

**The Doctrine of the Authority of Holy Scripture
in the Episcopal Church's Official Decisions
Pertaining to Divorce and Remarriage**

By

The Rev. Robert Durning Field

Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Theology of the University of the South
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

May 2009

Sewanee, Tennessee

Approved:

Date:

To John Henry Field, III

January 15, 1922 — November 11, 2007

In thanksgiving for exemplifying the love and value of lifelong learning

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Project under the supervision of The Rev. Robert D. Hughes, III, Ph.D., Norma and Olan Mills Professor of Divinity

This project is a thesis-essay examining the Episcopal Church's doctrine of the authority of Holy Scripture and its application in the church's official decisions regarding divorce and remarriage. In the first section, the project examines and summarizes the Episcopal Church's teaching about the authority of scripture based on its inheritance from the Church of England and other official sources, including the Articles of Religion, the Episcopal Church's Constitution and Canons, *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the decisions of General Convention, and statements from the Lambeth Conference as well as ecumenical dialogues affirmed by General Convention. In the second section, the project reviews the history of the Episcopal Church's deliberations regarding changes to the

Church's canons pertaining to divorce and remarriage in the Church. It examines how the Bible was used in national debates before, during, and after the amendment of canons to allow divorce and remarriage by and in the Church. In the conclusion, the author determines that the Episcopal Church was indeed faithful to its own teachings regarding the authority of the Bible. An appendix describes how the texts in Episcopal hymnals have portrayed scripture and its authority.

The project's conclusion is based upon three determinations made earlier in the paper. The first is that the Episcopal Church — while valuing its doctrinal heritage from the Church of England — has a particular context that has shaped the way the Church has interpreted and applied its understanding of the authority of the Bible. A second determination is that the Episcopal Church has not embraced the *sola scriptura* teaching of the Reformation except in a limited and transient sense. Finally, the project determines that the Episcopal Church's official teaching on the subject, rather than remaining static, has evolved during the course of its history.

Approved _____ Date _____
Advisor

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Second Reader

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