions is contrary to reality. Henry says that to begin the "presentation of one's views with *a prioric* affirmations and an appeal to faith is no more irrational or intellectually disreputable in theology than in philosophy or in natural

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[34] Ibid., 37—38.

[35] Ibid., 40.

science."[36] Empirical science routinely takes for granted what it cannot prove. It has as its aproric affirmations the comprehensive unity, unity and intelligibility of the universe. It also postulates the casual continuity of nature and the necessity of honesty in experimentation in scientific research.[37]

To further bolster his claim of the validity of deduction Henry records those who have used the postulational principle or philosophical axiom as a base for reasoning:

> Democritus never demonstrated that all substance consists of indivisible and imperceptibly small particles; he postulated this premise and attempted to explain all existence consistently in terms of it. Plato never demonstrated the independent existence of the invisible world of Eternal Ideas; he argued that all lesser existence participates in or mirrors them. . . . Kant for example, did not derive his transcendental forms of thought through his epistemic theory, which identified all knowledge as a joint product of sense of content and a priori forms. Since the a priori forms were not sense perceptible. Kant must have postulated them independently of the theory. There is no way that the philosophical naturalist can "prove" the declared truth of his scientific worldview other than by relying on his theory's own assumptions.[38]

Henry writes of the long established practice employed in twentieth-century science of this method. It is common place for scientists to use postulational affirmations in experimentation. The objection may be offered that in science the standard is different given that science knows nothing of being final in its quest for knowledge. However, that being said, Henry counters that mathematical formulas reflect the statistical average and the question arises whether the reported mathematical connections have ever been observed and do they correspond to nature? Empirical scientists do not simply assume

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[36] Ibid., 43.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 45–46. Here and throughout the remainder of this section of this discussion the influence of Gordon Clark is clearly seen. Cf. Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952, 1981), 312–25; Gordon H. Clark, *Religion, Reason, And Revelation*, 58–68; Gordon H. Clark, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1968, 1993), 297–323.

metaphysical realities, but instead offers a postulate and then attempts to prove or disprove his hypothesis.[39]

After having established the basis for deduction or axiomatization, Henry states what he believe are the two foundational axioms of the Christian faith: the one living God and divine revelation.[40] The importance of these two axioms for Henry cannot be understated. One of Henry's motives is to engage culture, and the basis for ethical engagement and participation is founded upon philosophical and theological engagement. Historic Christianity has a consistent, coherent, applicable, and adequate answer for the questions of how to make sense of all reality and life.

Henry makes the unqualified assertion that theology based on the truth or falsity of its claims must be testable as to the method of knowing theological truth. Furthermore, it must clearly state the criteria for determining its theological claims. To restate it another way, the evangelical must insist on truth and then provide the method for how one can know truth. In taking this step, it will not prevent some from rejecting the message of Christianity, for those who do it will be a willful rejection of the Christian message. Rejection will not come as a result of a mistaken notion that Christianity is inherently irrational.

Is there truth to be known? And how does one recognize it? Henry answers in the following way:

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[39] Henry, *GRA*, 1:173.

[40] Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 48-49. "The Christian's primary ontological axiom is the one living God, and his primary epistemological axiom is divine revelation. On these basic axioms depend all the core beliefs of Biblical theism, including divine creation, sin and the Fall, the promise and provision of redemption, the Incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, the regenerate Church as a new society and comprehensive eschatology." An axiom is defined as "a general proposition or principle accepted as self-evident, either absolutely or within a particular sphere or thought." Richard W. Micou, *Basic Ideas in Religion or Apologetic Theism* (ed. Paul Micou; New York: Association Press, 1916), 393.

Divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its verifying principle; logical consistency is a negative test for truth and coherence a subordinate test. The task of Christian theology is to exhibit the content of biblical revelation as an orderly whole.[41]

These are preliminary discussions that will be later amplified in a much more thorough and extensive way in *GRA* Vols. 2-4.

5.3   The Starting Point: Revelation

The first point in stating his method is amplified in the following way: "1. God in his revelation is the first principle of Christian theology, from which all the truths of revealed religion are derived."[42] In the *Rutherford Lectures* (1989), Henry offers an abbreviated defense of presuppositions: "The Christian ought to systematize, deepen, and

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[41] Henry, *GRA*, 1:215. For the remainder of Vol. 1 of *GRA*, Henry expounds on his theological method. Volume 1 serves as the preamble for Vols. 2-6 in which Henry gives and then explains his fifteen theses of Divine Revelation: (1) Revelation is a divinely initiated activity, God's free communication by which he alone turns his personal privacy into a deliberate disclosure of his reality; (2) Divine revelation is given for human benefit, offering us privileged communion with our Creator in the kingdom of God; (3) Divine revelation does not completely erase God's transcendent mystery, inasmuch as God the Revealer transcends his own revelation; (4) The very fact of disclosure by the one living God assures the comprehensive unity of divine revelation; (5) Not only the occurrence of divine revelation, but also its very nature, content, and variety are exclusively God's determination; (6) God's revelation is uniquely personal both in content and form; (7) God reveals himself not only universally in the history of the cosmos and of the nations, but also redemptively within this external history in unique saving acts; (8) The climax of God's special revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, the personal incarnation of God in the flesh; in Jesus Christ the source and content of revelation converge and coincide; (9) The mediating agent in all divine revelation is the eternal Logos-preexistent, incarnate, and now glorified; (10) God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words, that is in, in conceptual form; (11) The Bible is the reservoir and conduit of divine truth; (12) The Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine revelation, first, by inspiring the prophetic-apostolic writings, and second, by, illuminating and interpreting the scripturally given Word of God; (13) As bestower of spiritual life the Holy Spirit enables individuals to appropriate God's revelation savingly, and thereby attests the redemptive power of the revealed truth of God in the personal experience of reborn sinners; (14) The church approximates the kingdom of God in miniature; as such she is the mirror to each successive generation the power and joy of the appropriated realities of divine revelation; (15) The self-manifesting God will unveil his glory in a crowing revelation of power and judgment; in this disclosure at the consummation of the ages, God will vindicate righteousness and justice, finally subdue and subordinate evil, and bring into being a new heaven and earth (*GRA*, 2:8-16).

[42] Ibid.

apply his pre-philosophical convictions in order to test them for explanatory power and logical consistency."[43] In posting divine revelation as the epistemological foundation Henry echoes Abraham Kuyper and B. B. Warfield. Kuyper wrote that Christianity has a "dependent character of theology." Its dependency is on God, for any and all information necessarily comes from Him to man. Warfield says, "The religion of the Bible presents itself as distinctly a revealed religion."[44] Henry's defense of axiomatization is noteworthy as he sets the ground for what follows in his exposition of his epistemic and ontological axioms:

> while the logical structure axiomatization seeks by deduction to expound implications of any proffered postulate or axiom, it wholly confuses the actual epistemic basics of the Christian first principle when champions of a revelation axiom are portrayed as having speculatively invented it. Only a self-refuting concept of divine revelation could have its basis merely in philosophical presuppositionalism. The Christian religion does not dangle midair on a postulational skyhook; it is anchored in God's self-revelation. The proponents of a revelation-axiom do not approach divine revelation as merely speculative first principle, but rather affirm it in view of the self-activity of God. The very fact of divine revelation constrains the Christian theist to honor is as the basic epistemological axiom of theology. Any clouding of this distinctive of the basic axiom of revealed religion only minimizes a striking difference between transcendent divine disclosure and human postulation and speculation.[45]

An important point that Henry makes in his argument at this point is the distinction between divine revelation as the basic axiom and the resurrection of Christ as the basic epistemic axiom of Christianity. In support of the resurrection–axiom, its supporters contend that the resurrection was the center piece of the Gospel proclamation. Additionally, its supporters tout the historical grounding of Christianity. Henry notes

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[43] Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 67. In *GRA* 1:213–409, Henry provides a detailed defense and analysis of presuppositionalism.

[44] Henry, *GRA*, 1:213–14.

[45] Ibid., 1:219–20.

these two assertions and responds by saying for the latter claim "no where is there a disjunction between the two claims." In fact, Christianity as a historical religion is no less compatible with the primacy of revelation as the Christian epistemic axiom than is the centrality of the resurrection. More to the point is that apart from revelation, historical events are not in and of themselves self-explanatory, hence the need for divine revelation to ensure the proper interpretation of those historical events.[46]

Henry asserts the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ with no qualification. However, the facts in and of themselves, without the divine disclosure of their significance do not enable one to establish their meaning. Henry continues, "Apart from their revelationally vouchsafed interpretation, the divine acts are subject to wholesale misunderstanding."[47] Just as the presuppositionalists face objections in their appeal to divine revelation as their starting point, so too evidentialists face similar objections to their empirical claims for epistemic priority.[48]

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[46] Ibid., 1:220–21. "Once intelligible divine disclosure is forfeited, any prognosis of spiritual ultimates depends on mystical experience, rationalistic conjecture, or man's limited observations of history and the cosmos, all of which becomes substitutes for the intelligibility revealed Word of God" (p. 218).

[47] Ibid. "This writer's own conviction is that without the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth the Gospels would not have been written and the Christian church would not have come into being."

[48] Ibid., 1:221. "The historical resurrection-claim must cope similarly with numerous understandings or misunderstandings of the Gospel-attested resurrection, whether in the manner of the Greek mystery religions, or of Barthian superhistory, or of Bultmannian existentialism. Moreover, in view of Troeltsh's 'laws' of universal historical interpretation, the resurrection claim still confronts the arbitrary notion that the morality of historical consciousness disallows accepting the factuality of past events for which present day history presents no analogy." Henry comments on Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923). Troeltsch was the major proponent of *Religonsgechichte*. Troeltsch's position can described as the universality of historical phenomena. This interpretation of historical inquiry denies any special method for understanding God. His commitment to universal relativity as a scientific faith barred any attainment of facts of an absolute nature-of course his own postulational absolute (a private revelation?) that historical development is all embracing." Troeltsch relativizes the divine revelation of God thereby rendering the reality of knowing God through divine revelation improbable and inconceivable. "Troeltsch nowhere proves-nor can he do so-that all religions arise within a uniform field of development. His all-embracing continuity of human history is speculatively asserted and rests upon a secret metaphysical premise that cannot be derived from experience, nor is it a logical requirement of human thought" (216). Henry in a

5.4   The Method for Recognizing Truth: Reason

Having stated his axiom, Henry now moves to a method of verification through human reason. Human reason is a gift from God to man, not for making truth but for recognizing it; "2. Human reason is a divinely fashioned instrument for recognizing truth; it is not a creative source for truth."[49]

Writing in 1964, Henry states the case and the essential necessity of this second postulate:

> "The vulnerable point of contemporary theology lies in its theory of knowledge, a theory which deprives reason of its proper place in religious experience and re-enforces an anti-intelligible view of divine revelation. So radical is the way in which God's epistemological transcendence is defined, that it excluded the very possibility of God's telling us anything about Himself. As a result, Christian theology loses the very capacity to define God's transcendent relationship to the world and to man."[50]

The answer to this lies in the fashioning of man's reason. "The Creator-Redeemer God of the Bible created man in his rational and spiritual image for intelligible relationships. The Christian faith emphasizes that one has nothing to gain and everything to lose by opposing or downgrading rationality."[51] Contrary to moderns who place limits on knowledge due to culture and time, Henry contends that due to the relationship with the Creator God, man is inherently able to know and know accurately and extensively. While not denying that in certain respects the reality of culture dependency, Henry in no way

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telling bit of analysis shows how Troeltsch employs presuppositionalism, albeit without stating his preuppositions: "Troeltsch's 'laws' (criticism, relatively, analogy) that govern all historical inquiry are clearly not principles distilled from his observations of all history, but rather are axiomatic limitations he imposes upon history as an interpretative framework; only within these limitations will he discuss historical data, although he inconsistently exempts his own views from them. If his theory is true, Troeltsch's own absolutes are indefensible, since no finality can be claimed for his views any more than any others" (217).

[49] Ibid., 1:225.

[50] Carl F. H. Henry, "The Nature of God," in *Christian Faith and Modern Theology*, (ed. Carl F. H. Henry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 89–90.

[51] Henry, *GRA*, 1:225.

concedes that this dependency or conditioning rules out transcendent truth claims; Henry states, "The categories of reason do not arise only from human consciousness, but rather derive from God's intelligible attributes and from human existence in God's image. Relationships between human thought and logic are grounded in the transcendent mind and will of God."[52] In contrast to Kant, who argued (a priori) that the mind contributes to experience reason's organizing conceptual elements, and in contrast to the pragmatist, who argues that the mind knowingly creates the object of knowledge, and in opposition to the radical empiricist who insist that knowledge arises out of our sense experience and is the ultimate source and ground of knowledge, the Christian world view asserts "the forms of human reason derive from human epistemic structures given on the basis of creation."[53] This relationship between God's intelligible attributes and human existence in the *imago Dei*, provides a conduit between the indispensability of logic and human reason with a sovereign personal God, making the existence and the possibility of truth an attainable reality.[54] Henry restates just what is at stake in this relationship:

> If the nature of God is rationally disclosed and rationally apprehended, the assertion of universally valid knowledge of God's nature (including His transcendent and immanent relations to the world of man) can be vindicated-as by historic Christian theology through its appeal to intelligible divine disclosure and to the inspired Scriptures. But if man's ideas and concepts of the divine are simply products of his own creative consciousness, and imply no claim to literal truth about the objective nature of God, is there any compelling reason to regard the moral transcendence of God any less than His metaphysical (or indeed His epistemological) transcendence as anything other or more than symbol or myth? The renunciation of rational divine disclosure can only lead to moral as well as theoretical agnosticism about God-in-Himself.[55]

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[52] Carl F. H. Henry, "Fortunes of the Christian World View," *Trinity Journal* 19, no.2 (Fall 1998): 173.

[53] Ibid., 174.

[54] Ibid., 175.

[55] Henry, "The Nature of God," *Christian Faith and Modern Theology*, 86–87.

5.5   The Principle of Verification: Scripture

The third point is, "3. The Bible is the Christian's principle of verification."[56] The entire edifice of Henry's theological system is built on the premise that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and "therefore serves as the proximate and universally accessible form of authoritative divine revelation."[57] This contention stands in opposition to those religions that opt for their validity in personal and mystical experience. As Henry contends, theological verification is not dependent upon personal faith or national or cultural perspectives. Christianity retreats to no mystical or personal faith encounter for validation and verification. In fact, "Christianity contends that revelational truth is intelligible, expressible in valid propositions, and universally communicable."[58] One does not have to be a Christian or have had a conversion experience to understand the claims of Christianity. Scripture as the verifying principle about God is open and accessible to all through the means of logic and reason.[59] Contrary to evidentialists who spuriously argue that presuppositionalist are locked into their presuppositions, Henry argues that presuppositionalists do not discount the empirical evidence that are made to support faith

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[56] Henry, *GRA*, 1:229.

[57] White, *What is Truth?,* 99.

[58] Henry, *GRA*, 1:229.

[59] Ibid. Henry makes the point that "the truth of revelation is intended for sinners, and the unbeliever can indeed examine the content of theology. If the truth of revelation cannot be known prior to commitment to Christ, then men cannot be culpable for its rejection; moreover, it would be a waste of time and energy to try to persuade them of its validity. An unbeliever can know the meaning of revelation and the meaning of life and history, if he will only heed what the Bible teaches." Gordon Clark advances this point of view in that God created man in his image. In fact man is the image of God. Consequently, as knowledge and rationality are inherent qualities of God so they are the basic constituents of God's image in man. Furthermore, Clark contends that the intelligibility of the Scriptures presupposes logic. He writes that "Scripture without logic would have no meaning." As will be addressed in the next point and later in this chapter, Clark contends that law of non-contradiction is ". . . God thinking." Gordon H. Clark, "An Introduction to Christian Philosophy," *The Works of Gordon Haddon Clark*, Vol. 4 (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1968, 1993, 2004), 302–05. Karl Barth opposes this view and his opposition will be addressed in Chapter 6.

claims anymore than faith is deemed hostile to reason. However, the presuppositionalist

argues that a more solid foundation is available as found in Scripture. The Christian faith

offers more than mere mathematical or speculative certainty as found in evidentialist or

fideistic approaches. Divine authority eliminates the rational gap between probability and

certainty.[60]

> Inspired Scripture is the divinely authorized attestation of God's speech and acts, and as such is normative in all matters of religion and ethics. . . . While revelation is the source of all truth, and reason the instrument for recognizing it, the Bible is the Christian verifying principle. "To the law and to the testimony," to what "Scripture says," to the prophetic word and the apostolic word, to the sacred writings as an inspired canon, the faithful Hebrew and Christian community unapologetically and tirelessly pointed when the issues at stake was the verification of legitimate beliefs.[61]

5.6   Logical Consistency and Coherence: The Test for Truth

Christianity asserts that there is truth and it can be known. Given the intelligibility

of the Scriptures man can receive the divine disclosure. But can he know it is the truth,

especially in light of all the rival claims for truth? Henry answers with a resounding, yes.

Henry's next point is, "4. Logical consistency is a negative test of truth and

coherence a subordinate test."[62] In detailing these tests for truth, Henry disagrees with

those who say that testing for truth is impossible and with those that assert that the divine

revelation ought to be accepted without question. Why are tests necessary and

appropriate? Just as in the Old Testament, the people were required to distinguish the true

prophet from the false prophet, so modern man must distinguish between the true and

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[60] Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 57–59.

[61] Henry, *GRA*, 1:232.

[62] Ibid.

false, given the cacophonous voices that compete for his allegiance. Henry writes, "Tests of truth will not only serve to refute as spurious the natural man's objections, but also show that the alternatives they propose do not hold up and lead rather to skepticism. Rational tests will also exhibit the logical and psychological superiority of the Christian revelation as a world view that best meets all human needs."[63]

The influence of Clark is seen again at this point. Henry brings to bear the force of non-contradiction and logical consistency as the indispensable aids for knowledge. Clark and Henry will be accused of being rationalists (issues to be addressed in chapter 7), but insist that they are just be rational. Rationality is the way God functions and is the way that God has created man to function—rationally.

> Without non-contradiction and logical consistency, no knowledge whatever is possible. Christianity insists that verification answers the question, "How can I know that this claim is true?" And not the question of personal preference. To rational minds, the credibility of a religious claim, like any other, rests upon the availability of persuasive evidence and adequate criteria. The importance of intellectuality in theology, of cognitivity and concepts, of valid propositions, of logical system, therefore dare not be minimized. Some decry rational emphasis on logic and consistency in considerations of divine revelation . . . without appeal to sufficient reason, the mind of man has no basis for discriminating between mysteries, paradoxes and contradictions.[64]

Without the law of contradiction truth and error would be equivalent. Truth is destroyed. Logical consistency as a negative test for truth enables one to make the determination that whatever is logically contradictory cannot be true. It is by applying these tests that Christianity shows itself to superior to all rival claims. Logical

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid. Clark defines the law of noncontradiction; "The principle is this: The same attribute cannot attach and not attach to the same thing in the same respect. Or, otherwise, contrary attributes cannot belong to the same subject at the same time. This principle, be it noted again, is stated not merely as a law of thought, but primarily of being. The ontological form is basic; the purely logical is derivative: It becomes a law of thought because it is first a law of being." Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey* (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1957, 2000), 88.

consistency alone cannot adjudicate whether any alternative is worthy of one's commitment. Even when scholars posit divergent starting points, logic should not be discarded in a misguided attempt to serve Christianity. Rather, by employing the tests of logic, non-biblical alternatives are shown to be inferior by their inconsistency and violation of the law of contradiction. Christianity holds to and proudly displays its internal consistency and conformity to the law of contradiction.[65]

5.7   Theology's Task: Exposition and Elucidation

The fifth point is, "5. The proper task of theology is to exposit and elucidate the content of Scripture in an orderly way."[66] Given the fact that Scripture is intelligible divine communication, theology has the task of expounding the truths contained in Holy Writ. In undertaking the task of exposition, Henry again follows the path laid down by Clark. In *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, Clark highlights the all–inclusive character of the truth of God. Axiomatization demonstrates better than any other method the logically consistency of a given system in that theorems flow the basic axioms. Just as secular belief systems impinge on the sciences, so there is a Christian impingement on the sciences, thereby refuting the modern notion of compartmentalization, especially when Christianity claims to science, history, et al. are considered by secular scholars.[67] Scripture does lend itself to an orderly and systematic exposition. When the theologian

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[65] Ibid., 1:233–34.

[66] Ibid., 1:238.

[67] Ibid., 1:238–39. Clark's influence is seen when Henry writes "In principle, Christianity implies the theologizing of chemistry, biology, history and all realms of truth. 'There is nothing more implausible in theologizing chemistry than in positivizing or hegelanizing it' (p. 97)."

follows this pattern he stands over against the a priori speculation on non-biblical alternatives.

5.8 Apologetic Confrontation

The sixth point is, "6. The theology of revelation requires the apologetic confrontation of speculative theories of reality and life."[68] The two–fold task of the Christian theologian is proclaiming the superiority of biblical revelation and the inferiority of speculative theories. The application of the laws of logic assists in this task. Logic exposes the internal inconsistency of speculative alternatives and at the same time reveals the internal consistency and conformity to the law of non-contradiction of biblical revelation. Henry sees the apologetic task as inherent in the discipline of theology: "But if theology rests on intelligible divine disclosure and seeks to present truth in systematic form, then it most surely contains a structured argument against competing views, and apologetics cannot be contrasted with it as something wholly different and distinct form theology."[69]

The virtue of this approach is readily seen in its ability to highlight the essential rational nature of Christianity as grounded in the rationality of the living God and his rational communication in divine revelation. When alternative theories disparage or exaggerate the nature of reason and language, rational divine revelation reasserts the intelligibility of the divine disclosure. When ambiguities abound as part of the modern *Zeitgeist* as to the certitude of an authoritative word from God, revelational epistemology proclaims that an authoritative word exists and provides for its determination. God's

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[68] Ibid., 1:241.

[69] Ibid., 1:244.

communication exists as contained in the Scriptures. This communication is intelligible

and contained in concepts, words and propositions and is indispensably important.[70]

5.9   Upon An A Priori

Henry's method employs a priorism. More to the point, every system employs a

prioris whether they are stated or unstated. Henry quotes Clark:

> What distinguishes Christian axioms from rival axioms is not that Christianity axioms are a priori; all axioms are. No one can consistently object, writes Gordon H. Clark, to Christianity's being based on a nondemonstrable axiom. If the secularists exercise their privilege of basing their theorems on axioms, then so can Christians. If the former refuse to accept our axioms, then they can have no logical objection to our rejecting theirs.[71]

The importance of this position is that transcendent religious a priorists insists that the

desire for a direct knowledge of God is a rational one, and that intuitive consciousness of

God is a fact of human experience.[72]

In Vol. 1 of *GRA* Henry addresses a priorism in detail under three main headings:

(1) the philosophical transcendent, (2) the theological transcendent, and (3) the

philosophical transcendental.[73] Henry chooses these representative approaches to

highlight the development and use of a priorism. He analyzes the a priori elements in the

approaches of Plato, Augustine, Anselm, Descartes, Kant, Ernst Troeltsch, J. K. Fries,

and Rudolf Otto. The three designations that Henry selects offer an insight into the core

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 65–66.

[72] Henry, *GRA*, 1:383.

[73] Ibid., 1:281. Henry qualifies his use of the terminology and his explanatory method, "This terminology is confessedly one of convenience. The reader should by now be well aware that the author rejects the assumption that philosophy and theology necessarily operate in different spheres." For a more detailed explanation of the a priorism (*GRA*, 1:280–409).

of the approaches of each representative group and the selected writers respectively. For example, Plato expounded a philosophical transcendent a priori because it is independent of special divine revelation while equipping (or so it was maintained) man with a trustworthy and comprehensive metaphysical knowledge. The group represented by the philosophical transcendental approach (i.e., Kant) posits a method that accounts for man's intrinsic limitations of reason while claiming only to be regulating and transcendental. Henry summarizes the first and third approaches: "The first and third types of a priori exclude transcendent divine revelation, the first on the ground of the sufficiency of general human experience, and the latter on the ground of human reason's disability in the realm of supernatural truth; in other words, one because of the essential competence, the other because of the essential incompetence of human intellection as such."[74] The second type of a priori (theological transcendent) recognizes the God-given capacity of man's reason to recognize truth, but due to the effects of the Fall, divine disclosure is needed to usher man into truth.

5.7.1   The Long Shadow of Immanuel Kant

Any discussion of a priorism has to include Immanuel Kant. Prior to Kant a prioristic views were concerned with the existence of the religious a priori, the value of religious experience and the objective reality of the religious "Object." After Kant, the religious a priori is concerned only with the validity of the religious experience as a universal and necessary phenomenon. In effect post-Kantian philosophers operating within the limits of the Critical Philosophy can only affirm that men are universally and

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[74] Ibid. Cf. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, 58–63; and *Christian Philosophy: The Works of Gordon Haddon Clark*, Vol. 4, 36–42, 146–53.

necessarily religious because of a prioristic factors that regulate human life. The effect of this position has devastating consequences. It is impossible for those standing the succession of Kantian epistemology to settle the question of the value of religious experience, because this requires a determination of the ontic reality of the religious "Object" which the Critical Philosophy is unable to decide.[75]

Henry argues that given the reality of the prevalence of religion in humanity it is best explained by a priori considerations. In trying to account for this reality, attempts have been made that leave divine revelation out of any consideration and are consequently inadequate in their accounting for this religious reality. As Henry says ". . . religion is not therefore adequately explained only in terms of the consciousness-immanent structure of man. The transcendental religious a priori leaves in doubt the transcendent ontic reference of the a priori."[76] This leaves a question of extreme importance unanswerable, whether or not the God–idea refers to a real religious Object.

This is the effect of the influence of Kant. Modern arguments for the intuitive consciousness of God are dulled. Due to the acceptance of Kant's limitation of the

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[75] Ibid., 1:283–84. Gordon Clark writes in *A Christian View of Men and Things*, "Of all the modern philosophers it is Immanuel Kant who is naturally thought of first as a representative of *a priori* theory. For him experience gives us a rather indefinite, even chaotic manifold of sensation, and the mind arranges, or imposes unity on, this manifold by the application of innate categories so that knowledge results. All items of knowledge are judgments or predications. . . . The mind imposes unity on experience by judging or classifying. . . . These are the categories, the non-empirical contributions of the mind to knowledge-the prerequisites of learning. They are not based on or derived from experience, but rather the possibility of meaningful experience depends on them" (312–13). Clark goes on to highlight the inadequacy of Kant's epistemology from a Christian perspective but the following comments are particularly relevant to the current discussion: "After asserting that there are only two ways in which a necessary harmony of experience with the conceptions of its objects can be cogitated, *viz.*: either experience makes these conceptions possible or the conceptions make the experience possible, Kant attempts to dispose of an alleged third view. This middle way holds that he categories are neither innate (selbstgedachte) and first *a priori* principles of cognition, nor derived from experience, but are merely subjective aptitudes for thought implanted in us contemporaneously with our existence, which were so ordered and disposed by our Creator that their existence perfectly harmonizes with the laws of nature with regulate their experience" (314).

[76] Ibid., 1:380.

significance of concepts to the sense world, cognitive religious knowledge is dismissed.

The focus of the a priori becomes psychological instead of logical. Henry's analysis of

Kant's theory of knowledge is remarkable in its scope and breadth:

> Kant recognized that empiricism, most fully elaborated by Hume, abridges knowledge experience to disconnected animal sense perceptions, and can supply no reason for assuming that the parts of our experience are connected. Such skeptical reduction of human experience, to mere atomistic individual perceptions and one's private psychic responses, destroys the universal validity of human knowledge. Left unchallenged, the empirical takeover of all possibilities of knowledge presaged nothing less than the eclipse of human meaning and worth and the erosion of human culture.
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> Kant's contrary theory of knowledge has exerted remarkable influence in the modern era. Historic Christianity viewed man as by creation the bearer of God's rational and moral image, and the entire created universe as structured by the creative Logos. A divinely intended homogeneity therefore exists between the categories of thought and man's rational Creator, other selves, and the cosmic order, as objects of knowledge. Instead of recovering the obscured Christian emphasis on the transcendent Logos of God, Kant proposed a novel revision of the secular notion of the immanent rational a priori. Against an empirical reduction of the categories of reason to optional distillations from experience, Kant strove heroically to preserve the universal necessity and validity of human thought. But his epistemic theory unfortunately forfeited the objectivity of human knowledge, that is, its applicability to the nature of things-in-themselves and the objective constitution of reality. This ruinous sacrifice of intelligible knowledge of God and external reality Kant would have avoided had he espoused the biblical view of man as God's created image and of a Logos—structure universe.
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> To be sure Kant insisted that man's innate mental equipment makes human knowledge possible. Although sense perception, as Hume contended, supplies the content of knowledge, yet the epistemic apparatus native to the human mind-that is, man's innate forms and categories of knowing-transforms these otherwise chaotic perceptions into meaningful experience. Kant's monumental *Critique* details how man's inherent noetic endowment supposedly combines with sense experience to produce human knowledge. Knowledge is a joint product; sense perception supplies its content; the innate categories (unity, plurality, causality, substantiality, for example) supply its form. The categories without the perceptions are blank; the perceptions without the forms are chaotic. Even sense phenomena are known only through the modalities of space and time which are subjective human forms of perceiving. The innate forms or categories function as a transcendental ego to preserve the necessary character of all human knowledge and to guarantee its universal validity. But since the content of knowledge is restricted to phenomenal sense-world as ordered by the categories, man has no

cognitive knowledge of the noumenal world, whether of supernatural realities or of things-in-themselves that underlie our sense impressions.[77]

The results of Kant's theory are devastating. Man is deprived of objective knowledge of ultimate reality and of the externally real world, since cognitive experience is assertedly limited to phenomenal appearances or sense perceptions, to impressions presumed to be made upon man by reality and grasped in the necessary way prescribed by the innate categories of understanding and forms of perceiving. The second devastating effect is that "Kant's theory precludes cognitive knowledge of God as well of the objective cosmos or external world of nature, since he limits the content of our knowledge to sense percepts."[78]

Following Kant the argument for intuitive consciousness of God in terms of cognitive knowledge has lost support and influence due to the limitation of the significance of concepts to the sense world. More and more the religious a priori is regulated to the psychological realm rather than the logical. Pre-Kantian thinkers wrote that the a priori involved an ontic reference of ideas (so Plato, Augustine, Anselm, Descartes). Furthermore, pre-Kantian thinkers rejected the thesis that the content of experience is limited only to the sensate or empirical. To hold as post-Kantian thinkers to the position that the content of experience is limited to the sensate or empirical, does violence to knowledge experience and religious experience. Henry argues that the strength of the

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[77] Ibid., 1:387–88. Henry notes some of Kant's theories internal difficulties on (p. 388–89).

[78] Ibid., 1:389–90. Henry goes on to say that, "For Kant God is not all at all object of cognitive knowledge, but a necessary postulate of man's moral nature, an ethical ideal demanded by the 'I ought' or categorical imperative that structures human life" (p. 390).

transcendent a priori is not only that it correlates the questions of the metaphysical basis of religious experience and of its validity, but also of that it emphasizes, in its theological or dogmatic forms, that the religious *a priori* subsists in God, and that without this creation context and basis there would be no human experience whatever. For the theological a priori, the reference to eternity consists not merely in the fact of validity, which is unsubject to the conditions of time and space, but also in the condition of valid experience as they exist in and through the *imago Dei*. Only when the ontological background or reason is kept in view is the a priori guarded effectively from a dissolution into the *a posteriori* through an eclipse of the reality reference of ideas. This circumstance doubtless partially explains the hypostatization of the valid categories of experience, as by Plato, into transcendental realities. The questions of the validity of human concepts, of what lies beyond consciousness, and of the ultimate source of the *a priori* in consciousness which makes possible communication between individual minds cannot long be evaded. If such questions are not answered in the theological-revelational way, they will be answered in a conjecturally speculative way as by Plato, Leibinz and Hegel.[79]

The use of the a priori provides a solution to the "crisis of the west" that Henry spent his entire theological career in answering. The Christian use of the a priori answers the conjectural positions offered by philosophers in their attempt in giving a structured and satisfying answer to the dilemma that is life faced by man. Christianity is not dependent upon the soul's preexistence in a supernatural world that is anchored in a recollection of that world (per Plato); nor is the a priori based in a complex set of ideas common to all men found the pantheistic scheme of existence (per Spinoza); nor is it a mathematical concept that regulates God merely to an idea (per Descartes); it is neither an incipience shared by all ideas, emerging into consciousness only on the occasion of experience (per Leibniz); neither is it a reflex of morality, which bases the morality in a knowledge theory that assigns innateness to the categories of pure reason (per Kant); it is not a direct knowledge of the Absolute in the consciousness of human selves (per Hegel); not is it a form of religious experience (innate) that lacks theoretical content but is universal and necessary (per Troeltsch and Otto); nor is it a nonconceptual consciousness

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[79] Ibid., 1:383–84.

of God that is immediately experience in the feeling of absolute dependence (per

Schleiermacher); and neither is it a necessary constituent that links the mind to fictional

postulates (per Vaihinger).[80]

The phrasing of the a priori in revelational terms removes the uncertainty of

conjectural alternatives as a means of providing and securing its validity. Men can know

that their knowledge of God is from him and not based or inferred from their limited

experience. Validity is found and secured in the scripturally attested *imago Dei*.

Anchoring the test of validity here frees man from the conjectural angst that alternatives

based on innate forms, content antecedent to experience, epistemological necessity due to

a larger world where man is an isolated and related knower, Platonic pre-existence,

Cartesian conjectural theism, Leibniz's monadology, Kant's critical epistemology, and

Hegel's pantheism.[81]

> Henry says that the
>
> strength of transcendent a priori is not only that it correlates the questions of the metaphysical basis of religious experience and of its validity, but also that it emphasizes, in its theological or dogmatic form, that the religious a priori subsists in God, and that without this creation context and basis there would be no human experience whatever. For the theological a priori, the reference to eternity consists not merely in the fact of validity, which is subject to conditions of time and space, but also in the conditions of valid experience as they exist in and through the *imago Dei*.[82]

The safeguard for the religious a priori is found in divine revelation.

If basic axioms and theorems are so different in providing explanatory

methodology, is there any common ground that one can proceed to offer a superior

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[80] Ibid., 1:394.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., 1:383–84.

system to interpret reality? Henry's answer is found in the special characteristics that are safe guarded in a revelational epistemology; "The universality of religion is due not to man's rebellion against God but rather to man's nature on the basis of his creation by God and to those a priori factors which place him necessarily and universally in relationship with the living God."[83]

The fact remains that on the basis of the *imago Dei*, which all people share, the underlying knowledge of God is present in all people. Given this reality, even though there is the disavowal of common epistemological axioms does not rule out common ground between unbeliever and believer. Henry quotes his mentor Gordon Clark as Clark expounds the Reformed position in that there has always been the contention that there is a common psychological or ontological ground of human understanding that is the basis for human communication:

> Believer and unbeliever alike, though their philosophic axioms and theorems are totally incompatible, bear in their persons the image of God from creation. This image . . . includes their ordinary rational ability as human beings and as an exercise of this rationality certain minimal theological and moral principles. These beliefs, dimly and inconsistently held, often submerged and repressed, can be thought of as a point of contact for the Gospel.[84]

5.10   The God Who Speaks and Shows

Volumes 2-4 of *GRA* form the basis of Henry's revelational epistemology. In Vol. 1 of *GRA*, Henry has established the epistemic starting point and answered objections to it, now in the volumes under consideration he will expound in much greater detail the constituent elements of revelational epistemology.

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[83] Ibid., 1:402.

[84] Ibid., 1:396.

In an interview Henry was asked to name some of the key issues involved in evangelical identity. If anyone was positioned to speak to that topic it would have been Henry, as he was a principle architect of evangelical identity as it emerged and broke from fundamentalism. The first and most important issue was the question of an authoritative word from God. The issue is and has been, has God spoken authoritatively? Henry also addressed the lack of comprehensive evangelical unity, but for the purposes of this work those issues will not be addressed. Henry was asked to provide a comprehensive view of God's revelation and what would it look like. His answer was that was the most distinctive element of that view would be an emphasis on the priority of the truth that God declares.

> I would say that the biblical emphasis falls first and foremost on the authority of Scripture. After that the emphasis falls, it seems to me on the inspiration of God's word. It is what God has spoken; that's why it is authoritative. The notion of an authoritative word that isn't God's word, or that isn't inspired, is out of view. Inerrancy seems to me to be an inference from the inspiration that the Bible teaches. If one denies inerrancy, and affirms errancy, he raises all sorts of questions about inspiration. This affirmation of the errancy of Scripture introduces a principle of instability into the authority of Scripture leads to a lack of agreement as to what parts of Scripture are to be considered authoritative and what parts are not.[85]

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[85] Henry, *Conversations with Carl Henry: Christianity for Today*, 8. Henry would say in a later interview that he did not believe that the affirmation of inerrancy should be used as a test of evangelical authenticity. In response to a question raised about Lindsell's book *The Battle for the Bible* (the question of inerrancy will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter) in which Lindsell argued the case that if a person did not hold to inerrancy he was not an evangelical (in the technical sense p. 210–11), Henry was put in a position to state his position as it differed in its application from that of Lindsell. Henry states, "My position today is precisely what it has been through the years. I hold unequivocally to the authority, the inspiration, and the inerrancy of the Scripture; and I think that any questioning of one or all those emphases represents a departure from what the Bible teaches, explicitly or implicitly, a departure from the perspective of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and a departure from the historic Christian position. . . . When the magazine [*Christianity Today*] began, it was committed editorially to the doctrine of inerrancy as a test of evangelical consistency. We did not hesitate to express that conviction editorially, or to enlist essayists in support of it. But from the beginning we had as key contributing editors evangelicals who did not believe in inerrancy, yet how joined us in bold theological witness on other doctrines to the non-evangelical world. We used all soldiers where they fought well and fought best. At no time during my editorship did we escalate the doctrine of inerrancy into a test of evangelical authenticity. And I think that is what the Lindsell volume does. Cf. Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).

5.8.1 Divine Revelation: The Initiative is God's

How does one know God? How can one even know that there is even a God to know? While Henry recognizes the doctrine of natural revelation, he differs with Thomas Aquinas, who stated that man with his unaided reasoning ability can come to know the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.[86] The first thesis that is divine revelation comes from God and God alone.

The only reason that there is divine revelation is that God has taken the initiative to disclose himself to mankind.[87] Henry says, "The essence of revelation is that God steps out of his hiddeness to disclose what would otherwise remain secret and unknown."[88] Henry espouses the biblical view that revelation is God's disclosure of himself to mankind. The best that speculative theology can offer is that revelation is God's unveiling himself to mankind. Instead of man declaring the objective word of God who has disclosed himself to man, the modern period is left with how man has found God in the tales of self-explorers.[89]

So crucial is this issue that H. D. McDonald wrote the question of authority is the issue. He described it as the ultimate issue:

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[86] Henry, *GRA*, 1:184. "While Thomas Aquinas approaches the existence of God both from man's ordinary experience and from supernatural revelation as starting points, he nonetheless invokes philosophical theology, or metaphysics, a natural type of knowledge open to anyone, to supply the foundations of faith. . . . Henry writes in *GRA* 2:123 "We reject natural theology because of the express nature of supernatuaral revelation, because of man's epistemic nature and because of the invalidity of empirically based aruguments for theism. "All Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God rest on an appeal to sense observation without reliance on divine disclosure." Cf. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 105-106.

[87] Henry, *GRA*, 2:17. "Revelation is a divinely initiated activity, God's free communication by which he alone turns his personal privacy into a deliberate disclosure of his reality."

[88] Ibid., 2:20–21.

[89] Patterson, *Henry*, 85.

The ultimate issue which emerged from the long and lively discussions and controversies of the past century, which our precious chapter intended to make clear, concerns the problem of authority. The question of revelation passed into that of authority, and to discover the locus of revelation is to find the seat of authority. In the words of F.W. Camfield, to which we may refer again, it was agreed that 'We must fine authority in Revelation, for authority is its hall mark. It seems, therefore, a matter of indifference whether we talk of the understanding of revelation or of authority. In the context of religion and religious faith, to say, Here is Revelation, is the same as to say, Here is Authority.[90]

Henry is in agreement with McDonald in that he quotes McDonald, saying "The ideal of God making Himself known is not so much a biblical idea, as it is *the* biblical idea."[91] A great attribute of Henry was that in areas where he could find similar views from people with whom he differed in other areas, he did not hesitate to marshal their considerable skills and efforts. Such is the case with Karl Barth. While Henry's critique of Barth will be the subject of chapter 6, Henry quoted Barth extensively as the two found an area of co-belligerency in recognizing the significance of the authority of God as found in the Scriptures. Henry quotes Barth, "In Barth's words, the God of the Bible is 'the God to whom there is no way and bridge, of whom we could not say or have to say one single word, had He not of His own initiative met us *Deus revelatus*.'"[92]

> Apart from God's self-unveiling any affirmations about the Divine would nothing more than speculation. Only does *Deus revelatus* can banish *Deus dubitandus*. Not even modern theologians armed with sophisticated technological gadgetry could spy upon a reticent deity and program data about him. Barth spoke of "impassible frontier, the unbridgeable gulf" and emphasized that "we could not utter one wretched syllable about the nature of the Word of God, if the Word of God had not been spoken to us as God's Word." The only confident basis for God talk is God's revelation of himself. The self-revelation that God communicates provides what human ingenuity cannot achieve, namely, authentic information about the ultimate Who's Who . . . The very nature of divine reality

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[90] H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), 347.

[91] Henry, *GRA*, 2:18.

[92] Ibid.

and truth are such that, apart from divine initiative and disclosure, they remain intrinsically hidden. The God of the Bible is wholly determinative in respect to revelation. He is either free to reveal himself or not reveal himself; he is sovereign in his self-disclosure.[93]

5.8.2 Authoritative Communication

The universality of religion is not due to man's rebellion against God but rather to man's nature on the basis of his creation by God and to those a priori factors which place him necessarily and universally in relationships with the living God.[94] It is into this relationship that God has spoken. In as much as He has spoken, his authority attaches to what he has said. The question arises, is this communication understandable by man? This is an area where Henry spends considerable effort and energy responding to modern notions that somehow the God of the Bible is incapable of communicating intelligibly to mankind.[95] The world is knowable because God is an intelligent Deity. Henry asserts, "Contrary to the trajectory of rationalism, no autonomous standard of reason can be offered since reason itself loses meaning apart from the divine character. Since the Divine discloses himself as person, revelation is both personal in nature and can, therefore, speak

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[93] Ibid., 2:18-19. H.D. McDonald provides a concise summary of the attempts to find authority outside of the Bible, "Rejecting the records [the Bible] as altogether historically factual, there had to be, eliminated from them whatever the conscience could not verify, or the reason could not explain or the spiritual sensitivity could not authenticate. The actual result was that there was no possible agreement as to what was to be accepted, because conscience and reason and spiritual sensitivity varied from writer to writer. In the end the much acclaimed 'historical sense' turned out to be even more subjective than the subjectivism which it set out to correct. The authority of Jesus came to be nothing more than that of the individual critic's ingenuity, or imagination, or intuition, as the case may have been. The many volumes each supposed to present us with the authority of the Jesus of history were but the outcome of each writer's own uncontrolled dream or unrestricted daring" (*Theories of Revelation*, 354).

[94] Henry, *GRA*, 1:402.

[95] Carl F. H. Henry, *Frontiers of Modern Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1964, 1965).

to all of humanity. Consequently, revelation both coheres and corresponds to reality

because God is one."[96]

Henry's fifth thesis advances this position and is as follows:

5. Not only the occurrence of divine revelation, but also its very nature, content, and variety are exclusively of God's determination. God determines not only the *if* and *why* of divine disclosure, but also the *when*, *where*, *what*, *how,* and *who*. If there is to be a general revelation-a revelation universally given in nature, in history, and in the reason and conscience of every man-then that is God's decision. If there is to be a special or particular revelation, that, too, is God's decision and his alone. Only because God so wills it is there a cosmic-anthropological revelation. It is solely because of divine determination. Paul reminds us, that "that which may be known of God is manifest . . . for God has shewed it . . . For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. (Rom. 1:19-20, KJV) It is solely by God's own determination that he reveals himself universally in the history of the nations and in the ordinary course of human events. He is nowhere without a witness (Acts 14:17) and is everywhere active either in grace or judgment.[97]

5.8.3   The *Imago Dei*: God's Canvass

Not only has God taken the initiative to speak but he also has created man in such

a way as to be able to receive that communication. Henry avers that "revelational theism

affirms that the human person as divinely created bears the image of God."[98] The

problem is not, as many in modern theology would contend, man's inability to know, or

to acknowledge even his inability to be aware of God, but rather the problem today is

man's unwillingness to acknowledge God as sovereign. The God who Henry writes of is

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[96] Gregory Alan Thornbury, "Carl F. H. Henry as Heir of Reformation Epistemology," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8 (Winter 2004): 69. Thornberry comments that "in Kuperian fashion Henry avers that all knowledge owes its origins to God who speaks and shows" (p. 70). In this article Thornbury is making the argument that Henry is modeling an Augustinian/ Reformed epistemology.

[97] Henry, *GRA*, 2:8–9.

[98] Ibid., 2:124.

the God who stands over all.[99] As Paul writes in Rom 1:18 men suppress or hold down

the truth of God. There is no inherent deficiency in man that would necessarily limit his

ability to know God through the vehicle of divine revelation. It is as Paul has said, it is

man's volitional choice to hold back the truth of God. Henry writes that after God had

made the other living creatures, God announced his intention to create man in his "'as'

(or, 'according to') our image (selem), and 'after' our likeness (Demuth)."[100] The Bible

does not give the precise content of the original *imago*. But this is a far cry from saying

that the content of the *imago* is vague or indefinite. From the very beginning it is seen in

the Genesis account of Creation that man is a fully developed man. He is not a fully

evolved animal. Bequeathed to him as a constituent element of his creation by God, man

is a personally conscious being in communication with his Maker. Man is given rational

and moral aptitudes. These aptitudes are not the by product of civilization or culture but

are gifted to man as the bearer of the image of God and make possible personal and

meaningful relationship with his Creator. Furthermore, man in his original condition

loved God and gave himself to God. He knew the truth that God communicated to him,

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[99]Ibid., 5:15. Henry articulates this theme of *GRA* volumes 5 and 6 with every day terms so as to provide a readily accessible bridge to cross when contemplating God. Henry uses the terns like the God who stands, stoops and stays, speaks and shows to accomplish this task. The fact that God stoops is indicative of his initiative of divine self-disclosure. The fact that God stands is seen in the act of creation. The eternal I Am- condescended to make a finite universe that includes humans equipped with a rational and moral image to know, worship and serve the God who has made all that there is. "In creation God stoops to fellowship with man who bears his image, as the Logos becomes flesh, God himself assumes man's nature, and as the sinless Substitute gives himself freely for the redemption of the lost. . . . God reveals his nature not in intelligible propositions alone nor only in miraculous deeds; he reveals himself supremely in Jesus Christ, whose life and death and resurrection are cognitively and propositionally interpreted by the inspired Scriptures" (p. 15–16).

[100] Ibid., 2:124. Henry writes in *Remaking the Modern Mind*, "To be created in the divine image was, in part, to share in the divine rationality, thus being able to thing God's thoughts after Him. . . . Hence the most representative Christian thinkers, through the whole sweep of church history, were profoundly convinced of the intrinsic rationality of the Christian theistic world-life outlook" (p. 224).

and although he would eventually rebel against that truth, man understood God's

communication and obeyed it.[101]

> The God of the Bible of is a rational God; that the divine Logos is central to the
> Godhead and is the agent in creation and redemption; that man was made in the
> divine image for intelligible communication with God; that God communicates
> his purposes and truths about himself in the biblical revelation; that the Holy
> Spirit uses truth as a means of persuasion and conviction; and that Christian
> experience includes not only a surrender of the will but a rational assent to the
> truth of God.[102]

Another vital component of the *imago Dei* is the inherent awareness of the law of

non-contradiction. Henry follows the influence of Gordon Clark, as he will in his

understanding of language. Henry believes that human experience presupposes the law of

non-contradiction. Additionally, man knows the difference between truth and error. The

rational aspect of man has logical priority:

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[101] Ibid., 2:125. Calvin's well known *sensus divintas* comes into play here. "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. . . . God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty" John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Vol. 1 (ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960, 2006), 43. Gordon Clark adds to the distinction of the *imago Dei* that Henry is arguing for: "Since man was created in the image of God, he has an innate idea of God. It is not necessary, indeed it is not possible, for a blank mind to abstract to a concept of God from sensory experience or to lift sensory language by its bootstraps to a spiritual level" Clark, *The Works of Gordon Haddon Clark, Vol. 4*, 203. Clark, writing in context of the suppressed knowledge of God's truth of Romans chapter 1 ". . . this knowledge no doubt is an innate knowledge; it did not come from the Scriptures, but remains part of the original image of God in which he crated man" (p. 263).

[102] Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, 14. Nash quotes Henry in answering the question: Can the human logos know the logos of God? In other words, "is there a relationship between the human mind and the divine mind that is sufficient to ground communication of truth from God to humans?" Nash goes to say that to know the truth the mind is necessary but not sufficient. Augustine argued that light of the human intellect is unable to account for human knowledge without the illumination of the presence of God. "We must not think of the forms of as having been given to humans once-and-for-all. Though the forms are part of the rational structure of the human mind belong there by virtue of our having been created in the image of God, the soul never ceases to be dependent upon God for its knowledge" (p. 89). B. B. Warfield, commenting on Augustine, "God having so made man, has not left him deistically, to himself, but continually reflects into his soul the contents of His truth which constitute the intelligible world. The soul is therefore in unbroken communion with God, and in the body of intelligible truths reflected into it from God, sees God" (p. 90). Warfield also wrote, "Augustine's ontology of the intuition by which man attains intelligible truth, embraced especially two factors: the doctrine of the image of God, and the doctrine of the dependence on God." B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*.

Only if man is logically lighted, and not simply morally or spiritually involved independent or intelligence, can be meaningfully aware of responsible relationships. . . . All distinctively human experience presupposes the law of non-contradiction and the irreducible distinction between truth and error.[103]

If man attempts to deny the reality of these logical presuppositions he sacrifices the intelligibility of what he says and does and his own mental coherence. Any clouding or disparaging the *imago Dei* has serious consequences for the other elements of the *imago Dei*. Sin does affect man's psychological and moral ability, and sin does adversely affect man's ability to think correctly, but sin does not invalidate the law of non-contradiction.[104]

Furthermore, the *imago Dei* has embedded structures of morality. Not only does man come armed innately with an awareness of truth and error but also of right and wrong and good and evil. In the creation account of Genesis, God approved of his work by stating that not only was his work good, but with the creation of man it was "very good" (Gen 1:31). Henry believes that the language here is more than just descriptive of the creative acts of God. But because man is created in the image of God, moral significance is attached to man appearance as the bearer of the *imago Dei*. This significant passage inheres that

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[103] Henry, *GRA*, 2:126.

[104] Patterson, *Henry: Makers of the Modern Theological Mind*, 88. "Man is the image [of God]. . . . Therefore, is rational in the likeness of God's rationality. His mind is structured as Aristotelian logic described it." Gordon H. Clark, *Language and Knowledge* (Jerrerson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1980, 1993), 138. A summary of Aristotelian logic can be found in *Unshakeable Foundations*; "Aristotle established the difference between valid and invalid forms of human reasoning, . . . Aristotle showed how every science begins with certain obvious truths he referred to as first principles, explaining how these first principles form the foundations upon which all knowledge rests. . . . The law of non-contradiction is both self-evident and unavoidable; again it must be used in any attempts to deny it. It must be assumed true by anyone who wants to think or say anything meaningful; it is necessary for making any distinction, affirmation, or denial." Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, *Unshakeable Foundations* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2001), 19, 23.

man's very self-constitution is stamped with the conviction that the distinction between good and evil is not merely an arbitrary and optional conscience-with the 'good conscience' which approves what is right and disapproves what is wrong; he did not as yea have a 'bad conscience' because of moral disobedience. Anyone who demotes all ethical distinctions to relativity and considers conscience an irrelevancy is not only morally perverse but also a candidate for insanity.[105]

Henry was aware of competing views of the essential and functional nature of the *imago Dei*. The neo-orthodox view of the *imago Dei* will be examined in the next chapter with Karl Barth as the representative of that position. Without going into Henry's critique at this point, he argued that a biblically faithful exposition of the imago dei would entail the perseveration of cognitive knowledge as the essential basis of moral responsibility and meaningful religious experience.[106] Furthermore, the *imago Dei* is not to be located only in the conscience of man or his free will. The image of God in man embraces all psychic elements of man that differentiate him from the animal world. As man is conscious of himself, he is conscious of God. Henry follows Clark who insists that moving beyond the merely formal a priori elements of human knowing

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[105] Ibid., 2:126. A major early work of Henry's on ethics was *Christian Personal Ethics*. The fact that ethics had already found its basis in relativity in lieu of fixed values and standards, had in Henry's words "brought moral chaos." He went on to say, "One fact is certain: simultaneous with this relativity of moral imperatives, human life has lost its worth. The soul-nausea and dread of modern man has reached depths unknown even to the ancient Greek skeptic. The sense of cosmic lostness and of personal insignificance frames modern man's window on life" (p. 13). Henry had first called on evangelicals to be more culturally involved in all aspects of culture in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. He continued to make that call in books that he wrote and edited. A representative sample would include: Carl F. H. Henry, *Answers for the Now Generation* (Chicago: Moody, 1949, 1969); *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology* (1957), *The Word for This Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); *The God Who Shows Himself* (1966); ed. *Christian Faith and Modern Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971); *Evangelicals At The Brink of Crisis* (Waco, TX: Word, 1967*); A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971); New Strides of Faith (Chicago: Moody, 1972); *Quest for Reality: Christianity and the Counter Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973); *Evangelicals in Search of Identity* (1976), *The Christian Mindset In A Secular Society* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1984); *The Christian Vision: Man In Society* (Hillsdale, MI: Hillsdale College Press, 1984); *Christian Counter Moves In A Decadent Culture* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1986); *Twilight of a Great Civilization* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988); *Evangelical Affirmations* (1990).

[106] Ibid., 2:128.

the very forms of reason and morality may and must, in fact, be viewed as belonging also to the content of the divine image in man. The Bible disowns the vulnerable feature of Kant's theory of innate categories of thought, namely autocracy of creative human reason. It precludes viewing the categories of understanding merely as subjective forms of consciousness or as simply human determinations of knowledge, whose objectivity consists entirely in their validity of mankind.[107]

Henry writes that in opposition to theories like Kant's, human reason is incapable

and has no inherent capacity to create lasting significance. Human projections always

have an unstable relationship to reality. The issue that creates the unbridgeable chasm is

where does the derivation of the governing content of philosophical reasoning arise?

Does it derive from transcendent revelation or does it come from an elevated view of

human reasoning? Henry insists that Christian theism resists all attempts at deprecating

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[107] Ibid., 2:132. At this point it is again relevant to hear Clark as he analyses Kant's use of a priori as it relates to man's knowing: "After asserting that there are only two ways in which a necessary harmony of experience with the conceptions of its objects can be cogitated, *viz.* : either experience makes these conceptions possible or the conceptions make the experience possible, Kant attempts to dispose of an alleged third view. This middle way holds that he categories are neither innate (selbstgedachte) and first *a priori* principles of cognition, nor derived from experience, but are merely subjective aptitudes for thought implanted in us contemporaneously with our existence, which were so ordered and disposed by our Creator that their existence perfectly harmonizes with the laws of nature with regulate their experience" (*A Christian View of Men and Things*, 314). Earlier Henry critiques Kant's theory that had assumed the autonomy of the human mind. This autonomy compromised the ability to the know God objectively: (1) We cannot know things-in-themselves, or noumenal reality as independently existing or structured; (2) We can have no objective knowledge or even conceptual knowledge of God, since the limits of man's knowledge are such that sense experience supplies the only content of human knowledge. God becomes for Kant a mere postulate with no cognitive grounding; (3) It is not clear, in fact, how Kant could on his theory have acquired objective knowledge of the categories; (4) Kant presupposes that God was not the source—in terms of the imago Dei conferred on man at creation—of the categories thought structuring human knowledge. He ignores the transcendent Logos as the indispensable ground of universally valid knowledge. Yet for all that, he violates his own epistemic theory by attributing to human knowledge some relation to an objective world; (5) If not even sensation can be traced to some independent cause, then the whole process of knowledge must originate in subjective factors; consciousness is merely this necessary process of knowledge, and no basis exists for affirming either an underlying ego or self or an independently real existent; (6) But how can we say that he ego exists when not even my own consciousness is given in sensibility? The ego, self or person, too, must therefore be only an idea; (7) and if the human ego itself is a mere subjective representation, can we then even argue for the necessity and universal validity of our ideas or representations, despite Kant's assumption that this form of experience is common to the human race? Indeed for all Kant's valiant effort to overcome Humean skepticism, his Critical Philosophy sinks at last toward solipsism (we know nothing independent of our experience), illusionism (we know nothing beyond our representations) or nihilism (not even the ego is knowable, not even I exist)" (p. 131–32).

the role and authority of divine revelation in lieu of conjectural principles into the discussion of the foundations of human reasoning in relation to the *imago Dei*.[108] The role that reason plays in human reasoning is determinative for a proper understanding of the *imago Dei*. Henry addresses this issue in the context of discussing the *imago Dei* and supposed competing ways of thinking:

> But the real complaint now often heard about Western thinking rises from the assumption that oriental and occidental minds somehow function with essentially different forms of reasoning. Western thought, we are told, is ideally logical, whereas Eastern thought is intuitive or at any rate not as much concerned with logical antitheses. . . . Not even the oriental outlook is reducible to a view of reality in terms of part-and-whole rather than of creature-and Creator. The so-called Asian way of thinking differs among even Asians. There is in fact no perspective, oriental or occidental, that would be assisted by a good course in logic, or that does not soon sacrifice universal validity if it neglects the law of contradiction. The laws of logic are not a speculative prejudice imposed at a given moment of history as a transient philosophical development. Neither do they involve a Western way of thinking, even if Aristotle may have stated them in an orderly way. The laws of valid inference are universal; they are elements of the *imago Dei*. In the Bible, reason has ontological significance. God is Himself truth and the source of truth. Biblical Christianity honors the *Logos* of God as the source of all meaning and considers the laws of thought as aspect of the *imago*. Not even humanity's Fall into sin has annulled the law of contradiction. The noetic effect of sin is serious, for it hinders man's disposition to meditate on the proper content of human thinking. But it does not deform or destroy the components of logic and reason.[109]

5.11   The Intelligibility of the Logos of God

The ninth thesis in *GRA* says, "The mediating agent in all divine revelation is the Eternal *Logos*—preexistent, incarnate and now glorified."[110] God created man in his

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[108] Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*, 106–07.

[109] Ibid., 109–10.

[110] Henry, *GRA*, 3:164. Emil Brunner's *The Mediator* is a landmark treatment of this subject. Following Barth, Brunner provides a scathing and devastating critique of the classically liberal understanding of Christ. And like Barth, Brunner falls short of an orthodox understanding of the role of the Logos of God—Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Brunner falls short in stating how God communicates to man, limited as he is by his dialectical commitment, his view of the limitations of language, and his assertion of

image, an image that is inherently rational, just as God is inherently rational. God also created man with the ability to receive intelligible communication. And that communication is mediated by the eternal *Logos*. Henry counters those of the neo-orthodox camp who use mystical language to define the role of the *Logos* of God. Neo-orthodox writers say that the *Logos* communicates in a paradoxical or dialectical manner. Henry contends that that this type of view is at variance with Scripture. To say that "the real language of Christian eschatology . . . is not the Greek logos, but the promise (*A Theology of Hope,* p. 40)" eradicates the objective and rational content of the unveiled Word of God.[111]

The emphasis on the personal truth of God's Word at the expense of the propositional truth of God's Word comes at too high a price. Henry believes that the English versions use of the Word as the authentic translation of the Greek word *logos* protects the meaning of the Word from the various and sundry alternatives that have come from speculative uses of logos in Greek and Roman thought.[112] The import of the *Logos* is found in the following:

> The reality of the transcendent Logos of the Bible involves a distinctive view of reason, one alien to contemporary thought. The earlier history of Western thought pointedly rejected the modern and currently prevalent theory that human reasoning is essentially creative. There was never a denial that the mind of man has the power, on which recent modern knowledge theory concentrates, of

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the unreliability of the historical record of the Bible, Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* (trans. Olive Wyon; New York: MacMillan Company, 1934).

[111] Ibid., 3:165. Henry quotes Jurgen Moltmann. Others who Henry quotes or alludes to in this passage are Karl Barth, "divine disclosure is inherently dialectical or paradoxical." Henry summarizes the inherent weakness of neo-orthodox position in what while the neo-orthodox want to claim the Logos of Scripture, they either dismiss the supernatural Logos as myth (Bultmann) or afflict the Logos with a contagious dialetic (Barth).

[112] Ibid. Gordon Clark takes a controversial position in his translation of the Greek word *logos* into Logic. His argument is found in *The Johannine Logos* (p13-45).

conceptually ordering phenomenal realities or sense impressions in a creative way. But the human mind was not considered to be constructive of the order of external reality. As the source of created existence, the Logos of God grounded the meaning and purpose of man and the world, and objective reality was held to be divinely structured by complex formal patterns. Endowed with more than animal perception, gifted in fact with a mode of cognition not to be confused with sensation, man was therefore able to intuit intelligible universals; as a divinely intended knower, he was able to cognize, within limits, the nature and structure of the externally real world.[113]

The loss of this biblically attested view of the *Logo*s is and has been devastating for man. In Western philosophy, the loss of the biblically attested *Logos*, has resulted in intellectual aporia. The resultant skepticism has eroded confidence in ontological affirmations whether they are about God, man or nature.[114] Furthermore, the loss in Western philosophy of the Logos has resulted in the loss of fixed meaning of existence with the consequence that the enduring worth of man is now in question. Henry writes, "If we can learn anything from these speculative or mythological logoi of rationalistic philosophy and religious theory, it is simply that each and every such phantom–*logos* has its day and is soon spent."[115] With the divinely given and biblically attested *Logos*, we have the certitude that man's rationality as it relates and inheres to God's rationality is safe guarded by the objective intelligible reality of the *Logos*.[116]

The *Logos'* ontological reality is centered in the eternal Christ. Epistemologically there are some truths of the *Logos* that confront all men in the general revelation that is given in nature, history, reason, and conscience. Scripture states this truth comprehensively and objectively. The pervasiveness of the *Logos* is such that even

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[113] Ibid., 3:168. Gordon Clark in *Language and Knowledge* summarizes secular and religious theories as they relate to language and its role in knowledge.

[114] Ibid., 3;167.

[115] Ibid., 3:192.

[116] Ibid., 3:170.

unregenerate man is lighted by the *Logos* just as the regenerate man. Nash gives clarity at

this point in light of Henry's observation: "After John describes Jesus as the

cosmological *Logos*, he presents Him as the epistemological *Logos*. John declares that

Christ was 'the true light that enlightens every man' (John 1:9). In other words, the

epistemological *Logos* is not only the mediator of divine special revelation (John 1:14),

He is also the ground the all human knowledge."[117] The *Logos* doctrine "presupposes an

intelligible order or logos in things, an objective law which claims and binds man, and

makes possible human understanding and valid knowledge."[118] Jesus Christ as the *Logos*

of God guarantees and certifies human rationality and understandability of the Word of

God. The correspondence between the mind of God and the human mind that is grounded

in the *Logos* enables a human understanding of divine communication of truth.

Christianity maintains that the universe is rational and knowable. It is so because it is a

universe grounded in the creative act of God and structured by the *Logos* of God. This

ground and structure also make possible the logical connections that are based in God's

mind and will and are binding for man in view of the *imago Dei*.[119] The effect is that

man as a rational creature has thoughts and forms of thought that correspond to the laws

of logic subsisting in the mind of God. The *Logos*, as the mediating agent of God, is the

conduit that makes divine communication understandable and the rational world rational.

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[117] Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, 67.

[118] Henry, *GRA*, 3:193.

[119] Ibid., 3:192.

5.9.1 Rational Religious Language

Henry has argued that man is created as a rational being that follows the rational likeness of the Creator. He has also posited that the *Logos* is the mediator of this divine communication. Now Henry turns to the conduit of divine disclosure, language. Language theory has been and is an area of much dispute. While the limitations of this paper prevent a thorough analysis of the development of language theory, it is within the scope of the present work to present a representative sample of some of the major luminaries in this field that Henry critiques. Such figures as John Locke,[120] David Hume,[121] Bertrand Russell,[122] Ludwig Wittgenstein,[123] Rudolf Carnap,[124] A. J. Ayer,[125] Wilbur Marshall Urban[126] all come under the critical eye of Henry. Among the many things that Henry does well, he is among the best, following his mentor Gordon Clark, at insightful analysis of views that stand in opposition to Christianity. This review of

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[120] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1894), 321-412. Questia: The On-line Library of Books, http://www.questia.com/read/5781514?title=An%20Essay%20Concerning%20Human%20Understanding (accessed May 31, 2008).

[121] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

[122] Bertrand Russell, "The Cult of Common Usage," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 3* (1952-1953); 303–07; "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism," *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901-1950*,(ed. by C.R. Marsh; New York: Macmillan, 1956), 175-282; *My Philosophical Development* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959); "On Verification," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 38* (1937-38), 1-20;; *Why I Am Not A Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957).

[123] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1953); *Tractus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans. D. F. Pears and B.F. McGuinnes; New York: Humanities Press, 1961).

[124] Rudolf Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language," ed. A. J. Ayer, *Logical Positivism* (New York: Free Press, 1959) 63-79.

[125] A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (London: Victor Gallancz, 1936).

[126] Wilbur Marshall Urban, *Language and Reality* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press; reprint, 1971), 27–28.

Henry's view of language theory will summarize the representative views that have been listed.[127]

Gordon Clark asks the question(s) that scholars wrestling with the adequacy of language to convey cognitive information between two people have been attempting to answer for years:

> What is a word? How can sound be meaningful? Does thought exist before and apart from language? How did language originate? Is language adequate for knowledge of reality, or is its nature such that it automatically distorts the universe? Is all language symbolic and metaphorical, or are some sentences strictly literal?[128]

Henry answers these and other questions but in a more pointed way. Religious language in particular is adequate to convey cognitive knowledge and religious language is bound by the same rules as non-religious language.

At the outset of Henry's discussion of religious language in *GRA*, Vol. 3, he addresses those scholars who assert that religious language is guided by a thought structure that sets it apart from other language discourse. There is the contention that avers that the language structure and thought structure of biblical revelation is different from other religious discourse. Thomas Altizer contends that the Western orientation of philosophers renders them insensitive to the reality of language that is intrinsically

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[127] Norman Geisler, "Analogy: The Only Answer to the Problem of Religious Language*, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 16, no.3 (Summer 1973): 167–79. In this article Geisler provides a summary of the positions of those scholars who took the lead in casting doubt on the adequacy of language to convey cognitive knowledge about God. The first was Plotinus. His axiom was that God could neither be spoken of or written of. David Hume followed Plotinus in writing that there were only two kinds of meaningful statements and both of those disqualified religious statements. Geisler next writes of Wittgenstien who in combining mysticism with empiricism created a religious non-cognitivism. A. J. Ayer, of the Vienna Circle, posited (what would turn out to be a self-refuting statement) the verification principle. The verification principle asserts that only statements which are either true by definition (i.e., tautological) or else are empirically verifiable (i.e., known to be true from sense experience) are meaningful. All other statements are literally nonsensical. Paul Van Buren would carry out Ayer's earlier reliance on empirical verification, "the empiricism in us finds the heart of the difficulty not in what is said about God, but in the very talking about God at all" (p. 170).

[128] Clark, *The Works of Gordon Haddon Clark*, Vol. 4, 191.

religious. Altizer makes the following factual claim, "It is a simple fact that all authentic forms of religious language, that is, all language which is the by product of a uniquely religious vision, are grounded by one means or another in a dialectical logic, that is, a mode of understanding which assumes the necessity of contradiction."[129] Why is it necessary to attach contradiction to religious language? Altizer writes that "all authentic forms of religion are directed against the given, against the world . . . against the positive."[130] The negation against the given that Altizer contends is inherent in authentic religious language is the "dialectical coincidence of negation and affirmation is the innermost reality of the life of faith, and all forms of religion which have assumed a fully philosophical form have either adopted or created a dialectical logic."[131] The major point that Altizer makes is that all objects that are "supersensuous" are unknowable. Objects of language and concepts are pure imagination, just mere words. Altizer, according to Henry, tries to marry Buddhist logic with the Hegelian dialectic. In doing so Altizer misses the synthesis of Hegel's dialectic. The new concept which arises as synthesis of thesis and antithesis is a more developed concept than had existed previously. According to Buddhist logicians, "to conceive is to construct an object in imagination. The object conceived is an object imagined."[132] Altizer interprets Stcherbatsky to say that Buddha and all metaphysical objects are beyond experience and consequently cognitively unknowable. Even though there is in the Buddhist theory of perception and judgment a

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[129] Henry, *GRA*, 3:230.

[130] Ibid., 3:231.

[131] Ibid., 3:232.

[132] Ibid., 3:233. Here Henry quotes F. T. Stcherbatsky from his book *Buddhist Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 1–2.

development of the negative dialectic and a mystical approach is at the core of Buddhist logic, Altizer still contends that a "direct or immediate experience in which subject–object distinctions disappear, the world becomes illusion, and ultimate reality is intuited."[133] Henry's analysis of the irrationality Altizer's position is emphasized:

> It is to the pervasive rationality of Hegel's Idea that Altizer objects, since negativity in Altizer's dialectic would contravene any ultimate capable of conceptualization. Those who, like Hegel, think that Christianity is best served by replacing a closed logic by a dialectical logic, and seek to escape logical contradiction through a synthesis of thesis and antithesis, will quickly discover that any rejection of the law of contradiction leads at last to the negation of any intelligible view of God. Altizer demonstrates rather than disproves this when he urges us to "identify Christ as the absolute negativity who is the final source of the activity and the movement of existence. . . . The Christian faith is possible only through radical negativity . . . a negativity that is rooted in contradiction.[134]

Henry astutely points out that in order for Altizer to communicate his statement as something meaningful, it can only be done by a reliance on the logic he professedly wants to disown. And if he relies on logic for meaningful communication, the absurdity of this statement is readily apparent. One would look in vain to find anything in the New Testament that would remotely be in common with Altizer's view of Christ. Henry had earlier made an evaluation of Altizer's proposal, which in light of Alitzer's statement the weight of Henry's analysis is felt: "Were all authentic forms of religious language grounded in a "dialectical logic"—a two term antithesis without any synthesis—not only would all final judgments about religious reality be precluded, but any universally intelligible judgments would seem to be excluded as well."[135]

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[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., 3:234.

[135] Ibid., 3:231.

Henry's position is that all forms of logic are valid for all kinds of thought—whether pre-scientific or scientific, religious or non-religious—which have truth as their aim. According to Henry, there are only two ways of thinking, valid and invalid. If truth is the object of language discourse, then the logical laws of correct thinking apply to one's thinking at all times. This thought structure of which Henry is speaking provides the control for language. Language does not decide the role thought, but rather thought controls language. Language is connected to human logic and reason. Henry writes,

> All significant speech presupposes a regard for the law of contradiction; the admission of contrary meanings to the same word at the same time and in the same sense would turn conversation into a madhouse. Not even one who opposes a theistic view of language, and who thinks that logic has no ontological or linguistic import, can hope to communicate his notions to others unless speech presupposes the law of contradiction.[136]

This logical component of language has its basis in the *Logos* of God. Augustine in *De Magistro* developed a theory of language that recognizes the role that the Logos plays in ensuring the intelligibility of language;

> Augustine presses the distinction between words as mere signs of objects and truth as a possession of the mind; words, or signs, he stresses, are useful for communication only because the mind possess truth. The vitality of words in the Old Testament depends not upon some peculiar linguistic endowment and power thought to inhere in them, but upon the instrumentality as a medium of the revealed thought and sovereign agency of God. The Logos is the Reason, Logic or Wisdom of God and not a mere element in language analysis. While words depend on speech, Logos does not.[137]

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[136] Ibid., 3:235–36.

[137] Ibid., 3:238. Gordon Clark's comments are warranted at this point. In writing of Augustine's *De Magistro* Clark says, "Christ is the Logos or Reason who endows every mind with intellectual light. Christian theologians, even the poorer ones, have usually realized that in the moral sphere man is not borne neutral. 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.' Men are not born morally neutral, but are born depraved. Intellectually, also, men do not come into the world with blank minds. Inherited depravity only emphasizes the presence of innate moral ideas. . . . In addition to moral ideas, Augustine teaches that the presence of Christ the Logos endows all men with certain speculative or philosophic ideas as well. Communication, therefore, becomes possible because all men have these same ideas. . . . It [Theism] must assert that man's endowment with rationality, his innate ideas and a priori categories, his ability to think and speak were given to him by Go for the essential purpose of receiving a

Language is dependent on the *Logos* of God for its rational content. The Bible depends on a revelational basis for its communicative aspects. The Bible purports that God instituted language as a vehicle for interpersonal communication and fellowship. The Bible does not give a detailed explanation of the origin of language. Instead one finds Adam endowed with language in his communication with God and in his naming the animals. Henry cites Clark in his contention that non-biblically based conclusions on the origins of language are speculative conclusions. In the main they derive their theory of origins based on either evolutionary theory or sensory experience. In either case, the alternative theories have proven themselves incapable of explaining the nature or function of language, nor have they marshaled a compelling account of the origin of language.[138]

Henry chronicles the attempt by secularist to explain language. Many have followed Locke and Hume in their position that all human knowledge, linguistic knowledge included, arises from sense experience. Their position maintains that at birth the human mind is a blank tablet. Nature writes on this blank tablet and man is conditioned by what he sees, hears and feels. Secular language theory states, "Language emerges from his adjustment to nature, and by children imitating their parents' speech habits."[139] Evolutionary theory contends that human speech emerges as a complex

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verbal revelation, of approaching God in prayer and of conversing with other men about God and spiritual realities." Later in the same work Clark again emphasizes that the Logos is the rational light that lights every man. Since he was created in the image of God, man has an innate idea of God. It is neither necessary nor possible for man to have a blank mind that could be expected to abstract the concept of God from sensory experience. *The Works of Gordon Haddon Clark*, Vol. 4, 199-200, 203.

[138] Ibid., 3: 387.

[139] Ibid., 3:325–26.

development of animal cries. Language is deemed to be the result of "instinctual sound-making powers" of a merely quantitatively different sort than those of other species.[140]

The theistic view of the origin of language is that man was endowed with the capacity for intelligible speech. This endowment was given primarily for the communication between God and man and for the communication of truth. Even though Scripture does not give a detailed description of the origin of language, it is inferred from "the first conversation carried on between God and the first human justifies an inference that expressing his thought vocally was an Adamic ability from the very beginning."[141]

The theistic view of language sees language as possible because of man's God-given endowment of rationality, or a priori categories and of innate ideas, all of which precondition his ability to think and speak. Every mind is lighted by the *Logos* of God and consequently thought is the precondition of language or stands behind language. Clark contends that language has a specific purpose. God gives man the rational ability to think and speak. This ability enables man to receive verbal revelation. As man receives verbal revelation he can approach God in prayer and converse with other men about God and spiritual realities. Man is depicted in the Bible as being able to receive rational-verbal revelation by special equipping from God. Human language is adequate for theological knowledge and communication because all men are divinely furnished with certain common ideas.[142]

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[140] Ibid., 3:327.

[141] Ibid., 3:387.

[142] Ibid., 3:389.

5.9.2 Verbal Conceptual Language

The foregoing raises two important questions about language. If thought (God's thought) stands behind language, what is the content of that thought? Henry answers that God's thought is expressed in verbal–conceptual form. The other question that naturally arises is, what is the relationship between God's thought/language and the thoughts/language of man?

Henry starts his discussion of verbal conceptual form of language in the following manner: "The prime issue is therefore not whether human concepts and words are human, but whether—since man was made in God's image and God addresses man in revelation–our concepts and words can convey reliable information about God and his will. Do our conceptions of God in all cases originate with man?"[143] As Henry has been guided and echoes and in many ways develops further the position of Clark as it relates to verbal–conceptual knowledge of God, the univocity of language, propositional revelation and inerrancy.[144]

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[143] Ibid., 4:111.

[144] Gordon Clark's theological views took center stage in a well publicized controversy with Cornelius Van Til and his followers. Van Til was a major proponent of analogical view of language. Clark was seeking ordination in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1944. He was examined by the Presbytery of Philadelphia. He was ordained but only after opposition that can only be described as acrimonious. This acrimony continued in an effort to defrock him. At stake were several issues. The first issue was that Clark had never been to seminary which for some in the OPC was a stumbling block. More substantively were the doctrinal issues that were raised: (1) the meaning of the "incomprehensibility" of God; (2) the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility; (3) the doctrine of reprobation verse the "sincere offer" of salvation to the reprobate; and (4) the relationship of the intellect to will and emotions. Clark was not deposed but the controversy became a schism from which the OPC never recovered. For the purposes of this paper the import of the following works is that they highlight the difference from the Clarkian view (univocity) and the Van Tillian view (analogical). See Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1998); Gordon H. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God* (Philadelphia: Craig Press, 1964); and *A Christian View of Man and Things*; W. Robert Godfrey, "The Westminster School," in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development* (ed. David F. Wells; Grand Rapids: Erdman, 1985), 101; Herman Hoeksema *The Clark Van Til Controversy* (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1995, 2005); Fred H. Klosseter, *The Incomprehensibility of God in the Orthodox Presbyterian Conflict* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1951); John Robbins, *Cornelius Van Til: The Man and The*

From the beginning Christianity is anchored by its confidence in rational–verbal communication. In the Incarnation, the fully revealed Word of God is shaped and truth is knowable.[145] This condition is facilitated because truth is communicated to mankind *via* the Logos of God. The communication is rational, in that God as a rational being has created man in his image and is therefore rational. Furthermore, this rationality is communicated through conduit of language. Standing behind language are thoughts or concepts. Henry asserts, "The priority of thought over language was well put by Wilhelm Windelband: 'There are plenty of logical principles of Grammar, but there are no grammatical principles of Logic' (*Theories in Logic*, p. 17). We are conscious of thinking before we find the right words to express our thought. It is the case of course, that almost all, if not all, acts of human thought contains some impulse towards speech, and that man's language expands his thought requires it."[146] This verbal conceptual framework is foundational to the communication process. It is impossible to even think without the employment of words. To think is to use words. When the question is asked if human concepts and words are capable of conveying literal truth about God, Henry answers with a very definitive, yes;

> All man needs in order to know God as he truly is, is God's intelligible disclosure and rational concepts that qualify man—on the basis of the *imago Dei*—to comprehend the content of God's logically ordered revelation. Unless mankind has epistemological means adequate for factual truth about God as he truly is, the

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Myth (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1986); and Bradley J. Swygard, "The Basis for the Doctrine of the Incomprehensibility of God in Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991).

[145] Henry, *GRA*, 1:36.

[146] Ibid., 3:236. Henry notes the alternative theories of Barth, Brunner, Paul Althaus, Otto Weber that proposed the non-cognitive self disclosure of God. These dialectical and existential theologians oppose the traditional view that God's self-disclosure does not reveal any information about God's nature, purposes or activities. Henry stands in opposition to these positions.

inevitable outcome of the quest for religious knowledge is equivocation and skepticism.[147]

To combat the possibility of equivocation and skepticism, Henry notes that the verbal content of the Bible presupposes a coherent system of concepts. Revelation is a mental conception. The divine disclosure that emanates from the mind and will of God is addressed to the mind and will of man. Any view that reduces the revelation of God to self-revelation, cosmic revelation or historical revelation is a modern view based on modern prejudices.[148] Standing in stark contrast to this modern view that seeks to emphasize the belief in the existential non-historical as a "leap of faith," the early Church was under no obligation to believe in the irrational or to resort to sheer faith in matters of religious commitment. The early Church emphasized that the divine prophetic–apostolic record was a rational–verbal revelation. Additionally, this divine prophetic–apostolic rational–verbal revelation and its objective miraculous attestation gave man reliable, intelligible and trust worthy information about God.[149]

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[147] Ibid., 4:119. Gordon Clark in analyzing Karl Barth's view on language and knowledge quotes Barth, ". . . human cognition is fulfilled in views and concepts. Views are the images in which we perceive objects as such. Concepts are the counter-images with which we make these images of perception our own by thinking them, i.e., by arranging them. Precisely for this reason they and their corresponding objects are capable of being expressed by us (II, 1, 181)." Clark's analysis of Barth's statement is that there is no conceptual language beyond the language of images. Clark identifies Barth's position as the "representational theory of truth: We do not directly perceive the object of knowledge; we perceive it only in an image. This implies too that the object of knowledge is not a truth or proposition, but a sensible object, such as a color or sound, a tree or a song." *Karl Barth's Theological Method* (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1963, 1997), 161–62.

[148] Ibid., 3:248.

[149] Ibid., 3:276. Henry argues that much of the modern skepticism about the adequacy of language being able to carry cognitive knowledge about God emanates from Immanuel Kant. Dialectical and existential theologians standing in Kant's shadow operate with the limitations of Kant's epistemological theory and *a priori* dismiss the cognitively ability of language to convey knowledge about God: "Much of this modern theological development stood in witting or unwitting indebtedness to Kantian knowledge-theory, which sharply limited the reality perceptible by theoretical reason. Restriction of the content of knowledge to sensations of the phenomenal world in principle deprives man of cognitive knowledge of metaphysical realities. Divine revelation on this basis can neither be connected with cognitive reason nor

Christian theology maintains that God has revealed himself in a conceptually precise manner. These concepts do not attain their significance because they are religious or technical concepts. Their significance comes from revelational meaning–content in the in context of intelligible sentences and propositional truths. The verbal conceptual component of meaningful discourse requires no dismemberment of logic. No alteration of the structure of human knowledge is required to make the intelligibility of divine disclosure a reality. The Bible stands fast in its depiction of God's self-revelation as conceptually precise and verbally expressible.[150]

5.9.3   Univocal Language

Does the language used in Scripture convey literal truth about God? Henry affirms that it does. He does in the face of alternative language theories that are based on the speculative argument that theology has a unique language and meaning. This theory argues that religious language has no literal significance whatsoever.[151]

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can it have eternal and objective grounding, since Kant's view excludes revelation in nature and history, as well as in an objective scriptural revelation. Kant's influence was reflected both in the dogmatics of German theologians like Albrecht Ritschl and Wilhelm Herrmann and in the writings of British and American liberals who preferred metaphysical agnosticism over Hegelian idealism as an alternative to biblical orthodoxy. God is for Kant only a transcendental postulate: he conceived metaphysical relationships in terms of ethical ideals for fully experiencing selfhood. Kant's denial of the universal cognitive validity of revelational knowledge became a feature of the theological movement from Barth through Bultmann. We should note, however, that by denying cognitive knowledge in order to make room for faith, Kant envisioned not what neo-orthodox theologians stress, namely, faith as a divine gift whereby man trusts the supernatural God, but rather a moral response that issues from man as a rational being" (3:278).

[150] Ibid., 3:302-303. Henry provides an interesting aside to this point: "If one is skeptical of language as a carrier of truth, one cannot verbally communicate even one's own skepticism" (p. 3:359).

[151] Ibid., 3:362. Henry in this section deals with alternative theories that stress the analogical, pragmatic, behavioral, pictorial, dialectical, or existential significance of religious language. Cf. *GRA*, 3:363–85. Geisler in reviewing *GRA* writes with approval while disagreeing with Henry's view of language: "This book follows in the typical Henry tradition. It is comprehensive, scholarly, and wordy. Henry gives a strong defense of the cognitive and rational nature of revelation in balance with the personal revelation in Christ. Despite its many excellent insights and its strong defense of orthodox Christianity, Henry's presentation is flawed by his acceptance of a univocal view of language. He struggles (unsuccessfully) to explain how human language is limited to finite concepts and yet persists in maintaining

To Thomas Aquinas goes the distinction that from his pen flowed the theory that language is analogical predication. The theory of analogy has two purposes: (1) it avoids the agnosticism implicit in philosophies such as Neo-Platonism which stress the incomprehensibility of the Ground of the Universe and the inadequacy of human ideas and language for the knowledge of God; and (2) it avoids excessive anthropomorphisms, which, when speaking of certain attributes of God (i.e., wisdom, goodness, and justice) tend toward projecting God in the image of man.[152] The Thomistic view holds that descriptive terms, when applied to God, are not used in univocally–that is, in the same sense or meaning in which terms are applied to other referents. Neither are they used equivocally. Analogically is the way Thomas views a mediating position. Thoughts are limited by the finiteness of the human condition. Yet, when used of God, concepts bear a fullness and meaning that extend beyond human experience and relationships.[153]

Henry maintains the univocity of language. It combats an obvious weakness of analogy. Henry writes, "The main difficulty with doctrine of analogy lies in its failure to recognize that only univocal assertions protect us from equivocation; the very possibility of analogy founders unless something is truly known about both analogates."[154] Duns Scotus challenged the analogy of Thomas. Scotus argued that Christians use univocal language when attributing to God such characteristics as being good, wise or just. For in

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these finite concepts have a univocal (one-to-one) relation with the mind of God. In his zeal to defend orthodox Christianity against agnosticism, Henry's view is in danger of sliding into verbal idolatry. After all, idols can be mental as well as metal. This weakness notwithstanding, Henry's work is perhaps the most comprehensive defense of biblical revelation in English" Geisler, Norman L., "Review of *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Vol. *3*." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138, no. 551 (July 1981): 274.

[152] Henry, *GRA*, 3:363. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q, 13.

[153] Ibid., 3:363.

[154] Ibid., 4:118.

the absence of univocal language, skepticism is the result.[155] Henry picks up on the

argument of Scotus[156] and Gordon Clark, who embrace the univocal view of language.[157]

> Analogy is, of course, a phenomenon of scripture, and both Jesus and the biblical writers at times refer to likenesses and dissimilarities between the material and spiritual worlds. That the human person bears the image of God and that the visible world mirrors certain of the Creator's invisible attributes are frequent emphases of Scripture. Yet the Bible does not argumentatively develop a doctrine of analogical proof of God. . . . Thomists hold that familiar predicates like love and father are not used of God univocally, that is, they do not carry the same meaning when employed of God as when used of humans. Yet they deny that he consequences of such thinking is equivocation or skepticism. Such predicates, they insist, apply to God analogically and therefore somehow involve genuine knowledge.[158]

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[155] Ibid., 3:363.

[156] Swygard, "The Basis for the Doctrine of the Incomprehensibility of God in Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til," 5. Swygard quotes the summarization of Duns Scotus by Norman Geisler, "In summation, there are only three alternatives in our concepts about God. Either they are understood equivocally (i.e., in a totally different sense) in which case we know nothing about God; or they understood analogically (i.e., with partly the same but partly different meaning), in which case we must have some of the univocal concept of God enabling us to know which part of the analgous concept applies to God and which part does not apply to him; or else the concepts must be univocal (i.e., having totally the same meaning) in the first place." See Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 255.

[157] Swygard, "The Basis for the Doctrine of the Incomprehensibility of God in Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til," 5–32. In this section Swygard provides a thorough review of the position of Clark. Swygard concludes his analysis of Clark's position: "Primarily Clark's concern is that any view of analogy falls short of the truth, because it is only an analogy of the truth and not the truth itself. Particularly, he finds fault with analogical language because it is linked to an *a posteriori* method, which for Clark cannot lead to certainty. For Clark, the inductive process fails even if it also involves an *a priori* as with Kant and Aristotle. . . . Clark writes, 'Without a univocal element an alleged analogy is pure equivocation, and analogical knowledge is complete ignorance . . . But without even one time in common, they could not both said to be know" (p. 30–31). See also Gordon Clark, *The Trinity* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1985, 1990), 63; *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics* (Hobbs, NM:Trinity Foundation, 1982, 1987, 1995), 30–34. Here Clark writes in the context of explaining the necessity of univocity language, "Here it will stand repetition to say that if there is not a singe point of coincidence, it is meaningless to use the single term for knowledge for both God and man. Spinoza in attacking Christianity argued that the term intellect as applied to God and as applied to man was completely equivocal, just as the term dog is applied to a four-legged animal that barks and to the star in the sky. In such a case, therefore-if knowledge be defined-either God knows and man cannot, or man knows and God cannot. If there is not a single point of coincidence, God and man cannot have the same thing, namely, knowledge" (p. 31). Clark in *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* writes in refutation of the Thomistic argument of analogy, "Is it not obvious that a valid argument requires its terms to bear the same meaning in the conclusion that they started with in the premises? Unfortunately Thomas very clearly argues in other places that no term when applied to God can have precisely the same meaning it has when applied to men or things" (p.38). See Gordon Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation*, 28-110.

[158] Henry, *GRA*, 4:117–18.

Even though the doctrine of analogy is well attested (i.e., Thomas Aquinas, Cornelius Van Til although in a nuanced version from Aquinas),[159]Henry believes it creates more problems than it solves. Univocal language is possible and necessary in that man has been provided through the *imago Dei* a rational mind that corresponds to the inherent rationality of God and can receive God's intelligible disclosure.[160] This disclosure in univocal language conveys literal truth about God to man. Henry comments on the value of the univocity of language:

> The alternative to the historic insistence that Christianity conveys literal truth about God are hardly convincing and lead invariably toward skepticism. There is only one kind of truth. Religious truth is as much truth as any other truth. Instead of being devised for tasks other than to express literal truths about God, human language has from the beginning had this very purpose in view, namely, enabling man to enjoy and to communicate the unchanging truth about his Maker and Lord.[161]

5.12   Propositional Revelation

Henry has built the case that now moves directly to the defense of the authority of the Bible. He has shown that God has created man in his image. The *imago Dei* equips man with all that is necessary to receive direct and meaningful communication from God, and to have intelligible communication with his fellow man. The intelligibility of this

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[159] Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967), 39–46. See also Greg Bahnsen's *Van Til's Apologetics*, 220–26. Bahnsen provides a nuance to Van Til's position that in many ways is more readily understood than even Van Til stated his position, especially during the *Controversy* with Clark.

[160] Hutchens, "Knowing and being in the context of the fundamentalist dilemma: A comparative study of the thought of Karl Barth and Carl F. H. Henry," 210. Hutchens's analysis is helpful at this point: "The idea that the possibility of analogy founders unless something is truly known about both analogates rests upon the assumption that analogy is in fact mere equivocation in which nothing may be claimed to be truly known about the analogates. The idea of true knowing per analogium, common to Bath, the Protestant scholastics, and Roman Catholic philosophy is simply undigestable to Clark and Henry, for whom a direct, univocally predicable relation must exist between God and man, or no relation exists at all."

[161] Henry, *GRA*, 4:128.

communication is enabled by the *Logos* of God, who gives light to every man. Not only is man given divine enablement for intelligible communication but also he is given the very thoughts and words. The words are meaningful and understandable. They adhere to the laws of everyday language.

Henry continues to build his case for the authority of Scripture with his insistence on propositional revelation. This is a vital part of Henry's defense of biblical authority. Propositional revelation and then inerrancy naturally flow from Henry's revelational epistemology. God has given man the essential equipment to receive intelligible divine discourse. The non-propositional, non-cognitive view of revelation undermined the authority of Scripture and an attendant skepticism that was only growing exponentially. Henry set about to change this tragic course of events.[162] Henry develops his view of propositional revelation by first answering objections to this view, most notably neo-orthodox objections, and then provides a biblical case for his position.

In Henry's opinion neo-orthodoxy had set up a false dilemma with respect to revelation. This position offered by neo-orthodoxy was that revelation was personal as opposed to propositional. This view diminished the rational content of divine communication. Henry continues, "The controversy between Protestant orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy focused with special intensity on the issue of the propositional or nonpropositional character of divine disclosure, that is, on whether God's revelation is

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[162] Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, 9. In the preface to his book, Nash sets the context of the importance of propositional revelation: "Evangelicals are beginning to drift from their former consensus about the indispensability and legitimacy of a belief in cognitive or propositional revelation."

rational and objectively true, or whether it is only non-cognitively life-transforming. Neo-orthodoxy emphasized that God's revelation is personal but non-propositional."[163]

Henry had been engaged with contrasting this view with that of historic Christianity since the 1940s.[164] Henry had always provided insightful analysis of non-cognitive/non-propositional revelational claims. Typically of this analysis is found in the *Frontiers in Modern Theology*, where Henry writes, "A type of recent modern theology inspired by Soren Kierkegaard and popularized by Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. It espouses radical divine transcendence; the content of revelation, it is said, cannot be rationally captured in human concepts and propositions, but can only be witnessed to in a counter-balancing yes and no."[165] Henry continues his critique of this view, exposing the controlling assumptions on which the non-cognitive/non-propositional views were based:

> Chiefly responsible for the tension in contemporary European theology is the speculative notion that divine revelation is never communicated *objectively*—neither in historical occurrences nor in intelligible propositions—but always *subjectively* received through submissive response. This assumption contradicts the historic Christian concept that divine revelation is objective intelligible disclosure. The classic Christian view, moreover, states the divine revelation is addressed by the Logos to mankind generally through nature, history, and conscience, and is mediated more particularly through the sacred history and Scriptures, which find their redemptive climax in Jesus of Nazareth. On this bais-of the accessibility of a trustworthy knowledge of the Living God and of his purpose in creation and redemption-historic Christianity emphasizes the possibility of personal salvation through experiential appropriation of the truth of God and of his provision for sinners. . . . In a word, then, the historic Christian Church has understood divine revelation to be an intelligible, objectively given disclosure, whether that revelation be universal (in nature, history, and conscience) or special (in the redemptive deeds and declarations of the Bible).[166]

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[163] Henry, *GRA*, 3:455.

[164] Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 219–39; *The Protestant Dilemma*, 43–162; *The Drift of Western Thought,* 73–126.

[165] Henry, *Frontiers in Modern Theology*, 10.

[166] Ibid., 78.

In the face of historic Christianity, non-cognitive/non-propositional revelational theories expressly repudiated the objectivity of divine revelation. In its place these theories embraced and promoted the dialectical and existential view of revelation. Emil Brunner, along with Karl Barth,[167] was a major influence in the promulgation and acceptance of the non-propositional theories. His argument was that "we cannot possess divine truth in the same way that we possess other truth because statements in the sphere of personal truth cannot be stated objective truth (*Revelation and Reason*, pp. 371ff)."[168]

The neo-orthodox understanding of revelation severs God's personal and/or historical revelation from the biblical inspiration. The locus of divine disclosure is shifted by the neo-orthodox theologian from the divinely selected prophetic-apostolic writer to inner personal confrontation or to unique external events independent prophetic-apostolic

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[167] Henry, *GRA*, 3:466. "Among twentieth-century theologians, perhaps none has been more influential than Karl Barth in encouraging the disavowal of a propositional view of divine revelation. 'The real content of God's speech,' writes Barth, 'is . . . never to be conceived and reproduced as a general truth. . . . What God said was always different . . . from what we may say and must say to ourselves and to others about its content' (*Church Dogmatics*, I/1, pp.159–60)."

[168] Henry, *GRA*, 3:455. Nash provides a concise summary of Brunner's position: "Emil Brunner, following the early Karl Barth, maintained that 'divine revelation is not a book or a doctrine; the Revelation is God Himself in His self-manifestation within history. Revelation is something that happens, the living history of God in his dealings with the human race. Central to Brunner's doctrine of revelation was the claim that revelation is exclusively an event; it is God's breaking into history, into time in the person of Jesus Christ. . . . It is personal correspondence. It is an address and a response in faith as the individual is confronted by God in Christ. . . . Revelation is an encounter between two persons; God, in the person of Christ, and the individual" (*The Word of God and The Mind of Man*, p. 37–38). See Emil Brunner, *Reason and Revelation* (Wake Forest, NC: Chanticleer Publishing Company, 1946); *The Mediator*. Other major proponents who opposed propositional revelation William Temple, *Nature, God and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1949); Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, (trans. Kendrick Grogel; New York: Scribner, 1951, 1955, 1979); *Myth and Christianity: An Inquiry into the Possibility of Religion Without Myth*, with Karl Jaspers (trans. Norbert Gutermann; New York: Noonday, 1958); *Faith and Understanding* (trans. Louis Pettibone Smith; New York: Harper Row, 1969); Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). For a summary of the historical development of theory of Revelation, see H. D. MacDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study 1860-1960* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963).

inspiration. This neo-orthodox revisionism deprives the Bible of its objective textual authority and in its place is substituted a subjectively based personal encounter.[169]

This tendency to move the revelation of God to personal encounter/confrontation/response rules out a vast body of traditional theological affirmations. The neo-orthodox in their dislike of the propositional nature of revelation due in part to the truth or falsity of theological claims that inhere to propositional claims, have inserted existential hermeneutical properties that are foreign to the biblical text. Propositions, as generally understood, are verbal statements that are either false or true. Propositions are rational declarations that are to be believed, doubted or denied. Gordon Clark points to the fact that "aside from imperative statements and few exclamations in the Psalms, the Bible is composed of propositions. These give information about God and his dealings with men (*Karl Barth's Theological Method*, p.150)."[170] The prophets, the Lord Jesus Christ as well as the apostles communicated in intelligible sentences. Without intelligible communication—that is, communication that is rational has a bent toward logical validity and linguistic sensitivity—"it is impossible to engage in objectively meaningful human communication."[171] Henry emphasizes the expressed form of Scripture, "The inspired Scriptures contain a body of divinely given information actually expressed or capable of being expressed in propositions. In brief, the Bible is propositional revelation of the unchanging truth of God."[172]

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[169] Henry, *GRA*, 4:155.

[170] Ibid., 4:456.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid., 3: 457.

Henry establishes that revelation is propositional in nature. He does not leave unanswered the neo-orthodox claim that the propositional view diminishes the personal nature of revelation. Thesis Six says, "God's revelation is uniquely personal both in content and form."[173]   Revelation is personal communication as it originates with a personal God. Revelation is inherently personal due to its conveyance in verbal-conceptual rational thought. At the very center of divine revelation stands a personal God who has decided to disclose himself to mankind. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself to Israel through his divinely revealed names. The Israelites were prohibited to use material representations of God, which was a radical departure from the surrounding cultures.

The personal revelation is compatible with and not in contradistinction to propositional revelation. God, who is the personal form and content of revelation, has of his own initiative disclosed the divinely revealed names that reveal his incomparability to other would be deities. This personal declaration is unfortunately carries with it baggage that detracts from its intended function. As Henry was writing *GRA*, personal revelation had the connotation of non-intellectual and non-propositional. Henry was quick to point out that the high-jacking of the term was due to theological assertions that derived their moorings from modern philosophical speculations alien to the biblical view. In fact, modern philosophical speculations virtually deny that God as personal subject takes any significant initiative in revelation. Only because it unjustifiably dismisses divine revelation as a category of religious knowledge can modern philosophy of religion

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[173] Ibid., 2:151.

discuss deity as an enigmatic cosmic X to be deciphered by human initiative and ingenuity. What is discovered from Scripture is that

> A self ontologically other than the human self, a reality wholly different from the universe, stands at the center of the truth as God. The case for the reality of God begins not with human experience or speculation about the ultimately real but with God's self-disclosure with Deux dixit. When discussing divinity, God in his self-revelation is not a deferrable or disposable consideration; it is the sine qua non without which all God-talk is but human chatter.[174]

Henry writes that personal revelation emanates from a personal God who has taken the initiative to disclose himself to man through his divinely chosen names that disclose who God is to man. Propositional revelation is compatible with that personal aspect of revelation because in disclosing himself, God wants man to be in relationship with him. This relationship includes every area of life and for the successful living of life, God discloses to man truths in propositional form that enable man to live as God intends for him to live:

> The self-revelation of the living God is therefore not to be defined and curtailed by special theories that declare God to be "off limits" in the world of "external reality" and that seek to debar him from any objective revelation to man. only the superimposing of arbitrary views concerning the externally real world is what restricts God's self-revelation mere to internal confrontation. Only alien views concerning the nature and limits of human knowledge are what confine revelation to the inner non-intellective existential surd championed by recent neo-Protestant religious theory. It should be readily apparent that the one-sided neo-Protestant stress on divine self-revelation dims rather than illumines what actually constitutes revelational truth-data. The intelligible content of divine disclosure becomes unmistakably obscure when we are told, as by William Temple, that "there is no such thing as revealed truth" (*Nature, God and Man*, p.317) but that 'the living God himself' (p. 322) is alone at the center of revelation. Such theories create widespread confusion about the nature of revelation because of the conjectural bias that divine self-disclosure is best preserved by the exclusion of divinely revealed truths. In this misconception neo-Protestant theology does not stand alone. As Carl E. Braaten remarks: "Roman Catholic theology today is catching up with Protestant theology; it is no longer sure of what it means by revelation" (*History and Hermeneutics*, p. 117). Legitimate emphasis on divine

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[174] Ibid., 2:156–57.

self-revelation cannot compensate for illegitimate debarment from revelation of its truth content.[175]

Henry's articulate defense of personal and propositional revelation ensures the integrity and safeguards the intelligible self-disclosure of God to man.

5.13   What Role Does Inerrancy Play?

Inerrancy became the controversial term and the major point of battle in the "*Battle for the Bible*," in the "Fundamentalist/Modernist Controversy," a major issue to which one must adhere to join the Evangelical Theological Society, and became the point of demarcation in the Southern Baptist Convention's Conservative Resurgence.[176] As important as inerrancy is, Henry did not make it the test of evangelical authenticity. For Henry, the affirmation of inerrancy was the test of evangelical consistency. From the historical perspective this seems a bit peculiar given the amount of literature that discussion of this topic has produced. Henry's defense of inerrancy in the estimation of sum was/is a hallmark of evangelical scholarship.[177] And yet it is Henry's articulation of

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[175] Ibid., 2:166.

[176] Some of the representative works that chronicle the role of the inerrancy debate in addition to the information covered in chapter 4 and chapter 5 of the present work are: Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, Paul Pressler, *A Hill On Which To Die* (Nashville: B & H, 2002); W. A. Criswell, *Why I Preach That The Bible Is Literally True (*Nashville: Broadman, 1969); Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*: *Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Garland, TX: Hannibal Books, 2005; L. Rush Bush, and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 1999). The *ETS* statement on inerrancy is: 'The Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs." It is the statement for all who wish to join the Society must subscribe to and it is the founding principle. For a discussion see Gordon Clark "The Evangelical Society Tomorrow," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1966): 3-11. The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States of America, is the denomination of the writer and the issues addressed in this work are of vital interest and importance to the author and for the larger denomination to which he belongs.

[177] Ronald H. Nash, Review of *God, Revelation and Authority* Vols. 3 and 4, *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23, no. 2 (June 1980): 179–80. Nash writes, "Henry's treatment of inerrancy is probably clearer and more detailed than anything yet available. Evangelicals have not always

biblical authority and inspiration that lead to logical consequence of inerrancy (Henry's deduction).[178]

The major point to be articulated with respect to the Bible is its authority. Following the affirmation of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, Henry defends its inspiration (verbal plenary). Inerrancy then follows as a logical deduction of its authority and inspiration. The beauty of Henry's logic is clearly seen in the layout of *God, Revelation and Authority*. In reading *GRA*, by the time the reader gets to the section on the authority of Scripture, Henry has made the case with his epistemology that one can easily follow his contention of the Bible's authority, inspiration and inerrancy.[179]

In establishing the authority of Scripture Henry realistically apprises the current situation in which he writes:

> The problem of authority is one of the most deeply distressing concerns of contemporary civilization. Anyone who thinks that this problem specially or exclusively embarrasses Bible believers has not listened to the wild winds of defiance now sweeping over much of modern life. Respect for authority is being challenged on almost every front and in almost every form.[180]

Given the built in resistance to authority that pervades much of modern society Henry offers a view of biblical authority that has not capitulated to modern forms of thought—namely, the loss of absolutes or finalities: "Disbelief now stems from claims that finalities and objective truth simply do not exist; the good and true are declared to be only revolutionary by-products and culturally relative perspectives."[181] Neither does

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distinguished themselves with their grasp of the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the faith. Henry's exploration of the manifold dimensions of the Logos concept ought to be required reading."

[178] Henry, *Conversations with Carl Henry: Christianity Today*, 8.

[179] Henry is not without his critics and the pertinent criticisms will be addressed in chapter 7.

[180] Henry, *GRA*, 4:7.

Henry settle for the functional authority view of the Bible. In adopting this view of biblical authority, those theologians who reject the authority of the Bible as the "final rule of faith and practice set up for the Church a sophisticated way of evading the role of Scripture as an epistemic criterion for doctrine and morals. In this way the church itself sets a precedent for the world in reducing interest in the authority of the Bible."[182] Henry's reply to those that propose a functional view of authority is that the functional view

> can provide no objective reasons why any portion of Scripture ought to sustain a living experience of God in Jesus Christ, or why such a living experience is to be found in Jesus Christ alone, or even that God. . . . even lives. Evangelical Christianity rightly emphasizes that the Bible functions as it does in the human life because there is persuasive evidence for the ontological reality of God, for the authority of the Bible as divinely inspired Scripture, and for Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of Old Testament promise.[183]

It is into this cultural milieu that Henry returns to the historic view of Biblical authority.

5.14   Biblical Authority

The Bible is the authoritative Word of God because is the divine self-disclosure of God to man. God has spoken, and the Bible contains the codified word that God delivered to man. In his articulation of biblical authority, Henry followed the argument of B. B. Warfield, because in Henry's view, Warfield has given the representative

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[181] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:9.

[182] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:10. In *GRA*, 4:83-102 Henry gives an extended critique of the functional authority of the Bible. Karl Barth is the watershed theologian with respect to adopting a functional view of Scripture. Henry quotes Kelsey as he amplifies Barth's understanding of functional authority: ". . . in Barth's view 'the text are authoritative not in virtue of any inherent property they may have, such as being inspired or inerrant, but in virtue of a function they fill in the life of the Christian community.' 'To say that scripture is 'inspired' is to say that God has promised that sometimes, at his gracious pleasure, the biblical texts will become the Word of God, the occasion for rendering an agent present to us in a Divine-human encounter" (p. 84).

[183] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:101.

evangelical defense of biblical authority in his *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*.[184]

As has been stated, Henry views the authority of the Bible as the foundational position that inspiration and inerrancy logically find their basis: "For Warfield, the doctrine of plenary inspiration rests logically on the authority of Scripture, and not vice versa. Warfield argues that whatever doctrine is taught by Scripture is authoritative. Scripture is self-reflexive; it teaches even its own inspiration, and in regard to inspiration teaches biblical inerrancy."[185]

The early Church did not base the authority of the Scriptures on inspiration—that is the Spirit's supernatural guidance in articulating their oral and written teaching. The foundational claim of the apostles was that they were eyewitnesses of the historical facets of Jesus' life and ministry. Before receiving their commission as the authoritative verbal witnesses, they were persuaded by seeing the risen Lord. They had seen the risen Lord and were persuaded of the resurrection. During the post-resurrection appearances, the Lord then commissioned them to carry the news that he had risen to the nations. Henry highlights the eyewitness accounts, "Without the resurrection eyewitnesses there would have been no commission for world witnessing. Without the Spirit's guidance there

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[184] Henry, *GRA*, 4:69. See Warfield, B. B. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. David Kelsey (a proponent of functional authority) has said in commenting on the importance of the biblical authority that "virtually every contemporary Protestant theologian along the entire spectrum of opinion from the 'neo-evangelicals' through Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, to Anders Nygren, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Fritz Buri, has acknowledged that any Christian theology worthy of the name 'Christian' must in *some* sense of the phrase, be done 'in accord with Scripture'" David F. Wells, "Word and World: Biblical Authority and the Quandary of Modernity," in *Evangelical Affirmations* (ed. Kenneth Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 156.

[185] Ibid.

would have been no divinely authoritative teaching."[186] The New Testament documents come from reliable eye witnesses. These eye witness accounts have the same standard of proof that any eye witness account has. Having been subjected to serious inquiry and scrutiny the New Testament documents continue to stand as reliable accounts of those witnesses.[187] In light of the competency and reliability of the writers of the New Testament, Henry quotes Warfield with respect to the implication for inspiration: "The general trustworthiness of the Scriptures can be validly proven, Warfield insists, and therefore, 'we must trust these writings in their witness to their inspiration, if they give such witness; and if we refuse to trust them here, we have in principle refused them trust everywhere' (*Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 212)."[188]

Henry fleshes out the implications of what it means for the words of Warfield's reliable witnesses: (Commenting an exegesis of 2 Tim 3:15-16):

> If the purity of the Christian faith is guaranteed by an approved and authorized succession of teachers, it is established beyond the possibility of change on an unalterable bedrock of authoritative sacred writings. . . . Whether we take the passages distributively (every scripture) or collectively (all scripture), says Gealy, the main point is that the writer is concerned to emphasize the fact that the Christian faith is guaranteed by its inspired scriptures. Once written down, these become the standard for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.[189]

The direct affect on the Scriptures is that they authoritative because they are inspired. In 2 Tim 3:15-16, the writer has delineated the objective inspiration of the

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[186] Henry, *GRA*, 4:69.

[187] See F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[188] Henry, *GRA*, 4:69. Barr's critique of Warfield and Henry at this point will be addressed in chapter 7.

[189] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:73.

Scriptures. The inspiration extends to their doctrinal teachings, which form a standard

whereby false and erroneous views can be tested. Henry says pointedly,

> Precisely because of its written form as inspired Scripture, the Bible is the permanent standard and norm by which all the church's doctrine is to be validated. Kirsopp Lake emphasizes that only those unlearned in historical theology can suppose that 'the infallible inspiration of all Scripture' is a modern fundamentalist viewpoint rather than the inherited view of the Christian church. 'The fundamentalist may be wrong; I think he is,' he writes. 'But it is we who have departed from the tradition, and not he, and I am sorry for the fate of anyone who tries to argue with the fundamentalist on the basis of authority. The Bible and the *corpus theologicum* of the Church is on the fundamentalist side' (*The Religion of Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p. 61).[190]

Giving credence to Lake's assessment of the role of biblical authority in the

church's history, Henry cites James I. Packer as noting that it was the spreading influence

of Kant's critical philosophy that resulted in the higher critical derived skepticism that led

to question the authority and inspiration of Scripture. There was no logical or historical

disproof of Scripture that lead to the growing skepticism surrounding the Bible. The

skeptical views of Scripture were the result of alien philosophical views that when

applied to Scripture lead to the questioning of the truth of the biblical record.[191]

The authority of the Scriptures are found in the fact they are divinely imparted to

specifically designated men who codified the verbal conceptual information that they

received from God. The authority of Scripture is not grounded in the life of the

community of faith. The revelation of God chiefly embodied and self-revealed in Christ,

attested by general and special revelation, including scriptural authority, as objective

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[190] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:75.

[191] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:81.

factors that cannot be reduced to mere "function authority." Above all the Scriptures have been classically viewed as authoritative because they are true.[192]

5.15 Inspiration

Thesis Twelve of *GRA* states: "The Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine revelation, first as inspirer and then as illuminator and interpreter of the scripturally given Word of God."[193] Henry embraces the historic position of the Church that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. In spite of the attempt of James Barr to frame the discussion so as to dismiss the Bible's assertion of its inspiration, the Bible does claim to be inspired by God.[194] Gordon Clark cites the mass of evidence from Gaussen's book *Theopneustia* (released in the United States as *God-Breathed*). Clark states that no serious discussion of the question of inspiration can take place unless one first notes the

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[192] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:94.

[193] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:129. How the Bible is revealed to man has been and continues to be a topic of much discussion. The process of inspiration is of immense importance in understanding the doctrine of revelation. A representative reading of the historic position in addition to Warfield's *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* would include the following: Louis Gaussen, *God Breathed: The Divine Inspiration of the Bible* (trans. David Scott, 1863, ed. John Robbins; reprint Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 2001); Basil Manly Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration* (ed. Denise and Timothy George; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995); Clark, *God's Hammer*; John H. Gerstner, "The Nature of Revelation" *Christian Faith and Modern Theology* (ed. Carl F. H. Henry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 97-109; Wayne A. Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture," *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983, 1992),19-64; Phillip E. Hughes, "The Knowledge of God: The Inspiration of the Bible," *Basic Christian Doctrines* (ed. Carl F. H. Henry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 14-20; David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority, and Interpretation* (Nashville: B&H, 1995) 37-96; James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration;* Alan M. Stibbs, "The Witness of Scripture To Its Inspiration," *Revealtion and the Bible* (ed. Carl F. H. Henry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 105-134; John A. Witmer, "The Biblical Evidence for the Verbal Plenary Inspiration of the Bible," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121, no. 483 (July 1964): 243-52. For a concise summary of the many competing theories of inspiration see H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study 1860-1960*, 218-87. Representative theories that opposed the historic position of the Church can be found in William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*; John Ballie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956); Karl Barth, *The Word of God and The Word of Man* (trans. Douglas Horton: Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1978), *Church Dogmatics* Vol. 1, Part 1; H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: MacMillan, 1962).

[194] James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977, 1978), 260, 268.

elementary Scriptural data. Guassen in his book has collected passage after passage that attests to its divine origin. Clark's comment on Gaussen's book is noteworthy, "Let me repeat for the third time that the effect is cumulative. One should have in mind the hundreds of instances in which the Bible claims verbal inspiration. . . . If the prophets who spoke, if the authors who wrote, and if our Lord himself are mistaken these hundreds of times, what assurance may anyone have with respect to the other things they said and wrote?"[195] Clark had just referenced passages from the Old and New Testament where the prophets had explicitly stated that they were speaking not on their own authority but on that the Lord. More pointedly Jesus in John 10:34-35 is defending his claim to deity. In doing so he quotes Psalm 82. Jesus here says in the passage from John 10 that all the Scriptures, with Psalm 82 being a part of all the Scriptures, are given by inspiration of God and cannot be broken.[196]

Further textual support for the inspiration of Scripture is found in 2 Tim 3:15-16, 2 Pet 1:19-21, and the passage just cited John 10:34-36. The cumulative effect of these three passages is that (1) the Scriptures in their written form are a product of divine spiration, that is, are divinely 'breathed out' and therefore owe their unique reality to the life-giving breath of God (cf. Gen 2:7) even as man himself owes to it his distinctive existence. In this way Paul moves beyond simply apostolic oral instruction and asserts the permanent validity and value of the inspired writings; (2) the origin of Scripture is not due to human initiative, it is divine. The words of Scripture initiated by God are sure and accurate because God is the source and that specially chosen men spoke/wrote by the

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[195] Clark, *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics*, 40–41.

[196] Ibid., 41.

Spirit's agency; and (3) in the passage from John, Jesus attaches divine authority to Scripture as a whole. Jesus' statement is a declaration that unmistakably attests that the entire body of Scripture is authoritative.[197] The clear testimony of Scripture is that Jesus viewed the entire corpus of Scripture as divinely given. The apostles viewed Scripture as produced by the Spirit of God (2 Pet 1:21) and as such provided a permanent record necessary for man's salvation and right relationship with God and man (2 Tim 3:15-16).

Henry makes eight affirmations regarding inspiration that he defends as representative of the evangelical position on inspiration:

1) The text of Scripture is divinely inspired as an objective deposit of language. (Henry affirms verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture. This view holds that term plenary signifies that the inspiration extends to the whole-not merely to the ideas but to the words also).[198]
2) The evangelical view affirms that inspiration does not violate but is wholly consistent with the humanity of the prophets and apostles.
3) The evangelical view affirms that inspiration did not put an end to the human fallibility of prophets and apostles. (Henry comments that in light of the critic's objection that this necessarily involves errant autographs, he replies that if historical particularity necessarily prohibits the communication of truth then it applies to the critics as well).

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[197] Henry, *GRA*, 4:133–35.

[198] Henry, as he articulates these eight affirmations, does as he has throughout the six volumes of *GRA* engages in the apagogic method of Gordon Clark, which is while stating his own position, he systematically critiques opposing views. In *Baptists and the Bible*, Baptist theologians and pastors are brought together in one volume to show that through the years Baptists have affirmed verbal plenary inspiration. While there have been a few within Baptist life that have held divergent views, Baptist have a long history in holding to verbal plenary inspiration. Basil Manly Jr., a student of Charles Hodge, advocated the plenary view of Scripture in his book *The Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration*, 53: "The doctrine which we hold is that commonly styled plenary inspiration or full inspiration. It is that the Bible as a whole is the Word of God, so that in every part of Scripture there is both infallible truth and divine authority." Dockery describes plenary inspiration as the view that reflects the Scriptures own testimony and the consensus within the history of the church. "This approach is careful to see the Spirit's influence both upon the writers and, primarily, upon the writings. It also seeks to view inspiration as extending to all (thus, the adjective plenary) portions of Holy Scripture, even beyond the direction of thoughts to the selection of words. Even though the writers expressed the author's unique style, background, and personality, we must recognize the element of mystery involved in this process, which does not fully explain the how of inspiration. The plenary view seeks to do justice to the human factors in the Bible's composition and avoids any attempt to suggest that the entire books of the Bible were dictated. We believe that this model for understanding biblical inspiration best accounts for the design and character of Scripture and the human circumstances of the Bible's composition." Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 55.

4) The evangelical view also holds that divine inspiration is limited to a small company of messengers who were divinely chosen to authoritatively communicate the Word of God to mankind.

5) The evangelical view believes that God revealed information beyond the reach of the natural resources of all human beings, including prophets and apostles.

6) Evangelicals insist, further, that God is the ultimate author of Scripture.[199]

7) The evangelical view affirms that all Scripture is divinely inspired Scripture as a whole and in all its parts. . . . The historic evangelical insistence has been on plenary inspiration of the Bible; in other words, that Scripture is fully inspired. To stress verbal plenary inspiration simply brings out what this view necessarily implies: since it is written Scripture that is in view, inspiration extends the very words.

8) This view that all Scripture is inspired is the historic doctrine of all denominations. All major bodies have explicitly affirmed the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.[200]

5.16   Inerrancy of the Scriptures

"The New Testament . . . clearly teaches the plenary inspiration of Scripture; that is, inspiration to the writings in their totality, in the whole and in the parts. These inspired writings are distinguished from all other literature in that divine agency accounts for their production and divine authority inheres in their teaching."[201] Henry poses a question, if the inspiration of the Scriptures as defined as extending to the very words and thoughts of

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[199] Henry quotes Warfield at this point in his articulation of concursive inspiration or as Warfield labeled it concursive operation. Warfield writes: "The Church . . . has held from the beginning that the Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will (*Inspiration and Authority of the Bible,* p.173). Revelation takes at times a form that involves the total personality of the recipient and communicator of it, a form which, in distinction from the Old Testament prophecy, Warfield called 'concursive operation' through the action of the human powers—historical research, logical reasoning, ethical thought, religious aspiration—acting not by themselves, however, but under the prevailing assistance, superintendence, direction, control of the Divine Spirit' in contrast with the 'supercessive action of the revealing Spirit' as in prophetic revelation." *GRA*, 4:159.

[200] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:144–61. For an articulate article on Verbal Plenary Inspiration see Lewis Sperry Chafer, "II. Inspiration," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 95, no. 377 (Jan 38):7-21.

[201] Ibid., *GRA* 4:162. Henry cites and then provides and exposition of 2 Tim 3:15-16, 2 Pet 1:19-21, and John 10:34–36 as classic passages that clearly teach the plenary inspiration of the Bible (p. 131–33).

the Biblical authors, can not the association of divine authority be anything less than verbal inerrancy? In other words, if God has disclosed himself to man in intelligible verbal-conceptual revelation, is there any other option than to assert that this communication is any thing other than completely, accurately and precisely the intended communication from God to man?

In answering these questions, Henry again puts forth the view of B. B. Warfield as the evangelical representative answer that is most faithful to the historic position of the church:

> Warfield insists that the Bible not only teaches the divine origin and full inspiration of Scripture but also explicitly teaches the doctrine of verbal inerrancy, thus disallowing the possibility of error in the text of Scripture. While not an a priori commitment of, the doctrine of inerrancy rests, he emphasizes, on what Christ and the apostles taught. But we know what Christ taught only if the Bible tells the truth. Warfield stresses that if the apostles are wrong in teaching inerrant inspiration, they are not trustworthy in other doctrinal matters (*Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 174). He so connects the truth of inerrancy with the teaching of Jesus and the apostles that a necessary forfeiture of the doctrine would undermine their reliability: The evidence of its truth is . . . precisely that evidence . . . which vindicates for us the trustworthiness of Christ and His apostles as teachers of doctrine (p. 218).[202]

Henry opposes any view of that opens itself to a view of errancy or a view inerrancy that limits itself to soteric issues only. Inerrancy applies to the whole of Scripture. Henry opposes the view that Barr proposes that inerrancy rests "solely on philosophical supposition and has no rootage in the Bible."[203] Henry also resists the view that Arthur Holmes puts forth that neither inerrancy is taught explicitly in Scripture nor is it a logical inference from Scripture. Holmes writes that inerrancy is a "second-order

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[202] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:163.

[203] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:164. Barr develops his alternate theory in his book *Fundamentalism*, 72–84.

theological construct that is adduced for systematic reasons."[204] Henry also finds

defective the views held by Daniel P. Fuller and Dewey Beegle. Cumulatively their views

limit the claim of inerrancy to matters of salvation only. Beegle offers that in shifting the

line of defense from absolute truth to essential truth, the Bible is protected from the

alleged discrepancies and harmonization problems that opponents of inerrancy regularly

cite in an attempt to discredit the inerrantist position. Clark Pinnock, an early champion

of inerrancy, in later years began to question and redefine what inerrancy means. Pinnock

offered an alternate view that in an appeal to authorial intention the historical precision of

the text could be nuanced so as not to place on it the burden of historical accuracy. This

accommodation shifts the line of defense from absolute truth to a more nuanced view that

would allow for the writer's intent to be an excuse for historical inaccuracies, thereby

accommodation error in the biblical content.[205]

In making the case for inerrancy, Henry positively states that "the prevailing

evangelical view affirms a special activity of divine inspiration whereby the Holy Spirit

superintended the scriptural writers in communicating the biblical message in ways

consistent with their differing personalities, literary styles and cultural background, while

safeguarding them error."[206] In refuting the claim that inerrancy should only apply to

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[204] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:169.

[205] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:179. Pinnock defended inerrancy in his earlier theological career. *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971); and *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971),were written in defense of the historic position of affirming inerrancy. Later Pinnock would repudiate this position. In article written by Rex A. Koivisto entitled "Clark Pinnock and Inerrancy: A Change In Truth Theory?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24, no. 2 (June 1981): 139–51, Koiviston chronicles Pinnock's change from being a staunch defender of inerrancy to one who opposes inerrancy.

[206] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:167. A common misrepresentation of opponents of inerrancy is to make the unsubstantiated claim of mechanical dictation. Mechanical dictation affirms that the biblical writers acted as a stenographer who took down word for word the revelation from God. Gordon Clark in *God's Hammer:*

salvific matters and should not be extended to matters of history and science, Henry again

marshals Warfield who refused to acquiesce to any diminishing or limiting of the extent

of inspiration in its relation to inerrancy. The dangerous implications of

compartmentalizing theology and morals, sealing them off from history and science are

too great to allow to go unchallenged. To imply that God could deliver accurate and

precise information on theology and morals and somehow would not extend that same

accuracy and precision to historical and scientific matters attacks the reliability and

integrity of the Writer of the Bible.[207]

At issue is the question of the trustworthiness and reliability of the Bible. Can the

Bible be trusted in all matters that it addresses (objectively inspired truth) and not just

salvific efficacy? Barr overstates the issue when he alleges that harmonization of

apparently conflicting passages as a critical weakness of the conservative evangelical

position. Henry brings attention to the critical role of presuppositions at this point. Barr

claims that the fundamentalist approaches the hermeneutical task with an a priori

commitment to inerrancy. Henry's response is yes. While Henry has longed called for an

awareness and forthrightness about presuppositions, he demands the same for those of

Barr's positions as well:

> . . . one cannot both have his cake and eat it. One approaches Scripture either on
> the premise that it's teaching is reliable unless logical grounds exist for a
> rejection, or on the premise that what Scripture teaches is errant unless
> independent grounds can be found for crediting its content. Is the evangelical
> approach less principled than the view that the Bible must not be taken as reliable
> except where empirically verified-when in fact its supernatural claims and past

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The Bible and Its Critics clearly repudiates the dictation theory (p. 42–43). J. I. Packer gives a
representative evangelical view of the deficiencies of the dictation theory, "This 'dictation theory' is a man
of straw. It is safe to say that no Protestant theologian, from the Reformation till now [1958], has ever held
it; and certainly modern Evangelicals do not hold it" (*Fundamentalism and The Word of God*, p. 79).

[207] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:168–70.

historical events are beyond empirical accessibility? The constant factor in some non-evangelical interpretation may well be that Scripture should be regarded as myth when it speaks on its own, but this exegetical a priori is not to be dignified as objectively neutral.[208]

As Henry did for inspiration, he does for inerrancy. He puts forth both positive

and negative affirmations:

1. Inerrancy does not imply that modern technological precision in reporting statistics and measurements, that conformity to modern data, or that conformity to modern scientific method in reporting cosmological matters, can be expected from biblical writers.[209]
2. Inerrancy does not imply the only non-metaphorical or non-symbolic language can convey religious truth.
3. Inerrancy does not imply that verbal exactitude is required in New Testament quotation and use Old Testament passages.
4. Inerrancy does not imply that personal faith in Christ is dispensable since evangelicals have an inerrant book they can trust.
5. Scriptural inerrancy does not imply that evangelical orthodoxy follows as a necessary consequence of accepting this doctrine.[210]

Henry then affirms the positive aspects of inerrancy:

1. Verbal inerrancy implies that truth not only to the truth of theological and ethical teaching of the Bible, but also to historical and scientific matters insofar as they are part of the express message of the inspired writings.[211]

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[208] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:173.

[209] Henry is answering the charge from Barr, Fuller, the later Pinnock and Hubbard and others of their ilk, that non-salvific matters are errant in that they do not conform to modern scientific precision (a term that is used with the necessary reservation and skepticism). An additional claim from these representative writers is that the ancients were necessarily in error as their measurement standards are not in compliance with the modern standards (cf. *GRA*, 4:170–95).

[210] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:201-04. Roman Catholicism at the present (time of the writing of *GRA*) advocates inerrancy in the context of the Church's role as the supreme interpreter of the Scriptures. Jehovah Witnesses and other cults accept the inerrancy of the Scriptures (p. 204).

[211] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:205. Nelson Glueck, the distinguished archaeologist has said that in all of his archaeological investigations he had had never found one artifact of antiquity that contradicts any statement of Scripture. Henry repudiates Berkouwer's reduction of Scripture in *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth.* Berkouwer advances the position that Scripture need not concern itself with "perfect precision." Due to the limitations of human language and historical conditioning, really advances a non trust worthy inerrant text. Henry replies that Berkouwer's view creates an untrustworthy Bible by imperiling the biblical testimony to Christ on a an indifferent view of propositional truth that nullifies its Chistological emphasis that Berkouwer attempted to protect (p.189–90) See G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952, 1976), 211. Daniel Fuller advocated the view that in historical and scientifca matters the Biblical writers taught error. Henry opposes

2. Verbal inerrancy implies that God's truth inheres in the very words of Scripture, that is, in the propositions or sentences of the Bible, and not merely in concepts and thoughts of the writers.

3. Verbal inerrancy implies that the original writings or prophetic apostolic autographs alone are error-free. The theopneustic quality attaches directly to the autographs, and only indirectly to the copies.[212]

4. Verbal inerrancy of the autographs implies that evangelicals must not attach finality to contemporary versions or translations, least of all to mere paraphrases, but must earnestly pursue and honor the best text.[213]

5.17   Infallibility

If inerrancy applies to the originals, it does not follow that it applies to the copies. Inerrancy means that there is no error. Scripture teaches inerrancy (i.e., John 10:34-36, 2 Tim 3:15-16, 1 Pet 1:20-21), but nowhere is there any indication that inerrancy is extended to the copies. Infallibility is the correlating position that states that the copies of the inerrant originals are not prone to error.   The question that arises from the extant copies is not their inerrancy, but rather, are the copies fatally corrupt or are they infallible?[214]

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that view. For a representative view of Fuller's view see "Benjamin B. Warfield's View of Faith and History: A Critique in the Light of the New Testament," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1968): 75–83. Henry's critique of Fuller is as follows: "Fuller thus correlates plenary divine inspiration with supposed textual error in what the Bible expressly teaches in historical and scientific matters. His subdivision of Scripture into revelational-inerrant and non-revelational-errant content and his express contrast of revelational with the historical and scientific, moreover, involves and arbitrary and costly disjunction (*GRA*, 4:182).

[212] Henry answers the claims of some critics that the claim of inerrancy begin extended only to the autographs is in fact only more confusing and in some sense dishonest. Greg L. Bahnsen in "The Inerrancy of the Autographa" gives a masterful defense of the rationality and defensibility of extending inerrancy to the originals only and not to the copies. See Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Inerrancy of the Autographa," in *Inerrancy* (ed. Norman L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 151–93.

[213] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:205–10.

[214] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:220. Henry defines infallibility as not prone to error. "One may 'trust and believe' the copies because, although they are subject to incidental verbal variation and linguistic deviation, they faithfully convey the propositional truth of the original. It is not helpful to depict the infallibility of the copies as a matter of 'partial inerrancy'—a term fully as confusing as the notion of partial virginity! Linguistic deviation of copies from the originals is fluid rather than universally fixed; it varies with families of texts and within these families. Yet the copies are not error-prone, since error need not characterize all

Henry, again in his logical and forceful manner, asserts what infallibility means

and does not mean.

Infallibility of the copies does not imply:

1. Infallibility of the copies does not mean that prophetic and biblical extends beyond the biblical writers to the copyists or to the translators of the transmitted originals, let alone to the interpreters of the Bible.
2. Infallibility of the copies does not imply the inerrancy of the copies. Inerrancy is a divinely vouchsafed quality of the prophetic-apostolic autographs; it was a consequence of divine inspiration, of that special activity of inspiration whereby the Holy Spirit safeguarded the writers from error by superintending the choice of words they used. But such inspiration extended only to the original writings, not to transcripts or to translations.
3. Infallibility of the copies does not imply the personal infallibility of the copyists.
4. Finally infallibility of the copies does not imply the equal adequacy of all families of text, versions, and translations.[215]

Infallibility does imply the following:

1. That the copies reliably and authoritatively communicate the specially revealed truth and purposes of God to mankind.
2. That the copies unfailingly direct mankind to God's proffer of redemption. . . . The efficacy of Scripture is a consequence of the inerrancy of the autographs and is an implicate of the infallibility of the transcripts.
3. That the infallible copies and accurate versions remain the conceptual frame by which the Holy Spirit, Inspirer of the originals, and Illuminator of the transcripts and translations as well, impresses upon human beings their created dignity and duty, and ongoing answerability for moral revolt, and the differing destinies of the believers and unbelievers.
4. That the copies expound God's will and purpose and truth with clarity.
5. That the copies preserve the only sufficient divine rule of faith and conduct.

In summary, it may be said that although the copies are not inerrant, they are

nonetheless infallible, and that they possess this equality of infallibility because of their

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copies, is not constant in location, and does not distort the propositional and doctrinal teaching given by the originals" (p. 220).

[215] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:243–44.

perpetuation of the truth of the inerrant autographs.[216]

5.18   The History of Inerrancy in the Church

Henry has said he has done nothing other than defend the historic position of the Church. In asserting his position on biblical authority, the adequacy of human language, the inspiration of the Bible, its inerrancy and infallibility, Henry contends that he is doing nothing but citing the evidence from Scripture (as already examined) and now turns to the historical evidence.

By in large the question of the inspiration of the Bible is no longer in dispute. But with respect to the inerrancy of the Bible, the debate was far from over. Henry now offers conclusive evidence that inerrancy, while in his view is a logical inference from the authority and the inspiration of Scripture, is the view that was held by the biblical writers, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Church Fathers, and the Reformers. The evidence that Henry cites is a direct refutation of the allegation of Rogers and McKim who allege that inerrancy was a theological innovation by the Princetonians (Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield) made in light of the writings of the seventeenth century scholastics, principally Francis Turretin.[217] Henry argues that the objections to the doctrine of inerrancy from a

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[216] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:246–53.

[217] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:368–69. Turrentin and his *Institutio theologiae elencticae* was so influential because it was used as a primary text at Princeton by Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge. Mark Noll has complied an anthology of the Princetonians' significant theological works and other Princeton theologians that were influenced by Old Scholl Presbyterian in *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921* (ed. Mark A. Noll; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1983, 2001). Rogers and McKim allege that in formulating the doctrine of inerrancy, the Princetonians were theological innovators. Inerrancy in their opinon was never held by the Church, at any point in its history prior to the time of Hodge and Warfield. See Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Intepretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979). John D. Woodbridge has carefully researched the proposal by Rogers and McKim. Woodbridge has skillfully refuted the claims by Rogers and McKim and decisively discredited their allegations. See John D. Woodbridge, "Biblical Authority: Toward An Evaluation of the Rogers and McKim Proposal," *Biblical Authority and Conservative Perspectives: Viewpoints from Trinity Journal* (ed.

historical position arise from philosophical preconceptions. If one follows the evidence
from church history, the evidence clearly points to the acceptance of inerrancy from the
very beginning of the Church.

In looking at the evidence from the Bible and history even Emil Brunner, who at
one time held to the position that inerrancy was an invention of the seventeenth century,
came to the conclusion and admitted that "the doctrine of verbal inspiration was already
known to pre-Christian Judaism and was probably taken over by Paul and the rest of the
Apostles (*The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 107)." [218] George Duncan Barry even more
forcefully states, "The fact that for fifteen centuries no attempt was made to formulate a
definition of the doctrine of inspiration of the Bible, testifies to the universal belief of the
Church that the Scriptures were the handiwork of the Holy Ghost (*The Inspiration and*

Douglas Moo; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 9-64. Another attack on the historicity of inerrancy is found in
the writings of Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*. Sandeen influenced many who have
attacked inerrancy including Rogers and McKim, and Barr. Sandeen argues that inerrancy was a doctrinal
innovation introduced by the Princetonians (A.A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, "Inspiration," ed. Mark A.
Noll *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921*, 218-32) and elevated the belief in inerrancy to combat a defection
by Presbyterians from a commitment to a high view of Scripture. Influential in their innovation was
millernaian thought. The combination of millenarianism and the rising tide of fundamentalism (see chapter
4 of the present work) contributed to the pervasisve influence of inerrancy in Fundamentalism. Marsden
asserts that Sandeen has over emphaised the influence of millenarian thought and has not adequately taken
into account the theological and cultural factors that lead to Fundamenatliasm (see Marsden,
Fundamentalism and American Culture, 5). Sandeen and Marsden began a polite repartee in responding to
respective critiques of their opinions. See George Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism,"141–51; see
Sandeen's reply in *Christian Scholar's*, 227–32. Another aspect of the criticism on inerrancy as articulated
by the Princetonians was the undue influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism. The alleged influence by
this perspective is that the Princetonians took and adapted a rising paradigm in the United States (Scottish
Common Sense Realism) and applied it to the doctrine of Scripture and formuatled their position of
inerrancy. For a detailed anaylsis of the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism on Princeton
Theology see Sung Shik Jang, "Contextualization in the Princeton Theology 1822-1878: Scottish Common
Sense Realism and the Doctrine of Providence in the Theology of Charles Hodge" (Th.M. thesis
Westminster Theological Seminary, 1993). Jang argues that while Scottish Common Sense Realism was an
influencer on Charles Hodge, it was the cultural milieu in which he lived. Its influence gave him, and the
other Princetonians, the tools to communicate to their cultural context the historic position of inerrancy. For
additional comment on the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism see Mark A. Noll, "Common
Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," *American Quarterly* 37, no.2 (Summer 1985): 216–
38. One can see the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism in the theological method of Charles
Hodge in the opening pages of his systemic theology. See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology 3 Volumes,*
Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1872, 2003), 1–17.

[218] Henry, *GRA*, 4:371.

Authority of Holy Scripture, p. 10)."[219]

Henry begins his listing of significant figures of church history that affirm and advocate the doctrine of inerrancy: Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Amborse, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, John of Damascus. Any attempt to misconstrue the language used by Church Fathers in affirming the inerrancy (even they themselves did not use the term) is a significant departure from their articulation of the doctrine.[220]

The Roman Catholic Church teaches today the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Even though in the medieval period verbal inspiration was linked to mechanical dictation, Hans Kung who does not embrace the view himself, writes, "From the time of Leo XIII, and particularly during the modernist crisis, the complete and absolute inerrancy of Scripture was explicitly and systematically maintained in papal encyclicals (*Infallible? An Inquiry*, p. 174.)."[221]

Henry in analyzing Rogers' opinion of the views of Luther and Calvin cites that his analysis was not thorough enough.[222] Henry appeals to John Warwick Montgomery who refutes the often alleged statement that Luther only viewed as inerrant those passages with Christological content, who shatters the misconception of Luther by showing that Luther identified himself with the view held by Augustine: "St. Augustine, in a letter to St. Jerome, has put down a fine axiom-that only Holy Scripture is to be

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[219] Ibid.

[220] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:370–73.

[221] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:374.

[222] Woodbridge makes the same criticism of Rogers.

considered inerrant."[223] Rogers also has a defective view of Calvin. Rogers asserts that in

accommodating himself to mankind, God was not able to procure the inerrancy of

Scripture. Packer notes that typically the view that reduces the view of Calvin's view of

Scripture are taken from a small number of passages and leaves unmentioned the whole

context of Calvin's writings. In order to evaluate Calvin properly, Calvin's statement

from the *Institutes* (I, viii, 8–9) must be taken into account with other statements like his

exposition of 2 Tim 3:16. Henry's analysis is that

> Calvin speaks, therefore, of both divine revelation and condescension, and of both
> dictation and accommodation. What about the passages in which he seems to
> speak of error in Scripture? Packer insists that to attribute to Calvin a 'willingness
> to admit error in Scripture rests on a superficial mis-reading of what he actually
> says,' and that 'the evidence shows that Calvin's real view was the opposite'"
> ("Calvin's View of Scripture," p. 105).[224]

In looking at the seventeenth century, theologians believed they were continuing

the tradition of the Reformation in their exposition of the inspiration and inerrancy of

Scripture. They would have heartily disagreed with the Rogers, et al. in his assertion that

Princetonians would take their writings and invent the doctrine of inerrancy to suit a

theological/cultural agenda. In answering the challenges of Hobbes, Spinoza, Isaac de la

Peyrer, along with the deistic challenges and skeptics in general, Quenstedt (gives a

representative response of the time) wrote,

> "The holy canonical scriptures in their original text are the infallible truth and free
> from every error, that is to say, in the sacred canonical Scriptures there is no lie,
> no deceit, no error, even the slightest, either in content or words, but every single
> word which is handed down in the Scriptures is most true, whether it pertains to
> doctrine, ethics, history, chronology, typography, or onomoastics."[225]

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[223] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:375.

[224] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:377.

[225] Ibid., *GRA*, 4:378. Woodbridge brings even more evidence to bear with respect to the
widespread acceptance and propagation of the doctrine of inerrancy throughout the history of the Church in

The evidence is overwhelming that the consistent testimony of the Church has been to affirm the authority of Scripture, its inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility. Kirsopp Lakes' words ring even louder than before that the historic position of the Church is taught by Scripture and affirmed by history, and those that disagree with inerrancy have been the theological innovators.

5.19   Conclusion

This chapter has examined the major contribution to evangelical theology of the revelational epistemology of Carl Henry. Henry has laid out for evangelicals a ready defense of the intelligibility of the divine self-disclosure of God. God himself has given man the essential equipment to receive this disclosure. Contrary to competing views that lapse into either mysticism or skepticism, Henry solidly anchors his claims that absolute truth is objectively real and part of the transcultural, transhistorical self-disclosure of God. This truth is not dependent on evidentialism and the limits placed on knowledge in a post-Kantain world. Rather, Henry argues from a presuppostinonalist view, stating his presuppositions or axioms and then building his theological case from a clearly articulated position. Henry's foundational axioms are the true and living God and divine revelation. Henry asserts that a theologian must insist on truth and then demonstrate the

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his article, "The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Earnest Sandeen Proposal." Woodbridge shows that the historical record does not match the claims of Sandeen and those that followed his research (i.e., Rogers and McKim). William Whitaker and William Ames were noted advocates of biblical inerrancy. Whitaker's *Disputation on Holy Scripture* (1588) was a seminal book on biblical authority. Citing Augustine as an authority, Whitaker unhesitatingly affirms biblical inerrancy, "We cannot but wholly disprove the opinion of those, who think that the sacred writers have in some places fallen into mistakes. That some of the ancients were of this opinion appears from the testimony of Augustine, who maintains, in opposition to them, 'that the evangelists are free from all falsehood, both from that which proceeds from deliberate deceit, and that which is the result of forgetfulness" (p. 255). William Ames is also cited in his support of inerrancy. The breadth of Woodbridge's research is worthy of note as he goes to great lengths to refute convincingly the proposal of Sandeen.

method for knowing truth. God had created man in his image (the *imago Dei*), and in doing so he gave man rationality. This rationality corresponds to the rationality of God. This creature-Creator relationship, while in no sense pantheistic, equips man to know accurately and extensively. This relationship between God's intelligible attributes and human existence in the *imago Dei*, provides a conduit between the indispensability of logic and human reason with a sovereign personal God, making the existence and the possibility of truth a attainable reality. But how does one know? What is the principle of verification?

Theological verification is not dependent upon personal faith, national or cultural perspectives. Verification is found in the Word of God. Christians through the ages have appealed to the Bible as the source for what correct beliefs and actions are and are not. In accordance with Scripture man has as his aide the laws of logic to determine the validity of truth claims. The law of non-contradiction is the negative test for truth and coherence is a subordinate test. These laws of logic are the way God thinks. Here the influence of Gordon Clark is unmistakable. Rationality is the way God functions, and is the way that God has created man to function rationally. This God– given rationality is the conduit through which God communicates to man and the way that man recognizes his world and the communication he receives from God.

God has communicated to man. This communication is two fold: general and special revelation. It is special or divine revelation that Henry lends his considerable theological mind to defend. In addition to using the *imago Dei* and the laws of logic to communicate authoritatively to man, God employs the Logos. The Logos doctrine, articulated by Augustine, but embedded in the Gospel and Epistles of John, presupposes

an intelligible order or logos in things, an objective law which claims and binds man, and makes possible human understanding and valid knowledge. Jesus Christ as the Logos of God guarantees and certifies human rationality and understandability of the Word of God. The correspondence between the mind of God and the human mind that is grounded in the *Logos* enables a human understanding of divine communication of truth.

Language, common every day language, is used by God to communicate objective truth to man. The law of non-contradiction attaches to words, for without it meaning would be impossible. According to Henry, there are only two ways of thinking, valid and invalid. If truth is the object of language discourse, then the logical laws of correct thinking apply to one's thinking at all times. With respect to the thought behind language Henry would makes this statement, the prime issue is therefore not whether human concepts and words are human, but whether-since man was made in God's image and God addresses man in revelation–concepts and words can convey reliable information about God and his will? Henry would say yes. In fact language is same language that God uses. When God thinks of a rose or says a word, he does so in the same way that man does. This univocal view of language stands in opposition to equivocal (there is no correspondence between the language God uses and that man uses) and analogical (that there is some similarity but it does not correspond exactly in the same way).

In moving toward a defense of biblical authority, Henry follows his views of language with the assertion of propositional revelation. That is, revelation is given in statements that can either be affirmed or denied. They are either true or false. He does not fall prey to those who insist on a false dichotomy of personal and propositional

revelation. Given that God has spoken in intelligible discourse to man in a propositional manner, the Bible is authoritative depository of that communication. Biblical authority is the first and most important concept to be defended from Scripture. If the Bible has been authoritatively communicated by God, then based on the Bible's own testimony, it is inspired by God. The Bible being inspired by God then can be inferred to be inerrant. Although this is a logical inference, Henry does not see inerrancy as a test of evangelical authenticity but rather consistency. The chapter concluded with a summation of the history of the Church and its assertion of the doctrine of inerrancy. Henry repudiates any claim that the inerrancy was a theological innovation in the nineteenth century by American Protestants to further a theological and social agenda.