

BOOK REVIEW

of

Carl F.H. Henry,

God, Revelation and Authority, volume IV, *God Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part Three*, Word Books, 1979.

This book is in the Evangel Library,
and this review is by Larry D. Paarmann.

An overview of the six-volume set *God, Revelation and Authority* was given in the January 2003 issue of *Evangel News*. Individual reviews of volumes I through III were given in the March, April, and June issues. The three volumes of fifteen theses may be divided by primary concern with God the Father (volume II, seven theses), God the Son (volume III, three theses), and God the Holy Spirit (volume IV, the last five theses).

Thesis Eleven is that the Bible is the authoritative written record and exposition of God's nature and will. Thesis Eleven consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 is titled "The Modern Revolt against Authority." Chapter 2 is titled "Divine Authority and the Prophetic-Apostolic Word." Chapter 3 is "Modern Reductions of Biblical Authority." Chapter 4 is "Divine Authority and Scriptural Authority." Chapter 5 is "Is the Bible Literally True?"

Thesis Twelve is that the Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine revelation. Thesis Twelve has fifteen chapters. The chapter titles are "The Meaning of Inspiration," "The Inerrancy of Scripture," "The Meaning of Inerrancy," "The Infallibility of the Copies," "The Meaning of Infallibility," "The Spirit and the Scriptures," "The Spirit as Divine Illuminator," "Are We Doomed to Hermeneutical Nihilism?," "The Fallibility of the Exegete," "Perspective on Problem Passages," "The Historic Church and Inerrancy," "The Uses and Abuses of Historical Criticism," "The Debate over the Canon," "The Lost Unity of the Bible," and "The Spirit and Church Proclamation."

Thesis Thirteen is that the Holy Spirit is the bestower of spiritual life. Thesis Thirteen consists of two chapters. Chapter 21 is titled "God's Graven Image: Redeemed Mankind." Chapter 22 is titled "The New Man and the New Society."

Thesis Fourteen is that the church approximates God's kingdom in miniature. Thesis Fourteen has three chapters. Chapter 23 is titled "Good News for the Oppressed." Chapter 24 is titled "Marxist Exegesis of the Bible." Chapter 25 is titled "The Marxist Reconstruction of Man."

Thesis Fifteen is that God will unveil His glory in a crowning revelation of power and judgment. Thesis Fifteen has one chapter. The title of Chapter 26, the last chapter in volume IV, is "The Awesome Silences of Eternity."

As can be seen in theses eleven and twelve, very important operations of the Holy Spirit have been the giving and preserving of the written Word of God, and the illuminating of the reader of the written Word of God. Closely coupled with these is the idea of Authority. The very title of these volumes states that Revelation and Authority have much to do with what Henry wanted to write about. The chapter titles above give an idea of what Henry has to say on the subject, but it is not possible to summarize 26 chapters in a few words. However, it seems clear that Henry is committed to the truth that God has revealed Himself through prophets, apostles, and most of all through His Son Jesus Christ, that this is absolutely necessary since we cannot know much objective truth about God in any other way, that God has preserved the accuracy of the copies, and that given we have an objective revelation of God and His character it is the ultimate authority for both the individual believer and for God's Church. These ideas should be, it would seem, the obvious teaching of the Bible to all who read it, for the Biblical evidence is not difficult to find. Nevertheless, many professing Christians differ in their understanding of such things. Henry believes that at the heart of this issue is an understanding of Authority (Who's in charge, anyway?). Henry's most penetrating comments are in the opening chapter. Below is a sample.

"The problem of authority is one of the most deeply distressing concerns of contemporary civilization. ... Respect for authority is being challenged on almost every front and in almost every form. ... How to justify any human authority becomes an increasingly acute problem. ... Not only religious authority, but political, parental, and academic authority as well come under debate. ... Disbelief now stems from claims that finalities and objective truth simply do not exist ... In an age enamored of scientific empiricism, the very idea of unalterable absolutes, changeless commands, deathless doctrines, and timeless truths seems pretentious and unpalatable. ... Human dignity and self-realization, we are told, require creative liberty to opt for ideals of one's own making and choosing. ... The emphasis on human autonomy is pre-'secular' and pre-'modern' and carries us all the way back to Eden." The evangelical believer, however, can, along with the author of Jude, "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints."