

A snowy owl is the central focus, sitting on a sandy dune. The owl is white with dark speckles on its chest and wings. It is surrounded by dry, golden-brown grasses and some dark, leafless branches. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

prayer

ordained servant  
february 2022

# Ordained Servant Online

## *A Journal for Church Officers*

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**CURRENT ISSUE: PRAYER IN MINISTRY**

**February 2022**

### *From the Editor*

As part of our continued reflection on thirty years of *Ordained Servant*, I thought it would be enjoyable for those who like the aesthetics of periodical covers to have a brief look at the evolution of creating the monthly online covers and some of my favorite digital covers since I became editor in 2006. The print edition cover photos have been exclusively of New England churches and for copyright reasons, as well as my enjoyment of photography as an art, taken by me. I begin with a reflection on the biblical importance of beauty.

Bruce Hollister tackles the critical issue of prayer in the lives of pastors and elders in his article “The Priority of Prayer for the Pastor.” The American CEO model for leadership has dominated evangelical churches for many decades, ever since the emergence of the church growth philosophy of ministry in the 1960s. When activism, programs, and, above all, success take center stage, prayer tends to become an afterthought. Pastor Hollister gives church officers a timely warning, noting how ministers in particular neglect one of the two (preaching and prayer) fundamental apostolic activities.

Danny Olinger brings us Chapter 8, “Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions,” in *The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation*. This invaluable work culls all the late Meredith G. Kline’s reflections on the book of Revelations from his many works.

Alan Strange gives us Chapter 24 in his *Commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*.

Charles Wingard reviews a fine new anthology on the relationship of theology to preaching: *Theology Is for Preaching: Biblical Foundations, Method, & Practice* edited by Chase R. Kuhn and Paul Grimmond. It is a comprehensive reminder that the academy serves the church, not vice versa.

I review an impressive book of poems, *Reflections on Revelation in the Time of Covid: Finding Hope When Life Is Hard* by Susan E. Erikson. It is written in free verse by a veteran poet in our own theological tradition. I reflect on the difference between free and blank verse, locating the two among the many forms of poetry.

Our poem this month, “Against Sin,” was composed by James Ryan Lee, a former English professor, and now student in seminary preparing for pastoral ministry.

The cover picture was taken recently on Cape Cod on a peninsula on the Bass River where snowy owls often congregate for the winter. Such amazing creatures often remind me of the grandeur of God, encouraging me to pray to such a wonderful being.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES “PRAYER”

[http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject\\_Index\\_Vol\\_1-29.pdf](http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-29.pdf)

- “Giving Thanks—The Neglected Prayer” (Jeffrey B. Wilson) 21 (2012): 27–31.
- “How to Pray at Prayer Meetings: Some Practical Suggestions” (Ryan M. McGraw) 23 (2014): 55-59.
- “Prayer Cloths: Superstitious or Spiritual?” (Patrick Ramsey) 10:4 (Oct. 2001): 85–86.
- “The Prayer of Jabez: A Berean Look.” (John V. Fesko) 16 (2007): 147–49.
- “The Rhythms of the Christian Life in Bible Reading, Prayer, and Poetry” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 22 (2013):109–11.

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*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 Thoughts

## Digital Covers of *Ordained Servant* Online 2006–2021

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Gregory E. Reynolds

Having been trained in architecture and raised by an artist (a Japanese brush painting by my mother, Barbara Ann Reynolds (1921–2013), graces the May 2013 cover, see below), the look of things has always been important to me, whether it is a building or a magazine cover. In an age where aesthetics is believed to be largely without standards, it is an important part of Christian witness to appreciate, cultivate, and promote aesthetic beauty along with the moral and spiritual beauty enjoined by Scripture. The beauty of what we can see is only one aspect of beauty. All beauty, of course, begins ontologically with the being of God, “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth” (Ps. 50:2). The beauty of his creation and the creativity of God’s image bearers all reveal aspects of his beauty: “And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty” (Ex. 28:2).

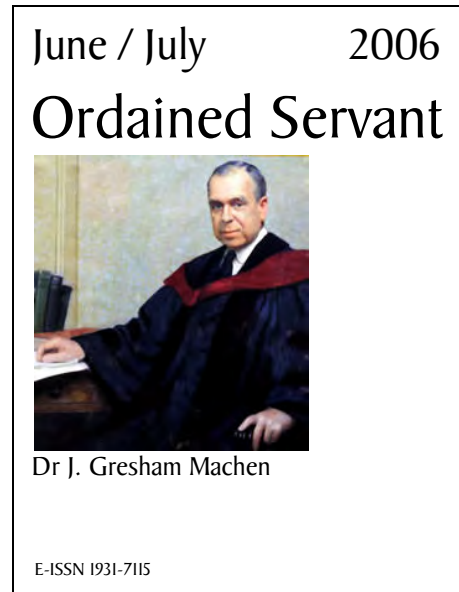
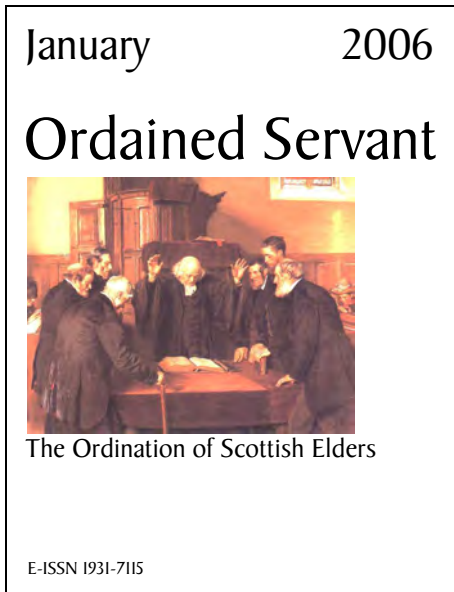
The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines beauty as “the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit.” Paul enjoins the appreciation of beauty: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil. 4:8). The text of the Bible itself is a work of craftsmanship as the writer of Ecclesiastes describes his own communication of wisdom and truth: “Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth” (Eccl. 12:9–10).

Book jackets have always been enjoyable to collect. The content of a book should be reflected by the cover, the same with periodicals. There is a genre of books called “books on books.” The history of books, book collecting, typography, libraries, and even bookshelves are all part of this fascinating genre. It has been a great pleasure to bring this interest to the pages of *Ordained Servant*. When Danny Olinger asked me to become the editor of *Ordained Servant* in October 2005, he gave me an editorial blank check to redesign everything. The thought of designing the typography, layout, and covers of *OS* was very exciting. At the time I was a member of the Boston Athenæum, which has a large selection of periodicals available to members; I spent a day perusing the collection, many of which are about art and literature, and so very artfully done.

I thought it would be enjoyable to see the way *Ordained Servant Online* covers have developed over the years.

The first two covers I created were for January through May 2006 in order to give myself time to ascend the steep publication learning curve. Until 2006 there were no

digital covers, only the printed quarterly covers. Beginning with the June-July issue, I produced a new cover for all ten digital issues each year. These first two covers were symbolically transitional: the first cover reflecting G. I. Williamson's emphasis on the eldership and my continued commitment to this emphasis; the second reflecting J. Gresham Machen as a model of Christian piety and thought. The design of these covers was simple because I was just learning the necessary digital skills.

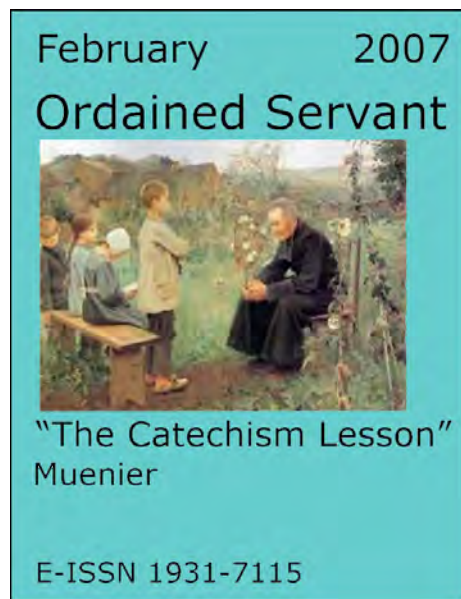


August-September and November of that year reflected an interest in church buildings, especially my photographs in New England, and in art, such as Monet's "The Rouen Cathedral."

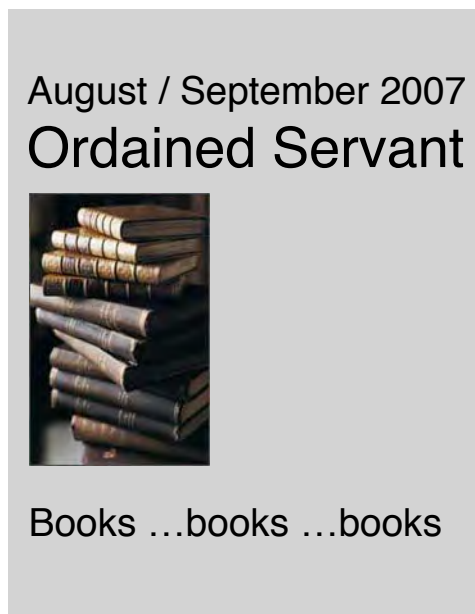


Creating interesting covers has become an important task since the nature of the Internet is so visual, and now our redesigned website is intensely visual. OPC.org has thirteen content boxes (known as cards) of which twelve have photos, seven of which are photos with titles superimposed. Catching attention for the contents of periodicals is a very important means of engaging readers with the text. The covers reflect the range of content in the online monthly of *Ordained Servant*.

December 2006 was my first attempt to use a somewhat startling work of art. February 2007 was the first colored background, also using a work of art. I was learning new features in Photoshop. Someone once asked me if creating these covers was the best use of my time. But for me it has provided a creative outlet that I have enjoyed immensely.



August-September 2007 is the first cover with a photograph. It was not my own. The first to use my own photograph was April 2009.



The August–September 2008 issue was the first to have a photographic background, the format I eventually decided to use almost continuously since April 2009. As time went on, copyright concerns moved me to use my own photography almost exclusively, especially since August-September 2011. I realized early on that the theme of every issue could not always, or even very frequently, be reflected in the cover art. This also made it easier to use photos of my own.

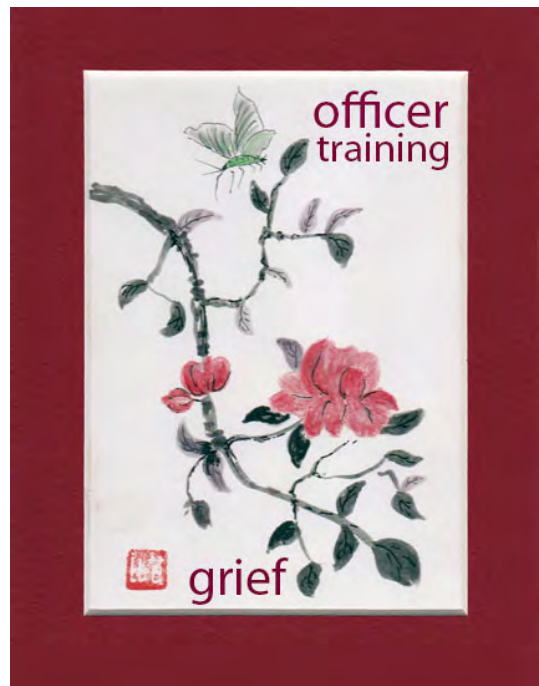
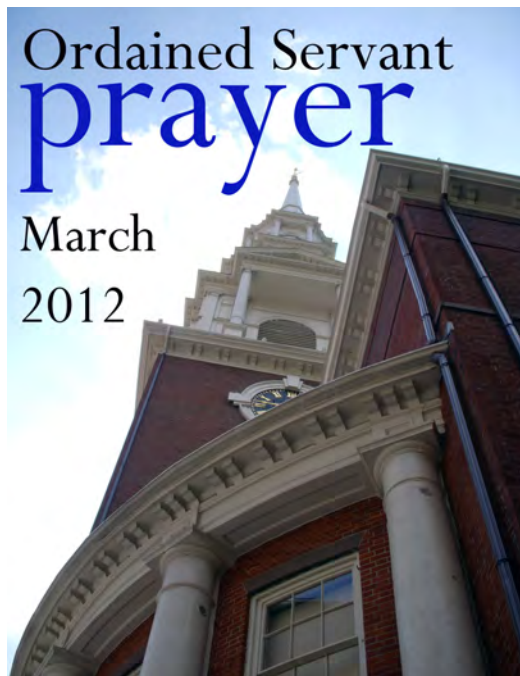
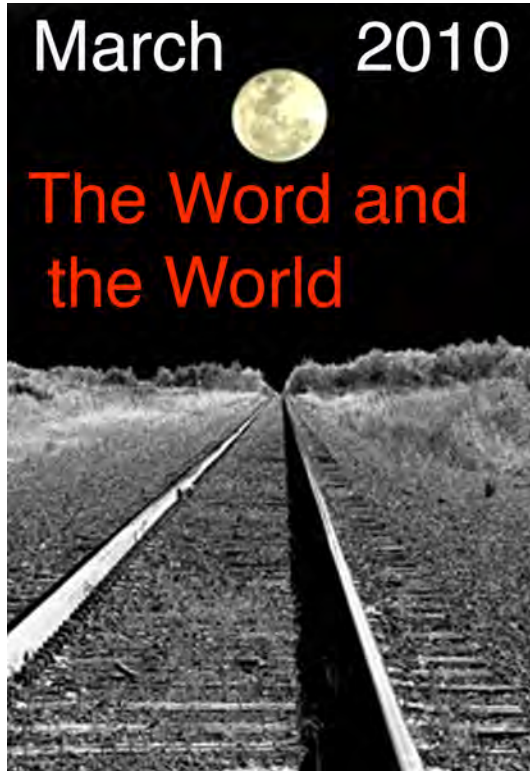


The quality of the digital covers has increased as the photographic and Photoshop skills improved over the years. The resolution of the early covers was terribly small, between 24 and 150 KBs. Now I sometimes struggle to keep them under 20 MB.

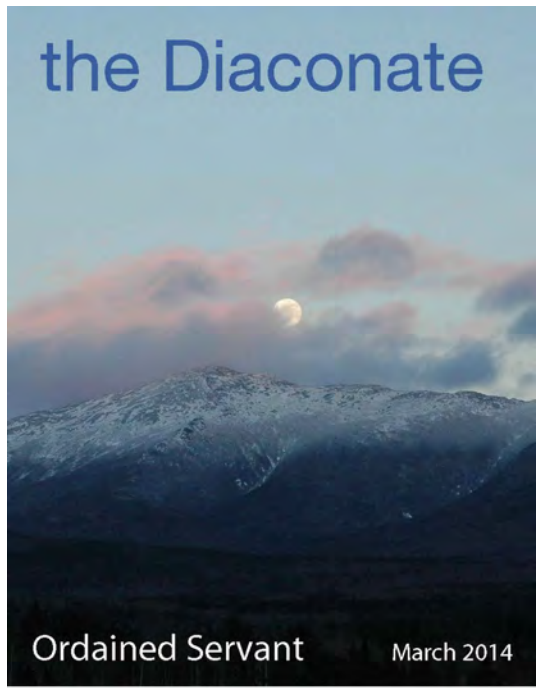
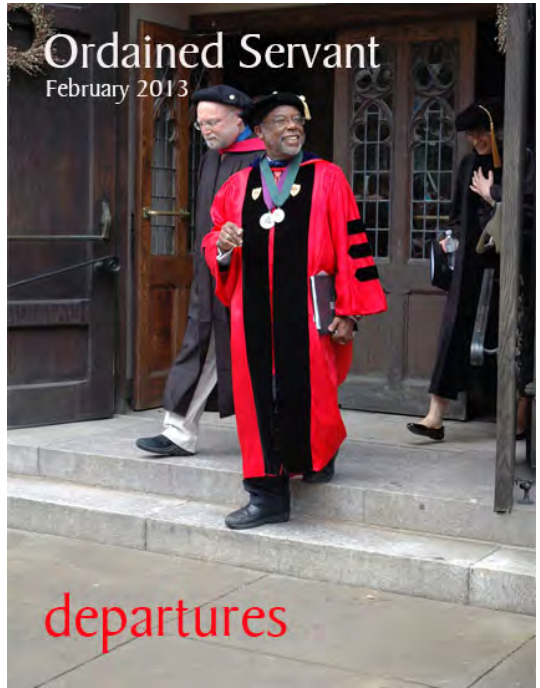
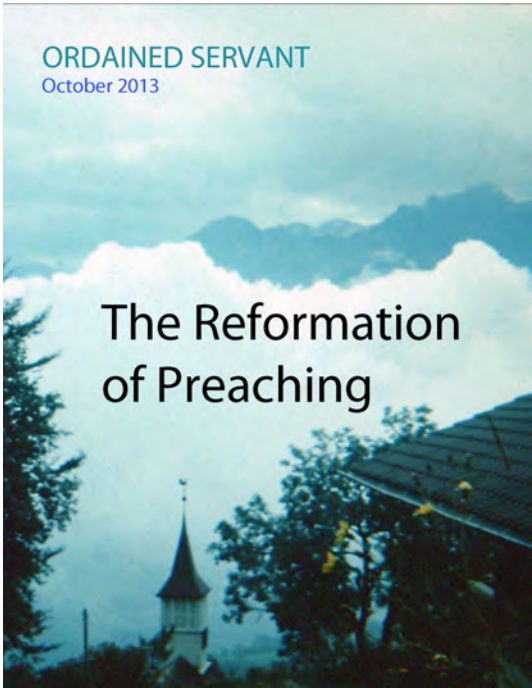
The first PDF, ePub, and Mobi editions were published in April 2012.

Here are a few of my favorite covers. I hope you enjoy them. I should add that professional cover designer Chris Tobias who designs the New Horizons covers, also designed the cover and the typography of the printed *Ordained Servant*. For each edition I simply provide a color choice and a photo.

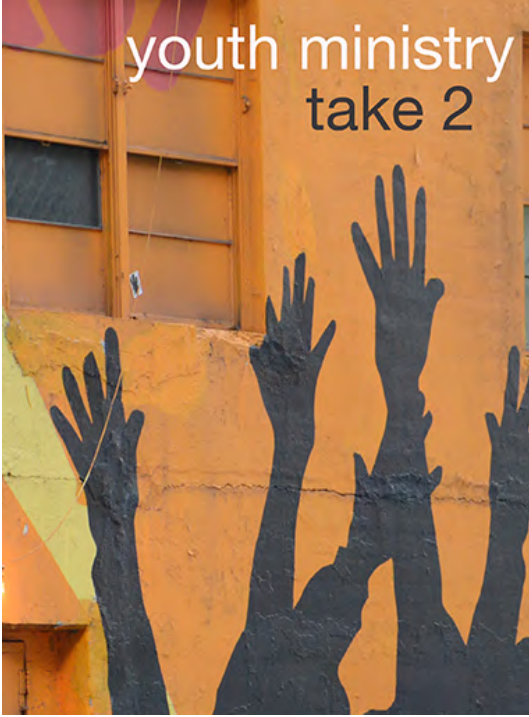
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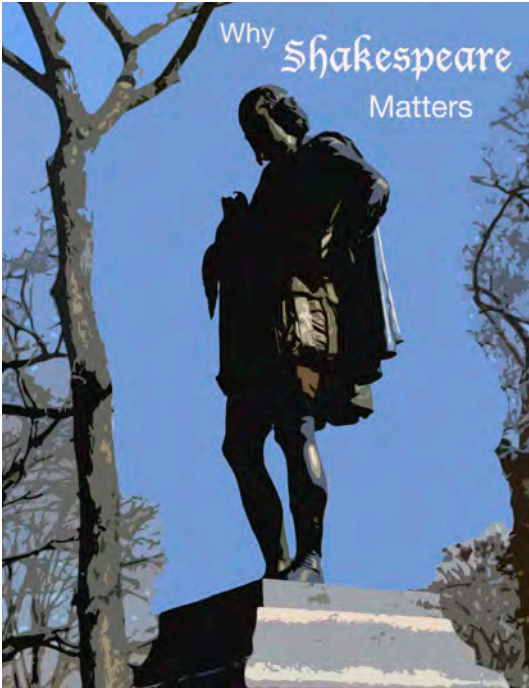




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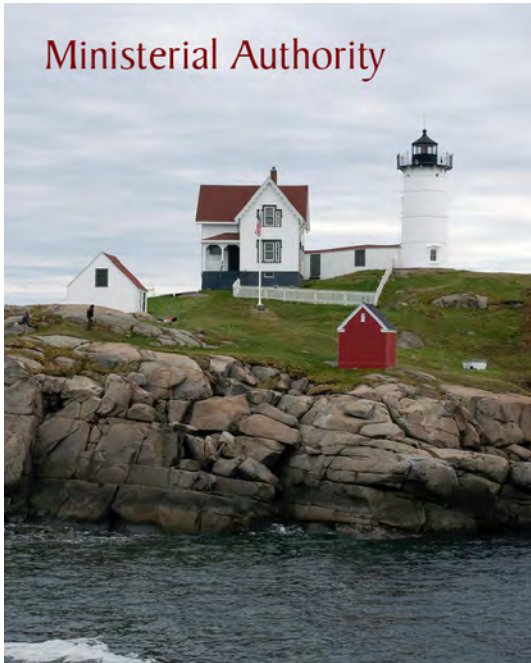


Addiction



Race

Ordained Servant March 2021



Ministerial Authority



Guidance 2



# Servant Work

## The Priority of Prayer for the Pastor

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by Bruce H. Hollister

### Adolph Monod on Prayer

It was several years ago now that the Lord graciously brought to me a season of refreshment in my own prayer life. In his kind providence he brought to me a particular prompting, or “wake-up call,” as I was reading excerpts from a spiritual classic: Adolph Monod’s *Les Adieux* (“Farewells”).<sup>1</sup>

Adolph Monod was a French Reformed pastor and was one of the greatest French preachers of the nineteenth century. Struck with cancer at age fifty-three, he went to be with the Lord about a year later. While in declining health, surrounded by family and friends, Monod presented from his sickbed a meditation on each of the last twenty-five Lord’s Days of his life. His family carefully kept record of these devotional talks. Monod’s dying testimony is most inspiring and instructive.

One of Monod’s regrets was that he had not prayed as he should. He put it this way: “My dear friends in Christ, among the subjects about which a Christian who believes himself to be near his end carries regrets, there is certainly none he would want so much to reform, if he returned to life, as prayer.”<sup>2</sup>

And this:

Ah, if I were restored to life, I would like, with God’s help, and in spite of myself, to give prayer much more time than I have done and to lean on prayer much more than on work. It is our duty never to neglect work, but work has no strength except when supported and animated by prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Monod’s comments strike at the heart of what we as pastors and elders—indeed, as Christians!—already know concerning prayer, but what, all too often, we sadly fail to act upon. We are just not sufficiently convinced that our work *truly has no strength* except when supported and animated by prayer.

Monod mentions the well-known example of Martin Luther. It is said that Luther, during the period that he was appearing before the Diet of Worms, spent three hours each day crying aloud to God. Luther’s friend Dietrich overheard Luther and took it upon himself to assemble those prayers for the good of the church. Dietrich observed that there

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<sup>1</sup> Adolphe Monod, *Living in the Hope of Glory: A New Translation of a Spiritual Classic*, Constance K. Walker, trans. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002); an older edition is Adolphe Monod, *Adolphe Monod’s Farewell to His Friends and to His Church*, trans. Owen Thomas (1874 repr., London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1962).

<sup>2</sup> Monod, *Living in the Hope of Glory*, 152–53.

<sup>3</sup> Monod, *Living in the Hope of Glory*, 159.

was not a single day in which Luther did not reserve at least three hours for prayer, those hours taken from the time during the day that was most conducive to work. Luther clearly believed that his work had no strength except when supported and animated by prayer! How was it that Martin Luther accomplished what he did for the kingdom of God? By faith in the Word of God *and by prayer!*

All of us as pastors and elders must ask ourselves this question: “What is it that will most impact my life and the life of those around me?” Or to put it another way: “What is it that will secure the greatest blessing for the church and for those to whom I minister?” Listen again to Monod: “Prayer is the distinctive mark of the Lord’s powerful servants. *All of them*, in spite of considerable differences, offer to us this common trait: They are men who pray much and who pray fervently.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Apostolic Lesson**

The priority of prayer for the pastor was recognized and affirmed very early on by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. When pressed by other important and worthy needs of ministry, they embraced this priority along with the priority of the ministry of the Word of God. Every pastor who is at all serious about his work knows by memory the familiar words of Acts 6:4: “. . . we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Prayer and the ministry of the Word: these two priorities are to be seen in tandem. Neither can be neglected and there result a thriving or fruitful ministry. What was the wonderful outcome of the apostolic embracing of these priorities? “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (v. 7). Yes, all of us know this lesson well—at least theoretically. Or perhaps better said, we are commonly guilty of knowing and applying only half of the lesson. The “ministry of the Word” part, we know. But what about the other half of the lesson concerning prayer? And in this case, to know only half of the lesson is not to know the whole lesson! As pertains particularly to prayer, we commonly fail to live the lesson out practically, and our ministries suffer because of it. Yes, as Reformed pastors and elders we generally pride ourselves concerning our seriousness about the ministry of the Word, while our devotion to prayer may be quite lacking. A great contradiction!

### **The Neglect of Prayer**

Of course, when we have been neglecting prayer, we become largely desensitized and oblivious to the blighting effects such neglect has upon our ministry. Perhaps we have neglected prayer for some long time, and so our ministry experience and its corresponding barrenness simply seems “normal” to us. What has happened? We have adjusted our thinking and have conditioned ourselves to find satisfaction in our labors in *other* ways. We spend many hours and work hard at sermon preparation. We busy ourselves with much activity—meetings and counseling and administrative chores. There is *always* so much to do! So we secretly salve our consciences and foolishly comfort ourselves with the thought of our many hours of labor or with the thought of the particular strains of our labor. Do we not labor more than anyone else in the congregation? Do we not feel the burden of such labor more than anyone really understands? But in reality we have become spiritually dull, spiritually desensitized. Let

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<sup>4</sup> Monod, *Living in the Hope of Glory*, 156, emphasis added.

us be honest with ourselves, brothers. Where prayer is neglected, to that degree it is being neglected, we are not walking by faith but in the flesh. We are in fact leaning on our work rather than on our Lord through prayer. And as Monod said, “work has no strength except when supported and animated by prayer.”<sup>5</sup> Heaven alone knows the reality of how very barren our service is when we are in such a state!

### **Busyness—a Lame Excuse**

There, I have already made my point, but let us fill it out just a bit. We commonly excuse ourselves for our neglect of prayer because as pastors we are so very busy. However, the example of our Lord instantly exposes how very juvenile and misguided is this excuse. Jesus was arguably (and legitimately!) the busiest man the world has ever seen. Busy to the max, going about doing good, preaching and teaching and healing. His schedule was *always* full to the brim. So what about prayer amid such busyness? What was his practice? We see it wonderfully summarized in Luke 5:15–16: “But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”

Our Lord steadfastly guarded the priority of communion with the Father through prayer. We see this described at several points in Luke’s gospel (3:21–22; 4:42–44; 5:15–16; 6:12–13; 9:18–22, 27–30; 11:1ff.). For now we simply observe that for our Lord, busyness in ministry *never* supplanted the priority of seeking the Father in prayer. Indeed, we can say that the secret of his massively fruitful and powerful ministry centered in his communion with the Father through prayer.

### **The Insidious Pressure of the CEO Pastor Model**

There is another problem closely related to busyness in pastoral ministry. The broader evangelical church is flush with its adulation for the CEO-pastor model. And we have all been tainted by it: the specter of (admittedly) very gifted and energetic men who are doing so much and *seemingly* accomplishing so much; burgeoning churches with multiple services, a vast array of growing programs and ministries, and “leadership teams” that are constantly brainstorming—“casting visions”—about yet more growth and ministry. This begs the question: when do these men pray? Answer: probably rarely, briefly, and “on the run.” And they excuse this because they are so very busy serving the Lord! We must honestly observe that such men are not particularly *spiritual* men; they are primarily functioning as CEOs who happen to possess significant spiritual gifts. They are men who lean on their work rather than on the Lord through prayer. And in such cases the fawning church gets what it craves, what it admires; it gets what it believes is really impressive and effective in ministry. We who pastor small congregations comfort ourselves: “*We* are not like that!” But to the degree that we neglect prayer, we are just like that: leaning on our work rather than on our Lord in prayer; praying rarely, briefly, and “on the run.”

### **The Practice of Prayer for the Pastor**

As pastors, nothing is more essential to our own spiritual life and to our ministries than daily seeking our God in prayer. Prayer is at the very heart of our communion with God, and where prayer is lacking our communion with God is lacking. Further, we must say that where prayer is lacking *faith* is lacking, and—whether we are conscious of it or

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<sup>5</sup> Monod, *Living in the Hope of Glory*, 159.

not—our old, native self-dependence *instantly* fills that vacuum. Said another way, we are failing to abide in Christ (John 15); we are in fact leaning upon our own wisdom and strength. In this state, fruit-bearing dries up. Jesus says, “Apart from me, you can do nothing” (v. 5). We may be “doing” plenty, but where prayer is neglected, we are bearing little fruit.

Our communion with Christ is always to be at the center of all of life and ministry. That is *the* great priority above all else. That communion is essential to all fruitfulness, and that communion is cultivated by prayer. Consider carefully from Mark 1:35–39 (Lk. 4:42–44) how our Savior guarded the priority of his communion with the Father:

The previous day had been a very busy one for our Lord as he ministered. He had taught in the synagogue, and the people were astonished at his teaching. There he had cast a demon out of one who was possessed. He then went to the house of Simon and Andrew and there healed Simon’s mother-in-law. At evening they had brought to him all who were sick and those who were demon possessed. He healed many who were sick. He cast out many demons. The whole city was gathered together there.

This must have been exhilarating for our Lord, but also exhausting! So much activity! Such constant pressure! So many demands! And this was no doubt a *typical* day for him. It would seem that he could hardly have had a private or quiet moment to himself. How could he continue on? How could he bear up under the pressure? How could he continue to preach, and teach, and counsel, and contend with his adversaries? What was the secret of his strength, his calm, his authority in teaching, his penetrating discernment in every situation? We see it here—wonderfully summarized, expressed (v. 35): “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”

We note these things particularly: Jesus rises and seeks the Father “in the morning” to be prepared for the day. He rose “very early in the morning, while it was still dark.” Why? He must have private, uninterrupted time, and this is the only way he will get it! He went out and departed to “a desolate place.” He thus *purposed* that there should be no distractions or interruptions. No one knew where he was! Simon and those who were with him searched for him! So-called “emergencies” must wait! Other legitimate needs must wait! This is the will of the Father! Thus, we see our Lord’s dependence upon the Father amid an unceasing crush of demands. (Who do we think we are?!)

We see also from this brief passage that it was through prayer that our Lord maintained a clear sense of priority in ministry. When Peter and the others found Jesus, they said, “Everyone is looking for you!” (v. 37). In effect they were saying, “Lord, there are all kinds of needs requiring for your attention!” But Jesus knew precisely what was to be done. He said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out” (v. 38).

### **The Benefits of Prayer for the Pastor**

The benefits of prayer for the pastor are manifold. We mention here just a few.

As we just noted by our Lord’s supreme example, nothing better helps us to hold to the biblical priorities of pastoring than daily prayer. Pressed with busyness and a multitude of people and needs—most all of them “legitimate,” and all of them arguably “great opportunities” for ministry—Jesus retained a crystal-clear sense of ministry



priority. The same is vital to us as pastors. This sense of priorities and of the will of God cannot be maintained in any other way.

It should be our practice as pastors to seek the Lord early in the morning in prayer, and of course, beyond this, all through the day in the midst of our labors. A practice that I personally have found helpful is this: there is a chair in my study on the other side of the room from my desk, or work area. During sermon preparation I would periodically pause, go to that chair on the other side of the room, sit in quiet, and pray. This was helpful to me to maintain a greater sense of dependence upon God while immersed in the hard work of sermon preparation.

Nothing better enables us to see the hand of God in his providences than communing with him daily in prayer. It is in and through prayer that the invisible world is opened to us, and we are enabled more clearly to see things from the perspective of the throne of God. Furthermore, nothing is more calming and refreshing to our souls, when pressed with the many and constant demands of pastoral ministry, than to frequently draw aside in prayer, seeking communion with our Lord.

As pastors, nothing keeps us so in touch with and tender toward the life and needs of our people than daily praying for them. Jesus said concerning His sheep, "I know my own, and my own know me" (Jn. 10:14). If I am praying daily for the precious ones committed to my charge, I truly grow to know them better, and it becomes apparent *to them* that I know them and am in touch with their lives! Thereby they also know that I love them. This opens ministry to their hearts as nothing else can! Nothing better helps us or prepares us for our personal ministrations to those of our flock than daily praying for them.

And what about our preaching? Nothing better prepares us to preach Christ to our flock than daily praying for them. It was my own practice in pastoral ministry every Saturday evening to pray for all of the members of my congregation, that the power of the Spirit of Christ might rest upon them in the Lord's Day worship in the day ahead. Among other things, I discovered that this very much shaped my preaching to them. I think it is accurate to say that because of this I enjoyed a unique connection with them amidst the preaching.

### **The Elders Encouraging their Pastor in Prayer**

Our Form of Government makes clear that our ruling elders are to pray with and for the people of the congregation. Also, they are to "have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word and help him in his labors" FG 10.3. It goes without saying that this concern must surely include daily prayer for their pastor. But directly related to this concern and to the concern that daily prayer should elicit, is the need of encouraging the pastor in the priority of prayer as a central feature of his ministry. I suspect that it is too seldom the case that elders ask this question of their pastor: "Are you getting the time in prayer that you need?" Or this vital follow-up question: "What can we do to remove other burdens of labor that may be keeping you from your necessary focus on prayer?" As noted above from Acts 6, the pastor is to be devoted to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. Once again we say that as good Reformed church officers we tend to be much attuned to the necessity and priority of the ministry of the Word but not so attuned to the necessity and priority of prayer. All of our ministry suffers accordingly.

I heard one fellow pastor recently mention that his session was being sanctified in the area of prayer. He explained that they had begun, amidst their meetings, to pray after each item of business or discussion. This is a great way not only to encourage the pastor in prayer but also to encourage one another to prayer and to a greater dependence upon God—session meetings sprinkled with prayer! What a precious and edifying thing! This would surely imbue all with a clearer heavenly focus, not to mention making brothers more tender to one another amid sometimes difficult discussions or disagreements!

As we said above, nothing keeps a pastor so in touch with and tender toward the life and needs of his people than praying for them daily. The same holds true, of course, for elders, not only in their relationship with one another but also in their relationship to their pastor. Generally, an elder has assigned to him particular members to whom he gives a special care. If he is praying for these daily, it will render him more tender toward their lives and their needs. He will certainly be thinking about them and most likely will check in on them more often! And he will thus engage them more tenderly and pastorally. It is vital to observe here that the same holds true in his relationship with the pastor. If an elder is praying daily for his brother in Christ, it should render him all the more tender to him. He will thus support him in the best way, engaging him with greater affection.

Most of all, for pastor and elders alike, we can point out this singular benefit of devotion to prayer. We will know an increasing liberty to ask for much, and we will have a deep and happy assurance that we will bear much fruit. This is in full accord with our Savior's great promise in John 15:7–8: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

Our Lord could not be more explicit. He clearly promises that through prayer and through our communion with him we will bear much fruit. All that we have said thus far with respect to the benefits of prayer are features of such fruitfulness. But we can say more. It is in and through prayer that an exciting world is opened to us—a "window" into the kingdom and into what God is doing. Every conversation, every interaction, every activity is then illumined with the light of our Savior's presence. Out of our communion with him it is his design that we should see a continual bearing of fruit though the whole of our life and our ministries—continual answers to prayer, countless answers to prayer—answers to prayer every day of our lives! That is surely what our Savior intends. Again, he could not have been more explicit. We are frequently guilty of shrinking our Savior's great promise with various well-intended and biblical qualifications. Too often this simply serves to mask our prayerlessness.

Hear the dying Monod again:

Altogether, with one spirit and one heart, humbled by the slackness of our prayers, let us form the holy resolve finally to know through experience the true promises of prayer so that we might harvest from it the blessed heritage of the invisible world."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Monod, *Living in the Hope of Glory*, 160.

# Servant Truth

## *The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation: Chapter 8 – “Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions” (2001)*

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by Danny E. Olinger

In September 1990, Meredith Kline commenced a series of fourteen articles on the Book of Zechariah that would appear over a seven-year period in *Kerux*, a journal of biblical-theological preaching edited by James T. Dennison, Jr., Kline’s faculty colleague at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. In 2001, Kline gathered the articles together in book form with the title *Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions*.<sup>1</sup>

Forty-nine years prior to the publication of the book, Kline first gave notice of his interest in Zechariah’s night visions. He delivered talks on the subject at the Reformed Ministerial Institute hosted May 13–16, 1952, on the campus of Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pennsylvania. Five years later, on June 4–7, 1957, on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, he delivered three lectures on the topic of the “Eschatology of Zechariah” that were subsequently published in the *Christian Reformed Ministers’ Institute*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions* (Two Age Press, 2001). Kline dedicated the book to Geerhardus Vos. The three other non-family member theologians to whom Kline dedicated books were Ned B. Stonehouse, *Treaty of the Great King* (1963); Paul Woolley, *By Oath Consigned* (1968); and Cornelius Van Til, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (1971).

<sup>2</sup> In the opening lecture, “The Casting Away of Israel,” Kline arrived at three biblical-theological observations—the conditional element of the covenant, the spirituality of the covenant, and excision from the covenant—that would reappear in his later writings, but not as neatly summarized as they are here. Regarding the conditional element of the covenant, Kline saw Zech. 5 in line with the Pauline teaching of Rom. 9:6–7a (“They are not all Israel that are of Israel; neither because they are Abraham’s seed are they all children”). That is, the covenant hope is fulfilled in spite of the fact that the curse of God strikes among those who are the seed of Abraham. Thus—according to Kline—Zechariah rebukes beforehand the formalists of Jesus’s day who proclaimed emptily, “We have Abraham as our father,” and the modern error that there was given to Abraham a dispensation with unconditional promises. The necessity of the conditional element in the covenant is determined by the spirituality of the covenant. Zech. 13:9b (“They shall call on my name and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God”) voices the thought of all the Scripture, describing the heart of the covenant in terms of personal communion with the holy God. Excision from the covenant is for those thieves and perjurers in Israel upon whom the spirit of grace and supplication was not poured. This is one side of the double process to separate Israel (the true covenant community) from Babylon (the world). The other side is the calling home of true Israel from exile in Babylon (Zech. 2:6–7). It is only by completion of both movements that the stage is set

Kline's interest in Zechariah continued in 1958 with a three-page treatment on Zechariah ("Bible Book of the Month—Zechariah") in *Christianity Today*.<sup>3</sup> On behalf of his people, the Messiah will be priestly intercessor (Zech. 1:12), iniquity remover (Zech. 3:9), royal governor and temple builder (Zech. 4:6–10). But the promised Messiah will also be the Suffering Servant (Zech. 11:8, 12, 13), pierced and smitten by the sword (Zech. 12:10; 13:7). The shepherd-king, lowly and riding on a donkey, is Zion's king who brings salvation (Zech. 9:9).

In *Glory in our Midst*, Kline kept the same focus on Christ's work, but narrowed the scope and returned to his original interest in Zechariah's prophecy, the seven night visions in Zechariah 1:7–6:8. And, instead of being limited to a 2,500-word count in a three-page article, Kline wrote fourteen articles that were then collected to produce a 240-page book over 100,000 words in length.<sup>4</sup>

In the preface to *Glory in Our Midst*, Kline stated that he designed the studies to help cultivate a biblical-theological reading and preaching of Zechariah's night visions. The attempt was "to grasp the significance of these visions in the light of their identity as part of the overall eschatological drama of the kingdom of God from creation to consummation,"<sup>5</sup> especially in regard to the fulfillment found in Jesus Christ. Consequently, each chapter was given a title reflecting the office or redemptive act of Christ that is highlighted in the particular vision being exegeted.

Kline also emphasized the role of the Spirit in relation to the messianic mission, especially in his identity as the theophanic Glory, the Glory-Spirit. According to Kline, "this Glory of the heavenly Presence of the triune God is indeed the dominant reality in Zechariah's visionary world." But the Glory-Spirit in Zechariah's night visions is also vouchsafed to God's people, first in gospel promise and at last in eschatological fullness. This explains the title chosen, *Glory in Our Midst*.<sup>6</sup>

This Christ-centered focus and the interconnectedness of Zechariah's visions to their fulfillment in Revelation led Kline to reference Revelation over two hundred times in the book.<sup>7</sup> Structurally, Kline noted how similar the two books opened. The opening revelation that John received on the island of Patmos, a vision of the Son of Man transfigured bright in heavenly glory (Rev. 1:9–20), was similar to the opening vision

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for the final judgment, the riding through the earth of the chariots of wrath and the satisfaction of God's justice (Zech. 6:8). See, Meredith G. Kline, "Eschatology of Zechariah" in *Lectures of the Christian Reformed Ministers' Institute, 1957*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Church, 1958: 46–48.

<sup>3</sup> Meredith G. Kline, "Bible Book of the Month—Zechariah," *Christianity Today* 2 (April 14, 1958): 23–24, 33.

<sup>4</sup> What Kline also did in preparation for the series of *Kerux* articles that would eventually become *Glory in our Midst* was to reexamine whether he had understood the structure of Zechariah correctly in his "Bible Book of the Month—Zechariah" article. The fruit of his research was his 1991 article, "The Structure of the Book of Zechariah," which appeared in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. See, Meredith G. Kline, "The Structure of the Book of Zechariah," *JETS* 34, no. 2 (June 1991): 179–193.

<sup>5</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, preface.

<sup>6</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, preface. Kline also added in the closing sentence of the preface his practice in quoting the Bible, an explanation that he could have helpfully added for readers in all of his published work. He wrote, "Quotations from the Bible, unless AV or otherwise noted, are my own, whether eclectic blendings or more distinctly independent renderings."

<sup>7</sup> The "Revelation" section of the "Scriptural Index" in *Glory in Our Midst* contains numerous errors. First, citations to Rev. 6:1, 6:5, 6:6–8, and 6:8 on page 255 should be listed as Zech. 6:1, 6:5, 6:6–8, and 6:8. Second, the citation of Rev. 5:6 on page 243 should be page 244. Third, references to Rev. 14:1, 14:2, 14:3–5, 14:4, 14:4–5, 14:8, 14:9, and 14:14 do not exist on page 254 as listed.

that Zechariah beheld of the commanding presence of a man riding a red horse, a man who was the Angel of the Lord, a pre-incarnate revelation of the coming Messiah (Zech. 1:7–17). Even more, Kline observed how “remarkably similar” the centerpiece of Zechariah’s night visions, Zechariah 3:1–10, was to Revelation 12, the passage that served as the beginning of the center section of the Apocalypse, Revelation 12:1–14:20.<sup>8</sup> In Zechariah 3 and Revelation 12 the ordeal between the messianic Servant and the diabolical serpent concerning the destiny of the people of God is clearly seen. The messianic Servant, the Branch of Zechariah 3 is the child of Revelation 12 who conquers Satan, the ancient serpent and the deceiver of the whole world. Through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, the saints accused night and day by Satan prevail (Rev. 12:11). Their filthy garments and iniquity removed (Zech. 3:3–7), they are clothed with the pure garments so that they might dwell in the presence of God forever.

### **First Night Vision: Zechariah 1:7–17 Governor of the Nations**

Kline declared that the three principals in the historical drama of Zechariah are the Glory-Presence of the Lord, the satanic world, and the redeemed covenant community. Symbolically all three appear in Zechariah 1:8—the rider of the red horse represents the Glory-Presence of the Lord, the deep represents the satanic world, and the myrtles represent the covenant community. In Kline’s judgment, properly understanding the scene in Zechariah 1:8 is the key to understanding Zechariah’s first night vision in Zechariah 1:7–17, the key to understanding the night visions in Zechariah 1:7–6:8, and the key to understanding Zechariah’s prophecy as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Rider of the Red Horse**

Proof for the identification of the rider of the red horse in Zechariah 1:8 as the messianic Angel is that, in Zechariah 1:11, the Angel of the Lord is pictured standing among the myrtle trees, a phrase that previously had been used to describe the man-figure in Zechariah 1:8 (and 1:10). Kline wrote:

In this man-Angel the coming Messiah-Lord was revealing at the very outset of these visions his immediate presence with his people. He was there with them in their historical struggle, exercising his sovereign power in their behalf (cf. Isa. 63:9 and 43:2). That personal presence of the Lord of Glory in the midst of the covenant community on earth was the all-important reality. To make known the meaning of the presence and mission of this messianic Angel is what Zechariah’s visions are all about. They are an unveiling of the secret of the covenant, an apocalypse of the mystery of the divine Presence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 96.

<sup>9</sup> In my judgment, it is not going too far to suggest that the interaction between the Glory-Presence of the Lord, the satanic world, and the redeemed covenant community also serves as a primary focus for Kline’s biblical-theological writings in his books, *Images of the Spirit*, *Kingdom Prologue*, and *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*.

<sup>10</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 2.

According to Kline, the fact that Zechariah 1:8 pictures the Messiah as a mounted figure brings into view the representation of Christ as the rider of the white horse in Revelation 19:11. In Revelation 19, the richly diademed King of Kings, Jesus Christ, commands other horsemen and leads the armies of heaven into the final battle against the Beast, False Prophet, and kings of the earth. Different historical hours are seen in the two prophecies, Revelation 19 picturing the final conflict and Zechariah 1 an earlier stage, but the presence in both prophecies of the mounted Messiah, the warrior-judge, among his chosen people is the sure token of victory.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Deep**

The red rider is not by a ravine, but the watery deep. Kline explained this interpretation of the place name, “If we follow the Masoretic tradition for the vocalization of the noun *mslh* in Zech. 1:8, there is no reason to translate it ‘ravine’ or otherwise to depart from the regular meaning of *mesula* or *mesola* (cf. *sula* Isa. 44:7), namely the depths of the sea, the watery deep.”<sup>12</sup> This is the same meaning that the plural form *musulot* has in Zechariah 10:11 (“all the depths of the Nile”) and Psalm 68:22, where the context (the portrayal of the Lord as a mounted figure accompanied by a myriad of hosts) is similar to Zechariah 1.

In counterfeit fashion to Zechariah 1:8 (and Genesis 1:2),<sup>13</sup> Satan in Revelation 13 stands by the deep and summons from the sea monstrous world kingdoms made in his likeness. The waters symbolize the source of evil powers, hostile to God and his people. But, Satan and the sea are no match for the Lord God. In Zechariah 1, the rider on the red horse, the Angel of the Lord, appears and snatches his own from the deep waters of death.

In the resurrection scene of Revelation 20:13, the sea is paralleled by death and Hades, each giving up the dead that are in it. Here, the God of Glory shows himself to be the God of resurrection power, who can break open the bars of the deep and swallow up the deep and death in victory. In the new heavens and new earth, the sea is no more (Rev. 21:1), and death shall be no more (Rev. 21:4).

### **The Myrtles**

In Zechariah 1:8, it is the myrtles that are identified as being by the deep. The red rider comes and takes up a position by the myrtles, which is the main point of this

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<sup>11</sup> Kline maintained that the portrayal of the Messiah as a mounted figure in Zech. 1:8 also has a parallel in Zech. 9:9. No longer riding a horse, the mounted figure in Zech. 9:9 is riding a donkey, which points back to Jacob’s blessing on Judah in Gen. 49:8–12. There, Shiloh, the coming one, tethers his donkey to the vine. The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matt. 21:4–5) identified him as the Lion of Judah in fulfillment of Gen. 49:8–12. But in the fulfillment of the Zech. 9 prophecy, the donkey was a sign of the necessity of Jesus going to the cross. Summed up in the two images of the rider of the red horse and the rider of the donkey colt is the dual status of Jesus as covenant Lord and covenant Servant, sacrificial atonement and judicial conquest, humiliation and exalted glory.

<sup>12</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Concerning Gen. 1:2, Kline commented that “the Glory-Spirit over the waters was a revelation of the absolute sovereignty of the Creator-King, a guarantee that whatever the conditions that seemed unruly and contrary, they would be overcome and God’s kingdom would be established and consummated in the form of a living and everlasting temple, the Omega-likeness of the Alpha Glory-Spirit.” Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 8.

symbolic disclosure. While the covenant people of God are in the wilderness of this world facing the satanic deep, Immanuel, mighty God, is present with them.

In Exodus 3, Moses saw the theophanic fire, identified with the Angel of the Lord, in the burning bush in the wilderness. Kline keenly noted that “what depicts the afflicted condition of the Israelites is not the fire in the bush, but the nature of the bush itself; a lowly desert scrub.”<sup>14</sup> Like the burning bush that is aflame but not consumed by the presence of God, so the myrtles in Zechariah 1 are aflame with the divine glory as the red rider stands in their midst but the myrtles are not consumed.

According to Kline, John in Revelation 1:12–20 saw a version of the burning bush as adapted by Zechariah. Transfigured and glorified, Jesus stands among the seven lamps. The lamps are burning but not consumed. This is symbolic of the church renewed by the shining image of Christ as it makes its way through the wilderness of this world to the promised new heavens and new earth. The Angel of fire in the burning bush in the wilderness (Exod. 3), the Angel-rider by the myrtles by the watery deep (Zech. 1:8), the glorified Christ in the midst of the lampstands (Rev. 1) represent “the already/not yet stage in the process of the formation of the eternal temple-city, the stage of the covenant people’s life in the present world wilderness.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Eschatological Delay**

The report of the agents of the Angel-rider in Zechariah 1:9–11 is that all the earth is living quietly at rest. Rather than assisting the covenant people to recover from their captivity in Babylon and rebuild God’s sanctuary, the nations “at ease” (Zech. 1:15) manifest defiant indifference. This report is in stark contrast to the eschatological hope of Israel of seismic upheavals overturning the nations and emptying out the glory of their treasures into the holy city. Rather, the great deep is calm. Kline concluded, “Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (Rev. 13:10; cf. 14:12).<sup>16</sup>

In Zechariah 1:12, however, the focus moves from the deep to the myrtles. Having received the report, the divine Angel in Zechariah 1:12 is stirred up to pastoral intercession for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. He asks, “How long?”

Christian martyrs in Revelation 6:10 still raise the “how long?” lament of Zechariah 1:12 when the martyrs cry out “How long, O Sovereign holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” The answer in Revelation 6:11 is that they must wait in their intermediate state of rest until the number of martyr-witnesses is filled up. The age of great commission, symbolized in Revelation 20 as a thousand years, is a time when believers who are advancing the gospel witness out from Jerusalem to all the nations are killed for the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 20:4).<sup>17</sup>

The nations might rage, but Revelation instructs the saints to witness and wait, to watch and pray, with confidence that their prayers ascend through their Advocate to the

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<sup>14</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Kline added at this point, “Revelation 20 knows nothing of a political dominion of the church over the earth during this millennial age of the great commission. That expectation is a delusion of the prophets of theonomic postmillennialism, who, in their impatience with the way through the wilderness, have succumbed to carnal cravings for worldly power. It is revealing that in order to defend their false forecasts they find it necessary to scorn as losers those whom the Scriptures honor as overcomers, indeed as “more than conquerors.” Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 53–54.

heavenly throne (Rev. 8:3), evoking divine judgments that culminate in the seventh trumpet that concludes the mystery of God (Rev. 10:7). But until that trumpet sounds, and delay is no longer (Rev. 10:6), the cry of “how long?” will continue in the church. Still, the sure hope for the church in the wilderness crying out for the return of the Lord is that they will overcome Satan “because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony that they loved not their life unto death” (Rev. 12:11).

The first night vision closes with the promise that God will deal in anger with the nations (Zech. 1:14–15) and visit Jerusalem with blessing (Zech. 1:16–17). Kline noted that God’s mercies were experienced at the level of the Mosaic Covenant in Zechariah’s own day in the temple’s completion, Jerusalem’s rebuilding, and the theocratic order’s general reestablishment under the Law, but the fulfillment is seen in Christ’s coming, the perfecting of the kingdom under the new covenant with its better promises and country. Further, the promised blessings to Zion and Jerusalem, temple and city, speak of the coming and consummation of the heavenly temple-city covenanted from the beginning in Eden. However, said Kline, “until he who promises, ‘Yea, I come quickly,’ does come, the church in the wilderness by the demonic deep will be pleading out of the depths of its great tribulation (Rev. 7:14; cf. 1:9), ‘Amen: come Lord Jesus’ (Rev. 22:20).”<sup>18</sup>

### **Second Night Vision: Zechariah 1:18–21 Avenger of the Afflicted**

In the second night vision in Zechariah 1:18–21, the interpreting angel describes the horn-nations lifting up the horn against God’s people (Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem), scattering them so that they could no longer lift up the head.<sup>19</sup> According to Kline, this is prophetic idiom, namely, a prophet employing the typological situation of his day to represent the antitypical realities of the coming messianic age. Through Zechariah, the Spirit of prophecy speaks beforehand of Christ’s church under the form of the restored covenant community of Judah, which is centered in Jerusalem on the temple mount. The hostile nations, seen in the four horns, seek to put down the chosen people of the covenant community and to exalt themselves against the Lord God. Kline said, “Translated into the terms of John’s portrayal of the horned beast in the Apocalypse: they made war against the saints and they blasphemed the name of God (Rev. 13:6, 7).”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 54.

<sup>19</sup> In introducing the second night vision, Kline summarized the first night vision. He wrote, “In Zechariah’s first vision the messianic angel appeared as a warrior mounted on a red horse, present in the midst of God’s people (the myrtles). Under his command stood a squadron of supernal agents (the flame-colored horses), ready to execute the judgment which the Lord threatened against the evil world-empire (the deep), usurper of dominion over mount Zion. Here was a prediscovery that when Christ was manifested, it would be to ‘destroy the works of the devil’ (I John 3:8), to cast Satan down from heaven to hell (Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:10; 20:10), and so fulfill the primeval decree that God’s champion should crush the draconic head lifted up against the holy mount in Eden (Gen. 3:15).” Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 57. Kline commented on page 63, “According to Jeremiah’s reading of the situation, the horn-nations had interpreted perversely their defeat of the covenant people and their dominion over them. Exploiting the fact that Israel and Judah deserved the punishment of exile because they had violated the Lord’s covenant, the captor-nations declared themselves innocent, the instruments of divine justice (Jer. 50:7). Yet in their hearts they were maliciously glad that the Lord’s heritage was destroyed (Jer. 50:11). For this evil God would send destroyers and spoilers against them (Jer. 50:2ff., 9f., 12ff.). In



In Zechariah's visions, the bestial horned nations attack Judah and the saints. In attacking Judah, though, the nations are attacking the God of Zion, a lifting up of the horn against the Most High.<sup>21</sup> The four craftsmen in Zechariah 1:20 that the Lord raises up to execute his judgment are specialists in dealing with horns. These agents of the rider on the red horse portray the mission of Christ as the great dragon slayer. In Revelation 12:3, Christ comes to destroy the devil, the monstrous red dragon that has seven crowned heads and ten horns. Already Christ accompanied by his angelic army has prevailed. He has driven the dragon out of heaven (Rev. 12:7–11) and bound him in the bottomless pit for a season (Rev. 20:1–3). And at his return, he will consummate his avenging against the dragon and the beast-powers. Every enemy of God who has lifted heads and horns against heaven and the saints will be cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:10; 19:20).

### **Third Night Vision: Zechariah 2:1–13 Builder of God's City**

The key in sorting out the *dramatis personae* in the third night vision is the proper identification of the measuring man of whom Zechariah asks, "Where are you going?" (Zech. 2:2a). The man who answers that he is going to measure Jerusalem to the end of seeing its breadth and length (Zech. 2:2b) is also the one who speaks in the first person as Yahweh in Zechariah 2:5. Kline declared, "This 'man' with the measuring line is then one with the 'man' riding on a red horse in vision one, identified as the Angel of the Lord."<sup>22</sup>

The one who charges John with the judicial use of the rod in the measuring of the temple in Revelation 11:1–2 is identified as Christ in Revelation 11:3 when he speaks of commissioning "my" two witnesses. In view is not to account for the size of the temple, but to register a divine verdict. What John measures is set apart unto God and under his divine protection. What is not measured is abandoned to profanation and desolation. Agreeably, in Revelation 21:15, Christ sends the Angel who has the golden rod with which to measure the New Jerusalem. The measuring man of Jerusalem in Zechariah 2:1–2 is Christ, the architect and master-builder of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

Further, the New Jerusalem that Christ builds in perfection is the Beyond-City of eternity, where God's presence fills everything to its unwallled limits. Paradoxically, however in Zechariah 2:5, the unwallled eschatological Jerusalem has a wall around it, the divine glory filling the city to its distant horizon constituting a wall of fire. Again, said

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Psalm 75 God declares concerning those who lifted up their horns against heaven (v. 5 [6]): 'I will cut off the horns of all the wicked' (v. 10 [11])."

<sup>21</sup> Kline connected the horns of Zech. 1:18–21 with the lifting up of the head (horns) that took place in Babylon's ancient attempt to erect a tower that reached to heaven in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11:1–9; cf. Dan. 1:2; Zech. 5:11). He said, "To aspire to fellowship with the living God, to seek access to him in worship and communion, is to appreciate the *summon bonum* of human existence. In the beginning the Creator provided for such sacramental diving presence and human approach in the mountain of God in Eden and after the Fall he restores this redemptively (cf. Jacob's staircase to heaven, Sinai, and Zion). But the Babel-tower tradition did not express a longing of the soul for the living and true God and his heaven. It was rather a rebellious attempt of fallen mankind, rejecting in unbelief God's redemptive offer of restoration, to regain heaven by human works. As a substitute for true religion it was an idolatrous venture, an antichrist affront to the true Har Magedon. It was from Nimrod to Nebuchadnezzar a lifting up of the head-horns against the Lord God." Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 61–62.

<sup>22</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 72.

Kline, help in explaining the meaning comes from Revelation 21. Rather than being a barrier against attack from outside, the fire wall functions as a sanctifying border. It sets apart all who dwell within the city as holy to the Lord, thus separating them from those outside the city who are not written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27; 22:14–15). Such is the function of the divine wall in Zechariah 2. A manifestation of divine holiness, like the Eden sanctuary and wall of fire produced by the flaming sword (Gen. 3:24), the fiery wall acts primarily not for the security of the city but for its sanctity.

Remarkably, though, in Zechariah's vision, the city—surrounded by a divine wall of fire that speaks of the consuming holiness of God—is filled with former outcasts (Zech. 2:11). It is accomplished only because the Angel of the Lord was himself to be pierced by the flaming sword (Zech. 13:7), thus opening a way through the wall of fire and gaining entrance for a countless multitude out of all nations (Rev. 7:9, 14–17).

### **Conversion of the Gentiles**

Kline saw the fulfillment of Zechariah 2:8–9 in Messiah's redemptive spoiling of the nations in Revelation 20. But in order to understand the thematic trail through Scripture leading to Revelation 20, Kline believed that one must first turn to Isaiah 49 and its parallels with Zechariah 2:1–13. God's people experience an exodus-like homecoming that leads to rejoicing and singing (Isa. 49:9–12; Zech. 2:7–10); Zion's citizenry will increase and burst old bounds (Isa. 49:13; Zech. 2:4); the new children of Jerusalem will come from the Gentiles (Isa. 49:21–22; Zech. 2:11); the influx of the Gentiles will validate the claims of the Servant (Isa. 49:23, 26; Zech. 2:9); and, “of most immediate interest,” the coupling of the conquest and conversion of the Gentiles with the promise that in Zion's warfare God will take away the captive prey of the terrible adversary (Isa. 49:24–25; Zech. 2:8–9).<sup>23</sup>

Jesus translates the question of Isaiah 49:24, “Shall the prey be taken from the strong?” into a question about himself and Satan, “How can one enter the house of the strong man and spoil his goods?” (Matt. 12:29). God's answer in Isaiah 49:25, that he would contend with the strong man and take away his prey, becomes Jesus's declaration that a stronger warrior will overtake the strong man, take away his armor, bind him, enter his house, seize his goods, and divide his spoil (Luke 11:21–22).

According to Kline, Revelation 20:1–3 refashions this teaching of Jesus in fulfillment of Isaiah 49 and Zechariah 2 in apocalyptic style.

Here, the messianic Angel from heaven (Rev. 20:1), the stronger One, binds the dragon, the strong man, for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2). Imprisoned in the abyss, Satan can no longer confine the light of the community of faith within the bounds of Israel, deluding all the other nations with his lie (Rev. 20:3). The thousand years are Great-Commission-filling times. All through the millennium the stronger One is rescuing as a prey from the dragon multitudes of converts out of every nation, tribe, people, and tongue (cf. Rev. 7:9). Delivered from the devil's darkness and deception, drawn as disciples unto the Light of the world, they become lampstand churches, martyr-witnesses faithful unto death. Beheaded for the testimony of Jesus they are received into the heavenly ministry of the martyrs as priest-kings with Christ before the throne of God (Rev. 20:4–6). So complete is the triumph of the stronger One over

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<sup>23</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 84.

the draconic foe, he who has the power of death, that dying, for the Christian martyr-witnesses, is transformed into a ‘first resurrection,’ an entrance into a sabbatical resting (cf. Rev. 14:13) and reigning with their Savior-Victor. In that blessed state they continue during the millennial time of the ‘great tribulation’ for the church on earth (cf. Rev. 7:14), waiting until the full complement of their company is attained (cf. Rev. 6:11), eager for the day when that pleroma of the seed of Abraham from all the nations, Christ’s battle spoils, will be displayed to the glory of God as the fullness of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24–26).<sup>24</sup>

It is through the twofold spoiling of the nations that Jerusalem becomes enlarged (Zech. 2:4). First, the elect remnant who constitute the fullness of the Gentiles are gathered in during the present church age. Then, the nations, spoiled of their election and identified with Antichrist, are spoiled of their earthly heritage in the judgment on the last day.

### **Validation of the Messianic Commission**

The measuring man, the divine Angel of the Lord, also asserts, “You will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me” (Zech. 2:9, 11). What he will accomplish in the power of the divine Glory (Zech. 2:5, 8), finishing and filling the temple-city with divine Glory and including the Gentiles, will validate his messianic commission as the one sent by God.

In John 5:36, Jesus proclaims that the works which the Father has given him to accomplish, the very works that he does, bear witness of him, that the Father has sent him. What John began to do in writing his Gospel, showing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God by rehearsing his sign-works (John 20:30–31), John continued to do in Revelation. According to Kline, Revelation (“a covenant witness document of Jesus”) puts forth the claims of Jesus, the faithful witness (Rev. 1:5). It testifies that he is the Lord of the covenant, the messianic Angel of Zechariah, the one invested with the Glory-Spirit. It confronts the reader with an overwhelming assemblage of images concerning who Christ is—possessor of all authority in heaven and earth; conqueror of the dragon, beasts, and all who stand in his way; judge of the nations; owner of the keys of death and Hades; priest-king who redeems a countless multitude to enjoy and serve God in the heavenly Zion forever; and, master builder of the New Jerusalem, the holy temple-city of cosmic dimensions that has the glory of God everywhere.<sup>25</sup>

### **Fourth Night Vision: Zechariah 3:1–10 Guardians of God’s Courts**

Kline asserted that the fourth night vision in Zechariah 3:1–10 takes the reader into the holy of holies to witness the critical encounter between the messianic Servant and Satan at the throne of God. At the center of the vision is the Christ-figure, present as the Angel of the Lord and typified by the high priest Joshua. But Joshua also appears as the representative equivalent of covenant-breaking Israel defiled by sin. The defilement is

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<sup>24</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 88.

clear as he appears in filthy garments, a shocking deviation from the ceremonial requirement that the high priest enter the holy of holies in his vestments of holy glory.

Satan is there as the accuser of Joshua, the contention revolving around the Lord's claim to the sinful but chosen people represented by Joshua in his defiled garments. The outcome of the ordeal between the messianic Servant and Satan turns on Joshua's fate in the judgment, "will this representative sinner be condemned and abandoned to the dominion of the devil or will he be justified and consigned as a holy minister to the service of God in glory?"<sup>26</sup>

### **Zechariah 3:1–10 and Revelation**

Kline noted that similar to Zechariah's fourth vision, which occupies the central position in the seven night visions, is Revelation 12:1–14:20, the centerpiece of an overall seven-member chiasm in the book of Revelation. The themes and imagery of the seven letters (Rev. 2–3), seven-sealed book (Rev. 4:1–8:1), and seven trumpets (Rev. 8:2–11:19) that lead up to Revelation 12:1–14:20 recall the themes and imagery of the three night visions (Zech. 1:7–17; Zech. 1:18–21; Zech. 2:1–13) that lead up to Zechariah 3:1–10. Tying the two center texts together, Kline said:

The Messiah figure in association with the Glory council dominates scene and action. He stands in the midst of his persecuted saints and sends forth agents of judgment on the world. These heavenly agents are symbolized as horsemen. Intimations are given that lurking in the shadows of the world's hostility to the church is the primeval leviathan. But, as in Zechariah, it is in the center-section of the Apocalypse that the conflict of the ages is directly and dramatically revealed as the contention of Christ with Satan over the church. And once more, as in Zechariah 3, it is the role of Satan as the accuser of the redeemed before God's throne that is prominent (Rev. 12:10). And again, the messianic man prevails in judgment against the dragon (Rev. 12:5, 9), a victory for the accused saints attributable to the blood of atonement shed by the suffering Servant (Rev. 12:11).<sup>27</sup>

Kline believed that further comparison of Zechariah 3 and Revelation 12 reveals a common rootage in Genesis 3. Among the major features of Genesis 3 that reappear in Zechariah 3 and Revelation 12 are: 1) the emergence of the gospel of salvation in the rebuke-damnation of the devil; 2) the three principals of the redemptive drama—Messiah, his people, and Satan; 3) Messiah's identity as the royal offspring, born of the women; 4) Messiah's contention with the devil; and 5) the two stages of Messiah's mission of vanquishing Satan—his sufferings and the consequent glory.

Kline concluded, "These central visions of the books of Zechariah and Revelation bring us back to the radical roots and fundamental realities of the holy war first announced in Genesis 3:14, 15 and destined to rage on through history from the loss of Eden's holy paradise until its consummatory restoration in the New Jerusalem."<sup>28</sup>

In accusing the brethren in Zechariah 3, Satan seeks the freezing of history in the situation produced by his success as the tempter of the first Adam. That is, Satan seeks

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<sup>26</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 96.

<sup>27</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 97.

<sup>28</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 97.

the verdict of condemnation with its sentence of expulsion from the garden of life and abandonment to the abyss of Hell to remain in place after Adam's breaking of the covenant of works. "He would ignore and would have the court ignore," said Kline, "the divine decree announced immediately after the Fall of the first Adam, declaring God's eternal purpose of grace for a countless throne of elect and revealing the opening up of a new redemptive way to justification and life through a second Adam, a serpent-trampling Savior (Gen. 3:15)."<sup>29</sup>

In Zechariah 3:2, "Yahweh rebuke you, O Satan," the Angel of the Lord deals directly and decisively with this blasphemous challenge of God's decree. This rebuke not only silences the accuser, but also is a scornful repudiation of Satan's pretension to the throne on Har Magedon. This condemnation, like the primeval curse pronounced on the serpent in Genesis 3:15, also carries with it the promised salvation announced in Genesis 3:15. The verdict is rendered in favor of the Joshua-community, the brand plucked out of the fire (Zech. 3:2).

The judicial confrontation depicted anticipatively in Zechariah 3 is actualized in Revelation 12. The dragon fails to defeat Jesus, Revelation 12:3–4. It is the anointed Son who ascends to occupy the throne in heaven, Revelation 12:5. The Messiah-Michael and his angel-agents of the divine court suppress the demonic revolt and cast the Accuser down from Har Magedon and out of heaven, Revelation 12:7–9. Then, in Revelation 12:12, the enthronement of the priest-king, the one who has prevailed in the advocacy of the cause of his own on the basis of his atonement, causes Satan's stay in the divine council to be terminated so that his time until his final doom is short. Revelation 12:11 further explains that the way the saints overcome Satan and his demonic host is the blood of the lamb. Salvation is of grace, not of works.

### **The Re-Investiture of Joshua**

The wonder of God's grace is revealed in his rejection of Satan's charges against Joshua, even though Joshua is standing before the Angel of the Lord in filthy garments (Zech. 3:3). But Kline pointed out that clothing imagery continues with the removal of the offending garments (Zech. 3:4) and Joshua's reclothing in priestly vestments (Zech. 3:5). The pattern for the re-investiture—divine choice, cleansing, clothing-crowning, and charism—is from Aaron's installation (Exod. 28–29; 39–40).

The regulations for the priesthood then would also include a continuing ritual for the cleansing of sins in order to serve in the holy place. Whenever Aaron and his sons were to minister in the tabernacle, they were to resort to washing their hands and feet in the brass laver located between the altar and the tent of meeting lest they die (Exod. 30:17–21; 40:30). The waters of the brass laver represented the waters of the heavenly sea, which, flowing from the throne of God, are the instrument of divine judgment.<sup>30</sup>

In Revelation 7:11–17 the key features involving these episodes with Aaron and Joshua reappear. There is induction into priestly ministry, with the symbolism of priestly

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<sup>29</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 105.

<sup>30</sup> At this point, Kline referenced Rev. 15:1 on page 109 for support. In my judgment, this is a typographical error as what is described fits with Rev. 22:1, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb," and does not fit with Rev. 15:1, "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished."

clothing and judicial washing accomplished through atoning sacrifice. In the heavenly courtroom and before the Lamb, stand the redeemed myriads. White-robed because of the blood of the Lamb, they serve God in his temple day and night. Kline posited, “Strange detergent, staining blood. But, such is the forensic chemistry of the justification of God’s chosen priesthood.”<sup>31</sup>

In Revelation 12:10–11, the brethren overcome because the accuser is conquered by the blood of the Lamb. The same imagery is in Revelation 1:5–6, Christ being the one who has freed believers from their sins by his blood in order to make them a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. The bruised and bleeding but serpent-crushing seed of the woman promised in Eden in Genesis 3:15 is Zechariah’s promised coming Servant, Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup>

The grounding of Zechariah’s fourth vision in Genesis 3 and its fulfillment in Revelation did not stop there for Kline. God in Genesis 3:21 covers Adam and Eve, guilty and defiled as seen in their sense of shameful nakedness, with a skin covering that symbolized the restoration of the image of God. Adam had been tasked with guarding God’s sanctuary-garden (Gen. 2:15), but cast from that place due to his sin, his priestly function was taken over by the cherubim (Gen. 3:24). According to Kline, the act of clothing in the divinely provided garments in Genesis 3:21 takes on the nature of a re-investiture with priestly status and dominion.

In Revelation 19:7–8, the church-bride of the Lamb is clothed in fine priestly linen. The description of the church-bride arrayed in priestly garments continues in Revelation 21 and 22, a church-bride having been transformed into a replica of the likeness of Christ in high priestly robes and invested with the Glory-Spirit as put forth in Revelation 1:13–16.

### **Revelation of the Messiah**

In the book of Exodus, after Aaron undergoes the installation ceremonies of washing, putting on the holy vestments, and anointing, he receives instructions concerning his priestly duties (Exod. 29). In Zechariah 3:6–7, after Joshua undergoes re-investiture, the Angel of the Lord delivered to him a solemn charge regarding his high priestly functions. According to Kline, as a reward for fighting the good priestly warfare against Satan, God promises Joshua that he will grant him access among the ones standing in heavenly court in the presence of God, the experience of a close, confidential relationship.

Kline saw the fulfillment of this promise in the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 and 22. He wrote, “The final fulfillment of the Angel’s promise to Joshua is found in the New Jerusalem, the celestial city constituted a temple by the presence of the Lord God enthroned in the midst of the heavenly hosts (Revelation 21–22).”<sup>33</sup> In the New Jerusalem, the Lord tabernacles with his people, the bride-priest whose bridal garments are priestly garments, the ultimate realization of redemptive renewal in the image of the Lord of Glory. “In a word,” Kline said, “the Joshua-priesthood was promised heaven.

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<sup>31</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 111.

<sup>32</sup> Kline also referenced on page 111 the prophecy of the coming Shiloh in Gen. 49, which he had earlier connected with Zech. 9:9, with the triumph of believers through the blood of the Lamb. He wrote that Rev. 1:5–6 was also the doxological climax for “the coming Shiloh of Jacob’s blessing on Judah, with whom the prophecy associates a donkey slain to ratify covenants and a mysterious washing of garments in the blood of grapes (Gen. 49:10, 11).”

<sup>33</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 118.

There God's holy servants dwell eternally in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty."<sup>34</sup>

It is not Joshua, however, that will secure this promised dwelling in God's presence. It will be set in motion by God bringing forth "my Servant the Branch" (Zech. 3:8), a dual title identifying him as both priest and king. As delineated in Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the Servant's ministry is priestly. He offers sacrifice for sin, sprinkles many nations, and intercedes for transgressors. That the Servant is also the Branch brings into view the royal dimension of such prophecies as Isaiah 11:1 and Isaiah 28:5 that the Messiah will come from the line of King David, son of Jesse. "My Servant the Branch" speaks to the Messiah's work in fulfillment of the promise of God. In his obedience unto death during his state of humiliation the Servant is both priest and sacrifice. But, as a reward for his priestly service, he is exalted and crowned with glory as priest-king.

John in Revelation 5:5–6 bears witness that this combination of suffering priest and righteous king seen in Zechariah 3 has been realized in the coming of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 5:6 John proclaims that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that the scroll and seven seals can be opened. He then states in the next verse that he saw a Lamb standing as though he had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

That John declares that the seven eyes are the sevenfold Spirit of God brings also into view Zechariah 3:9 where there is the stone with seven eyes set before Joshua. The stone belongs to the symbolism of reclothing, particularly its relation to the mitre or high priestly headdress that Joshua wears. On the front of the mitre is a plaque of pure gold (Exod. 29:6) on which is inscribed "Holy to Yahweh." This crown, a sign of consecration, was to be worn whenever the high priest came before God bearing the iniquity of Israel's holy gifts. This was so the Lord's eyes would fall on his holy seal of consecration, a prerequisite for acceptance of the priestly ministry.

Those priestly servants who receive the seal on their foreheads in Revelation 7:3 are those in Revelation 14:1 who are said to have on their foreheads the name of the Lamb and the Father. These marked ones are God's servants (Rev. 7:3; 22:3). They are purchased for God (Rev. 14:4), stand before God, and see his face (Rev. 14:3; 22:4). Just as Aaron bore with the mitre the name of God on his forehead and Moses was transfigured when God talked to him mouth to mouth out of the Glory-cloud (Num. 12:8), so the overcomers in the New Jerusalem will see God's face and his name will be on their foreheads. This is to say that they will bear the image of the glorified Christ.

### **Fifth Night Vision: Zechariah 4:1–14 Anointer of God's Temple**

If Zechariah's fourth night vision in Zechariah 3:1–10 took the reader into the holy of holies to witness the encounter between Christ the messianic Servant and Satan before the throne of God, the fifth night vision in Zechariah 4:1–14 reveals the sequel to Christ's victory over Satan. In the fourth vision, Christ is typified by Joshua, who is invested with holy robes and crowned with the golden diadem, which is a seal of the Spirit. In the fifth vision, Christ is typified by the royal figure of Zerubbabel who builds the house of God in the power of the Spirit. The interrelationship of Christ and the Spirit ("constantly

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<sup>34</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 118.

bound up with Messiah's presence is the presence of the Spirit") pervades the fourth and fifth night visions, the difference being that Christ receives more of the focus in Zechariah 3 and the Spirit more of the focus in Zechariah 4.

### **The Spirit as the Pattern for the Menorah**

The vision opens with Zechariah seeing a golden menorah. In the tabernacle, the menorah, which is the Hebrew word for lampstand, was a stylized tree with a central trunk, and three branches on either side that held seven lamps. The people would supply the oil for the lamps, and the priests serving in the tabernacle would trim the lamps each morning and then lite them in the evening. The seven lamps appear in this vision, but what is new in the vision is the two flanking olive trees (Zech. 4:3) that supply a continuous flow of oil.

The olive trees represent the divine Presence. The manner in which the olive trees overarch the lampstand from both sides reflects the two cherubim of the Glory-Presence with wings spread over the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies. Just as the presence of the divine Glory among the covenant people was pictured in the first vision by the red rider standing in the midst of the myrtles (Zech. 1:8), so in the fifth vision the Glory-Spirit is present in the midst of the covenant people under the symbolism of the oil of the olive trees flowing into the menorah. Fueled by the Spirit-oil, the flames arising from the lamps are the shining of the covenant community, an illuminating witness to the world (Zech. 4:4–10).

In the New Testament, the church is the temple built upon the foundation of Christ Jesus to be the habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:20–22; Heb. 3:6). But Kline stressed that it is particularly in Revelation 1:20 that the menorah is interpreted as the church, for the seven lampstands are identified as the seven churches. Then, in Revelation 11:4, the two prophets representing the witnessing church are equated with the lampstands of Zechariah 4. In Revelation 4:5, the seven torches of fire burning before the throne are identified as the seven Spirits, another intimation that the menorah-church bears the divine Glory-image.

Antecedent to Israel's tabernacle and the church temple is the archetypical heavenly temple. This Glory-Spirit temple, invisible to the eye now, will be unveiled in the revelation of the new heavens and earth. At that time, the beatitude of Revelation 22:4 ("they shall see God") will be realized for believers. This fulfillment is why John declares in Revelation 21:22 that there will be no further need of temples with the descent of the New Jerusalem. God himself is the temple in the New Jerusalem, his own Glory his holy house. Kline was quick to point out, however, that Revelation 21:22 is not intended to deny the perpetuity of the church-temple. He said, "Not a temple made by human hands, the church is God-built, a temple created by the Spirit, and God, even though he is his own temple-dwelling, will yet condescend to tabernacle forever in the church-temple." He then doxologically added, "Wondrous this union: we dwell in him, the divine temple, and he dwells in us the temple that he has made (cf. Isa. 57:15; 66:2). It is in Christ that we are that temple; indeed, Christ is that temple (cf. Mark 14:58; John 2:19ff.)."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 133. Kline returned to this theme in the closing chapter on Zech. 6:9–15. There in summary fashion he wrote, "According to Scriptural representations, the cosmic temple is not simply a place where God manifests his Glory; it is actually identified with God himself (Rev. 21:22), that is, with the self-manifestation of God within creation. (Needless to say, the intention is not that God is



### **The Spirit as Power for the Menorah Mission**

The menorah also witnessed to God being light and truth and reminded the covenant people of their purpose in the fallen world. They were called to glorify God by reflecting the light of his Glory back to him, a task that brings them into conflict with the satanic powers that are currently the rulers of darkness of this world. This is why the menorahs were lit every night in the holy place of the tabernacle. They were a testimony to the light shining in the darkness.

In Zechariah 4:7, the confrontational aspect of the menorah mission of the church's witness is emphasized. The "great mountain" there symbolizes the hostile imperial power that seeks to rival the mountain of God's temple on Zion. The church standing on Zion opposes this imperial power with its idol-cult. The church stands in opposition of the enemies of God and magnifies God's name.

According to Kline, the condemnatory aspect of the covenant people's menorah mission is again prominent in Revelation 11:1–13. In John's adaptation of Zechariah 4, the symbolism of the light of the menorah is interpreted as the light of truth, with the menorah being identified with God's two witnesses in Revelation 11:3–4. The world's hatred of the exposing and condemning light of the truth from the two witnesses is so demonic that, when the witnesses have finished their testimony, the beast from the abyss kills them, and people from all the nations celebrate with hellish glee (Rev. 11:7–11).

One dimension, then, of the church's menorah witness is maintaining a judicial-apologetic witness against the deceived, unbelieving world. But, another dimension is calling the lost to salvation in Jesus Christ. In Revelation 1:12–20, the heavenly Son of Man, his countenance like the sun, his eyes like flames of fire, appears in the midst of the radiant lampstand churches so that the churches appear as lights in the world. In Revelation 11, the two lampstand-witnesses carry out their mission in the confidence that Jesus, the Lord of Lords, is present with them in this mission by his Spirit (Rev. 11:4–6). These gospel-witnesses, ordained by Christ, go forth to all peoples, tribes, tongues, and the nations (Rev. 11:3). Though they will be silenced by the Beast (Rev. 11:7b–11), it will not be until they have completed their Great Commission mission (Rev. 11:7a). The Lord will quickly quell this Har Magedon challenge and exalt the witnesses to Glory (Rev. 11:11–12). The movement of Revelation 11 from age of testimony to hour of trial to eternal triumph puts forth the eschatological course of the menorah-church that is patterned after the mission of the Light of the world.<sup>36</sup>

### **Christ and the Covenantal Commission**

Zechariah 4:9 promised that the hands of Zerubbabel that have laid the foundation of the house shall also complete it. Kline saw the fulfillment of this prophecy in the great commission of Jesus Christ. As the risen one who possesses all authority, he issues a menorah mandate to the church to shed abroad the light of its gospel witness (Matt.

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identical with creation in a pantheistic sense.) More precisely, this Glory-temple is identified with the realm of heaven, the Glory-dimensioned realm presently invisible to mortals but to be opened to the redeemed at the Consummation. Created in the beginning and continuing forever, the cosmic Glory-temple, as God's own self-manifestation, constitutes a perpetual epiphany, a permanent entempling of the divine Presence." Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 225.

<sup>36</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 173.

28:18–20). Using the language of Revelation, Kline described Christ’s appearance to his disciples:

The risen Christ stood before his disciples as the victor, the slayer of the dragon, the conqueror of Satan and his power of death (cf. Rev. 12:5–11). He was the living one. He was dead—behold his hands and side—but was now alive forevermore, possessor of the keys of death and Hades (cf. Rev. 1:17, 18). He was the Son of Man exalted to the pinnacle of heaven with authority over all creation (Matt. 28:18b). This self-identification of Christ the Lord in the hour of his ascension, confronting his disciples with who he was and what he had done for them, constituted his claim on their covenantal confidence and commitment.<sup>37</sup>

Advancing from victory in his battle ordeal with Satan (Zech. 3) to the erection of God’s dwelling place (Zech. 4), Jesus is the builder who issues a menorah mandate to his church. In the words of Kline, Jesus “commissions his people to enter into the work of redemptive re-creation with him, promising them that afterwards they shall also sit down with him on his throne (Rev. 3:21).”<sup>38</sup>

### **Sixth Night Vision: Zechariah 5:1–11 Desolator of the Apostates**

The sixth vision is a vision of a judgment curse of exile distinguished in two stages, the destruction of the victims’ holding in the land (Zech. 5:1–4) and deportation to a foreign land (Zech. 5:5–11). Associated with this judgment within the covenant realm removal is the motif of uncleanness, the unclean stork (Zech. 5:9). Prominent in the indictment is speaking lies in the name of the Lord (Zech. 5:4).

The angel’s identification of the flying scroll as a curse in Zechariah 5:3 informs the reader that the scroll is a covenant document. The dimensions of the curse-scroll, twenty by ten cubits, were equivalent to the forecourt of the temple (1 Kings 6:3), a precinct associated with judicial process (1 Kings 8:31–32). The dimensions also match that of holy space spanned by the cherubim in the holy of holies (1 Kings 6:23–27), the site where the Mosaic covenant texts were kept. Zechariah 5:4 testifies that the Israelites have broken the covenant the Lord made with Moses. As a result of such sin and uncleanness, symbolized by the stork in Zechariah 5:9, the curse sanctions of the old covenant promises in Deuteronomy 28 and 29 reign down upon them.

To carry out the anathema mission of judgment of the flying scroll, the Lord sends heavenly agents of judgment, the angels symbolized by the winged cherubim that flank the ark of the scroll in the holy of holies. Guardians of the holy Presence of God, wielders of the flaming sword at the entrance of Eden, these celestial beings cut off all that profane God’s holy land and temple. The expunging of the apostates, however, brings realization of the blessings of the promise to true Israel. In Kline’s words, “the curse of the flying scroll is a surgical strike that selectively targets the apostate,” but “a spared, surviving remnant is implied.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 168.

<sup>38</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 169–170.

<sup>39</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 190.

The Messiah's menorah mission to the Gentiles in Zechariah 4 would be accomplished through the hardening and fall of Israel in Zechariah 5. This mystery, that the fall of Israel should lead to the salvation of the Gentiles, new covenant revelation brilliantly illuminates. "The remnant that was not cut off in the collapse of the typological Israelite kingdom was an earnest of the glory of Christ's church, 'which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all' (Eph. 1:23)."<sup>40</sup>

### **Mystery: The True Israel**

Kline believed that Revelation 12 is a key non-Pauline text that explains what Zechariah foresaw dimly in the sixth vision regarding the mystery of God's will, whereby all things up are summed up in Christ. In Revelation 12, the true Israel is represented in the figure of the woman, adorned with heavenly glory and giving birth to the messianic son. In Revelation 21:9 and following, the true Israel appears as a bride, the wife of the Lamb, shining with the glory of God. Kline explained that the focus on the woman in the book of Revelation is primarily on the woman as the mystery church of the messianic age. And yet, her role in bringing forth Christ as to the flesh also implies her previous presence in the old covenant, a testimony to the underlying unity and continuity of the ongoing covenant of grace.

Kline then detailed more exactly the allusions to Zechariah 5 in the Revelation 12 account of the woman who represents the true Israel. The deliverance of the Revelation 12 woman is put forth in exodus imagery. She is threatened by a river from the dragon's mouth, but the waters are swallowed by the earth, much like Israel's crossing of the sea (Rev. 12:15–16). The woman's flight from the dragon takes her into the wilderness, as did Israel's from pharaoh (Rev. 12:6, 13–14). The woman is given the two wings of a great eagle so that she can fly to safety (Rev. 12:6, 13–14), as God carried Israel on the wings of eagles (Exod. 19:4).

According to Kline, it is at this last point that the influence of Zechariah 5 is most evident, not just in the motif of both women flying, but in the description of the destination as "the place prepared for her" (Zech. 5:11; Rev. 12:6, 14). At the same time, however, the allusions that call attention to the exodus-like link between the two women in Zechariah 5 and Revelation 12 actually serve to focus the difference between the two. The exodus of the woman Wickedness in Zechariah 5 is a reversal of the Israelites deliverance from Egypt, an abandonment from the promised land to the world. The exodus of the woman in Revelation 12 is a true, antitypical deliverance from satanic world power accomplished by the child the woman brings forth, the mediator of the new covenant.

### **Mystery: The Harlot Babylon**

In Revelation 17:5, John, carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness, is shown a woman who has written on her forehead: "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth." Once again, Kline said, this is Zechariah's woman Wickedness. Exiled from Canaan, the woman Wickedness becomes identified with Babylon in Shinar, even set there as its enshrined queen (Zech. 5:7–11). She, like all false churches, despises any calling to be distinct from the world.

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<sup>40</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 192.

For Kline, the connection of the two women, woman Wickedness in Zechariah and harlot Babylon in Revelation, was mutually interpretative. He wrote, “The identity of the woman Wickedness in Zechariah 5 as the apostate community confirms the indications within the Book of Revelation itself that her equivalent there, the harlot Babylon, is an image of the false church.”<sup>41</sup> That is, elaboration of the career of the harlot church in Revelation opens up the history of the woman in Zechariah 5.

### **The False Church**

Prior to the full account of her career in Revelation 17, Revelation 11:8 provides key preparation for identifying the harlot Babylon. The great city in Revelation 11 is the erstwhile “holy city,” Jerusalem (Rev. 11:2), the place where the Lord of the two witnesses was crucified (Rev. 11:8). The great city is the apostate covenant community. The apostate character of the great city is symbolized in Revelation 11:1–2 by the act of separating the true covenant people of God, seen in the temple and altar, and the false members, seen in the outer court and the city of Jerusalem.

Kline then contrasted the harlot Babylon with the church-bride of the Lamb in order to show that Babylon the Great in Revelation is an apostate form of the covenant community.

Each is identified as a city—the harlot with unfaithful Jerusalem (Rev. 11:2, 8); the bride of the Lamb with the holy city, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, 9–10).

Each has a spectacular portraiture—harlot Babylon draped with the glittering enticements of a prostitute, a likeness of the beast (Rev. 17:3–4), itself a likeness of the draconic Satan; the bride of the Lamb adorned with the radiance of heavenly glory (Rev. 12:1; 21:11) and bright linen, the righteousness of the saints (Rev. 19:8), an image of Christ (cf. Rev. 1:13).

Each is a mother—harlot Babylon gives birth to the harlots and abominations of the earth (Rev. 17:5); the bride of the Lamb gives birth to the child who saves (Rev. 12:5), her offspring hold to the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17), a virgin company not defiled with women (Rev. 14:4).

Each is tied to persecution—harlot Babylon, like old Jerusalem, persecutes the prophets and the saints to the extent that she is drunk with their blood (Rev. 17:6; 18:24); the bride of the Lamb and her offspring are persecuted unto martyrdom (Rev. 12:11, 17).

Each is associated with the wilderness—harlot Babylon sits on the satanic beast in the wilderness (Rev. 17:3); the bride of the lamb, pictured as the mother of the son who is caught up to God’s throne, flees into the wilderness for refuge from the dragon and the beast (Rev. 12:13–14; 13:1–7).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 193–194.

<sup>42</sup> See Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 194–195.

Kline called this last parallel a “strange sequel” for the impression is given that the harlot Babylon in Revelation 17:3 is the corrupt derivative of the woman-bride in Revelation 12:13–14 who had fled into the wilderness from the dragon and his beast-agent. In other words, the harlot Babylon is a devolution, a false church, out of the true covenant community. But, the Lord preserves for himself a true bride.

### **The Harlot Babylon and the Woman Wickedness**

Kline believed that the conclusion that the harlot Babylon is the church in an apostate condition, not just a political or economic dimension of an unbelieving society, is furthered by the data showing that this apocalyptic figure is a continuation of Zechariah’s woman Wickedness. In Zechariah 5:1–11, the cutting off and separation of the apostates from the holy realm of the land provides the model for the anathematizing of the great city in Revelation 11:2. In both texts the false is distinguished from the true, a judicial discrimination where the holy standards of God’s temple are expressed in Revelation 11:1–2 by the measuring rod that recalls the measurements of the flying scroll of Zechariah 5:2. There is also the shared references to various temple courts. One referent of the twenty-by-ten-cubit dimensions of the scroll was the inner court of judgment, a court that fell within the measured area holy to God in Revelation 11:1. Outside of the measured area in Revelation 11:2 is the outer court, which, along with the great city, symbolized the rejected apostates. As the outer court and the great city are given over to trampling by the nations, there is the merging of the cut off group with the Gentile world that corresponds to the coalescence of the woman in the ephah with the Babylonian world in Zechariah 5:11.

The influence of Zechariah 5 is not limited to Revelation 11. According to the angel’s announcement of Revelation 17:1, “Come, and I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute,” the harlot Babylon, particularly her judgment, is the main theme of Revelation 17:1–19:10. Kline noted the following influences upon Revelation 17:1–19:10 from Zechariah 5.

In Zechariah 5, the sphere of the ephah and talent characterizes the apostate covenant community; in Revelation 17:1–19:10, the mercantile activity of the great city is presented, an activity that marks the false church that despises its calling to be distinct from the world.

In Zechariah 5:9, the woman Wickedness is transported to Shinar by the unclean stork; in Revelation 18:2, every unclean bird is associated with Babylon the Great.

In Zechariah 5:11, the woman Wickedness is enthroned in Babylon like a fertility goddess in the temple; in Revelation 18:7, harlot Babylon sits as a queen in the world city.

In Zechariah 5:3, the curse of the flying scroll punishes the thieves and perjurers and their houses; in Revelation 17:1, judgment is pronounced up the great prostitute who sits on the waters.

In Zechariah 5:1–4, the effect of the flying curse is the loss of possessions and a casting out; in Revelation 17:16–18:24, with harlot Babylon’s downfall, there is the loss of earthly treasure and fiery consumption.

In Zechariah 5:7, the angel lifts up the stone talent (circular in shape like a millstone) and casts it on the ephah, that in Zechariah 5:11 was to be deposited in the depth of the sea of the nations; in Revelation 18:21, a strong angel takes up a stone like a millstone and casts it into the sea, which Revelation 17:15 tells us is where harlot Babylon is seated.<sup>43</sup>

Kline even noted linkage between Zechariah 5 and the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. In his judgment, there is no mistaking the relationship of the woman Jezebel and her adulterous idolatry within the church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:20–23) to the harlot Babylon. A woman of whoredoms and sorceries (2 Kings. 9:22), Jezebel was “it would seem” the mother of Ahab’s daughter Athaliah—quite literally, a mother of harlots and abominations (Rev. 17:5). And, Athaliah was the historical model behind the woman Wickedness in Zechariah 5 (cf. 2 Chron. 24:7). Kline concluded that “the symbolic individualizing of the two harlot-Babylon figures of Zechariah and Revelation by these two intimately related evil queens, Athaliah and Jezebel respectively, attests to their equivalency.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Fallen is Babylon the Great**

Harlot Babylon in Revelation, then, represents apostasy in old Israel as well as in the false church of the present age. The woman in Revelation 12 symbolizes the true people of God before and after Christ. Unbelieving Israel has a continuing existence as the apostate harlot church. The remnant of Israel has a continuing existence as the nucleus of the ongoing community of faith of the new covenant.

The judgment-destiny awaiting both the woman Wickedness and the harlot Babylon is utter desolation, but their significance in relation to their respective old and new covenant orders are different. Kline explained that the fall of Israel in AD 70 put an end to the typological kingdom blessings and terminated the old covenant order itself. The fall of Babylon in the still future crisis, however, does not terminate the new covenant order. Rather, it is a precursor of the consummation of the blessings of the new covenant that accompany the kingdom of glory in its fullness. “Accordingly,” said Kline, “cries of ‘Woe’ at the catastrophic end of the harlot church (Rev. 18) are followed by shouts of ‘Hallelujah’ in heaven.”<sup>45</sup> They are shouts of praise to God because God has avenged the blood of the true church on the great whore. They are shouts of joy because now the wedding of the Lamb and his holy bride has come (Rev. 19:1–9).

## **Seventh Night Vision: Zechariah 6:1–8 Judge of the World**

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<sup>43</sup> See Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 195–197.

<sup>44</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 197.

<sup>45</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 199.

The seventh night vision, Zechariah 6:1–8, answers the “how long?” question of the first night vision in Zechariah 1:7–17 where the prayer raised heavenward was prompted by the news of the world brought by the rider on the red horse. The rider reported the defiant indifference of the nations to the Lord God, an indifference marked by their oppression of God’s people. The Lord assures his suffering servants through the intercession of the messianic Angel (Zech. 1:14–17) that he will deal with the nations at ease and that they, his servants, will be vindicated. Zechariah 6:1–8 announces the fulfillment of that divine promise.

The fact that in Zechariah 6:1 there are two mountains carries significance. In Zechariah 14:5, part of the final vision of the “burdens” of Zechariah and parallel to the closing night vision, another pair of mountains identified as the Lord’s appear. These mountains are produced as a result of the advent of the Lord with his holy ones. On that day when the Lord stands on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem, Zechariah 14:4, the Mount of Olives will be split and divided into two mountains. Striding the mountains are the feet of the towering figure of the Lord. Revelation 10:1–2 and 5 draws from this imagery where the mighty angel wrapped in a cloud, face like the sun and legs like pillars of fire sets his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. The Lord is coming, and he will bring to completion that which he has promised. For his own, the promise of Zechariah 14 is that he will provide a passage to safety through the valley created by the parted halves of Olivet, a mountain guarding their flanks and the overarching Presence of the Lord a shield above them.

### **Land of the North**

Zechariah 6:8 makes clear that the target of the chariots of wrath is “the land of the north.” In Zechariah 2:6–7 the exiles living in Babylon are summoned to flee back to Zion “from the land of the north.” Babylon is the appropriate symbol of the world in its opposition to the Lord in that Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, took captive the Davidic king, and exercised dominion over God’s people. But, Babylon is also the revival of Babel in Shinar, that is, “center of the world in its antichrist propensity to build a pseudo-Har Magedon and to exalt itself against the God of heaven.”<sup>46</sup> In this sense, Babylon, “land of the north,” is an apt symbol “for the satanic world in the final antichrist stage that evokes God’s final judicial wrath.”<sup>47</sup>

In the prophecy of Daniel, the antichrist theme is also associated with developments in the north, although Daniel used a different historical situation as his typological model. Antiochus Epiphanes is the “king of the north” whose career Daniel 11 transmutes into a prophecy of the man of sin who exalts himself above all gods. In this king of the north the world power pictured in the bestial little horn of Daniel 7 comes to climactic individual expression of satanic working.

Matching Daniel’s little horn, according to Kline, is the beast from the sea in Revelation 13, more exactly that beast at the point symbolized by the sixth and seventh heads. Further, Daniel’s antichrist king of the north is he that heads up the final eruption of evil represented by the eighth king in Revelation 17:11. In Revelation 17:12–14, he leads the deceived kings of the earth to battle the Lord God Almighty. In Revelation 19:11–16, this antichrist king is overwhelmed by the *parousia* of the King of Kings, Jesus

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<sup>46</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 211.

<sup>47</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 212.

Christ, who comes in the furious wrath of God. Kline said, “This judgment of the antichrist king of the north is what is signified in Zechariah’s seventh vision by the *parousia*-advent of the four chariots with the land of the north as ground zero of their attack.”<sup>48</sup>

### **The Spirit’s Sabbath**

Kline also argued that the concluding verse of the night visions, Zechariah 6:8, “Lo, those who go to the land of the north have set my Spirit at rest in the land of the north,” proclaims the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise in Zechariah 1:14–17 of his eschatological return to his people. Zechariah 6:8 puts forth the dawning of the eternal Sabbath, a vista of the world to come. Kline proclaimed, “The final trumpet has sounded and there is ‘delay no longer,’ the mystery of God has been finished as he announced to and through his servants the prophets (Rev. 10:6,7). Sabbath time has come.”<sup>49</sup> In this promised new day, God’s Glory-Spirit is both at rest and enthroned in the new heavens and earth, the saints dwelling in his presence and enjoying a world purged of every enemy.

### **Centerpiece: Zechariah 6:9–15 King of Glory**

Kline closed the book with a chapter dealing with Zechariah 6:9–15, the hinge between the presentation of the night visions in Zechariah 1:7–6:8 and the “burdens” in Zechariah 9:1–14:21. What tied everything together was the coming of the Messiah in his priest-king office.

Zechariah 6:9 opens with the command of the word of the Lord to Zechariah to make a crown and set it upon Joshua, the high priest, in Zechariah 6:11. Zechariah was to say then to Joshua, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord’” (Zech. 6:12). The Branch is the one who builds the temple and is invested with the right to the throne. In the New Jerusalem, the throne and temple coalesce so that there is no separate temple in the heavenly city (Rev. 21:22).

Grammatically, the marked repetition of the three clauses in Zechariah 6:12–13 indicates the antecedent to “his” in Zechariah 6:13 as being Yahweh so that the “two of them” refers to the Lord and his Anointed. In the same manner of Psalm 110 where the Messiah is stationed at the right hand of God, the proper translation of the preposition *al* in Zechariah 6:13 is “by” his throne.

According to Kline, Revelation softened the distinction of the two thrones. “It describes the Lamb as in the midst of the throne (Rev. 5:6; 7:17; cf. 3:21), which it even calls ‘the throne of God and the Lamb’ (Rev. 22:1, 3).”<sup>50</sup> Kline believed the teaching in Revelation reflects the closeness of the union of God the Father and God the Son in their co-enthronement over creation. Further, the elements of the theophanies of the Glory-Spirit and the Ancient of Days are blended into the representations of the priest-king figure of the Son of Man. This produces a single triune figure in Scripture revealed in the context of the divine Presence on the heavenly throne (Rev. 1:13–16).

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<sup>48</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 212.

<sup>49</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 214.

<sup>50</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 224.



### **God's Covenant Decree**

Kline finished by noting that each aspect of the Messiah's exaltation in Zechariah 6:9–15 follows a covenant transaction. Messiah's royal rule and temple building are tied to the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. His heavenly enthronement as priest-king is tied to the covenant oath of Psalm 110. The promise in Zechariah 6:15 that this will come to pass if the people diligently obey the voice of the Lord their God "is the preincarnate Christ directing his people in faith to himself as their vicarious probationer, who secures for them God's approbation and so puts them beyond probation."<sup>51</sup> In the words of Paul from Romans 5:19, it is by the obedience of the one that the many are made righteous.

But, Kline also emphasized that the Messiah's exaltation would follow humiliation. In Zechariah 6:12, Messiah's descent prior to his ascension is pictured by the designating of him as the Branch who comes from the line of David. Earlier, in Zechariah 3:8, the Branch is identified as the Suffering Servant. In fulfillment of prophecy, Christ, the promised Branch-Servant, goes to the cross so that he might redeem for himself a people for his own possession, a people pure and cleansed from all iniquity (Titus 2:13, 14).

The result of such a work, the acquiring of his church-bride with his own blood as testified to in Revelation 7:14 and 19:7–8, is the sounding forth of the music of heaven forever. According to Revelation 5:9 and 5:12, the saints will sing, "You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals: for you were slain and have purchased to God by your blood (a throng) from every tribe and people and nation." They will say with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

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<sup>51</sup> Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 236–37.

# Servant Standards

## Commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapters 24

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by Alan D. Strange

### Chapter XXIV Dissolving Ministerial Relationships

1. When a minister desires leave to resign a ministerial charge in order to accept a call to similar service in another charge within the Church the provisions of Chapter XXII, Section 12, shall be observed.

**Comment:** Inasmuch as this chapter is about dissolving ministerial relationships in circumstances other than a minister receiving a new call to service in this church, it begins by pointing back to FG 22.12, which details what happens when a minister seeks to leave his present charge and accept a call from another charge to similar service in the church. That is a rather ordinary sort of thing, and it is assumed that many using the FG may come here for that sort of circumstance and thus need to be pointed back to the proper place addressing this. This chapter will address other sorts of circumstances, often rather challenging ones, in which a ministerial relationship is dissolved.

2. If any congregation desires to be relieved of its pastor it may, through a duly called meeting of the congregation, ask him to resign. If the pastor agrees to do so, the presbytery shall be requested to dissolve the pastoral relationship as of a mutually agreeable date. If the pastor is not willing to resign the congregation may petition the presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship and may send representatives to the meeting to support the request. The presbytery may grant the request, but only after giving the pastor opportunity to present his reasons for not concurring, or it may urge the congregation to reconsider its action.

**Comment:** This section describes the, frankly, difficult circumstance of a congregation desirous of being relieved of its pastor. This serious action may be taken only by a duly called meeting of the congregation. We should all recall that such a duly called meeting comes about either by the initiation of the session or by the initiation of at least a quarter of the congregation requesting that the session call such a meeting (see FG 16). The session is the entity that must call the meeting, and it must ordinarily do so if duly requested by the congregation. The session in the present case (a congregation seeking to be relieved of its pastor) does not have discretion to refuse to call a properly requested congregational meeting. The nature of Presbyterianism dictates this: it is a congregation that calls a pastor, and the session of a local church cannot keep the congregation from asking for a meeting to consider asking the pastor to resign. The

congregation has a right to do this, and the session is thus, when duly requested (that is, a request that meets the requirements of this FG 16.1), bound to do so.

In general, a desire on the part of a congregation and/or session for any office-bearer (see also FG 26.4), including its pastor, to resign should allow, first of all, the officer in question, in this case the pastor, voluntarily to resign his charge. If he does not do that, say, upon sessional request or his own initiative, a congregational meeting may be held asking him to resign (such a vote requesting his resignation may, of course, fail, thus resolving the matter, at least for the time), and the pastor may then tender his resignation upon such a request. If he does offer his resignation, the matter goes to his presbytery as a request to dissolve the pastoral relationship at a date mutually agreeable (to the pastor and the congregation). It should be noted here that when a pastor is asked to resign by a majority of his congregation, he should ordinarily do so, unless some extraordinary reasons exist (he has been clearly unfairly maligned, misrepresented, etc.). This is because he no longer has the support that he did when called, and it is generally conceded that in such a case the man's effective ministry in that congregation has come to an end.

If the man in question, on the other hand, refuses to resign the pastorate, even if he has what he deems legitimate reasons for so refusing, the congregation may (not must) nonetheless petition the presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship. The congregation has the right to, and should, as a matter of propriety, send representatives to the presbytery to argue its case for why the pastoral relationship should be dissolved, if that remains the congregation's desire. The pastor in question may present his reasons for not concurring with the request of the congregation that such a relationship be dissolved. The presbytery may take one of two actions at this point: dissolve the pastoral relationship, thereby removing the pastor from such charge, even though contrary to the pastor's will; or the presbytery may ask the congregation to reconsider its request that the pastoral relation be dissolved.

The FG at this point does not stipulate what happens if the congregation persists in wanting to dissolve the ministerial relationship. Presumably it would come back to the presbytery, with further reasons for wanting the pastoral relationship dissolved, which request the presbytery would presumably ultimately grant, since governors are never imposed in Presbyterianism without the consent of the governed. It is conceivable that if the congregation persisted in what the presbytery regarded as improper reasons for desiring dissolution (they have become his enemy because he told them the truth, as Paul noted), then the presbytery could bring an exhortation along such lines to the congregation. In reality, however, it is impractical for a presbytery to insist that a congregation retain a pastor that they have come to desire to leave.

3. If a presbytery, or an agency of a presbytery or of the general assembly, decides to dissolve its relationship with a minister who is serving it under terms of a call it shall inform him of its decision and of the date on which the dissolution is to take place. It shall also provide adequate care of his needs to permit him to find another field of service.

If the body is an agency of a presbytery or of the general assembly, the agency shall at the same time notify the minister's presbytery of its decision.

a. If the minister agrees to leave his service with a body that is not a presbytery the body shall inform his presbytery of the dissolution.

b. If the minister does not agree to leave his service with the body he shall consult with it in person or by correspondence to clarify the reasons for the dissolution and to seek agreement.

If the body is a presbytery and the minister continues to withhold his agreement, the presbytery may nevertheless proceed to dissolve the relationship.

If the body is an agency of a presbytery or of the general assembly and the minister continues to withhold his agreement, he may request his presbytery to consult with the agency in the matter. If the presbytery agrees that the relationship should be dissolved it shall so inform the minister and the agency he serves and the dissolution shall be implemented as of the date originally set or, if that has become impractical, a later date established by the agency.

If the body is an agency of a presbytery and the presbytery does not agree with the dissolution the presbytery shall determine what redress is appropriate.

If the body is an agency of the general assembly and the presbytery does not agree with the dissolution it may, nevertheless, counsel the minister to accept the decision in the circumstances or it may overture the general assembly, seeking redress.

Continuation of the minister's financial support in such cases shall be determined by the body in the light of the existing circumstances.

If the matter is concluded by dissolution of the relationship the minister's presbytery shall be informed and the fact entered in its records.

**Comment:** This section addresses the circumstance in which an agency of a presbytery (say, its Home or Foreign Mission Committee) or of the general assembly (say, one of the program committees respecting its general secretary) wishes, for whatever reason(s), to dismiss or release someone in its employ. The agency desiring to dissolve the call with the minister in its service shall inform him of such a decision and of the date at which such dissolution shall occur. The agency shall provide adequate compensation during the time that he seeks to find another field of service, whether another call or some other field of service that may not involve a call, such as an appointment to teach in an institution outside the church. At the same time, the agency of the presbytery or general assembly shall notify the presbytery of the minister of its decision to dissolve the relationship.

If the minister agrees with the agency of the church seeking to dissolve his relationship with it, he shall inform the presbytery of his agreement and of the date of dissolution that he and the agency have agreed upon. If the minister does not agree with proposed dissolution, he may consult with the body proposing dissolution, either in person or in writing, seeking clarification for its reasons for dissolution, with a view to coming to some agreement. If the body contemplating dissolution is a presbytery, even if the minister continues to dissent from the proposed dissolution, the presbytery may nonetheless proceed to such dissolution. If the body proposing dissolution is the agency of a presbytery or the general assembly, and the minister continues to withhold agreement as to the dissolution, he may ask his presbytery to consult with the agency about the proposed dissolution.

If the presbytery agrees with the dissolution, it shall order it as the time previously set forth by the agency seeking such. If such has become impractical due to the passage of time, a later date for the dissolution shall be determined by the agency. If the presbytery does not agree with the dissolution proposed by the presbytery/general assembly agency, it shall determine the appropriate redress, namely, it may counsel the minister in question to accept the proposed dissolution nonetheless (though neither the minister nor presbytery

consider it fitting), or, if it chooses otherwise, the presbytery may overture the general assembly, as part of its seeking redress of the differences/grievances. In such cases, the body seeking dissolution shall determine whether to continue financial support in the light of such circumstances. If, at the end of the day, the matter is concluded with the dissolution of the minister's relationship with the body seeking it, the minister's presbytery shall be informed of such, and the circumstances entered into the minutes of his presbytery. This all reflects, obviously, a difficult situation that the FG seeks to provide an orderly way of resolving.

4. If a minister desires permission to resign a charge in order to take up a different kind of labor he shall offer his resignation to the body he serves and shall seek its concurrence, and shall ask his presbytery to approve the contemplated labor. Presbytery shall require him to inform it of the kind of work he would perform, with a view to determining if the work is the work of the ministry and if it would be in accord with his ministerial vows.

If the presbytery approves his doing the contemplated work, and if the body that he serves has agreed to his resignation, he shall be free to leave at a mutually agreeable date, and the presbytery shall be informed. If the body that he serves does not agree to his resignation he may withdraw it or ask the presbytery, at a meeting to which the body may send representatives to plead its cause, to dissolve the relationship. The presbytery may ask him to reconsider his request, or deny it, or grant it.

**Comment:** This section describes the circumstance in which a minister desires to resign a charge (whether a pastoral or other sort of ministerial position) to take up "a different kind of labor." The "different kind of labor" means that he is not accepting a call to service in a pastorate in or out of the OPC. He may be seeking to resign the pastorate to take up, e.g., teaching in the seminary, serving as a general secretary of a program committee, etc. He offers his resignation to the body he is serving (say, the local church of which he is pastor), seeking its concurrence with his stated desire to resign and seeking dissolution of the call from his presbytery. At the same time, he asks the presbytery to approve his contemplated labor (e.g., serving in an agency of the church). This means that the presbytery needs to be informed, and shall require the minister to inform it of his contemplated labor so that the presbytery can determine whether the work in view is that of the work of the ministry, the kind of work that would properly cohere with his ministerial vows.

If the presbytery approves his contemplated work, and if the body that he serves in his present call agrees to his stated desire to resign, he may leave at a date mutually agreeable with whatever body he currently serves. If the body he serves does not agree with his request to resign, he may withdraw the request and continue his current service. If he still wishes to resign and to pursue his other contemplated ministerial labor, he may proceed to press his case and to ask the presbytery to dissolve his current ministerial relationship, notwithstanding continuing opposition to such from the relevant calling body. If he wishes to do such, it must happen at a presbytery meeting at which the current calling body may send representatives to argue against dissolving the ministerial relationship. The presbytery, at such a meeting, may ask him to reconsider his request for dissolution of his present call, deny his request for such, or grant it. Of course, as has been noted herein previously, it is the case that, long term, a man cannot be held in a charge that he does not wish to serve in. It is parallel to what was noted earlier: a

congregation cannot, long term, be asked to bear with a man that it no longer wishes to have in its service as pastor, and no minister can, long term, be required to remain in a charge that he desires to leave.

5. When a minister desires to resign a charge without other ministerial work in view the procedures of Section 4 shall be followed. If the presbytery grants the request it shall advise with him concerning his resuming ministerial labor, taking into consideration Chapter XXVI of this Form of Government.

**Comment:** This section describes a circumstance in which a minister in a charge (whether in a congregation or some agency of the church) desires to resign such charge without other ministerial work in view. Section 4, above, should be followed, and then the presbytery has a decision to make. It may be that the work that he proposed to do after resignation from his current charge was not viewed by the presbytery as the work of the ministry, though he argued that it was or should be. This is a challenging situation because a man might resign a charge and say that he wishes to continue to supply pulpits and carry on the work of the ministry in that way, though his income may now derive from things like construction work, selling cars, etc. It lies in the discretion of the presbytery as to whether there is sufficient ministry work contemplated for his future, always with an eye to the possibility that he should not remain in the ministry.

It may be the case that even the man in question does not propose to do the work of the ministry chiefly just now but wants to continue in the ministry long-term and look for another call in due time. Maybe he admits that what is in view is not ministry as far as that from which he derives his living. The presbytery, if it grants his request under such a circumstance (“you can continue in the ministry though your full-time occupation is no longer that which meets any proper description of gospel ministry”), should counsel with the minister about his future in ministry. In other words, the presbytery should inquire as to whether he seeks to resume what properly are regarded as ministerial labors. If he does not intend to do so, at least after some time (he may request “time off” before jumping right back into ministry after having just left a charge), the presbytery shall, in terms of FG 26, pursue with him the question of whether he should continue in ministry or demit the office of minister if his labors are no longer genuinely able to be construed as ministerial. There is discretion here, especially on the part of the presbytery.

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# ServantReading

## Theology Is for Preaching

A Review Article

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By Charles M. Wingard

*Theology Is for Preaching: Biblical Foundations, Method, & Practice*, edited by Chase R. Kuhn and Paul Grimmond. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021, 343 pages, \$29.99, paper.

A pastor must be both theologian and preacher. In his mind, the union between them should be so strong that neither can be considered without the other. Theology and preaching are bound together like fuel and fire. Neglect theology and preaching becomes separated from the life-giving and life-sustaining truths of God's Word. Neglect preaching and there is no proclamation of divine truth, the truth that kindles a love for God and faith in Jesus Christ.

That love of theology and preaching distinguishes the twenty-one essays in *Theology Is for Preaching*. Contributors demonstrate expertise in their fields and a firm grasp of the place expository preaching holds in the life of God's church.

The editors, both lecturers at Moore Theological College in Sydney, are persuaded that "when we preach, we come to every text with a theology, and each text refines our theology as we carefully listen to the word" (xix). Therefore, faithful preachers pay attention to both biblical and systematic theology as well as adopting a preaching method that "will flow from theology" (xx–xxi).

Essays are arranged under five headings – Foundations, Methodology, Theology for Preaching, Preaching for Theology, and Theology Preached.

### Part 1: Foundations

In the opening essay, "Theology for Preaching, Preaching for Theology," Chase Kuhn makes the case that "preaching in its most biblically faithful form is deliberately theological" (1). The Reformation affirmation *sola scriptura* does not mean that interpreters approach a passage of Scripture as if it were a newly discovered island awaiting exploration, its terrain as yet to be mapped. Instead, there is a "nexus of recursion" between text and theology in which "theology informs our reading of Scripture, and our reading of Scripture continues to refine our theology" (10). Failure to study theology impoverishes preaching.

Mark Thompson contends that preaching is not a pragmatic tool chosen by the church to spread its message (31). Rather, preaching is grounded in the doctrine of God—the God who speaks—and with words reveals his character and plans. Indeed, "God's speech is the engine room of the biblical story" (23–24). His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, is the Word made flesh, and his life and ministry were "word-saturated" (29).

Other essays in this section include a lexical study of words translated “preaching” and “teaching” in our English versions, a historical examination of the Second Helvetic Confession’s denominating the sermon “as the word of God,” and a presentation of the biblical qualifications of preachers and the way they are set apart for the preaching office. The last essay (67–79) by Christopher Ash contains a helpful review of the qualification of pastors and the role that ecclesiastical bodies perform in examining candidates for ministry. The God who sends out ministers to fields of harvest is good and sovereign, and those preparing for ministry do well to “remember that God is able to get you into the service where he wants you, in the place he desires, in the time he chooses” (78). Candidates for ministry, sessions, and presbyteries will benefit from the author’s exposition of Scripture and prudent counsel.

## **Part 2: Methodology**

These seven chapters cover a variety of topics as they relate to preaching methodology and include the role of Scripture in the worshiping congregation, Old Testament hermeneutics (with a helpful explanation of the emphases of Christocentric and Christotelic views of preaching, 111–27), the implications of proclaiming Christ crucified in preaching, and the person of the preacher.

In his chapter “Expositional Preaching in Historical Context: A Rich and Inspiring Resource” (155–78), Peter Adam offers “twenty features of expository preaching” (156–57). He demonstrates how those features were displayed in the preaching of Augustine and Calvin. Their preaching methods serve as a vantage point from which contemporary preachers may evaluate their own work.

## **Part 3: Theology for Preaching**

How preaching is shaped by the doctrines of salvation, sanctification, eschatology, and worship is the focus of this section.

Although most readers of *Ordained Servant* are not a part of the Anglican tradition, they will still benefit in reading David Peterson’s “The Priority of Proclamation: Preaching in a Liturgical Context” (236–50). He notes the inclusion of Psalm 95 in the order of daily morning prayer (found in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer) and its position before the day’s other Scripture lessons. Psalm 95, he comments, “is both a call to corporate worship and also a challenge to hear God’s voice and not harden one’s heart against him” (242–43). Study of historic orders of liturgies can alert today’s pastors to how the various parts of worship fit together and serve the ministry of the Word. We should assume that earlier generations may have captured significant insight that may well have escaped us. Whatever our tradition, we will prepare better for worship and ministry of the Word if we have taken the time to familiarize ourselves with the historic liturgies of the church.

## **Part 4: Preaching for Theology**

Theology shapes the lives of those assembled to hear God’s Word preached. Just how this transformation takes place concerns this section’s three essays.

According to Simon Gillham, as the congregation grows in right theology (its knowledge of God), hearers grow in maturity and godliness. Therefore, “there is a perpetual feedback loop, or better a feedback spiral. Knowledge leads to transformation



(to fear of God, obedience, love, righteousness, and the like), and transformation leads to knowledge. What is more, both are expected to continue to do so” (254–55). Preaching, at its best, does more than derive a series of truths from a text and then present them along with applications. Biblical preachers must consider the literary forms of the Old and New Testaments, and how they should influence the composition of our message. He deals with two specifically: narrative and parables (260ff). The preached Word is meant to shape the congregation throughout the week as they live together in families and in communities, communicating within these contexts right theology (264–66).

A pastor instructs his congregation in how to listen to sermons. Helpful counsel for listening well is found in Jane Tooher’s (269–85) essay. Her counsel is concrete and imminently practical. For example, she offers a list of questions that an “ideal listener” might ask in response to a sermon, including “What must I do? What might I do? What can I do? (actions),” “How does this change / challenge / encourage my thinking? (knowledge),” and “How does this passage challenge / correct / encourage my emotions?” (278). Any reader—pastor or lay person—will benefit from her wisdom.

Paul Grimmond fittingly concludes this section with “Letting the Word Do the Work: A Constructive Account of Expository Preaching” (286–97). Beyond question, biblical preaching must be faithful to the text and communicated in language that is accessible to the congregation, but it also must appeal to the heart. “Faithful expository preaching will shape God’s people by addressing their hearts in the very way that Scripture addresses the heart” (292). Week-by-week expository preaching gives the congregation the “framework” they will need to live faithfully and obediently for Christ in their various relationships (292–93).

## **Part 5: Theology Preached**

The final section forces the preacher to consider what his congregation actually hears when he preaches.

Of course, they must hear a sermon that is faithful to the Word of God. For that to happen, argues Simon Manchester, the preacher must listen before speaking (301–12). This requires that the minister himself listen to God’s Word before he preaches, a point the author ably demonstrates from Jeremiah 23:16–32. Are the preacher’s words accurate expositions of the text, or does he only tell the congregation what he thinks they need to hear? The author shares that “one of the things I keep thinking through with my own team in the ministry is whether we are turning good news into bad and caning God’s people, or are we turning bad news into good simply to satisfy our people and protect ourselves?” (304–5)

Phillip Jensen concludes the book with a sermon on Luke 5:1–11, “Meeting Jesus,” (313) and offers observations about the sermon. In keeping with the book’s premise, he explains how his commitment to the unity of Scripture shapes his message (322). I wish there had been additional chapters like this—sample sermons followed by the preacher’s explanation about how he approached the text and selected his sermon’s contents.

## **Conclusion**

I recommend this book. Its contributors succeed admirably in demonstrating the critical importance of theology to preaching. The link between right theology and faithful preaching is indissoluble.

*Theology Is for Preaching* is a much-needed corrective to an unfortunate trend in contemporary evangelicalism. We live in a time when many preachers, consciously or otherwise, approach preaching without regard to how their own theological tradition shapes their ministry of the Word. This is misguided. Theology has a disciplining effect on the preacher, directing both what he says and does not say. David Starling puts it well when he reminds that

a prior knowledge of the theological tradition can have an appropriately chastening effect, reminding the brash or impetuous interpreter that he or she is not the first to wrestle with these verses, and that the conclusion that seems self-evident to one interpreter is not always so obvious to another. Theological understanding can sometimes help us to say less, not more. (91–2)

Do not look in this volume for any shortcuts to faithful biblical preaching. The preacher must perform strenuous spadework in the biblical text as he prepares his sermons. It is challenging, time-consuming work—so much so that the pastor ends up spending little or no time preparing the congregation to hear and apply the preached Word. The essays in part four will help pastors tend to this important duty.

Reading this book made me think of the treasure Presbyterians have in questions two and three of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Here we find our theology of the Word derived from Scripture itself: “The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.” Here we find the preacher’s task: He is to study the whole counsel of God so that he may proclaim “what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.”

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# ServantReading

## Reflections on Revelation in the Time of Covid, *by Susan E. Erikson*

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By Gregory E. Reynolds

*Reflections on Revelation in the Time of Covid: Finding Hope When Life Is Hard*, by Susan E. Erikson. Eugene, OR: Resource, 2021, xii+ 177 pages, \$20.00, paper.

This book of poetry is composed in free verse. Free verse is free of both meter and rhyme. Blank verse, as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, has meter but not rhyme. Erikson employs free verse, which has dominated the twentieth century, but in Erikson's case with excellent poetic rhythm, which mimics ordinary language and is artfully done.

The New Formalism, to which I as a poet subscribe, has surprised the modern world with a return to poetic structure of all kinds, from the quatrain to the sonnet and the pantoum. My quarrel with the modern dominance of free verse should not mean the elimination of free verse but rather the happy inclusion of historic forms, and perhaps the invention of some new ones.

The essence of free verse hearkens back to oral culture, which is what poetry is all about—memorable, sounding in the ear in unforgettable ways! As T. S. Eliot concludes in his essay "Reflections on *Vers Libre*," "we conclude that the division between Conservative Verse and *vers libre* does not exist, for there is only good verse, bad verse, and chaos."<sup>1</sup> Alas, the mnemonic power of poetry is the great resource of the preacher. Its lack in the contemporary scene is directly related to the failure of poetry to capture the popular imagination.

Erikson divides the book into four parts: "I Need You Lord" (5 poems), "The Church in Christ" (19 poems), "We Battle in Christ" (20 poems), and "Our Victory in Christ" (11 poems). The shape of the book is consistent with the theme revealed in the subtitle, "Finding Hope When Life Is Hard." As with the book of Revelation there is an eschatological movement represented in the move from the opening poem, "The Spirit of the Age" (2–4) to the concluding poem, "The Age of Eternity" (175–77). Identical tercets begins each poem, connecting the two.

I feel as if the world is falling down a rabbit hole,  
And I am Alice,  
Tumbling right behind.

The two couplets following these tercets are:

Are you there, LORD?  
My soul is full of troubles.

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<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot, "Reflections on *Vers Libre*," in *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965), 189.

*I AM coming soon,*  
He says.

The next long stanza is repeated in both places, followed by a significant variation:

I need you, LORD.

*I am the Alpha and Omega,  
First and Last,  
Beginning and the end.  
David's son and David's Lord,  
I bring God's glory and His grace,  
I wield the sword.*

The opening poem ends with a simple couplet query:

Is this the end?  
Is this the time You will appear?

The concluding poem answers the query with an apocopated summary of the judgment and the eschatological Paradise state, ending, as the book of Revelation does, with the confident prayer, *Come Lord Jesus! Come!*

I say all of this to demonstrate that well-crafted free verse is not chaotic. Erickson displays considerable care and subtlety in her poetic structure.

Typographically there are inconsistencies in the two poems. The norm is to capitalize the first word in each line. Another way of doing this is to lowercase the first word of lines not preceded by punctuation in the last line. This might be better done when all but periods precede. In other words, only complete sentences begin with Capitals. However, that second way of capitalizing, mentioned above, seems to be consistently done throughout most of the book.

The range of content makes for an interesting variety, displaying the Old Testament roots of Revelation in, for example, "And Moses Said" (14). Each poem has biblical references footnoted. Entire Scripture passages are interspersed throughout the collection (1, 18, 68, 146). Some poems are explicitly related to a text in Revelation. For example, the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 are each the subject of separate poems (19–40).

Erikson often refers to our contemporary situation, demonstrating the power of John's apocalypse to apply to every age between the two comings of Christ. Yet, such references will apply in any time before the coming of our Savior.

I am an exile in a wilderness of strife,  
An anxious neighbor to an angry crowd,  
And I am bowed  
by my own sin as well as theirs. (100, "Holy War")

The biblical humility of the poet is beautifully expressed. This should also be a creative aid to preachers as they contemplate how to relate the text of Scripture to their congregations. For those unfamiliar with poetry, this may be a good place to start, since it digs into subject

matter familiar to the pastor. Erikson is rarely specific about our contemporary situation. In “Jars of Clay” she begins,

COVID digs by harrowing,  
Its fiercest teeth are plowing through  
our covenants with death,  
Our covenants that honor kings above all else,  
That rest in shelters  
we have fashioned out of us,  
Constructed out of narratives that put our egos first.  
We are a constant chattering,  
A gathering of birds,  
A murmuration mumbling the ancient lies  
as if our chattering could muzzle sacred words. (135)

I would like to see more enjambment in these poems. Enjambment is seen when a poetic line stops before its natural linguistic pause.

I love to open Your Word.  
It feels like  
Opening the back door on a summer day. (11)

Smell the ruthless wind that blows in from the viper’s nest,  
And from such arrogance,  
*How delightfully depraved,*  
They brag,  
*How decadent to drink down to the dregs*  
*the blood of saints,*  
*The blood of those who would not bend a knee*  
*before the kings and priests of our rapacious immorality,*  
*Before the worshipping of sex and stuff. (113–14, “Bending”)*

Enjambment seems especially suitable to free verse. But Erikson’s staccato rhythms make up for this to a large degree, since when read aloud, the meaning strikes home, echoing the power of the text of Revelation. Such oral structure should also be of help to the preacher, especially one who may be overly tied to a manuscript.

On a topic circumscribed by a topic like Covid and the book of Revelation, I would have been inclined to produce a briefer chapter book.

Poetry based on the Bible is not easy to write. Erikson has done a wonderful job. In these poems we find a deep sense of human need, a realistic view of our fallen world, and the power, holiness, and grace of God exalted. Anyone who needs encouragement while living in this fallen world will surely find it here, since her poems are rooted in the infallible Word of God.

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# ServantPoetry

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By James Ryan Lee (1980–)

## Against Sin

“My soul waits for the Lord,  
More than the watchmen for morning;  
Indeed, more than the watchmen for morning.”

Psalm 130:6

Present hope forged in forgiveness of past sin  
cautions against remaining sin—future sins—  
which is really fear before the Lord,  
the only fear for a Christian,  
fear in the proper sense, fear without insecurity  
Augustine calls it—*desire for the continuance of God’s presence*.  
Or what I think Anselm means when he writes:  
*Let me seek You in desiring You;*  
*let me desire You in seeking You;*  
*let me find You in loving You;*  
*let me love You in finding You.*  
What a great and terrible prayer.

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