

A dramatic sunset or sunrise over the ocean. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, with a bright light source breaking through near the horizon, casting a golden glow. A single lightning bolt is visible in the upper left portion of the sky. The water in the foreground is dark and textured with small waves.

THE IMMEASURABLE GREATNESS OF  
GOD'S MAJESTY & POWER



# Introduction

In the early 70s, I heard John Hyde's (1865-1912) name for the first time. Soon after, I purchased a brief biography of his life by Francis McGaw. By the time I finished the book, it had become clear to me why he was called "Praying Hyde."

In 1892, following God's call on his life to be a missionary, Hyde sailed for India and began to minister in the Punjab region, where very few people came to know Christ and where his mission faced persecution. Seven years later, from 1899, he began to spend entire nights in prayer to God and devoted himself to the ministry of prayer. Before his death from a brain tumor in 1912, he was seeing one, then two, then four people come to know Christ every day.



# Introduction

On his way home to America, almost 20 years after leaving for India, Hyde stopped in the U.K. and attended an evangelistic service where there seemed to be great opposition and few results. One of the speakers invited John Hyde to pray for him. McGaw described what happened next: “He (Hyde) came to my room, turned the key in the door, dropped to his knees, and waited five minutes without a single syllable coming from his lips. I could hear my own heart thumping and beating. I felt the hot tears running down my face. I knew I was with God. Then while the tears were streaming down my face, Hyde said, ‘Oh, God!’ Then for five minutes at least, he was still again, and then when he knew he was talking with God...there came such petitions for people as I had never heard before.”



# Introduction

A second story comes to us from J.I. Packer (1926-2020). The year was 1855, and a young 20-year-old minister named Charles H. Spurgeon was preaching at New Park Street Chapel in London. This is how he opened his sermon on that day: “It has been said by someone that the proper study of mankind is man. I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”

# Introduction

“Oh,” he continued, “there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus (salve) for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Spirit, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.”



PLUNGE YOURSELF IN THE GODHEAD'S DEEPEST SEA  
BE LOST IN HIS IMMENSITY



# Introduction

We could elaborate on many of the thoughts that these two stories suggest to our minds. However, I would maintain that there is one primary truth that both Hyde and Spurgeon want to emphasize to us. It is summarized in E.M. Bounds book, *Power Through Prayer*: “**God’s acquaintance is not made by pop calls.** God does not bestow His gifts on the casual or hasty comers and goers. Much with God alone is the secret of knowing Him and of influence with Him. He yields to the persistency of a faith that knows Him.”

The greatest thing in life, according to the Apostle Paul, is to “**know Him** and the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3:10).



# A Serious Appeal from the *Preacher*

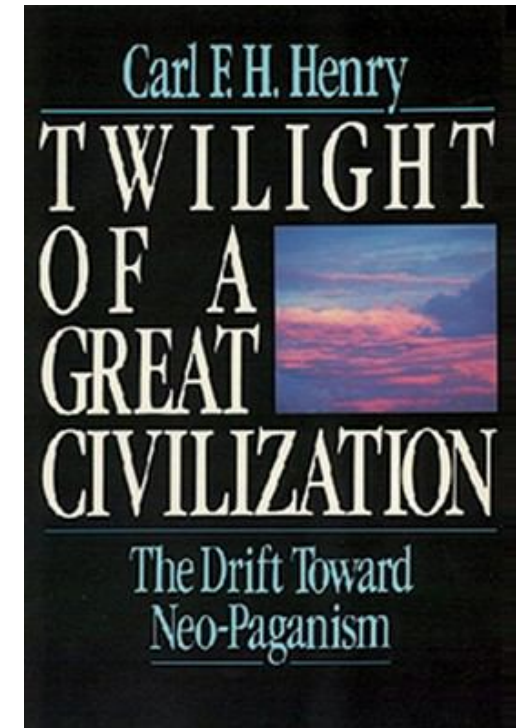
“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near....before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:1,6-7). “This is a picture in which death usually comes to a human being: the silver cord is snapped, or the severing of the spinal cord; the golden bowl broken, or the brain ceasing to function; the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the heart giving way; and the wheel broken at the cistern, or the loss of blood. Remember your Creator, he pleads, *before, before, before*, for then will the dust return to the earth as it was...” (Henry).



# From Carl F.H. Henry

“Our generation is lost to the truth of God, to the reality of divine revelation, to the content of God’s will, to the power of His redemption, and to the authority of His Word. For this loss it is paying dearly in the swift relapse to paganism. The savages are stirring again; you can hear them rumbling and rustling in the tempo of our times.”

- Written in 1988, 32 years ago



# Who Seeks After God?

- “God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one” (Ps. 53:2-3).
- “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one....There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:10-12,18).
- “You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord...” (Jer. 29:13-14).



# The Attributes of the Person We Are Seeking

- **Attribute:** “A quality or character ascribed to any person or thing, one which is in common estimation or usage assigned to him; hence, *sometimes*, an epithet or appellation in which the quality is ascribed” (OED).
- “An attribute is a concept expressed by an adjective (as *eternal*) or a noun (as *eternity*), used to describe a person or thing” (John Frame).
- “The attributes tell us who God really and truly is” (Frame).
- Attributes of Being: “Aspects of God’s character that describe his essential mode of existence” (Wayne Grudem).
- God’s attributes are “the perfections that constitute the essence of the one living God” (Carl F.H. Henry).



# How Can We Know God's Nature?

- “The way of **special biblical revelation** declares God himself and his revelation to be the only objective intelligible basis for statements about his nature. Only if God in fact communicates propositional information about himself, as the Judeo-Christian prophets and apostles attest, and only if that information is available to us in a trustworthy record, do we have a confident basis for expounding the divine attributes...The Bible provides a basis for distinguishing between God's incommunicable attributes, that is, perfections that are predicable of God alone, and his communicable attributes, or divine perfections shared in some respects by his creatures.”
- Divine disclosure is the starting point for the doctrine of God.

# Herman Bavinck



**Dr. Herman Bavinck**  
1854-1921

In his book, *The Doctrine of God*, Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) 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."

# R.C. Sproul

“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.**”



R.C. Sproul  
1939-2017

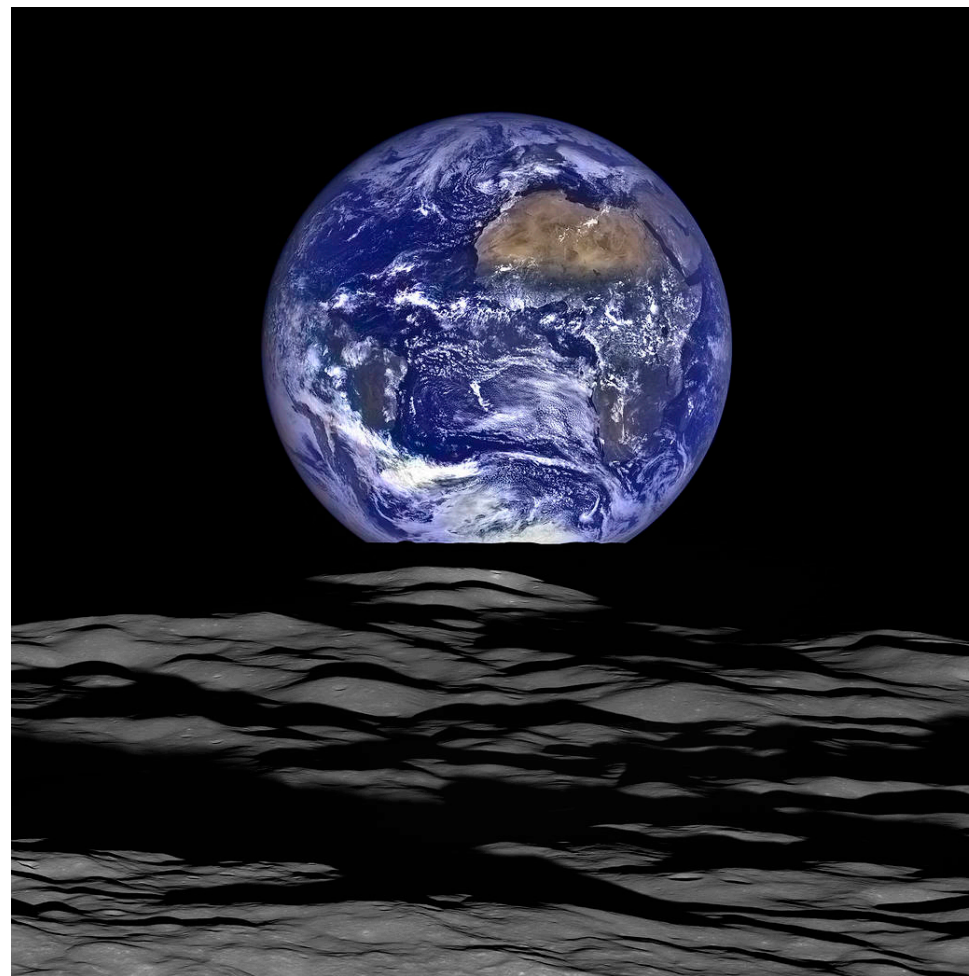


# How God's Word Comes To Us

- “How does the word of God come from God’s lips to our ears, minds, and hearts?” (Frame).
- The three categories of revelation media God uses:
  1. **Events:** brought about by God’s controlling power
  2. **Words:** bear meaningful authority
  3. **Persons:** embody the personal presence of the Lord
- “Through all of the media of revelation, God expresses all the aspects of his lordship...Scripture treats all of God’s revelation as supremely powerful, authoritative, and personal.”
- “If we are to accept God’s revelation, we must accept what we hear and see through his media.”

# What God Reveals Through General Revelation

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his **invisible attributes**, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:19-20).







# “God Is...”

“The statement ‘God is’ – if we know what we are saying – exhausts all that a course in theology can teach concerning him. If we give the subject ‘God’ and the predicate ‘is’ their true and full sense, we must speak of God’s essence, names, attributes, and triunity, and do so expressly on the basis of his revelatory self-disclosure addressed to his created and fallen creatures.”

- John M. Frame

# Two-Fold Classification of Divine Attributes

“Any biblically controlled classification of the divine attributes faces two requirements: (1) it must exhibit God’s independence of the created universe, and (2) it must exhibit God’s relation to the universe in a way that makes God accessible to human experience and assures knowledge of him as he truly is. Any other approach is disastrous for biblical theism.”



**Carl F.H. Henry**  
1913-2003

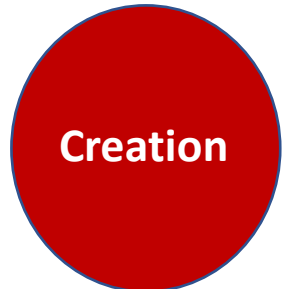


# Two Levels of Reality

Everything in God is different from everything in the world.



Everything in God is perfectly divine and not creaturely.



In the world, nothing is divine and everything is creaturely.



# Divine *Essence* and Divine *Attributes*

“All God’s attributes known through his self-revelation are to be identified with what theologians properly designate as God’s being, essence, nature or substance, and identified with what the Scriptures call the deity or divinity of God who makes himself known. **The divine essence is not to be differentiated from the divine attributes**, but is constituted by them; the attributes define the essence more precisely.”

- Carl F.H. Henry



# Divine *Essence* and Divine *Attributes*

- “What we mean by the essence or nature of God is a living personal unity of properties and activities. Divine essence and attributes are integral to each other...God’s being is not the bearer of the divine attributes; rather, God’s essence and attributes are identical.”
- God is both one and many, and the balance of unity and diversity in God insures the balance of unity and diversity within the created world.
- God’s qualities can never fail. Without them, God would not be God.
- There are many attributes that characterize God’s essence.
- All the attributes of God refer to his essence, but they describe different aspects of it.
- An attribute is not something *in* God. All of them refer to everything God *is*.

# Divine *Essence* and Divine *Attributes*

- When we speak of God's being, essence, nature or substance, we are saying the same thing.
- God's attributes or perfections are to be identified with his essence; they define the essence more precisely.
- God's being is not the bearer of divine attributes; rather, God's essence and attributes are identical.
- God is the living unity of his attributes.
- The attributes may be thought of as divine activities. God is not an abstract substance but an active spirit, consciousness and will.
- God's attributes are not variable nor interchangeable; he prominently displays now one and then another of his superlative virtues.



# Divine *Essence* and Divine *Attributes*

- “God is spirit” (Jn. 4:24) and is not a physical being. “God is light” (I Jn. 1:5). “God is love” (I Jn. 4:8,16).
- God is not made up of physical parts, nor can he be divided into form and matter, or actuality and potentiality, since he has no matter or (passive) potentiality.
- Everything in God is essential to his being. So he is, in a sense, his essence. His essence includes all of His attributes.
- Each attribute is necessary to God’s being. “None of his attributes can be removed from him, and no new attribute can be added to him.”
- None of God’s attributes exist without the other attributes.



# The Simplicity of God

- “Evangelical theology insists on the simplicity of God. By this it means that God is not compounded of parts; he is not a collection of perfections, but rather a living center of activity pervasively characterized by all his distinctive perfections. The divine attributes are neither additions to the divine essence nor qualities pieced together to make a compound...God’s variety of attributes does not conflict with God’s simplicity because his simplicity is what comprises the fullness of divine life” (Henry).
- “God never was, nor will ever be, ontologically divisible” (Peter Bertocci).





# God's Incomprehensibility

“Knowledge of the divine attributes, no less than of the divine proper names, involves a knowledge of God’s inmost essence. Our knowledge is not exhaustive, to be sure, since God’s incomprehensibility, which evangelicals affirm, means that we know no more concerning the divine nature than what God intends and enables us to know by revelation.”

- Carl F.H. Henry



# How the Attributes Relate to the Others

“Each attribute in the nature of God interpenetrates every other attribute and no conflict or contrast among them is possible. God’s wisdom is his omnipotence, God’s omnipotence is his justice, God’s justice is his love, are mutually exclusive synonyms...No divine perfection is therefore inferior or subordinate to another” (Henry).



# Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

“There is but one only, living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal, most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.”

*Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter II, Section I*



This is the God we are invited to seek with all of our hearts.