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Meredith G. Kline at 100

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From the Editor

For four years each fall from 1999 to 2002 Professor Meredith G. Kline taught for ten weeks at The Granite State School of Theology and Missions. He taught essentially everything he had taught throughout his illustrious career at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and Westminster Seminary California:

- 1999 – “Covenant-Kingdom Foundations,” (*Kingdom Prologue*)
- 2000 – “Old Testament Prophets,” (*Images of the Spirit*)
- 2001 – “Old Testament Exegesis,” (*Glory in Our Midst*, on Zechariah)
- 2002 – “Covenant-Kingdom Foundations,” (*Kingdom Prologue*)

Dr. Kline invited me to visit with him each week for fellowship. It was one of the most delightful times of my life. I came to more deeply appreciate his gentle brilliance. His wife Grace came with him each week, so we got to enjoy her quiet gracious presence as well. This personal dimension of Dr. Kline’s life is beautifully described for us in his son Meredith M. Kline’s rich memorial sketch on this one hundredth anniversary of Professor Kline’s birth—“Meredith G. Kline’s Family Life.” This should be read with Meredith’s “Meredith G. Kline: A Biographical Sketch,” in *Essential Writings of Meredith G. Kline* (2017). Now, fifteen years after his death in 2007, is a worthy time to reflect on Kline’s unique contribution to biblical theology.

John Muether helpfully answers the oft asked question about Kline’s writings—where should I begin? The various answers of former colleagues and students are illuminating—“Reading Meredith G. Kline: Where to Begin?”

Alan Strange begins Chapter 3 of his commentary on the Book of Discipline, “Steps in the Institution of the Judicial Process.” It reminds me of how wonderful it is to have Presbyterian order. Ardor without order is dangerous, and order without ardor is dead. But care in the judicial process is especially important in protecting all parties, particularly the accused. The process places a premium on taking the time to consider prayerfully the implementation of the biblical procedure which seeks the restoration of the offender, the purity of the church, and the honor of the church’s head, the Lord Jesus Christ. The concept of good order is well suited to our first book review.

The doctrine of the church is certainly the weakest in American ecclesiology. Ryan McGraw, in his review article, “What is Essential to the Doctrine of the Church?” looks

at Dustin Bengé's *The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church*. Besides the many positive things McGraw has to say, he picks up on a major weakness, Bengé's failure to describe the church as an institution while focusing almost entirely on the organic nature of the church. McGraw incisively enumerates the biblical importance of the church's organization, the distinction between visible and invisible church, and organic and institutional aspects of her nature. During my ministry I would ask those who denied the institutional nature of the church to imagine a body without a skeleton.

Charles Wingard completes his review of Harry Poe's three volume biography of C.S. Lewis by reviewing the last volume, *The Completion of C.S. Lewis: From War to Joy (1945-1963)*. This is probably the best biography of Lewis to date, as Wingard declares, "surveying the life of one of the twentieth century's great writers and formidable Christian apologists."

I review two wisely constructed devotional anthologies in "Profound Devotion." Editor Robert Elmer's latest is *Fount of Heaven: Prayers of the Early Church*. He also anthologized *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans* (2020), which I reviewed in January 2020. Leland Ryken has done it again too with *The Heart in Pilgrimage: A Treasury of Classic Devotionals on the Christian Life*. His anthology of classic devotional poetry, *The Soul in Paraphrase* (2018), was reviewed by me in January 2019. He is a master anthologist with an encyclopedic knowledge of devotional poetry and literature.

Our poem this month is a reflection on the Magi of Matthew 2— "Magi Majesty."

The cover photograph is of the front door of our home in New Hampshire—Chestnut Cottage.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

CONTENTS

ServantMemorial

- Meredith M. Kline, "Meredith G. Kline's Family Life"
- John R. Muether, "Reading Meredith G. Kline: Where to Begin?"

ServantStandards

- Alan D. Strange, "Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapter 3.1–3"

ServantReading

- Ryan M. McGraw, review article, "What is Essential to the Doctrine of the Church?" review of *The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church*, by Dustin W. Bengé

- Charles M. Wingard, review of *The Completion of C.S. Lewis: From War to Joy (1945-1963)*, by Harry Lee Poe
- Gregory E. Reynolds, review article, “Profound Devotion,” review of *The Heart in Pilgrimage: A Treasury of Classic Devotionals on the Christian Life*, by Leland Ryken, editor; and *Fount of Heaven: Prayers of the Early Church*, by Robert Elmer, editor.

ServantPoetry

- G. E. Reynolds, “Magi Majesty”

FROM THE ARCHIVES “KLINE”

http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-30.pdf

- “Calvin’s Kline.” (David W. Inks) 21 (2012): 63–68.
- “Memorial Remarks at the Funeral of Meredith G. Kline.” (Meredith M. Kline) 16 (2007): 40–43.
- “Meredith George Kline: Artist-Exegete.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 16 (2007): 6–9.
- “Scholar of the Heavenland.” (Yong H. Kim) 16 (2007): 121–24.

Ordained Servant exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

Servant Memorial

Meredith G. Kline's Family Life

Meredith M. Kline¹

Interest in my father Meredith G. Kline focuses on his academic and ecclesiastical involvement along with his biblical-theological writings. His linguistic skill² and artistic sensibilities strengthened his exegesis, while his global-systems thinking enabled him to perceive and elucidate both the theological forest and the exegetical trees. What role, however, did life outside seminary or church play in his academic career? The multitasking involved in juggling his family life and academic responsibilities helps us appreciate what he was able to accomplish.

Not much is known about Meredith's family life growing up. His father, born Harry Klein in 1895, possibly in Austria, had emigrated from Latvia with his family and settled in Boston, Massachusetts by the 1900 census. Harry grew up in a Jewish household where his father supposedly spent the day immersed in Torah, so at a young age Harry was helping to support the family by selling newspapers on streetcars. When he dropped out of school at age fifteen, Harry abandoned Jewish culture and changed the spelling of the family name from Klein to Kline.³ He spent much of his working life either painting Navy ships during wars or painting Boston area mansions and Fenway Park seats and concession stands while working with a couple of his brothers in a relative's business. When my brothers and I were growing up, the only members of Harry's family that our family interacted with were Harry's brother Ben's family; we would visit them in Dorchester, Massachusetts near Meredith's parents to watch Friday-night fights.

Somehow, Harry ended up working as a machinist in the Coplay, Pennsylvania area, where he married Lydia Moyer in 1918. Their son Meredith was born on 15 December 1922, three years after his sister Gladys. Lydia had been born in 1900 and was a member at Trinity Reformed Church in Coplay. According to church records, Harry became a member months before Meredith was born. But most of his life he rarely attended church services, perhaps hearing Meredith preach once at Central Congregational Church in Dorchester. However, when he and Lydia lived in the housing for the elderly that his grandson Sterling designed for the Whitinsville (Massachusetts) Christian Reformed Church, he would attend services with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) folk. At Harry's funeral, Robert Eckhardt, who served on the pastoral staff there and had been a

¹ In consultation with my brothers and our wives: Miriam Kline, Sterling and Karen Kline, and Calvin and Sharen Kline.

² Cyrus Gordon told me when I started studies with him in 1972 that up to that point in time Kline was the best linguist he had taught.

³ Interestingly, we wonder what genetically is at play in the family. Consider Harry's son (Meredith G. Kline), grandson (Meredith M. Kline), and great-grandson (Jonathan Kline) — each has written a doctoral dissertation dealing with the Old Testament text, and each has taught biblical Hebrew and other Semitic languages at seminaries and divinity schools.

Westminster Theological Seminary (WTS) classmate of Meredith, comforted his fellow Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) pastor, saying he had perceived a spark of faith in Meredith's father.

By 1930, Harry, Lydia, Gladys, and Meredith were living in Dorchester. Lydia took the children to nearby Central Congregational Church, which had an evangelical pastor, the Rev. Norman King. Even though church activities included putting on plays, which Lydia and Meredith participated in, by the time Meredith graduated from Boston Latin School he was nicknamed "Rev." The spiritual life that bloomed while growing up under Pastor King's ministry directed his career path. Before commencing classes at Harvard, Meredith determined his life would be better spent as a minister than as a dentist, so he withdrew and enrolled at Gordon College to study theology, on the advice of a woman missionary associated with Central Congregational Church. Pastor King mentored Meredith, passing on an emphasis on evangelism and church revival, encouraging his preaching,⁴ and working to find him a Congregational pastorate in the Boston area as Meredith approached graduation from Westminster; while a Westminster student, although each of his two older sons were born in June, Meredith waited until Christmas vacation time when he could return to Dorchester in order to have them baptized by Pastor King.

Meredith seems to have had good relations with his family. His sister Gladys supported our family throughout her life. She came to Philadelphia to help Meredith and Grace when newborns arrived. Her home in Canton, Massachusetts was the place where Meredith M., Sterling, and Calvin enjoyed playing with their cousins during family vacations with Meredith's parents. Gladys apparently was not aware of Kline's career though, since she seemed surprised to learn at his funeral how respected he was by his academic and ecclesiastical colleagues and friends.⁵

Meredith was closest to his mother. When away from home, he communicated frequently with her by letter, whether from Camp Waldron in New Hampshire where he was a summer counselor during his college days or from wherever he was pastoring or teaching; unfortunately, almost all those letters have not survived. His mother showed keen interest in his career and was familiar with seminary happenings from Meredith's letters and her personal visits to Philadelphia to help the family from the time Meredith was a student at Westminster until he began teaching at Gordon Divinity School.⁶ One significant event in their relationship was the time Meredith differed with his mother about his future plans. A couple months before he graduated from Gordon College and just after Gladys had been married, Meredith was planning to be married soon and depart for Dallas Theological Seminary, where he had been accepted. The sudden prospect of being an empty-nester and having Meredith located in far-off Texas was too much for Lydia; apparently, she weepingly pleaded with him to change his mind. The next day he agreed to comply with her wishes, and they were reconciled; he then went to Burton Goddard for advice and was directed to Westminster!

⁴ Meredith first preached at Central Congregational Church in November 1941 when he was eighteen and preached there occasionally through 1954.

⁵ Gladys died two months after Meredith. We were surprised to learn from her children at her funeral that she had never informed them of their Jewish roots.

⁶ Lydia and Harry's visits to the family in Philadelphia also enabled them to maintain their lifelong relationships with their Copley friends.

The most significant factor for Kline's own family life was the mental health of Grace, his wife. According to Grace's sister Joan, a classmate of Kline at Gordon College who introduced him and Grace while they were counselors at summer camps for boys and girls near Meredith, New Hampshire, their family had been dysfunctional. Grace's father, Arthur Lambourne, was a kind-hearted Six-Principle-Baptist pastor, but her mother, May, apparently suffered from undiagnosed emotional problems (her mother had hated her) that made family life miserable. She traumatized Grace at a young age by quoting a poem to her about a little girl who was either very good or horridly bad. Grace considered that occasion the origin of her paranoid schizophrenia (Grace thought of herself as a double personality, as reflected in her going by the name Grace in most contexts but going by Muriel, her first name, in medical institutions or when signing her paintings).⁷

Grace's father was dispensational, believing Israel and the church were on separate tracks in God's redemptive program. Our father told us that Grace's emotional issues and the fractured relationship between our family and her family were theologically rooted. Perhaps Meredith had applied to Dallas Theological Seminary under the influence of Rev. Lambourne, who apparently arranged for Meredith to preach often during the last half of 1943 at a Six-Principle-Baptist chapel in Maple Roots, Rhode Island. And perhaps because Grace had fled her family a few months before her wedding and because Meredith changed his plans last-minute to study at a Reformed seminary, none of Grace's family, who lived ten miles away in Cambridge, Massachusetts, attended her wedding; memory of that fact at anniversaries in later years, Meredith felt, would bring on Grace's bouts of depression.⁸

The seriousness of Grace's condition did not manifest itself until Kline started teaching full-time at WTS in the fall of 1950, soon after the youngest of their three sons was born. The family had moved from Kline's OPC pastorate in Ringoes, New Jersey to a rental near WTS, but, possibly to save money, in February 1951 he planned to move the family to seminary-campus lodgings while he attempted to construct a house which he had designed for property purchased next to E. J. Young. The stress of contemplating such a move with three young boys apparently triggered Grace's inherited dysfunction, and she spent over six months in a CRC mental facility in Wyckoff, New Jersey. Initially, with the help of Glenside, Pennsylvania and Ringoes OPC friends, along with family, Kline maintained his WTS schedule and house-constructing activities, but he temporarily discontinued his PhD studies; Lillian Young started taking care of seven-month-old Calvin while, eventually, Meredith M. and Sterling were sent to Kline's parents in Boston. Grace experienced additional lengthy hospital stays in the next several years; despite continual medical monitoring and various medications, she was susceptible to breakdowns of varying length during the rest of her life. One fall, a church pastoral search committee decision so upset her that she was unable to cope with life for months;

⁷ Mair Walters (wife of Gordon Divinity School homiletics professor Gwyn Walters), who had practiced medicine in Wales and helped Grace over the years, said she was a "sweet" schizophrenic. Thus, many people were not aware of Grace's emotional issues. She shared Meredith's interest in evangelism and missions, constantly prayed for family, friends, and missionaries, and she would donate the proceeds of sales of her artwork to missions. After Meredith died, she bought large-print hymn sheets for residents of her assisted living to use when church groups came for services, and she visited church and resident-acquaintances during their stays at the next-door nursing home.

⁸ Over the years we had little contact with Grace's family.

when Kline managed to get her to Escondido, California so he could teach during the spring semester at Westminster Seminary California, instead of renting an apartment as usual, they lived with their son Meredith's family so someone could be with her while Kline taught his classes at the seminary.

Dealing with Grace's fragile condition resulted in Kline placing constraints on the family, primarily out of fear of how he could manage if something unexpected happened to the boys, thus adding cares to the uncertainty of Grace's potential negative reaction to such events. The boys' extra-curricular school activities were limited, they were not driven to libraries for research-report resources and, later for financial reasons, were not permitted to get driver's licenses until late college years or beyond.

In addition to limitations on the activities of his three sons related to concerns about Grace, Kline's ideas also affected what the boys did. While they were growing up, he had traditional views of the Sabbath. Kline did not work on his academic, even biblical, projects on Sunday. When healthy, family members regularly attended morning and evening services at the Glenside or Hatboro OPC churches, the boys attended Sunday School and Machen League, afternoons involved naps or reading or taking walks, and the family might socialize with church friends. Meredith M. and Sterling did not attend their high school graduations, which occurred on Sunday. Based on Kline's views of church and state relations, the boys, along with their many Jewish classmates, did not participate in reciting the Lord's Prayer during the school's joint morning opening-exercises.⁹ Kline's strong Reformed convictions meant his boys did not affiliate with the high school Bible club.¹⁰

Kline's desire to protect Grace contributed to his tendency to micromanage and do things himself. In academic life his desire to control an Old Testament department and curriculum was a significant factor in his switch from Westminster to Gordon Divinity School in 1965.¹¹ In family life he performed all sorts of activities related to building or maintaining the family's houses and managing their yards, yet he never trained his boys to do carpentry or paint or shingle or mow the lawn, etcetera, but he had to do those activities himself so they would be done the way he thought they should.¹² Even in later life, Kline's need to be in control led to trying, even if with good intentions and involving generosity, to make decisions for his grown sons.

Grace's emotional instability might be a reason Kline never traveled outside the United States, except to briefly lecture in Canada; an additional factor might have been potential uncertainties associated with the fact that she was a British citizen (having been born in London before her parents moved to Rhode Island)—she did not become an American citizen until her seventies, probably for reasons related to Social Security. Grace's condition was considered a major factor in the family not going to Basel for a

⁹ Kline spoke to Christian groups about supporting the attempt by parents of the boys' classmates to take their case to the Supreme Court to have the Abington (Pennsylvania) School System stop the mandatory Bible reading and Lord's-Prayer-recitation practice.

¹⁰ The boys already had Wednesday catechism classes, which like Sunday School involved homework. During high school Meredith M. had no interaction with classmate George W. Murray, president of the Bible club, who later became president of Columbia International University.

¹¹ Conwell Theological Seminary and Gordon Divinity School merged in 1969 to become Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

¹² He never attempted to work on cars though, relying totally, while teaching at WTS, on Charles Danberry, a Ringoes OPC elder and lifelong friend who had a Chevrolet franchise and operated a garage.

possible sabbatical around 1957, though finances also played a role in Kline not fulfilling invitations to England or Switzerland for later sabbaticals.

Kline constantly had to include Grace's requirements into calculations for daily living. She never learned to drive, so he had to transport her for family shopping or evening art classes and seminary wives' events as well as medical appointments. Providing taxi service for family members was considered noteworthy in his date books along with writing projects or seminary meetings. He also supported Grace by accompanying her for walks in the woods on the Gordon College property, by canoeing in nearby Chebacco Lake, or by visiting the beaches and scenic locations of Boston's North Shore as well as its art galleries.

Art was Grace's therapy throughout her life. She had studied fashion design at Massachusetts College of Art, so she made her own clothes and hats and also knitted rugs. Her main concentration, however, was oil and watercolor painting. Meredith's artistic talent, developed during high school days as evident in artwork done for Central Congregational Church and Boston Latin School publications, enabled him during college days to join Grace in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts classes and later in life to join her as an exhibiting member of the Beverly (Massachusetts) Guild of Artists. They also enjoyed frequent visits to art galleries in the Boston area. After Meredith died, the family was pleased with how Grace managed on her own in an assisted-living facility, spending many days, when healthy enough and despite limited eyesight, in drawing and painting or even assisting other residents with artwork. Grace as artist was the background to the punning dedication of Kline's book *Images of the Spirit*—to “the grace of murielangelo.” Also, her painting of the mountains of New Hampshire graced the cover of Meredith's last book, *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon*.

Kline was interested in architecture. He designed the family house in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania and additions to two residences in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. While engaging church or seminary acquaintances to do the bulk of the construction and utility work for his houses, Kline would help dig foundations, do carpentry, paint, lay linoleum, and shingle. He also served on faculty committees for the construction of new library buildings at Westminster in Philadelphia and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton.

Kline's artistic gifts were exhibited in his academic work, since they enabled him to perceive aesthetic techniques in Hebrew poetic pericopes, symmetry patterns and genre forms in whole biblical books, and structures of covenant theology. He and Edmund Clowney were known as skilled practitioners of biblical theology, and both were artists constantly thinking in terms of the relationships of parts to wholes. In Kline's case, he even sketched colleagues or designed houses during long Saturday WTS faculty meetings!

Kline liked classical music, which was usually on the radio at home, and he enjoyed going to local concerts. While in high school he had played violin in a Boston area youth symphony; he continued to play violin during his Westminster years, and the night he died he was talking with grandson Jonathan about a young violinist he had heard.

Kline passed on his interests to his sons. He dedicated his last book to them. Son Meredith continued his dad's interest in ancient Near Eastern languages, the artistry of biblical texts, and covenant theology, especially in relation to Ecclesiastes. Sterling inherited an ability to visualize conceptual systems, which resulted in him being a

prominent architect in the construction of pharmaceutical manufacturing plants, designing two churches, and volunteering as consultant for projects of the OPC's Boardwalk Chapel in Wildwood, New Jersey. Calvin inherited the ability to perceive the structures of musical compositions, which enabled him to conduct musical groups, be a church organist, and play many instruments. In later life he has also been a lay preacher.

Kline was athletic and enjoyed participating in and watching sports on television. While attending Westminster he taught swimming for over a year and was a lifeguard at a local YMCA. In 1957 he was the speaker at the OPC New England Presbytery's Deerwander Bible Conference in Maine, but the next year and many of the next forty years, along with teaching the staff class, he was the waterfront director! As a student at Westminster, he played football, and even as a faculty member he would play for the graduate student team. He enjoyed playing softball with church folk at picnics or weekly summer games on the Westminster campus; he and his three sons constituted half a team. He enjoyed playing tennis with other pastors and friends at Wildwood, New Jersey when the family vacationed at the OPC Boardwalk Chapel. After moving to Massachusetts, for many years he would try to run a mile most days. Having grown up in Boston, he was always a fan of its sports teams, and he enjoyed watching the baseball world series or, sometimes with Robert Knudsen, football bowl games on New Year's Day.

Kline liked the outdoors. Though he grew up in Dorchester, a part of urban Boston, he loved the lakes and woods of New England. College summers were spent as counselor at a camp in New Hampshire canoeing on a lake and climbing mountains (even leading campers up Mount Washington at night, partly on the cog-railway tracks to avoid animals). When the family lived in Pennsylvania and traveled to Boston to visit family, Kline always cheered when we crossed the border into Massachusetts. He would often take his family and parents to the mountains of New Hampshire for a day trip or a week's vacation. Later in life he was thrilled to have a house in evergreen woods overlooking a pond. He enjoyed the common grace of a beautiful natural environment provided by the Creator he loved, and he encouraged others to appreciate it also by the results of his biblical investigations. When Kline was a young boy, scientists devised means through terrestrial telescopes to prove there were multiple galaxies; by the time he died, orbiting celestial telescopes portrayed in splendid color an even more majestically glorious cosmos that produces a quantum-leap magnification of the unfathomable love of a Creator who also amazingly redeemed members of a rebellious species on a little blue planet, a theme Kline devoted his energies to articulate.

Meredith M. Kline *is the former director of the Goddard Library, and was Ranked Adjunct Assistant Professor of Oriental Languages, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. His ThD thesis was on Ecclesiastes, and he is a member of First Presbyterian Church, North Shore (PCA) in Ipswich, Massachusetts.*

ServantReading

Reading Meredith G. Kline: Where to Begin?

By John R. Muether

If someone were to begin to read the works of Meredith Kline, where are the best places to start? I am often asked that question, and I have my list of a dozen or so pieces that fall in chronological order, from “The Relevance of the Theocracy” to “Covenant Theology Under Attack.” I began to wonder, however, how others might respond to that question. And so, I polled several former students and colleagues of Kline, from different eras and schools (Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia [WTS], Gordon-Conwell Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts [GCTS], and Westminster Seminary California in Escondido [WSC]), who offered a variety of approaches.

Miles Van Pelt, who teaches Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson (and who studied with Kline at GCTS), commends *Images of the Spirit* as an accessible and rewarding first read. “It’s a good introduction to Kline’s thought and a place where he defines many of the terms he uses.” Beyond that Van Pelt points to the studies that form appendices to *Structure of Biblical Authority*. In particular, he cites “The Two Tables of the Covenant” and “The Old Testament Origins of the Gospel Genre.” After that, the reader should proceed to *By Oath Consigned*.

Mark Futato (Kline student at WTS and teaching colleague at WSC, and now my colleague at RTS Orlando) divided the challenge into two particular categories: creation and covenant. For creation, “Because It Had Not Rained” and “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony” present Kline’s framework interpretation, first in an early and simpler expression and then in a later and more sophisticated form. For covenant, “Intrusion and the Decalogue” masterfully handles challenges in Old Testament ethics, such as conquest, and his first two books *Treaty of the Great King* and *The Structure of Biblical Authority* brilliantly connect covenant and canon.

“Hands down, one must read *Kingdom Prologue* for his mature thoughts and *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon* for his contemplations on heaven,” suggested Peter Lee, OPC church planter and professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., (and Kline’s student at WSC). Venturing into Kline’s articles, Lee added two pieces that pair together well: “*Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium*” and “Covenant of the Seventieth Week.” “Dr. Kline was critical of both dispensational premillennialism and postmillennialism,” Lee explained. “These articles are a tour-de-force challenge to both.”

Finally, a reading of Kline ought to expose the reader to his expertise also in the New Testament, and Lee suggests two articles in particular. “Gospel Until the Law” is important for three reasons. “First, it shows the importance Dr. Kline placed on the covenant of works with Adam. Second, it is one of the key New Testament texts he often cited to support his view of a works-principle in Moses. Third, it shows that he was just as insightful as a New Testament exegete as he was of the Old Testament.” Lee

concluded by insisting that “we don’t really get Kline unless we end in the book of Revelation.” So, he urged that “The First Resurrection” find its way into an introductory reading list.

Bryan Estelle, a student and later a colleague of Kline’s at WSC, ventured into less familiar works. In the 1950s Kline had contributed to a “Bible Book of the Month” series in *Christianity Today*, and Estelle offered that his introduction to the Song of Songs was “perhaps one of Meredith’s most popular and accessible pieces.” He added that an alert reading will detect an adumbration of his later views on republication. Secondly, he pointed to the posthumously published *Genesis: A New Commentary*, which provides “the easiest access to Kline’s thoughts on Genesis.” Finally, “The Oracular Origin of the State” is an important work on Kline’s view of the state.¹

T. David Gordon, recently retired from teaching at Grove City College (and a former colleague of Kline at GCTS for over a decade), reminds us not to overlook the obvious. The *Essential Writings of Meredith G. Kline*, an anthology edited by grandson Jonathan Kline, “is very good, because it ranges well across his career. I thought they were extremely well-selected. I have been enjoying reading back through them (some for the first time), and I think they are very representative of his writing.” In particular, Gordon noted that the collection “has good examples of how Meredith sometimes began with what appeared to be a small, technical linguistic matter that turned into something profoundly significant (such as “Double Trouble” and “Abram’s Amen”). At this point, when I meet someone totally unfamiliar with him, I recommend this collection.”

My respondents found it a challenge to keep their lists short. As varied as the answers were, a consistent feature in all of their responses was the inclusion of a particular work published about the time the respondent actually studied under him. Understandably, those paradigm-shifting moments made a great impression on each of them. Together, these suggestions underscore that there are many approaches to begin one’s reading.

The reader should not despair at the seeming obscurity of some of these suggestions. All of these works are easily accessible on the Meredith Kline website (<https://meredithkline.com>). There you will find a complete bibliography and electronic texts of older and hard to find pieces. In addition, any student of Kline will be enriched by listening to the 190 episodes in the Glory-Cloud podcast (<https://glorycloudpodcast.libsyn.com>), recorded from 2016 to 2020. Hosted by three Kline experts (Chris Caughey, Lee Irons, and Todd Bordow), this remarkable resource includes an introduction to Kline’s life and work, discussions of his significant articles, multi-episode analyses of his books (including 40 episodes on *Kingdom Prologue* and two dozen on *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*), and interviews of interpreters of Kline. Particularly worth noting are several installments devoted to “Meredith Kline Applied” that explore how his thought sheds light on contemporary challenges to the church.

Wherever you begin with Kline, you will find yourself challenged by his writing style, even in the more accessible and introductory materials. And so, it is fitting to conclude with suggestions about *how* to read Kline, and here we are helped by two OPC pastors who were among the last of Kline’s seminary students when he retired from WSC in 2003. Brett McNeill, who pastors Reformation OPC in Olympia, Washington, had the advantage of hearing Kline in the classroom before he encountered him in print.

¹ Estelle himself applies some of these Klinean principles in his own recently published book, *The Primary Mission of the Church: Engaging or Transforming the World?* (Fern, Rosshire: Mentor, 2022).

“Listening to Kline and getting used to the cadence of his rhetoric,” McNeill suggested, “made his syntax far more understandable for me, and this has been the experience of many others.” He urges students of Kline today to do the same through recordings of Kline’s lectures that can be found on the internet, including the Meredith Kline website listed above.

Zach Keele, pastor of Escondido Orthodox Presbyterian Church, wisely adds that a reading of Kline should be slow and deliberate. He writes:

It is not unusual to hear that [Kline’s] writing is difficult and inaccessible, but another estimate is more fitting. Although he may use language that is unfamiliar in everyday parlance (and he enjoys his hyphens!), Dr. Kline can weave together beautifully rich sentences, where form and meaning are wonderfully matched. In this way, Kline resembled the authors he spent so much time studying: the prophets. The blackbelt skill of the prophets was the rhetorical creativity they pulled from the law and the culture around them to foretell the greater realities to come. Meredith G. Kline was the student who followed the example of his teachers. . . . I encourage readers to go forth and not just learn, but enjoy.²

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Servant Standards

Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapter 3.1–3

by Alan D. Strange

Chapter III Steps in the Institution of Judicial Process

1. A charge of an offense may be brought by an injured party, by a person not an injured party, or by a judicatory. The offense alleged in the charge should be serious enough to warrant a trial (cf. Chapter III, Section 7.b [6]). No charge shall be admitted against an elder, unless it is brought by two or more persons, according to I Timothy 5:19.

Comment: Here begins the elaboration of what the BD refers to as “judicial process,” a formal procedure that the church employs when informal procedures have proved unable to resolve differences between parties. There are several sorts of informal procedures that ought ordinarily to be engaged when one party alleges that another party has offended (sinned against) either that party or another: allowing love to cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8) and simply letting the offense go (Mark 11:25); or, when the offense cannot honestly be let go, the offended approaching the offender in terms of Matthew 18:15–16 and working through that with one or two witnesses; and then, if no satisfaction can be achieved by all these efforts, the offended may (not must; the offended is not obligated to initiate or to continue informal or formal process) bring the matter to the church (the elders) (Matt. 18:17).

Though Matthew 18:15–17 is explicitly cited below, and more will also be said there, it is perhaps helpful to address some misconceptions about Matthew 18 right up front at this point in our BD commentary, since Matthew 18 was adduced in my comment, immediately above. Matthew 18 involves some presuppositions that become obvious when teased out. The process set forth in Matthew 18 describes someone who is personally and privately offended—that is customarily recognized—though we also acknowledge that it may well be fitting to go personally and privately to an alleged offender even in the case of public sin (BD 3.5), if discretion suggests that it is wise, particularly if the parties are equals. The mention of equals leads to the observation that the process also presumes that the parties in view in Matthew 18:15–17 are equals, as defined by WLC 131–132 (cf. WLC 126–130). Matthew 18 clearly does not have in view a superior to an inferior, because an offended superior can ordinarily require that the inferior recognize the offense and offer amends accordingly. This is not to say that other Scriptures do not directly speak to superior/inferior relations and how they are scripturally to be conducted, but Matthew 18 has in view, ordinarily, the behavior of equals.

On the other side of the equation, Matthew 18 does not have in view inferiors going to superiors with alleged offenses. Such can perhaps be done in cases in which the

superior is truly humble and will give a fair hearing to the inferior and even repent. Often, however, the very behavior that an inferior would be offended by involves an alleged misuse of authority and power on the part of the superior. If a superior is alleged to be abusing his office as a superior, it is unreasonable and irrational to insist that the inferior must approach him under the rubric (authoritative rule) of Matthew 18, as if they were the equals implied in the text (“if your brother sins against you”).

If the superior can be easily entreated by the inferior, then that is a happy, though perhaps unusual, situation, and Matthew 18 may be quite possible. However, if the superior is offended by being challenged by the inferior, as is often the case even when things are at the level of simple forgiveness—in which parties, whether superior or inferior, acknowledge sin and seek forgiveness and restoration—it is usually the case that an inferior is quite vulnerable and in no position to “go to the superior under the rubric of Matthew 18.” Even if the superior claims to be reasonable and approachable, he may not be, and the judgment of others about whether he can truly be easily entreated in the given case should or would need to be brought into view and the superior not simply be left to be judge in his own case.

All this is to say that Matthew 18 is not customarily in play in the case of a superior offended by an inferior: to insist that it is misguidedly puts them on the same level; at the same time, when an inferior alleges offense by a superior, especially of a serious nature (abuse of various sorts come to mind), the judgment of the church should usually be brought in as the first step (which should refer violations of the law to civil authorities), rather than the session wrongheadedly requiring a member alleging pastoral or other special officer malfeasance to “go to the pastor (or elder/deacon) and work it out with him in terms of Matthew 18.”

That is not the proper use of Matthew 18—to require inferiors claiming injury to go to superiors with whom there is no proper sense of a level playing field. Matthew 18, if carefully thought through, just as it is not required in cases of public sin, is also not required when a superior, especially in the discharge of his office, is thought by an inferior to have offended. An allegation of such to the local elders should be sufficient for them to seek to address the matter, involving the presbytery if and as necessary. Matthew 18 has too often been as heavy-handedly abused as was Job at the hands of his well-meaning but ultimately misguided friends.

When a matter is brought to the church, either through a Matthew 18 process or other ways in which such can occur (parties may simply be known to be at odds and needing reconciliation), the church can seek in several ways—by the whole session or a committee thereof—informally to help the parties reconcile or otherwise come to terms with each other. As a part of this, the church, or the parties, may wish also to use outside counselor(s) or mediating agencies (like Peacemakers) under the rubric of informal procedures. This highlights that when a matter is brought to the attention of a judicatory, either through allegations or their own investigation, it is not the case that the only actions which the judicatory can take is to proceed with formal judicial process. The judicatory may investigate matters and advise counseling, processes of reconciliation, and the like all to resolve difficulties and “redress” evils (FG 14.5. paragraphs 1 and 2).

If the session wishes to use informal processes and such fail, or if the session deems it best to go more quickly to formal judicial process, the beginning of such formal process is the bringing of an alleged offense to the judicatory. When an offense meeting the test

of this chapter (below, especially BD 3.3) is brought by the eligible parties (offended, another party—presumably a witness—or a judicatory), the judicatory to which it is brought shall follow all the rules of this chapter in processing, chief among them that the offense alleged in the charge is serious enough to warrant a trial. This presumes that it is, indeed, an offense, meaning that what is alleged is contrary to the Word of God, which cannot simply be taken for granted, and will be addressed fully under BD 3.3. And even then, the offense may be deemed by the judicatory not sufficient to warrant trial. The Bible’s warning that there must be at least two witnesses when charging an elder is also cited here. Does that mean that other parties may be charged by fewer than two persons? No, two or three witnesses are required for all charges, the details of that requirement treated below.

2. No charge shall be admitted by the judicatory if it is filed more than two years after the commission of the alleged offense, unless it appears that unavoidable impediments have prevented an earlier filing of the charge. A charge shall be considered filed when it has been delivered to the clerk or the moderator of the judicatory.

Comment: This section sets forth what is commonly called at law a “statute of limitation.” A charge of sin, and thus any offense respecting such, needs to be handled in a timely manner (even the pagans admit that “justice delayed is justice denied,” and Western law, at least back to Magna Carta, expresses the need for timely justice). That being admitted, a two-year statute of limitation recognizes that there are good reasons for why one may not immediately, and perhaps should not immediately, institute judicial process: for instance, the Matthew 18 process or other valid reasons may delay a charge from being filed immediately. In any case, parties are generally well-advised to seek to remedy alleged offenses short of filing charges (see the comments on section 1, above).

Thus, one should not ordinarily prefer charges quickly; on the other hand, undue delay in filing charges creates its own set of problems, not the least of which is to permit a matter to go unresolved, allow it to fester, and develop into bitterness or the like. One should neither rush to formal judicial procedure nor put off doing so unduly, especially in a case in which there appears to be no other remedy. Nothing can be substituted for sound wisdom in these matters. When it comes to law (Hebrew *torah*), one must never dispense with wisdom (Hebrew *hokma*). To do so leads to straining at gnats and swallowing camels, forsaking both justice and mercy (Matt. 23:24).

The clause of the first sentence merits some comment. The statute of limitations is two years, unless certain circumstances prevail, what the BD refers to as “unavoidable impediments,” which have prevented an earlier filing of the charge. This has occasioned no little controversy among us. Amendments to this part of the BD have been offered in recent years attempting to define unavoidable impediments along the lines of personal abuse, recognizing that this may take a longer period to come to terms with before reporting, often due to a sense of shame on the part of those sinned against. Sometimes sin may involve a pattern of behavior suggesting that the action of a year or two ago (within the statute of limitations) may also properly bring into view similar sins (of previous years) lying beyond the current statute of limitations.

The general assembly has referred such attempts to the Committee on Appeals and Complaints, not believing that the proper remedy has quite yet been reached. One suggestion that has floated about is something along the lines of eliminating the words

“unavoidable impediments,” since those words have occasioned much debate and instead simply requiring circumstances that seem to the judicatory, in its exercise of discretion, to warrant the admittance of a charge that lies beyond the statute of limitations. All this is to say that there has been an increasing recognition that a too narrow construction of the statute of limitations may be detrimental to justice and mercy and that a greater leeway may be taken by a judicatory as long as it properly documents the reasons for allowing a charge(s) that lies outside the two-year statute of limitations. The last sentence of this section of the BD makes it clear that a charge of an offense is considered formally filed when delivered either to the clerk or the moderator of a judicatory.

3. Every charge of an offense must: (a) be in written form, (b) set forth the alleged offense, (c) set forth only one alleged offense, (d) set forth references to applicable portions of the Word of God, (e) set forth, where pertinent, references to applicable portions of the confessional standards, (f) set forth the serious character of the offense which would demonstrate the warrant for a trial.

Each specification of the facts relied upon to sustain the charge must: (a) be in written form, (b) declare as far as possible, the time, place, and circumstances of the alleged offense, (c) be accompanied with the names of any witnesses and the titles of documents, records, and recordings to be produced.

Comment: Neither this section nor any that follows should be taken as *pro forma* and quickly gone through in the examination of a charge brought to a judicatory. First, every charge of an offense must be in written form. The judicatory cannot deal with oral allegations of offenses but must have any charge(s) properly before it in written form. The second item listed here—that every charge of an offense must set forth the alleged offense—must also be carefully attended to. This seemingly simple requirement contains more than at first meets the eye. It should here be noted that the judicatory to whom the charge of an offense is brought must at this point determine whether the alleged offense is in fact an actual offense. That is to say, the alleged offense must be determined at this point to be a real violation of God’s Word if it were ever proved true. Often, such a determination is easy, obvious, and patent: someone is charged with adultery, for instance, which is a violation of the seventh commandment and also detailed at other places in the Bible and the Westminster Standards as a true offense. No one would question that adultery, if proved true, would indeed be an offense (and a chargeable one). I labor to make my point: The judicatory is not at this point to determine whether the offense has been committed; rather the judicatory is to determine that what is alleged as an offense is in fact an offense, not potentially an offense.

The difference between something being patently an offense and potentially an offense is to be determined right at this point, not later in a formal preliminary investigation and certainly not in a trial. A judicatory does not conduct a preliminary investigation and certainly not a trial to determine whether an alleged offense is properly an offense. Rather, at this point in BD judicial process, the judicatory is to determine whether the alleged offense is an offense, though it is not at the point of determining things like whether it is serious enough to warrant a trial and whether or not it has been committed, the latter determination reserved for a trial. The judicatory at this point is determining whether what is being alleged is something that is a proper offense in terms of BD 3.3.(b). An example of something that is not an offense is the case in which someone is said merely to have played a game of cards or have had a glass of wine at a

wedding, both of which have been alleged to be offenses in cases before, but which, on their face, no judicatory should properly regard as an offense under this rubric of the BD.

A trial, or even a preliminary investigation, is not meant to be a fishing expedition to determine whether a disliked party has possibly committed some wrong. Charges, in fact, should be proffered only as to the wrong alleged, not because the bringer of the charge has an animus against an alleged offender and is looking for something to charge the person with. We are to be neither respecters of persons, shielding parties we may like because they have been charged, nor should we be despisers of persons, too ready to receive any allegation if it does not state a clear offense but invites a fishing expedition to see if the person might have committed some offense with which we may charge them.

Once it has been clearly ascertained that what is being alleged to be an offense is, in fact, an offense, not needing further judicial process to determine whether it is an offense (if such is needed, let the judicatory look into the matter without reference to a particular case, perhaps through a study committee or other governmental process), then the judicatory may proceed to (c). Here the judicatory should assure itself that each charge is properly discrete, which is to say, that it contains only one alleged offense. Other alleged offenses in any given situation warrant additional charges, not seeking to combine multiple alleged offenses into one charge. Items d. and e. highlight the requirement that each charge of an alleged offense must contain relevant citations from the primary (biblical) and secondary (confessional/catechetical) sources. This helps keep in focus the question of whether what is alleged as an offense is indeed biblically and confessionally regarded as an offense. To put it another way, if what one takes to be an offense on the part of another is not a clear violation of one of the commandments of God (as summarized in the Ten Commandments and usually as interpreted by the Westminster Standards), then the claim that the alleged offense is indeed a sin is dubious at best. Any alleged offense should be able to be shown a violation of God's Word, not simply something that irritates or frustrates the bringer of the charge(s). Item f. is of great importance, along with these other items in BD 3, and may not be overlooked. This item requires that there be in the charge itself, as brought to the judicatory, a reasonable argument that this charge of an alleged offense is serious enough to warrant a trial. Something may be indeed a violation of God's Word in a lesser degree that is not a sin serious enough to warrant trial. Another way of putting this is that a charge of an alleged offense is not to be brought if the bringer cannot make a good faith argument that the alleged offense is of a serious nature, such that warrants further judicial process. Let us imagine that one person said something taken to be offensive by another; it is not enough to allege offense and to note that the offending party was "insensitive" to the offended party. The alleged offense needs to be shown to be a serious sin that warrants trial. This is perhaps one of the thorniest matters confronting the judicatory in processing charge(s). Many examples could be adduced here, but the best thing is for the judicatory to seek to put itself in the place of the offended in gauging the seriousness of the alleged offense.

The last paragraph addresses the requirements that pertain with respect to the specifications that must accompany any charge(s). As noted, specifications in a charge detail the particulars of the offense that constitute the charge. Any given charge may have multiple specifications. For example, in a charge of adultery, specification 1 may be that the parties in question, not married to each other, were seen at a restaurant on such a date not only having dinner together but also displaying affection appropriate only for

committed couples. Specification 2 may be that such were seen at the movies or a ball game together acting in the same manner. The specifications of a charge, in other words, put the meat on the bones and give the actual details of what makes this charge credible, serious, and all the rest if proved true.

To that end, several things must obtain when it comes to specifications: each specification of fact relied upon to sustain the charge must meet a set of requirements. First, each specification must be in written form. Second, each specification must provide the relevant and necessary details to sustain the charge, particularly the date/time, place, and circumstances (as exemplified in the above paragraph) of the alleged offense. And lastly, each specification must be properly evidenced, accompanied by the names of witnesses to the act and/or the titles (or a list) of documents, records, and recordings that may be produced in witness to the alleged offense. Again, it is important that the judicatory assures itself of all these matters in BD 3.3 before proceeding on in the judicial process.

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ServantReading

What is Essential to the Doctrine of the Church?

A Review Article

The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church, by Dustin W. Benge, Union series. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022, 198 pages, \$19.59, paper.

By Ryan M. McGraw

As Christ promised, the church has stood firm through the centuries, and the “gates of hell” have not prevailed against her (Matt. 16:18). While Christians have fluctuated in their esteem of the church, the Triune God has not, always preserving the church as the sphere of the application of redemption in Christ. While there are many views about the nature and function of the church, it is important to grasp how and why the church is precious in God’s sight and why it should be so in ours. Such facts demand a “catholic” understanding of the church, which pulls in all believers regardless of denominational differences and convictions. Aiming to “awaken [our] affections” for the church, Dustin Benge notes, “This book is about the beauty and loveliness of the church” (14). Grounding this aim in the glory and beauty of the Triune God, the author lays a good foundation for pressing all Christians to value the church highly, seeing her beauty in light of the beauty of God. Though, as this review shows, this book does not fully achieve a catholic doctrine of the church pulling in all believers, it remains a helpful introduction to the topic in that it presents a doctrine of the church that is a bit off the well-worn path.

In fourteen chapters Benge unfolds the doctrine of the church under the theme of her beauty. Since her beauty lies in the beauty of the Triune God, he devotes more than half of the book to the glory and beauty of God and the persons of the Trinity, often treating divine persons in more than one chapter. Additionally, he highlights the officers and teaching ministry of the church in a way that attempts to avoid denominational distinctives. Finally, pressing believers towards the sacraments as exemplifying the unity of the church in the Triune God, he concludes his material by way of summary and exhortation, directing readers to see God’s beauty revealed in the church. Revolving the doctrine of the church around the theme of “beauty” is distinctive to this book, providing readers with an interesting and helpful perspective aimed to lead them to delight in the church and to look forward to her perfection in glory.

The questions to pose to this work are whether the material adequately promotes a catholic understanding of the church that can pull in all Christians and whether this depiction of the church is sufficient to foster delight in the visible and local congregations that believers belong to (or should belong to). Several ideological and exegetical points illustrate why this material needs augmentation and adjustment.

First, Benge asserts that we cannot define the church in institutional terms, “for the church belongs exclusively to God” (30). Yet, this point leads to some potential difficulties in fostering love for the church. Traditionally, the church has defined herself

in terms of both institution, or organization, as well as organism. The church as a living organism results in the church as an outward institution. We can define the church both in terms of her internal life and in terms of her outward characteristics and organization. Like the relationship between body and soul, the church has internal and external marks, which are both invisible and visible to human beings. While the mode of church government should never rise to the being of the church, we need institutional as well as organic terms to describe her nature. Later, appealing to Ephesians 1:3–13, Bengue defines the church purely in terms of election, effectual calling, and the sealing of the Spirit (33). One is left wondering whether room is left for the distinction between the visible and invisible aspects of the church. Ultimately, this point may reflect a distinction between Congregational and Presbyterian (though not only Presbyterian) definitions of the church, since Congregationalism traditionally defined the church in terms of elect believers covenanting with God and one another to the practical neglect of the external catholic organization of the church, consisting both of true believers and of people whose unbelief God alone knows. If the goal is to love the church, then the question is whether pitting the church as living organism against its outward organization can mean anything more than loving the invisible church. Readers could legitimately conclude from these pages that they love and belong to the invisible church without seeing the need for membership in the visible church. While countering the author's intent, this all-too-common practice often results from pitting the church as organism against organization rather than holding them as two aspects of "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" church.

Second, the author too easily dismisses standard Christian interpretations and applications of key Scripture texts. For example, citing the much-debated Matthew 16:18, he states that it is "quite clear" that "Christ is the rock upon which the church is founded" (32). This assertion is too dismissive of the volumes of historical reflection on this text, which makes the proper view of the text less than clear on the surface. While it is true that Christ is the foundation of the church and that he alone builds and defends his church, the church rests on an apostolic foundation flowing from Christ as well (Eph. 2:20). Doubtless this apostolic foundation is at least partly, if not primarily, in view in Matthew 16:18, since Christ builds his church on apostolic revelation. The primary question throughout church history has always revolved around how Christ is the foundation of the church and how this related to Peter, the apostles, and the ongoing ministry of the church. Bengue's off-hand dismissal of such debates is both simplistic and bypasses the scope of Scripture regarding the church. We must grapple with the fact that as important as this text is about the church's foundation and the "keys of the kingdom," Jesus did not here define his central terms and ideas. Determining what the "rock" is on which Christ founded his church and how this relates to the "keys of the kingdom," necessarily involves both exegesis and drawing from the rest of the New Testament. The resulting picture is that Christ founded his church on the inspired teaching of the apostles and prophets, with himself as the focal point, and that he continues to work through the "keys" in the uninspired ministry of the Word and sacraments. Though this is not the place here to establish these ideas clearly, this summary illustrates why it is inappropriate simply to dismiss alternatives that necessarily relate to "big-picture" New Testament issues.

A related example occurs with 1 Timothy 3:15. While Bengue quotes 1 Timothy 3:15 to the effect that the church is "the pillar and buttress of the truth" (75), he eventually

shifts to saying that “Scripture is the pillar and buttress of the church” (84). While this is true theologically, it is not true textually. The church is founded on the apostles and prophets, and thus on Scripture (Eph. 2:20), yet the epistle to Timothy addresses a different question. Christ as the truth, who communicates divine truth, founds the church, but the church also supports the truth by retaining, promoting, and proclaiming it. The church is born from Christ’s word in Scripture, but the church is also the Spirit’s means of sustaining Christ’s truth in the world. Both ideas are necessary for a balanced view of the church’s nature. This point illustrates the risk we all face of explaining away a passage rather than explaining it.

Ignoring classic readings of biblical texts occurs elsewhere as well, hindering the catholicity of the author’s doctrine of the church. A good example is his citing John 4:24 to the effect that we must worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, he simply dismisses the idea that John has worship through the Spirit and the Son in mind, stressing sincerity of heart in worship instead (90). Yet, John consistently made “truth” personal, revolving around Christ. He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and he is “full of grace and truth” (1:14). Likewise, the Spirit is “the Spirit of truth” (16:13) because, as “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9), he takes what belongs to Christ and declares it to the church (John 16:14–15). Believers must be born of water and Spirit (John 3:5), and when Jesus asked the Father to sanctify believers by his word, which is truth (17:17), this was an applicatory prayer for the Spirit’s work detailed in chapters 14–16. The burden of proof from the gospel of John is that “Spirit” is the “Holy Spirit” and “Truth” is Jesus Christ, which we cannot detach from the Spirit’s work in believers’ hearts or from Christ’s revealing the Father in Word and in deed. This is why, historically, the early and medieval church asserted a reference to the Trinity in this passage. Like the example of Matthew 16:18, Bengé dismisses classical Christian readings of key biblical texts too easily, hindering the catholic scope of his work.

Third, some theological issues arise with respect to the sacraments. In pursuing a broad-based Christian rather than denominationally-specific theology of the church, one should stress what is common both to Scripture and to Christianity. Yet, the author misplaces the emphasis of baptism. Without substantiating his claim, he assumes that “baptism” means immersion (133), which raises both theological and exegetical problems. Theologically, defining baptism as immersion confuses mode with meaning. Baptism means “to wash” rather than “to immerse.” Washing provides the theological key to baptism in relation to washing in Christ’s blood and in the renewing power of the Spirit. One exegetical example highlights the importance of this point. In Mark 7 the Pharisees complained that Jesus’s disciples ate with “unwashed hands” (Mark 7:5). Yet, the word used for “washing” hands, “cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches” in verse four is “to baptize.” Whether or not believers agree that immersion is the proper mode of baptism, we should all agree that baptism indicates washing and identification. Additionally, he assumes that baptism “demonstrates that you love Christ and are willing to obey him” (135). However, if sacraments are, as the church has often said, “the visible Word of God,” then, as with a sermon, the accent of baptism falls on what God says rather than what the church says in response. Likewise, on page 173, Bengé adds that baptism is “a testimony that salvation has already taken place.” Yet, what if salvation has not taken place? Then is baptism not baptism, objectively speaking? If it is not, then what is it? If we define baptism by invisible spiritual realities, then how can the church ever be

certain that she has baptized anyone? While it is the author's right to hold and promote Baptist views of baptism, yet the wide scope of this book seems to demand focusing on what the church holds in common on baptism in relation to its function in telling us that God washes sinners through Christ's blood by the Spirit's power. Combined with most of the above examples, the result is that believers are left with the beauty of the invisible aspect of the church, loving and delighting in an organism consisting of elect regenerate people, without a clear and easy way of integrating the organization of the church in visible form. In other words, the author provides ample grounds for loving the soul of the church, but it is not clear how this necessarily includes loving her body as well.

In spite of these criticisms, Bengé's creative approach to presenting the doctrine of the church in light of her beauty as flowing from the Triune God is valuable in its own right. Yet, the church today needs something more. We should love the church as a living organism, as God's family, united to Christ and indwelt by the Spirit. Yet, we should also love her organization, without going so far as to define her in terms of her government. Whether Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational, believers should love the church in both her visible and invisible aspects. In order to do this, the church's visible aspects must be integral to the definition of the church. Though the internal saving aspects of the church are primary and essential, her outward catholic form is not incidental or non-essential. The form of governing the church does not affect the church's being, but taking outward form is part of her being. The church is a lovely place, reflecting the beauty of the Triune God, but God shows his glory in the church through her organization in light of her foundation and through her worship and sacraments, all of which tell us more about God's work and words than about the character and profession of those within her walls. In short, this book is a good place to start considering the loveliness of the church in order to foster love for the church, but readers will need more than this to foster a broad-based biblical view of the church.

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The Completion of C.S. Lewis *by Harry Lee Poe*

By Charles M. Wingard

The Completion of C.S. Lewis: From War to Joy (1945-1963), by Harry Lee Poe. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022, 413 pages, \$34.16, cloth.

Sometimes work forces me to read. Lectures and sermons must be prepared, and reading is indispensable to the process. Whether I find the reading especially enjoyable or not, the commentaries and theological books and articles must be attended to.

But apart from work, I read mostly for pleasure, and Harry Lee Poe's three-volume biography of Lewis has been for me sheer pleasure. In addition to surveying the life of one of the twentieth century's great writers and formidable Christian apologists, I have had opportunity during the past year to read for the first time several of Lewis's books. Others I reread, some for a third or fourth time. I sympathize with Lewis's words to a friend: "You really lose a lot by never reading books again" (303).

The *Completion of C.S. Lewis* surveys the final eighteen years of Lewis's life. The author's literary output was impressive. Among the titles published during this period were *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–56), *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (1955), *Till We Have Faces* (1956), *A Grief Observed* (1961), *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958), *The Abolition of Man* (1943), and *The Four Loves* (1960). Numerous articles were later collected and published in several volumes, including *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (1970). Poe provides concise information about the books and articles, placing them in the context of Lewis's unfolding life and the broader world of English literature. The circumstances of Lewis's transition from Oxford to Cambridge are thoroughly reviewed.

Friendships, old and new, continued to play a critical role in his life. A special relationship developed with poet Ruth Pitter. There were both personal meetings and lengthy correspondence. Her pilgrimage to the Christian faith came, she said, "by the pull of C.S. Lewis and the push of misery" (102). She wrote to a friend, "I do delight in him" (166). So serious was the relationship that at least the possibility of marriage occurred to Lewis (225). I was amused to read that the relationship progressed for seven years before the pair spoke to each other on a first name basis (181). Lewis clung to courtly manners that the world around him was rapidly shedding.

Lewis's life was powerfully molded by a lifetime of suffering. His mother's death at an early age, World War I injuries, and tensions with his father shaped his early life.

As the years passed, Lewis's suffering compounded as he encountered new types of adversity. The experiences contributed to what his biographer calls "the completion of C.S. Lewis."

Along with his fellow countrymen, Lewis endured the nearly decade-long shortage of food and basic commodities in post-World War II Britain. For Americans of the boomer generation and younger, it is difficult to imagine the hardships that pummeled the nation after victory was secured. Lewis's burden was eased by the kindness of admirers in the United States who sent to him hard-to-find goods. Over time his low view of Americans gave way to a profound appreciation for their care, support, and friendship.

The austerity programs imposed by the post-war Labour government may have displeased Lewis, but they failed to rob him of his humor. Poe notes that "when England had

a beautiful May for the first time in many years, Lewis cynically remarked that the government had not yet found a way to ration the sunlight” (37).

Other of Lewis’s trials were relational and acutely painful. Until her death in 1951, Lewis continued to care for Janie Moore—a quarter century his senior—and the mother of a friend and fellow soldier, Paddy Moore. During World War I, each young man had promised to care for the other’s parent should he not survive the war. Paddy did not, and Lewis kept his word. For more than three decades he struggled to support a woman whose “worrying, jealous, exacting, and angry disposition” only worsened as the years passed (159). I could not help but think of the godly man of whom David wrote in Psalm 15, the man “that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” Medieval codes of chivalry were not merely the subject of his studies. They were one of the influences that molded him into the man he became.

Lewis was no stranger to familial suffering. A flourishing romantic love and marriage came to Lewis late in life. His union with Joy Davidman Gresham brought with it unanticipated happiness as well as the intense heartache that accompanied her lengthy illness and death. A depressed and alcoholic brother and a troubled stepson were recipients of Lewis’s compassionate solicitude.

Controversy plagued Lewis at Oxford; he was never at home with political intrigue. His popular books, energetic personality, and religious devotion made him unpopular with many of his colleagues. Even his close friend and fellow faculty member and Inkling, J.R.R. Tolkien, objected to the attention Lewis gave to theology, a subject for which he had no formal academic training or credentials (52). When he was denied a prestigious English professorship that was given instead to Lord David Cecil, Cecil observed that although Lewis was the eminent member of the English faculty, “his forceful manner combined with his equally forceful piety [made him] unpopular with a prim and agnostic electorate” (74–75).

Concurrent stresses could be overwhelming. Tolkien’s sharp criticism of *The Narnian Chronicles* hurt, as did that of two friends, to whose daughter Lewis intended to dedicate *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The parents objected to the whole notion of children trapped in a wardrobe and furs stripped from the carcasses of helpless animals. The unfortunate recipe of a heavy workload, caring for his brother and Janie Moore, and friends’ criticism of his books led to his collapse and hospitalization (46–47).

Poor lifestyle choices culminated in steep physical decline in Lewis’s later years. Long walks, once a cherished routine, were no longer possible. But Lewis did not lose heart, bearing in mind that “mercifully the desire goes when the power goes” (260).

In his final chapter, one might think that Poe has moved from biographer to spiritual instructor. If so, I am grateful. He revisits several hardships and heartaches that Lewis experienced during his life. When considered together over the course of his life of nearly sixty-five years, these should be viewed not as obstacles to faith but part of a process begun in faith and sustained by faith and finding full fruition in the mature faith of a complete man. Poe concludes, “Some will say that it was a tragedy for Lewis to have died so young. I think it remarkable that he became complete so young” (352).

Regarding Lewis, Helen Gardner wrote, “It was impossible to be indifferent to him” (75). And I am not. His books have enriched my life for more than four decades. Nor am I indifferent to Poe’s three-volume biography. It serves as a splendid introduction to the man behind the books.

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Profound Devotion

A Review Article

by Gregory E. Reynolds

The Heart in Pilgrimage: A Treasury of Classic Devotionals on the Christian Life, by Leland Ryken, editor. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022, 188 pages, \$34.99.

Fount of Heaven: Prayers of the Early Church, by Robert Elmer, editor. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022, 346 pages, \$24.99.

Christian publishers seem to have discovered a market for devotional anthologies. No doubt in the midst of the frenetic environment of modernity, serious Christians hunger for the change of spiritual and mental pace that only heaven can bring. Here are two wisely constructed devotional anthologies that will help modulate the Christian walk and act as an antidote to the constant and pervasive electronic demand for our attention—usually to the trivial.

Robert Elmer is a former Baptist pastor, reporter, and ad copywriter, who has written over fifty inspirational books of historical fiction and science fiction for adults and young people. He lives in Idaho.

His latest devotional is *Fount of Heaven: Prayers of the Early Church*. He also anthologized *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans* (2020), which I reviewed in January 2020. His devotional focus is the life of prayer. He also has a version of *Piercing Heaven* formatted for journaling and meditation.

His choice of authors for *Fount of Heaven* covers the first six centuries of the church's history. The earliest of the thirty-four authors are Clement of Rome (35–101 AD) and the Didache (first century). The latest is Venantius (530–609). Some authors are familiar like Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Eusebius, and Tertullian; but almost half are new to me. Elmer concludes the book with almost thirty pages of “Biographies and Sources” and an author index. Not all the authors are Christian leaders. Decimus Magnus Ausonius (310–95) “offers us an inside look at the last days of the Roman Empire, as well as a feel for his approach to living and working as a professing lay Christian in a secular society” (319). Under the rubric “Send Us Peace, Grace, and Healing,” Ausonius prays, “You are our hope O God, and you provide our endless home! Amen” (155).

The prayers are logically arranged under thirty-four headings with anywhere from three to eighteen prayers in each, beginning with “Help Us to Praise” and concluding with “Prayers for Days of the Christian Year,” five of which are Christmas and three for Palm Sunday and Easter. The topics are wide-ranging, covering creation, the Trinity, the attributes of God, faith, repentance, grace and forgiveness, worship and the sabbath, the church and its unity, and much more.

As Elmer points out many sacrificed wealth and status to become Christians, and many gave their lives during times of persecution, prior to Constantine. Their prayers are uniformly God-centered. “[P]ersonal issues seemed to take a back seat to the all-consuming glory of their three-in-one God. . . . They seemed to have little time for self-centered

drama” (2). These Christians put a premium on the truth, biblical doctrine and theology, as the ultimate reality connecting them with the living and true God.

Elmer’s ardent hope is that we will imitate the intelligent ardor of these ancient believers. “They wrote about their faith with effusive, mystery-filled joy that is rare today” (2). It is not an accident that Elmer accents the God-centered nature of these prayers by beginning with praise—focusing on the wonders of God’s nature and grace. The first and last prayers of this opening section are by Augustine of Hippo, with one by Clement of Rome in the middle, believed to be the earliest recorded Christian prayer outside of the Bible.

* * *

Leland Ryken has done it again with *The Heart in Pilgrimage: A Treasury of Classic Devotionals on the Christian Life*. His anthology of classic devotional poetry, *The Soul in Paraphrase: A Treasury of Classic Devotional Poems* (2018) was reviewed by me in January 2019. This present volume is meant to be a companion to *The Soul in Paraphrase*. Both are devotional, but each is a different medium, the former poetry and the latter prose. He is a master anthologist with an encyclopedic knowledge of devotional poetry and literature. In this volume Ryken gathers fifty classic devotionals. Each devotional is accompanied by a brief biographical sketch of the author, concluding with an explanatory note, and a related Scripture verse. Ryken is ever the professor of English literature.

The only author unfamiliar to me is Lilius Trotter (1853–1928), a missionary who wrote two well-known devotional books interspersed with drawings of plants: *Parables of the Cross* and *Parables of the Christ-Life* (144). The authors are as diverse as nurse Florence Nightingale, literary critic Samuel Johnson, novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, playwright William Shakespeare, and Medieval mystic Julian of Norwich. From the ancient church to the twentieth century, the book is strewn with poets, Puritans, and preachers. Five of the devotionals come from creeds and one from the preface to the Geneva Bible. The range of writers is extraordinary. Forty-six authors over a span of seventeen centuries from a wide range of denominations and traditions make for a fascinating variety of devotional material.

Ryken’s choices were very intentional. In his “Editor’s Introduction” he defines devotional literature as first taking personal religious and spiritual experience as its subject and second aiming to affect godliness in daily life. Meeting these criteria, they become classics due to superior technique and beauty of form. “The verbal beauty and rhetorical skill are part of the total effect of a passage” (15). There must also be an element of surprise in the work to make it rise above the expected, Ryken insists—not in doctrine but in the way the truth is expressed. This is a superb volume in every aspect. I highly recommend it.

Both Crossway and Lexham have produced books whose physical properties suit the profundity of the subject matter. This craftsmanship, along with the prayers themselves, invites the reader away from screen reading, demanding our undivided attention. They each have subtly colored buckram hardcovers with gilt lettering on the spines and front covers, a ribbon bookmark, and bound in signature to last through many years of reading. Crossway has a slight edge in terms of paper and print quality, cover design, and typography.

The combination of arresting devotions and heaven-storming prayers in these volumes should enrich the reader’s Christian experience.

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ServantPoetry

G. E. Reynolds (1949–)

Magi Majesty

Such an ordinary birth room
With makeshift cattle crib,
Under Caesar's cruel thumb,
Destined for an earthly tomb,
Saddled with a baby's bib,
Nourished on an infant's crumb.

Celebrated by sheep slaves
Surprised by heaven's choir,
Worshipped by alien mystics
Magi saving you from royal knaves
And other destinies so dire,
Yet to be celebrated in triptychs

In cathedrals throughout the world,
The gold, frankincense, and myrrh
Presaged your certain future glory
That over time would be unfurled
And would men's hearts stir
To complete your earthly story.

So hidden even now your splendor
Is to human sense and comprehension
That only divine illumination can reveal;
Which leads us mortals to adore
The Child's redemptive work's dimension
Feeding us in each Eucharistic meal.

How did the Magi discern this majesty?
When from an unknown place they came
To recognize this untold infant royalty;
They could not know what they would see
Or prophesy Messiah's future fame,
Setting mortal sinners forever free.