

BOOK REVIEW

of

Carl F.H. Henry,

God, Revelation and Authority, volume VI, *God Who Stands and Stays: Part Two*,
Word Books, 1983.

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 V were given in the March, April, June, July/August, and September issues. Volumes V and VI, the last two volumes, are concerned with the knowledge of God as disclosed in the Scriptures. It is Henry's conviction that we can know little of God's attributes, at least with any degree of certainty, apart from revelation. Without revelation, we are left with "conjecture and vain imagination." That is why God's attributes are an appropriate topic to pursue in "God, Revelation and Authority."

The twenty one chapters in volume VI have the following titles: "Shall We Surrender the Supernatural?," "God's Transcendence and Immanence," "The Resurgence of Process Philosophy," "Election: The Freedom of God," "God the Sovereign Creator," "Creation *Ex Nihilo*," "The Six Days of Creation," "The Crisis of Evolutionary Theory," "The Origin and Nature of Man," "Angels, Satan and the Demons, and the Fall," "The Goodness of God," "God and the Problem of Evil," "Evil As a Religious Dilemma," "The Fatherhood of God," "The Holiness of God," "God's Incomparable Love," "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit," "The God of Justice and of Justification," "Justice and the Kingdom of God," "God Who Stays: Divine Providence," and "God Who Stays: The Finalities."

With the rise of "Enlightenment" thinking and the ever increasing emphasis upon science and applying scientific methods to the study of most things, apparently those educated in theology felt less and less able to engage secular learning. This resulted in theological studies and scientific studies following two separate paths in the pursuit of knowledge. Very dissimilar to many who made early advances in science, such as Newton, two separate spheres of "truth" seemed to develop. Soon it became the position of naturalistic scientists, and even misguided theologians, that objective truth could only be obtained by the methods naturalistic science. In more recent times the limitations of naturalism, or science itself as society became committed to the equivalence of science and naturalism, has become more well known. These limitations are presented by Phillip Johnson in his book *Reason in the Balance*. They are even more profoundly presented by Walter ReMine in chapter two of his book *The Biotic Message*. In the meantime, a complete break has occurred between "truth" as perceived by secular learning and "truth" as perceived by Christian believers, at least as our greater society perceives it. Johnson explains that religious commitments are tolerated in a secular learning setting as long as they have no bearing on the secular subject in question. However, extreme intolerance is immediately expressed if any should suggest otherwise. In the Postface at the beginning of volume VI, Henry addresses these issues in a way that should make all committed Christians take notice: "For many years I have been persuaded, and remain so as much as ever, that unless the study of theology finds its rightful preeminence among the priorities of modern learning there will be no authentic rescue or salvation for modern society. Only as other academic disciplines are related to theological principles will they succeed in achieving a stable and unifying overview of human thought and life." Those words were written by Henry in November of 1982. They are an enormous challenge. In the intervening 20 years progress has been made, but almost entirely by para-church organizations, and individuals, not by denominational organizations. Most local churches, their denominations, and church-supported seminaries, seem almost entirely concerned with and devoted to issues at the local level. The big issues that Henry is concerned with seem somehow unrelated. Those interested in learning more about how Christianity should relate to the larger society, and issues in learning, science, and academic pursuits, may find the six volumes of *God, Revelation and Authority* a good place to start.

Henry writes: "Both evangelical evangelism and charismatic experientialism tend to nurture a type of Dead Sea Caves detachment from the central concerns of the present civilizational crisis". Were you aware that there is a crisis? In the last chapter, to let Henry speak for himself, he writes: "Only one theological perspective, only one philosophical perspective, has an enduring future, a worldlife view, namely, that openly acknowledges that the future belongs to God." "Judeo-Christian revelation has nurtured a universal conviction that no theology or philosophy can be comprehensive unless it deals with the direction of history and the goal of the universe, with the matter of man's ultimate destiny and the problem of death. Most secular philosophy lacks an eschatology; the question of endings is as much an embarrassment to it as the question of beginnings. ... Judeo-Christian eschatology, however, impinges on the totality of metaphysics, ethics and history; it impacts on all the data of science and of human experience. Scripture affirms that all history has a purpose and goal."