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**Inerrancy and sovereignty: A case study on Carl F. H. Henry**

**Karanja, Joseph, M.Th.**

**Andrews University, 1990**

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**ABSTRACT**

**INERRANCY AND SOVEREIGNTY: A CASE STUDY  
ON CARL F. H. HENRY**

**by**

**Joseph Karanja**

**Faculty Advisor: Fernando L. Canale**

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: INERRANCY AND SOVEREIGNTY: A CASE STUDY ON  
CARL F. H. HENRY

Name of researcher: Joseph Karanja

Name and degree of faculty advisor: Fernando L. Canale,  
Ph. D.

Date completed: January 1990

Problem

This study examines how the concept of inerrancy of Scripture presupposes a particular understanding of divine sovereignty. Investigation is based on the writings of Carl F. H. Henry, a contemporary American evangelical theologian.

Method

This investigation uses case-study approach. It consists of a descriptive analysis of Carl Henry's concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty as individual concepts and the sense in which the former presupposes the latter. General inferences are based on that analysis.



### Results

This study shows that Henry's concept of sovereignty is an indispensable presupposition in his concept of inerrancy. Among other things, sovereignty denotes God's absolute causality, thereby providing the theological grounds on which scriptural inerrancy is predicated.

### Conclusions

The concept of inerrancy is best explained in theological contexts where divine sovereignty is affirmed and understood in absolute causal terms.



**Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary**

**INERRANCY AND SOVEREIGNTY: A CASE STUDY  
ON CARL F. H. HENRY**

**A Thesis  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Theology**

**by  
Joseph Karanja  
January 1990**

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INERRANCY AND SOVEREIGNTY: A CASE STUDY  
ON CARL F. H. HENRY

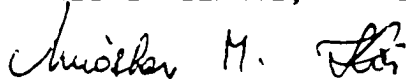
A thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Theology

by  
Joseph Karanja

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:



Fernando L. Canale, Ph. D., Faculty Advisor



Miroslav M. Kis, Ph. D.



Hans K. LaRondelle, Ph. D.

3-5-1990

Date approved

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of inerrancy<sup>1</sup> has been a focus of much discussion in the recent past.<sup>2</sup> Discussion often consists

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<sup>1</sup>As a word, "inerrancy" refers to a view of Scripture which affirms that biblical truth was originally revealed and written down without error.

The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," written by a number of conservative evangelical theologians, seems to reflect the basic understanding of the term "inerrancy." The fourth point in the preamble of the Articles reads: "Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation and the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives" (Norman L. Geisler, ed., Inerrancy [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979], 494).

<sup>2</sup>Mark A. Noll lists twenty-seven books, most of which have been published since 1979, on the subject of inerrancy and related issues. See his article, "Evangelicals and the Study of the Bible," in Evangelicalism and Modern America, George Marsden, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 198-9, n. 39.

Another bibliography, more recent and comprehensive (includes journal articles), is found in The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy 1987 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 543-54; henceforth referred to as The Proceedings 1987.

Perhaps the most telling evidence of the importance of the question of inerrancy was the formation of the International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) in the 1970s. The ICBI has produced two official consensus statements and, at least, six volumes consisting of conference papers on inerrancy. For the 1978 "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," see Geisler, ed., Inerrancy, 493-502. For the 1982 "Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" and a partial list of books published by ICBI, see Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus, eds., Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from



of debates between conservative evangelical theologians who defend inerrancy<sup>1</sup> and critics who oppose it. Among critics, there is a tendency to give the impression that inerrancy is a baseless guiding principle which conservatives use in reading the Bible. In other words, inerrancy is depicted as a merely dogmatic opinion devoid of any meaningful theological content or context.<sup>2</sup>

Conservatives have expressed concern over the failure of many criticisms to take inerrancy seriously as a theological concept.<sup>3</sup> It has also been stated by John

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International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, Summit II  
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 681-7.

<sup>1</sup>Some of the prominent contemporary advocates of inerrancy are the executive council members of the ICBI. They include Gleason Archer, Kenneth Kantzer, James Packer, Robert Preus, Earl Radmacher, Francis Schaefer, and R. Sproul. See Geisler, Inerrancy, Preface.

The association between inerrancy and conservative evangelicalism has also been observed by Avery Dulles in Models of Revelation (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 37; and Donald K. McKim, What Christians Believe About the Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 88-89.

<sup>2</sup>James Barr, for example, describes inerrancy as a non-intellectual principle to which members of "theology-less" movements feel obliged to subject all the interpretation of the Bible. He argues that if the conservatives have a theology at all, it is "fragmented, . . . fossilized, . . . and inactive" (Fundamentalism [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978], 160-1).

For similar approaches to inerrancy, see Paul J. Achtemeier, The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 34-36, 50-75; and Robert Gnuse, The Authority of the Bible: Theories of Inspiration, Revelation, and the Canon of Scripture (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 22-33.

<sup>3</sup>The sentiment is evident in reviews written by conservative theologians on books that criticize inerrancy. Carl F. H. Henry, for example, writes of Barr's "radical misconceptions of fundamentalist doctrines and exaggerations that become misrepresentations, . . . uncritical association of fundamentalism with conservative evangelicalism,"

Setzer, himself a critic of inerrancy, that the reason why many criticisms make little, if any, impact on inerrancy is because most of the "critical theologians have merely knocked down a 'straw man' . . . and left the conservative position undisturbed."<sup>1</sup> In view of that fact, Setzer strongly suggests that to be effective, an analysis of inerrancy must include an investigation of the presuppositions on which the idea is built.<sup>2</sup> A presupposition is here understood to denote a premise, a concept, or idea that controls, influences, conditions, and logically comes prior to another. A presupposition does not

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especially in America, and an "importation into the term 'fundamentalism' everything he finds to be odious in evangelical Christianity" (review of Fundamentalism, by James Barr, part 1, Christianity Today 22 (June 2, 1978): 23-25). See also parts 2 and 3 in the same journal, 22 (June 23, 1978): 25, and 22 (July 21, 1978): 29-32; and William W. Wells, "Blasting Bible Believers," review of Fundamentalism, by James Barr, Christianity Today 22 (June 2, 1978): 30-34.

Commenting on The Inspiration of Scripture by Paul Achtemeier, L. Russ Bush writes that the author "comes close, yet at crucial points fails to grasp the heart of evangelical methods" (review in Southwestern Journal of Theology 24 [Fall 1982]: 107). It has also been observed by Geisler that "despite a claim to the contrary (p. 178), Achtemeier does not take either the Bible or the conservative scholars seriously" (review in Bibliotheca Sacra 138 [April 1981]: 179).

<sup>1</sup>John S. Setzer, "A Critique of the Fundamentalist Doctrine of the Inerrancy of the Biblical Autographs in Historical, Philosophical, Exegetical and Hermeneutical Perspective" (Ph. D. diss., Duke University, 1965), Preface, xxi. He adds on the same page that "The general ineffectiveness of the small amount of anti-inerrancy polemic that critical scholars have produced thus far [by 1965] is due to an unperceptive methodology which permits them to attack a position the essence of which they do not sufficiently comprehend" (ibid.).

<sup>2</sup>Setzer, "A Critique of Fundamentalist Doctrine," 104.

always surface in the discussions of the idea that it influences. It is simply assumed most of the time.<sup>1</sup>

One of the ideas which have been suggested as constituting a presupposition on which inerrancy stands is the concept of divine sovereignty. Various writers have made direct and indirect allusions to this fact.<sup>2</sup> Survey of literature, however, seems to reveal at least three reasons why an additional study on how inerrancy presupposes sovereignty is needed. First, the resources available on the subject consist mainly of short articles which do not analyze thoroughly the issues involved in the proposition that the concept of inerrancy presupposes the concept of divine sovereignty.<sup>3</sup> Second, the few important contributions available on the subject interpret the connection between inerrancy and sovereignty in a manner

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<sup>1</sup>For a definition of the term presupposition, see Josef de Vries, "Presupposition," Philosophical Dictionary, ed. Walter Brugger and ed. and trans. Kenneth Baker (Spokane, Washington: Gonzaga University Press, 1972), 320.

<sup>2</sup>See Randall Basinger and David Basinger, "Inerrancy, Dictation and the Freewill Debate," Evangelical Quarterly 55 (July 1983): 177-80; Geisler, "A Response to Basinger Brothers," Evangelical Quarterly 57 (1985): 349-53; Dulles, Models of Revelation, 40; Dewey M. Beegle, The Inspiration of Scripture (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 167-9; id., Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 264-7; Clark H. Pinnock, The Scripture Principle (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 100-5; Setzer, "A Critique of Fundamentalist Doctrine," 106-76; L. Russ Bush, "The Roots of Conservative Perspectives on Inerrancy (Warfield)," in The Proceedings 1987, 273-88; D. Clair Davis, "Inerrancy and Westminster Calvinism," in Harvie M. Conn, ed., Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 35-46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

that could easily jettison biblical authority.<sup>1</sup> Third, very few case studies exist on the subject.<sup>2</sup> Case studies are generally helpful in that they are more specific and less likely to make a caricature of others' views.<sup>3</sup> Case studies are also useful in establishing general patterns in an area of study so that valid and well-supported inferences can be made.

This study is based on the writings of Carl F. H. Henry. The appropriateness of selecting Carl Henry as a case study arises out of a number of factors. As a major contemporary thinker whose contributions in theology cannot

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<sup>1</sup>Setzer, for example, states that ". . . the copies and translations [of the Bible] are errant" (ibid., 139). He writes of ". . . errors in the overwhelming proportion of the books that historically have passed as his [God's] word . . ." (ibid.).

Further, after citing a list of "errors" in the Bible, Setzer also writes: "It may be concluded that the exhibition of these nineteen exemplary apparent contradictions sufficiently demonstrate that the Bible is replete with too many confusing and textually insoluble formal problems to be the totally supernatural product that fundamentalists believe it to be" (ibid., 283).

It seems to me that with these remarks, it is difficult, if not impossible, to offer a viable rationale for affirming a strong biblical authority in matters of theology, ethics, and Christian experience.

<sup>2</sup>Apart from a dissertation by John Setzer in which a complete chapter is devoted to an analysis of the connection between inerrancy and sovereignty in the writings of Cornelius Van Til, Edward Carnell, and Gordon Clark, I have not come across any other case studies on the subject. See Setzer, 106-76.

<sup>3</sup>In the case of inerrancy, there are various differences between advocates of this concept and it is not likely that a general approach to the subject will not misinterpret certain specific details of some advocates.

go unnoticed,<sup>1</sup> Henry is widely recognized as an authentic representative of an important section of Protestant Christianity in America, the conservative evangelicals.<sup>2</sup> It seems safe to assume, on this basis, that to know Henry is one way of understanding American evangelicalism.<sup>3</sup> Henry's

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<sup>1</sup>During the last decade, Carl Henry has received much attention in scholarly circles. His magnum opus, God, Revelation and Authority, 6 vols. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1976-83) has been reviewed in various journals by more than twenty theologians in America and Europe. They all recognize the series as a landmark in conservative evangelical theology in America. In addition, more than ten dissertations have been written or based on Henry's ideas. Four of these are particularly notable: Larry D. Sharp, "Carl Henry: A Neo-evangelical Theologian" (n.p., 1972); Richard Allan Purdy, "Carl Henry and Contemporary Apologetics: An Assessment of the Rational Apologetic Methodology of Carl F. H. Henry in the Context of the Current Impasse between Reformed and Evangelical Apologetics," (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1980); Miroslav M. Kis, "Revelation and Ethics: Dependence, Interdependence or Independence? A Comparative Study of Reinhold Niebuhr and Carl F. H. Henry" (Ph. D. diss., McGill University, 1984); and Thomas Reginald McNeal, "A Critical Analysis of the Doctrine of God in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry," (Ph. D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986).

<sup>2</sup>Carl Henry has been referred to as "the honored dean of evangelical theologians" by Kenneth S. Kantzer, review of God, Revelation and Authority, by Carl Henry, Christianity Today 27 (May 20, 1983), 72. Henry's biographer, Bob Patterson, describes Henry as the evangelicals' "outstanding theological spokesman . . . who best represents the characteristics of evangelical thought . . ." (Makers of Modern Theological Mind: Carl F. H. Henry [Waco, Texas: Word Books Publishers 1983], 18). Henry has written about thirty books and edited more than ten others (see bibliography at the end of this study). He has also written numerous articles for symposiums and scholarly journals.

<sup>3</sup>The conservative evangelicals in America whom Henry represents form the moderate right group in the Protestant movement. They distinguish themselves from "fundamentalists" who constitute the extreme right of the movement. For the history of the two groups, including their similarities and differences, see Harold J. Ockenga, "From Fundamentalism, Through New Evangelicalism, to

prolific writing also provides new insights that call for a fresh look at the correlation between inerrancy and divine sovereignty.<sup>4</sup>

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Evangelicalism," in Evangelical Roots, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1978), 35-46; and Ronald H. Nash, The New Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), 13-32. For an analysis of the place that conservative evangelicals occupy in the religious and social life of contemporary America, see Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., Mainline Churches and the Evangelicals: A Challenging Crisis? (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981); and James Davison Hunter, American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup>Henry is mentioned by John Setzer in his study (p. 37, n.) but Setzer assumes that whatever Henry had to say on inerrancy and sovereignty or the correlation between the two is sufficiently covered in his analysis of Van Til, Clark, and Carnell. However, despite certain basic similarities between Henry and the three theologians--due to their orientation in the Calvinistic tradition--Henry is critical of various aspects of Van Til's and Carnell's theologies in his major work, which was published more than ten years after Setzer completed his dissertation. See, for example, God, Revelation and Authority, 1:236-8; henceforth cited as GRA.

Further dissociation of Henry from the theologians studied by Setzer is made by Richard Purdy who presents Van Til and Clark as defenders of the traditional Reformed dogmatics while Henry and Norman Geisler are presented as evangelical theologians whose methodology is a significant departure from the traditional Reformed theology (see Purdy, "Carl Henry and Contemporary Apologetics"). These differences seem to be important enough to warrant a study of the same question which Setzer investigated with Carl Henry specifically in mind.

It cannot be overlooked, however, that Setzer may have left Henry out of his study due to the fact that Henry's writings before 1965 were mainly on areas other than the doctrine of revelation (John Setzer, "A Critique of Fundamentalist Doctrine," 137). Investigation seems to indicate that not until the publication of God, Revelation and Authority did Henry's contribution to the subjects of inerrancy and sovereignty become clear.

### Purpose of the Study

This study is a descriptive analysis of the concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty as they are found in the writings of Carl F. H. Henry for the purpose of determining how inerrancy presupposes the concept of sovereignty. Implications of the study are then made on the basis of that analysis.

### Delimitations of the Study

This study has three main delimitations. First, the project is undertaken primarily in the interest of the idea of inerrancy. Certainly, both concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty are analyzed in their own right as individual ideas in order to make their meanings clear and distinct, but the final observations and conclusions are made with the significance of the study to the idea of inerrancy in mind.

Second, this study is limited to those aspects of the two concepts which have a bearing on how inerrancy presupposes sovereignty. It is recognized that the two concepts involve much more than can be covered in this study. Thus, many related issues are either left out or briefly mentioned to maintain the thematic coherence of the investigation.<sup>1</sup> Care has been taken, however, to ensure that the observations and conclusions made are in harmony with the wider scope of the two concepts.

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<sup>1</sup>Examples of these issues are topics such as scriptural canon, infallibility, archaeology, historical criticism, hermeneutics, divine attributes, election, predestination, foreknowledge, miracles, etc.

Third, the study is not intended to validate or contravene Henry's concepts of inerrancy, sovereignty, or the connection between them. In other words, this study is not intended to show if or not Henry's views are correct. That is a task of future commentators on the subject. Presently, the evaluation which is included is in connection with the analysis of Henry's views for the purpose of determining the nature of the correlation between inerrancy and sovereignty.

#### Methodology

This presentation is based primarily on what Henry has written in his six-volume series, God, Revelation and Authority.<sup>1</sup> The series is a rich resource of Henry's ideas on inerrancy and sovereignty and represents the most concise and mature thoughts of Henry on theological subjects. In view of this, I have opted to concentrate on the six volumes due to limitations of time and space.

The idea under investigation in this study, i.e. how inerrancy presupposes sovereignty, is not stated in explicit

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<sup>1</sup>As stated previously, the series is referred to as GRA in the study. The volume number and page reference(s) follow that abbreviation.

The first volume is a philosophical prolegomenon that deals with questions of theological method. In it, Henry surveys various contemporary approaches to theology and concludes that the survival of Christianity is dependent on a clear recognition of propositional revelation in the Bible. In vols. 2-4, Henry deals with the doctrine of revelation while, in the last two volumes he focuses attention on the doctrine of God. Henry gives his exposition on the major doctrines of evangelical faith in the context of the doctrine of God.



terms by Carl Henry.<sup>4</sup> If that were the case, the need to investigate his views in a study like this would be less compelling. In view of this fact, a research methodology has been adopted which aims at making explicit what is implicit. First, it consists of a descriptive analysis of the two concepts as they are found in GRA. This stage of the investigation seeks to make Henry's views clear and distinct. Second, methodology includes also an interpretation of the two concepts from the perspective of those elements in them and facts about them that point toward the idea that inerrancy presupposes sovereignty. Third, an evaluation of the idea that inerrancy presupposes sovereignty in Henry is made on the basis of the evidence presented in the first two stages of the methodology.

#### Overview of Study

This study is divided into five chapters. After the present introductory chapter, two chapters are devoted to a descriptive analysis of each of the two concepts under investigation in this study. In chapter 2, the idea of inerrancy is examined in terms of Henry's theological heritage, the meaning of inerrancy and the place of inerrancy in the theology of Henry. Chapter 3 has its focus on Henry's concept of divine sovereignty. Brief remarks are made concerning the background behind Henry's understanding

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<sup>4</sup>Each of the two concepts has several pages devoted to it in the series (see GRA, 4:162-219 for inerrancy and ibid., 5:307-33 for sovereignty) but nowhere does Henry state clearly that the two chapters are connected in any manner.

of this concept. Particular attention is given, however, to the meaning of the concept and its role in Henry's theology.

Chapter 4 is an analytical and interpretive evaluation of the evidence from the previous two chapters and other relevant material from Henry's series for the purpose of clarifying the sense in which inerrancy presupposes sovereignty in Carl Henry. In the conclusion, which is chapter 5, the theme of the study is summarized, implications of the study highlighted and suggestions made for further exploration of the questions raised in this investigation. It is hoped that this presentation will help to clarify some of the issues which surround the concept of inerrancy.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONCEPT OF INERRANCY

The subject which concerns us in this study is the sense in which Henry's concept of inerrancy presupposes his concept of sovereignty. Since the basic question involves a relationship between two concepts, it is assumed that the connection requires a clear description and analysis of the ideas being connected. In this case, attention is given first to the meaning and significance of the concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty as independent ideas in order to better appreciate and understand the connection between them. The present chapter on inerrancy and the following one on sovereignty are devoted to the clarification of the two concepts as these are found in Henry's GRA.

The concept of inerrancy is one of the distinctive aspects of Henry's theology. Its significance is readily noticeable in Henry's own words that inerrancy is "theoretically and practically important."<sup>1</sup> In view of such a statement, the need to investigate the meaning of inerrancy and the reasons why it seems so important to Henry cannot be overemphasized. Undoubtedly, not everything that Henry writes about inerrancy can possibly be presented here

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 4:209.

as that would entail a wider coverage of material than is intended in this study. However, efforts are made at saying enough on the concept to make its core structure clear.

Discussion on inerrancy is here divided into five main sections. The first one is introductory. It briefly shows the sources from which Henry draws most of his basic arguments for inerrancy. The second consists of an analysis of inerrancy from the perspective of the basic concepts which constitute its meaning. The third is, in a sense, a continuation of the second. It further clarifies the meaning of inerrancy by answering the question of the extent or scope of biblical inerrancy. The fourth seeks to set the concept of inerrancy in the wider context of Henry's theology and to assess the role which it plays in that theology. Finally, a conclusion is made on the basis of those aspects of Henry's concept of inerrancy which point in the direction of the purpose of this study.

#### Inerrancy and Henry's Sources

Henry maintains that inerrancy is not a novel idea which he or other contemporary evangelicals have created in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> For him, inerrancy has always been the historic position of the church from the earliest to modern times.<sup>2</sup> It was the view held by Jesus and original

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<sup>1</sup>See *ibid.*, 4:367, 369.

<sup>2</sup>Henry refers to inerrancy as "the historic commitment of the Christian church" (*ibid.*, 4:367).

Bible writers.<sup>1</sup> Church fathers, and particularly Augustine, and reformers also viewed the Bible as inerrant.<sup>2</sup> For Henry, "Christian churches throughout the centuries have maintained the concept of inerrancy."<sup>3</sup>

However, while he views inerrancy as an idea originating in Bible times, Henry recognizes that inerrancy was not fully developed as a theological concept until a more recent past.<sup>4</sup> It seems that the reason for this situation was that before eighteenth century, at least in America, inerrancy of Scripture was generally assumed and, as such, it was not an issue that called for detailed

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<sup>1</sup>Henry states, "The doctrine of scriptural inerrancy is in fact implicit in the New Testament and in the very teaching of Jesus, and before that, even in the Old Testament" (ibid., 4:370).

<sup>2</sup>Henry does not state that the fathers taught inerrancy as such, but he argues that their views of Scripture excluded error in Scripture. Some of the fathers on whose views he comments are Clement of Rome (30-100), Polycarp (65-155), Justin Martyr (110-165), Irenaeus (120-202), Tertullian (145-220), Origen (185-254), Chrysostom (347-407), and Augustine (354-430). As far as the reformers (and the Protestant orthodox theologians after them) are concerned, Henry contends that they were all inerrantists (ibid., 4:370-2).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:384. By Christian churches, Henry seems to mean the Apostolic Church, Roman Catholic Church (until Vatican II), the Reformers, and "classic evangelicalism." See ibid., 4:369-80.

<sup>4</sup>Henry writes that "While the Reformers emphasize the authority, power, clarity and self-authenticating nature of Scripture, they do not delineate any detailed doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. This latter was done by seventeenth century Lutheran theologians. In America the doctrine of inerrancy became influential through L. Gausson's Theopneustia and the teaching of Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield and the so-called Princeton School" (ibid., 4:369).

descriptions and discussion.<sup>1</sup> For Henry, the rise of secularizing influence of enlightenment which led to the undermining of the authority of the Bible motivated Christian thinkers to see the need for a systematic exposition and defence of the idea of inerrancy.<sup>2</sup> As evidence seems to indicate, Henry considers the theologians of the Princeton Theological Seminary, and Benjamin B. Warfield, in particular, as the main architects of inerrancy as a theological concept.<sup>3</sup> This brief historical background

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<sup>1</sup>H. D. McDonald states, "Prior to the year 1860, the idea of infallibly inerrant Scripture was the prevailing idea" (Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study, 1860-1960 [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963], 196). For a detailed study on how the critical spirit of the modern era led to undermining inerrancy, see Geisler, ed., Biblical Errancy: An Analysis of Its Philosophical Roots (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981). See also Peter Maarten Van Bemmelen, Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1987), 17-117.

<sup>2</sup>Henry wonders if it was not during the age of Enlightenment that scholars "abandoned the tenets of transcendent divine revelation and special inspiration of the Bible" (GRA, 4:386). He agrees with Harold Lindsell that "The doctrine of biblical inerrancy has been normative since the days of the apostles. . . . It was not until the last century and a half that the opponents of inerrancy . . . have become a dominant force in Christianity" (*ibid.*, 4:367).

<sup>3</sup>See *ibid.*, 4:84, 163, 165, 253. Henry maintains that Warfield's concept of inerrancy is impeccable and that to qualify it is to weaken it (*ibid.*, 4:165). The connection between Henry and the Princetonians has been made also by Donald G. Bloesch, review of GRA, vols. 3 & 4, Christian Century 97 (April 9, 1980): 414-5; and Alan Padgett, review of GRA, vols. 1-6, Journal of American Academy of Religion 52 (Dec. 1984): 785-6.

The foundational role which Warfield played in formulating the concept of inerrancy is widely recognized. Roger Nicole, a contemporary advocate of inerrancy, writes, "Indeed Warfield is one of the most notable and articulate modern advocates of the doctrine of biblical inspiration and inerrancy . . ." See his article, "The Inspiration of

is important for an understanding and appreciation of the reason why Henry mentions Warfield so frequently in his expositions on inerrancy.<sup>1</sup> Not all of Henry's references to Warfield are covered here but those deemed significant are briefly mentioned in the appropriate contexts.

Another important source of Henry's concept of inerrancy is Gordon H. Clark.<sup>2</sup> Henry remembers Clark as "one of the most brilliant faculty members" during his College days at Wheaton in Illinois.<sup>3</sup> The influence of Clark on Henry is readily admitted by Henry himself<sup>4</sup> and

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Scripture: J. D. Dunn versus B. B. Warfield," Churchman 97 (1983): 198. Barr, a critic of inerrancy, remarks along similar lines that "A conservative evangelical bibliography will almost certainly have Warfield's name on its list of authorities for the doctrine of Scripture; and any other names there are will in all probability have got their thoughts from Warfield" (Fundamentalism, 262). For an evaluation of Warfield and his colleagues at Princeton in regard to their role in defending inerrancy from a historical perspective, see George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 113-116.

<sup>1</sup>The main references to Warfield are in two consecutive chapters in vol. 4 entitled, "The Inerrancy of Scripture" and "The Meaning of Inerrancy" (GRA, 4:162-210).

<sup>2</sup>A partial bibliography of Gordon Clark's publications (up to 1968) is given by Ronald Nash, ed., The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark: A Festschrift (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968), 513-6. Clark's most important essays on Scripture have been compiled posthumously by John W. Robbins in Gordon H. Clark, God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics (Jefferson, Maryland: Trinity Foundation, 1987).

<sup>3</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 66-67, 71.

<sup>4</sup>After expressing his indebtedness to "scholars of various traditions," Henry writes, "To no contemporary do I owe profounder debt, however, than to Gordon Clark, as numerous index references will attest. . . . He has offered

acknowledged by reviewers of God, Revelation, and Authority.<sup>1</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that Clark defends Henry's doctrine of Scripture against those who criticize it.<sup>2</sup> A study of Clark's view on inerrancy is not intended in this study as that endeavor falls outside the scope of this study.<sup>3</sup> However, as in the case of Warfield, a few references to Clark are made where it is deemed appropriate and when a statement from him helps to clarify a point in Henry.

#### The Meaning of Inerrancy

"The meaning of inerrancy" is a phrase that Henry himself uses as a title of one of the chapters in vol. 4 of God, Revelation, and Authority.<sup>4</sup> In that chapter, Henry describes the meaning of inerrancy in terms of what "scriptural inerrancy does not imply" and what "inerrancy does imply." There are five negative implications and four positive ones. The chapter is then followed by a "Supplementary Note" which is a reproduction of "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" formulated in 1978. While

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helpful comments on many of the chapters." (GRA, 1:10).

<sup>1</sup>See Padgett, review, 785-6; and James Daane, review of GRA, vol. 3, Reformed Journal 30 (May 1980): 27-29.

<sup>2</sup>See Clark, God's Hammer, 175-85. In a critique of one review of GRA, Clark here writes of "Henry-Clark position," "Henry-Clark view," and "Henry-Clark defence of Biblical inerrancy." He also states that "Henry and I are in extensive agreement" (*ibid.*, 175, 180, 185).

<sup>3</sup>The reader is referred to the bibliography of Gordon Clark cited above for further reading.

<sup>4</sup>GRA, 4:201-19.



the task of this section seems to be simplified by the contents of that chapter, other factors militate against a mere paraphrase of what Henry writes there.

For one thing, the chapter does not deal adequately with the fundamental concepts that underlie inerrancy in Henry.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, another approach to the meaning of inerrancy is needed which will bring together the various significant ideas on inerrancy from that chapter as well as from other sections in Henry's series. For yet another reason, a different approach is demanded by the goals of this study which are certainly of a different character from Henry's. As an apologist, Henry seeks to clarify various misunderstandings over inerrancy and to vindicate inerrancy as a logically defensible position. I am concerned about the fundamental concepts that sustain inerrancy and the grounds on which the idea stands.

This section consists of two sub-sections. The first one identifies the referent to which Henry applies the term "inerrancy." That identification is significant. It delimits the discussion in the whole chapter to a particular referent. The other sub-section identifies the meaning of "inerrancy" in Henry. In that section, the main ideas which constitute the concept of inerrancy are described and on that basis a working definition of the term "inerrancy" is provided.

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<sup>1</sup>The chapter seems mainly to address various misunderstandings of the term "inerrancy" (ibid.).

## The Inerrant Referent

Henry states clearly that the term inerrancy is not to be indiscriminately applied to anything and everything called Christian Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> He distinguishes between autographs--i.e., original manuscripts of the Bible--and copies, or apographs made from original manuscripts, translations from one language to another, and versions (variant renderings of the Bible in the same language).<sup>2</sup> According to Henry, autographs are the only writings which have the characteristic of inerrancy. The reason for this is that they "have a theopneustic quality."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the autographs alone were "breathed out" or inspired by God.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the apographs cannot be inerrant

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:220.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:231.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:233.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 4:131. The Greek rendering, theopneustos, is used by Paul in 2 Tim 3:16. It is mostly translated as "inspired by God"--see, for example, King James Version, Revised Standard Version, New English Bible, New Jerusalem Bible. A few versions translate the word as "God-breathed"--see, for example, New International Version, The Amplified Bible--a phrase which Henry uses quite frequently.

Linguistically, theopneustos is a compound adjective comprising the noun theos, meaning God, and the adjective pneustos which is derived from the aorist stem of the verb pneo, meaning to breathe. See H. Wayne House, "Biblical Interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:16," Bibliotheca Sacra 137 (Jan-Mar 1980): 57-58; C. Spicq, O.P., Les Epitres Pastorales, vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1969), 788.

Benjamin Warfield made a thorough analysis of the word theopneustos in defending the view that Scripture is "God-spirited," "God-breathed," and "produced by the creative breath of God." See Benjamin B. Warfield, "God-inspired Scripture," The Presbyterian Review 11:89-130. The article is reprinted as chap. 6 in Warfield's The Inspiration and the Authority of Bible, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company,

because the term "inspiration" refers not to them but to the original manuscripts of the Bible. According to Henry, apographs are infallible, not inerrant.<sup>1</sup>

The shift of language from inerrant autographs to infallible apographs has been pointed to by critics as a weakness in the inerrancy position.<sup>2</sup> They argue that it is an admission, first, that inerrancy cannot be proved since the autographs are no longer extant and, second, that there are errors in the Bible which we possess.<sup>3</sup> In response, Henry asserts that the shift in language does not weaken the inerrancy position. For him, it is a mere recognition of

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1948), 245-96. Warfield's article has become the standard interpretation of the word theopneustos for many conservative evangelicals, Henry not excluded. See examples in Gordon H. Clark, The Pastoral Epistles (Jefferson, Maryland: Trinity Foundation, 1983), 179-85; Edward W. Goodrick, "Let's Put 2nd Timothy 3:16 Back in the Bible," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 25 (Dec 1982), 479-87; Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 34; and Rene Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, trans. Helen I. Needham (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 45-46.

<sup>1</sup>GRA, 4:244. Warfield made the connection between inerrancy and the autographs in two articles: "The Inerrancy of the Original Autographs" and "The Westminster Confession and the Original Autographs," in Benjamin B. Warfield, Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, ed. John E. Meeter (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 2:580-594; henceforth cited as Shorter Writings. He, however, expressed that the phrase "the inerrancy of the original autographs" is not an altogether happy one . . . as to the entire truthfulness of the Scriptures as given by God" (ibid., 2:582). Henry does not express any such caution.

<sup>2</sup>See Achtemeier, The Inspiration of Scripture, 52, 53; Beegle, Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility, 156-8; Setzer, "A Critique of Fundamentalist Doctrine," 141-5.

<sup>3</sup>Achtemeier, The Inspiration of Scripture, 52-53.

the fact that apographs are not directly inspired by God.<sup>1</sup> Further, the fact that these apographs are not inerrant does not mean that they are errant.<sup>2</sup> They still remain "infallible" in the sense that "the Bible remains virtually unchanged and its teaching undimmed."<sup>3</sup> For Henry, what critics usually call errors in the Bible are not errors as such but only difficulties which can be resolved when all the relevant information on the passages in question has been brought together.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 4:233. What Henry asserts about the apographs is that they have been "providentially preserved" throughout the centuries (ibid., 4:247).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:233.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:235.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4:173. Henry here refers to Warfield as having defended this position. The reference is, possibly, to an article written jointly by Archibald A. Hodge and Warfield in 1881, and recently compiled with other related articles by Nicole in Inspiration (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 40-61. The particular section in question here was written by Warfield himself.

In order to buttress this position, Henry adds that the number of so-called errors in the copies diminishes as one moves textually in the direction of the lost autographs (ibid., 4:354). The view which Henry expresses here is representative of the position held by most conservative evangelical theologians. See, for example, the response and comments of Gleason L. Archer on twenty alleged errors in the Bible: "Alleged Errors and Discrepancies in the Original Manuscripts of the Bible," in Inerrancy, ed. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 55-82. Archer, like Henry, denies that there are any "genuine mistakes" or "demonstrable errors" of any sort in the original manuscripts. It has even been suggested by James A. Bollard, a conservative evangelical, that the alleged errors are a result of textual criticism which is confined to a few early manuscripts and which ignores thousands of other manuscripts, each bearing independent testimony to the inerrancy of the autographs. See his article, "Re-examining New Testament Textual-Critical Principles and Practices Used to Negate Inerrancy," The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 25 (Dec 1982): 499-506. The 1978

Henry also minimizes the difference between the autographs and the apographs by maintaining that there is a vital link between them.<sup>1</sup> He contends that the apographs

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"Chicago Statement on Inerrancy" by conservative theologians sums this point well in Article XIV: "We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible" (Geisler, ed., Inerrancy, 497).

<sup>1</sup>Undoubtedly, Henry urges evangelicals to "put at least some slight distance between . . . the oldest extant copies and the autographs" (GRA, 4:232). For him, "modern textual scholars themselves disagree over the most reliable family of available copies; neither the oldest nor the most prevalent texts available to us from the past can be considered the final criteria of the original text and equated with the inerrant autographs" (*ibid.*, 4:235). He identifies some of the errors in the copies as "skipped or duplicated words, misspellings, use of a wrong word due to a copyist's misunderstanding of dictation, faulty judgment or memory (recollection of the text in a different form or insertion of a marginal note into the body of the text) . . . addition of vowel symbols and punctuation marks . . . inclusion of grammatical or linguistic updating, and in some texts even elimination of an apparent incongruity or an attempted harmonization of passages" (*ibid.*). Yet, Henry asserts, "none of these alterations . . . need involve a change in theological substance" (*ibid.*). Further, despite "whatever uncertainties copying has contributed" (*ibid.*, 232), the "text of Old and New Testaments has been preserved in the copies in a remarkably pure form. Not a single article of faith, not a single moral precept is in doubt" (*ibid.*, 4:232, 235-6).

Before Henry, Warfield had already distinguished between "autographic codex" and "autographic text" of Scripture in clarifying the point that, in essence, inerrancy continue in the copies also. See Warfield on this in Shorter Writings, 2:583. Following Warfield's path, Greg L. Bahnsen explains the "autographic text" as the words of Scripture and "autographic codex" as the physical document of Scripture. He adds, "Loss of the latter does not automatically entail loss of the former. Certain manuscripts may have decayed or been lost, but the words of these manuscripts are still with us in good copies." See his article, "The Inerrancy of the Autographa," in Inerrancy, ed. Geisler, 172-3. Henry does not use that terminology. However, his statements that "acknowledgement of error in the copies and translations does not require insistence on error in the text of Scripture per se" (GRA, 4:253) and that "scribal errors . . . are to be distinguished from errors in Scripture per se" (*ibid.*,

are efficacious and authoritative today only because there once existed inerrant autographs.<sup>1</sup> For our present purposes, we will not follow this discussion further since focus is not on infallibility of the apographs but on the inerrancy of the autographs. Suffice it here to state that the shift of language--from inerrant autographs to infallible apographs--helps to clarify the fact that the term "inerrancy," as it is used in this study, has the original autographs as its primary referents.

#### What Inerrancy Means

To clarify the meaning of inerrancy in Henry, this section seeks to bring together his main ideas from the chapter on "The Meaning of Inerrancy" and to correlate these with other relevant data on the subject from the rest of Henry's series. Inerrancy is here described as signifying an attribute of Scripture, a quality of biblical propositions, an absence of error, and a presence of truth.<sup>2</sup>

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4:358) are perfectly compatible with above distinctions.

<sup>1</sup>According to Henry, "The promotion of original errancy [that the autographs erred] . . . encourages selective and creative rearrangement of the biblical data that soon frustrate the purpose of Scripture ordained for the infallible copies. The affirmation of errant originals jeopardizes both the epistemological and the evangelistic utility of the copies and translations because the thesis of prophetic-apostolic errancy is repeatedly correlated with the superiority of contemporary ecclesiastical gnosis. All the infallible functions of confessedly errant copies are easily subverted once the errancy of the autographs is affirmed. . ." (GRA, 4:234).

<sup>2</sup>These seem to be the most important and representative significations of the term "inerrancy" in Henry's theology.

While no single definition can do justice to the whole range of significations of the word "inerrancy,"<sup>1</sup> a working definition will be attempted at the end of this section.

#### Inerrancy as an Attribute of Scripture

For Henry, Scripture is essentially the Word of God written. Henry recognizes the fact that this Word was often spoken before it was written down. To both spoken and written forms of the Word, he accords equal authority.<sup>2</sup> But it is evident that Henry considers the written or "inscripturated" Word of God as the most significant locus of God's revelation.<sup>3</sup> The reason Henry gives for this point is that what is written, in contrast to what is spoken, has a certain "fixity and durability."<sup>4</sup> It seems, therefore,

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<sup>1</sup>This is my opinion based on investigation of the concept of inerrancy in Henry. Other attempts to define the word "inerrancy" have also shown that there is no such a thing as a short and precise definition of the term. See Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in Inerrancy, ed. Norman Geisler, 265-304; Stephen T. Davis, The Debate about the Bible: Inerrancy versus Infallibility (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 23-48; and J. Ramsey Michaels, "Inerrancy or Verbal Inspiration? An Evangelical Dilemma," in Inerrancy and Common Sense, ed. Roger R. Nicole & J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 49-70.

<sup>2</sup>See GRA, 4:32-40.

<sup>3</sup>The word "revelation" is used in the study to denote the whole content of knowledge which God has made available to man through various means. Further comments on revelation are given below.

<sup>4</sup>Henry stresses that "Writing obviously implies a permanence greater than that of the nonwritten, spoken word" (ibid., 4:37). For him, "the written word" has a certain "fixity and durability" (ibid.). Further, the "inspired scriptural writings only transmit the prophetic-apostolic message in permanent form" (ibid., 4:37-38).

that for Henry, the Bible is the document of revelation and the inscripturated Word of God.<sup>1</sup> It is real and also objective.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, like any other real object, the Bible is a book which possesses particular attributes, properties, qualities or characteristics that distinguish it from other literature. These attributes include, among others, perspicuity, efficacy, objective intelligibility, and sufficiency of Scripture.<sup>3</sup> To these, inerrancy may be

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<sup>1</sup>Henry views Scripture as "a uniquely inspired literature" and "a body of inspired writings that possess divine authority" (ibid., 4:406). He considers the canon of Scripture as fixed or closed. This topic is discussed in a chapter on canon (ibid., 4:405-49).

<sup>2</sup>This emphasis on the "Word of God written" is sometimes characterized by critics as a kind of bibliolatry-book worship. One of the critics who makes this charge is Heinrich Emil Brunner who states that inerrancy is a type of bondage to the text that makes the Bible an idol or a "Paper-pope." See his book, Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), 11, 181. See Henry's response to this criticism in GRA, 4:139, 381.

<sup>3</sup>For Henry, "the prophetic-apostolic writings are addressed to the people, not to professional theologians only. . . . All things necessary to salvation are lucid even to the unlearned: to common folk everywhere it yields unclouded doctrinal and moral norms" (GRA, 4:252-3). Further, the meaning of Scripture "is clear to the mind of the ordinary reader" (ibid., 258). On the basis of an analysis presented by Kis on Henry in this respect, it appears that perspicuity of Scripture (general clarity of biblical contents) has tremendous consequences on Henry's hermeneutics and his understanding of the significance of human language in expressing divine realities. See his dissertation, "Revelation and Ethics," 268.

Henry emphasizes that "The Word of God is a double-edged sword (Heb 4:2) that does not return to God short of accomplishing its task (Isa 55:11)." He continues to state that "The efficacy of Scripture is a consequence of the inerrancy of the autographs and an implicate of the infallibility of the transcripts." He refers to "Bible's amazing vitality and character as a spiritual oasis where men find God seeking, speaking, commanding and inviting



added. Although Henry does not state explicitly that inerrancy is an attribute of Scripture, the inference seems clear enough from the close association that he makes between Scripture and inerrancy. Volume 4 is especially replete with phrases such as "scriptural inerrancy," "inerrancy of the Bible," and "biblical inerrancy," all of which are phrases expressing the attributive status of inerrancy. Sometimes Henry describes inerrancy as "a doctrine" which characterizes the Bible as "error-free" and disallows "the possibility of error from the text of Scripture."<sup>1</sup>

As is the case with other attributes, Henry sees in inerrancy a term that describes a quality which the Bible possesses as the Word of God. It denotes "errorless transmission of the message that God desired them [sacred

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them, where he responds to their penitent pleas and bestows his healing presence" (GRA, 4:249).

Henry writes of Scripture as "transcendent cognitive-verbal revelation" which acts as a "carrier of objective truth transcending our social location in history." For him, "God has intelligibly disclosed his transcendent will. The truth of God can be stated in all cultures; it does not need to be restated in any culture except by way of linguistic translation and repetition" (ibid., 4:53). Further, one need not be a believer to understand biblical truth (ibid., 1:229).

For Henry, "Special revelation does not continue sporadically throughout the post-biblical era; it is once-for-all" (ibid., 4:276). Henry considers this attribute as an important one in maintaining a strong authority of Scripture. For him, if the canon is only fluid and not closed, there can be no fixed meanings of biblical truth and Scripture would, thereby, stop being the final norm in doctrine and morals (ibid., 4:95).

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:163, 207.

writers] to communicate to mankind."<sup>1</sup> But, unlike other attributes, inerrancy is set apart by Henry as a "governing epistemological principle."<sup>2</sup> Henry makes use of this point in arguing that inerrancy keeps the interpreter of Scripture from the temptation of distinguishing what is true and false in Scripture.<sup>3</sup> For him, such an enterprise can only be subjective and arbitrary since there is no objective criteria for making the distinctions.<sup>4</sup> In other words, while the other attributes generally explain how the Bible functions as the Word of God, inerrancy is really an a priori attribute of Scripture. The commitment to biblical

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:207.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:238. Henry does not consider it unjustifiable in principle when critics charge that conservative "hermeneutics is assertedly governed by a prejudiced a priori, that the Bible is inerrant and that its errorlessness is to be understood principally as 'correspondence with reality' . . ." (ibid., 4:173). What Henry is opposed to is the idea that conservatives alone approach Scripture with "an exegetical a priori" and the implication, therefore, that the conservative approach is not open but closed to the facts at hand. For him, "One approaches Scripture either on the premise that its teaching is reliable unless logical grounds exist for its rejection, or on the premise that what the Scripture teaches is errant unless independent grounds can be found for crediting its content" (ibid.). Henry compares inerrancy with the approach used by "scholars who, affirming a major explanatory hypothesis in the physical sciences, are confident that apparent factual conflicts can be resolved within the context of the theory itself and which only overwhelming incompatible evidence seriously jeopardizes" (ibid.). According to Henry, "No scholar views the phenomena--whether of Scripture or of nature--in terms of isolated discrete units; some interpretive framework there must be, if the data are to be coherent and meaningful" (ibid.). See also ibid., 4:191.

<sup>3</sup>See ibid., 4:238.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4:181.

inerrancy, for Henry, precedes the reading of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

In order to explore the meaning of inerrancy more specifically, it is appropriate to discuss Henry's concepts of proposition, error, and truth. The following three sub-sections are aimed at fulfilling that purpose.

Inerrancy as a Characteristic  
of Biblical Propositions

Henry understands the contents of Scripture in terms of propositions.<sup>2</sup> According to him, "a proposition is a verbal statement that is either true or false; it is a rational declaration capable of being believed, doubted or denied."<sup>3</sup> Other words which Henry uses in a manner that appears to make them synonymous with propositions are sentences, judgments, truths, statements, and information.<sup>4</sup> Henry prefers the concept of "proposition" to other terms in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:173.

<sup>2</sup>It is Henry's conviction that "revelation is primarily correlated with communication of propositional truth" (ibid., 3:417).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3:456.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3:429, 430; 4:198. The idea of "proposition" is an aspect of philosophy called deductive logic. See Gary Iseminger, ed., Logic and Philosophy: Selected Readings (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), 3-34. Clark used deductive logic in explicating the truth of scriptural revelation. For him, truth is logical and revelation is propositional in a full logico-philosophical sense. See Clark's God's Hammer, 24-38, 175-85, and the second of his three lectures given at Wheaton College, "The Axiom of Revelation," in The Philosophy of Gordon Clark, ed. Ronald Nash, 57-92. A historical connection between Clark's and Henry's use of propositional logic, on one hand, and Aristotelian logic, on the other, has been suggested by Alan Padgett, review of GRA, 6 vols., TSF Bulletin 9 (Jan-Feb 1986): 28-29.

describing biblical contents for two main reasons. One reason is that other possible alternatives--concepts and words--are limited in their capacity to bring the truth of Scripture to the forefront.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a proposition is a universal "minimal unit of public meaning and truth."<sup>2</sup> As an association of a predicate with subject, it can be "stated externally in print or verbally, or internally thought and either volitionally acted upon or disregarded."<sup>3</sup> In other words, a proposition is a unit of thought that conveys a complete, objective, and intelligible logical meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The implications of Henry's assertion that biblical revelation is propositional may be seen from a number of related perspectives. First, the contents of the Bible are all explicable in terms of propositions.<sup>5</sup> For Henry, the

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<sup>1</sup>He states that "If revelation is a communication of sharable truth, it will consist of sentences, propositions, judgments and not simply isolated concepts, names and words. To be sure, concepts and words are instrumentalities of God's disclosure; divine disclosure is conceptual and verbal. But neither a concept nor an unrelated word can be true or false" (GRA, 3:429-30). See also *ibid.*, 3:302; 4:202.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:314.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:282.

<sup>4</sup>Further discussion of the term proposition is included in chapter 4. Meanwhile, the proposition refers to a logico-verbal unit of thought in Scripture which is capable of being true or false. Where a proposition is not explicit in Scripture, it is at least implicit.

<sup>5</sup>It is Henry's view that "The inspired Scriptures contain a body of divinely given information actually expressed or capable of being expressed in propositions. In brief, the Bible is a propositional revelation of the unchanging truth of God" (*ibid.*, 3:457).

presence of anthropomorphisms and literary genres in the Bible--like poetry, figurative language and symbolism--does not vitiate the propositional character of scriptural contents.<sup>1</sup> He maintains that even these genres convey valid and objective truth in the propositional sense.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Henry clarifies the fact that "While evangelicals insist that theological truth is true in the same sense that any and all truth is true, they do not ignore the difference between literary genres. To imply that evangelicals are wooden-headed literalists who cannot distinguish between literary types is a resort to ridicule rather than to reason. No evangelical takes literally what biblical writers explicitly declare to be figurative (cf. Rev 11:8) or what biblical writers explicitly declare to be figurative (cf. Rev 11:8) or what they portray metaphorically as, for example, the Isaiah statement that 'the trees of the field shall clap their hands' (55:12, KJV). In no way can the claim for the literal truth of the biblical revelation mean that prose is the only vehicle of truth or, on the other hand, that truth cannot be conveyed by poetry. That Scripture contains metaphors, similes, parables and verbal techniques such as hyperbole in no way excludes the truth of what the Bible teaches. Metaphor is used for drama and color and not because the truth strains the resources of prose. Some literary techniques more than others sharpen the communication of truth by rousing the imagination, stirring the emotions, and stimulating the will. Prose does not wholly lack such potentialities. Poetry can usually be restated in prose form; prose is a kind of linguistic shorthand for poetic expression. Such statements as 'the Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations' (Isa 52:10, KJV) or 'the eyes of the Lord are in every place' (Prov 15:3, KJV) can with little effort be seen to mean that Yahweh will accomplish his sovereign purpose internationally, and that nothing is hid from God's omniscience" (ibid., 4:109).

This passage summarizes Henry's understanding of the relationship that exists between truth of Scripture and the various genres of Scripture. It seems clear that, for him, intelligible truth is embedded in all literary types and, if these genres are not propositional in form, they can be formulated into propositions. In essence, Henry seems to argue that genres are only different means of expressing truth.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Henry admits that literary units such as commands and God's name cannot possibly be referred to as propositional. However, they can be formulated into propositional form. He explains: "Commandments like 'thou

Second, by referring to biblical revelation as propositional, Henry appears to mean that the contents of Scripture are intelligible or rational to the human mind.<sup>1</sup> According to Henry, biblical revelation is not some esoteric or classified information which only the initiated or the qualified can understand.<sup>2</sup> Any reasonable person--irrespective of whether or not he is a believer--can

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shalt not kill' are indeed imperatives, . . . but their grammatical form does not cancel the fact that revelation is primarily correlated with communication of propositional truth. Imperatives are not as such true or false proposition; but they can be translated into propositions (e.g., 'to kill is wrong') from which cognitive inferences can be drawn" (ibid., 3:417). Further, "It is the case that in the Bible God not only reveals sentences, or propositional truth, but also reveals his Name, or Names, and that he gives divine commands. Such disclosures assuredly are capable of being formulated propositionally, but that is something other than expressly identifying them as propositional disclosure. Yet even the revelation of God's name requires a meaning-context for intelligibility; isolated concepts do not convey truths. Even were God to say, 'Moses, my Name is Yahweh,' that would be a proposition. . . . If it is too much to say that divine revelation must be propositionally given to be both meaningful and true, it is nonetheless wholly necessary to insist that divine disclosure does indeed take propositional form" (ibid., 3:480-1).

<sup>1</sup>Henry states that "divine revelation is a mental act, for it seeks to convey to the mind of man the truth about the Creator and Lord of life, and to write upon the spirit of man God's intelligible holy will" (ibid., 3:271). Further, Scriptural truth is "rationally persuasive and defensible" (ibid., 3:280).

<sup>2</sup>He stresses that "One need not take a master's degree in biblical theology, nor even read Greek and Hebrew, to know the sense of most scriptural propositions" (ibid., 4:267). In addition Henry emphasizes that "revelational truth is intelligible, expressible in valid propositions, and universally communicable" (ibid., 1:229).

understand the message of the Bible because it is addressed to man's rationality.<sup>1</sup>

Third, propositional revelation implies that the Bible contains objective knowledge. For Henry, biblical truth is not different from any other kind of truth.<sup>2</sup> It is, rather, genuine information about reality.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, biblical contents can be related to other kinds of truth such as history and science and proved to be compatible with them.<sup>4</sup>

Fourth, by virtue of the propositions being rational and objective, Scriptural truth is capable of being tested

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<sup>1</sup>Henry argues that "If a person must first be a Christian believer in order to grasp the truth of revelation, then meaning is subjective and incommunicable" (ibid., 1:229).

<sup>2</sup>For Henry, "theological truth does not differ from other truth in respect to intelligibility; therefore, truth must be rationally cognized if it is to be meaningfully grasped and communicated" (ibid., 1:228).

<sup>3</sup>Henry stresses that "Scripture's chief sphere is God's self-revelation of his own nature and will. Its primary concern is therefore theological and ethical. This is a very extensive range of authority, to which every other authority claim is subject" (ibid., 4:42). Yet, Henry writes, while it is not comprehensive in its coverage of "subjects like astronomy, botany, economics, geography, history, and politics, . . . God's Scripture contains authoritative teaching about many so-called secular matters . . ." (ibid.). In addition, "The Bible constitutes a propositionally consistent revelation whose principles and logical implications supply a divinely based view of God and the universe" (ibid., 4:251).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1:237. It is to be noted that, for Henry, truth and reality are mutually correspondent. According to Henry, "truth is held to refer to reality" by those, like Thomas F. Torrance, who advocate "representational epistemology," while for him, "truth is itself the reality" (ibid., 3:222). It appears, in that case, that truth is the verbal extension of reality, while reality is knowable only in terms of truth.

for validity and truth.<sup>1</sup> The testing procedures that Henry proposes for biblical propositions consist of three elements. The first element seems to be that biblical propositions must first be arranged into axioms and theorems for their meanings to come out fully.<sup>2</sup> This task is the domain of theology which has the mandate to explicate biblical contents in logical terms. Henry writes,

Theology, we shall insist, sets out not simply with God as a speculative presupposition but with God in his revelation. But the appeal to God and to revelation cannot stand alone, if it is to be significant; it must embrace also some agreement on rational methods of inquiry, ways of argument, and criteria for verification.<sup>3</sup>

It needs to be pointed out at this juncture that the dividing line between Scripture and theology in Henry is very thin.<sup>4</sup>

The second element is Henry's argument that to test

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<sup>1</sup>In response to some persons who "think that tests of revelation or truth are highly inappropriate, and that human creatures ought to accept the divine without question," Henry states that "tests of truth are wholly appropriate. The old Testament required the people to distinguish prophets from pseudoprophets; Jesus warned of false Christs (John 5:43); and the early Christians had to discriminate true from false apostles" (ibid., 1:232).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1:238-40. For Henry, "axiomatization is simply the best means of demonstrating the logical consistency of a given system of thought, and showing that all logically dependent theorems flow from the basic axioms" (ibid., 1:239).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1:14.

<sup>4</sup>Despite his observation that there exists a distinction "between the canonical content of revelation and systems derived from it" (ibid., 1:240), Henry contends that "the content of revelation does indeed lend itself to systematic exposition, and the more orderly and logical that exposition is, the nearer the expositor will be to the mind of God in his revelation" (ibid., 1:240-1).



biblical propositions for truth, what needs to be done is to test the logical validity of the statements made in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> The point here is that Henry understands logical validity of a proposition to be a significant indication that the proposition in question is true.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, he contends that the most critical tool in testing the truth of any proposition is to apply the law of non-contradiction.<sup>3</sup>

A third element in the testing procedures is what Henry calls the "principle of verification."<sup>4</sup> After rejecting all other criteria for testing truth as limited and biased, Henry proposes that "divine revelation is Christianity's principle of verification."<sup>5</sup> While divine revelation refers to a phenomenon larger than the Bible, Henry makes it clear that at the center of divine revelation stands Scripture. He writes,

For revelational theism, verification rests centrally on

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<sup>1</sup>For Henry, ". . . what is logically contradictory cannot be true" (ibid., 1:233). Further, "whatever is logically contradictory and incapable of reconciliation simply cannot be accepted as truth" (ibid., 1:174).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Henry maintains that "A denial of the law of contradiction would make truth and error equivalent; hence in effect it destroys truth" (ibid., 1:233).

<sup>4</sup>Henry does not define "the principle of verification." However, on the basis of what he writes, it seems that it is a norm or criteria by which one knows that some given proposition, idea, or concept is objectively true (ibid., 1:229-32). Henry also refers to this principle as a principle of falsification or confirmation or a science of contraries, according to Aristotle (ibid., 1:248).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

authoritative witness [of biblical writers]. . . . The Old Testament representation that there is no higher verification appeal than God's word is heightened by New Testament emphasis on the Word (rhema): Scripture is an authoritative witness.<sup>1</sup>

Further, "what the prophets and apostles teach, and hence the inspired Scripture, [is] in any case Christianity's ultimate principle of verification. . . ." <sup>2</sup> On the basis of what Henry writes, it seems that, for him, no humanly devised criteria can be applied to test the truthfulness of scriptural propositions.<sup>3</sup> In effect, Henry maintains that the Bible is self-authenticating.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Henry concludes that, on the basis of Bible's own testimony, Scripture is inerrant in all the propositions that it makes.<sup>5</sup>

So far, a proposition has been shown to constitute the minimum unit of logical thought to which Henry attaches his meaning of scriptural truth. As a logical element, a proposition can be subjected to testing procedures which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:265.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1:269.

<sup>3</sup>According to Henry, "It [empirical test] cannot at all decide the objective meaning or existence of the supraempirical. . . . Although given in the context of the space-time continuum, knowledge of God must be gained—even if in concrete experience—from its own proper ground, that is, from God's revelation in his word" (ibid., 1:262).

<sup>4</sup>Henry argues that "Only because Scripture in fact has its source and sustaining authority in God does it confront us as self-authenticating" (ibid., 4:257).

<sup>5</sup>Henry refers to Warfield in stressing 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" (ibid., 4:163).

indicate whether the proposition is erroneous or truthful. In the next two sub-sections, the concepts of error and truth are discussed to further clarify Henry's understanding of the meaning of inerrancy.

Inerrancy as Absence of Error  
in Biblical Propositions

Henry's concept of error is based on his understanding of a proposition. As it was earlier pointed out, Henry conceives a proposition as a logical unit which is capable of being tested for validity and truth.<sup>1</sup> The criteria which Henry holds to be of vital importance in testing propositions is the law of non-contradiction.<sup>2</sup> This law is further explained as having two levels: the level of logical consistency (absence of inner contradiction) and the level of logical coherence (absence of external contradiction).<sup>3</sup> The two levels may be described as follows: The level of logical "consistency is a negative test of truth."<sup>4</sup> The implication of this statement is that this level does not affirm any proposition as being true. What it does is to disqualify a particular proposition as

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<sup>1</sup>See pages 28-29.

<sup>2</sup>Henry makes a distinction between rational and empirical criteria for testing truth. While he gives credit to "scientific verification" for its contribution to contemporary civilization, a fact which theology can ignore only "at its own expense," he, nonetheless, considers rational verification of truth to be of a higher calibre than empirical and experiential criteria (ibid., 1:250-1).

<sup>3</sup>Henry explains the law of non-contradiction along with its two levels (ibid., 1:232-8).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1:232.

erroneous or false on the basis of the presence of a logical contradiction in it.<sup>1</sup> For Henry, a proposition which is self-contradictory is logically invalid, false, or erroneous and, therefore, not true.<sup>2</sup>

The other level is logical coherence which Henry calls a subordinate test.<sup>3</sup> This level checks the correlation which a particular proposition has with the rest of reality and life. According to Henry, one of the evidences that divine revelation is true is its logical compatibility or coherence with "all other information, including empirical data involving chronology, geography, history, and psychological experience" can be shown to be compatible with it.<sup>4</sup>

In view of the two laws, Henry's concept of error may be expressed as follows: An error is any proposition which is logically self-contradicting and one which is incompatible with known facts about reality and life. When

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<sup>1</sup>"Logical consistency is not a positive test of truth, but a negative test; if it were a positive test, logical consistency would accredit all views. . . . As a test, it disqualifies any serious contender whose truth-claim is characterized by logical contradiction" (ibid., 235).

<sup>2</sup>Henry characterizes error as "what is wrong, inaccurate, incorrect, mistaken . . ." (ibid., 1:177).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1:232.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1:237. Henry's point here seems to be that, because all knowledge has one source in God, it is coherent. If, for some reason, a proposition is shown conclusively to be incoherent or incompatible with the rest of knowledge, that would be a clear indication that proposition is false and not true. That is the reason why, for Henry, it is important that biblical truth is shown to be compatible and coherent with other knowledge.

Henry refers to Scripture as inerrant, therefore, he means that there are no logical contradictions within Scripture or between the propositions which the Bible makes and other aspects of reality.

Inerrancy as Presence of  
Truth in Scripture

From one perspective, the above discussion on error is closely related to Henry's concept of truth. The absence of error in a proposition and the compatibility of a proposition with "all other information" is at the same time a sign that truth is present. Truth is the absence of contradiction and falsehood in a proposition.<sup>1</sup> It seems, in fact, that the length to which Henry goes in defending the idea of an "error-free" Bible is partly attributable to his desire to preserve the truth of Scripture.<sup>2</sup> Yet, from another perspective, the mere absence of error in a proposition does not exhaust Henry's concept of truth. According to Henry, truth has an ontological status. That is, it is universal and eternal.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, its existence is not accounted for by mere sense experience or

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:233.

<sup>2</sup>See *ibid.*, 4:170.

<sup>3</sup>This observation is based on Henry's statements about truth such as the following: "Truth does not refer to reality. It is itself the reality" (*ibid.*, 2:222). Truth is "absolute, fixed, definitive, [and] final" (*ibid.*, 1:168). "True knowledge . . . means nothing more or less than truth as God knows and reveals it, and that will include whatever any philosopher and any scientist says without need of retraction" (*ibid.*, 1:93). Truth is "above all human contingency and change, . . . timelessly true as the truth of mathematics" (*ibid.*, 3:474).

logical reasoning. It is Henry's view that man does not create or invent truth.<sup>1</sup> He only discovers it.<sup>2</sup>

Henry categorizes truth into two main types. One type is biblical truth, which includes theological affirmations derived from it, and the other is knowledge which man acquires independently of the Bible.<sup>3</sup> In one sense, biblical truth is the same as other truths. Like them, it is objective, intelligible, and verifiable.<sup>4</sup> But in another sense, it is different. It is "infallibly certain and divinely authorized."<sup>5</sup> Other truths are, in comparison, only tentative and under constant revision.<sup>6</sup> In this case, Henry seems to elevate biblical truth to a

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<sup>1</sup>In one chapter in vol. 1 on various theories about the source of knowledge and truth, Henry discounts intuition, experience, and reason as origins of truth. For him, all truth is a revelation of God (ibid., 1:70-95).

<sup>2</sup>Henry emphasizes that "The biblical doctrine of religious knowledge everywhere presupposes man's ability to reason logically and to understand truth conveyed by God about himself and reality." Further, "God is the revelational source of all truth; revelation is his disclosed truth and the evoking cause of knowledge. Reason is a divinely gifted instrument enabling man to recognize revelation or truth" (ibid., 4:227-8).

<sup>3</sup>See ibid., 1:228; 3:384; 4:109.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1:228.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>For Henry, science, for example, is "a method of knowing that accepts nothing as final (let it be said with finality!) and stands always ready to revise its findings (the word findings may itself be less than accurate). . . . Because of limitations of method, science has so little basis for fixed and final truth about reality that it must stand ready to alter every pronouncement it makes and then to alter that alteration ad infinitum. But Christian theology has historically identified such affirmations not as scientific truth, but as dated opinion" (ibid., 1:173).

position where it alone can be described with certainty as "absolute, fixed, definitive, and final."<sup>1</sup>

From the meaning of inerrancy discussed so far, it seems that Henry's idea of inerrancy entails more specific and fundamental concepts than first meets the eye. For Henry, inerrancy applies to the original autographs only. It also applies to specific propositions in which all biblical truth is capable of being expressed. These propositions are without error and, hence, they constitute divine truth. More specifically, inerrancy may be defined as a term which denotes total validity and truthfulness of the propositions which the Bible explicitly or implicitly makes about God and the whole of reality. In the next section, this discussion about the meaning of inerrancy is continued in terms of the extent to which Henry views the Bible to be inerrant.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Extent of Inerrancy

Henry's idea of inerrancy covers all Scripture.<sup>3</sup> For him, partial inerrancy, if such a thing exists, is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:168.

<sup>2</sup>Henry quotes two writers in his emphasis of the pervasive inerrancy of Scripture. According to him, "John Wesley's position is clear: 'If there be one falsehood in that book it did not come from God of truth' (Journal, 6:117). Lindsell writes: 'If inspiration allows the possibility of error then inspiration ceases to be inspiration' (The Battle for the Bible, p. 31)" (ibid., 1:191).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:184-5.

untenable.<sup>1</sup> If some aspects of the Bible can be accepted to be erroneous, there exists no longer any basis for trusting anything that Scripture says.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Henry maintains that the Bible is inerrant in all the matters that it addresses, including historical and scientific facts. He writes,

Verbal inerrancy implies that truth attaches not only to the theological and ethical teaching of the Bible, but also to the historical and scientific matters insofar as they are part of the express message of the inspired writings.<sup>3</sup>

This general application of the term "inerrancy" raises certain issues which Henry both recognizes and attempts to answer.

One of these issues concerns the coverage of subjects. Some critics of inerrancy have argued for a distinction between essential truths and incidental matters in the Bible as a means of limiting the extent of biblical inerrancy.<sup>4</sup> Henry considers such an approach as self-defeating since all the matters that the Bible addresses are inseparably connected with the central message of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. For Henry, "partial inerrancy" as a term is as confusing as "partial virginity" (ibid., 4:220, n.).

<sup>2</sup>Henry contends that "once errancy of the texts is accommodated, the universe of controversy enlarges. If geographical and historical are untrue, why should the events or doctrines correlated with them be true?" (ibid., 4:178).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:205.

<sup>4</sup>Donald G. Bloesch, Essentials of Evangelical Theology, 2 vols.: God, Authority and Salvation, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), 1:64, 65; McKim, What Christians Believe, 82-94; Beegle, Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility.



Bible.<sup>1</sup> If the Bible is inerrant, Henry avers, it is so in all the subject matter that it addresses.<sup>2</sup>

According to Henry, when the critics charge that there are errors in the Bible, they make one of three mistakes, or a combination of them. First, they fail to recognize that some of the so-called errors are only apparent and not actual.<sup>3</sup> For Henry, a closer study of the passages in question soon reveals that contradictions can be harmonized.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, Henry maintains that some biblical propositions are said to be in error for lack of sufficient information about the subject(s) covered.<sup>5</sup> He points to many archeological discoveries which have vindicated the truth of several historical facts previously thought to be erroneous.<sup>6</sup> Henry's advice is that none of the errors in

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 4:181. Henry illustrates this point by stressing that "Without the assumption that the specifics are reliable, a great deal of contemporary biblical study would collapse into confusion" (ibid., 5:329). In addition, "not even the narrative details [of Jesus' life and ministry] can be considered insignificant when it comes to making a spiritual decision" (ibid., 4:169).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:170-1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:173.

<sup>4</sup>Henry refers to Warfield in stating that "the attempt to exhibit harmony [in Scripture] should indeed be made and earnestly pursued" (ibid., 4:172).

<sup>5</sup>In this connection, Henry quotes Roger Nicole to stress that "'a number of these [errors] are so far from being demonstrable mistakes as to be barely more than inconsiderable difficulties . . .'" (ibid., 4:354).

<sup>6</sup>Henry discusses to some detail some specific achievements of biblical archaeology which he considers to be on the side of inerrancy (ibid., 4:316-367).

the critics' list has conclusively been proven to be so.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Henry cautions biblical scholars against harmonizing seeming contradictions if that enterprise involves overstretching sound methods of biblical interpretation. To leave such cases unharmonized is better than engaging in questionable exegesis.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, for Henry, critics often forget that the errors they point out are in the apographs only.<sup>3</sup> This means that none of the errors mentioned by the critics necessarily threatens Henry's idea of inerrancy. Thus, Henry maintains a concept of full inerrancy in spite of claims that there are errors in the Bible. Expressed otherwise, the above arguments may be summarized as indicating that, for Henry, an error is not an error unless it is shown to meet the following criteria: It must exhaust the exegetical possibilities of the biblical text; it must conclusively be proven that all the relevant information on the subject is not in favor of inerrancy; and error must be shown to have existed in the original autographs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:354.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:172.

<sup>3</sup>On this fact, Henry approves Augustine's statement that "I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it." ('Letter to Jerome,' 82.3)" (ibid., 4:248).

<sup>4</sup>It appears from the nature of these tests that Henry makes it impossible to falsify anything in the Bible.

Despite the stringent criteria set above, Henry disassociates himself from the view which may be called "absolute inerrancy."<sup>1</sup> Henry considers his own view to be more flexible than "absolute inerrancy" for one main reason. He states that one should not expect to find "scientific precision" in the Bible. For him, such an expectation imposes modern and, therefore, foreign modes of thought on the Bible. In clarifying this position, Henry offers two explanations. First, the Bible was written thousands of years ago. As such, its level of technology should not be expected to be compatible with ours.<sup>2</sup> Second, the Bible writers often employ "everyday phenomenological language"--such as sunrise and sunset--which is definitely not meant to convey scientific facts.<sup>3</sup>

Henry maintains that inerrancy extends to all the

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 4:176. The term "absolute inerrancy" is used by Millard Erickson in Christian Theology (Nashville: Baker Book House, 1985), 222. Erickson associates the view with Harold Lindsell who advocates the view in The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976).

According to Lindsell, the truths which the Bible teaches on any subject are inerrant in the same sense that a factual statement in chemistry or history is inerrant today. Lindsell argues that "The Bible is not a textbook on chemistry, astronomy, philosophy or medicine. But when it speaks on matters having to do with these or any other subjects, the Bible does not lie to us. It does not contain error of any kind" (Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible, 18).

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 4:176. This allowance in Henry effectively exempts the Bible from the charge that it contains error in many areas. Henry lists these areas specifically: statistics, measurements, historiography, genealogies, historical data, and cosmological matters (ibid., 4:201).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:109. This argument is used also by other conservative evangelical theologians. See, for example, Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible, 37-38.

subject matter which the Bible addresses. For him, if the Bible makes assertions in matters of theology, morals, history, or science, it does so inerrantly. However, Henry cautions against employing inappropriate criteria in judging certain aspects of truth. This qualification seems to strengthen his understanding of inerrancy. It shows, among other things, that, although Henry's view covers all Scripture, it is realistic. One reason why Henry finds it preferable to retain the concept of inerrancy by qualifying it rather than undermine its usefulness through lack of qualifications is the role which inerrancy plays in Henry's theology. In the next section, attention is given to this role.

#### Inerrancy in Henry's Theology

The concept of inerrancy is not an isolated idea in the theology of Carl Henry. Like other aspects of Henry's thought, inerrancy stands within a web of several related ideas, all of which are aimed at demonstrating the comprehensive coherence of his theological structure.<sup>1</sup> In this section, the question being addressed is the place the concept of inerrancy occupies in the theology of Henry. The answer to this question is sought by first examining in brief the basic structure of Henry's theological system and then by assessing the place of inerrancy in that system.

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<sup>1</sup>Henry holds that "Christian theology is the systematization of the truth-content explicit and implicit in the inspired writings." Thus, the task of a theologian is to present biblical teaching as a "comprehensive whole" (GRA, 1:238, 239).

Henry does not define what a system is nor does he explain the meaning of various technical terms which he uses in connection with the system. But general observations can be made on the basis of his writings in this regard. A system may be defined as a comprehensive but coherent body of theological truths in the form of axioms, theorems, and other propositions which gives an account of all the reality there is.<sup>1</sup> Henry recognizes the existence of many conflicting systems of truth in the modern intellectual arena. In his assessment of these systems, Henry concludes that "there can be only one system of truth, however many theoretical models may be constructed."<sup>2</sup> For Henry, this system is the one advocated by evangelical theology and one which Henry himself defends.<sup>3</sup>

Henry's system consists of axioms and theorems.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This description of a "system" is based on Henry's statements such as the following: "Christianity supplies impetus for a comprehensive and consistent interpretation of reality and it is applicable to all the experiences of life" (ibid., 1:238); "If rationality and system are intrinsic to theology, then the arrangement of theological teaching in axioms and theorems remain a legitimate and ideal goal" (ibid., 1:240).

A system is variously described as a view, world-view, theory, or explanation of reality. For a philosophical explanation of "system," see Fernando Luis Canale, A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presupposition (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1987), 44. For an explanation of various systems and the factors that constitute a system, see Ronald H. Nash, Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 21-79.

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 1:237.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1:241.

<sup>4</sup>Theorems are general principles which a

According to him, an axiom is a "first principle," an assumption, or a presupposition which is not demonstrable and from which all other truths and theorems are derived.<sup>1</sup> An axiom is self-evident and it is neither verifiable nor flexible.<sup>2</sup> Henry continues to assert that every system of truth about reality--be it in natural science or in philosophy--is built on some basic axioms or presuppositions.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, Henry posits two axioms as the foundations of his theological system: the epistemological axiom and the ontological axiom.<sup>4</sup> Henry states clearly that divine revelation is Christianity's epistemological axiom.<sup>5</sup> By this designation he seems to mean that whatever assertions a Christian makes about knowledge--its origin, nature, and content--is derived from,

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systematician formulates as implicates of the axioms. These do not detain us here as they are outside the scope of the present discussion. See *ibid.*, 1:239-41.

<sup>1</sup>This characterization of an axiom is based on Henry's usage of the three terms--axiom, first principle, and presupposition. See Henry's usages in *GRA*, 1:223, 239; 1:219; and 1:230, 231, respectively.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* Further information on "axiom" as Henry uses the term can be found in Kis, "Revelation and Ethics," 228. See also a lecture by Henry's college mentor, Clark, entitled "The Axiom of Revelation," 57-92.

<sup>3</sup>"Consciously or unconsciously," Henry maintains, "belief systems rest on fundamental assumptions which decisively and comprehensively interpret all reality and life" (*GRA*, 1:180). Further, "No historian and no scientist approaches historical or physical events without presuppositions" (*ibid.*, 1:261).

<sup>4</sup>The epistemological axiom is discussed here while the ontological axiom is examined in chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup>*GRA*, 1:213-24.

grounded in, and sanctioned by divine revelation.<sup>1</sup>

For Henry, divine revelation is an essential guide in all pursuits after knowledge and truth. It helps man to see reality from God's perspective without which any knowledge that man possesses is superficial and distorted.<sup>2</sup> It is in this sense that divine revelation is an axiom, a first principle, or presupposition in Henry's epistemology.<sup>3</sup>

Henry views divine revelation as consisting of general revelation and special revelation.<sup>4</sup> For Henry, general revelation refers to God's self-disclosure in four main areas:<sup>5</sup> in nature,<sup>6</sup> in the mind of man,<sup>7</sup> in the moral

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<sup>1</sup>Henry concedes that "biblical writers provide no extended treatise on religious epistemology." However, "on the basis of revelation and its implications he [the Christian] can adduce some specific and highly significant epistemic considerations" (ibid., 1:224).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:205.

<sup>3</sup>As mentioned above, the axiom of a system is undemonstrable. It is self-evident. These are the grounds on which Henry refers to his theological method as presuppositionalist. For him, this designation is not something to be ashamed of but a source of contentment. By recognizing and openly admitting his presuppositions, Henry maintains that he is being objective and that he is hiding nothing under the table. According to him, what he is doing is the same as what every systematician in every field does. See Henry's defence of presuppositionalist methodology in ibid., 1:171, 179, 205, 219-20, 226-36.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2:86.

<sup>5</sup>Henry lists the four areas in ibid., 2:87.

<sup>6</sup>Henry refers to Ps 19 and Rom 1:18-20 as biblical basis for this variety of general revelation (ibid., 2:84).

<sup>7</sup>According to Henry, the mind consists of two things: human reason which enables man to be a recipient of divine revelation (ibid., 2:84) and also the consciousness of "the existence of God" (ibid., 2:133-4).

conscience of man,<sup>1</sup> and in "the whole sweep of history."<sup>2</sup> Some of the other terms which Henry uses in reference to general revelation are "primal revelation"<sup>3</sup> and "general cosmic-anthropological revelation."<sup>4</sup> According to him, this general revelation is important for three main reasons. First, it is "a presupposition of ongoing individual and collective existence in all times and places."<sup>5</sup> Second, "Scripture declares it to be the basis of man's morality and responsibility to God."<sup>6</sup> Henry stresses that "rejection of God's general revelation is what makes men and women heathen."<sup>7</sup> Third, "general revelation is the presupposition of redemptive revelation."<sup>8</sup>

The other type of divine revelation is what Henry refers to as "special revelation."<sup>9</sup> This revelation is "soteriological" or "salvific" in content and purpose. Like general revelation, it is "addressed to the whole world." But, unlike it, special revelation is given in specific

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<sup>1</sup>For Henry, the conscience is the "inner, secret, guilty knowledge of the true God and of his demand for spiritual submission and moral obedience" (ibid., 2:85).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2:87, 247-56.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2:84.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2:86.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2:85.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2:86.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 2:90.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 2:86.



historical events. Henry writes the following regarding what special revelation includes:

In redemptive revelation, God discloses himself in once-for-all saving acts of Judeo-Christian history, particularly in Israel's exodus from Egypt and the consequent founding of the Hebrew nation, and in Jesus' resurrection from the tomb and the consequent founding of the Christian church. And he is disclosed in Jesus Christ the incarnate Logos. He is revealed, moreover, in the prophetic-apostolic Word, in the whole canon of Scripture which objectively communicates in propositional verbal form the content and meaning of all God's revelation.<sup>1</sup>

Both general and special revelation comprise divine revelation which is Henry's epistemological axiom. For Henry, this axiom is the basis for the Christian world-view. It "supplies the impetus for a comprehensive and consistent interpretation of reality."<sup>2</sup> Not only does it reveal "knowledge of the ultimate world" and anticipate "man's future destiny" but it also

exhibits the wonder of the cosmos, the meaning and worth of individual existence, the purpose of history and the role of society and culture, the grip of moral values and the power of love.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of what God has given in his revelation, therefore, Henry projects the possibility of constructing a complete Christian epistemology.<sup>4</sup>

It is to be noted, however, that the utility of the axiom of divine revelation in the construction of a Christian epistemology hinges to a large extent on the fact

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2:87.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1:238.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1:224.

that Scripture is part of that revelation. Certainly, Henry argues that God's revelation is not to be identified exclusively with the Bible.<sup>1</sup> To do so is to obscure "the full range of divine disclosure."<sup>2</sup> Yet, the role that Henry accords Scripture in the revelation axiom is central. For him, it is Scripture which "objectively communicates in propositional verbal form the content and meaning of all God's revelation."<sup>3</sup> In relation to general revelation, the Bible has a logical priority: it "republishes the content of general revelation objectively."<sup>4</sup> In addition, "it enables man to assess fully the revelation in God's created works."<sup>5</sup> In relation to God's revelation in history, Scripture communicates both the "historical act" and "its interpretation."<sup>6</sup> In other words, God's acts in history would have remained unknown and unintelligible were it not for the existence of Scripture. Thus, as these illustrations indicate, the Bible plays a significant role in Henry's epistemological axiom.

Given the important role that Henry accords Scripture in his theory of knowledge, it becomes easy to understand why he seeks to shield the Bible from any

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2:80.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2:87.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1:223.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2:90.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 2:330.

suggestion that it is less than a totally reliable source of objective truth.<sup>1</sup> For Henry, if Scripture has any kind of flaws, it cannot be trusted as an objective expression of "the content and meaning of all God's revelation."<sup>2</sup> If its truth is questionable, it cannot be expected to play the role of making known and intelligible other aspects of divine revelation. In other words, to propose that Scripture is erroneous is to undermine the basis on which Christian epistemology is founded.<sup>3</sup> It is in this context that Henry proposes the idea of inerrancy as "a governing epistemological principle."<sup>4</sup> That is, inerrancy guarantees Scripture's total trustworthiness and this, in turn,

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<sup>1</sup>Henry explicitly states, "The fact of inerrant autographs is both theoretically and practically important" (ibid., 4:209).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2:87.

<sup>3</sup>The major problem which Henry associates with the view that the Bible has errors is that it "provides no adequate basis for a sound apologetic. Only logical imprecision can begin with errancy and conclude with divine authority" (ibid., 4:192). According to him, what "errancy" does is to "destroy the objective truth of the Christian religion, trivialize theology, and lead finally to skepticism" (ibid., 4:193).

<sup>4</sup>The context in which this phrase occurs is Henry's response to critics who think that inerrancy is dispensable. Henry retorts, "But if inerrancy is irrelevant as a governing epistemological principle, why should any specific issue of faith and practice be thought beyond the possibility of apostolic error? . . . To argue that the modern exegete can trustworthily distinguish what is true and false in Scripture, even if the inspired prophets and apostles could not do so, is like swallowing a camel and straining a gnat" (ibid., 4:238). These statements seem to imply that inerrancy is indispensable if the Bible is to play the role it should in the Christian theory of knowledge. The fact that Henry considers inerrancy to be a "governing presupposition," particularly in hermeneutics appears to be implied (ibid., 4:173, 191).

establishes the case for a Christian epistemology. When a single error is admitted to exist in Scripture, Henry stresses, the door is wide open for individuals to find all kinds of errors in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> According to Henry, only if and when Scripture is shown to be totally reliable can it play the decisive role which Henry accords it in his theology.<sup>2</sup> It is Henry's view that, without inerrancy, one is left with "an unstable religious epistemology,"<sup>3</sup> and by implication, a vulnerable theological system.

### Conclusion

The case for inerrancy which Henry presents covers a wide range of areas. The concept of inerrancy denotes total reliability of scriptural contents, the logical consistency and coherence of the propositions in which biblical truth is expressed, absence of error and presence of truth in Scripture as the document of revelation. As it has been shown, inerrancy has the original autographs as its referent

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<sup>1</sup>For Henry, "once errancy of the text is accommodated, the universe of controversy quickly enlarges. . . . Once biblical inerrancy is set aside, errancy is readily correlated with much broader spheres of conflict" (ibid., 4:178).

<sup>2</sup>Commenting on the "importance of probing the nature and implications of biblical inerrancy," Henry argues, "An unsatisfactory view of Scripture will soon undermine itself, if we cannot rely on the gospels and Epistles to tell the truth, we can say little or nothing about Jesus Christ whom they represent" (ibid., 4:366-7). Further, "Without persuasive epistemic credentials, Christianity will be assimilated to the historical approach prevalent in the modern intellectual world where all events are set in the context of developmental contingency and any claim to finality and absolute uniqueness is leveled" (ibid., 1:213).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:366-7.

since only they bear the quality of being inspired by God. Although Henry does not espouse absolute inerrancy, he, nonetheless, insists that the Bible is fully inerrant both in part and in whole. It has also been pointed out that inerrancy occupies an important place in Henry's epistemology and, hence, in his theological system. A natural conclusion from these observations seems to be that, without inerrancy, Christianity has no "epistemic credentials" since Scripture would thereby be no longer a reliable interpreter of the revelation axiom.

It is recognized that all these aspects of inerrancy cannot be evaluated in full in this study. Such a task would demand more time and space than is presently available. However, it is important to conclude this chapter with an assessment of some of the underlying arguments on which Henry bases his case for inerrancy. According to investigation, there are four main arguments which Henry uses to defend inerrancy. These are: (1) argument from text of Scripture, (2) argument from the phenomena of Scripture, (3) argument from history, and (4) argument from the doctrine of inspiration.

First, Henry maintains that the concept of inerrancy is supported by Scripture's witness about itself. He states that the Bible "explicitly teaches the doctrine of verbal inerrancy."<sup>1</sup> The passages which he cites are 2 Tim 3:16,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:163.

John 10:35, Rom 3:2, and 1 Cor 2:13.<sup>1</sup> Further investigation of these passages reveals two points. The first one is that the passages do not refer to inerrancy. If they do, the reference is indirect and, therefore, dependent on subjective factors of interpretation. The second point is that Henry himself elsewhere indicates that inerrancy is not an explicit teaching of Scripture. He writes, "inerrancy is implicitly taught, logically deducible, and is a necessary correlate of Scripture as the word of God."<sup>2</sup> In fact, Henry points out that inerrancy may not be a correct biblical interpretation. According to him,

While Warfield held that the Bible explicitly teaches its own inerrancy, he left open the possibility that inerrancy is not a correct biblical interpretation: 'This evidence is not in the strict sense "demonstrative;" it is "probable" evidence. It therefore leaves open the metaphysical possibility of its being mistaken.'<sup>3</sup>

What these statements seem to indicate is that Henry considers inerrancy to be deducible from Scripture. However, the evidence is not conclusive and, as such, Henry seems hesitant to rest the case for inerrancy wholly on evidence from Scripture.

Henry's second argument for inerrancy comes from the phenomena of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Henry maintains that the phenomena

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<sup>1</sup>These texts are based on the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod which was adopted by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in 1932, p. 1548 (ibid., 4:168).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:168. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:168.

<sup>4</sup>This phrase, "phenomena of Scripture," is used here

of Scripture vindicates the inerrancy of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> He also does not consider any of the so-called errors in the Bible to be an error unless it is demonstrated that the exegetical possibilities of the text are exhausted (through harmonization), that all the relevant data in the text in question made available, and that error is shown to have existed in the original autographs.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, Henry also concedes that scriptural phenomena is not always compatible with inerrancy. He recognizes that some apparent contradictions in Scripture cannot be harmonized successfully without engaging in "strained or artificial exegesis."<sup>3</sup> Henry discourages such an exegesis and even states that harmonizing is "a second-order concern."<sup>4</sup> For him, some passages are better left unharmonized. In one instance, he even considers the appeal to the original autographs to be, at times, an oversimplification of some textual problems. He notes that "the most troublesome discrepancies occur not in passages where the biblical text is in doubt, but rather where the

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to refer to the nature of the text of Scripture, that is, the known facts about scriptural contents.

<sup>1</sup>Henry holds that "Harmonizing the phenomena with biblical teaching is not unimportant as Warfield sees it; the attempt to exhibit harmony should indeed be made and earnestly pursued" (GRA, 4:172).

<sup>2</sup>See *ibid.*, 4:172-3, 316-67.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:172.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

text is not in question."<sup>1</sup> Given these observations, it seems that Henry does not rest his case for inerrancy mainly on the phenomena of Scripture.

A third argument which Henry appeals to in support of inerrancy is history. Henry refers to inerrancy as "the historic commitment of the Christian church."<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted that, in this context, Henry means, by inerrancy, a belief in the total reliability of Scripture. In that sense, Henry is certainly right in stating that the total reliability of the Bible was always the position of the church from the biblical times until the rise of the critical theories in the last two or three centuries.<sup>3</sup> As far as inerrancy as a theological concept is concerned, however, Henry traces its earliest origin to Lutheran theologians of the seventeenth century in Europe and the Princeton theologians of the nineteenth century here in America.<sup>4</sup>

If a distinction is to be maintained between inerrancy as a theological concept and total reliability of the Bible as some scholars appear to suggest,<sup>5</sup> it seems that

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<sup>1</sup>Henry illustrates this point by comparing the difference between Gen 50:4-13 and Acts 7:16 in regard to where Abraham bought a burial place (ibid., 4:231-5).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:367.

<sup>3</sup>See Hasel, Biblical Interpretation Today, 4-10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4:369.

<sup>5</sup>Van Bemmelen, Issues in Inspiration, 373-5. The distinction between inerrancy as a theological concept, on one hand, and confidence in the Bible as the word of God, on the other, seems to be made also by Geoffrey W. Bromiley,



the appeal to church history as a supporting evidence for inerrancy is not very helpful. Available studies on inerrancy and history reveal that history can be interpreted in favor of inerrancy or against it.<sup>1</sup> Henry seems to be aware of these facts and, therefore, does not rest his case for inerrancy wholly on history.

The fourth argument which Henry adduces for inerrancy is the biblical concept of inspiration. The affinity that exists between the concept of inerrancy and inspiration in Henry is particularly notable. First, it is not uncommon to find the words inerrancy and inspiration combined in a single phrase. Henry writes of "inerrant inspiration" in a manner that suggests a close relationship between inerrancy and inspiration.<sup>2</sup> Second, in his

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"Church Doctrine of Inspiration," in Revelation and the Bible, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 205-17; and Mark Noll, "A Brief History of Inerrancy, Mostly in America," in The Proceedings, 1987, 9-25.

<sup>1</sup>For the view that the Bible and church history are on the side of inerrancy, see, for example, Carl Henry, ed., Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), and John D. Hannah, ed., Inerrancy and the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984). For the opposite view that Scripture and history are against inerrancy, see, for example, Beegle, Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility; and Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:206. The following statements also shed more light on this point: "It is no accident that those who deplore the concept of biblical inerrancy are increasingly uncomfortable with the doctrine of inspiration as well" (ibid., 4:192); ". . . inerrant inspiration is what assures the absence of logical contradictions and verbal misrepresentations" (ibid., 4:206); and "in all cases inspiration safeguards the writers from error in communicating the content of their message" (ibid., 4:207).

treatment of the subjects of inerrancy and inspiration, he discusses inerrancy immediately after his chapter on inspiration.<sup>1</sup> Henry develops his themes in logical sequences and, therefore, it is noteworthy that the two concepts are juxtapositioned in that manner. Third, it was earlier mentioned that the term "inerrancy" is applied in reference to the autographs for the simple reason that only they are designated as "inspired." According to Henry, the apographs are infallible, not inerrant. The reason for this is that they are not expressly said to be inspired in the Bible.

Henry maintains that inspiration is "a divine activity."<sup>2</sup> For him, inspiration is descriptive of God's activity in the particular context of revealing himself at specific times and places and to particular individuals. On the basis of what Henry writes, the basic issue involved in designating inspiration as a divine activity is an important one. In effect, it raises the question of the nature of God's activity in the world and how God relates himself with the world. The implication of this observation is that in order to fully understand and appreciate how Henry views God's activity in inspiration, one has to examine Henry's views on the nature of God's activity in and relationship with the world. Given Henry's systematic and integrative approach to theological subjects, it is not likely the case

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<sup>1</sup>See GRA, vol. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:130.

that Henry's understanding of how God acts in inspiration differs radically from his views on how God acts in other contexts. As investigation seems to indicate, Henry's views on the nature of God's activity in the world are explicated in his concept of sovereignty.

Accordingly, the next chapter is devoted to an analysis of Henry's concept of sovereignty as a means of bringing to light the basic ideas which underlie Henry's understanding of the nature of God's activity in the world. That discussion sets the stage for chapter 4 in which an attempt is made at identifying the nature of the correlation between inerrancy and sovereignty in Henry.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is to be noted that the sequence of topics, from inerrancy to sovereignty, is dictated by the nature of the subject and the delimitations of the study. At first, it might appear that a discussion on sovereignty should precede the chapter on inerrancy, given the fact that the case being advanced here posits the concept of sovereignty as the "presupposition." Yet, since the study is undertaken primarily in the interest of the doctrine of inerrancy, a clarification of this primary concern takes precedence over that which it presupposes. Another support for the present sequence arises out of the case for inerrancy itself. As argued in this chapter, there are pointers in the concept of inerrancy itself which indicate that inerrancy derives its main impetus from considerations outside the perimeters of its meaning and those arguments which constitute its foundations.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

In chapter 2, Henry's concept of inerrancy was analyzed in terms of Henry's sources, the meaning of the concept, the role of inerrancy in Henry's theology, and the arguments which Henry uses as basis for taking the inerrancy position. It was also noted that inerrancy is closely connected with Henry's idea of inspiration. In Henry's words, "The biblical doctrine of inspiration . . . connects God's activity with the express truths and words of Scripture."<sup>4</sup> To understand inspiration fully as an activity of God, it is appropriate to address first the wider issue of the nature of God's activity in the world. One reason for taking this approach is that, without the wider context in which specific ideas are set, it is often difficult to grasp the full force of Henry's concepts.

As investigation reveals, Henry's ideas on the nature of God's activity in the world find expression in the concept of sovereignty. In this chapter, the concept of sovereignty is analyzed descriptively for the purpose of clarifying Henry's ideas about the nature of God's activity in general. After the analysis in this chapter, attention

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<sup>4</sup>GRA, 4:144.

is given, in chapter 4, to the issue of how inerrancy presupposes the concept of sovereignty.

This chapter it is divided into five main sections. The first is general and introductory. It is an enquiry into Henry's theological orientation out of which the concept of sovereignty arises. That background leads to the second section which is on the meaning of sovereignty. As becomes evident in the discussion, the approach used here in the search for the meaning of sovereignty is neither semantic nor linguistic. It is oriented to Henry's theology of sovereignty. The discussion on the meaning of sovereignty is continued in the section on the extent or scope of sovereignty, that is, whether or not Henry's concept of sovereignty has limits. This prepares the ground for the larger issue in section four concerning the place of sovereignty in Henry's theology. Finally, a conclusion is made on the basis of the material presented in this chapter and in view of the theme of this study.

#### Sovereignty and Henry's Tradition

An attempt is made here at setting Henry's concept of sovereignty in Henry's theological tradition. The investigation conducted here is not intended to be exhaustive but to give a bird's-eye view on the sources and the tradition which lie behind Henry's concept of sovereignty. To achieve that goal, a brief survey is made of the clues which Henry himself gives in God, Revelation and Authority concerning his intellectual ancestry.

Henry's theological tradition is not easily detectible from his series. One characteristic of Henry's style of writing is his frequent use of diverse sources of information to strengthen his arguments.<sup>1</sup> This practice gives Henry's writings an ecumenical orientation.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Henry describes himself as a defender of "historic Christianity" and "evangelical faith," in particular,<sup>3</sup> both of which terms can be used for wide varieties of Christian traditions.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the difficulties which these terms pose

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<sup>1</sup>D. B. Knox has checked vol. 6 alone and found that there are 750 different books quoted and 850 authors referred to (Review of GRA, vol. 6, Reformed Theological Review 43 [Jan-Apr 1984]: 19).

<sup>2</sup>At least two theologians see Henry as a partner in ecumenical dialogue: Mark Ellingsen, review of GRA, vol. 4-6, Dialogue 24 (Winter 1985): 76; and Peter D. Fehlner, review of GRA, vol. 6, Theological Studies 44 (Dec. 1983): 708. The former is a Lutheran theologian and the latter a Roman Catholic.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:34, 136; 1:28, 212. Henry also refers to his theology as "revealed theology" (ibid., 1:196, 199), "biblical Christianity" (ibid., 1:248), and "Judeo-Christian religion" (ibid., 1:248; 5:136).

<sup>4</sup>According to George Marsden, the term "evangelical" is elusive." He writes that it refers to "anyone who promotes proclamation of the gospel to salvation through the atoning work of Christ and has a traditional high view of Scripture alone as authority." See his article, "Reformed and American" in Reformed Theology in America, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985) 2. Barr adds that an evangelical can be a Calvinist or an Arminian in his theology (Fundamentalism, 188).

It appears that the reason why Henry does not identify himself closely with any specific theological tradition is because such an identity would jeopardize his apologetic goal which is aimed at making a wide appeal on behalf of Christianity. Henry laments the "fragmented condition of evangelical Christians" and calls for "a corporate fellowship of believers" with a "vanguard of scholars to exhibit the truth of revelation with an intellectual power that confronts non-Christian ideologies" (GRA, 1:133). It is in his autobiography where one learns

in establishing Henry's theological roots are not insurmountable.

The evidence considered here comes mainly from Henry's use of sources in his major work, God, Revelation and Authority. In several instances, Henry makes favorable references to theological positions of John Calvin and various Reformed Confessions written before 1650. Among Calvin's ideas which Henry approves explicitly are Calvin's aprioristic methodology,<sup>1</sup> an emphasis on God's nature rather than his existence,<sup>2</sup> the essential divinity of the Trinity,<sup>3</sup> the importance of the doctrine of predestination,<sup>4</sup> the

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that Henry is a Baptist and that he has been intimately involved in the interdenominational evangelical revival for about fifty years (Henry, Confessions of a Theologian, 62-107, 144ff).

<sup>1</sup>After surveying various methodological approaches to theology, Henry endorses Calvin's "apriorism" in an extended comment. "Aprioristic methodology" is described by Henry as the view that a person is born with a certain fundamental knowledge about God and other principles that make human life--search for truth, interpersonal communication, etc.--possible (GRA, 1:334-43). This seems to be a basic epistemological principle in Henry.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5:135. Henry here paraphrases Calvin: "What is God? Men who pose this question are merely toying with idle speculations. It is more important for us to know of what sort he is and what is consistent with his nature." See The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20, Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960], 1, 2:2. Hereafter, this resource is referred to as John Calvin, Institutes, followed by book number in Roman numeral, and chapter number, and section number in Arabic numerals.

<sup>3</sup>GRA, 5:206.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:76.

function of the law as a teacher of righteousness,<sup>1</sup> emphasis on universal revelation and "a fractured image of God" in man after the fall,<sup>2</sup> limited atonement,<sup>3</sup> and the Holy Spirit as the source of all truth.<sup>4</sup> In addition to Calvin, Henry also uses the pre-1650 Reformed Confessions as definitive statements on matters of doctrine. Thus, he cites The Westminster Confession (1647) as teaching the foreknowledge of God<sup>5</sup> and Article 12 of the Belgic Confession (1561) on the purpose of the doctrine of providence.<sup>6</sup> On one hand, it may appear as if, in these instances, Henry is merely adding more sources indiscriminately in order to strengthen his arguments.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, while Henry writes

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:253.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:424.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:88, 100.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:372.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5:279. Henry mentions The Formula of Concord (1576) here as also teaching God's prescience. This is rather strange. Besides being a Lutheran rather than a Reformed Confession, the view of God's foreknowledge in The Formula is quite different from that of The Westminster Confession which is Reformed. In The Formula, foreknowledge is not tied to foreordination of particular events. Compare The Formula of Concord, XI:2-5 and The Westminster Confession V:1, 2, Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 165-166 and 612, respectively.

<sup>6</sup>GRA, 6:478.

<sup>7</sup>That is the impression of Paul Helm who, in reviewing vol. 6 of GRA writes, "Any apt quotation, from whatever source, is grist to the author's mill. Thus extracts from Eulalio R. Bulthazar jostles with those from Karl Barth, and quotations from Hegel with those from Harpers magazine" (Churchman 98 [1984]: 74). A thorough reading of Henry's volumes reveals a more deliberate choice and use of the sources than Helm seems to allow.



approvingly of many ideas from various sources, he also criticizes other ideas from the same sources.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, Calvin and the pre-1650 Reformed Confessions are an exception. The investigation has demonstrated only approvals of these sources and no criticisms. Henry's burden with Calvin and the Reformed Confessions is to defend their orthodoxy and correct those interpretations of them which he considers to be misguided.<sup>2</sup> These observations, among others, have led reviewers of GRA to conclude that Henry is "deeply steeped in the Calvinistic heritage."<sup>3</sup>

Given the above observations concerning Henry's theological heritage, it is most unlikely that in his exposition of the concept of sovereignty, Henry will deviate, at least significantly, from his tradition. In the next section, Henry's understanding of sovereignty is explored with his theological background in mind. No

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<sup>1</sup>One example here is James Barr--the author of Fundamentalism--whose ideas Henry uses (GRA, 4:10, 17, 192) but whom he also criticizes sharply (*ibid.*, 4:121-30, 144-50, 329-35). Another example is the Seventh-day Adventists. Henry commends them for teaching creationism and praises scholarly contributions of Adventist scholars like Edwin Thiele and Gerhard Hasel (*ibid.*, 6:149; 4:360-1, 466-7). But he also criticizes them for honoring "Ellen G. White on a level with inspired prophets" (*ibid.*, 4:204).

<sup>2</sup>Henry considers Karl Barth (1886-1968), Emil Brunner (1889-1966), G. C. Berkouwer (1903-), Jack B. Rogers (1934-), and a host of other modern theologians as unorthodox interpreters of the Reformed faith (*ibid.*, 6:91-97).

<sup>3</sup>Ellingsen, review, 75, 76. See also reviews by John Eddins (Perspectives in Religious Studies 11 [1984]: 73); Knox (19, 20); and Padgett (785-6). Eddins, after remarking that Henry's theology is "a slightly modified Calvinism," hastens to add that Henry "defends a Calvinistic doctrine of God with vengeance" (73).

thorough comparative study is intended between Henry's ideas and those of the Reformed tradition since such a task lies outside the scope of this investigation. But, where appropriate, brief comments are made in assessing the extent to which Henry reflects the influence of his tradition on specific aspects of the concept of sovereignty.

### The Meaning of Sovereignty

Henry's understanding of sovereignty is primarily found in a chapter entitled "The Sovereignty of the Omnipotent God."<sup>1</sup> The following descriptive analysis of the concept is based on the ideas in that chapter and other relevant ideas in the rest of GRA. In this section the meaning of sovereignty is analyzed in terms of what the concept signifies.

Henry's usage of the word "sovereignty" may be said to include five significations: independence, freedom, power, lordship and causality of God. These significations have been carefully chosen as best representing what Henry means by the term "sovereignty." Since the focus of the study is the relationship between sovereignty and inerrancy, the selected significations are described and analyzed in view of that focus.

First, divine sovereignty stands for the independence of God in his existence.<sup>2</sup> God is self-

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 5:307-33.

<sup>2</sup>Henry refers to God's independence in terms of God's aseity, a term which, according to Henry, means that God has "life from and by himself in independent freedom" (ibid., 5:69).

sufficient and his being and life have their origin only in himself.<sup>1</sup> He is not dependent on anything outside himself for anything.<sup>2</sup> In fact, if everything turned into nothingness, God would still exist.<sup>3</sup>

Second, sovereignty points to the freedom of God in his decisions and activity. God does nothing out of necessity.<sup>4</sup> The creation of this particular world, the choice of Israel as the people of the covenant, the salvation of sinners and other things that God does are a result of the free will of God. Had he chosen to do so, he would have created a different type of a world or chosen another nation as his people.<sup>5</sup> In other words, God is sovereign in the sense that he can do anything, anytime, and anywhere as he sees fit.<sup>6</sup> Yet, Henry cautions that God's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Henry asserts that God is "independent of all compulsory relations to anything and anyone outside himself" (ibid., 6:37).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:69. In stressing this point, Henry argues that one of the major flaws in process philosophy is its refusal to view God in terms other than his relationship with the world (ibid., 5:68).

The same idea is expressed by Reformed theologians as follows: "It is independence by which in being and operating God depends on no one else but possesses for himself an essence sufficient to make him a se in essence and also in operation, so that everything outside him depends upon him in existing and in operating" (Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, rev. and ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thompson [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950], 63).

<sup>4</sup>GRA, 5:317.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Arthur Pink, a Reformed theologian, describes God similarly as being "free to decree or not to decree, and to decree one thing and not another" (The Attributes of God

freedom does not lead him to do unreasonable things.<sup>1</sup> God has not only a logical mind but also a personal will and a good character. These factors are the ground from which the freedom of God springs.<sup>2</sup>

Third, God's sovereignty signifies divine power.<sup>3</sup> Henry views this power as that energy which God possesses and which he manifests in various ways if and when he chooses.<sup>4</sup> For Henry, it is not a blind force but, like divine freedom, an aspect of God which is grounded in God's mind, personality and character.<sup>5</sup> For purposes of clarity, Henry distinguishes between God's inherent power and manifest power.<sup>6</sup> The latter is revealed to us through the self-revelation of God in Scripture and through what God

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[Swengel, Pennsylvania: Reiner Publications, 1964], 11).

<sup>1</sup>God's action is "rationally consistent and intrinsically good" (GRA, 6:274).

<sup>2</sup>Henry states that "God's will or nature implies certain limitations on his actions . . ." (ibid., 5:319). Further, "God's own activity is a free divine activity, grounded in, yet not necessitated by, his nature (ibid., 317).

<sup>3</sup>The word "omnipotence" generally conveys this notion of power--unlimited power. The term is avoided in the discussion because its exact meaning in Henry is ambiguous, despite its frequent mention. At times it is synonymous with sovereignty. At other times, it means just power as it is described in the third signification of sovereignty. Compare, for example, Henry's usage in ibid., 5:308 and page 311 in the same chapter.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 5:314, 317.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5:316, 317.

does, has done and has promised to do in the future.<sup>1</sup>  
 Divine acts such as creation, preservation of the universe,  
 and redemption are examples of manifest power of God.<sup>2</sup>

Fourth, Henry refers to God's lordship over all nature and history as another aspect of divine sovereignty. In this connection, Henry views God as King, Monarch, Judge, Administrator, and Governor of the universe.<sup>3</sup> The titles are not idle terms since behind them lie the notions of independence, freedom, and power of God which make his lordship an actual reality. God is lord by virtue of his creatorship and continual preservation of the universe.<sup>4</sup> He is the highest power there is anywhere.<sup>5</sup> For Henry, God is

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<sup>1</sup>Henry stresses that it is on the basis of manifest power that we can speak of God's inherent power (ibid.). This emphasis corresponds with Calvin's idea of omnipotence. Calvin writes, "And truly God claims . . . omnipotence--not the empty, idle, and almost unconscious sort that the Sophists imagine, but a watchful, effective, active sort, engaged in ceaseless activity. Not . . . a general principle of confused motion . . . but one that is directed toward individual and particular motions" (Institutes, I, 16:3).

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 5:308. Were we to classify the significations, inherent power would be listed alongside God's independence and freedom as these characteristics describe God as he is in himself whereas manifest power would be classified together with God's lordship and causality as these aspects are descriptive of God's relationship with the world.

<sup>3</sup>Henry uses all these terms for God (ibid., 5:309; 6:67; 27; 15; and 36, respectively).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 5:316, 317.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5:318.

"the sovereign Lord of the cosmos, . . . lord and judge of the whole space-time processes."<sup>1</sup>

The ideas of independence, freedom, power, and lordship of God define or qualify the concept of sovereignty. But they do not spell out how God actually exercises his sovereignty in the world. In other words, if God is the highest Power and the supreme Lord in the universe, in what way are these divine properties effected in the world? The answer to this question seems to lie in Henry's idea of divine causality which also signifies divine sovereignty.

The word "causality" is itself not one of Henry's favorites. Henry uses it mostly to show that the popular meaning of the term belongs to "conjectural philosophy of religion, and not to the Bible."<sup>2</sup> However, Henry does not consider the term "causality" to be one that can easily be dispensed with. He writes,

Causality is a complex subject in the theological no less than in the physical realm, but to simply dispense with it in order to advance personal factors creates as many problems as it solves.<sup>3</sup>

While, in one instance, Henry states that the notion of causality brings confusion, he also stresses that "to do

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:27. Calvin also holds that "the universe is ruled by God, not only because he watches over the order of nature set by himself, but because he exercises especial care over each of his works" (Institutes, I, 16:4).

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 5:153.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:93.

without causality seems to invite ambiguous synonyms."<sup>1</sup> For him, creation is certainly not a "mechanistic causal reality," but it involves, nonetheless, divine causation whereby God voluntarily reenacts constantly his presence and power.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Henry notes approvingly that in the Synod of Dort, "causal categories" are used "to describe God's sovereign work."<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons why Henry retains the idea of causality in his theology seems to be his belief that God's relations with man and the world are "causal" in nature.<sup>4</sup> For him, God is a "divine principle immanent in all reality . . . a spiritual-rational-moral shaping force at work throughout cosmic existence and all historical events."<sup>5</sup>

Henry distinguishes between God's causality and the causality of creatures. He refers to God as the "ultimate cause of all that is,"<sup>6</sup> the "sovereign causal creator of all,"<sup>7</sup> the "independent personal cause of the universe,"<sup>8</sup> the "metaphysical Absolute,"<sup>9</sup> the "fundamental power of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:98.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:42, 64.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 3:202.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 6:37.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 5:332.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

creation, the cause of existence,"<sup>1</sup> the "chief causal principle,"<sup>2</sup> an "operative reality who impinges on the whole universe to the very limits and details of man's daily life,"<sup>3</sup> and the "one and only creative causality in the universe and in history."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to divine causality, Henry also believes in the existence of "ongoing causes"<sup>5</sup> which he also refers to as "causality of nature."<sup>6</sup> In one instance, he even mentions "secondary causes" in a manner that closely identifies them with the finite causal agents.<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere, the causality of nature bear the designation "agency of creatures."<sup>8</sup>

On the question of the relationship between the causality of God and the causality of creatures, Henry's position may be outlined as follows: First, Henry maintains that God's relationship with the world does not imply that God is ontologically continuous with the world. For him, the world is not necessary to God's being, neither is it a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:333.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:64.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:149.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:232.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6:49.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5:311.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 6:49.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 6:84.



mode of God's being or a phase of divine life.<sup>1</sup> Henry holds that God transcends the world in a manner that makes his contact with the world both objective and external.<sup>2</sup>

Second, God is not impersonal or blind but personal and intelligible in his relationship with the world.<sup>3</sup> Third, divine causality is voluntary, that is, free and without internal or external necessity on the part of God.<sup>4</sup>

According to Henry, "God's own activity is a free divine activity, grounded in, yet not necessitated by his nature."<sup>5</sup>

Fourth, divine causality is teleological in perspective.<sup>6</sup>

Henry maintains that God "is now purposely at work not only in the religious sphere but also in the realm of socio-political, scientific and economic spheres."<sup>7</sup> Further,

"Christ is advancing the eternal good of believers throughout the entire space-time process."<sup>8</sup> Fifth, Henry understands the relationship between God's causality and that of the creatures in terms of "concurrence." The word "concurrence" is used by Henry in a context where its presence is by no means incidental. The passage in which

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<sup>1</sup>Henry considers such views to be closer to pantheism than to his own (ibid., 6:39).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:40.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:331-3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:49.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5:317.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 6:50, 303-4, 492-513.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 6:505.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

the word occurs reads as follows:

God is not a divine being who acts only behind, outside or between cosmic and historical processes; he is present in these processes and works in them. The universe does not exist without his support and concurrence. God both acts on the events of nature and history from without and is purposely and meaningfully engaged within the universe as well.<sup>1</sup>

Although Henry leaves many questions unanswered about causality,<sup>2</sup> his usage of the word "concurrence" in the above context provides a basis for understanding his views on the relationship between God's causality and the causality of the creatures.

First, the word "concurrence," in its dictionary meaning, suggests association, cooperation, and union or two or more agents in producing a single effect.<sup>3</sup> In applying

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:48. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>2</sup>Henry is extremely cautious about using the language of causality which entails referring to God as the First Cause and the agency of the creatures as secondary causes. He is certainly against using the phrase First Cause for God. Even the phrase "secondary causes" is used very advisedly (ibid., 6:49). The problem which this caution on the part of Henry poses is that there are no statements in Henry's series showing clearly how God's causality relates itself with the causality of the creatures, a distinction which Henry certainly makes but one which has also to be made on the basis of certain statements here and there. Perhaps the reason for Henry's caution is that Henry, as an apologist, seeks to appeal to a wide evangelical constituency and if he came out strongly on causality, chances are the the appeal could be diluted. Yet, the possibility of explicating Henry's views on the nature of the relationship between the two causalities exists despite these obstacles. There are a few key words and ideas which Henry uses which unmistakably link him with the traditional Reformed dogmatics where the relationship is more explicit. In this section, the few links which Henry provides are mentioned as a way of clarifying the relationship.

<sup>3</sup>According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, the word "concurrence" denotes, among other

the word to the relationship between God and the creatures, it seems that "concurrency" denotes that the activity of God and that of the creatures are not merely simultaneous but also harmonious. Further, the implication is there that one agent cannot produce an effect without the active and contributory involvement of the other. In the present case, this implication applies only to the creatures since God does not always act in conjunction with the creatures.<sup>1</sup>

Second, the word "concurrency" links Henry directly with the traditional Reformed dogmatics<sup>2</sup> where "concurrency," or concursum, stands for a specific

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things, "agreement or union in action, combination of power or influence," and "cooperation." The verbal root, "to concur," means "to act together to a common end or to produce a single effect," while the adjectival derivative, "concurrent," is defined as follows: "occurring, arising, or operating at the same time often in relationship, conjunction, association, or cooperation; acting in conjunction: marked by accord, agreement, harmony, or similarity in effect or tendency" (see Webster's Third New International Dictionary, ed. Philip Babcock Gove (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 1986), s.v. "concurrency," "concur," and "concurrent."

<sup>1</sup>It was previously mentioned that God's activity is free and independent of any compulsory relations with the world. This leaves concurrency as a necessary condition for the activity of the creatures only since, unlike God, they are not free to act independently.

<sup>2</sup>As used in this study, the phrase "traditional Reformed/Calvinistic dogmatics/theology" refers to the theological position of John Calvin and his followers. Since that tradition has many varieties today, I have in mind particularly those schools of thought which make no allowance for independent or uncaused activity of the creatures. For a description of the four major schools of thought in Reformed theology, see David Basinger, "The New Calvinism: A Sheep in Wolves' Clothing," Scottish Journal of Theology 39 (November 1986): 483-99. My understanding of the term "traditional" school excludes the fourth school in Basinger's scheme.

theological concept.<sup>1</sup> According to Johannes Heideggerus, a Reformed theologian who lived around 1700,

Concurrence or cooperation is the operation of God by which He cooperates directly with the second causes as depending upon Him alike in their essence as in their operation, so as to urge or move them to action and to operate along with them in a manner suitable to a first cause and adjusted to the nature of second causes.<sup>2</sup>

As this statement indicates, the word "concurrence" is used in the context of the relationship between God as a first cause and the creatures as second, or secondary causes. It is not insignificant to note that Henry, too, sets the word "concurrence" in a context where he discusses the notion of causality, raises "the question of how God acts in the world" and "injects himself into the ongoing causes," which Henry advisedly also calls "secondary causes."<sup>3</sup> What this fact implies is that the meaning of the word "concurrence" as Henry uses it can be illumined by the way traditional Reformed theologians understood the relationship between God, as the primary or the First Cause and second or secondary causes.

For both Henry and Reformed theology, the

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<sup>1</sup>Given Henry's theological tradition--Reformed or Calvinist as argued at the beginning of this chapter--and the theological importance of the word "concurrence" in traditional Reformed theology, it seems that Henry's usage of the term, particularly in the context of the passage cited above, is neither accidental, coincidental, or incidental. Rather, its mention is a deliberate effort on Henry's part to clarify the manner in which God, "the one and only creative causality" (GRA, 6:232) relates himself to the activity of the creatures.

<sup>2</sup>Johannes Heideggerus, quoted in Bizer, 258.

<sup>3</sup>GRA, 6:48-49.

relationship in question is characterized by three main features. First, the activity of God and that of the creatures constitute not two separate, different, or contradicting activities but a single activity. In other words, what may be referred to as an act of the creatures is at the same time an act of God.<sup>1</sup>

Second, "concurrence" consists of not natural laws, maintenance of existence, or general guidance by God primarily but a direct, voluntary, and "constant reenactment of God's presence and power" in each and every activity of the creatures.<sup>2</sup> The point here is that the creatures, even

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<sup>1</sup>According to Henry, "The Psalms frequently speak of the operations of nature as the very operations of deity: thunder is God's 'voice,' lightnings 'his arrows,' earthquakes 'his doings.' Without dwelling on secondary causes the biblical writers here attribute the phenomena of the creation directly to the creator" (ibid., 6:48-49). Similarly, Johannes Heideggerus writes that "concurrence is simultaneous" in the sense that God "produces one and the same action along with the second cause, so that the action of the first and second cause is one" (Johannes Heideggerus, quoted in Bizer, 260).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:49. For Henry, God "acts not only behind, outside or between cosmic and historical processes" but "is present in these processes and works in them. . . . God both acts on the events of nature and history from without and is . . . engaged within the universe as well" (ibid., 6:48). Further, Henry states that "God is no less implicated in the falling of the rain than in the resurrection of the Redeemer" (ibid., 6:15).

As far as the Reformed dogmaticians are concerned on this point, the following statements seem to be representative: "But this cooperation of God must not be conceived as a mere maintenance of natural forces, or the mere setting up of a natural and moral law, or as the effecting of an indifferent, general movement, to be determined first of all by the creatures themselves, or as an activity of God different from the activity of the creatures and only coinciding temporally with it, working not upon the creatures themselves but only upon their activity. On the contrary it is an activity of God such that by it God directly and predeterminedly grasps the

with their God-given capacities to act, are impotent until and unless God "immediately" causes them to act in a certain way.<sup>1</sup>

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powers of the creatures and so arouses them to activity in their natural way that the activity of the creature is God's own action" (Bizer, 258-9). Further, "This cooperation is not to be placed (1) either in sheer preservation of strength to work, (2) or in the giving of some law natural or moral, by which all things act proprio motu, (3) or in a general, indifferent movement, to be determined by the creatures, like the inflow of the sun, as is claimed by the Jesuits, Socinians, Remonstrants, (4) or in the simultaneous act of God distinguished really from the action of the creatures, by which God in no wise inflows into creatures, but only into their actions--but in all creatures' direct--as regards power and what underlies, by a previous, predetermining method not of time but of order--impulse and move to action, so that in this way the action of creator and creature is really the same, merely differently named" (Johannes Marckius [1690], quoted in Bizer, 259).

<sup>1</sup>According to Johannes Heideggerus, God's part in the "concurrence" is "direct, not because He alone operates alone without the application of any second cause, but because between God's action and the result there is no intervention of creaturely efficacy, which touches the result more nearly than God. God does not merely so assign and preserve to the creature a faculty and power of action, that the creature meantime emits an action or produces an effect close at hand and directly, while God does so solely by the medium of the power which He gave and preserves to the creature;--on account of the nature of the creature's dependence He attains to every action and result of the creature directly.--Hence 'all things' are said to have been done 'through Himself,' i.e., by this direct and proximate power as first cause Rom 11:36 (of him and through him and to him are all things)" (Johannes Heideggerus, quoted in Bizer, 260. The language of the Reformed dogmaticians, if Heideggerus is a theologian to go by, seems to make the connection between God's causal role in the activity of the creatures quite clear. That role is immediate and direct and the natural capacities of the creatures are only instruments through which that role is actualized.

Although Henry does not use the word "direct" in describing God's relationship with the results of creatures' activity, he makes statements which unmistakably suggest that he concurs with the views expressed in the above passage. The following statements are particularly enlightening:

"for theism nothing happens that God does not foreknow and foreordain" (GRA, 5:280);

Third, God's causality comes logically prior to the causality of the creatures and, therefore, it is determinative of the effects of the "concurrency." It is not the case here that the causality of the creatures is totally cancelled in terms of the creatures themselves deciding and acting voluntarily, but that their decisions and actions are causally preceded by God's prior causality. This idea seems to be the basis of Reformed doctrines such as God's decree, predestination or foreordination, foreknowledge, and election, all of which Henry affirms.<sup>1</sup>

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"it is the purposing will of God, and not omniscience, that governs the certainty of events" (ibid.);

"God has so sovereignly disposed the course of the universe and of history that even the severest hostility to his will instrumentally displays and promotes his sovereignly redemptive plan" (ibid., 5:330);

"If God can foreknow human decisions and acts before their psychological self-determination, and can do this compatibly with man's free will, then why should divine foreordination be considered any less compatible?" (ibid., 5:284);

"God's foreknowledge is a predeterminative knowledge" (ibid., 5:285);

"Scripture contravenes the claim that divine non-determination is necessary for human freedom and responsibility, for God's foreordination includes even such events as fallen man's rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ . . ." (ibid., 5:284).

<sup>1</sup>The force of these doctrines is expressed in the following statements from Reformed dogmaticians (Henry's statements which seem to come closest to the position of the dogmaticians are also included):

". . . the object of the divine decree is not the abstract order of the physical, moral and saving dispensation in the abstract which is present in the world and in God's kingdom of grace, but the concrete existence and life of the world and of individual men with their complex or causes and effects" (Bizer, 142).

Henry writes that "In biblical theology everything that God does is the outworking of his sovereign decree. In this respect man is no different from the stars or the sands of the sea; that humans stand at a definite place in history is no more an accident than that the planets move in their

The essence of these doctrines is that there is no decision, action, event, circumstance, or destiny of a creature in the universe which is not predetermined by God. As Henry

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orbits and that the nations have their given bounds" (GRA, 6:78).

"Predestination is God's decree by which He has appointed rational creatures from eternity to fixed limits beyond this temporal and natural life, they to be led thereto by fixed means likewise foreordained from eternity" (Amandus Polanus [1624], quoted in Bizer, 154).

According to Henry, "predestination is but a part, a particular phase of God's decrees" (GRA, 6:478). He states that this doctrine may not be the easiest one to proclaim from the pulpit but the fact is that "the Bible itself thrusts upon us this theme of divine predestination" (*ibid.*, 6:76). For Henry, the word "predestination" is synonymous with the word "foreordination" (*ibid.*, 6:80).

"God's foreknowledge is that knowledge by which God is signified as foreseeing and foreknowing from eternity everything that is said to be future, as far as we are concerned" (Amandus Polanus [1624], quoted in Bizer, 75). Further, "Since as the actuosity of the divine Being foreknowledge is the proof of God's nature over against the world, it is determinative . . ." (Gulielmus Bucanus [1609], 75).

Henry asserts that "what creaturely minds grasp in their time sequences God knows immediately as a comprehensive totality; his decree to create a specific universe involves knowledge of all its eventualities and possibilities" (GRA, 5:277). For him, "God's foreknowledge is predeterminative knowledge" (*ibid.*, 5:285).

"We define the election in question as God's eternal and immutable decree, by which from the entire human race that had fallen by its own fault from *primaeval* integrity into sin and destruction He elected a fixed multitude of individual men, neither better nor worthier than the rest, of His sole good pleasure, to salvation in Christ Jesus, and resolved to give them to His Son to redeem, and by a peculiar and effectual mode of operating to bring them to living faith in Himself and to a sure perseverance in the same living faith, and that for a proof of His gracious mercy and for the praise of His glorious grace" (Leiden Synopsis, quoted in Bizer, 163).

Henry writes of God "in his love electing some undeserving human beings to salvation" and in justice "redemptively passing over others who are equally undeserving" (GRA, 6:107). He maintains that election is not a "class election" but election of particular individuals (*ibid.*, 6:104-7). Like other doctrines mentioned above, the doctrine of election stresses God's prior choice in both the existence and destiny of creatures.



writes, "For theism, nothing happens in time that God does not foreknow and foreordain."<sup>1</sup> Even in regard to man, Henry asserts that,

everything that can be predicated of man whether his existence and continuance, or his responsible decisions and deeds and final destiny, finds its necessary presupposition in a divine reality beyond himself.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the above discussions, it seems that the word "concurrence," as Henry uses it, has a specific theological connotation. Not only does it denote cooperation of divine and creaturely causalities but it also signifies total dependence of creatures on God for any and all given aspect(s) of their existence. The significance of this fact for the concept of sovereignty cannot be overemphasized. Basically, sovereignty means rulership, kingship, lordship over a domain. Sovereignty is not a passive but an active quality. One exercises sovereignty over some domain. While the range of possibilities of how one exercises sovereignty is certainly very wide, the case which Henry seems to present suggests that God exercises his sovereignty in the universe in a comprehensive and yet detailed manner. For Henry, God does not rule the world by merely allowing or permitting creatures to decide and do what they will. Through his causal relations with the world, God exercises his sovereignty by directly causing the creatures to do what he both foreordains and foreknows. As such, divine sovereignty is a term which has far-reaching

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 5:280.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

effects on how Henry views God's activity in the world.

From the above survey, it seems that without the ideas of God's independence, freedom, lordship, power, and causality, the concept of sovereignty lacks specificity of reference and the dynamics which make it functional as a term that expresses God's authority in the universe. Yet, if the discussion were to stop here, Henry's concept of sovereignty would only be partially understood. A need exists of showing the extent to which God is sovereign in the universe. In the next section, an attempt is made at describing the absolute nature of God's sovereignty in Henry's writings. This description includes some examples of Henry's application of the concept of sovereignty to specific aspects of his theology.

#### The Scope of God's Sovereignty

Henry states explicitly that "God's sovereignty is absolute."<sup>1</sup> This means that there is nothing anywhere in the universe which does not have its origin or cause in the sovereignty of God. All things exist or happen because God both originates them and controls their activity.<sup>2</sup> The sphere or the domain in which God exercises his sovereignty is limitless in both time and space. Since the complete

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:107.

<sup>2</sup>These ideas are expressed by Henry in various ways: he describes God as "absolutely sovereign" (ibid., 6:67), One "whose sovereign purpose fashions and governs everything" (ibid., 6:133), the One who "governs and determines all limits of possibility for himself and the universe" (ibid., 5:319), and One whose sovereignty is both "universal and eternal" (ibid., 5:308).

scope of God's sovereignty in Henry cannot be covered here as that would entail going beyond the goal of this study, three specific areas have been selected to demonstrate the consistency with which Henry maintains his concept of absolute sovereignty. These areas also help to bring out some aspect of sovereignty which have not been covered so far. The areas themselves are the problem of evil, and providence.

#### The Problem of Evil

Henry recognizes evil as a formidable problem for theism and atheism alike.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, Henry observes, the Bible is not silent about the subject. It accepts and confronts "the horrendous reality of sin and pain in moral and physical evil."<sup>2</sup> The context in which this problem must be accepted and confronted, Henry suggests, is not philosophical or theoretical. For him, "Not even theistic arguments can fully vindicate God's righteousness in the face of human evil" on theoretical grounds alone.<sup>3</sup> Henry's recommendation, rather, is that evil is "a religious dilemma" whose solution can be found only in revelation and scriptural doctrine of eschatology.<sup>4</sup>

Henry deals with evil in terms of "natural and moral

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:282.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:284.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:282.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:282, 299.

evil."<sup>1</sup> He does not see any evil as gratuitous (meaningless or unwarranted) as that would imply lack of purpose in some aspect of a providential universe.<sup>2</sup> In actual exposition of his views on evil, however, Henry does not appear to make a distinction, at least a clear one, between moral and natural evil. In that case, both types of evil are here explained together.

The question which seems to concern Henry most is that of the origin of evil. Before giving his own views, he first denies certain proposed solutions to this problem. According to him, evil is not "an essential aspect of finite and creaturely existence"<sup>3</sup> or an "imperfection either in the created substance of the world or in the created nature of man."<sup>4</sup> In other words, evil is not an "ultimate metaphysical principle as is good."<sup>5</sup> As God created it, the universe is "unconditionally good and hence free of intrinsic evil."<sup>6</sup> Henry states that, originally, "all angels were morally good on the basis of divine creation."<sup>7</sup> In addition, when God declares in Genesis that the created universe is "very good," he "underscores its intelligible

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:312.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:291.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:239.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:294.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 6:124.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 6:233.

order, moral perfection and aesthetic beauty, in short, its excellence."<sup>1</sup> If evil were a metaphysical necessity, Henry argues that there would be no "hope for any sure triumph over it" and God's victory over it would imply "eliminating the finite and the creaturely."<sup>2</sup>

Henry is also opposed to the idea that man's will or man's desires are the source of evil.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, Henry raises the objection that an appeal to man as the source of evil ignores "satanic and demonic influences in human affairs."<sup>4</sup> For Henry, "evil's ultimate source lies not in, but beyond man."<sup>5</sup> Other theories on the origin of evil which Henry rejects are those which view evil in terms of "divine deficiency," "cosmic inevitability," "evolutionary necessity," "intrinsic historical disorder," "human illusion," and "psychiatric aberration."<sup>6</sup>

Henry points to Satan as "directly or indirectly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:252. Henry conceives God's goodness as consisting of the three qualities: rational, moral, and aesthetic perfection which are then reflected in the things that God creates and/or declares to be good--like the original creation (ibid., 6:252-3).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:239.

<sup>3</sup>Henry does not indicate whether or not the will and desires are identical. He deals with them in two separate contexts. But his exposition of each of the two concepts seems to suggest that the will and the desires refer to the same thing (ibid., 6:244-5, 272-3).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:272. See also ibid., 6:244-5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6:270.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 6:284.

responsible for a terrible trail of terror and shame."<sup>1</sup> He describes Satan as "a living power hostile to God and external to man."<sup>2</sup> In Genesis, Henry observes, "the origin of human sin" is connected with the serpent as the one who "occasions human apostasy."<sup>3</sup> After Adam fell through Satan's deception, Henry states that "the sin principle" which resulted in "human sinfulness" flows representatively through Adam to all persons in the totality of their being, and conditions both their individual acts and community life.<sup>4</sup> Yet, Henry hastens to add that, although Satan is responsible for a lot of evil in the world, he is not to be posited "as if he were a rival deity unsubject to Elohim."<sup>5</sup> According to Henry, "the Bible nowhere teaches that world history is outside God's control and directed by the devil."<sup>6</sup> Although Scripture attributes "some of the radical evil in the world to satanic forces," Henry explains, these forces are themselves bound by "God's creative power and will."<sup>7</sup> It is Henry's view that Satan is not "a principle of primordial evil" and that "God uses Satan's acts to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:249.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:245.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:244-5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:248.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6:249.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 6:274.

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Henry emphasizes the fact that "Everything that comes from God, beginning with his work of creation, is good."<sup>1</sup> For Henry, God declared his creation to be good because he "brings the good with him; he is himself the source of the good."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, Henry writes, "To be sure, in speaking of God as good, we mean that he is the creator and sustainer of what we call good in the creatures."<sup>3</sup> The original creation is something which God desired and became its author and creator. In that case, the original creation was good and perfect in all dimensions.

As concerns evil, God's relationship with it is only causal. On the same page where Henry states that God is the "cause of the factors in the created universe which we consider evil," he also makes it clear that God is not the author of sin, that evil is not an aspect of God, and that "sin is the antithesis of the divine and of the truly godly."<sup>4</sup> Thus, sin and evil exist because God caused them to be but since they do not reflect his goodness and perfection, God is not their author.

In explaining the fact that not all that which has God as its "cause" reflects his goodness, Henry writes,

God can be an ultimate cause of evil . . . without himself being an aspect of evil, or of evil being an aspect of him as its cause. God created giraffes, but

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:252.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:133.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:257.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:294.



he is not a giraffe, nor are giraffes aspects of God.<sup>1</sup> These statements seem to indicate that, for Henry, God is the cause of evil despite the fact that evil is not reflective of God's character or goodness. Another point to note in this context is that Henry does not consider evil to be something which God merely permits to exist. Such a view, Henry argues, is essentially "incipient dualism" as it suggests that, apart from God, there is another source of reality in the universe. In fact, it questions the sovereignty of God.<sup>2</sup>

Another matter that Henry addresses is the divine rationale for the existence of evil. Henry here appeals to the idea of God's freedom in his sovereignty. He states:

Although God had sufficient reason for creating the present universe, he might indeed have created a different one, or even two or more dissimilar universes. . . . The transcendent God's freedom is what accounts for space-time realities.<sup>3</sup>

Henry here seems to imply that a world in which evil exists is one which God freely chose to create and it should be accepted as such. Thus, Henry demonstrates that God remains sovereign even in the face of evil. Not only is God the cause of evil but he is also its judge who intends to eradicate it in the end-time.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:294.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:295.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:78.

## Providence

Henry considers providence as the doctrine which underscores the fact that the "time-space universe" is not metaphysically ultimate" but "entirely contingent, moment by moment upon God."<sup>1</sup> Providence is to be distinguished from creation in that, although both are "works of divine omnipotence," creation is "an already accomplished activity" of God which antecedes and anticipates what God subsequently "freely sustains, universally governs, and deploys for special redemptive ends."<sup>2</sup> It is this subsequent preservation of what God created which is the arena of God's providence.

In his explication of God's providence, Henry distinguishes between universal providence and special providence. Henry refers to the two aspects of providence also in terms of "universal dominion" and "special covenant dominion."<sup>3</sup> Universal or general providence is the dominion which God "exercises over all creatures."<sup>4</sup> It stands for the idea that the "all-perfect omnipotent One fulfills his divine purpose in creation and redemption by ordering both nature's movements and human affairs."<sup>5</sup> It implies that God is "nature's everpresent ground and administrator" who

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:455.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:456.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:457.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6:78.

exists "perpetually in providential relationship to man and the world."<sup>1</sup> For Henry, "God is no less implicated in the falling of the rain than in the resurrection of the Redeemer."<sup>2</sup>

Special or particular providence affirms that "God works out his purposes not merely in life's generalities but in the details and minutiae of life as well."<sup>3</sup> It relates to "personal experiences" and "life's peculiarities."<sup>4</sup> Henry writes: "Since all things fall within God's purview, even seemingly chance events should be considered divine providences."<sup>5</sup> Yet, special providence has its focus mainly on God's people. For Henry, "God's special providence works selectively for the good of all who trust him."<sup>6</sup> He adds, "God promises the overruling benevolence of sovereign providence not to rebellious and impenitent worldlings but to his people."<sup>7</sup> However, this emphasis is not to be understood as implying that the "rebellious and impenitent" are outside God's providence. In this respect, Henry stresses that "God's providence . . . embraces even the acts

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:459.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6:459.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 6:461.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 6:460.

of those who rebel against his purposes."<sup>1</sup> Within the categories of universal and special providence, then, Henry affirms "God's all-comprehending providence."<sup>2</sup> The goal and purpose of God's providence may not yet be achieved till the final "climactic consummation" at the "end of time" but it seems clear that, for Henry, nothing, even in the present world, falls outside God's providence.

One question which naturally arises in view of God's providence is the place of human freedom in the whole scheme. Henry's main exposition on human freedom is given in the context of objections against the idea that "God ordains the entire course of world and human affairs."<sup>3</sup> According to Henry, the critics charge that "comprehensive divine foreordination is inconsistent with human freedom."<sup>4</sup> In response, Henry affirms that "God preserves man's responsible moral agency and that divine election in no way transforms human beings into robots."<sup>5</sup> Further, he states that "God preserves relative freedom and independence of creatures."<sup>6</sup> He even dismisses "secular theories of determinism that eclipse human moral responsibility."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:461.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:84.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5:311.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 6:84.

However, Henry explains that the human freedom he has in mind is a qualified type of freedom. For him, "man does not have, nor has he ever had, the freedom to decide and act in a manner that contradicts all his indicated decisions and deeds."<sup>1</sup> Henry describes this sort of freedom as "the Pelagian 'liberty of indifference.'"<sup>2</sup> He views it as "arbitrary," "unpredictable," "unrestrained," "capricious and random," "abnormal and subrational."<sup>3</sup> The fault with that kind of freedom, Henry argues, is its insistence on "man's ability in each action to totally reverse his course and be today the living contradiction of all that he was yesterday. . . ."<sup>4</sup> For Henry, "That sort of 'free will' would make responsibility impossible."<sup>5</sup>

What Henry proposes is a view of human freedom which is compatible with divine foreordination.<sup>6</sup> That freedom has

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. What Henry seems to emphasize in this sentence is the fact that human decisions and actions are predictable. His concern here is not so much that God predetermines human decisions and actions as to refute the "libertarian" view of freedom where it is possible for man to decide and act in a manner that contradicts all present causal factors in the experience of deciding and acting. For Henry, "indicated decisions and deeds" are theoretical possibilities based on certain "givens" and which are later confirmed by actual decisions and deeds.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6:84-85.

<sup>6</sup>Henry uses this term as a synonym for predestination (ibid., 6:80). For Henry, the two terms denote God's unconditional determination beforehand of all circumstances that prevail and all events that take place anywhere in the universe (ibid., 5:277-80; 6:76-78).

the following characteristics: First, it excludes divine coercion. Henry states clearly that "God does not force man to sin."<sup>1</sup> Second, it consists of "voluntary choice." According to Henry, "Human beings voluntarily choose to do what they do."<sup>2</sup> This sense of freedom, Henry maintains, is perfectly compatible with divine foreordination and foreknowledge.<sup>3</sup> He writes, "The fact that God has foreordained human choices and that his decree renders human actions certain does not therefore negate human choice."<sup>4</sup> For Henry, "If humans voluntarily choose to do what God foreknows to be certain, then the conditions of voluntary human agency are fulfilled."<sup>5</sup> In fact, Henry adds, "We do not choose because God has determined our choices."<sup>6</sup>

It is significant to note that Henry affirms both human "freedom" to choose and act and God's providence and foreordination at the same time. The language which Henry uses can be particularly misleading in this respect if care is not exercised in interpreting what Henry means by the the term "freedom." In addition, Henry does not always use the traditional terminology of Reformed theology--such as the "bondage of the will" and "reprobation" of some to eternal

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:283.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:85.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:280.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:85.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5:282.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

damnation. Instead, he uses expressions which many non-Calvinists would find quite acceptable--such as "relative independence of creatures,"<sup>1</sup> "man's responsible moral agency," "responsible free agency of man"<sup>2</sup> and man's voluntary decisions and actions.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Henry's language should not be understood as indicating that he is no longer a Reformed theologian. It is to be noted that, in his treatment of human freedom, nowhere does Henry suggest that man can choose contrary to what God both foreordains and foreknows. For Henry, human choice and activity is essentially an effect or a result of a decision and action which God has previously taken. This point is illustrated by Henry in the following statement: "While confession of Jesus' name is and must indeed be human decision and choice . . . its very possibility reflects Yahweh's prior choice."<sup>4</sup> Further, "God's foreordination includes even such events as fallen man's rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, events for which mankind is held responsible."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Henry maintains that "God's decree renders certain not only good acts but wicked acts as well."<sup>6</sup> That

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:311.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:85.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:282.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:83.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5:284.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 6:86. The meaning of this statement seems to be that God makes the occurrence of the said acts unconditional. On the same page, Henry also writes that "the certainty of events that God decrees includes man's

being the case, Henry concludes that, in God's causal relations with the world, man is not different from the non-moral world. Henry writes:

Everything that God does is an outworking of his sovereign decree. In this respect, man is no different from the stars or from the sands of the sea; that humans stand at a definite place in history is no more an accident than that the planets move in their orbits and that the nations have their given bounds.<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that, on the basis of Henry's views on the relationship which God has with his creatures in general and with man in particular, Henry's position is best described as a form of "compatibilism" or "soft determinism." According to John Feinberg, "compatibilism" is a way of relating God's sovereignty and human freedom in a manner that shows that they are compatible. He states that "genuinely free human action" is "compatible with nonconstraining sufficient conditions which incline the will decisively in one way or the other."<sup>2</sup> Feinberg goes on to explain that "compatibilism" is a form of determinism which affirms both the Calvinistic doctrine of divine sovereignty

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sinful no less than righteous acts" (ibid.). See also ibid., 6:461. For Henry, God's foreordination of an evil act is not itself evil" (ibid., 5:315). As the Reformed dogmatician, Johannes Heideggerus expressed this point, "between God's action and the result there is no intervention of creaturely efficacy, which touches the result more nearly than God" (Johannes Heideggerus, quoted in Bizer, 260).

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:78.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Feinberg, "God Ordains All Things," in Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 25.



and the idea that humans are free.<sup>1</sup> The two main characteristics of this view are that human decisions and actions are "causally determined" but that they are free in the sense that God's causation is nonconstraining.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of Henry's views analyzed in this chapter, the conclusion seems to be in place that the term "compatibilism" adequately expresses Henry's concept of the relationship between God's sovereignty, on one hand, and human decisions and actions, on the other.

So far, the meaning of sovereignty in Henry has been discussed in terms of what the concept signifies and the extent to which it is absolute. An equally important aspect of the concept is the place which it occupies in Henry's theology. Such a setting helps to underscore the overall importance of sovereignty in Henry's thought. In the following section, this setting is analyzed and its significance in Henry's theology described.

#### Sovereignty in Henry's Theology

The concept of sovereignty is not an isolated idea in the theology of Carl Henry. Like other aspects of Henry's thought, sovereignty stands within a web of related ideas, all of which are aimed at demonstrating the comprehensive coherence of Henry's theological structure. In this section, the question being addressed is the place which the concept of sovereignty occupies in the theology of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 22, 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 24.

Henry. The answer to this question is sought by examining sovereignty in two related contexts: its place among the attributes of God and in the wider context of Henry's theology.

#### Sovereignty as an Attribute of God

Henry describes sovereignty as one of the attributes of God.<sup>1</sup> Attributes are characteristics that define the nature of God.<sup>2</sup> They include such qualities as omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, love, wisdom, immutability, etc.<sup>3</sup> By placing sovereignty among these attributes, Henry lays significant theological weight on the concept. He thus implies that the concept is not a mere inference from other considerations but a subject that deserves to be treated like other important biblical teachings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 5:295.

<sup>2</sup>Henry refers to attributes also as properties and perfections. He does not think that there are any meaningful differences between the two words (*ibid.*, 5:99).

<sup>3</sup>Nowhere in the series does Henry give a complete list of the divine attributes. He only writes of two kinds of attributes: communicable and incommunicable (*ibid.*). This classification has been used traditionally by Reformed theologians. See Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 60-64.

However, those properties of God which Henry considers to be important are specifically referred to as attributes and they are discussed in individual chapters in GRA, vol. 5. These attributes are: personality (chap. 7), Spirit (chap. 10), infinity (chap. 11), timelessness (chap. 12), omniscience (chap. 14), immutability (chap. 15), sovereignty (chap. 16), and rationality (chap. 17).

<sup>4</sup>Those theologians who view sovereignty as an inference from other teachings of Scripture consider sovereignty as so comprehensive a concept that to place it among the attributes somehow limits its coverage. See James Montgomery Boice, The Sovereignty of God (Downers Grove,

While he counts it among the attributes, he also distinguishes sovereignty from them. Henry stresses the fact that "without it all other attributes of God lose their efficacy."<sup>1</sup> This qualification has two implications, among others. First, despite Henry's assertion that no attribute is higher or more important than others,<sup>2</sup> it seems that sovereignty can be exempted from that requirement. Certainly, Henry chooses his vocabulary carefully so that there is no obvious contradiction between his assertion that the attributes are equal and his reference to sovereignty as having a logical priority over other attributes.<sup>3</sup> Yet, it

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Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 150.

<sup>1</sup>GRA, 5:295.

<sup>2</sup>Henry emphasizes the "equal honor that Scripture bestows on all God's attributes" (ibid., 6:136).

<sup>3</sup>On one hand, Henry considers all attributes to be equal (ibid.). On the other hand, he also makes certain statements which, properly interpreted, tend to support the idea that sovereignty is a fundamental attribute. Consider the following statement: "Even if one does not consider sovereignty the fundamental divine attribute, without it all other attributes of God lose their efficacy" (ibid., 5:295).

In another passage, Henry uses the word "omnipotence" to express the same idea: "It is indeed divine sovereignty that permeates the Bible narrative, whether one turns to the creation, incarnation or final judgment. If one considers the omnipotence of God as foundational, then all other divine attributes or activities express that omnipotence as applied to different historical situations" (ibid., 5:325). That the word "omnipotence" here is interchangeable with the word "sovereignty" is supported by three considerations. First, the sentence preceding the one in question is the first in the paragraph and it clearly indicates that the subject which the author has in mind is sovereignty. Second, the chapter where the passage occurs is entitled, "The Sovereignty of the Omnipotent God." Third, Thomas McNeal, in his dissertation on Henry's concept of God, observes that "Henry links the notions of God's sovereignty and omnipotence together" (A Critical Analysis of the Doctrine of God, 180).

seems clear that the least which can be said about sovereignty is that, for Henry, it is the first attribute among equals. It is definitive of the other attributes.

Second, the distinction which Henry accords sovereignty among the attributes seems essentially to disqualify it as an attribute. Although as a general rule, an attribute must be shown to be compatible with other attributes in order to maintain coherence within one's concept of God,<sup>1</sup> it appears unusual to qualify one attribute, as Henry does with sovereignty, so that a relative independence of the other attributes is precluded. If without sovereignty "all the other attributes lose their efficacy,"<sup>2</sup> it would appear that Henry has not quite established sovereignty as "one of" the divine attributes. To me, it seems that sovereignty is given the status of an attribute mainly for systematic purposes. That is, as a divine attribute, the concept of sovereignty is not an appendage to systematic theology but a proper Christian dogma. Otherwise, its significance transcends the role of an ordinary attribute.

Furthermore, sovereignty is a key concept in Henry's understanding of the nature of God. Without it, none of the other aspects of the nature of God have any significance. It needs to be pointed out here that, for Henry, the

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<sup>1</sup>See Nash, The Concept of God, 12-13.

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 5:295.

attributes of God and his essence are identical.<sup>1</sup> When this fact is understood, it becomes easier to appreciate the implied logic that if a concept is significant in the description of the nature of God, it is so also for the whole doctrine of God as far as Henry is concerned. In this case, this means that if sovereignty is a fundamental "attribute" in the nature of God, it is equally significant for the whole doctrine of God. This theological weight of the concept of sovereignty has, of necessity, tremendous consequences when it comes to Henry's view of God's relationship with the world. In fact, Henry maintains that "God's sovereignty is an aspect of his ontology, and it is God in his total being who decrees, and does so freely, that is, free of all external constraints."<sup>2</sup>

#### Sovereignty in Henry's Theological System

In chapter 2, it was mentioned that Henry sets his ideas in the context of his theological system. It was also observed that his system consists of two main axioms-- epistemological and ontological, theorems and propositions. After discussing the epistemological axiom in chapter 2, it now remains for us to focus attention on the ontological axiom.

Henry clearly states that "the triune God is

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<sup>1</sup>Henry states clearly that attributes "are identical with the divine essence and serve more fully and precisely to define God's nature" (ibid., 5:132).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:99. Henry conceives God's decrees to be those relations which God has with realities outside himself (ibid., 6:80).

Christianity's basic ontological axiom."<sup>1</sup> In other words, for Henry, God is Christianity's ontological first principle or presupposition. Further evidence shows that by referring to God as the "ontological" axiom, Henry means that God is the ground of all existence and One in whom everything has its being. Henry maintains that "God is the source of all substance and structures of existence, metaphysical ground of the true and the good."<sup>2</sup>

In view of what was mentioned previously concerning sovereignty as an attribute, the case for the significance of sovereignty in Henry's theological system may be stated as follows. Henry distinguishes sovereignty as the single most important attribute of God. That being the case, sovereignty must logically be considered to be a very significant concept in Henry's doctrine of God since God's nature and his essence are identical and both constitute all that can be asserted about God. From these observations, it appears that if an axiom is a basic element in Henry's theological system, and God is the ontological axiom, then sovereignty must be considered a concept of vital importance in that system.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it seems safe to infer that, for Henry, the concept of sovereignty, along with its

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:219.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:67.

<sup>3</sup>Henry himself seems to support this conclusion when he writes that "God's sovereignty is in fact an aspect of his ontology, and it is God in his total being who decrees, and does so freely, that is, free of all external constraints" (ibid., 6:99).

significations, plays a significant presuppositional role in the whole structure of his system.<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusion

In this chapter, Henry's concept of sovereignty has been analyzed in terms of Henry's tradition, the meaning of the concept, its scope and also its place in Henry's theology. It was pointed out at the beginning that the investigation is done for the purpose of analyzing Henry's views on the nature of God's activity in the world. As such, this evaluation has its focus mainly on those aspects of the concept which are descriptive of that phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>That the concept of sovereignty plays a key role in Henry's theological system is not by any means a strange or new approach to theology. The concept of sovereignty has been affirmed by other Reformed theologians as an interpretive principle in theology. Ben A. Warburton, for example, writes, "The one rock upon which Calvinism builds is that of the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of the eternal and self-existent Jehovah" (Calvinism: Its History and Basic Principles, Its Fruits and Its Future, and Its Practical Application to Life [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1955], 63). See also H. Henry Meeter, Calvinism: An Interpretation of Its Basic Ideas, vol. I: The Theological and the Political Ideas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1939), 31-38; William K. B. Stoever, "The Calvinist Theological Tradition," in Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements, vol. II, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 1039; Arthur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930); James Montgomery Boice, Foundations of the Christian Faith, vol. 1: The Sovereignty of God (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978); and John Murray, Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1960), 55-71.

<sup>2</sup>A full assessment of the concept is not intended here as that involves more issues than the purpose of this investigation allows. It should be remembered that the issues raised in this chapter have been debated for centuries and a study of this size cannot hope to do deal adequately with the whole question. Those aspects of the

Henry views divine sovereignty as signifying God's independence, freedom, power, lordship, and causality. divine sovereignty is, therefore, a complex of other attributes that underlie God's authority and ability to act as he pleases. For Henry, sovereignty is the most important divine attribute. Without it, all other attributes lose their efficacy. This being the case, and in view of the significance which Henry attaches to the doctrine of God,<sup>1</sup> it is not surprising that sovereignty plays a definitive role in Henry's theology. Because the concept of divine sovereignty describes the basis and the nature of God's action in the world, it necessarily follows that divine sovereignty surfaces in many contexts.

Divine sovereignty is the perspective from which Henry understands many theological problems. One of these is the problem of evil. For Henry, God causes evil because he is the only one who can ultimately cause anything. God causes all the decisions and actions of man. Those who are "God's people" may have special favors from God but all human decisions and actions, be they righteous or wicked, are caused by God.<sup>2</sup> Another issue which the concept of sovereignty illumines is the concept of providence. It is

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concept of sovereignty which are deemed significant for the objectives of this study are briefly mentioned.

<sup>1</sup>When asked in an interview what doctrine he thought to be most important, Henry replied that the doctrine of God is the most fundamental (Butler D. Hochstedt, "An Interview with Carl F. H. Henry," TSF Bulletin 10 (Mar-Apr 1987): 17.

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 5:280, 312; 6:83, 86, 461.



Henry's view that the place of every individual person or thing in the world and in history is definite and certain because God so provides.<sup>1</sup> The natural processes, too, operate under direct command of God.<sup>2</sup> God's sovereignty is implicated in the rainfall as it is in the resurrection of Christ.<sup>3</sup> For Henry, any suggestion that any thing in the universe is caused by some agent other than God is "incipient dualism."<sup>4</sup> In essence, divine sovereignty denotes God as the absolute causal agent throughout the universe and no creature, man included, can act contrary to what God makes certain through his causality.<sup>5</sup>

For our present purposes, it is of particular importance that Henry understands divine sovereignty in terms of causality, among other significations, and that this causality is absolute.<sup>6</sup> The connection being made here

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:15.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6:295.

<sup>5</sup>Jack W. Cottrell admits that the "Bible certainly speaks of God's ability to turn a person's heart and actions (e.g., Ps 16:1; 21:1), and it gives many examples (e.g., Gen. 50:20; Exod 10:20; Ezra 1:1). The Calvinistic fallacy, however, is to generalize from these particulars and to assume that they are paradigms for the way God works in every decision without exception." See Cottrell's article, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," in Clark Pinnock, ed., A Case for Arminianism, 113.

<sup>6</sup>The word "absolute" is used here and in the study as a whole to signify the fact that there is no aspect of reality and existence which does not have God as its direct cause, including the decisions and actions of free moral agents like human beings.

between sovereignty and causality is one in which causality is not merely a qualifier in the concept of sovereignty but the means by which God exercises his sovereignty. For Henry, sovereignty is not some general concept of God's authority and rulership in the universe where created agents are free to decide and act independently to some degree. Rather, the notion of divine sovereignty entails a very specific description of the exact manner in which God rules the universe and how he guarantees effectiveness in his exercise of authority in the world. On the basis of the connection between sovereignty and the idea of causality, there are three inferences which can be drawn from that fact.

First, God exerts his sovereignty by himself being the ultimate, independent, causal principle in the universe. Henry does not leave any room for anyone or anything other than God himself to independently originate, create, or cause any thing, any event, or any condition, even evil itself. This means that the chief cause for any given aspect of created reality is external to the agents that constitute that reality. For Henry, God is not ontologically continuous with the world and it is in that sense that his causality must be considered to be objective and external to the world and the agents that constitute it.

Second, divine sovereignty implies absolute certainty and unconditionality of the events and circumstances which God intends to cause to exist. In this respect, Henry states that God's decrees "eventuate with certainty" and

that "all history reveals the certainty of events decreed by God."<sup>1</sup> It is Henry's view that

If God's plan achieve what he did not purpose, if parts of it conflicted and competed, if his purpose itself requires constant revision, then God would be neither all-wise nor all-powerful. God's decrees will eventuate with certainty whether they come to pass solely by his own causality or through the agency of his creatures. . . . All history reveals the certainty of events decreed by God.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of these statements seems to be that the "causal chain" between God and the created universe is so necessary that God's decisions and actions cannot be qualified, modified, or changed by any factors or considerations outside God. For Henry, not even human freedom is capable of affecting the certainty of God's decrees.

Third, divine sovereignty implies that the decisions and actions of created existents are not, indeed cannot be, in competition with or opposed to God's decisions and actions. God's actions and those of nature are harmonious and compatible. To express this idea, Henry uses the word "concurrency." For him, "The universe does not exist without his [God's] support and concurrency."<sup>3</sup> It is to be noted that, while Henry emphasizes the logical priority of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. It is to be noted that in this passage, Henry does not place the causality of God and that of the creatures on the same level. The phrase, "or through the agency of his creatures," seems to suggest that the creatures do not have an independent causality running parallel to God's. The role of the creatures is that of agency and instrumentality through which God may choose to effect his plans and purposes.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:48.

God's activity in this "concurrency" or "compatibilism," he does not thereby eliminate the relevance and significance of the activity of created agents. In fact, Henry considers the activity of the creatures to be "voluntary."<sup>1</sup> What Henry teaches is that "the operations of nature" are at the same time the "operations of deity."<sup>2</sup>

The material presented in this chapter has focused on Henry's concept of sovereignty in general terms. It consists of an analysis of how Henry views the nature of God's activity in the world. In chapter 4, an attempt is made at examining the sense in which Henry's concept of sovereignty is a presupposition in his concept of inerrancy.

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<sup>1</sup>This is best illustrated by Henry's concept of human freedom which is discussed in this chapter under "providence." Freedom of activity here is not the "libertarian 'freedom of indifference'" but "freedom of voluntary choice" and activity (ibid., 6:84-5).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:49.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOVEREIGNTY AS A PRESUPPOSITION IN THE CONCEPT OF INERRANCY

In chapters 2 and 3, attention has been focused on clarification of Henry's understanding of inerrancy and sovereignty as individual concepts. Each was described and analyzed in terms of Henry's sources for the concept, the basic meaning of the word, the scope covered by the concept, and its place in Henry's theology. An evaluation was also made of each for the purpose of highlighting those aspects that point in the direction of this study. The analysis made in regard to the concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty thus far makes possible the investigation of the proposition that "sovereignty is a presupposition in Henry's concept of scriptural inerrancy."<sup>1</sup>

It was observed in chapters 2 and 3 that the terms inerrancy and sovereignty encompass several concepts and that these concepts exist in logical chains with other ideas.<sup>2</sup> Thus, discussion on how inerrancy presupposes

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<sup>1</sup>This propositional phrase expresses the central focus of this chapter. It appears in the discussion in two forms: "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy" and "inerrancy presupposes sovereignty." Both forms are used interchangeably in this study.

<sup>2</sup>Inerrancy represents such ideas as logical consistency and coherence of biblical propositions, absence

sovereignty cannot be limited only to the dictionary definitions of the two words. It must include other related ideas also.

In keeping with this guideline, the present chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section, entitled "Primary Considerations," is devoted to those ideas and concepts which are related to sovereignty and inerrancy in an effort to establish fundamental principles on which the proposition, "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy," is predicated. The second section examines how Henry applies those principles in his understanding of the process of inspiration. It is in this context that specific observations are made on how Henry confirms the proposition that "inerrancy presupposes sovereignty." The two main sections of the chapter are followed by a conclusion which highlights the main concerns of the chapter.

#### Primary Considerations

The first task in this chapter is to lay the foundation on which the proposition, "Henry's idea of inerrancy presupposes his concept of sovereignty," seems to be established. It is a search for basic principles which underlie that proposition and which make it metaphysically significant. One important consideration in this respect is

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of error from and truthfulness of scriptural contents. It is closely associated with Scripture, the doctrine of revelation and the structure of Henry's epistemology. Sovereignty signifies God's independence, freedom, power, lordship, and causality. It is connected with the nature of God as a divine attribute and it plays a vital role in Henry's ontology.

the fact that both sovereignty and inerrancy belong to realms of meaning which have no obvious relevance to each other. One way of expressing the distance between the two is to view sovereignty as belonging to the realm of ontology and inerrancy as belonging to the realm of epistemology.<sup>1</sup> Another way of expressing the same distance is to describe sovereignty as an aspect of the supernatural God while inerrancy is a characteristic of Scripture, something which belongs to the natural world.<sup>2</sup>

These distinctions help to clarify what is involved in examining the proposition that "inerrancy presupposes sovereignty." Before considering the specific nature of the proposition, therefore, one must determine if there is a possibility of relating such diverse realms of reality as epistemology and ontology in Henry's writings. If the realm of ontology (being), and the concept of God, on the one hand, and the realm of epistemology (knowledge) and the

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<sup>1</sup>That is, sovereignty attaches to the realm of "being" while inerrancy attaches to the realm of "knowledge."

Allusions to the relevance of these broad philosophical categories were made in previous chapters. As it is pointed out later, ontology and epistemology are not separable. The categorization made here is for the sake of argument and clarification of Henry's ideas.

<sup>2</sup>Henry also considers these distinctions as necessary categories in philosophical and theological argumentation. For him, "However difficult may be a precise definition of nature, such definitions are essential to any resolution of the issues in debate. . . . Judeo-Christian theology declares the universe--the cosmos and the whole world of creatures--to be God's creation. It distinguishes God as the uncreated Creator of all else, and hence as supernatural; the term nature, by contrast, applies to everything derived from God. No part of the created universe is to be considered supernatural" (GRA, 6:13).

concept of what belongs to nature, on the other, cannot be shown to be related in any manner, there remains little, if any, hope that the proposition, "inerrancy presupposes sovereignty," can be affirmed. In other words, the proposition in question involves, at a primary level, a relationship between ontology and epistemology, being and knowledge, and God and the world.<sup>1</sup>

Henry's ideas which are considered here to be "primary considerations" in the discussion are: God's epistemological sovereignty, God's ontological sovereignty, and the concept of divine Logos. It is to be noted that the notions of epistemology and ontology have been mentioned briefly in chapters 2 and 3 in connection with Henry's theological system. In this chapter, these notions are further clarified with more attention being focused on their relevance to the proposition under investigation. Henry's concept of divine Logos is discussed for the first time. However, as the investigation seems to reveal, its novelty lies more in its integrative role in Henry's metaphysics than in its constitutive meaning.

#### God's Epistemological Sovereignty

Henry's concept of sovereignty has definite implications on Henry's epistemology. In this study, the

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<sup>1</sup>In dissertation, Fernando Canale has shown convincingly the absolute necessity of relating together ontological and epistemological frameworks in the construction of theological systems. He considers it naive to fail to see the relationship between them. See A Criticism of Theological Reason, 27-51.



phrase "epistemological sovereignty" is used to express Henry's view that

God's sovereignty requires the confession that all existence and all knowledge have their ultimate source in the divine Logos. Truth is truth because God thinks and wills it; in other words, truth depends on the sovereignty of God.<sup>1</sup>

It is Henry's view that God is the "ultimate explanation of the rational structure of the world and men"<sup>2</sup> and that "the fixed orders of created existence, both rational and moral, are God-given."<sup>3</sup>

From what Henry writes, it appears that God is sovereign in respect to moral and rational order in the universe. By moral structures, Henry makes reference to ethical categories and all other factors which make the moral experience of man possible.<sup>4</sup> All these have their

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 5:334. Although the phrase itself, "epistemological sovereignty," occurs in connection with Henry's depiction of self-conceptions of the secular man (ibid., 5:315), it is used in this study in reference to God since the context in which the phrase occurs suggests that "epistemological sovereignty" is a divine prerogative which man wrongly assumes to be his.

It is to be noted also that Henry's epistemology is a broader subject than what can possibly be covered in this section. But a number of important ideas are embedded in it and these need to be taken into account if the validity of the presuppositional premise of sovereignty in the concept of inerrancy is to be demonstrated.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5:350-1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:294.

<sup>4</sup>These categories include "God's revealed commands and principles" which form "the core structure of biblical ethics," "man's moral understanding, . . . his created relationship both to the sovereign God and to moral imperatives which man even in his unbelief retains through the imperishable cognitive links of reason and conscience . . . moral categories implanted by creation, . . . the voice of the sovereign holy Lord both in general and in special

source and ground in God.<sup>1</sup> Henry especially emphasizes the fact that it is God who originates and defines both good and evil as moral referents.<sup>2</sup>

Closely related to moral categories is the rational content and order of the universe which is also a dimension of God's sovereignty. The rational categories refer to laws of logic, mathematical structures, laws of language, and other natural laws.<sup>3</sup> Of special significance to Henry is the "logical" distinction between truth and falsity. For Henry, what is true is also logically consistent and valid.<sup>4</sup> He laments the loss of this distinction in modern theology, a fact which he attributes to the influence of secular philosophy. As a result of this loss, theology is deprived of its goal and content, and truth is relativized.<sup>5</sup>

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revelation" (ibid., 6:252, 256).

<sup>1</sup>An incisive study of the divine origin of Henry's ethics has been done by Miroslav Kis. See especially chapter 9 of his dissertation, "Revelation and Ethics," 275-326. Commenting on the origin and ground of Henry's ethics, Kis observes that "from its transcendent source, Christian ethics gains an eternal and absolute quality. Its content and sanction and dynamic and goal are derived from God" (ibid., 277).

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 6:296, 84.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:319-25.

<sup>4</sup>Henry emphasizes that "The Christian religion is wholly on the side of rational method of determining whether or not conditions necessary to truth of any statements are met" (ibid., 1:266). Further, "Logical consistency is a negative test of truth and coherence a subordinate test" (ibid., 1:232).

<sup>5</sup>After criticizing "the absurdities of dialectical theology," Henry writes that "what is logically contradictory cannot be true. A denial of the law of contradiction would make truth and error equivalent; hence

God's sovereignty also extends to man's moral and rational powers. According to Henry, these originate from God.<sup>1</sup> They are dependent on their giver in the sense that they recognize but do not create the moral and the rational contents of the universe.<sup>2</sup> It is God alone who defines, creates, and maintains the moral and rational order in the universe. In this sense, Henry maintains the concept of sovereignty in the origin, nature, and experience of knowledge.

One of Henry's ideas which appears to form the backbone of his concept of epistemological sovereignty of God is the notion that reality is rational.<sup>3</sup> Although Henry does not actually define what reality is, his repeated mention of a triad of elements--God, man, and the world<sup>4</sup>-- seems to suggest that those three entities constitute the

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in effect it destroys truth" (ibid., 1:233).

<sup>1</sup>According to Henry, "man was divinely made with rational and moral aptitudes for intelligible communion with his maker and for the joyous service of God" (ibid., 1:227).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 225-6.

<sup>3</sup>This idea is developed in the rest of this subsection. There are, however, specific statements in Henry which point in that direction. Three examples can be used as illustrations: For Henry, truth, which we have seen to be a rational category, does not refer to reality. "It is itself the reality" (ibid., 3:222). Henry also calls for an "awareness of the meaning of God as the revelationally given reality that certifies the rational coherence of created reality" (ibid., 3:170). Further, "the logical law of noncontradiction is necessarily and objectively true, and hence integral to the real world" (ibid., 3:229).

<sup>4</sup>For a few examples, see ibid., 2:95; 5:347, 350, 354-5, 388.

main referents of his concern when he uses the term reality.<sup>1</sup>

### God is Rational

Henry maintains that God is rational.<sup>2</sup> He further states that God's rationality consists of laws of reason and logic, which are the framework of the divine mind and the way God thinks and acts.<sup>3</sup> For Henry, these laws are also conceivable in terms of propositions.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, God's mind consists of propositions or "self-evident truths" which God, by virtue of his omniscience, knows in their totality and in all their relationships.<sup>5</sup> Henry does not consider rationality to be an independent system of impersonal laws to which everything in the universe, including God, is subject.<sup>6</sup> Rather, it is an intrinsic attribute of God which is as eternal as God himself.<sup>7</sup> On this basis, Henry proposes, therefore, that because reason, laws of logic, and

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<sup>1</sup>Angels are another dimension of reality which Henry mentions (*ibid.*, 6:229-50). Our exclusion of this dimension is primarily due to the fact that angels are not an immediate concern in the present discussion although much of what is asserted here is equally applicable to them.

<sup>2</sup>For a fuller treatment of the idea by Henry, see *ibid.*, 5:334-58.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:334.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:336.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:336-7.

<sup>6</sup>Henry writes that "constancy [referring to logical laws in the universe] does not imply an ontological or logical or moral order independent of God to which God must conform . . ." (*ibid.*, 5:319).

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:334.

propositional truth are the stuff out of which God's mind is made,<sup>1</sup> they have an ontological status.<sup>2</sup> For him, they are neither created by God<sup>3</sup> nor produced by man's thinking process.<sup>4</sup> Rather, their existence is grounded in the very essence of God.<sup>5</sup>

### Man Is Rational

The transition from God's rationality to the rationality of man and the world is fairly straightforward. If rationality signifies the way the divine mind works, it is reasonable to expect that the activities which God engages himself in and the creatures which he makes reflect God's rational nature.<sup>6</sup> Man, above all, reflects God's rationality more than other creatures.<sup>7</sup> That is so because

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:334-5.

<sup>2</sup>It is Henry's view that the "biblical emphasis on a rational Creator . . . elevates the role of reason and the laws of logic to timeless significance" (ibid., 5:342). For the ontological status of truth and reason, see ibid., 5:351, 354, respectively.

<sup>3</sup>Henry quotes Gordon Clark in stressing that "the laws of reason may be taken as descriptive of the activity of God's will, and hence dependent on it though not created as the world has been created." (ibid., 5:335).

<sup>4</sup>"Human reason is a divinely fashioned instrument of recognizing truth; it is not a creative source of truth" (ibid., 1:225).

<sup>5</sup>"God's rationality is the ultimate explanation of the primacy and ubiquity of rational structure in the created world of men and things . . ." (ibid., 5:350-1).

<sup>6</sup>"The rational God fashioned both the mind of man and the intelligible world to harmonize with each other" (ibid., 5:347).

<sup>7</sup>"Endowed with more than animal perception, gifted in fact with a mode of cognition not to be confused with

man is, not has, the image of God.<sup>1</sup> Henry argues that the image refers to rational, moral, and spiritual capacities of man.<sup>2</sup> It is worthwhile to note that although Henry considers all the three powers as equally important, he accords a logical priority to man's faculty of reason.<sup>3</sup> It is man's reasoning capacity, Henry contends, which acts as the basis for the meaningfulness of man's morality and spirituality.<sup>4</sup> This is a result of Henry's doctrine of the fall which excludes human rationality from the consequences of sin.<sup>5</sup> According to him, the fall affected man's

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sensation, man [is] . . . 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" (ibid., 3:168). Further, "The image of God in man facilitates his cognitive transcendence of nature and the linguisticization of cognitive capacity" (ibid., 3:346).

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:382. The exact meaning of this emphasis in Henry is not clear. The context of the statement, however, seems to suggest that Henry is here trying to show how "ontologically resemblant" man's mind is to God's mind. Henry quotes William Clarke approvingly: "The differences between God and man are differences between beings that are essentially resemblant." Henry adds that "the nous of God is not a mental faculty wholly different in kind from the nous of mankind in its content. Man not merely has the image of God but is the image of God" (ibid.).

<sup>2</sup>Henry refers to these qualities as "a cohesive unity of interrelated components that interact with and condition each other" (ibid., 2:125).

<sup>3</sup>"But in contemplating a divine image in man, it should be clear that the rational or cognitive aspect has logical priority. . . . Only if man is logically lighted, and not simply morally or spiritually involved independent of intelligent, can he be meaningfully aware of responsible relationships to God and other selves and to the cosmos" (ibid., 2:125-6).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Henry views man as "still capable," after the fall,

philosophical orientation but not his thinking mechanism.<sup>1</sup> Had the latter been affected, Henry holds that there would be no longer any basis for God's communication with man and, consequently, man's salvation.<sup>2</sup>

### The World Is Rational

The manner in which the world is rational is less clear in Henry. The reason for this, according to him, is that the Bible does not reveal the order of the universe.<sup>3</sup> However, there are some indications that Henry is not willing to leave the rationality of the world to what anyone might wish to imagine. First, it is Henry's view that laws of logic (especially the law of noncontradiction) and mathematical structures are "integral to the real world."<sup>4</sup> For him, it is this assumption which opens the possibility of correlating and harmonizing "the mind of God, the mind of

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"of intellectually analyzing rational evidence for the truth-value of assertions about God" (ibid., 1:227).

<sup>1</sup>Henry elucidates this point by referring to Gordon Clark: "Clark distinguishes sin's noetic effect on the content of man's thinking, that is, on his philosophical premises, from its effect on mental activity or the components of logic and reason. Whereas sin affects man's psychological activity and hinders his ability to think correctly, it does not affect the laws of valid inference" (ibid., 2:135-6).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:388.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3:229. Henry views God as having "willed moral and mathematical distinctions in the creation of the universe . . ." (ibid., 5:319). Further, "the certainty and universality of logic and mathematics establish a priority for insight into the nature of ultimate reality" (ibid., 5:388).

man and the rationality of nature" with each other.<sup>1</sup> Second, despite his methodological differences with Thomas Aquinas' five proofs for God's existence, Henry appeals to the cosmological argument in asserting that the world is not haphazard but full of pattern and design.<sup>2</sup> Third, Henry holds that there is order in history.<sup>3</sup> Events in the world are not isolated accidents but parts of a teleological plan which God will complete at the end of history.<sup>4</sup> Given these observations, it seems clear that although Henry confesses his ignorance on whether the rationality of the world is mathematical or teleological,<sup>5</sup> he has some definite suggestions to make in that respect.

#### Rationality and Sovereignty

The idea that "reality is rational" is what gives substance to Henry's concept of God's epistemological sovereignty. Henry's understanding of rationality, as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:347, 388.

<sup>2</sup>He makes it clear that his rejection of the cosmological argument does not require a rejection of "the relevance of reason to theological realities" as the neoorthodox theologians do. Ibid. He dismisses also as secular "the notion that nature is haphazard, history intrinsically unpredictable, all events unique" (ibid., 2:284). In addition, he appear to identify himself with the view that the real world is "objectively ordered and coherent" and nature as "a patterned reality of intelligible laws discoverable by human reason" (ibid., 5:359).

<sup>3</sup>Henry writes of history as being characterized by a "pattern", "a general coherence" and a "universal plan" (ibid., 6:460, 470-1).

<sup>4</sup>This theme can be clearly seen in Henry's doctrines of providence and eschatology. See ibid., 6:455-513.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5:388.



discussed above, includes elements such as truth, propositions, reason or thinking faculty, laws of logic, mathematical structures, and design in nature. These elements, for Henry, exist in the mind of God as necessary constituents of and conditions of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Without them, Henry maintains that objective knowledge of anything and communication of that knowledge is impossible.<sup>2</sup> If that be the case, and epistemology is generally defined as an area of study which deals with the source, nature, and limits of knowledge,<sup>3</sup> it is easy to notice the link between Henry's concept of rationality and his epistemology. Accordingly, to state that God exercises an epistemological sovereignty means, in Henry's case, that God is the source and preserver of all knowledge and the conditions which make that knowledge possible.

The basic principle which seems to issue from the above discussion on God's epistemological sovereignty is that all reality is rationally coherent with God as its sovereign origin and sustainer. The implications of this

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<sup>1</sup>"God the creator and sustainer of all gives the cosmos its intelligibility and meaning and hence its human knowability" (ibid., 5:384).

<sup>2</sup>"Valid knowledge is possible only in view of man's relationship to the divine mind" (ibid.). In addition, "Logic is indispensable to human thought and to human speech. Without the law of contradiction, no significant speech is possible, even attempts to refute the law of contradiction would have to be formulated in intelligible language that presupposes it" (ibid., 3:390).

<sup>3</sup>Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, Introduction to Philosophy (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 33-35.

principle on the proposition that "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy" may be stated as follows: First, propositional truth is the very structure of God's mind and, in special revelation, God communicates the contents of his own mind to man.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Henry seems to identify the propositional truth of Scripture with the propositions which constitute God's rational mind. Second, propositional truth is transmittable interpersonally throughout reality since, as a rational element, it maintains the same intelligibility and objective meaning in man, in God, and in the world.<sup>2</sup> The essence of these implications is that there are no epistemological barriers when God communicates propositional truth with man.<sup>3</sup> Henry

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<sup>1</sup>This inference is deducible from the material surveyed above and from the following statements of Henry: "Evangelical Christianity . . . acknowledges the cognitive and propositional nature of divinely revealed truths about God and his purposes conveyed by the inspired Scripture" (GRA, 4:332). The point becomes even clearer in the case of the New Testament: "The New Testament conveys the mind and the voice of the incarnate and risen Christ in intelligible propositional form" (ibid., 3:95).

<sup>2</sup>For Henry, "by true knowledge it [evangelical theology] means nothing more or less than truth as God knows and reveals it and that will include whatever any philosopher and any scientist says without need of retraction" (ibid., 1:93). Truth is eternal, "as timelessly true as is the truth of the mathematics," and "above all human contingency and change" (ibid., 3:474).

<sup>3</sup>It is Henry's position that "if revelation is God's revelation, and God chooses to communicate in human concepts and words, he is under no obligation to adopt 'anti-faith reason' or to speak in verbal ambiguities. . . . If God is the sovereign, rational God, . . . and if God desires to communicate indispensable information, then no modern theory of linguistics can be considered a roadblock" (ibid., 3:289). In addition, "God need not stutter when he pronounces his own Name nor when uttering any sentence he will to speak in our language" (ibid., 2:180).

maintains that "Divine sovereignty can be thus formulated because it extends also to the sphere of truth."<sup>1</sup>

#### God's Ontological Sovereignty

After discussing God's sovereignty in the realm of knowledge, it now seems appropriate to turn attention to God's sovereignty in the realm of being.<sup>2</sup> By God's ontological sovereignty, specific reference is hereby made to the concept of causality. The basic meaning of this concept was amply explained in chapter 3 and, therefore, the main focus of this discussion is on the application of that concept to the proposition that "inerrancy presupposes sovereignty." As already mentioned, Henry views God as the agent who is himself the original being,<sup>3</sup> the origin of all other beings in existence<sup>4</sup> and the direct cause of every

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:16.

<sup>2</sup>The sequence from epistemology to ontology is not arbitrary. It is the same sequence followed in the last two chapters. The arrangement is a deliberate effort to follow Henry's scheme in his treatment of the two subjects in God, Revelation and Authority, a fact which, in turn, is in accordance with the logical order of Reformed Confessions. See "The Second Helvetic Confession" (1566) and "The Westminster Confession" (1646) in John H. Leith, ed., Creeds of the Churches, 3rd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>God "neither became the living God by his creation of the universe, nor did he become the living God at some point in eternity past; he is the only living God and is so eternally. He lives in eternal self-affirmation . . . He wills eternally to be himself in the fullness of his independent vitality, and never ceases to be himself" (GRA, 5:69).

<sup>4</sup>God is "the originating principle of the cosmos and the ultimate foundation of the logical form of the cosmos and its coherent content" (ibid., 5:335).

event and condition in the universe.<sup>1</sup> In other words, nothing exists or happens without God's direct command.<sup>2</sup> The "causal relationship" which God has with the world seems, in fact, to be so intimate that it threatens the balance which Henry wishes to maintain between God's transcendence and immanence.<sup>3</sup> This total causation of every detail in existence is what I refer to here as God's ontological sovereignty.

The significance of this concept to our concerns in this study cannot be overemphasized. The idea of causality stands for the principle that divine causality is the

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<sup>1</sup>Henry describes God as "a divine principle immanent in all reality, that is, for a spiritual-rational-moral shaping force at work throughout cosmic existence and all historical events" (ibid., 3:202). God is also the "metaphysical absolute, . . . the independent personal cause of the universe, . . . the fundamental power of creation, cause of existence" (ibid., 5:332-3). He is also "the ultimate cause of all that is, . . . [and] the ultimate source of all reality" (ibid., 6:37).

<sup>2</sup>It is Henry's contention that "in the Bible creation is not a mechanistic causal reality; it involves, rather, a constant reenactment of God's presence and power." Henry calls this "voluntary" in contrast with "involuntary" causation (ibid., 6:49).

<sup>3</sup>Henry discusses the concepts of "God's Transcendence and Immanence" in ibid., 6:35-51. It seems, however, that despite his efforts to defend two levels of reality--natural and supernatural--against the tenets of process theology, he, nonetheless, emphasizes God's immanence in such ultimate and absolute terms that the ontological barrier between God and the world is essentially removed and the coherence of reality is stressed at the expense of God's transcendence. It may be improper to call Henry a panentheist on this basis but his concept of causality has some features which are easily comparable to those of panentheism. In both cases, God is directly implicated in every detail of existence. For a brief summary of the meaning of panentheism, see Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984).

unifying factor in the realm of being (or ontology) which, in Henry's terms, is meaningful and coherent. Reality consists not of several free and independent causal agents but several elements which are tied together by their dependence on God as the direct and necessary cause.<sup>1</sup> It seems that it is in this context that the proposition "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy" becomes more evident. If it may be argued that there is no ontological barrier between God and man, then the idea that God caused the existence of inerrant autographs is within the limits of real possibility.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Divine Logos

Henry's doctrine of the divine Logos is so comprehensive that, to do justice to it, the discussion here must be limited to those aspects which have a direct bearing on our present concern--the proposition that "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy."<sup>3</sup> In the previous two subsections, an attempt has been made to show how Henry

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<sup>1</sup>Undoubtedly, Henry states that God is not "the sole volitional agent that pantheism projects" (GRA, 6:82). He even mentions the existence of "secondary causes" and causal agency of the creatures. Man is especially endowed with a capacity for moral freedom (*ibid.*, 6:49, 84). Yet, it is Henry's view that to posit independent causality outside God (even in the case of evil) is "a kind of incipient dualism rather than the metaphysical monism of Scripture. One problem with such a view is an apparent questioning of God's sovereignty" (*ibid.*, 6:295). Italics supplied.

<sup>2</sup>More discussion on this follows below.

<sup>3</sup>Henry's exposition on the doctrine of divine Logos is divided into six chapters covering eighty-four pages (GRA, 3:164-247).

maintains a unified epistemology and a unified ontology, both of which structures exhibit God's sovereignty. It is not being suggested here that epistemology and ontology are mutually exclusive, especially given the ontological status of rational categories in the universe. However, it appears that, in order to fully appreciate Henry's concept of a "metaphysical monism,"<sup>1</sup> Henry's concept of the Logos goes a long way in elucidating the meaning of that notion. It should also be pointed out that since inerrancy of Scripture is an assertion which impinges on both epistemology and ontology at one and the same time, a concept such as that of the Logos is useful in illustrating the unity between realms of being and knowledge. Therefore, to include in this section a concept which seems to be the integrative principle in Henry's metaphysics seems to be well within the scope of the study.

Henry states that his concept of the Logos is derived from Scripture, particularly the first chapter of the Gospel of John.<sup>2</sup> His interpretation of the passage in John yields five major ideas.<sup>3</sup> (1) The word "logos" stands for "the mind, wisdom, and the truth of God incarnate."<sup>4</sup> For Henry, the divine Logos is an embodiment of reason and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:295.

<sup>2</sup>Henry devotes two chapters of vol. 3 to a biblical study of the word "Logos." See *ibid.*, 3:173-191, 482-487.

<sup>3</sup>These ideas seem to be most basic in Henry's interpretation of the biblical material.

<sup>4</sup>GRA, 3:486. Henry bases this first idea on lexical meaning of the Greek noun "logos." See *ibid.*, 3:482-487.

its attendant propositions of truth.<sup>1</sup> (2) The Logos is eternal.<sup>2</sup> He pre-existed with God in eternity<sup>3</sup> and as God, he is an ontological personal reality.<sup>4</sup> (3) The Logos is the creator and sustainer of the universe.<sup>5</sup> (4) As the incarnate God-man, the Logos is the mediating agent in creation, in redemption, and in the coming judgment.<sup>6</sup> (5) The Logos, who "lighteth every man," is the agent of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Henry seems to base this idea on a phrase in 1 John 1:1--"That which was from the beginning . . ."--and on John 1:1, 2--"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." He comments that the Logos "in eternity past shared the inner life of the Godhead" (ibid., 3:184).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3:167.

<sup>5</sup>This idea is in harmony with John 1:3, 4--"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men." Remarking on the significance of this passage, Henry writes, "The Logos of God is the source of all the substance and structures of created reality (John 1:3). To deny that the divine Logos originates the structural relations of the cosmos is to dispute the Creator's sovereignty" (ibid., 5:384).

<sup>6</sup>The point here is most likely based on John 1:14--"The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us." Referring to Christ as "preincarnate, incarnate, and now glorified," Henry assigns the Logos the role of the "mediating agency in creation, redemption and the coming judgment" (ibid., 3:203).

In this point, Henry's interpretation of the Logos is reminiscent of Plato's demiurge or divine craftsman who mediates between the Ideas and concrete world. See a characterization of the demiurge in Joseph Owens, A History of Ancient Western Philosophy (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959), 235-249. Henry himself opposes the idea of Plato's demiurge and accuses Alfred North Whitehead of reviving it in his process theology (GRA, 6:59). However, he seems to be unaware that he himself, in the doctrine of the Logos, is not very far from that notion.

God's self-revelation.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of these ideas which Henry considers to be the key concepts about the Logos in John, Henry proceeds to assign four fundamental functions to the Logos: cosmic, epistemic, salvific, and judgmental.<sup>2</sup>

The cosmic and epistemic roles of the Logos are particularly significant in Henry's view of reality.<sup>3</sup> According to Henry, the cosmic function signifies the Logos as the creator and sustainer of the universe.<sup>4</sup> In this case, the Logos is the "source of created existence."<sup>5</sup> The epistemic function signifies the Logos as the "ground of human knowledge"<sup>6</sup> and One who gives the universe its "intelligibility and meaning and, hence, its human knowability."<sup>7</sup> Henry combines the two functions of the Logos as follows:

The divine Logos is creative and revelatory. The ontic articulation (creation and preservation of the universe) and the noetic articulation of the cosmos (that is, its intelligible meaning and purpose) have their common

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<sup>1</sup>This idea is based on John 1:9. Henry interprets the phrase, "light which lighteth every man," to mean that the Logos confronts "every man in the universal general revelation given in nature, history, reason, and conscience" (GRA, 3:171).

<sup>2</sup>For a list of these roles, see *ibid.*, 3:194. The first three roles are also mentioned in terms of the cosmological Logos, the epistemological Logos, and the soteriological Logos (*ibid.*, 3:185).

<sup>3</sup>The other two roles are left out since they are outside the scope of this study.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:185.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:168.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:185.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:384.



source and ground in the divine Logos. . . . In other words, the creative Logos is at one and the same time the sole originating principle of the cosmos and the ultimate foundation of the logical form of the cosmos and of its coherent content.<sup>1</sup>

For Henry, the Logos is his basis for affirming "the ultimate meaning and coherence of the universe."<sup>2</sup> He is, in essence, the tie that holds reality together both epistemically and ontically.<sup>3</sup> One may infer from these observations that, given such a comprehensive concept of the Logos, there are no more barriers existing between ontology and epistemology, being and knowledge or God, man, and the world, since all these factors are accounted for by the existence of one personal being, the divine Logos.<sup>4</sup>

As evidence seems to indicate, the importance of the concept of the Logos is not any new significations which are not already included in the notions of rationality and causality previously discussed. Rather, the Logos idea assumes its distinctiveness from its integrative role in Henry's concept of sovereignty. Henry writes, "God's sovereignty requires the confession that all existence and all knowledge have their ultimate source in the divine

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:335.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3:194.

<sup>3</sup>This seems to be the meaning of Henry's phrase "metaphysical monism" in *ibid.*, 6:295.

<sup>4</sup>Henry states clearly that "the eternal and self-revealed Logos, incarnate in Jesus Christ, is the foundation of all meaning, and the transcendent personal source and support of the rational, moral and purposive order of created reality" (*ibid.*, 3:195).

Logos."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the divine Logos combines in his own person both the epistemological and the ontological aspects of God's sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> This appears to be the essence of Henry's assertion that the divinely revealed Logos is "the unifying principle of the cosmos."<sup>3</sup> For our present purposes, it is of particular significance that Henry designates the Logos as the agent of revelation.<sup>4</sup> It seems safe to infer from this designation that Henry here establishes the concept of sovereignty as the epistemic and ontic presupposition in the nature, the contents, and the product of that revelation.<sup>5</sup>

So far, the focus of discussion has been on examination of basic issues which underlie the proposition that "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy." It seems that, for Henry, the concept of sovereignty stands for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:334.

<sup>2</sup>Discussion on the relationship between God and the Logos is not intended here as it involves extended investigation of Henry's understanding of Trinity, the roles of the three persons of the Trinity and their relationship with each other. Suffice it here to say that Jesus the Logos has, for Henry, that particular function of being the "unifying factor" throughout all reality.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:388.

<sup>4</sup>See Henry's ideas on the revelatory role of the Logos (ibid., 3:203-15).

<sup>5</sup>This conclusion is not far-fetched given the following views from Henry: "God in his sovereign initiative determines the actuality, direction, nature, content and diversity of his self-disclosure." Henry also attribute various "non-orthodox" teachings on the doctrine of revelation to "a certain reluctance to approve God's sovereignty in regard to modes of revelation . . ." (ibid., 2:78, 80).

the way God thinks and acts and the way he relates himself with the world. The next section is an attempt to apply this general working principle to the proposition under investigation. It addresses itself to Henry's doctrine of inspiration as the occasion in which the presuppositional priority of sovereignty over inerrancy is best illustrated.

#### Sovereignty and Inerrancy in Inspiration

Henry's doctrine of inspiration provides some of the most relevant data in the investigation of the proposition that "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy."<sup>1</sup> The whole doctrine is not in view here since not all that it entails is of immediate concern in this study. But those aspects which are considered vital are examined for their potential in illustrating the proposition in question.<sup>2</sup> In order to streamline the discussion, three main emphases in Henry's understanding of inspiration have been selected: divine authorship of Scripture, providential guidance of Bible writers, and the Spirit's superintendence of inscripturation.<sup>3</sup> Within the range of these emphases, it is

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<sup>1</sup>Henry explains "The Meaning of Inspiration" (ibid., 4:129-69). That chapter is then followed by two others on the subject of inerrancy. That inerrancy is closely tied to the doctrine of inspiration is an unmistakable fact.

<sup>2</sup>The limitations mentioned here have more to do with the depth of analysis rather than the coverage of the subject. A wide perspective of the doctrine is what is viewed here rather than the details of Henry's ideas. The reason for this is that Henry's doctrine of inspiration is so broad that it would require another full study to cover it thoroughly.

<sup>3</sup>These topics encompass what in this study is considered significant in Henry's doctrine of inspiration.

hoped that the veracity of the proposition, "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy," can be shown to be demonstrable.<sup>1</sup>

#### Divine Authorship of Scripture

On the basis of two main passages--2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:19-21, Henry considers God to be the author of Scripture.<sup>2</sup> The crucial element in the passage from Timothy is the Greek term theopneustos.<sup>3</sup> For Henry, this word expresses "God's relationship to the sacred writings."<sup>4</sup> It signifies that the "Scriptures in their written form are a product of divine spiration, that is, are divinely breathed out."<sup>5</sup> The word theopneustos raises the inspired writings above "apostolic oral instruction" to a level where their "permanent validity and value" is made secure.<sup>6</sup> In regard to the passage from 2 Peter, Henry views it also as stressing divine authorship of Scripture. This it does "both negatively and positively."<sup>7</sup> First, Henry interprets the passage to mean that "Scripture does not have ground in

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<sup>1</sup>The word "sovereignty" itself hardly appears in Henry's chapters on inspiration and inerrancy. But its absence is no evidence that it has not controlling influence in Henry's understanding of inspiration and inerrancy.

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 4:131-3.

<sup>3</sup>The background that lies behind Henry's interpretation of this word is given in chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup>GRA, 4:131.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 4:132.

human inquiry and investigation or in philosophical reflection . . . or human initiative."<sup>1</sup> Second, the passage "affirms the origin of Scripture to be divine."<sup>2</sup> According to Henry, "since the context so contrasts divine over against human origin . . . the emphasis on divine origination is unmistakable."<sup>3</sup>

Henry's understanding of the two passages as teaching divine origin of Scripture is indeed commendable.<sup>4</sup> Because of the nature of the case, it seems difficult to conclude otherwise.<sup>5</sup> However, when this scriptural teaching

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:132.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>The exegetical basis for asserting the broad premise of divine origin of Scripture seems to be conclusively established by Benjamin Warfield, and more recently by Gordon Clark, Wayne House, and Edward Goodrick. See citations of their contributions in chapter 2. Efforts to evade that general premise through concentration of attention on the functions of Scripture in 1 Tim 3:17 do not appear to succeed in doing away with that premise. The avoidance of the obvious implication of the two passages mentioned by Henry is seen sometimes in treatments of Paul's or New Testament's attitude towards the Old Testament which totally ignores the contents of the passages. See Robert M. Grant, "Paul and the Old Testament" and C. K. Barrett, "The Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New," in The Authoritative Word: Essays on the Nature of Scripture, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 27-58. Perhaps the main reason for this is the critical denial of the authenticity of the epistles of 2 Timothy and 2 Peter. However, Donald Guthrie has clearly shown how tentative and inconclusive the arguments adduced to support that denial are. See his volume, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 584-634, 814-63.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. See also Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 7:344-5, 601-2.

is viewed in the context of Henry's concept of sovereignty, divine authorship of Scripture assumes new meanings.<sup>1</sup> For one thing, divine authorship means, for Henry, that the propositions in which scriptural truth is set is a concretization of the mind of God.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, on the basis of this identity between the mind of God and the contents of Scripture, propositional truth of the Bible is logically consistent and coherent.<sup>3</sup> For Henry, Scripture is necessarily inerrant since it is impossible for God to err

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<sup>1</sup>It is possible to be correct on the level of a general principle and still be incorrect in the application of that principle to specific situations. Divine authorship of Scripture seems to be clearly established in 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:19-21, but the range of possible interpretations of what constitutes this authorship is quite wide. In the present case, this author thinks that Henry is right in emphasizing the divine authorship of Scripture but wrong in the application of that idea to a specific role which God played in the production of Scripture.

<sup>2</sup>This is a natural conclusion on the basis of previous discussion and statements of Henry such as the following: "Insofar as the being of the Logos is to be distinguished from his intelligible revelation, and prophetic-apostolic discourse is to be distinguished from the teachings of Jesus in his earthly ministry, the contrast is quite proper. But insofar as it implies that the revelational word of prophets and apostles is never identical with the Word of the Lord, the distinction is not only confusing but biblically unjustifiable" (GRA, 4:47).

<sup>3</sup>The identity between God and biblical contents is an emphasis which Henry considers to be central in his understanding of inspiration. For him, "Inspiration is primarily a statement about God's relationship to Scripture, and only secondarily about the relationship of God to the writers" (*ibid.*, 4:143). He also writes: "The prophets, and Jesus, and the apostles all held that God had spoken and is speaking through the Scriptures. More than that, they considered Scripture itself to be 'the Word of God,' a designation that underscores both its origin and nature. . . . The Word of God came not from the prophets but 'through' them . . . What Moses said is 'the Word of God' . . . Scripture is God's Word . . . What Scripture says, God says. . . ." (*ibid.*, 4:137).

or to do or say anything that is contradictory to his rational nature.<sup>1</sup>

Another perspective from which divine authorship can be viewed which has a direct relationship with inerrancy is Henry's distinction between God as "author" and God as "cause."<sup>2</sup> For Henry, God is the cause of all things, be they good or evil.<sup>3</sup> In that case, God is the cause of Scripture in the same sense that he is the cause of everything else. But if Henry asserted scriptural inerrancy on the basis of causality alone, that would not be sufficient reason to exclude error from Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, if God is not only the cause but also the author of Scripture, the situation becomes

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<sup>1</sup>Henry views inerrancy as a defense of God's sovereignty and his logical nature. In his chapter on sovereignty, Henry states that "God's will or nature implies certain limitations on his actions and normatively defines the very conception of omnipotence in terms of his own omnipotence. God will not alter his own nature, he cannot deny himself, he cannot lie and cannot sin, . . . Any concept of omnipotence that requires God to contradict himself reflects a conjectural and ridiculous notion of absolute power. . . . Having willed moral and mathematical distinctions in the creation of the universe, God will not affirm vice to be virtue or two times two to be three; he is faithful to himself and to the relative unity and continuity he wills for his creation. . . . God himself wills the law of contradiction as integral to both divine and human meaning" (ibid., 5:319).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:294. This distinction was mentioned in chapter 3 in connection with the problem of evil.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5:332-5; 6:292-5.

<sup>4</sup>One could easily point to several things in the world which are mistaken, negative, erroneous or evil that are caused by God, to follow Henry's thought. To base inerrancy of Scripture on divine causality alone, therefore, would be absurd.

radically different. As author, God not only originates and sustains the good (this he does also for evil), but he also defends and preserves it.<sup>1</sup> That which has God for its author is good and, hence, free from imperfection of any kind.<sup>2</sup> For Henry, "Everything that comes from God, beginning with his work of creation, is good" and that goodness includes not only moral and aesthetic but also logical perfection.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, since God is the "author" of Scripture, it is inconceivable for Henry that error should be a part of it. According to Henry, "The doctrine that the Bible is divinely inspired is as

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<sup>1</sup>Henry's main passage on this distinction reads: "The central issue is whether and how God can be regarded both as the cause of factors in the created universe that we consider evil, and also as the defender and preserver of what we consider good. Here a distinction must be preserved between cause and author" (GRA, 6:294). Significantly, the passage occurs in Henry's discussion of the problem of evil.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:252. Henry has a doctrine of "the good." His ideas on this are in a chapter entitled, "The Goodness of God" (ibid., 6:251-68). There are two themes in that doctrine which have a bearing on our study. First, "goodness is an intrinsic perfection [or attribute] of the living God" (ibid., 6:251). This designation further clarifies Henry's distinction between good and evil. Unlike goodness, evil is not an attribute of God. Henry writes, "God can be an ultimate cause of evil, . . . without himself being an aspect of evil, or of evil being an aspect of him as its cause. God created giraffes, but he is not a giraffe, nor are giraffes aspects of God" (ibid., 6:294). Second, Henry defines "the good" as "a comprehensive correlation of the true, the moral and the beautiful" (ibid. 6:253). This means that when God declared the world which he created to be good (before the fall), he underscored creation's "intelligible order, moral perfection and aesthetic beauty, in short, its excellence" (ibid., 6:252).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:252-3. Henry does not use the term logical, but his mention of "intelligible" and "true" as necessary ingredients of "the good" strongly suggests this in view of his understanding of logic.



incompatible with the notion that God inspired error as it is with the doctrine that he need not have inspired truth."<sup>1</sup> Further, he considers it "simple illogic" to suppose that,

the God of the Bible who himself is truth and who cannot lie . . . personally inspired error and falsehood. Would not reason and logic instead side with a denial that God inspired what is declared false and errant?<sup>2</sup>

#### Providential Guidance of Bible Writers

Despite his emphasis on God's authorship of Scripture, Henry disowns three views of inspiration which he considers to be exaggerations of that emphasis. First, he rejects the view that human writers of the Bible were some kind of robots or machines in God's hands.<sup>3</sup> He states that such a view is more compatible with "manticism"--where mediums in the ancient pagan world lost their consciousness totally at the time of inspiration--than with biblical teaching.<sup>4</sup> Second, Henry denies that Scripture was revealed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:191. Henry's point here is that the fact of divine inspiration necessarily excludes error from the text of Scripture and establishes the truthfulness of what God inspired. In other words, God does not inspire error, he inspires truth.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:193.

<sup>3</sup>"The writers of Scripture are not unhistorical phantoms whom the divine Spirit controls like mechanical robots" (ibid., 4:138).

<sup>4</sup>Henry borrows from Geoffrey W. Bromiley four characteristics of biblical inspiration which distinguish it from manticism: "First, the Bible does not make unintelligible or sporadic pronouncements. Secondly, the divine aspect is not inscrutable providence, fate, or destiny. Thirdly, the biblical sayings, though often oracular in form, are not obscure or devious. Finally, there is an ethical quality about God's word and work in Scripture" (ibid., 4:142).

by dictation.<sup>1</sup> According to Henry, dictation theory is faulty because it excludes the "individuality" of the human writer from the process of inscripturation.<sup>2</sup> Third, Henry is opposed to any suggestion that the Bible came down in completed form from heaven like the Qur'an or from an angel like the Book of Mormons.<sup>3</sup> It is Henry's contention that the Bible is an historical book which reflects the culture, history, and the personality of those who wrote it.<sup>4</sup>

For some writers, human involvement in the production of Scripture indicates at once that, since humans are fallible, the possibility, and even the presence, of error in Scripture cannot be completely erased from Scripture.<sup>5</sup> But Henry thinks otherwise.<sup>6</sup> For him, the

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<sup>1</sup>"Statements that depict inspiration in terms of supernatural dictation are untrue to the Scriptures, unrepresentative of evangelical doctrine, and prejudicial to theological understanding" (ibid., 4:138).

<sup>2</sup>Henry stresses that "The Spirit of God made full use of the human capacities of the chosen writers so that their writings reflected psychological, biographical, and even sociohistorical differences" (ibid., 4:148). Commenting on the fact that "God did not dictate the words," Henry continues, "consistent with their differing personalities and stylistic peculiarities, the inspired prophets and apostles in fact spoke in the language of their time and place" (ibid., 4:149-50).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:138.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4:148-50.

<sup>5</sup>This reminds us of Clark H. Pinnock, for example, who writes that "God, in giving us literary vehicles of his Word, accepted a definite limitation upon himself. He shows himself willing to speak to us within the limits of human language and to accept the risks that belong to that decision" (The Scripture Principle, 99). Pinnock does not spell out the "risks" to be errors but the implication seems obvious. For the view that these "risks" consist of actual errors, see Beegle, Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility;

cultural, historical, and personal ideas which the writers brought into the Bible were not their own creation. Long before Scripture was written, God's providence guided the personality and the circumstances of each individual writer so that at the time of writing, his style of writing, his personality, and other circumstantial factors were exactly what God had programmed them to be.<sup>1</sup> In that case, Henry proposes that Scripture at one and the same time is written by real historical persons and is a product of God's authorship.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, Henry does not consider the writers

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and Bloesch, Essentials of Evangelical Theology, vol. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Henry would rather liken the human aspect of Scripture to Christ's humanity in incarnation. For him, the "authentic human nature of Christ" needed not to share in human fallibility" (GRA, 4:150).

<sup>1</sup>It is Henry's view that "divine inspiration did not occur ex machina but crowned a long period of providential preparation involving diverse experiences" (*ibid.*, 4:140).

<sup>2</sup>Henry refers to this joint venture as "special confluence of divine and human" and "simultaneous agency of God and man" (*ibid.*, 4:142). Benjamin Warfield also used the same language in describing the human and the divine factors in inscripturation: ". . . the whole Scripture is the product of divine activities which enter it, however, not by superseding the activities of human authors, but confluently with them. . . . The human and divine factors in inspiration are conceived of as flowing confluently and harmoniously to the production of a common product" (Warfield, Shorter Writings, 2:547). Warfield refers to his concept of the balance between human and divine in inspiration as concursum (*ibid.*, 2:547), a term which Henry also uses (GRA, 4:206). It seems quite clear that Henry and Warfield are agreed not only on general concept of divine authorship but also on the terminology also.

It is noticeable, however, that Henry considers it incorrect to talk of "dual authorship" or "divine-human coauthorship" (*ibid.*, 4:142). Warfield differs from him on this. For Warfield, the Bible is "a divine-human book in which every word is at once divine and human" (Warfield, Shorter Writings, 2:547). It appears that this language would, for Henry, suggest a kind of "synergism" in the

as infallible persons in their daily lives.<sup>1</sup> But how he maintains human fallibility and the inerrancy of Scripture at the same time is the subject of the next sub-section. Meanwhile, it seems clear that the human factor in Scripture is itself part of God's providence and, as such, it does not threaten the inerrancy of what God revealed.

#### Spirit's Guidance in Inspiration

Despite his view that inspiration has to do with what was spoken as well as with what was written under Spirit's superintendence,<sup>2</sup> Henry considers inscripturation--the process of writing the original Scripture--to be the focal point in inspiration.<sup>3</sup> For him, it is what is written down that has permanence and durability.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it is

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writing of Scripture ("synergism" is a term from Greek synergismos, associated particularly with Desiderius Erasmus in his defense of free will against Martin Luther's concept of the bondage of the will). This concept, which is essentially Pelagian, was refuted by Calvin in Institutes, III, 24.1. Although Henry does not mention it except in a quotation from Karl Barth (GRA, 6:93), his doctrines of election and predestination necessarily preclude it. That being the case, the causal part that God played in the production of Scripture is just as total, absolute, and overwhelming as God's irresistible grace in matter of salvation. In general, the difference between Henry and Warfield on the use of some phrases seems to be only superficial. The underlying stress on divine causation of Scripture is the same in both cases.

<sup>1</sup>GRA, 4:151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:31-35, 37-38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4:37.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

to the Word of God written that Scripture often attaches the word inspiration.<sup>1</sup>

In order to clarify his position on inspiration, Henry first states what he does not mean by using that word. For him, biblical inspiration does not refer to a heightening of man's psychic powers.<sup>2</sup> It is not "some special internal disposition of the chosen writers" or an experience which results in "manifestation of artistic, literary or poetic genius."<sup>3</sup> Neither does inspiration refer to God's impartation of thoughts or concepts into man's mind, in which case the writer is then left on his own to translate and communicate those thoughts and concepts in human language.<sup>4</sup> Henry is opposed to that view because it leaves a lot of room for human error to creep into Scripture.<sup>5</sup> Henry's anthropology, that man is totally

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4:142.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Henry refers to this view as "the concept theory of inspiration" which he associates with A. H. Strong, the Baptist theologian who wrote Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland Press, 1901). See GRA, 4:143.

<sup>5</sup>Henry argues that this theory "lies in representing inspiration as a phenomenon internal to the writers more than a quality of the writings" (GRA, 4:143.).

Henry's criticism of this view seems to be rather shallow in the sense that it does not take seriously the faithfulness of human instruments in communicating to their best ability what God revealed to them. Strong's theory seems to assume, and rightly so, that God chose human mediums who he knew would faithfully communicate what they knew to be truth. In my opinion, this view seems to be much more compatible with Bible's view of itself, phenomena of Scripture, and common human experience.

depraved, is not an irrelevant issue in the evaluation of his exclusion of human contribution in Scripture.

Henry defines inspiration as "a supernatural influence upon divinely chosen prophets and apostles whereby the Spirit of God assures the truth and trustworthiness of their oral and written proclamation."<sup>1</sup> It appears evident from the definition that, for Henry, inspiration extends to what is written down. However, this point immediately raises the issue of the exact manner in which the Spirit assured the "truth and trustworthiness" of various types of biblical literature. The problem involved here may be illustrated by the difference between the books of Luke and Revelation. On one hand is Luke the historian who openly admits that his book is a result of research.<sup>2</sup> On the other is John the prophet who repeatedly assures the reader that his book is a result of what he saw and heard in visions.<sup>3</sup> Differences between the two books on the immediate source of their contents and the nature of Spirit's action have been interpreted by some scholars as indicating that there is a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:129.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 1:1-4. Henry also admits that human powers are employed in this case. Commenting on Luke, Henry writes, "Sometimes a long period of providential preparation, and then an extended period of writing, may well have entered into the completion of the end product. Luke writes of including patient sifting of sources" (ibid., 4:146). Elsewhere, Henry remarks that Luke is "completely candid about the use of human sources" (ibid., 4:138).

<sup>3</sup>Every chapter in the book of Revelation has such phrases as "I saw" or "I heard" which suggest a supernatural impartation of information.

variety of inspiration models in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> The implication here is that, even if it were possible to assert inerrancy of the autographs, the assertion cannot be applied in a uniform manner throughout Scripture.

Henry's response to this issue is short but significant. He readily recognizes that there are at least two literature types in Scripture.<sup>2</sup> One type is the prophetic while the other is what resulted from exercise of some human powers. Henry borrows Warfield's terminology to express the fact that the two literature types represent two models of inspiration. He writes:

Revelation takes at times a form that involves the total personality of the recipient and communicator of it, a form which, in distinction from Old Testament prophecy, Warfield called 'concurvative operation' ('Revelation,' 4:2580a). Here the 'enunciation of divine truth is attained through the action of the human powers-- historical research, logical reasoning, ethical thought, religious aspiration . . . in contrast with the 'supercessive action of the revealing Spirit' as in prophetic revelation."<sup>3</sup>

In other words, there is a difference in the way the Spirit operated in different contexts of inscripturation. Yet, in terms of the extent to which the Spirit superintended all biblical writers, Henry insists that inspiration was uniform throughout.<sup>4</sup> That is, in Spirit's role of assuring the "truth and trustworthiness" of what was inscripturated, it

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<sup>1</sup>See William Sanday's views on degrees of inspiration in Van Bemmelen, Issues in Inspiration, 148-58. See also Beegle, The Inspiration of Scripture, 135-9.

<sup>2</sup>GRA, 4:159.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

made no difference if the contents were immediately revealed--as in the case of John's Revelation--or a result of research or exercise of human capacities--as in the case of Luke. Realizing that the latter case is especially likely to occasion suspicion that the Spirit's role was not so total, Henry writes that "the human powers--historical research, logical reasoning, ethical thought, religious aspiration" were "acting not by themselves, however, but under the prevailing assistance, superintendence, direction, control of the Divine Spirit.' . . ." Furthermore,

'The Spirit is not to be conceived as standing outside of the human powers employed for the effect in view, ready to supplement any inadequacies they may show and to supply any defects they may manifest, but as working confluently in, with and by them, elevating them, directing them, controlling them, energizing them, so that, as His instruments, they rise above themselves and under His inspiration do His work and reach His aim. The product . . . attained by their means is His product through them.'<sup>1</sup>

The manner in which Henry describes the Spirit's role in inscripturation seems to suggest two main ideas. First, it appears evident that the process of inscripturation leaves no room for free and "uncaused" human involvement.<sup>2</sup> Whatever personal, cultural, or ideological characteristics one may find in Scripture, their ultimate source is God. If the human writers were at all free, that freedom was itself incorporated in God's sovereignty.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:159-60.

<sup>2</sup>For Henry, "in inscripturation the divine Spirit selectively superintends fallible and sinful human beings in the inerrant oral and written proclamation of God's message" (ibid., 4:160).



Second, Henry's understanding of the Spirit's role in inscripturation means that, since the writers were totally under the control of the Spirit, the possibility of error was eliminated. Henry's own statement on this matter reads:

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 from error. As J. Gresham Machen expressed it, the biblical writers were preserved by a 'supernatural guidance and impulsion by the Spirit of God . . . from the errors that appear in other books and thus the resulting book, the Bible, is in all its parts the very Word of God, completely true in what it says regarding matters of fact and completely authoritative in its commands.'<sup>1</sup>

The fact that this passage is a clear illustration of the decisive role which the concept of sovereignty plays in the formulation of the doctrine of inerrancy seems to be unmistakable.

#### Conclusion

The material presented in this chapter is geared towards an analysis of the proposition, "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy." The basic contention is that, although that proposition is not explicit in Henry, there are strong indications that it is at least implicit. The section on "primary considerations" is an attempt to set the problem which the proposition raises in its wider philosophical context. It is argued that Henry's concept of sovereignty of God stands for a fundamental principle in which God is the unifying factor in his metaphysics. In

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:166-7.

other words, divine sovereignty accounts for the objective intelligibility and coherence of reality. The main implications of this fact is that it removes all epistemic and ontic barriers between various levels and elements of reality so that it becomes possible for categories of meaning and existence to be uniformly applicable throughout the universe. In this case, divine sovereignty become the exercise of God's freedom, lordship, power, and causality in the existence of a unified reality in which God himself is the center. From this broad concept of reality, Henry approaches his doctrine of Scripture.

In revealing himself in Scripture, God vindicated his sovereignty. He demonstrates his independence in making no consultations with anyone else about whether or not he should reveal himself. According to Henry, the fact of revelation is wholly a matter of God's initiative.<sup>1</sup> There was no external necessity that God should reveal himself. God was also free to reveal himself whenever and in whatever manner he chose. Henry expresses this aspect as follows: "Revelation has its free and independent ground solely in the divine Redeemer."<sup>2</sup> God has also the power and abilities that it takes to reveal himself in the manner that he did. It is Henry's view that the reason why some theologians fail to see God as revealing himself in certain ways is their reluctance to affirm God's lordship or sovereignty in the

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<sup>1</sup>According to Henry, "God need not have addressed [his revelation to] the Hebrews or anyone" (GRA, 2:87).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2:121.

universe.<sup>1</sup> For him,

The methods and means of divine revelation are not to be limited by any a priori foreclosing or prescribing of ways by or in which the God of revelation might reveal himself. . . . God alone in his sovereign initiative determines the actuality, direction, nature, content and diversity of his self-disclosure . . . . God reveals himself in his own time and the way when and where he wills.<sup>2</sup>

Within the perimeters of these statements and other concepts discussed in this chapter, it seems evident that in his doctrine of Scripture, Henry stresses the priority of all that his concept of divine sovereignty signifies.

Henry's understanding of the role that God played in revealing himself to the Bible writers is best described in terms of causality. At least three facts seem clear in this respect: First, by holding that God is the author of Scripture, Henry accomplishes two main things. One is that he attributes the contents of Scripture--in the form of propositional truth--to God as their causal origin. The other is that he eliminates the presence of error from original Scripture since, like original creation, but unlike evil, the Bible is something that God desired to actuate. It, therefore, reflects God's goodness and perfection.

Second, God so sovereignly controls the lives of individual writers of Scripture through his providential guidance that all the thoughts which they brought into Scripture were exactly the way God would have them at the time of writing the Bible. This idea seems to be a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2:80-81.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 77-79.

consequence of Henry's view of causality which, when applied to inerrancy of Scripture has two implications. One is that God's decision and act of disclosing himself in Scripture is "concurrent" with the decisions and acts of the human writers of the Bible. In this case, the autographs which the human writers produced were at the same time autographs which God himself also produced. Another inference is that God's thoughts, decision and act of disclosing himself in Scripture logically precede and determine the nature of the thoughts, decisions and acts of the human writers. It is to be noted that in Henry's scheme, the human writers needed not act like robots. When they wrote Scripture, they were "free" in the sense that their activity was not "constrained." Theirs was a voluntary activity which, as Henry would argue, is perfectly compatible with God's causation of that activity.

Third, the Holy Spirit so superintended the writers in the inscripturation process that they were supernaturally kept from making any error of any kind. This is the crowning point in the process of inspiration. More than any other aspect of God's disclosure, inspiration distinguishes the Bible writers from other human beings and also the thoughts of Scripture from other human thoughts. As a result of the superintendence of the scriptural writers, Henry maintains that the original autographs were without error.

The significance of the idea that "sovereignty is a presupposition in inerrancy" cannot be overstated. The

proposition implies at least three related conclusions. One is that a good grasp of the concept of sovereignty is necessary for a proper understanding and appreciation of inerrancy. Another implication is that inerrancy is best defended in the context of absolute sovereignty. To detach inerrancy from sovereignty is to remove from it that which renders it epistemologically important and to undermine the ontological base on which it stands. In other words, inerrancy is descriptive of effects of a revelational-inspirational act which God performs in his sovereignty. In fact, Henry maintains that "inspiration connects God's activity with the express truths and words of Scripture."<sup>1</sup> Finally, any serious evaluation of the concept of inerrancy must include also an evaluation of the concept of sovereignty. The real issue in inerrancy is not so much the logistics of what the concept means and what it does not mean. These matters are peripheral and incidental to the case for inerrancy which Henry presents. The heart of the matter, rather, is the nature and extent of God's action in man and in the world. Consequently, to justify a rejection of inerrancy, for those who are uncomfortable with the position, requires a concept of sovereignty different from Henry's since, without this, it is not possible to systematically formulate a view of inerrancy.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4:144.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The question which was raised at the beginning of this study was how inerrancy presupposes a particular concept of divine sovereignty in the writings of Carl Henry. Among the points made in the foregoing analysis of that question, a number of key ideas have emerged which act as milestones in the development of the study.

Chapter 2 is a descriptive analysis of Henry's concept of inerrancy, in the interest of which this investigation is primarily undertaken. The analysis has its focus on those features of inerrancy which are foundational to a thorough understanding of the concept. These features include Henry's sources for the concept, the meaning of inerrancy, the extent or the coverage of the concept, and the role which inerrancy plays in Henry's theology. For the purposes of this study, it is of particular significance that Henry attaches the word "inerrancy" only to the original autographs of the Bible. According to him, it is the fact that the autographs were "inspired" which renders them inerrant. Henry does not consider scriptural apographs to be inspired and, as such, they are infallible, not inerrant. Further investigation reveals that inspiration is a phenomenon which "connects God's activity with the express

truths and words of Scripture."<sup>1</sup> In effect, Henry conceives inerrancy to be a consequence of God's act of inspiration. One implication of this observation is that, for Henry, inerrancy is not a question of the nature of Scripture alone but one that impinges also on the nature of God's activity in the world.

In chapter 3, Henry's concept of sovereignty is analyzed for the purpose of clarifying Henry's understanding of the nature of God's activity in the world. This aspect of the investigation is meant to set the discussion of inerrancy in the wider context of Henry's theology. The guiding hypothesis is that, if inerrancy is an end-product of God's activity, there must be something in Henry's understanding of how God acts which illumines how God's involvement in the production of Scripture results in the inerrancy of the autographs. To avoid a caricature of Henry's views, the concept of sovereignty is presented not only to meet the objectives of this study but also to highlight its main features as an individual concept in its own right. Thus, divine sovereignty is examined in terms of Henry's theological tradition, the meaning of the term "sovereignty," the scope covered by the concept, and the place which sovereignty occupies in Henry's theology. For the purposes of this study, however, certain aspect of Henry's concept of sovereignty are especially important in their explication of how Henry views the nature of God's

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<sup>1</sup>GRA, 4:144.

activity in the world. Two of the main aspects may be summarized as follows:

First, sovereignty is a key attribute in Henry's doctrine of God. As "an aspect of God's ontology,"<sup>1</sup> divine sovereignty is the single most important attribute of the divine nature since "without it all other attributes of God lose their efficacy."<sup>2</sup> Given such a high status of the concept of sovereignty, it seems pertinent to conclude that divine sovereignty is the basis on which God's activities in the world are grounded.<sup>3</sup>

Second, Henry's concept of sovereignty entails the idea of causality. Undoubtedly, Henry dissociates himself from notions of causality which depict the universe as an impersonal "mechanistic causal reality."<sup>4</sup> But he makes it clear that such interpretations of the term "causality" do not provide sufficient reason for rejecting some basic concepts which the term itself represents. Henry affirms that God is "the one and the only creative causality in the world and in history."<sup>5</sup> Henry is here not to be understood as precluding the existence and, indeed, the significance of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:99.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5:295. See also *ibid.*, 5:325.

<sup>3</sup>Henry states explicitly that this is particularly so in the case of God's decrees (*ibid.*, 6:99), predestination, and election (*ibid.*, 6:83).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 6:49.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 6:232.



causality outside God.<sup>1</sup> His contention is that any causality there is outside God is not original or creative but secondary, dependent, and concurrent with God's ultimate causality.<sup>2</sup>

One significant point that should not be ignored in respect to Henry's notion of causality is the distinction which Henry makes between God as "cause" and God as "author."<sup>3</sup> From what Henry writes, it seems that the difference between "cause" and "author" relates to whether a given factor or a set of factors in the universe, though, nonetheless, caused by God, is or is not desired by him and, therefore, reflective of God's goodness and perfection.

With the concept of sovereignty thus explicated, the stage is set for a discussion on how inerrancy presupposes Henry's concept of sovereignty. This is the focus of chapter 4. It is to be noted that due to the complexity of both concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty and given the theological distance between them--inerrancy, in this case, being an attribute of Scripture while sovereignty is an attribute of God, certain primary considerations need to be taken into account in order to show the possibility of a connection between the two concepts in question. Investigation reveals that this possibility of a connection between inerrancy and sovereignty lies in Henry's view of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5:311; 6:49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:48-49.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6:294.

reality in terms of "metaphysical monism."<sup>1</sup> For Henry, reality is a rational complex of related elements in which God, himself being rational, is both the causal principle and the unifying factor. Moreover, since God's causality accounts for both the ontological and epistemological factors in the universe, Henry recognizes no barriers in God's exercise of his sovereignty in the world. With this comprehensive view of a unified structure of the universe, Henry maintains that God can act and speak in the world in a manner that is direct, literal, and intelligible to his creatures.

To be more precise, the case for a connection between inerrancy and sovereignty which is presented in this study may be stated as follows. Henry's concept of sovereignty provides the theological preconditions which are necessary to make the inerrancy of Scripture possible. First, inerrancy requires that the inerrant truth of Scripture come from a rational being who is perfect. This requirement is met by Henry's view of God's "epistemological sovereignty." For Henry, God is a rational being, the only creative source of knowledge and truth, and one whose goodness includes logical, moral, and aesthetic perfection.

Second, inerrancy requires that the human elements in Scripture, to be inerrant, be themselves of divine origin. According to Henry, divine sovereignty extends to the personal and cultural factors which the human writers

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:295.

brought into Scripture. As Henry sees it, God was providentially active in the biography of the writers so that, while their personalities and cultural ideas were truly human, they were, nonetheless, caused by God. What Henry means by a "concurrence" of the divine and the human in the production of Scripture is that human agency was "concurrent" with and dependent on God's causality.

Third, inerrancy requires that the whole process of inscripturation be totally controlled by God in order to preclude the possibility of error. For Henry, God, in his sovereignty, so pervaded the process of inspiration that in inscripturation of truth in the autographs by the human agents, the possibility of error was totally excluded. It must be added here that, for Henry, Scripture is inerrant not only because God is its cause--God is the cause of everything in the universe, including evil. More importantly, as the sovereign "author" of Scripture, God "desired" to disclose himself in Scripture and, as such, it manifests his perfection and goodness.

#### Implications of the Study

As it is stated at the beginning of the study, the purpose of this investigation is to analyze Henry's concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty for the sake of showing how the former presupposes the latter. As investigation seems to indicate, inerrancy presupposes Henry's concept of sovereignty in the sense that, as sovereign lord, God was the causal origin of all the factors that went into the

production of Scripture, thus making the Bible inerrant. The presuppositional connection thus established seems to be necessary and logically consistent. That being the case, this study has various implications.

First, in orienting inerrancy to the concept of sovereignty, inerrancy is thereby demonstrated to be a theory whose theological base is found mainly in the traditions where God's sovereignty is viewed in terms of causality. It seems to be commonly accepted that in Protestantism, this view, as Henry expresses it, is chiefly found among those who identify themselves with the Calvinistic or Reformed traditions.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the most ardent advocates of inerrancy have consistently been Reformed theologians. This is true of the Princeton theologians who popularized inerrancy in America the majority of modern advocates of the position. As

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<sup>1</sup>According to Ben A. Warburton, "The one rock upon which Calvinism builds is that of the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of the eternal and self-existent Jehovah" (Calvinism: Its History and Basic Principles, Its Fruits and Its Future, and Its Practical Application to Life [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1955], 63). See also H. Henry Meeter, Calvinism: An Interpretation of Its Basic Ideas, vol. I: The Theological and the Political Ideas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1939), 31-38; William K. B. Stoever, "The Calvinist Theological Tradition," in Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements, vol. II, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 1039; Arthur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930); James Montgomery Boice, Foundations of the Christian Faith, vol. 1: The Sovereignty of God (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978); and John Murray, Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1960), 55-71.

Leon Hynson states, "inerrancy has emerged from a largely Reformed matrix."<sup>1</sup>

Second, the concept of inerrancy cannot be defended theologically by those who do not subscribe to the concept of sovereignty. The point here is not that one cannot advocate inerrancy for reasons other than theological ones.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it is here argued that unless there are basic theological grounds for holding inerrancy, such as Henry's concept of sovereignty, inerrancy is merely a dogmatic position with little, if any, intellectual significance. If the critics mentioned at the beginning of this study wish to charge that inerrancy is a "theology-less" position, it is this concept of inerrancy which is not undergirded by an appropriate doctrine of God towards which they need to direct their attacks. While inerrancy may be a view held by many conservative evangelicals, a distinction needs to be maintained between inerrancy as a theological concept and inerrancy as a fad of conservative evangelicals in general.

Third, the connection between inerrancy and sovereignty is a warning against general and simplistic evaluation of the concept of inerrancy. For Henry, inerrancy is an end result, a final product, or a surface effect of a more fundamental phenomenon, namely, the

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<sup>1</sup>Leon O. Hynson, "The Inerrancy Question: A Misplaced Debate," Evangelical Journal 5 (1987): 30-34.

<sup>2</sup>One could appeal to a family or church tradition as a reason for believing in inerrancy. Another could find inerrancy a simple and straightforward way of defending the reliability of Scripture.

activity of God in his sovereignty. In this case, a keen evaluation of the concept is one which considers inerrancy not as a view of the nature of Scripture only but also as one part of a larger context in which the doctrine of God features prominently.

#### Suggestions for Further Study

The present study has focused its attention on Henry's concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty and how the former presupposes the latter. It cannot be claimed that these subjects have been exhaustively analyzed and, as such, there remains room for further investigation of Henry's views to see if there are perhaps other additional data that could strengthen the case for a connection between inerrancy and sovereignty.

Apart from studying the connection between inerrancy and sovereignty in Henry, there exists also a need to make other case studies to see if the conclusions made in this study are demonstrable in other theologians. It would be enlightening to study other conservative evangelical theologians in the following categories: those, like Henry, in the Reformed tradition who advocate inerrancy; those in the Reformed tradition who do not hold inerrancy; those outside the Reformed tradition who subscribe to inerrancy; and those outside the Reformed tradition who do not defend inerrancy.

It is hoped that the material presented in this study on the concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty

contribute toward a clarification of some of the issues involved the debate over inerrancy. The subjects of Scripture and God to which the concepts of inerrancy and sovereignty are attributes are certainly valuable concerns for Christianity. Further investigation of these subjects can only add to the significance which Christianity attaches to these fundamental doctrines.

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