

THE THEOLOGY OF CARL F. H. HENRY
by Steve Weaver

Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry (1913-2003) has largely been credited with “formulating the apologetic for a socially relevant evangelicalism.”¹ The president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, R. Albert Mohler Jr., has written that Henry is “among the few individuals who can claim to have shaped a major theological movement.”² Associate Dean and Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, Paul R. House has written that: “Though one can certainly critique his theological vision, it is historically untenable to ignore or dismiss Carl Henry’s role in shaping of twentieth-century American evangelicalism.”³ But the greatest assessment of Henry is from a former colleague who once shared an office with him, Kenneth S. Kantzer, who wrote: “In summary, Carl Henry is truly a man of God. He has many talents and gifts, but he has truly understood that all of his talents and gifts are to be used for the glory of God and the advancement of the church in the service of his fellow human beings.”⁴ It is no wonder then that Henry continues to be studied today and is a worthy subject for this paper.

¹Augustus Cerillo, Jr. and Murray W. Dempster, "Carl F. H. Henry's Early Apologetic for an Evangelical Social Ethic, 1942-1956," *JETS* 34 (1991): 366.

²R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Carl F. H. Henry," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, eds. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 279.

³Paul R. House, "Remaking the Modern Mind: Revisiting Carl Henry's Theological Vision," *SBJT* 8 (Winter 2004): 4.

⁴Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry: An Appreciation," in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 377.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the theology of Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry. This goal will be accomplished in the following three ways. First, a brief biography of Henry's life will be given. Second, in order to highlight his theological emphases, a survey of Henry's theology will be made. Third, a comparison with another Baptist theologian of a previous century, James Petigru Boyce, will be offered.

Biography

Carl F. H. Henry was born on January 22, 1913 to Karl and Johanna Heinrich in New York City.⁵ His parents were both German immigrants who changed their family name to Henry during World War I due to the widespread anti-German sentiment in America.⁶ Carl was the oldest of eight children, all with two middle names.⁷ Their home life had no evidence of religious activity even though his mother came from a Roman Catholic family and his father was nominally a Lutheran.⁸ Henry's first exposure to the Bible came when he stole one from the pew rack of the Episcopal Sunday school which he attended as a boy.⁹

The young Carl held a series of part-time jobs to supplement his family's income. His education as a high school student led to his interest in journalism. Upon graduation from high school, Henry received a job selling subscriptions for *The Islip Press* of Long Island. Through his own ingenuity, he began selling subscriptions on the verge of the Great Depression in 1929. He also began contributing news stories of local interest at this time and his career in the

⁵Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 15.

⁶Ibid., 16.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Mohler, "Carl F. H. Henry," 280.

⁹Carl F. H. Henry, "The Bible and the Conscience of our Age," *JETS* 25 (1982): 404.

newspaper industry was launched. Within three years, at the age of nineteen, Henry had become “the youngest editor of a weekly newspaper in New York’s second largest county.”¹⁰ The paper was *The Smithtown Star* and Henry was soon to be confronted with the claims of the gospel.¹¹

Within a year of becoming editor of *The Smithtown Star*, Henry was converted through the ministry of The Oxford Group. Henry himself recalls the moment of his conversion:

I acknowledged my sinful condition and prayed God to cleanse my life of the accumulated evil of the years, to empty me of self and to make resident within me the Holy Spirit to guide and rule my life.

By the end of that prayer the wonder was wrought. I had inner assurance hitherto unknown of sins forgiven, that Jesus was my savior, that I was on speaking terms with God as my Friend. A floodtide of peace and joy swept over me. My life’s future, I was confident, was now anchored in and charted by another world, the truly real world.¹²

Henry’s conversion to Christ was a dramatic turning point in his life. Like so many before him, he would never be the same.

As a direct result of Henry’s encounter with Christ, he soon became convinced that he must enter a Christian college or university to prepare for full-time Christian service.

Consequently, in the Spring of 1935, Henry applied for admission to Wheaton College for the Fall semester.¹³ The years at Wheaton would be formative in his life as many lifelong friendships would be made with profound and lasting influences. Among the friendships established at Wheaton were those with Gordon Clark, Billy Graham and Harold Lindsell.¹⁴ Most significantly for Henry personally was the acquaintance he made with the daughter of Baptist pioneer

¹⁰Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 33-41.

¹¹Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 280.

¹²Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 46.

¹³Ibid., 55.

¹⁴Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 280.

missionaries to the African Careroons, Helga Bender. Within five years of their meeting, she became Mrs. Helga Henry in 1940.¹⁵ They would have two children together.

After graduating from Wheaton in 1938 with a Bachelor of Arts, Henry stayed on at Wheaton to complete a Master of Arts in 1941. By 1942, Henry had completed both a Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Theology degrees from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹⁶

Henry had become a Baptist when he was immersed in 1939 at the First Baptist Church of Babylon, New York¹⁷ Consequently, Henry served as the pastor of Humboldt Park Baptist Church from October 1940 to January 1943. This congregation in his wife's home denomination, called the German Baptist Conference, ordained Henry in 1941.¹⁸

_____ Henry taught theology at his alma mater of Northern Seminary from 1942 to 1947.¹⁹ During his time at Northern, Henry penned two seminal works which set the trajectory for his legacy as a spokesmen for evangelical engagement with culture. These works were *Remaking the Modern Mind* (1946) and *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947). The first argued for a return to Christian theism as the only worldview which makes sense of the world as we know it.²⁰ The second, which was reprinted in 2003, argues for a robust theological foundation combined with a active social and ethical application of the gospel. *The Uneasy*

¹⁵Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 62.

¹⁶Ibid., 102 and 107.

¹⁷House, "Remaking the Modern Mind," 6.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Mohler, "Carl F. H. Henry," 281.

²⁰House, "Remaking the Modern Mind," 7.

Conscience became the manifesto for the movement now known as “new evangelicalism.”²¹

More will be said about this volume when Henry’s writings are being discussed in more detail in the next section of this paper.

In early 1947 Henry was approached about the possibility of joining the founding faculty of a new seminary on the West coast. This seminary would be Fuller Seminary and would be started due to the vision of evangelist Charles E. Fuller and organization of founding president Harold Ockenga.²² The seminary began classes in September of 1947. Henry taught theology and philosophy at the new seminary while earning a Ph.D. at Boston University under personalist philosopher Edgar Brightman.²³

After serving for eight years at Fuller Seminary, Henry was contacted about serving as the founding editor of a new magazine committed to evangelical orthodoxy.²⁴ After corresponding from a distance and meeting in person with Billy Graham, Henry agreed to accept the position of editor for the new magazine in 1956.²⁵ The mission of the magazine was stated in the early years by Henry to be a journal of “international, interdenominational scholarship” with “the largest circulation in the world to the Protestant ministry and lay leadership.”²⁶ Henry continued as editor-in-chief for twelve years, until 1967 when Henry and the magazine parted

²¹Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 283.

²²Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 114-115.

²³Ibid., 120.

²⁴Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 281.

²⁵Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 144-148.

²⁶Carl F. H. Henry, “The Mission of a Magazine,” *Christianity Today*, 12 October 1959, 20.

ways over a difference over its future direction.²⁷ Overall, however, Henry's founding leadership at *Christianity Today* was a great success. By the time Henry's leadership ended, *Christianity Today* had "earned a worldwide reputation for serious engagement with modern thought."²⁸

_____The year following the departure from *Christianity Today* was spent by the Henrys in Cambridge, England. While there Henry performed much of the research that undergirded his six volume *magnum opus* titled *God, Revelation and Authority*.²⁹ The first two volumes were published in 1976 with the final two being published in 1983.³⁰

Henry's return to the United States in 1969 also saw a return to the classroom. Henry taught in subsequent years at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.³¹ He was also listed as visiting professor for both Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.³² Additionally, beginning in March of 1974, Henry assumed the position of lecturer-at-large for World Vision International.³³ This position allowed him to teach or lecture on any campus he desired, as well as being able to complete his writing projects. This position also contained the expectation that Henry would teach as many as three months each year on campuses outside the United States.³⁴ Henry continued to lecture in various evangelical contexts throughout the remaining years of his life.

²⁷Mohler, "Carl F. H. Henry," 282.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰House, "Remaking the Modern Mind," 18.

³¹Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 313.

³²Ibid., 380.

³³Ibid., 352.

³⁴Ibid.

His later years also saw the publication of a number of books. He died on December 7, 2003 in Watertown, Wisconsin, six weeks before his ninety-first birthday.³⁵

Theology

_____In order to understand the theology of Carl F. H. Henry, his major writings must be explored. Henry was a prolific writer with more than forty books published during his lifetime.³⁶ A survey of all his books is therefore beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, in the following pages, a survey of four key themes from his major writings will be given. First, Henry's commitment to engagement of the culture will be analyzed. Second, Henry's doctrine of God will be explored. Third, Henry's view of divine revelation and biblical authority will be examined. Finally, Henry's commitment to evangelical orthodoxy or "fundamentalism" will be observed.

Cultural Engagement

Henry's commitment to engagement with the culture is most clearly seen in his early writings, mainly the seminal *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. In this early work first published in 1947, Henry argued that Fundamentalists had retreated from the culture instead of engaging the culture with the truth. The theological liberals of the day had abandoned biblical authority, but were engaging the culture. Henry called for a change in the *status quo*, preferring that fundamentalists with their strong doctrinal commitments would also engage the culture from that position. He wrote that:

Somehow we must relate the witness of the inerrant Book to the world for which God

³⁵House, "Remaking the Modern Mind," 21.

³⁶D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 396-398.

has intended it. Our concern to attest an inerrant Bible must lead beyond our Essene community into the cultural mainstream, there to confront our contemporaries with the right questions until they reach for the supreme Answer.³⁷

In his preface to *The Uneasy Conscience*, Henry pleaded for “an application of, not a revolt against, fundamentals of the faith.”³⁸ Evangelicals, he said, should recognize that although in this world “we are pilgrims..., we are ambassadors also.”³⁹ In this short eighty-nine page book, Henry’s call for theological commitment along with cultural engagement is first heard. This would become the battle-cry for the so-called “neo-evangelical” (a term coined by Harold John Ockenga).⁴⁰ In fact, the late James Montgomery Boice stated in a 1998 editorial in *Modern Reformation* that, “When I went to work at *Christianity Today* eighteen years after the publication of *The Uneasy Conscience* we still talked about it a lot. . . . [It] expressed what many of us were sensing at that time: that evangelicals had been avoiding the great social issues of the day.”⁴¹ Like the young Boice, a whole generation of evangelicals were influenced by the call by Henry in *The Uneasy Conscience*.

The impact of Henry’s call to his fellow evangelicals to engage their culture was expanded exponentially by his involvement in the forming of the “new evangelical” magazine *Christianity Today* in 1956. Henry was the founding editor and thus exerted a tremendous influence on the young magazine’s constituency. As David Weeks has noted: “The first issue of

³⁷Carl F. H. Henry, “The Bible and the Conscience of our Age,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 406.

³⁸Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), xviii.

³⁹*Ibid.*, xix.

⁴⁰Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 117.

⁴¹Quoted in J. Budziszewski, *Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 124-125.

Christianity Today, sent to 285,000 potential subscribers, notified America that evangelicals would no longer ignore intellectual or public life.”⁴² The last fifty years have seen that Henry’s call for cultural engagement has been heard with political and cultural engagement being the main thing for which contemporary evangelicals are known. Unfortunately however, as modern-day Henry disciple Russell Moore has commented, “evangelical theology is divided . . . over issues of God, revelation and authority.”⁴³ The battle for cultural engagement has been won, but the battle for doctrinal integrity has seemingly been lost in our day.

Doctrine of God

Henry’s cultural engagement, unlike its modern-day counterpart, was grounded in a robust orthodox theology. This foundation is most clearly seen in his *magnum opus* six volume *God, Revelation and Authority*, but it pervades all his other writings as well. The key emphasis of Henry is upon God as a “revealing God.” As he wrote in a review article for the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* in 1984, “The Christian doctrine is that the living personal God directly and objectively manifests himself by intelligible words, commands and acts.”⁴⁴ The Bible then is the self-revelation of God. The “God Who Speaks and Shows” and “Who Stands and Stays”⁴⁵ He is a God of goodness which is known only by “the living God’s own self-revelation in the history of his people.”⁴⁶ But the God of the Bible is also a God of holiness.

⁴²Ibid., 125.

⁴³Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 187.

⁴⁴Carl F. H. Henry, "The Priority of Divine Revelation: A Review Article," *JETS* 27 (1984): 78.

⁴⁵These are the two main divisions of Henry’s six volume *God, Revelation and Authority*.

⁴⁶Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 6:251.

“Only God,” says Henry, “is holy in himself” and “only in relation to him can anything else become holy.”⁴⁷ The holiness of God, like His goodness, is known ultimately in the pages of Sacred Scripture. Henry comments as follows:

The Bible opens not with God’s love for man as a fallen sinner as the context in which God’s mercy is to be understood, but with creation and with God’s sovereign instruction to Adam and his flaming indignation over the fall of man. It does not begin, like liberal theology, with an emphasis on divine love for the sinner to which divine wrath is and must be subordinated.⁴⁸

While obviously stressing the priority of God’s holiness in God’s revelation of Himself, Henry does not deny the Biblical teaching of “God’s Incomparable Love.”⁴⁹ Instead, God’s love is most clearly seen in light of His holy wrath against sin. Henry concludes his chapter on the love of God by beautifully stating the following:

The emphasis on God’s wrath no less than on his love, and on propitiation, reconciliation and justification as aspects of the doctrine of salvation, does far more than simply preserve God’s righteousness from unbiblical diminution. Such emphasis channels the salvific mercy of God through the mediating work of Jesus Christ. It is through and in Christ alone that salvation is provided, God’s enmity propitiated, and reconciliation consummated. This self-revealing God is the God of holy love, the God of *agape* who manifests this divine love first and foremost in the election of Israel and then in the foundation of the church. Centering in the revelation of God in Christ who came to save sinners, *agape* culminates in Christ’s death on the cross, a death that in every way fully satisfies the justice of the sovereign ruler of the planets and of men and nations.⁵⁰

The key for Henry that God is a “self-revealing God” who alone has the right to determine how He is known.

Revelation and Authority

⁴⁷Ibid., 324.

⁴⁸Ibid., 325.

⁴⁹Chapter title in *God, Revelation and Authority* dealing with the topic of God’s love.

⁵⁰Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6:359.

_____The view that Scripture is nothing less than the revelation of the true God demands that Scripture be seen to have authority. If God has spoken, then those words should be seen as authoritative. That this was Henry's view can be seen simply by the title of he chose to give his contribution to *Theology Proper: God, Revelation and Authority*. For Henry, there was an obvious connection. He summarized the historic Christian view as "that revelation is given in the form of verbal truths inerrantly conveyed in the inspired prophetic-apostolic writings."⁵¹ The inspiration of Scripture implies the inerrancy of Scripture and therefore its authority. Henry expressed his belief in the relationship between divine revelation and Scripture's authority by writing: "Revelation is in fact a core doctrine of the Bible. Without it the entire Scriptural message would lose its authority."⁵² Therefore, revelation equals authority.

If an acceptance of Scripture as divine revelation necessarily implies the authority of Scripture, then whenever Scripture's authority is rejected the loss of absolute truth inevitably follows. Henry expressed this idea in a lecture given at the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy at Summit II – Hermeneutics in Chicago, Illinois on November 13, 1982. He said, "The loss of absolutes – absolute truth, absolute right and wrong – follows from the speculative effort to vindicate truth and the good independently of the living God who makes his nature and will known."⁵³ Then recalling his experience stealing a Bible from the pew racks of his Episcopal Sunday school class as a boy, Henry began to lament another kind of biblical thievery, a thievery of the authority of Scripture.

But in recent years a different type of thievery has emerged as some fellow evangelicals, along with nonevangelicals, wrest from the Book segments that they derogate as no longer Word of God. Some now even introduce authorial intention or the culture-context of

⁵¹Henry, "The Priority of Divine Revelation," 78.

⁵²Ibid., 77.

⁵³Henry, "The Bible and the Conscience of our Age," 404.

language as specious rationalizations for this crime against the Book, much as some rapist might assure me that he is assaulting my wife for my or her good. They misuse Scripture in order to champion as Biblically true what in fact does violence to Scripture.⁵⁴

With these strong words, Henry expresses his opinion of those who reject the authority of Scripture by denying its divine revelation.

Evangelical Orthodoxy

The “Fundamentals” of the faith were never the issue for Carl F. H. Henry. He was strongly committed to the evangelical orthodoxy expressed in the “fundamentals.” In *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, Henry was speaking from the inside of a movement. It is only later that there begins to be a distinction made between the “Fundamentalists” as cultural isolationists and the “New Evangelicals” as cultural engagers. In 1947 when *The Uneasy Conscience* was published “Fundamentalism” and “Evangelicalism” were synonymous terms.

Henry’s commitment to the core doctrines of Christian orthodoxy can be seen throughout his writings. One specific source of evidence, though, is a series of books which Henry edited and to which he contributed during from 1957 to 1969. This series of books were published with the title of *Contemporary Evangelical Thought* and they featured articles by the leading conservative evangelicals scholars of the day.⁵⁵ Contributing scholars to this series included: Gordon Clark, James I. Packer, G. C. Berkouwer, Roger Nicole, Ernest F. Kevan, George E. Ladd, Anthony Hoekema, John Gerstner, Cornelius Van Til, Leon Morris, John Murray, and many more. These volumes titled respectively: *Contemporary Evangelical Thought*

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Carl F. H. Henry. *Contemporary Evangelical Thought Collection*. Vol. 16. In *The Christian Library Series*[CD-ROM]. Albany, OR: AGES Software, 2002.

(1957), *Revelation and Bible* (1958), *Basic Christian Doctrines* (1962), *Christian Faith and Modern Theology* (1964), *Jesus of Nazareth: Savior and Lord* (1966), and *Fundamentals of the Faith* (1969). In these volumes a healthy orthodox Protestantism is presented without compromise. Given just this brief evidence, there should be little doubt of Henry's commitment to Evangelical Orthodoxy.

Comparison to James Petigru Boyce

_____The final section of this paper will seek to explore points of comparison between Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry and James Petigru Boyce. Although at first glance there would seem to be no obvious similarities, upon further review there are at least four areas in which comparisons are warranted. The first similarity is their obvious leadership abilities. Second, they were each involved in the founding of a seminary. Third, they both acknowledged the need of confessional accountability in their respective institutions. Fourth, they shared a common belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.

Leadership Abilities

Both Henry and Boyce demonstrated tremendous leadership ability throughout their respective ministries. Henry's involvement in the founding of Fuller Seminary⁵⁶ and *Christianity Today* have already been noted, but he was also instrumental in the formation of The Evangelical Theological Society.⁵⁷ In fact, Henry was the one who gave the keynote address at the dinner

⁵⁶Along with being a part of the founding faculty, Henry was also the first "acting dean" of the fledgling seminary.

⁵⁷Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 123.

meeting of the preliminary meeting of scholars gathered to discuss the formation of the Society.⁵⁸ Additionally, it was Henry who suggested the name of “The Evangelical Theological Society.”⁵⁹ He would later become president of the Society in 1969.⁶⁰

Henry was a respected leader in evangelicalism throughout his many years of ministry. He was recognized as such from both within and without evangelicalism. *Time* magazine called Henry “the thinking man’s Billy Graham” and Clark Pinnock called him “the decisive charismatic leader (in Max Weber’s, not Jimmy Bakker’s sense) of post-war evangelicalism in North America, the man who was uniquely able to lead a movement of people and command their admiration and respect.”⁶¹ Clearly Henry was, as John D. Woodbridge has described him, “one of the principal spokespersons for American evangelicalism since World War II.”⁶²

The leadership ability of James Petigru Boyce was also obvious to his contemporaries. His father was a successful business man and the younger Boyce seems to have inherited his business sense. After Boyce’s death, Louisville banker Theodore Harris remarks were reported as follows:

Intimately associated with Dr. Boyce in business relations, he knew him as a gifted man in business. He was a great man; the most perfectly rounded character Mr. Harris had ever seen. On one occasion Dr. Boyce presented him a business paper; and, deeply impressed with the great wisdom and ability of the paper, he lost sight of other things, and

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹John D. Woodbridge, "Carl F. H. Henry: Spokesperson for American Evangelicalism," in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 379.

⁶²Ibid., 378.

asked who was its author. As modestly as a maiden, Dr. Boyce confessed the authorship.⁶³ Boyce's business ability was undoubtedly useful in his leadership of the first Southern Baptist seminary. As Baptist historian Timothy George has noted, "His life's work . . . would not have been possible without his extraordinary acumen in business and financial affairs."⁶⁴ Another testimony to Boyce's leadership ability are these words delivered by Dr. H. H. Tucker at the memorial meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Of Dr. Boyce Tucker said,

He seems to have inherited the business talent of his father, the Hon. Ker Boyce, who, many years ago, was the millionaire president of the Bank of Charleston, and a man of wonderful business sagacity. Oh, it was beautiful to see James Boyce lay his financial talent, which might have brought him millions, on the altar of the Lord!⁶⁵

Thankfully, Boyce rejected the repeated offers of presidencies of railroads, banks and great universities.⁶⁶ Instead, he stayed and led The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Founding of Seminaries

Both James Boyce and Carl Henry were both involved in the establishment of evangelical seminaries in their lifetimes. James Boyce was the founding president, as well as a professor of theology of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Carl Henry was a founding faculty member, first acting dean and professor of philosophy and theology of Fuller Seminary. Each of these seminaries were founded to fill a particular void in their day. Southern was the first Baptist seminary in the South. Fuller aimed to be a bastion of conservative evangelical

⁶³John A. Broadus, *A Gentleman and a Scholar: A Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2004), 346.

⁶⁴Timothy George, "James Petigru Boyce," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, eds. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 74.

⁶⁵Broadus, *A Gentleman and a Scholar*, 369.

⁶⁶George, "James Petigru Boyce," 79.

scholarship in a day in which the denominational seminaries had become liberal. Both seminaries would be come flagship seminaries in their own right. Southern is the flagship seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention, while Fuller is the flagship seminary of the “New Evangelicalism.”

Confessional Accountability

Another area of similarity between Henry and Boyce is their belief in the necessity of confessional accountability for theological institutions. Boyce championed this cause in his “Three Changes in Theological Institutions” delivered at Furman University on July 31, 1856.⁶⁷ In this address Boyce argued that each professor should be required to agree to teach according to a set doctrinal statement. He argued:

You will infringe the rights of no man, and you will secure the rights of those who have established here an instrumentality for the production of a sound ministry. It is no hardship to those who teach here to be called upon to sign the declaration of their principles, for there are fields of usefulness open elsewhere to every man, and none need accept your call who cannot conscientiously sign your formulary.⁶⁸

Henry also believed on the importance of confessional accountability. Within a few years of Fuller Seminary’s beginning, the faculty and board of trustees adopted a ten-point statement of faith.⁶⁹ Each professor was required to sign the statement annually as “a sacred act as well as a sacred commitment.”⁷⁰

Likewise, when the Evangelical Theological Society was formed, a doctrinal statement

⁶⁷James P. Boyce, “Three Changes in Theological Institutions,” in *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings*, ed. Timothy George (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1989),30-59.

⁶⁸Ibid., 56.

⁶⁹Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian*, 123.

⁷⁰Ibid., 124.

was approved which required annual subscription. Henry no doubt had a hand in seeing this statement adopted. The statement was simply that: “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs.” Although this statement has come under criticism in recent years because of its failure to address important challenges to orthodoxy in our day,⁷¹ at the time it adequately distinguished evangelicals from their liberal counterparts.

Inerrancy of Scripture

A final area of agreement between these two prominent Baptist theologians from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively is their views on the inerrancy of Scripture. Both Boyce and Henry were committed to this central evangelical doctrine. George quotes from the preface to Boyce’s *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, in which he declared his belief in the “perfect inspiration and absolute authority of the divine revelation” which does not possess “the liability to error that arises from human imperfection.”⁷² Additionally, Basil Manly Jr.’s *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration Explained and Vindicated* was written at the request of Boyce to assert the seminaries position on the issue. In Manly’s volume the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration is clearly set forth.⁷³

Henry’s commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture has already been well documented in this paper. Henry summarized the historic Christian view as “that revelation is given in the

⁷¹For more on this issue see: Ray Van Neste, “The Glaring Inadequacy of the ETS Doctrinal Statement,” *SBJT* 8 (Winter 2004): 74-81.

⁷²George, “James Petigru Boyce,” 83.

⁷³Ibid.

form of verbal truths inerrantly conveyed in the inspired prophetic-apostolic writings.”⁷⁴ His agreement to the confessional statements of both Fuller Seminary and the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) testify to his commitment to the view of inerrancy described in these documents. In fact, Henry’s view may best be summarized in the words of the ETS statement: “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs.”

Conclusion

_____ Although Henry was denominationally a Baptist, in reality he belonged to the larger evangelical community. His legacy among evangelicals is his longstanding commitment to orthodox Protestant doctrine while at the same time engaging the contemporary culture with the truth of the gospel. John D. Woodbridge, professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has commented on the indebtedness owed by evangelicals past and present to this great and gifted man: “For decades, he had provided the evangelical community with a model of Christian service as an evangelist-theologian, stalwart apologist, and wise apologist.”⁷⁵ The modern evangelical movement still remains “deeply in debt” to Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry.

⁷⁴Henry, “The Priority of Divine Revelation,” 78.

⁷⁵Woodbridge, “Carl F. H. Henry: Spokesperson for American Evangelicalism,” 393.

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