

Footnotes

*The Hermeneutics of Reading Scripture and the Symbols of Faith in the PCA:
An Exploratory Essay*

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[2]The denomination was originally known as the National Presbyterian Church and changed its name due to a possible law suit. For a more extensive history see John Richards, *The Historical Birth of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Liberty Hill, SC: Liberty Press, 1973); Frank J. Smith, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America: The Continuing Church Movement* (Manassas, VA: Reformed Educational Foundation, 1985); Morton H. Smith, *How Is the Gold Become Dim: The Decline of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., as Reflected in its Assembly Actions* (Jackson, MS: The Steering Committee for a Continuing Presbyterian Church, 1973).

[3]The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America (Atlanta, GA: Office of the Stated Clerk, General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1989): 21-5, 24-5.

[4]Morton H. Smith, *The Subscription Debate: Studies in Presbyterian Polity* (Greenville, SC: Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, nd.), 5.

[5]The two groups do not naturally form neat positions, but for the sake of this study they will be dichotomized. Most individuals find themselves some where between the two positions.

[6]Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970).

[7]Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The Importance of Hermeneutics for a Christian Worldview* (Unpublished paper, 1994).

[8]The use of events or people are meant to be illustrative and does not imply agreement or disagreement with their position.

[9]The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, preface.

[10]The Westminster Confession of Faith: An Authentic Modern Version, rev. 2nd ed. (Signal Mountain, TN: Summertown Texts, 1984), Chap. 1.

[11]Subscription Debate, 6.

[12]David Lachman, "Divisiveness in a Confessional Church," The Presbyterian Advocate, vol. 1:9-10 (October-November 1993): 2.

[13]Frank Barker, "What does Subscription to Our Confession Mean?" The Presbyterian Advocate, vol. 2: 7&8 (September-October 1992): 8.

[14]Gerhard Maier, Biblical Hermeneutics, trans. by Robert Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994).

[15]Anthony C. Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); V. Philips Long, The Art of Biblical History, vol. 5 in Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation edited by Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Moises Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible?, vol. 1 in The Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

[16]Nicholas Wolterstorff, Reason Within the Bounds of Religion, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). See also John Frame, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987).

[17]This is precisely what Silva notes when he writes, "Our formulation of a theological doctrine depends on the text of Scripture, yet our understanding of that text depends on our prior doctrinal knowledge. This interconnection is an aspect of the so-called hermeneutical circle, a principle that is generally accepted by scholars, *though in practice one finds a good deal of resistance to it.*" (Italics added.) Has the Church Misread the Bible?, 21.

[18]My intent is not to fully elaborate a worldview approach, that is beyond the scope of this paper. I wish merely to identify some areas of contention and problematic concerns that underlie the current discussion.

[19]Richard Pratt, He Gave Us Stories. (Brentwood, TN: Woglemuth & Hyatt, 1990).

[20] This is a broad and sweeping statement. This approach is impacted by the removal of God from the interpretative act. The locus of authority resides in the

interpreter rather than God. For a discussion of these issues see Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), Appendix A; Long, chap. 4; Silva, chaps. 1&5; Maier, chaps. 12&13; Thiselton, chaps. 8-14. For a concise overview of the current philosophical and theological landscape see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Exploring the World; Following the Word: The Credibility of Evangelical Theology in an Incredulous Age," *Trinity Journal* 16NS (1995): 3-27.

[21] For a brief description of neo-orthodoxy see C.A. Baxter, "Neo-Orthodoxy" in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Sinclair Ferguson, David F. Wright and J.I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988).

[22]The label experiential approach would be a more appropriate descriptor. For the sake of clarity the term subjective will continue to be used. For a description of the experiential approach see Maier, chap. 3 and Thiselton, chap 12.

[23]Biblical Hermeneutics, 37.

[24]Smith, *The Subscription Debate*. The implications here are far reaching and point more to one's Scriptural hermeneutic. It should be noted that one may have a correct doctrinal understanding of Scripture and at the same time employ a defective hermeneutic when reading and interpreting the text.

[25]A copy of the letter was shared with me by a friend. I have chosen not to reveal the name, church or presbytery for my intent is purely illustrative.

[26]Brian J. Walsh and Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984); Gordon Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

[27]Long, *The Art of Biblical History* noted this problem.

[28] Maier, Wolterstorff and Frame point out the difficulties with neglecting one's preunderstanding.

[29] Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Michael Horton, ed., *Power Religion* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993).

[30] Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Pocket 1963); Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who is There*, vol 1 in *The Complete Works of Francis A Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982).

[31] Pratt, He Gave Us Stories; Wolterstorff, Reason Within the Bounds of Religion.

[32]The Subscription Debate, 17.

[33]WCF, XXI:7.

[34]See note 28 above.

[35] In other words, there is little room for discussion. To disagree with one's interpretation is to disagree with the WS and Scripture. This is most obvious, for example, in dispensentialism which describes its hermeneutical approach as "biblical" thereby inferring any other approach is "non-biblical." The objective interpreter maintains the same posture towards the WS.

[36]He Gave Us Stories, 32.

[37] Barker, "What Does Subscription to Our Confession Mean?"

[38]Thomas McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).

Darwin K. Glassford is Associate Professor of Bible and Christian Ministry and Chairman of the Christian Ministries Division at Montreat College, Montreat, NC. He is a member of Western Carolina Presbytery. Comments can be sent to him at dglassford@montreat.edu.)

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