

# Modulations of Biblical Interpretation

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## ***Baptist Interpretation: The Melody***

### Caveats

- (1) Generalizations
- (2) Few Systematic Writings

"Baptist scholars have written books on biblical interpretation, but they have written virtually nothing that explicitly addresses distinctively 'Baptist' hermeneutics per se." (W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions*, p. 161)

### Background Score for the Melody

- (1) The Bible as Self-Interpreting

"The Bible is good enough for me, just the old book under which I was brought up. I do not want notes or criticisms or explanations about authorship or origins or even cross-references. I do not need them or understand them, and they confuse me." (Grover Cleveland, as quoted in Martin E. Marty, "Literalism vs. Everything Else," *Bible Review*, 10.2 [April 1994], 40)

- (2) Soul Competency: Everyone's Right to Interpret the Bible

"The right of private judgment as to the meaning of the Bible is of course another aspect of the [soul competency]." (E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* [1908], 56)

"To interpret and apply the text in accordance with *its real meaning* (emphasis added), is one of the preachers' most sacred duties." (John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* [1870], 32)

## ***Baptistic Approaches to Interpreting Scripture***

### **Biblicism**

"(1) *Biblicism*, understood not as one or another theory of inspiration, but as humble acceptance of the authority of Scripture for both faith and practice." (James William McClendon, *Ethics* (1986), 28).

➤ "This is that" and "Then is now."

- Literalism and WYSIWYG

## **Christ: The Reading Lens of the Bible**

- The Role New Testament vs. the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament)

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The third-century interpreter Origen (AD 182-254?), who was not a Baptist but perhaps one in spirit, voiced a prayer for how we read Scripture:

*Lord God, let us keep your Scriptures in mind and meditate on them day and night, persevering in prayer, always on watch. We beg you, Lord, to give us real knowledge of what we read and to show us not only how to understand it, but how to put it into practice, so that we may deserve to obtain spiritual grace, enlightened by the law of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord, whose power and glory will endure throughout all ages. Amen.*