

## FAITH AND HISTORY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Old Testament and New Testament unite in asserting the reality of the special revelation of God within history. Traditionally, the divine word, has been accepted by evangelicalism as being either personal and active—e.g., Psalm 147:15, 18, “His word runneth very swiftly” and when He casteth forth His ice like morsels “He sendeth out His word and melteth them,” a phenomenon which climaxes in Jesus Christ, John 1:1—or as being verbal and static, e.g., Exodus 34:28, “And He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (cf. v. 27), which climaxes in the written Scriptures, “the word of God” per Mark 7:13. The latter or verbal revelation has been considered as essentially dependent upon the former;<sup>1</sup> e.g., faith in the static truth of heavenly immortality would become an illusion without history and the active deed of Christ’s redemption (Ps. 16:10-11, I Cor. 15:17-20). But the former, or active, has been seen as equally dependent upon the latter, for its meaning and interpretation;<sup>2</sup> indeed, historical acts of God seem hardly to figure at all in certain forms of Old Testament revelation, e.g., the Solomonic wisdom literature.<sup>3</sup>

### I. Background

19th century Wellhausenism repudiated both the historicity and the supernaturalistic faith of the Old Testament. Such an approach leaves it, of course, without a meaningful “word of God”; as G. Ernest Wright explains, “A Biblical theology is completely impossible because the Bible has no unity . . . [only] many human voices which present more dissonance than they do harmonious concord of sound.”<sup>4</sup> All that was left was a history of the religion of Israel, rewritten so as to present an evolution<sup>5</sup> of religious values.

The reaction of post-World War I Barthianism, however, with its re-

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1. James Barr thus decries the unfairness of current criticisms of evangelicalism which would limit it to propositional revelation: “The fundamentalist, generally, feels that there is more ‘event,’ ‘encounter’ and the like in his kind of Church than any other,” *Old and New in Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 201.
2. So Barr insists that the OT itself prohibits the reduction of its “centre” to “acts of God in history,” *ibid.*, pg. 17, as opposed, e.g., to the “word,” p. 23; cf. pp. 72-82.
3. J. C. Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Univ. of Chicago, 1946); cf. G. Ernest Wright’s admission that “it does not fit” into his historical-active view and his attempts at explanation, *God Who Acts* (Studies in Biblical Theology #8; Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), p. 103.
4. *Op. cit.*, p. 31.
5. Or romanticizing; cf. Barr, *op. cit.*, notes to pp. 180 and 206.

turn to a belief in the transcendence of deity and in redemption accomplished through Christ the *Λόγος*, produced a corresponding movement within Old Testament studies, which sought to reinstate a faith in the kerygma, not simply of the apostolic church but also of Yahweh's historic redemption wrought out for Israel. A brief and classic enunciation in English of this renewed interest in Biblical theology appears in Wright's Markland lectures of 1951, published in the following year under the title, *God Who Acts*. Its author declares, "We begin as Christians, with the proclamation of Christ, his life, death, and resurrection. Thence we reach back into . . . what God has done in his election of Israel of which we are heirs in the Church."<sup>6</sup> Faith is thus reunited with history; and Biblical theology is reinstated, as "the confessional recital of the acts of God."<sup>7</sup> Evangelicals recognize with humble gratitude the significance of his insistence that, "In Biblical faith everything depends on whether the central events actually occurred."<sup>8</sup>

## II. Analysis

Yet has Wrightian neo-orthodoxy truly ended the Babylonian captivity of Biblical theology and restored Israel and its churchly heirs to a promised land of what the Old Testament means by faith and history? The same author also insists that the "word" to which faith responds is "not propositional dogmatics . . . [but] proclamation of the acts of God"; the Old Testament's theological interpretations of these acts are but human "inferences drawn therefrom."<sup>9</sup> He states without hesitation that "The Bible is not primarily the Word of God, but the record of the Acts of God, together with . . . interpretations which historian, prophet, and psalmist associated with them." These latter are but words of men, with all "the disagreement and discrepancy [that] are to be expected."<sup>10</sup> Even concern-

6. Pp. 112-113.

7. P. 13; cf. his antagonism toward "the naive assumption that the teaching of values is the same as the proclamation of the Gospel," p. 18.

8. P. 126; cf. the insistence of Gustav Oehler, "If we deny the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the giving of the law from Sinai, the OT religion floats in the air. Such facts can no more be separated from the religion of the OT than the historical facts of Christ's person can be from Christianity. . . . Here indeed there must be strife between those who—and I avow myself to belong to this class—acknowledge as facts what the OT religion lays down as such, and are consequently convinced that the thing believed was also a thing which took place; and between those who see in the OT faith mainly a product of religious ideas, the historical basis of which can be ascertained only by a critical process resting on rationalistic presuppositions," *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), pp. 9-10.

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108. This actually places Wright back in company with 19th century liberalism; for, as Claus Westermann notes, the latter had reacted against the earlier orthodoxy—"in which no distinction had been made between the word of the prophet and the word of God"—by hearing only "the voice of man," and Westermann, with a characteristic modern distortion of the evangelical position, would reject both positions, claiming, "In a third period that is now beginning, both of the extremes—only God's word or only man's word—have reappeared with equal importance in an altered conception of tradition," *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), p. 13. But Wright remains "extreme"!

ing such a basic truth as the aforementioned election of Israel, Wright can say only, "This was a proper inference from the Exodus deliverance,"<sup>11</sup> though one cannot help wondering why some other "interpretation" of this deliverance might not have proven equally tenable.

In essence, his goal seems to be three-fold. First, along with most modern theologians, he desires to have revelation without inspiration, a divine word, that is, without a divine book, which inerrantly records the revealed words.<sup>12</sup>

Second, along with orthodox Barthians, he desires to have active revelation without static revelatory interpretation.<sup>13</sup> Here Wright has fallen into sharp conflict with non-existentialists in general and with James Barr in particular.<sup>14</sup> On the prophets, for example, while Wright *et al* may assert that "the source of their enlightenment was not from mystical experiences but from history itself,"<sup>15</sup> Barr vigorously insists that, "The prophetic consciousness is one of hearing what God has to say to the prophet, not of diagnosing the forces and probabilities inherent in the historical situation." He does go on to grant that one's recognition of what the prophets themselves thought "does not mean that we have to believe" in these same thoughts.<sup>16</sup>

Third, along with certain of the more conservative among today's non-evangelical interpreters, he desires to have an actual occurrence of "central events," but without full Biblical historicity; Israel's exodus in particular, they insist, has to be fact but Adam's fall is myth. As Wright explains,

The farther back the Bible pushes beyond what is factually known—both backward to the creation and forward to the eschaton—the more it is forced to use traditional material. Consequently . . . he [the Biblical writer] must use symbols and pictures because he has no other means of presenting what he knows to be true. . . . Yet such Biblical projection is still presented in the

11. *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

12. Cf. Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 84, "We no longer think that the Bible itself is directly revelation, for reasons which are sufficiently familiar." Indeed, were it not for our Lord's pronouncements (see below), the concept of Scripture as merely human records of divine revelation, what men wrote down after being in contact with God, would not be inherently impossible, J. B. Payne, "Apeitheo: Current Resistance to Biblical Inerrancy," *Bulletin of E.T.S.*, 10 (1967), 8.

13. On his desire for "another kind of theology than . . . the propositional," *op. cit.*, p. 32, cf. Daniel Lys' insistence on revelation that is personal, not factual, *The Meaning of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), pp. 29, 36, or J. Kenneth Kuntz' "dynamic event . . . rather than static propositional truth," *The Self-Revelation of God* (Westminster: Philadelphia, 1967), p. 21.

14. See note 2, above.

15. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 83; though he goes on to grant, "Events need interpretation . . . Consequently, when God acted, he also 'spoke' . . . by chosen interpreters," the nature of such 'speaking' being left vague.

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 22; cf. p. 81.

manner of history, because it is indeed a projection from the known to that known alone by faith.<sup>17</sup>

To this myth-history of faith the terms *Heilsgeschichte* or *Urgeschichte* are also assigned. Walther Eichrodt insists, however,

The primal history deals not with timeless truths, but with *actual events*. What has here to be stated by the imperfect means of the myth is a matter of real processes, of happenings by which the present shape of the world has been determined. . . . These processes are related in the language of historical record, while, in fact, any 'record' of the creation, the Fall, and suchlike, is finally beyond the reach of our historical science.<sup>18</sup>

But here Wright and company have come under attack by their fellow "neo-Biblical theologians" from three different directions. On the left, Gerhard von Rad represents those who, when they read the Old Testament, find far less that is "factually known," including the exodus,<sup>19</sup> and far more that is "traditional material," who fail, indeed, to see why the Old Testament's confessional recital of history need correspond to actual history at all. As the latter puts it,

Critical historical scholarship has constructed an impressively complete history of the people of Israel. As this process took shape, the old picture of Israel's history which the Church had derived and accepted from the Old Testament was bit by bit destroyed. . . . Two pictures of Israel's history lie before us—and for the present, we must reconcile ourselves to both of them. The one is rational and "objective"; it constructs a picture of history as it really was in Israel. . . . The other activity is confessional and personally involved in the events to the point of fervour. . . . The fact that these two views of Israel's history are so divergent is one of the most serious burdens imposed today upon Biblical scholarship. No doubt historical investigation has a great deal to say about the growth of the picture of history which the faith of Israel painted: but the phenomenon of the faith itself, which speaks now of salvation, now of judgment, is beyond its power to explain.<sup>20</sup>

And frankly, if Wright is entitled to believe in "true pictures, after the

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

18. *Theology of the OT* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), II:402.

19. Cf. the emphasis of von Rad's Roman Catholic disciple, James Plastaras, on the exodus narratives as a recital of faith, a creed, rather than objective history, *The God of Exodus* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), pp. 2, 5.

20. *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper, 1962), I:106-108. Thus even a recent Bible picture book states, "According to the Hebrew tradition, while man slept, God took one of his ribs. . . ." Cecil Northcott, *People of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967). As von Rad puts it, "Historical investigation searches for a critically assured minimum—the kerygmatic picture tends toward a theological maximum," *loc. cit.*

manner of history" why cannot von Rad believe in "the picture of history which the faith of Israel painted?" In the center, James Barr objects not so much to the conclusions of *Heilsgeschichte* as to its semantic "artificialities," e.g., its overworked distinctions between *Geschichte* (*Heils—, Ur—*) and true *Historie*, and its "'*ad hoc*' redefinition of terms." He resents its proposed antinomy

between history as the field which can be analyzed, and history as the milieu in which God acted. . . not accessible to historical-critical examination, so that normal methods of historical explanation appear to be suspended. . . . To think of history in which God's action is discerned as the history narrated or confessed by Israel, we object that if God really acted in history, and if history is so very central, then the history involved must be not the history as the documents confess it but the history as it really happened. . . . It is possible that, when people speak of God's acting in history, nothing more tangible is really there than an Israelite way of thought; but if it is really intended, then it has to be said plainly.<sup>21</sup>

But now, if history is not really history, and what is called "holy history" is only an Israelitish way of thought, what has become of normative Biblical theology? On the one hand Wright grants that "the problem of the modern scholar regarding the relation between Biblical theology and the history of Biblical religion no longer seems so acute"<sup>22</sup>—after all, lacking objective communications from God, what else can one have but a history of human ideas—yet on the other hand he does maintain the actuality of a few "central events." On the right, then, John Bright takes issue with any such process of selection and pleads, interestingly enough, for "recognition of the *validity* (i.e., the authority) of the whole. Either we accept the Old Testament as a valid document of our faith or we do not."<sup>23</sup> At this point, however, Wright, and most of his neo-orthodox colleagues make no equivocation: he forthrightly grants the Biblical "errors and discrepancies" produced by his historical research; but he contends that, "This is minor." He feels that "the so-called destructive nature of Biblical criticism has been exaggerated."<sup>24</sup> It is, moreover, this ability of his to override the factual problems observable within Scripture that gives to the "God Who

21. *Op. cit.*, pp. 66-67; cf. p. 68. Actually, another category of history becomes justifiable only if one arbitrarily limits "real" history, as does von Rad, by "presupposing the similarity [non-supernaturalness] of all historical occurrence," *op. cit.*, I:107.

22. *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), p. 142. Yet despite his disclaimers, Bright himself discards "much in the Bible that does not command the Christian's faith and practice," p. 143; "it is through its theology, not its ancient forms and institutions, that the OT speaks with relevance and authority to the church," p. 148; and he employs a certain NT "structure of belief" as a criterion for his selectivity within the OT, as his reviewers have been prompt to point out, cf. *JBL*, 86 (1967), 218. His contention reduces to this, that "we will listen to it all and will not be tempted to discard any part as valueless," p. 142.

24. *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

Acts" theology its appeal, particularly for those found within the evangelical circle. As Barr has said,

Where the fundamentalist takes revelation to be propositional and to be identical with the propositions of the biblical text, he is in very severe agonies and straits. He is in direct contradiction with modern science, history, anthropology and the rest. His position can be maintained only on the ground of simple basic credulity, defying everything else that is thought and known.<sup>25</sup>

But the real question remains, whether a man can maintain this modern intellectual respectability, demonstrated by a swallowing of negative Biblical criticism with its pick-and-choose approach to Scriptural validity, and yet retain an effective Biblical authority and a faith that is operative in history. Can he, in other words, have his cake and eat it too?

### III. Evaluation

The question of selectivity from within Scripture can be approached from two directions. First, negatively: what problems or evils does a pick-and-choosing method entail, if any, along with its appeal? At the outset, we note that the "God Who Acts" theology, while concessive to modern thought forms, remains antithetic to the Old Testament itself. Barr thus states,

We think we cannot imagine verbal communication between God and man, and we worry about terrible consequences which would ensue in the Church, and of serious damage to the rationality of our presentation of Christianity, if it were admitted that such verbal communication is important. . . . It may well be that as historical scholars we cannot give an adequate account of these phenomena; but . . . verbal communications [not only] were understood to be, they dominate the form-patterns of the literature.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, a point which Barr does not state, the Old Testament is as much committed to the idea of full and undiminishable Scriptural authority (Dt. 4:2, 12:32; cf. Acts 24:14) as it is to the idea of verbal revelations in general. That is, modern Biblical criticism, whether its destructive nature has been exaggerated or not, still elevates human judgment to the position of arbiter over the divine word. Evangelicals thus observe with concerned alarm that its procedures seem to differ little from those which produced the "religious values" of old school liberalism. For example, the 1967 neo-orthodox Romanism of James Plastaras says,

The exodus narratives as we now possess them represent the first of over 600 years of reflection. . . . These chapters abound in

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 202.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

inconsistencies, all of which apparently did not bother the inspired editor who gathered all these different traditions together . . . . They are rather the fervent proclamation of a gospel, the announcing of the good news that Yahweh is the God who saves.<sup>27</sup>

Yet the 1920 liberal Protestantism of Bailey and Kent says,

The later Biblical writers have surrounded the Sinaitic events with symbols of mystery. . . . The narratives that gather about Sinai prove that the Hebrews held the conviction that law is something greater than the individual and more sacred than the nation. Thus these ancient teachers dramatically and effectively taught that law and conscience are both divinely inspired.<sup>28</sup>

Both positions, while obviously skeptical of the Exodus record, pay lip-service to "inspiration"; but, as far as that goes, William Hamilton can say, "I am not yet ready to give up *sola scriptura*," over which John W. Montgomery observes, "Even a death-of-God theologian claims to follow *sola scriptura*. . . . Aprioristic biblical criticism has brought theology to the bier of Deity."<sup>29</sup> And who is to say which is right: the God who saves, the God who pervades conscience, or the God who is non-existent? All three are equally derivable from a methodology based upon belief in partial inspiration. As John Bright puts it, "The attempt to isolate an authoritative element within Scripture by means of a value judgment leads inevitably to the breakdown of the whole concept of authority."<sup>30</sup>

Second then, and positively: what solution is proffered for ascertaining in some objective way those bindingly "central" elements that Wright finds within the Old Testament? He seems actually to suggest two ways. On the one hand, he may adduce the widely recognized hermeneutical criterion of the intent of the secondary authors of Scripture.<sup>31</sup> One may grant with Ignatius Hunt that, "Salvation was the chief preoccupation of the Israelite historiographers. History as such was not their interest."<sup>32</sup>

27. *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

28. *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth* (New York: Scribner's, 1949), pp. 40-41.

29. *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

30. *Christianity Today*, 12 (1967), 118.

31. Provided, of course, that the intent of the secondary authors is not employed to the detriment of the intent of God the primary author, as revealed through the analogy of Scripture; cf. L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), pp. 137-138, and such instances as Acts 2:29-31, where inspiration has carried the writer David beyond what might otherwise have been inferred from Ps. 16, or Dan. 12:8, I Pet. 1:10-12, where the writers themselves confess incomprehension over their messages, J. B. Payne, *Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), pp. 512-513.

32. *The World of the Patriarchs* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 159. It is significant that in quoting his own Pontifical Biblical Commission's second decree, which forbade belief in "narratives in the historical books which have only the appearance of being historical. . . . excepting that it can be proved by solid arguments that the sacred writer did not intend to give a true and strict history, but proposed rather to set forth, under the guise and form of history, a parable or an allegory or some meaning distinct from the strictly literal or historical significance of the words," Hunt goes on to describe the defences of the historicity of Genesis that were undertaken by Catholics from 1905 until the decree's virtual revocation in 1948.

But the question yet remains, do they present their *Heilsgeschichte* as what is also real history, or do they intentionally utilize and compose mythological or traditio-legendary literary forms? In a recent publication Wright asserts that, "The material [in Gen. 2-4] is not given as a series of obvious facts to be accepted or rejected as fact. . . . The didactic intent, or parabolic aim, is so obvious that for a parallel one might turn to the parables of Jesus."<sup>33</sup> Yet Eichrodt, whose terminology might seem occasionally to suggest this same view,<sup>34</sup> hastens to add: "That the biblical authors were unconscious of the barriers—insurmountable to our thinking—between historical record and those events which explain and consummate the meaning of history is obvious."<sup>35</sup> Wright himself, in much the same language, concedes,

The tenth-century writer was scarcely conscious of the problem of fact and faith in the way that we are today. . . . Did it happen? He is uninterested in such a question, perhaps because this is something which everyone amongst his people more or less took for granted.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, the author of Genesis seems to have taken it for granted too: for Ludwig Köhler, despite his personal commitment to a rather extreme form of mythological interpretation, insists:

This [Gen 3] aetiology is unmistakably intended to be historical in the sense that where something is explained its present character is explained by telling that at the beginning of history this and that happened. . . . The story is intended as history, not *Urgeschichte*. . . . The so-called theological concept *Urgeschichte* conceals only the one simple fact that something is regarded as no longer historical event but, contrary to the intention of the Bible, as merely psychological truth.<sup>37</sup>

Even in respect to some of the Old Testament's most central affirmations, Wright is willing to grant, for example:

To us the interpretation of the meaning of election for Israel's life in terms of a covenant is a projection of faith by means of. . . metaphorical language. . . . Not so for Israel, however. For her the

33. *The Rule of God* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1960), p. 25.

34. Eg., concerning the "Yahwist": "The man who knew how to tell of the Flood and of the Tower of Babel found himself confronted by the riddle of the rebellion which sin constituted within the creation of the good God. How he tackled this problem, and formulated it, is one of the most marvelous things in all the mighty series of epic narratives which he left to posterity. . . . One aim is to portray the origin of conditions which obtain in the present; and this is done in the language of myth. . . . It is a means of expression for those truths of faith which there is no method of comprehending in conceptual language. . . . These are beyond the reach of our historical science," *op. cit.*, I:401-402. But this is not to say they were beyond the reach of the Yahwist's!

35. *Ibid.*, I:402.

36. *The Rule of God*, pp. 25-26.

37. *Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), pp. 175, 177, 250.

covenant was an actual event which took place at a certain historical time and place, namely at Sinai.<sup>38</sup>

To equivocate with Daniel Lys and to claim that our own non-

historical reconstructions were what the Biblical writer "wanted" to say,<sup>39</sup> is simply to admit to eisegesis, to "interpret" in ways contrary to the intent of the Old Testament itself.

On the other hand, Wright may adduce the New Testament apostolic witness as determinative for getting down to what may have been the essential kerygma of the Old, e.g., Paul's list in Acts 13:16-22 of major Biblical happenings, from the choice of the patriarchs down to that of David.<sup>40</sup> Yet this too proves to be an illusory criterion. Elsewhere in the New Testament, over half of the great 11th chapter of Hebrews addresses itself to the "myths" and "traditions" of the first book of the Bible, grouped in a way indistinguishable from the historic careers of David and Samuel and the prophets (v. 32). The apostles, and indeed our Lord Himself, seem to have marked out for primary elaboration those very Old Testament events that are the most embarrassing to modern negative criticism, e.g., the fall of Adam, the death of Abel, or the flood of Noah.<sup>41</sup> They committed themselves, moreover, not simply to some "structure of belief,"<sup>42</sup> but to the secondary intent of the Old Testament writers as well, including the accuracy of such details as the precise substances that destroyed Sodom (Lk 17: 29), the length of Elijah's famine, and the village and district of the widow to whom the prophet was sent (4:25-26), and descending to the doctrinal authority of individual Old Testament words, yea, even their pronominal suffixes (20:42 (cf. Mt 5:18), Mk 12:26, Jn 10:34, Gal 3:16).<sup>43</sup> Modern liberals such as F. C. Grant freely admit that in the New Testament "it is everywhere taken for granted that Scripture is trustworthy, infallible, and inerrant."<sup>44</sup> Thus two, and only two, courses lie open: to repudiate either the authority of Christ and the apostles or that of the negative criticism. Consistent critics are compelled to embrace the former alternative, either delicately, like Barr—"The modern scholar can look with respect on the interpretative processes of the time, as forms within which Christ and the apostles in fact worked; yet he cannot on that ground

38. *God Who Acts*, p. 54.

39. *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

40. *God Who Acts*, p. 76; cf. the appeals by Lys, *op. cit.*, p. 64, to the reality in Christ, or by Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 140, to "significance in the light of what Christ has done."

41. For an analysis of our Lord's teaching, see Payne, *Bul. ETS*, 10 (1967), 10-13; cf. Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 159, "There is no place where any repudiation of Scripture is made," or Vriezen's recognition that Jesus was not "critical of the Bible" in our sense of the word. *An Outline of OT Theology* (Newton, Mass.: Charles T. Branford, 1960), p. 3.

42. See above, note 23.

43. Cf. Berkhof's discussion of valid investigations of "the implied sense of Scripture" as opposed to unwarranted reasoning from incidental expressions found in ordinary human writings, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-160.

44. *Introduction to New Testament Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950), p. 75.

maintain that it is entirely mandatory for us to follow the same methods<sup>45</sup>—or bluntly, like Wright, with his belief in “examples of extreme, ‘unscientific’ exegesis and extravagant rabbinical argument.”<sup>46</sup> Both men are entitled to their skepticism and to its resultant partial Christology, if they wish; but they must then face up to the cogency of William Hamilton’s argument:

If Jesus’ demonology and cosmology and eschatology [to which we would add, His Bibliology] are taken as first-century views, appropriate then, not so now, needing reinterpretation and understanding but not literal assent, what is inherently different about Jesus’ *theology*?<sup>47</sup>

For, skeptical criticism, even when it does not result in Hamilton’s atheism, still produces an essentially man-made religion and hence idolatry. But what of evangelicals, those who embrace the latter alternative and prefer Christ to the so-called modern scholarship? Assuming the Lord’s deity, we gain thereby a God-made religion, which some may, confessedly, label “credulity,” but which others, following the teaching of the Old Testament, that is validated by the New, find eminently plausible: a faith that is based upon history and that posits both revelation and inspiration—real acts of God that men saw (Ex 14:31) and real words of God that men heard (20:22) and later read (Dan 9:2), with the canonical library constituting the real equivalent of God’s own verbal compositions (II Chron 34:21).

45. *Op. cit.*, p. 131; cf. p. 157.

46. *God Who Acts*, p. 59; cf. his disparagement of the NT’s use of messianic psalms, which “originally did not refer to a future king provided by God,” p. 78.

47. *Christianity Today*, 12 (1967), 118.