

## CARL HENRY EVALUATES THE REFORMATION

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**ABSTRACT.** When Carl Henry presented an evaluation of the Reformation and its impact on the worldview of that period, he often put forth the Reformation as an example, which needed emulation by the modern evangelical church. His focus in his evaluation were on actions related to an orthodox view of God's self-revelation in the areas of epistemology, authority, and life application. Henry's conviction was that these actions, undertaken particularly by the Reformers Luther and Calvin, were necessary for a redemptive impact on the world through the modern evangelical church.

**KEYWORDS:** Carl Henry, Luther, Calvin, self-revelation, authority

Multiple times in his writings, Carl Henry presented an evaluation of the Reformation and its impact on the world view of that time period. Often his purpose in doing this was to uphold the Reformation as an example that needed to be emulated by the twentieth and twenty-first century evangelical church. There were three components of the Reformation, particularly as represented by Luther and Calvin that he asserted needed to be emulated: (1) a battle for God's self-revelation as the necessary epistemological cornerstone, (2) a return to biblical authority, and (3) a comprehensive application of a Christian life view based on God's authoritative, self-revelation. Henry felt these three types of actions that were undertaken by the Reformers, in some cases quite successfully, were necessary for the evangelical church of his day to implement in order to have his envisioned redemptive impact on society and its worldview.

### **Henry's Historiography**

Before looking at what Henry had to say about these three components of the Reformation, it is helpful to first lay out the framework of Henry's historiography. This is important because Henry's view of the history of

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thought in Western civilization relates directly to his evaluation of the Reformation as well as to how he believed that evangelicals should engage with the world today. As will be noted, his view is not typical of a commonly held historiography among evangelicals today.

Bryan Litfin in *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* asserts that there is a misconceived, simplistic historiography held among many evangelicals today. In his description of this historiography the New Testament church began well and remained true to apostolic truth. Later, however a gradual departure from the apostolic truth began resulting in a complete perversion of that truth by the Middle Ages. This perversion was not only apparent in doctrine but also in ecclesial and personal practice. The Protestant Reformers were able to recover this apostolic truth. Litfin notes, 'Thus it becomes necessary to span the ancient and medieval periods with a kind of Protestant bridge' (Litfin 2016: 13). This bridge reveals itself through the restorationist tendency among some Protestant groups who try to discover in Scriptures the New Testament church. Most try to limit their understanding of apostolic doctrine and practice to the New Testament era though there are some who hold the first few centuries of the church's history to be more or less faithful to that doctrine and practice. A few even recognize the existence of the true church as represented by a small number of believers during the years between the early church fathers and the Protestant Reformers.

Carl F. H. Henry would no doubt agree with Litfin that this historiography is simplistic. This not because he diminished the significance of the Protestant Reformation. Henry, though not a professional historian had, as D. A. Carson points out, a far-ranging vision of the church and its doctrine (Carson; Hall & Strachan, eds 2015: 112). What would likely concern Henry is that this short summary as presented by Litfin leaves out a significant, crucial component, i.e., the philosophical, epistemologically centered movements which seek 'intelligibility or meaning in the cosmos' (Henry 1946: 214), a search that precedes Christianity and continues to this day. In this way, Henry's view of history is more expansive than the typical restorationist view.

In one of his earliest works, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, written shortly after World War II, Henry presents a historiography using three commonly recognized divisions of Western history. However, rather than focusing on these divisions as chronological epochs of history, his understanding of these three divisions, ancient, medieval, and modern, is better described as 'the way in which the universe has been made significant' (Henry 1946: 214) to the world mind.

Henry describes the ancient world, beginning with Plato and Aristotle and continuing through the various Greek philosophies of succeeding gen-

erations, as accepting the philosophers' assertions that there is an invisible spiritual world and also as seeking truth about that spiritual world. He points out in *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 'Greek philosophy... insistently asked what speculative reason is driven to affirm about ultimate reality, about being and becoming' (Henry 1999: 35).

The problem as Henry sees it is this; there was no special divine revelation from the invisible spirit world from which one could receive authoritative answers. While the Christian message held in common with the ancient world the ideas of 'the reality of the supernatural, the uniqueness of man, and the objectivity of truth and right' (Henry 1946: 214), as a divine revelation it revealed the thought of the Greek philosophers as nothing more than theory and speculation, that is lacking in authority.

However, according to Henry, a special divine revelation came upon the scene in the person of Jesus Christ, through whom the change of the world mind from ancient to medieval began. The philosophy that recognized the revelation of God in Jesus, unlike the ancient philosophy, which concerned itself with what reason can affirm, began to ask a much different question, 'How is divine revelation related to human reasoning?' (Henry 1999: 35). This was a sudden change of worldview that asserted God had spoken intelligibly through the apostles, the prophets, and their writings to all the world of his own redemptive plan for humankind.

Henry contrasts the ancient philosophy with the new medieval philosophy in many ways though most significantly in its affirmation of the incarnation of the Logos. An incarnation was unthinkable for these ancients because through speculative reasoning they had determined that matter must be 'inherently evil' (Henry 1999: 34). The medieval philosophy on the other hand, possessed a confidence impossible for the ancients because God had through the incarnate Logos and through the rational revelation of Christ given a clear perspective of the world that had not been available before except as has had been revealed to the nation of Israel in their encounters with God (Henry 1999: 36).

It is the engagement of the reformers some fifteen hundred years later with this question of divine revelation and human reasoning, which Henry sees as exemplary for modern evangelicalism if it is going to compete against the modern mind as a 'vital world ideology' (Henry 2003: 65). In 1978, he writes in *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society: Promoting Evangelical Renewal and National Righteousness*, 'We need to remember that the Bible links the moral decline of nations with reprobate minds. Training the mind is an essential responsibility of the home, the church, and the school. Unless evangelicals prod young people to disciplined thinking, they waste-[and] even-undermine-one of Christianity's most precious resources. Leaders of

the Protestant Reformation were all university trained; they knew the Bible, the languages, philosophy, theology, and much else' (Henry 1978: 145-46).

### **The Philosophical Battle**

Henry recognized, however, that certain developments in the medieval times had a negative effect on the 'Great Tradition'. He identifies the culprit against which Luther and Calvin struggled as the earlier revival among medieval scholastics, 'particularly through Thomas Aquinas, [of] an optimistic doctrine of human reason ... [stating] the case for biblical theism in a way that attracted speculative doubt' (Henry 1999: 36). Aquinas' appeal to universal experience for making the case for God's existence, the soul of man, and immortality and not decisively on God's special revelation to man resulted in a loss of assurance that God had revealed through His word the truth about the world. No longer were the scriptures the only authority for a world-life view. Henry lays the founding of the third stage of his historiography, modern philosophy, at the feet of Aquinas (Henry 1999: 36). The original question that had preoccupied the ancients became the question of the moderns, 'What can reason tell us about reality?'

Henry describes the attitude of the Reformers to this shift toward reason as a prioritized court of appeal regarding reality as uncompromising, '... Reformed theology insists... that natural theology supplies no possibility of theological understanding' (Henry 1999: 399). 'Medieval scholasticism, [according to Luther and Calvin]... by its speculative metaphysics and religious superstitions, prompted a reactionary reformulation in modern terms' (Henry 1999: 37). The Reformers recognized that '[a]ccording to the Bible, man has squandered his created state of moral and spiritual integrity, has forfeited original righteousness, and is not related to God as a wayward rebel. Consequently it is impossible for fallen man to arrive at the truth of God beginning with himself' (Henry 1999: 399).

In his first volume of *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Henry discusses this further as he surveys several systems of apriorism. He includes Luther and Calvin with Augustine as the prime examples of 'The Theological Transcendent A Priori', a '[h]istoric Christian apriorism [that (1) was confidently metaphysical... [and that (2) professed] a revelational grounding' (Henry 1999: 324). According to this version of apriorism, no proper in-depth understanding of truth is possible without a foundation acceptable of God's revelation from the start. While he does not deny that human knowledge is possible because God has created humankind as a rational creature who can know, he acknowledges faith as 'a primal element in human knowledge' (Henry 1999: 331). In other words, faith is also essential for the rational creature. Because man can recognize the limits of his knowledge, assurance is only possible through knowledge of the One who is greater. This is espe-

cially true because of man's sinfulness. Faith enables man to understand through God's revelation through the Logos and in the Bible that understanding of God and His purposes which sin hinders (Henry 1999: 331).

### *Luther*

In this context, Henry turns to Luther and specifically sets him as an example of the one who holds to a proper theory of faith and understanding against Aquinas' theory of natural theology. He notes that Luther set the Protestant Reformation in motion through his teaching of justification by faith alone as well as his call for a study of biblical revelation without any appeal to human reason as an additional way to know God's truth. Luther rejected the idea that knowledge of God's truth is available through the doors of reason. 'Luther (1483-1546) reasserted the Augustinian emphasis, <I believe in order to understand>. With Augustine and against Aquinas, Luther supports the reality of an innate knowledge of God grounded in the divine creation of man. Even in sin unregenerate man lives in a context of divine revelation' (Henry 1999: 331).

Henry goes on to clarify that Luther also in contradiction to Aquinas held to a more serious doctrine of the effect of sin on humankind. For Aquinas, 'While the fall eliminates [the] divine bonus [of original righteousness], it produces no radical distortion of man's original nature, [and therefore]... leaves the natural attributes unimpaired, man's grasp of theological realities by the natural reason is not seriously affected by sin' (Henry 1999: 332). Luther's response to Aquinas however went beyond the effect of sin. In the name of what Henry identifies 'biblical theology' (a quite positive phrase in Henry's vocabulary) as opposed to Aquinas' natural theology, Luther equated the words 'image' and 'likeness' with each other, which had clear implications not only for his anthropology but also for how God reveals Himself to the inner man and how God actually redeems humankind (Henry 1999: 332).

According to Henry, Luther saw two dangers in Aquinas' view of the effect of sin on humankind: (1) 'an overlapping of natural knowledge and special revelation in the interest of the authority of the law of reason and nature, and [a failure] to stress adequately the positive and peculiar content of the scriptural revelation' (Henry 1999: 334). Luther does not provide a clear explanation of this innate knowledge of God but he argues, and this is what is most important for Henry, strongly for the 'priority of special revelation' for any significant knowledge of God.

### *Calvin*

In this same discussion, Henry also notes that for Calvin, '[A]ll knowledge is revelational and that man possesses knowledge of God along with knowledge of himself are fundamental theses advanced in Calvin's *Institutes*

of the *Christian Religion*' (Henry 1999: 334). Unlike Luther, Calvin followed the lead of Augustine and addressed these issues at length, allowing Henry to deal in some detail with Calvin's views.

Henry holds that Calvin's assertion that God knows is also an assertion that God reveals. The revelation comes to man through the self-accommodation of God to man, first in general revelation and then through further self-accommodation of God to man in special revelation. This special revelation is known through the written word of God but not solely as the acquisition of knowledge about God from God but also as personal communication from God to the individual (Henry 1999: 335).

This revelatory knowledge, however, is not limited to knowledge of God but also includes for man knowledge of himself. This knowledge, however, is not speculative but genuine. God reveals Himself because without that knowledge, man cannot know anything. While salvific knowledge is only possible through special revelation through Christ and his word, God does reveal through general revelation his power, providence, and kindness towards humankind (Henry 1999: 335-36). This, however, is not speculatively known according to Henry from general revelation but rather clearly known even to the 'most illiterate and stupid' (Calvin's *Institutes* I, 5, 1).

The purpose of this knowledge in Calvin's view and explained by Henry is so that man will be able to obey God's spiritual and moral law, that is, to glorify God in thanksgiving for all His blessings upon humankind. Interest in this knowledge for any other purpose leads of necessity upon rejection of that knowledge to rebellion and rejection of God as the true God. Henry contrasts Calvin's epistemological purpose and method with that of Descartes' mathematical inquiry methodology. For Calvin, the very method itself rejects the very purposes for which God gives knowledge: worship and reverence of God (Henry 1999: 336-37).

Henry also discusses the relation of knowledge in Calvin's epistemology with other aspects of human nature. Knowledge is not limited to something that can only be reasoned out (pre-Kantian philosophers) nor to something that can be non-cognitively experienced (Kantian and post-Kantian philosophers) but rather is related as in Augustine's philosophy to the will and to the affections. In other words, Calvin has a holistic view of what human knowledge of God entails, a holistic view consistent with knowing being integrated with the rest of man's being (Henry 1999: 337).

Man's being, however, is the problem with man's knowing because it is blind to the truth. Like Luther, Calvin understands that the fall prevents humankind from apprehending and obeying God-knowledge, whether given in general revelation or in special revelation. Although general revelation is not salvific, Calvin finds it to be quite extensive, extensive enough to result in genuine knowledge of God had the fall not happened but also

enough to result in spite of the fall in condemnation based on the inexcusable rejection of genuine knowledge of God (Henry 1999: 339).

This rejection is inexcusable, Henry notes, because unlike Anselm, Calvin does not separate innate knowledge within humankind from apprehension of creation. The mind cannot act independently of the outside world in its discovery of knowledge. Innate knowledge and knowledge from creation and history are intertwined with each other and are the components of general revelation. This knowledge results then in a sense of divinity and in conscience, that is 'more than the mere formal possibility of religious knowledge [a la Brunner... but] a profounder noetic significance, endowing man with actual knowledge of God' (Henry 1999: 339-40).

This sense of divinity and the conscience stand between true knowledge of God accepted and rejected. A sense of divinity stands as the general revelatory connection point between acknowledgement of the existence of the true God and various forms of idolatry. Conscience stands as the general revelatory connection point between following the law of God and the ultimate condemnation of humankind. In both cases, however, Calvin sees sin as decisive in preventing true knowledge though some significant understanding remains possible to be sensed (Henry 1999: 341).

Henry does not claim to understand all that Calvin asserted about general revelation and knowledge of God. He admits that it is difficult to ascertain all that Calvin might have understood to be involved in conscience. What is clear, however, is that Calvin, like Augustine saw all human knowledge as totally dependent upon God's revelatory work (Henry 1999: 342). His summation of the Augustinian-Calvinistic view 'is that man knows only in and through divine revelation; apart from God's revealing activity, man has no knowledge whatever. The various strata of general revelation are given together, but the knowledge of God has a logical priority' (Henry 1999: 343).

#### *Henry on the Reformers' Worldview*

In all Henry dedicates well over one hundred pages in his first volume of *God, Revelation, and Authority* to the various versions of 'a priorism', in order to show that the Reformers as well as the church fathers before them, had then as we do now an adequate justification for religious faith. He agrees with them that this justification is not dependent on what one can derive from natural theology (which was the Reformers' primary opponent in the arena) or from a myriad of other theories but on a knowledge of God that is innate within humankind, though clearly dependent on God's self-revelation in order to obtain any real and direct knowledge of God.

Henry saw this theological basis for religious faith as providing a superior philosophical basis for Christianity and for that reason Christianity is able to address, whether in the times of the Reformers or in the modern period

the foundation necessary for remaking the world mind. Henry saw this re-making as successful in significant ways under the Reformers and was convinced that if this was to happen again, that not only must Evangelicalism have a strong epistemological/philosophical basis but also be able to assert that basis against the opposition.

For these reasons, Thornbury has called Henry the heir of Reformation epistemology though he has pointed out that Henry was not unique in this attitude during the 'heyday' of what he calls classic evangelicalism. 'Classic evangelicalism saw itself in continuity with the Reformers... in terms of an approach to truth that leads to faithful theological expression... establishing how the concept of reliability and authority of the Scriptures could be established and maintained in the modern world' (Thornbury 2013: 40). This is what Thornbury means when he describes Henry as an heir of Reformation epistemology.

Henry, likewise, saw all of fundamentalism/evangelicalism as heirs of Reformation epistemology and argued from the beginning of his career that the movement should take advantage of its inheritance. His oft used phrase, 'the inherent genius of the great evangelical tradition' was the description of more than fidelity to doctrinal orthodoxy or even to scriptural authority, otherwise, his attempt to perform surgery in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* would have been no more than a call on fundamentalism to behave better for there was no doubt about fundamentalism's orthodoxy. Henry was calling on the world of fundamentalism/evangelicalism to reclaim boldly a 'critically-held' 'ideology of supernaturalism' with a 'keen world reference' and develop 'within its own framework' an assertive and redemptive engagement with the world mind (Henry 2003: 4-5).

### **The Reformation and Revelational Authority in Historical Context**

Logically derived from Henry's epistemology based on God's self-revelation was his strong argument for biblical authority. Henry applauded the efforts of the Reformers like Luther and Calvin in reclaiming for the church a strong position for biblical authority. During the medieval 'movement' scholasticism began to depend on human reason as a possible source of authoritative knowledge concerning God and the universe though Henry is careful to point out that Thomas Aquinas 'conceded that the doctrine of the Trinity, and the divine redemptive mercy, could not thus be proved' (Henry 1946: 196). As noted earlier, Henry saw this as a return to the error of the Greek philosophers who had to depend on speculation through reason due to the lack of authoritative revelation.

These cultural and theological developments in medieval religion were recognized 'by Christian theologians-such as Luther and Calvin in the Protestant Reformation-who were', according to Henry, 'distracted that



medieval scholasticism supplanted the biblical mind by assimilating the revealed mind of God to the papacy and the teaching hierarchy' (Henry 1999: 37). It was against these developments that the Reformation reacted. Henry points out early in his career that the Reformers had actually called the church to again found its belief in God in the authoritative self-revelation of God through the Scriptures. Those, however, who accepted Aquinas' argument that by natural reason humankind can know God (Aquinas, Question 12, Article 1), that is, 'that the divine existence is logically demonstrable from natural theology' (Henry 1946: 197) were unable to oppose effectively the moderns when they appealed to reason in order to deny foundational truths of Christianity (Henry 1946: 197).

Henry further notes that as Christian thinkers began to lose ground to the moderns, that instead of turning back to revelation, they began to argue that the accumulation of evidence yielded a high probability of truthfulness to Christianity. This probability could not reasonably be called scientifically or rationally certain but that there was some sense of certainty associated with these cumulative evidences. Henry, however, argues 'that special revelation alone yields certainty, and that without revelation the empirical arguments are not satisfying. The rationality of Christianity was, for Biblical thought, mixed in with the acceptance of revelation' (Henry 1946: 197).

Just as the Reformers 'resummoned the church to ground its great belief in the existence of God in the divine self-revelation in the Scriptures' (Henry 1946: 197). Henry, saw during the second half of the previous century, as a result of two world wars and a worldwide depression, a collapse of viability for the Renaissance ideals and an opportunity for 'remaking the modern mind' through the worldview of Christianity. This 'remaking' or 'reformation', Henry sees as a vital component of the redemptive task of the Church. As from the beginning the Church has had the potential through the authority of its supernatural, redemptive message to remake the mind of the world.

It was for this reason that Henry called for Protestantism to follow the example of the Reformers in a return of the Church to biblical authority making possible the remaking of the modern mind, and for fundamentalism to return to a biblical theology grounded on biblical authority. For Henry it was clear that biblical revelation was authoritative as declared through the revealed Word of God, i.e., the words of Scripture and he saw himself and all of orthodox Christianity in alignment with the Reformers.

It was not only the evangelicals, however, who claimed the Reformers as their example. Some who are generally identified as Neo-Orthodox also claimed to have a view of biblical authority that was consistent with at least some of the Reformers views, particularly Luther. Henry was convinced this

was a misunderstanding of the Reformers and attempted to correct this misunderstanding.

In *The Protestant Dilemma*, Henry responds strongly to Brunner's assertion in *Revelation and Reason* that 'The Reformers of the first generation, Luther and Zwingli, are not favorable to the doctrine of verbal inspiration, whereas Melanchthon, Calvin and Bullinger are' (Brunner 1946 127). Henry appeals to the consensus of Reformation historians and commentators that the Reformers called all believers to return to the written word of God and to reject the assertions of the Roman Catholic Church. He indicates that the reformation was 'a <to-the-Bible> movement; it was not a <Spirit rather than the Bible> movement' (Henry 1949: 71). In fact, Henry appeals to Brunner's own statements about Calvin's acceptance of the written word as authoritative, noting that Calvin's position is so clear the Brunner really does not attempt to use him in his 'first generation' argument and depends solely on Luther (Henry 1949: 68).

Henry, however, also answers Brunner decisively in the case of Luther. As evidence that Luther was not ambiguous or ambivalent in regards to biblical inspiration and authority, he indicates that Luther was representative of the magisterial Reformers' view in that he vehemently opposed in 'Against the Heavenly Prophets' the supposed appeal by Karlstadt to the Spirit's testimony separate from or prioritized before the Scriptures (Henry 1949: 68). Just as strong was Luther's similar opposition to the Catholic Church and its tradition when prioritized before the Scriptures. Henry writes, 'Luther opposed lifeless dogmas, but he says also that the Christian life is anchored in the written word as firmly as in the testimony of the Spirit' (Henry 1949: 72).

In a further discussion in the appendices of this same book dedicated to 'Calvin on the Word and the Spirit' and to 'Luther on the Word and the Spirit', Henry quotes extensively from both reformers, in order to demonstrate they understood that 'objective authority is in the written word, apart from which the Spirit conveys no knowledge' (Henry 1949: 232). In these appendices, he is responding to what he identifies as the Neo-Supernaturalist view of Brunner and Barth, which 'merely varies' Catholic bibliology by replacing the authority of councils and tradition by the 'testimony of the Spirit... subdued in a personalistic Mysticism' (Henry 1949: 56).

One of the shorter quotes is from Calvin's *Institutes*, 'God did not produce his word before men for the sake of sudden display, intending to abolish it the moment the Spirit should arrive; but he employed the same Spirit, by whose agency he had administered the word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the word' (as quoted by Henry 1949: 232).

Henry also answers Brunner's assertion that Luther's reluctance to number some New Testament books among the canonical books indicated a weaker view of biblical inspiration. He did not defend Luther's refusal, noting that it is not proper to submit the doctrine of inspiration to even important doctrines like justification by faith (Henry 1949: 71). Instead he pointed out that questions about canonicity did not equate to questions about scriptural authority or inerrancy (Henry 1949: 232), and that it was likely Luther's high view of scripture and its teachings concerning justification by faith that gave him such difficulty when trying to address epistles like James that in his mind did not properly address the doctrine (Henry 1949: 71). In fact, he notes that Luther stated that he reckoned infallibility to those books that were recognized as canonical (Henry 1949: 231). Henry footnotes another weakness in Brunner's assessment of canonicity based on Luther's key question, 'Does the writing honor Christ?' with a clear question of his own on Brunner's approach, 'What Christ?' (Henry 1949: 63) clearly implying that Luther's understanding of Christ differs from Brunner's quite significantly.

Henry appeals in response to Brunner to theologians who one might expect would be sympathetic to Brunner's view. He notes that Barth recognizes well the high regard for Scripture held by the Reformers (Henry 1949: 70). Additionally, he quotes Schubert Ogden's *Sources of Religious Authority in Liberal Protestantism*, indicating the liberal theologians understanding that just as the whole Old Testament was received in Jesus' day and from God and profitable, so also the Reformers regarded scripture with no appeal to tradition (even patristic tradition) as alone 'conferred authoritative status' [Ogden] by the Holy Spirit (Henry 1999: 48).

Henry, however, is careful to point out that the acceptance by the Reformers of this authoritative status was not simply subjective. In discussing a statement from the *Institutes*, where Calvin could be taken to indicate that the word of God becomes authoritative 'when they are satisfied of its divine origin' (Calvin, 1936: I. 1. Ch. 7, sec. 1), Henry argues there is no indication in Calvin's writings of the Spirit's testimony being exalted above the written word of God, producing no less than four extensive quotes from the *Institutes* intended to clarify that although the Spirit's testimony is vital to the individual's subjective faith in God's word, even to the point of confirming the truthfulness of the written word, the Holy Spirit uses the word as his instrument, and that when some supposed spirit detracts from the certainty of the word of God, then it is most certainly not the Holy Spirit (Henry 1949: 229-230).

Henry recognizes that the relation of the Spirit to the word in Lutheran theology differs somewhat from that of Calvin in that the Spirit and the word are not seen as in conjunction with each other, but not that Luther

holds the Spirit to be somehow independent of the written word. He states, 'As to the essentiality of the testimony of the Spirit [confirming the written word], Luther leaves no doubt' (Henry 1949: 231). He notes several sermons quoting from Kerr's *Compend of Luther's Works*, in which Luther makes it clear that the preached word will have no effect unless God causes it to affect the heart of the listener (Henry 1949: 231). In other of Luther's sermons, Henry points out that Luther was certain that objective authority was in the word but that it could not be accepted by reason, the Holy Spirit must be trusted as having authored only truth (Henry 1949: 232).

Not only did Henry object to Brunner's attempt to enlist the Reformers, particularly Luther as support for the Neo-Supernaturalist view of scriptural authority but also to the assertion by Barth and others that Luther's definition of the image of God in Genesis 9:6 as prospective meant that Luther saw the *imago Dei* in man as totally destroyed through the fall and 'exists only as a divine intention' (Henry 1999: 333). This assertion was intended to support the idea that there was nothing within man to which special revelation could appeal but Henry points out that several times Luther in his writings maintains that within man there is an innate knowledge of God (Henry 1999: 333).

### **A Comprehensive Application of Christian Life View**

That evangelical theology sees a commonality with the Reformers in their view of Biblical authority seems indisputable and even those evangelicals who sympathize with or hold Thomist views recognize the opposition of Luther and Calvin against those views. However, we should note that the emphasis of Henry's approach was that he expected that the scriptures be applied to all of life and saw in the Reformers' approach a prime example though imperfect of this approach being carried out. After all, if God's self-disclosure, no matter what form it might take, is essential for knowing anything, then anything we know is because God allows the possibility of knowledge and must be revealed to us because He wants us to do something with and about that knowledge.

This is in contrast to those who understand knowledge as something created by man. In Henry's objection to the scientific historical method he contrasts the Renaissance understanding of knowledge with that of the Reformers. He notes that logically the Renaissance assumptions of the priority of man's freewill and the uncertainty of the future deem it impossible to expect any plan or purpose in history. On the other hand, the Reformers expected both based on the scriptural assertion of a Creator-God who ensures both a plan and a purpose (Henry 1999: 257). It seems clear that the difference in the two approaches has significant implications for life.

Henry, however, also contrasted the Reformers with mid-twentieth century Fundamentalism. In his argument for Fundamentalist social engagement, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, he admits that Luther did not work out well the ethical implications of justification by faith alone as evidenced by a lack of emphasis on sanctification in both his doctrine and his practice, specifically as it relates to the Peasant War. However, the Swiss Reformations of Zwingli and later Calvin were clearer about the implications of the gospel in public and private life. He asserts that Calvin viewed such implications as historically articulated by the Hebrew-Christian tradition.

Even though he understood Protestant Fundamentalism as in this tradition, he saw that the spirit of the movement was divorced for the main part from the typical civic and social interests of both the original Christians and the Reformers. The Fundamentalists unlike the Reformers had simply turned the world over to the modern mind. At best, he saw the natural social concerns of Christianity as in the hands of those who did not have a Christian worldview (Henry 2003: 38-39).

In pointing out that the heirs of the Reformation are strangers to its predominant spirit, in this case in the area of social interest, he is emphasizing not only the necessity of a comprehensive application of the Christian worldview but also the primary dangers of neglecting that application. In *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, two dangers can be detected. The first is that the Christian who fails to understand actionably that faith in Christ has implications for every area of life, may take actions that have grave consequences. This he identified in Luther as opposed to Calvin and decades later found this true of much of evangelicalism's social, political, cultural, and missional efforts today. In the application of God's redemptive self-disclosure to life, blind spots matter.

One can see, however, that Henry is greatly concerned when Christians leave the field to those who have no epistemological ground to support them and no divine authority to lead them. One might argue that blind spots cannot be avoided but one cannot and should not argue that because of the danger of blind spots that one should not be fully engaged.

For Henry, this remaking of the mind of the surrounding culture is not limited to evangelism or changing the world view of society or personal and social right-living. All three are vital and have been proven in the past to be effective in having a redemptive impact on the world. It is for this reason that Henry writes, '[w]hen the believing church and the world are compared, the long witness of history is still an indisputable testimony to the source of genuine and enduring ethical vitality—the church' (Henry 1957: 205).

## Conclusion

Although Henry did not present the aspects or even the progression as outlined in this paper in any one work, he makes it clear that he saw his work and the work of other evangelicals of his time period as not only related and to be emulated but one might say a continuation of the work of Luther and Calvin. A philosophical basis for truth must be established and as that basis is established, it is logical that whatever form it might take, the propagation of that established truth must also be authoritative because it is truth and revealed by the Truthful One. Henry also asserted following the example of the Reformation that this truth, more specifically, the Scriptures, must be authoritative for every aspect of life and for that reason its application must also be comprehensive to every aspect of life.

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