

A misty forest scene with a path leading to a bright light, surrounded by trees and fallen leaves. The path is covered in red and orange autumn leaves. Several large, dark rocks are scattered along the path. The trees are tall and thin, with green and yellow foliage. A bright, ethereal light emanates from the end of the path, creating a sense of mystery and divine presence.

What it means to Know God



Introduction

From the beginning of this series, our interest has been in showing that the God of Scripture can be known, but not by making ourselves the starting point for such knowledge. We have maintained that the various ways of knowing - mystical intuition, rational intuition, empiricism, and reason – are inadequate means by which we can know an invisible and eternal Being. Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), in his book *The Doctrine of God*, began his chapter on *God's Knowability* with these words: "Religion and the knowledge of God can have their origin only in revelation. If God does not reveal himself in his creatures, knowledge of him is evidently unattainable. But if it be true that he displays his virtues to creatures, God's knowability can no longer be disputed."



Introduction

“The Scriptures,” writes R.C. Sproul, “come to us as divine self-disclosure. Here the mind of God is laid bare on many matters. With a knowledge of Scripture we do not have to rely on secondhand information or bare speculation to learn who God is and what he values. In the Bible he reveals himself.”

Last week we began an insightful journey with a competent guide who was the towering figure in 20th century evangelicalism, Dr. Carl F.H. Henry. When he died on December 7, 2003 at the age of 90, David Neff, then editor of *Christianity Today*, said in an interview, “If we see Billy Graham as the great public face and generous spirit of the evangelical movement, Carl Henry was the brains.”

Reintroducing Our Guide

Today, Carl F.H. Henry will again be our guide through the final 9 of 15 of his theses which “summarize what can be said for divine revelation in terms of the living God who shows himself and speaks for himself.” In his 6-volume *magnum opus*, *God, Revelation and Authority*, he sets forth the case for divine self-disclosure.



Carl F.H. Henry, ThD, PhD

Involved in founding the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), Fuller Theological Seminary, Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), and was the founding editor of *Christianity Today* 1913-2003

J. Marcellus Kik, Carl F.H. Henry, L. Nelson Bell

At the Founding of *Christianity Today*, ca. 1955





Divine Revelation: Thesis Six

6. God's revelation is uniquely personal both in content and form.

- “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I praise Thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst **reveal** them to babes. Yes, Father, for this it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to **reveal** Him’” (Mt. 11:25-27; cf. Lk. 10:21-22).



Divine Revelation: Thesis Six

- “But when He who had set me (the Apostle Paul) apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to **reveal** His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood...” (Gal. 1:15-16).
- “In emphasizing the personal form and content of divine revelation, we therefore view God as the active thinking Subject whose **personal initiative** is the indispensable presupposition of all knowledge of him.”
- **Question:** Has God made Himself known to you – personally?



Divine Revelation: Thesis Seven

- 7. God reveals himself not only universally in the history of the cosmos and of the nations, but also redemptively within this external history in unique saving acts.**
- “Man was made not for the state nor for civilization but for God.”
 - “The Bible opens with the Creator God in action as the sovereign, purposive maker of the world and man. From then on his personal presence and purposive action pervade the cosmos and history ongoingly.”
 - “God is everywhere active either in mercy or in judgment.”



Divine Revelation: Thesis Seven

- “All historical events are subject to his overruling omnipotence and inescapably serve his intended ends.”
- “In the resurrection of the crucified Jesus from the dead, God dramatically publishes the future direction and goal of both church history and world history, publicly identifies the risen Redeemer and future Judge of the human race, and tilts the balance of prophetic religion to be ‘the last days,’ or the aeon before the end.”
- **Question:** Do you believe that God “notably discloses himself in external historical acts and vindicates his promises in the external world?”



Divine Revelation: Thesis Eight

8. The climax of God's special revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, the personal incarnation of God in the flesh; in Jesus Christ the source and content of revelation converge and coincide.
- “And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been **revealed** to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (Eph. 3:4-5).
 - Simeon, with the Child Jesus in his arms, said, “For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of **revelation** to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (Lk. 2:30-32).

Divine Revelation: Thesis Eight

- “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days **he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Heb. 1:1).
- “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...” (Jn. 1:14).
- “And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation” (Col. 1:15).
- **Question:** Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate?



Divine Revelation: Thesis Nine

9. The mediating agent in all divine revelation is the Eternal-Logos – preexistent, incarnate, and now glorified.
- “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a **revelation of Jesus Christ**” (Gal. 1:12).
 - “...that **by revelation** there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief” (Eph. 3:4).
 - “The central and unifying element in the biblical doctrine of the Logos of God is transcendent divine communication mediated by the eternal Christ. The Word of God is personal and rational, and the truth of God...can be propositionally formulated.”
 - **Question:** Do you believe the Word of God is personal *and* propositional?



Divine Revelation: Thesis Ten

10. God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words, that is, in conceptual-verbal form.

- “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and Father is in Me? The **words** that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works” (Jn. 14:10).
- “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on **every word** that proceeds out of the mouth of God”’” (Mt. 4:4).



Divine Revelation: Thesis Ten

- “Revelation in the Bible is essentially a mental conception: God’s disclosure is rational and intelligible communication. Issuing from the mind and will of God, revelation is addressed to the mind and will of human beings.”
- **Question:** Do you believe that God disclosed Himself directly and verbally to chosen prophets and apostles? That “only truth-revelation delivers us from the helpless uncertainty of human guesswork about the meaning of divine disclosure?” (Kenneth Kantzer).



Divine Revelation: Thesis Eleven

11. The Bible is the reservoir and conduit of divine truth.

- “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me” (Jn. 5:39).
- “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (Jn. 5:46-47).
- “Christianity teaches that all legitimate authority comes from God. Loss of faith in God soon brings a questioning of the transcendent basis of any and all authority, and sets in motion a search for humanistic alternatives.”
- **Question:** Without believing in the authority of God’s Word, how do you justify any human authority?

Divine Revelation: Thesis Twelve

12. The Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine revelation, first, by inspiring the prophetic-apostolic writings, and second, by illuminating and interpreting the scripturally given Word of God.

- “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the **Spirit of Christ** within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the **Holy Spirit** sent from heaven...” (I Pt. 1:10-12).



Divine Revelation: Thesis Twelve

- “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate for every good work” (II Tim. 3:16-17).
- “Inspiration is 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.”
- **Question:** Do you believe in the divine origin of Scripture (rather than by the will of man) and the necessity of the Spirit’s illumination “whereby the readers and hearers of the scriptural Word grasp the content of revelation”?

Divine Revelation: Thesis Thirteen

13. As bestower of spiritual life the Holy Spirit enables individuals to appropriate God's revelation savingly, and thereby attests the redemptive power of the revealed truth of God in the personal experience of reborn sinners.

- “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Cor. 4:6).
- “But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (II Cor. 3:15-16).
- **Question:** Have you been born again?



Divine Revelation: Thesis Fourteen

14. The church approximates the kingdom of God in miniature; as such she is to mirror to each successive generation the power and joy of the appropriated realities of divine revelation.

- “The church is to publish openly to the world the special divine revelation of which she was initially the beneficiary.”
- “Christ’s gospel is comprehensively liberating.”
- **Question:** Do you believe that “the church of Jesus Christ is the sign of God’s redemptive presence in the world?”

Divine Revelation: Thesis Fifteen

15. The self-manifesting God will unveil his glory in a crowning revelation of power and judgment; in this disclosure at the consummation of the ages, God will vindicate righteousness and justice, finally subdue and subordinate evil, and bring into being a new heaven and earth.

- “It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is **revealed**” (Lk. 17:30).
- “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the **revealing** of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:18).

Thesis Fifteen

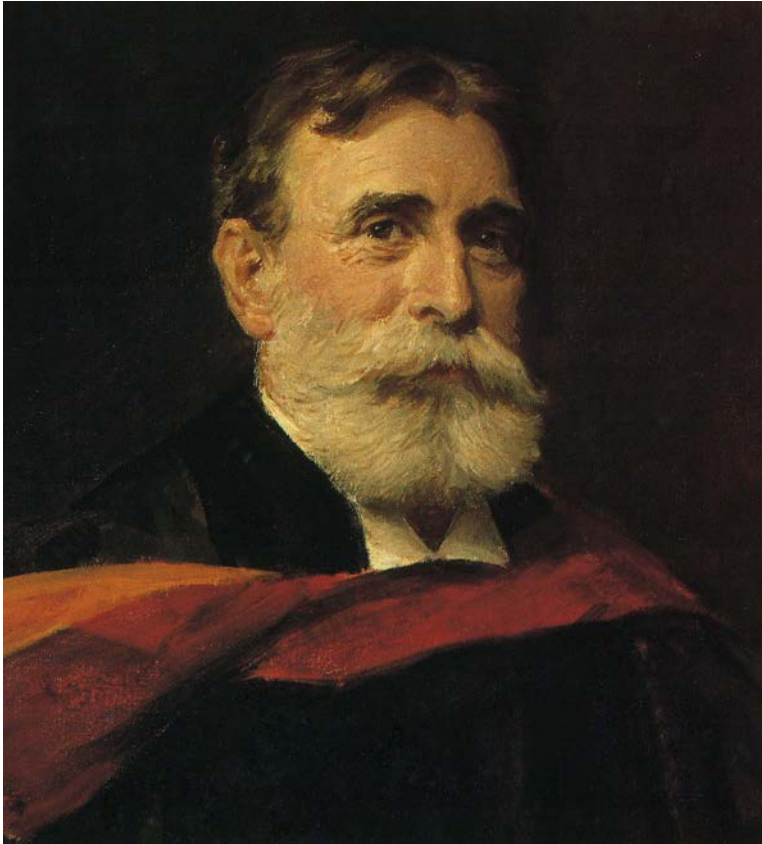
- “Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it; because it is to be **revealed** with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work” (I Cor. 3:12-13).
- God has “caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be **revealed** in the last time” (I Pt. 1:3-5).



Thesis Fifteen

- “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow-elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be **revealed**” (I Pt. 5:1).
- “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (II Thess. 1:6-8).
- **Question:** Do you believe that some will weep now but shall laugh later, and that some will laugh now but mourn and weep later?

B.B. Warfield



B.B. Warfield
1851-1921

“The religion of the Bible announces itself, not as the product of men’s search after God, if haply [perhaps] they may feel after Him and find Him, but as the creation in men of the gracious God, forming a people for Himself, that they may show forth His praise. In other words, the religion of the Bible presents itself as distinctively a revealed religion.”