UNCOVERING THE PROTOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS OF GEORGE MCCREADY PRICE AND BENJAMIN WARFIELD

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Problem

This dissertation addresses the protological hermeneutical impasse between George McCready Price and Benjamin Warfield over whether biblical protology should be interpreted literally or symbolically in response to the evolutionary theory.

Method

To identify, compare, and contrast the protological hermeneutics of George McCready Price and Benjamin Warfield, this dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary methodology that seeks to integrate historical theology, systematic theology, and exegetical-biblical theology.

Conclusions

The protological hermeneutical impasse between George McCready Price and Benjamin Warfield over the interpretation of biblical protology was caused by how they applied their views on epistemology. On the hermeneutical level (where ontology, metaphysics, and epistemology inform interpretation), McCready Price held to the meaning of the biblical text interpreted through Scripture alone, and not based on external sources of protological knowledge. While Warfield held that Scripture is "the end of all strife," he held to an interpretation of the biblical text contingent on the interpretations of nature by mainstream science.

This research indicates many similarities between these two thinkers, bringing to an end a two-decade-long misconception that Warfield's views on science were superior to McCready Price's views on science. In fact, they held similar views on science (i.e., its definition, task, etc.). In addition, they both agreed that: God is not timeless and he communicates with humankind through reason; "the heavens and the earth" (i.e., the entire galactic universe) might have been created more than six thousand years ago; Gen 1:2a is a description of the condition of the earth after the creation of inorganic matter and prior to the beginning of the creation week; the seventh day of the creation week is the foundation of the Sabbath (they disagreed on the actual day of observance—Saturday vs. Sunday); and they both understood the biblical flood in Gen 6–8 as a historical event.

This research also challenged the claim that McCready Price is the founder of modern scientific creationism. This idea was popularized by two historians who wanted to link McCready Price to fundamentalism—a term

generally used pejoratively—to delegitimize McCready Price's contribution to theology and to science, and to uplift Warfield. However, this research showed that neither Price nor Warfield was a Fundamentalist.

The research also showed that the current categorization of the creationist movement in the West is obsolete and needs to be updated. The old Earth versus young Earth debate can no longer account for the views of proponents of biblical protology. The undated Earth creation movement must be included in a landmark publication.

Altogether, these findings can facilitate a renewed dialogue about the relationship between theology and science in the writings of McCready Price and Warfield, their interpretations of biblical protology, the history of the Creationist Movement in the West, and the contributions of their protological hermeneutics to contemporary Christian theology.