



servant ministry

ordained servant
october 2021

Ordained Servant Online

A Journal for Church Officers

E-ISSN 1931-7115

CURRENT ISSUE: SERVANT MINISTRY

October 2021

From the Editor

We live in rancorous times which unlike former times cause us to experience the rancor almost ubiquitously and continuously. The ease with which messages may be sent through various media tend to undermine thoughtfulness and personal accountability. Sin has always caused societal toxicity, but the contemporary electronic environment has exacerbated this poisonous atmosphere. Church officers are not immune to this poison and are called not only to avoid it themselves but also to help their congregations to eschew it.

Because ministers are in the best position to model humility, compassion, and thoughtful communication, I have thought it prudent to cover this topic in an editorial that is slightly expanded from 2012, “A Little Exercise for Young Theologians Revisited.” Old theologians are always in need of renewing the exercise. Richard Gaffin’s submission of “Ordination and Installation Charge” reminded me of this editorial, based on Helmut Thielicke’s (1908–86) 1962 booklet entitled *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*.¹ Gaffin reminds us that essential to preaching the Word faithfully is a servant attitude. As Paul reminded Timothy, “the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness (2 Tim. 2:24–25).” Gentleness, patience, and kindness are an essential part of the whole counsel of God we are sworn to uphold.

“Reflections from the Front Lines” is part of the initiative of the Special Committee on Ruling Elders of the CCE to address the need of “assisting in the education, training, and encouragement of ruling elders in the discharge of the duties of their office.” I am working with the committee to incorporate a podcast as part of the ministry of *Ordained Servant* to address the needs of the office of elder where most appropriate. When a sufficient number of topics addressing the education, training, and encouragement of ruling elders is complete, the podcasts will expand their subject matter for pastors and deacons, encompassing the entire mission of the journal.

Danny Olinger gives us the fourth chapter of *The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation: Chapter 4 – “Images of the Spirit”* (1980). His discovery of Meredith G. Kline’s 1946 ThM thesis in the Montgomery Library of Westminster Theological Seminary led to his development of Kline’s work on Revelation throughout Kline’s writings. Kline’s work on John’s Apocalypse, together with Olinger’s summary and analysis, is an unfolding treasure to the church. This is also the second part of our republication of Meredith G.

¹ Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, trans. Charles L. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

Kline's 1946 thesis.

I continue to be impressed with Alan Strange's commentary on our Form of Government. It is destined to be of enormous help to ministers, sessions, candidates, and presbytery committees on candidates and credentials.

In "Chrysostom on Preaching the Word" Joseph Tipton reviews a new book on the subject by Gerald Bray. Tipton's review reminds us of the strengths and weaknesses of the hermeneutics of the ancient church. But Chrysostom's pastoral care in accommodating his congregation in his preaching is a good reminder to preachers to follow the example of our Savior's use of illustrations from common life.

In "Can We Fully Separate Ecclesiology and Polity?" Ryan McGraw reviews Gregg Allison's *The Church: An Introduction*. This book is part of a Crossway series of Short Studies in Systematic Theology. This primer on the doctrine of the church calls churches to conform their church polity to a biblical doctrine of the church, even as its author comes to some conclusions different from ours.

Stuart Jones's review of Hongyi Yang, *A Development, Not a Departure: The Lacunae in the Debate of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Gender Roles*, gives us some helpful ideas on how to navigate this profound and presently controversial topic.

Finally, do not miss eighteenth-century black female poet, Phillis Wheatley's "A Hymn to the Evening."

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

CONTENTS

ServantThoughts

- Gregory E. Reynolds, "A Little Exercise for Young Theologians Revisited"

ServantWork

- Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Poured Out Like a Drink Offering: Ordination and Installation Charge"
- Gregory E. Reynolds, "Reflections from the Front Lines"

ServantTruth

- Danny E. Olinger, *The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation: Chapter 4 – "The First Resurrection: A Reaffirmation"* (1976)
- Meredith G. Kline, *A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John, Part 2*

ServantStandards

- Alan D. Strange, “Commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapters 22”

ServantReading

- Joseph A. Tipton, A Review Article, “Chrysostom on Preaching the Word,” on *Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom* by Gerald Bray
- Ryan M. McGraw, A Review Article, “Can We Fully Separate Ecclesiology and Polity?” on Gregg R. Allison, *The Church: An Introduction*
- Stuart R. Jones, review Hongyi Yang, *A Development, Not a Departure: The Lacunae in the Debate of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Gender Roles*

ServantPoetry

- Phillis Wheatley (1753?–1784), “A Hymn to the Evening”

FROM THE ARCHIVES “ORDINATION, SERVANT LEADERS”

http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-29.pdf

- “On Fasting, Death, and Joy: Reflections on My Upcoming Ordination” (Hugh Lynn) 23 (2014): 78–80.
- “How to Prepare Spiritually for Ordination Exams” (Ryan M. McGraw) 21 (2012): 52–56.
- “On the Laying on of Hands” (R. D. Anderson) 13:2 (Apr. 2004): 44–48.
- “A Little Exercise for Young Theologians” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 21 (2012): 12–14.
- “The ‘Christian Soldier’ and ‘Humble Servant’ Models: A Paradox for Pastors?” (Robert B. Needham) 4:3 (Jul. 1995): 62–66.
- “An Open Letter to a New Pastor in His First Charge” (Arthur Fox) 4:2 (Apr. 1995): 34–36.
- “Sage Advice for the New Pastor” (Allen C. Tomlinson) 29 (2020): 139–42.

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

A Little Exercise for Young Theologians Revisited

Gregory E. Reynolds

When I think back on my brashness as a young theologian, I shudder; and whenever that same brashness rears its ugly head today, I shudder still; but age and Christian experience have at least taught me to recognize this monster within.¹

Very early in my Christian life, while still considering a call to the ministry, I came across a little booklet first published in 1962 by Eerdmans entitled *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*.² I recognized the author, Helmut Thielicke (1908–86), from my reading of his *Encounter with Spurgeon*³ in Bible school in 1972. I have exercised myself with this sage booklet at least once a decade ever since, and never without profit, since the demon of pride is ever in need of being exorcised.

While avoiding the dangerous dichotomy of setting the Christian life over against doctrine, Thielicke does not confuse the two by eliding doctrine into life. One without the other is a sign of spiritual illness. Thus, he addresses his seminary students like a wise father:

You can see that the young theologian has by no means grown up to these doctrines in his own spiritual development, even if he understands intellectually rather well the logic of the system . . . There is a hiatus between the arena of the young theologian's actual spiritual growth and what he already knows intellectually about this arena.⁴

Thielicke goes on to liken early theological training to puberty, during which it is as unwise to unleash the novice on the church as a preacher, as it would be to let the young singer sing while his voice is changing.⁵

Furthermore, time spent in the lofty realms of truth makes the novice susceptible to the “psychology of the possessor,” in which love is sadly absent. “Truth seduces us very easily into a kind of joy of possession.”⁶ “But love is the opposite of the will to possess. It is self-giving. It boasteth not itself, but humbleth itself.” But when “truth is a means to

¹ This editorial originally appeared in digital form on OPC.org on February 2012. It appears in the 2012 printed annual: “A Little Exercise for Young Theologians” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 21 (2012): 12–14. This version has some added material.

² Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, trans. Charles L. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

³ Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963).

⁴ Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

personal triumph,”⁷ the young theologian returns home with a keen sense of membership in an esoteric club, displaying his rarefied tools to the annoyance of all and the hurt of some. Thieliicke observes, “Young theologians manifest certain trumped-up intellectual effects which actually amount to nothing.”⁸

The only cure for this malady, insists Thieliicke, is an active faith that cultivates love, that is, living one’s faith out of love for God and those around us. Our theology must be worked out in the life of the church,

We must also take seriously the fact that the “subject” of theology, Jesus Christ, can only be regarded rightly if we are ready to meet Him on the plane where he is active, that is, within the Christian church.⁹

and it must be worked out in light of eternity,

A well-known theologian once said that dogmatics is a lofty and difficult art. That is so, in the first place, because of its purpose. It reflects upon the last things; it asks wherein lies the truth about our temporal and eternal destiny.¹⁰

and it must be worked out in spiritual battle,

Thus it is possible to become an eschatological romanticist . . . Such a person nevertheless has not comprehended a penny’s worth of what it means to live on the battlefield of the risen Lord, between the first and second coming, waiting and praying as a Christian.¹¹

Thieliicke knew the true exercise of a theologian’s faith in spiritual battle. In 1935 he was refused a post at Erlangen due to his commitment to the Confessing Church, which opposed National Socialism, and in which Dietrich Bonhoeffer was famously active. In 1936 he became professor of systematic theology at Heidelberg. But he was dismissed in 1940 after repeated interrogations by the Gestapo. He went on to pastor a church in Ravensburg, and in 1942 he began teaching in Stuttgart until the bombing in 1944, when he fled to Korntal. After the war ended, he began teaching at Tübingen, and finally in Hamburg, where he pastored the large congregation of St. Michaelis.

Finally, Thieliicke warns the young theologian—older ones need this, too—to beware of reading Scripture only as a matter of exegetical endeavor rather than God’s “word to me.” He urges a “prayed dogmatics,”¹² in which theological thought breathes “only in the atmosphere of dialogue with God.”¹³ “A person who pursues theological courses is spiritually sick unless he reads the Bible uncommonly often.”¹⁴

⁷ Ibid., 17, 19.

⁸ Ibid., 11–12.

⁹ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹¹ Ibid., 29–30.

¹² Ibid., 33.

¹³ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴ Ibid., 40.

One aspect of human pride Thielicke does not confront in his little exercise is plagiarism. The temptation of preachers to copy the work of others in their preaching, while failing to give proper attribution, has always been a problem. The electronic availability of sermons, especially services that provide weekly sermons, has exacerbated the problem. As we have seen in recent years, our own Reformed pastors are not exempt from falling into the temptation.

In a culture where celebrity is accorded high esteem, the temptation to copy the work of well-known preachers is ever present. Congregations often cultivate the soil for this temptation by idolizing the famous Reformed conference speakers and communicating unrealistic expectations of the everyday pastor who normally must produce two sermons a week. It is pride, however, that succumbs to this enticement. While the local pastorate may be looked down upon, the humility of the cross must make us content with service in small pastures.

Of course, there is a gray area when it comes to sermon preparation. Most of us use commentaries and even sermon series in our development of sermons. Developing our own outlines from careful exegesis first, will help us to flee the seduction of plagiarism. When we make the ideas or many thoughts and even applications found in print our own, plagiarism is not engaged in. But copying someone else's outline or using verbatim sentences and phrases without acknowledging their sources is plagiarism.

While we will not agree with Thielicke's theology at every point, the gist of his message to young theological students is so pointed that there is nothing quite like it in English. Within our own tradition, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield delivered an address at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1911 entitled "The Religious Life of Theological Students."¹⁵ In the strongest possible terms, Warfield pleads for a godly and learned ministry: "But before and above being learned, a minister must be godly. Nothing could be more fatal, however, than to set these two things over against one another."¹⁶ He sums this emphasis up nicely, "Put your heart into your studies."¹⁷

No exercise in the young theologian's or minister's life is better calculated to keep him humble than regular contact with God himself. Warfield cautions his students:

I am here today to warn you to take seriously your theological study, not merely as a duty, done for God's sake and therefore made divine, but as a religious exercise, itself charged with religious blessing to you; as fitted by its very nature to fill all your mind and heart and soul and life with divine thoughts and feelings and aspirations and achievements. You will never prosper in your religious life in the Theological Seminary until your work in the Theological Seminary becomes itself to you a religious exercise out of which you draw every day enlargement of heart, elevation of spirit, and adoring delight in your Maker and Savior.¹⁸

We are, after all, called to be warriors; but the kind of spiritual warrior that Scripture calls us to be is not the gladiator seeking personal victory and glory, but rather the soldier

¹⁵ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 1:411–25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 412.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 416.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 417.

of the cross who seeks to magnify the person of his Savior and Lord. J. Gresham Machen captured this spirit well in his sermon “Constraining Love.” Christian militancy should never be confused with sectarian belligerence, hubris, or meanness of spirit. But pride can also move us to shrink in cowardice from defending the truth of the gospel. Machen made this clear in his sermon to the second general assembly of our, then, new church. How many movements, he asked,

have begun bravely like this one, and then have been deceived by Satan . . . into belittling controversy, condoning sin and error, seeking favor from the world or from a worldly church, substituting a worldly urbanity for Christian love. May Christ’s love indeed constrain us that we may not thus fall!¹⁹

If Christianity teaches us nothing else, it must teach us the value of the cross—the chief expression of God’s constraining love for sinners. If we learn nothing else from the cross, we must learn humility—a humility that leads us to cling to the Savior who died to save us. As we minister, whether young or old, we must always remember that “we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Cor. 4:7); thus,

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive (Col. 3:12–13).

Gregory E. Reynolds is pastor emeritus of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire, and is the editor of *Ordained Servant*.

¹⁹ J. Gresham Machen, “Constraining Love,” in *God Transcendent and Other Sermons*, ed. Ned Bernard Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 141.

Servant Work

Poured Out Like a Drink Offering: An Ordination and Installation Charge

by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

John,¹ you have just been set apart by the church, under the lordship of its head, Jesus Christ, as a minister of the gospel, a ministry that is to be for the wellbeing of the church. As you have requested, I am privileged now to charge you on this important occasion from God's Word, and I have decided to do that along these lines.

According to the Nicene Creed—true to Scripture—the church is one, holy, catholic (or universal), and apostolic. These four attributes, it is important to see, stand or fall together; each depends on and is qualified by the other three. From one angle, then, the church is and will remain one, holy, and universal, only as it is and remains truly apostolic.

It is the church—one, holy, and catholic—as *apostolic* that I want to reflect on with you now for a few minutes. While it is true that we have not ordained [or installed] you as an apostle (I am assuming that is clear to you!), nonetheless my charge to you is to aspire to a ministry that may be said to be apostolic, to a ministry that is in the interest of furthering the unity, holiness, and catholicity of the church, as it is a ministry intent on maintaining and preserving the apostolicity of the church.

How are you to do that? What would such an apostolic ministry look like? Well, many things could be said in this regard. For instance, I could remind you that the apostolicity of the church resides first and most deeply today, as it always has down through the centuries, in its *apostolic foundation*, in being founded on the witness of the apostles. I would remind you that the church is and remains apostolic only as it holds fast to that apostolic witness as the very words of the exalted Christ. I would also remind you that the Reformation's *Scriptura sola* reflects its renewed appreciation of the church's true apostolicity.

So, for all this, it would be appropriate this evening, in a time where so much is at stake for the church in its fidelity to Scripture and doctrinal soundness, where trends of unbelief and rejection of the gospel and Scripture are on the rise as never before in our culture—it would be appropriate for me to exhort you, for example, to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). Or in the words of Paul—the apostle—to Timothy—among the first of his non-apostolic successors down through the centuries—I could charge you to “hold fast the pattern of sound words, . . . to guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (2 Tim. 1:13–14).

¹ A charge, with slight variations, given on a number of occasions over the years in ordination and installation services, most often of a former student either as a pastor, a missionary evangelist, or a seminary teacher. “John” is no one in particular but stands for all those charged.

I could do that—I could do that most appropriately—but instead I want rather to challenge you by reflecting with you on what is fairly seen as another dimension of true apostolicity, an aspect that is as transferable as it is enduring. It surfaces, for instance, in a number of places and different ways throughout the letters of Paul. Here I focus on it as we find it in Philippians 2. There in the latter half of the chapter, in verse 17, he writes, “But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.”

First, we see here immediately that sacrificial language and images are plain and pronounced: Paul is being poured out like a drink offering, a sacrificial libation. No doubt the sacrificial system of the Old Testament is in the background—for instance, the burnt offerings with the accompanying drink offerings of wine offered every morning and evening at the entrance to the tabernacle to consecrate it as the place where God is present and meets with his people. With something like this background in mind Paul sees himself as a drink offering.

What specifically or concretely does he have in mind? Some maintain—he is in prison in Rome at this time—that he is thinking of what may be his impending martyrdom (“poured out” is seen as referring to his own bloodshed). But that view, I think, misses the point. In fact, it blunts Paul’s point.

Rather, here Paul is looking at the *whole* of his ministry and, we may fairly say, not only in its apostolic uniqueness but also in a way that is to be true of every minister of the new covenant. To be sure, that ministry may culminate in a martyr’s death, as it has for many and apparently did eventually for Paul. But here he has in view the present and the past as well as what may be the future of his ministry. Sometime later he will write to Timothy, using the same verb, “I am *already* being poured out as a drink offering” (2 Tim. 4:6). In view, then, is a mark of his ministry that is a *constant* mark.

So, when he says, “I am being poured out like a drink offering” (the present tense he uses has a progressive sense here), he is best seen as likely having in mind all the difficulties and suffering that have been true and continue to be true of his ministry, like the things he lists toward the close of 2 Corinthians 11, beginning in verse 23: frequent persecution and opposition, abuse, physical discomfort and danger, exhaustion, perplexities, misunderstanding, and disappointment.

But now note, second, that as Paul reflects on all this adversity, he says, “I am glad and rejoice,” and he wants the church in Philippi to “rejoice and be glad” with him (v. 18).

Why does he say this? How can this be? Is it because he is of a certain personality type that delights in the negative with an inverted love of misery—a prominent characteristic of Christian clergy, as an *Atlantic Monthly* survey some years ago concluded?

No, that is hardly the answer. The reason rather is because Paul knows the “secret” of a successful gospel ministry, a secret he shares throughout his letters, and I now remind you of. It is a secret among those “open secrets” that have been revealed in Christ, the secret that the glorified Lord Jesus revealed to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Here is that “foolish” wisdom of God, that it is not the wise and powerful in the eyes of the world but those in themselves weak and insignificant whom God uses to advance his gospel. As Paul puts it elsewhere of his relationship to the church in Corinth, “So

death is at work in us, but life in you” (2 Cor. 4:12)— this for the church, by the way, is a permanent “first principle” of successful evangelism and edification.

Paul had learned this secret—that “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). And that is why he is so positive, so upbeat, so joyful in writing to the Philippians, why he says elsewhere that “he will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

John, let this, then, be your aspiration: to experience this blessing, this gospel-related power, of being “poured out like a drink offering” in serving Christ and his church.

But, third, there is still another point to consider. As you may have already noticed, Paul is not the only sacrifice in view in our verse. As he considers those he ministers to, he speaks of “the sacrificial offering of your faith,” or, as we may gloss, “the sacrificial service coming from your faith.”

It is worth noting that here, as so often in the New Testament, faith is in view in its activity and fruitfulness, what is done by faith, what Paul calls “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5 and 16:26) and is expressed in the first long, multifaceted sentence of Westminster Confession of Faith 14.2. Just because we are saved by faith—because we are justified solely by faith, by the sole instrumentality of faith and not by our own efforts—faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is (to be) the proximate source of ceaseless activity for God and the gospel. Just as faith is trust in Christ, as faith receives and continues to rest on him alone for salvation in all its aspects, its ongoing concern, as Paul exhorts the Philippians just a few verses earlier, is to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (v. 12).

Faith, as Luther is reported to have said, is “a busy little thing”! Faith, we may say, is a “restless resting”—a resting in Christ that is restless to do his will. Because we do nothing for our salvation, we are to be intent on doing everything for our Savior—despite the struggles and difficulties, small and great, and the opposition often encountered.

This, then, is “the sacrificial offering of your faith” to which the church—the *whole* church—is called.

But then, fourth, we must not miss either how Paul sees his sacrifice in relation to that of the congregation, how he relates his ministry to their sacrificial activity. Against the background of the Old Testament sacrificial system we have already noted, they, not he, are the *main* sacrifice. He is but the accompaniment, the accompanying drink offering poured out over their sacrifice.

Here in a quite striking and evocative way is the humility, the due deference, that is to characterize the minister of the gospel. The more important concern for Paul is not himself, his office and status, his prerogatives and privileges (although, when necessary, he was ready to assert them and knew how to defend them forcefully), but the church, the whole congregation, and what he can do to serve it and to facilitate its sacrificial service.

Here Paul shows that he has learned what Jesus meant in telling his disciples that in the kingdom of God, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35). In the church “greatness” is in fact a four-letter word, spelled L-A-S-T.

Finally, back to the apostolicity of the church. Paul, in fact the entire New Testament, is clear: for the church to be apostolic, its ministers must be true to the apostles not only in their message but also in the manner they minister that message. Apostolic *content* and apostolic *conduct* are not the same, but they are to be inseparable.

Where all too often that is not the case, where our manner is less than apostolic, our

conduct something unbecomingly other than apostolic, then inevitably the apostolic word will come across with a confusing edge of dissonance, and its clarity will be obscured.

This is the sobering reality to consider: where the apostolicity of the church is not what it ought to be—not just in its message but also in its manner of ministering that message—then we face the dark prospect of which the history of the church already provides all too much evidence. As its apostolicity is diminished not only by compromising the apostolic word but also by unapostolic conduct, its catholicity will be inhibited, its unity undermined, and its holiness tarnished.

We are confronted here, then, with a considerable challenge. Not only is the ministry of the gospel to be marked by sacrifice, but it is to be sacrifice that is in the interests of, even subservient to, the sacrifice of others.

So, the unavoidable question for you, John, is this: How will you be capable of such sacrifice? How will you be able to say to those you are called to minister to, “I am glad and rejoice with you all,” and mean it, say it with integrity. How will you find such joy and gladness, such *apostolic* joy and gladness? For this is so contrary to our persisting self-serving inclinations. Left to ourselves, such gladness, such joy is simply beyond us, beyond our capacities, beyond our best will and intentions.

But, of course, the good news is that you are not left to yourself and your own resources in this. You have the same promise that Paul had, the promise of our risen Lord Jesus: “*my* power is perfected in *your* weakness.”

John, cling to this promise and rely on it. And as you endeavor to do that—I will end with this—let me remind you of what may be obvious yet is so easily overlooked and neglected, and that is *prayer*, the importance of prayer.

In that regard listen to these words of Abraham Kuyper, words that I first read many years ago now and still continue to find searching and often unsettling, words that ministers of the gospel especially need to take to heart. They come at the conclusion of his discussion in a section on theology as “sacred,” holy:

. . . theology has flourished only at times when theologians have continued in prayer, and in prayer have sought the communion of the Holy Spirit, and . . . on the other hand it loses its leaf and begins its winter sleep when ambition for learning silences prayer in the breast of theologians.²

John, be ever on guard against that kind of silence and against falling into that “winter sleep.” May God, as ultimately only he can, keep you from that.

John, in the ministry you now begin—and in whatever other forms of ministry you may take up in years to come—may God grant that for and to those you are called to serve, you “may be poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of [their] faith,” and that in doing that, may you always be “glad and rejoice.”

Richard B. Gaffin Jr. *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and emeritus professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. He lives in Springfield, Virginia and attends Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Virginia.*

² Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898), 340.

Servant Work

Reflections from the Front Lines

by Gregory E. Reynolds

In light of a new focus on the office of elder, three elders who have been moderators of the general assembly have responded to several questions that I posed to them. They each represent outstanding service in the OPC. But each had different strengths. I am grateful that elders Jim Gidley, Paul Tavares, and Dave Winslow were each willing to reflect on their ministries on the front lines of spiritual warfare.

Elder James Gidley, who moderated the 2000 General Assembly, is a ruling elder in Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Sewickley, Pennsylvania.

When I was in graduate school in the late 1970s, I wrote a letter to Edmund Clowney, then president of Westminster Seminary, asking his advice about whether I should drop out of my engineering studies and go to seminary. He advised me to stay where I was. Perhaps he didn't want any more nerds in the seminary student body, but at any rate I took his advice and in time became a university professor.

In November 1985, I was ordained as a ruling elder at Reformation Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Morgantown, West Virginia, where I was teaching civil engineering at West Virginia University. The church was a mission work at the time and needed elders. Jim Alexander, Joe Camp, and Jim Thomas were ordained along with me.

Over the years, I have assisted the ministry of the pastor primarily through teaching adult Sunday School classes. For many years I have typically taught at least one quarter each year. In the last few years, while my congregation has been without a pastor, I have been called upon to do some counseling which would normally have fallen to the pastor.

I attended my first presbytery meeting in October 1987 and was elected as a commissioner to the 55th General Assembly (1988). I have attended about thirty general assemblies; my calling as a college professor has made me more available in the summers than other ruling elders. I was elected moderator of the 67th General Assembly (2000).

Since the early 1990s I have served on the Candidates and Credentials Committee of the Presbytery of Ohio. Throughout my time on the committee, I have had the responsibility of administering the English Bible exam. Candidates are often weak in several aspects of the exam, especially on Scripture memory. Perhaps their seminary studies have accustomed them too much to talking about theology rather than becoming intimately acquainted with the Bible itself. The two things need not and should not be separated.

In 1989 I was elected to the Subcommittee on Ministerial Training of the Committee on Christian Education, and I continue to serve on both. I have chaired the SMT since the mid-1990s, and I served as President of the CCE from 2003 to 2019. Among many other things, I

helped to establish *Ordained Servant*, the SMT's seminary visitation program, and the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC. The MTIOPC came into being after a serious discussion of establishing an OPC seminary.

Since 2018 I have served on the Special Committee on Updating the Language of the Doctrinal Standards. The committee is charged with proposing changes to archaic language in the standards without changing their meaning.

The most heart-wrenching episodes in my service as an elder have involved church discipline. The general lesson I have learned is that church discipline requires us to excel in love and humility. Falling short in these virtues, which I have done too often, not only fails to fulfill the purpose of church discipline but also does great harm.

The office of ruling elder exposes a man's faults and weaknesses. It is vain to think that our own efforts can accomplish the work of the kingdom, for nothing good occurs except by the work of the Holy Spirit. The greatest service an elder can do is to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon himself, the church, and the world.

* * *

Elder Paul Tavares, who moderated the 2016 General Assembly, was a ruling elder in Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Grove City, Pennsylvania.

Born into an OPC pastor's home, I was heavily influenced by the ministry of my parents and the many ministers and godly men and women that passed through our lives throughout my upbringing.

My father was called to Covenant OPC in Grove City, Pennsylvania, when I was nine. Over the next sixteen years the congregation observed and contributed to the development of my faith. At the age of twenty-five (six months prior to my father's retirement) I was ordained a deacon, serving for ten years. Visitation of the sick, elderly, and shut-ins (including a nursing home ministry that provided hymn singing and devotional messages) were our regular responsibilities.

My interest in the work of presbytery began when I was elected to serve on the presbytery's Diaconal Committee. That involvement brought me into a working relationship with the men of presbytery and deepened my knowledge and appreciation of how the church labors as a larger body.

Rubbing shoulders with the Lord's undershepherds, observing how they strived to know God's truth and will for his church, how they prayed for one another and sought to work as one, made a great impression on me. In particular, the care they showed for individuals and congregations demonstrated to me Christ's love for his church. These were faithful shepherds that sacrificed their lives to build, strengthen, and watch over the flock that was entrusted to them.

Having been nominated an elder candidate, I began to sense that inner call to continue their good work. When approved by the session, and having received the congregation's affirming vote, I was ordained an elder on June 6, 1989, with the words of the apostle, "Woe to me if I do not," resonating in my heart.

Shepherding through hospitality, home and hospital visitations, Bible studies, and private conversations with prayer became a way of life. Particularly difficult matters were shared with the session for council and prayer. Hours spent in travel and 'parking lot' discussions have yielded rich blessings in the raising up of faithful elders and deacons.

Overseeing a minister's doctrine and conduct is a daunting task. Their lives/ministry are dissected constantly, justly and unjustly. Some lack humility to acknowledge their failures. They need wise, constructive council and encouragement.

Ministers and elders are like bricks and mortar. Working together in Christ builds a beautiful structure. A failing brick stresses and mars the wall. Standing in the gap can be very painful, but necessary. They need encouragement when injustice rises up due to the sin or ignorance of others. Guiding others to the truth without discouraging them requires much prayer, patience, time, and self-sacrifice.

Then there is the work to be done in the broader church. I first served on the Visitation Committee of our presbytery for several terms, visiting the churches once a year to inquire as to their well-being; the Candidates and Credentials Committee for twenty-five years, presenting church history exams; the Home Missions Committee for several terms, spending eight years traveling an hour twice a week in an effort to restart a church, and forty-five minutes once a week for eleven years to another community seeking to establish a work there.

Presbytery often called upon me to be a commissioner to the general assembly. There I served as chairman for various advisory committees over the years and was elected to the Committee on Coordination for eighteen years (serving as secretary for several years and President for several others). In 2016 I was elected moderator of the Assembly. Now retired and relocated to Florida, I look for the Lord's next assignment in life.

* * *

Elder David Winslow, who moderated the 1996 General Assembly, is a ruling elder in Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Westminster, California.

I was ordained as a ruling elder in 1982 in the Garden Grove (now Westminster) California Orthodox Presbyterian Church and continue to serve there almost forty years and fourteen re-elections to three-year terms later. My first pastor, Edwards E. Elliott, mentored me in doing door to door calling, recommended books to read, and encouraged me to attend presbytery meetings even before my ordination. My next pastor, William E. Warren, encouraged me to stand for election as a ruling elder, and he too set a sterling example of serving in the presbytery and on committees of the general assembly. Along with these pastoral encouragements, the Lord also gave me a thirst and some measure of aptitude for reading Reformed literature and teaching and serving youth.

Three months after being ordained, the moderator of presbytery, ruling elder Robert Coie, called and asked me to go to the general assembly to fill a vacant spot. That phone call changed my life and the horizons of possible service open to me in the OPC. Attending the assembly and observing the overall vitality of the church in her gospel ministry around the continent and world was a refreshing, invigorating experience in so many ways. It remains so to this day, some thirty-four assemblies later. Becoming a father quite soon after ordination helped to make me a better elder, in fact the 1985 General Assembly passed a motion excusing me "to go to be with my wife" for the birth of my first daughter. And I repaid that generosity by missing most of her birthdays thereafter because I was at GA.

In our presbytery I was able to serve for several decades on the Youth Committee helping in the administration and leading of camps, foreign missions teams, and backpacking trips for the presbytery. I also took turns serving on our judicial, ministerial oversight, visitation, and

credentials committees and even got to moderate for a couple of years back in the 1980s. I have found that I serve best when I am supporting and enabling the ministerial vision of the presbytery's pastors, evangelists, and teachers.

That last observation has also been true serving on general assembly committees and especially the Committee on Christian Education. Helping Danny Olinger and David VanDrunen execute VanDrunen's brilliant idea for the OPC Timothy Conference gave me (and my wife Susan) so much joy; it was youth ministry at the denominational level with potential impact on the whole church for decades to come. Again, serving with Danny Olinger and Alan Strange facilitating the business aspects of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal project for the sake of two denominations (OPC and URC) has been among the most fulfilling work of my life.

As a Presbyterian I get it when Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 11:28 that in addition to all his trials he "faces the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches." The blessing of serving on presbytery and denominational committees brings "all the churches" into my heart and mind, but unlike the apostle, I am keenly aware that the core of a ruling elder's concern and service is a local congregation in which he has been called and elected to serve. I believe this awareness is a big part of why I have been a member of only one OP congregation for forty-five years. Going to presbytery and assembly committee meetings is almost always a collegial, brotherly experience of the highest order with elevated discussion, debate, and devotion, at least it has been that way for me. And presbytery is a meeting where you share the burdens of life in the local church with other ministers and elders. You are not alone in the joys and struggles of your own congregation.

The life of our congregation is daily on my heart and mind. Indeed, life in the local church is where elders face their greatest challenges. Determining when to institute formal judicial process in contrast to administrative discipline or continuing informal counseling is always very challenging. Making sure that I am actually helping the pastor shepherd the flock: making home visits, hospital visits, leading worship to the extent he requests, not leaving the tough pastoral situations for him to handle alone, and protecting him from unjust criticism are all challenging.

The greatest challenge I faced was a three-year period involving all of these aspects, which led to causing a ruling elder of long standing to be removed from office and defending that decision before the presbytery. Thankfully the session was unanimous in these tough decisions, but as clerk this involved hours and days of meticulous record keeping and communication.

Working with men of this caliber, with which our little denomination is filled, has been one of the greatest privileges and joys of my life. How gracious our Lord is to gift and call such men into the office of ruling elder. Please remember your elders in regular prayer since they are on the front lines of spiritual warfare.

Gregory E. Reynolds serves as the pastor of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire, and is the editor of *Ordained Servant*.

Servant Truth

The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation: Chapter 4 – “Images of the Spirit” (1980)

by Danny E. Olinger

In 1977, Meredith Kline published two articles in *Westminster Theological Journal*, “Creation in the Image of the Glory-Spirit” and “Investiture with the Image of God.” In the process of writing those articles, Kline testified that new exegetical paths came into view and led him to write a third related *Westminster Theological Journal* article in 1978, “Primal Parousia.” He pulled the three articles together and added a new chapter on the story of creation in the image of the Glory-Spirit for his 1980 book, *Images of the Spirit*.

Kline stated that his goal in *Images of the Spirit* was to show through exegetical studies in a biblical-theological manner that the idea of creation in the image of the Glory-Spirit is a foundational and pervasive theme in the Scriptures. He maintained that, once it is seen that God the Spirit in his theophanic presence is the divine paradigm in the creation of the image of God, “a conceptual overlap, if not synonymity, will be recognized between the *imago Dei* and concepts like messiahship and the Spirit’s filling or baptism of God’s people.”¹

But what Kline also noticed in writing *Images of the Spirit* was that he continually returned to the Book of Revelation. He stated,

Over and again in the following chapters, usually at a climactic point, attention turns to the Book of Revelation. From the way these studies evolved it will be obvious that I cannot claim that any semblance of a symphonic quality that might be produced by this recurrence of the Apocalypse theme is the premeditated product of conscious artistry. My constant returning to the Apocalypse is just a natural by-product of a love for this fascinating capstone of biblical revelation that goes back to student days.²

The movement in each chapter of *Images of the Spirit* would be from man’s creation in the image of God in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis through redemptive history, most often Moses and the prophets in the Old Testament and the witness of the Gospels and the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, to the Book of Revelation and the consummation. In this redemptive-historical sweep, Kline endeavored to show how in Christ the church was being formed into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

¹ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 11.

² *Ibid.*

The Glory-Spirit and His Human Image

In the first chapter, “The Glory-Spirit and His Human Image,” Kline set out to answer from Scripture the question, “What is the image of God?” Kline concluded that the divine model used in the creation of man in the image of God was the theophanic Glory-cloud present in the form of the Spirit in Genesis 1:2.

Genesis 1:2a announces that the earth, the visible world that God created,³ was in a state of unbounded deep and darkness. Light shines in the darkness, and bounds to the waters are set by God the Creator. This is affirmed in the “remarkable” statement of Genesis 1:2b: “The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

In Scripture after Adam’s fall into sin, the Glory-Spirit witnesses to scenes of re-creation that both mirror the creation as described in Genesis 1:2 and define the legal nature of the redemptive action of God. That is, the Spirit that overarched creation as a divine witness to the covenant of creation is the Spirit that gives witness to the new day promised in the old covenant.

As an example of this witness, God’s Glory-Presence in the exodus was seen in the pillar of cloud and fire that went before Israel so that Israel might make its way through the waste howling wilderness (Deut. 32:10) to the promised land of Canaan. In the same way that the Spirit “hovered” over the deep in Genesis 1:2, God hovered in the pillar of cloud and fire over Israel protecting them as an eagle protects her own (Deut. 32:11). Kline concluded that Moses’s interpretative reuse of the verbal imagery of Genesis 1:2 in Deuteronomy 32 showed that “Spirit of God” in the creation record is to be understood as a designation for the theophanic Glory-cloud.

In the New Testament at the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit descends as in Genesis 1:2. It is a divine witness that the new creation has arrived with the Son given by the Father. But it is in the Book of Revelation where messianic redemptive re-creation, that is, the re-creation of the new man in God’s likeness, is prominently displayed. Kline proclaimed that the Glory-figure is apocalyptically revealed in Revelation 10 at the consummation of the new covenant with its new exodus-creation. Clothed with a cloud, rainbow haloed, a face like the sun and feet like pillars of fire, the Glory-figure stands astride creation with his hand raised in oath to heaven. He is swearing by him who lives forever and ever, who created the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all their hosts, that in the days of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God will be finished.

These redemptive reproductions of Genesis 1:2—the exodus re-creation and Glory-cloud, the beginning of the new creation at the baptism of Jesus with the Spirit descending, the consummation of the new covenant, the Glory-figure—testify to the Glory-Spirit’s role and witness.

Further, God created man in the likeness of the Glory-Spirit to be a spirit-temple of God. According to Kline, this theme of the re-creation of man by the Lord of Glory in his own likeness “is prominent and, in fact, foundational” to the message in the Book of Revelation. He stated,

³ Kline believed that Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” should be understood as teaching that God created all things invisible and visible. For support of this conclusion that “the heavens” were the invisible heavens, he appealed to Nehemiah 9:5, Psalm 103:19, Psalm 148:1–4, and Colossians 1:16. From the invisible heavens, the Lord of Glory comes forth to reveal himself in history as the Alpha and Omega, the Creator and Consummator.

This book as a whole depicts the messianic re-creation in symbolism drawn from the Mosaic reenactment of creation in the exodus, but that layer of the Apocalyptic representation overlies a foundational conceptual structure derived from the original creation event.⁴

In Kline's judgment, this was inevitable in that creation provides the basic mold filled by redemption. All the elements of the hope set before Adam in the garden are realized at the close of Revelation through Christ and his Spirit. Those joined to Christ, the "overcomers" (Rev. 2:11), enter sabbath-rest in the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21:1). Unlike the first creation with its chaotic darkness, there is no more sea in the new world. Answering to the Spirit-cloud, the archetypal temple over the earth in Genesis 1:2, is the temple-city of Revelation 21:2.⁵

This temple-city, transfigured in the light of the glory of God (Rev. 21:11, 23; 22:5), is the ultimate likeness of the Glory-Spirit. It is a holy of holies where God sits enthroned (Rev. 21:5, 6). Shining with the glory of God, this temple-city has the church-body of Christ engrafted into it. "For while the church is the temple where God dwells, God is the Spirit-Temple where the church dwells (Rev. 21:22)."⁶ It is in this radiant temple-city, the New Jerusalem, that all the promises of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 find their Amen in Christ.

A Priestly Model of the Image of God

In the second chapter, "A Priestly Model of the Image of God," Kline declared that God, the Creator-King, established heaven and earth as his holy palace. Eden, by virtue of the Glory-Spirit canopy, was a holy temple, a house of God in miniature.⁷ Created in the image of God, Adam was called to worship God and serve him in a priestly fashion in the temple-garden that was Eden, the site of God's throne-presence.

The construction of the tabernacle at Sinai replicates Eden. In this redemptive reenactment of creation, the Glory-cloud hovers at the top of Sinai over the wilderness and reproduces its likeness in the world below. At the bottom of Sinai, the tabernacle is built according to the pattern seen on the mount, a Glory-Spirit-temple. Moses and Aaron are also fashioned in the image of the Glory-Spirit. The Lord speaks to Moses face to face (Exod. 33:11) so that Moses's face reflects the likeness of the Glory-Spirit (Exod. 34:29–35). Aaron also shares in the investiture of the Glory-Spirit (Exod. 39–40).

The prophet Ezekiel also connects creation with the tabernacle/temple. In Ezekiel 47, the same verb is used as in Genesis 2 for the issuing forth of the eastward flowing river. Further, in Ezekiel, the river emerges from under the lintel of the temple entrance, which was a reflex in the temple's architectural symbolism to the Glory-cloud.

⁴ Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 24.

⁵ Kline made clear on pages 25 and 26 that Rev. 21 also puts forth a cosmic re-creation, "a new heaven and earth are seen, replacing the first (Rev. 21:1a; Gen. 1:1)," that corresponds to the Genesis 1 account of creation.

⁶ Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 26.

⁷ According to Kline, such was Ezekiel's inspired interpretation of Gen. 2. Kline said, "In the passage where [Ezekiel] comes the Prince of Tyre to a figure in the original paradise scene (Ezek. 28: 14, 16), he speaks of a covering cherub as present there on the holy mountain of God. The Glory theophany thus located by Ezekiel in Eden is prominent in his apocalyptic vision of paradise restored and consummated" (36).

The tabernacle-temple symbolism and the prophecy of Ezekiel 47 of the eschatological sanctuary with the river and tree of life reappear in Revelation 21 and 22. Moreover, “the cosmic symbolism of the tabernacle is afforded by the coalescence of the eternal holy of holies, the tabernacle-city, New Jerusalem, with the heaven and earth in John’s apocalyptic vision of the new creation (Rev. 21 and 22).”⁸

Aaron’s Robes—A Replica of the Glory-Tabernacle

Kline then moved from an examination of the broad parallelism between the creation accounts in Genesis and Exodus to a focused examination of Aaron’s priestly investiture. Aaron’s robes are a replica of the tabernacle, symbolically testifying that Aaron and the priesthood partakes of the Glory-Spirit also. Kline wrote, “Moses’ transfigured countenance was his glory-reflection, but for Aaron the holy vestments were appointed as a symbolic equivalent, imaging the Glory-beauty of the fiery Shekinah.”⁹

Aaron’s investiture points back to Genesis 1 and the creation of man in the likeness of the Glory-Spirit as the personal image-temple of God. Aaron’s vestments show that those who are to minister in the presence of the Glory of the Lord in the tabernacle must reflect his holy beauty.

The parallelism between the Glory-tabernacle and Aaron’s garments and their fulfillment in the holy tabernacle-temple city in heaven as pictured in Revelation 21 is seen in Aaron’s shoulder pieces. The shoulder pieces of the ephod represent the “shoulders” of the gate where one entered the tabernacle and temple. As such, they are associated with the name-banner lintel (Ezek. 47:1–2). Precious stones, engraved with the names of the sons of Israel (Exod. 28:9), are on Aaron’s shoulder as he enters the tabernacle gates wearing the mitre. This headpiece, between and above the shoulder pieces, has a golden plate with the inscription on it, “holy to Yahweh.” In Revelation 3:12, Christ, the incarnate Glory, promises his people that they will enter the gates of the holy city bearing the name of God, and in that temple-city they will all be priests and pillars.

Glory-Investiture in the Book of Revelation

Having worked through the Old Testament, Kline moved to an elaboration of Glory-Spirit investiture in the New Testament, particularly in the Book of Revelation. In doing so, he returned in the main to the thesis of his student paper, “A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John.” There Kline argued that Christ was at work through his Spirit transforming the church into his image to be his heavenly bride. Now, in *Images of the Spirit*, Kline added exegetically how John used the symbolism of the priestly investiture to put forth the corporate renewal of the church as the new man in the image of Christ. Christ in Revelation 1 is the archetypal Glory-Spirit-temple; the church, renewed by Christ in his Glory-image in Revelation 21 and 22, is an ectypal temple in the Spirit. It is the church in Revelation 21 and 22 that is re-created in the likeness of Christ, the Glory-robed priest of Revelation 1.

Christ’s royal-priestly ministry stands central to the church’s transformation. In Revelation 1:12–13, Christ’s priestly function is indicated by the location of his ministry—he stands amid seven golden lampstands of the sanctuary. Revelation 1:18

⁸ Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

discloses that he is a royal priest with the keys of office, the authority to open and close, received by holy ordination. He is clothed with a long robe and a golden sash around his chest (Rev. 1:13). The term used for his long robe is the same as that which is used in the Septuagint for the high priest's robe and ephod and its breast-piece. The golden sash brings into remembrance the sash of the ephod with its flame-colored material interwoven with threads of gold. Kline declared, "Christ appears in the opening vision of Revelation as an incarnate Glory-Spirit, but the figure seen by John is also the antitype of Aaron invested with the holy garments emblematic of the divine Glory."¹⁰

The bridal adornment of the church in Revelation 21 consists of priestly garments made after the pattern of the church's bridegroom presented in Revelation 1. This is especially brought out in the imagery of Revelation 21:2. There, the holy city, New Jerusalem, is the symbol of the "bride *adorned* for her husband." Since the bride is identified with the holy city, urban adornment is interchangeable with bridal adornment, especially seen in the twelve precious stones constituting the foundations of the wall and bearing the name of the covenant people.

In Kline's judgment, additional confirmation that the church-bride of Revelation 21 is also a priest-figure arrayed in holy tabernacle-vestments of glory is found in Isaiah 61–62. In Isaiah 61:1–3, the Spirit of the Lord transforms Zion through the Messianic Servant into a thing of beauty, joy, and glory. In that day, the people of Jerusalem shall be called priests of the Lord (Isa. 61:6). The prophet then declares in 61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

In Isaiah 62:1–5, the marriage imagery is continued. The bride-city is characterized by shining glory, the same description used of Aaron's priestly garments. The double symbol of the city-wife, Jerusalem-Hephzibah, over whom God will rejoice as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, is the same double symbolism of the bride-city of Revelation 21.

This dependence of Revelation 21 upon the prophecy of Isaiah informed Kline's view that the church-bride of Revelation 21 is portrayed as a priest figure, arrayed in holy tabernacle-vestments of glory.¹¹ Kline concluded, "Thus, the Book of Revelation, in making its symbolic statement that the church glorified is a church renewed in the image of God revealed in Christ, equates this image renewal with a priestly investiture in the Glory of God."¹²

In Revelation 22:4, the re-created covenant community will see God's face and his name will be on their foreheads. This marks the fulfillment of Christ's promise in Revelation 3:12 to include the overcomer in his temple and write on him his new name, the name of God and the name of the holy city coming down out of heaven, the New Jerusalem. Kline wrote, "The church's bearing of Christ's new name is exponential of its

¹⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹¹ In addition to Isa. 61 and 62, Kline appealed to Ezek. 16 in support of this contention. In Ezek. 16, the history of the exodus is recalled as Israel is a woman in the wilderness whom the Lord enters into covenant and takes as a wife. As a token of the marriage covenant, the Lord spreads the corner of his robe over her, Ezek. 16:8, an image that speaks to God's sheltering of Israel under the Glory-cloud (Ps. 105:39).

¹² Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 50.

new nature as the new city-temple, the priest-bride arrayed in tabernacle-glory, the image of the Glory-Spirit-Lord, the glory of the bridegroom-Son.”¹³ Christ takes his church in covenant to bear his glory and his name, to be the fullness of him who fills all in all.

A Prophetic Model of the Image of God

In the third chapter, “A Prophetic Model of the Image of God,” Kline showed that Adam’s creation as an image-reflector of the glory of the Creator-Spirit is recapitulated in the history of the prophets. In the formation of a prophet, the critical event is the prophet’s transforming encounter with the Glory-Spirit in which the prophet is caught up in the Spirit and received into the divine assembly. Thus, the hallmark of the true prophet is that he stands before the Lord in the heavenly court to receive the divine message. The prophets serve as God’s authoritative spokesmen who have been sent from heaven to earth speaking the very words of God. More still, the prophet “took on the glory that diffused the heavenly court. He was transformed into the likeness of the King of Glory whom he beheld there on his throne high and lifted up, the train of his Glory-robe filling the royal temple.”¹⁴

The prophets also reflect the judicial, ethical, and physical glory of the *imago Dei*. Judicially, Moses, the prophet supreme in the Old Testament (Num. 12:6–8), exercises authority on behalf of the Lord. Deuteronomy 18:15–22 points to the role Moses performed at the Sinai covenant-making as paradigm. That is, “Moses’ authoritative administration of God’s covenant lordship over Israel was to be carried on by the prophets.”¹⁵ A prophet’s heavenly authority is a renewal of the task given to Adam of dominion over the world, adapted to the redemptive situation. It was, in Kline’s words, “an act of re-creation in the glory-image of God.”¹⁶

Ethically, man’s creation in the image of God is a likeness to the glory of the divine holiness and righteousness.¹⁷ Kline maintained that biblically a prophet had to be

¹³ Ibid., 54.

¹⁴ Ibid., 58.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 60.

¹⁷ Kline connected the judicial and ethical aspects of man’s creation in the image of God in a very Vosian manner. He wrote, “If in his ruling function man was to be a true image of his royal Lord, his exercise of dominion must be informed by those qualities of rectitude and truth that were the very foundation of the throne of God. It was a lie of the tempter to suggest implicitly that the absence of the ethical element in the *imago Dei* was irrelevant to the development of man’s God-likeness in the area of judicial glory. The truth was that love of the holy will of the heavenly King of kings was essential to man’s advancement from glory to glory in his reflection of the glory of the divine majesty” (Ibid., 60). In his article, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” Vos argued that an aspect of the covenant of works, which God put before Adam for the goal of advancement from glory to glory, was that in all his works Adam was to show forth the image of God and to be a means for the revelation of God’s virtues. Vos said, “Just as the blessedness of God exists in the free relationship of the three Persons of the adorable Being, so man shall also find his blessedness in the covenantal relationship with his God. It is not his bliss in itself, but his salvation as a reflection of the eternal blessedness of God, toward which he is disposed. Therefore, he must not immediately and prematurely possess the highest enjoyment, but be led up to it along a rational way. The image of God within him must be brought out in the full clarity of his consciousness. In a certain sense it must be extended, for in that he can still sin and die man is not God’s image bearer. In his life it must be formed by keeping the divine law. With deep moral earnestness he is immediately directed not to his own bliss but to the honor of the Creator, and assigned a task so that, by completing it, he might enter the full joy of his covenant God.” Geerhardus Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” in

ethically qualified, conformed inwardly to the Lord of the heavenly council, before he could be sent as the Lord's authoritative representative. Isaiah recognizes the problem of his spiritual disqualification in Isaiah 6:5. Before he can be sent as the emissary of the King in the prophetic image of God, he must be redemptively cleansed, Isaiah 6:6–8.

Physical glorification is contemplated only in eschatological hope at creation, but it is a feature present in the prophetic model of the image of God. Moses's shining face after meeting with God at Sinai and Elijah's bodily translation from this world in the Glory-chariot were earnest of the eschatological rapture that is promised. It is the ultimate stage in the redemptive renewal in the image of God that the prophets declare, but it is also their life experience as they are caught up in the Spirit that presents a glimpse of the believer's predestined future.

Jesus Christ and the Prophetic Image

In the New Testament, Jesus is the antitypical Moses-prophet. Kline maintained that Peter in Acts 3:22 had grasped the significance of Jesus's transfiguration as a counterpart to Moses's transfiguration under the Glory-cloud at Sinai. The command from heaven to listen to the Son is the ultimate application of the requirement in Deuteronomy 18:18 that Israel obey God's prophet.

A connector in seeing the fulfillment of Moses's prophetic role in Jesus is via Isaiah's proclamation of the Servant of the Lord. In speaking of the Servant, Isaiah speaks of Christ; in speaking of the Servant, Isaiah speaks of a new Moses-prophet. Raised up by the elective call of God and Spirit-endowed (Isa. 42:1), the Servant is cognizant of the divine council and made a mouth for the Lord (Isa. 50:4). He is the mediator of the redemptive covenant in fulfillment of the covenantal promise (Isa. 42; 53:4–12).

Jesus Christ is the ultimate realization of a biblical prophet. He participates in the Glory of the heavenly council of the sons of God. He possesses the Spirit without measure. He is sent forth from the Glory-council on covenantal mission. He is the living prophetic Word of God, the priest-king builder of the kingdom of God, and the righteous judge-destroyer of Satan's kingdom. According to Kline, everything that constitutes the prophetic *imago Dei* and had prototypal expression with Moses is present in antitypical fullness in Jesus Christ.¹⁸

Messianic Re-creation in the Image of God

Kline turned next to the Book of Revelation to show how Christ's creation of the church in his prophetic image is also fundamental to the structure of the book. In Revelation 1, the Lord and the church are both conveyed as luminous figures. Kline observed, "Jesus, wrapped in Glory, the light of his face as intense as the sun, stands in the midst of seven golden lampstands symbolic of the church. Christ is the original light; the church which he creates in his likeness is a reflective light."¹⁹

The light-bearing objects in Revelation 1, rich in Old Testament imagery of the lamps found in the tabernacle and temple, symbolize the covenant community's light-bearing witness of God's majestic name and glory to the nations. This is brought out clearly in

Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 245.

¹⁸ Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 82.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

the vision of Zechariah 4:6 where “the message of the chapter is that the covenant people will be empowered by God’s Spirit, symbolized by the oil, to accomplish its prophetic light-bearing witness in the world.”²⁰

Kline saw this connectedness between Christ and his church in prophetic witness-bearing coming to expression throughout Revelation. In Revelation 1:2, there is the testimony given by Jesus; In Revelation 12:17 and 20:4, there is the testimony given by Christians. In Revelation 1:5, Jesus is the faithful witness; in Revelation 1:9, the Apostle John is the one devoted to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 19:10, the testimony of Jesus is identified as the Spirit of prophecy; In Revelation 22:9, those who keep the words of this book stand in the company of God’s servants, the prophets.

This theme is also developed in Revelation 10. In Revelation 10:7, where reference is made to God’s servants the prophets, the Angel-Lord stands as witness and prophesies the completion of the mystery of God. He then eats the little scroll, which indicates the prophetic nature of his assignment to prophesy before many peoples and nations and languages and kings (Rev. 10:8–10). The commissioning of John, the apostle-witness, by the by Angel-Witness in Revelation 10:11 is a fashioning of John in the prophetic image of his Lord.

That prophetic commission is then extended to the church in Revelation 11. The two witnesses, who share in the authoritative power of the apostle and are symbolic of the church, carry forward the message to all who dwell on earth, to peoples and tribes and languages and tongues. The nations rage against the two witnesses, gazing upon their dead bodies, but God vindicates and rewards his servants, the prophets, those who fear his name both great and small (Rev. 11:9, 18). It is not just John in Revelation 10, then, who Christ conforms to his prophetic image; it is the also the church in Revelation 11.

The consummation of the church in Christ’s prophetic image is the subject of the closing vision of Revelation. The cloud veil that hides the heavenly council from the eyes of mortal men removed, John “in the Spirit” in Revelation 21 sees the church perfected in the New Jerusalem. There all of God’s people are “in the Spirit.” Kline rejoiced, “Entrée into the council that had been the peculiar privilege of prophets and apostles caught up in the Spirit is now the normal joy of everyone, and so the longing of Moses is fulfilled: all the Lord’s people are prophets.”²¹ Even more, all of God’s people through union with Jesus, the divine paradigm prophet, enjoy a level of intimacy with God previously unknown.

The Spirit-Presence and His Parousia-Day

A central thesis that Kline emphasized in *Images of the Spirit* is the connection between the creation account in Genesis and the realization of new creation in Revelation. In the last chapter, “The Spirit-Presence and His Parousia-Day,” Kline expanded upon this theme once more.

Following the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden, God comes to prosecute his lawsuit against the covenant-breakers and to announce the damnation of the serpent, which turns out to be an account of primal *parousia*, what is known later in Scripture as the day of the Lord. Kline maintained that the sound that Adam and Eve heard in Genesis 3:8 was not

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 94.

the Lord calling them. Rather, it was the sound of the Lord's approach. Frighteningly loud, it was the thunder of God's coming in judgment.

This understanding is reflected later in Scripture in such passages as Psalm 139:7 where the psalmist asks, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence" (NKJV). Then when the psalmist confesses in 139:12 that for God the darkness is as light, he clearly evokes Adam and Eve seeking to hide in the shadows among the trees of Eden. Despite their efforts, the guilty pair is exposed by the coming of the Spirit in the day of the Lord (Genesis 3:9).

Kline believed that the difficulty encountered with the translation into English of the adverbial phrase *Irwh hyywm* (AV, "in the cool of the day") in Genesis 3:8 had led traditional exegesis away from the natural meaning of the first part of the verse. He asked, "are we really prepared to accept the anthropomorphism of the Lord's seeking the relief that might be afforded by the evening air from the burden of the day?"²² He proposed that the words that the phrase qualified, the *ruah* of the day, had the meaning of a mission of judgment.

The Day of the Spirit

Spirit and day are joined in a close connection in the record of the first day of creation at the start of Genesis 1, but Kline saw a significant relationship existing between the Spirit and the seventh day. He wrote,

It will in fact appear that the seven-day pattern of the creation record as a whole was so constructed that while it was figuratively indicating the temporal dimension and especially the sabbatical structuring of the creation history, it should also serve as a seven-panelled portrait-paradigm—a prototypal model—of the day of the Lord, which was to be of such great importance in the unfolding biblical revelation of cosmic-redemptive history.²³

The day of the Spirit is a time when God acts and pronounces a judicial assessment as seen in the sevenfold refrain, "God saw it was good." The seven acts of Spirit-Creator "seeing" are seemingly the ultimate source of the imagery of both Revelation 5:6, the seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth from all the earth, and Revelation 4:5, the seven burning torches of fire before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. Additionally, Revelation 4:11 with its focus on God's creation of all things, strengthens the likelihood that the seven eyes of the Spirit sent on judicial missions in Revelation 5:6 are related to the seven acts of the Spirit's seeing in Genesis 1.

Kline also endeavored to show how John's experience in Revelation 1 was related to Genesis 3:8. He said, "Describing the circumstances of his vision of Christ as the Glory theophany incarnate, John writes, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a great voice' (Rev. 1:10), a voice as a trumpet or mighty waters (v. 15). Here is a striking reminiscence of the combination of features encountered in Genesis 3:8—the Spirit, the day, and the voice."²⁴ But, according to Kline, the greatest tie to the Genesis text at the beginning of Revelation is the coming of the Glory itself in the person of

²² Ibid., 103.

²³ Ibid., 107–108.

²⁴ Ibid., 123.

Christ. Present as Lord of the Covenant, Christ's words, identified as what the Spirit says to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, echo the words of God in Eden as he pronounces judgment on the works of his servants.

Kline continued, "As was the case in the Spirit of the day at the Fall of man, so the *parousia* (or day) of Christ, with its purpose of exposing and sentencing the guilty, has as its effect a panic of terror manifested in frantic, futile attempts to hide from the eyes of the divine Presence."²⁵

The kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountain and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" Rev. 6:15–17

These similarities clearly show that the *parousia* of Jesus is the New Testament realization of the Old Testament Glory theophany in the primal *parousia* of Genesis 3:8. His coming again brings vindication to the saints during cosmic cataclysm, which is reflected in Revelation 6:12, and in Revelation 20:11, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them." Kline declared that "like the prototypical day of the Spirit in the Genesis Prologue, the *parousia* of Christ entails creation of heaven and earth, and Sabbath consummation."²⁶

Isaiah and Revelation and the Spirit-Raised Standard

Kline finished *Images of the Spirit* by tying together the prophecies of Isaiah, in which Isaiah speaks of the Glory-Spirit as a banner, and the fulfilling of the prophecies in Revelation with the appearing of Christ in his coming Glory. In Isaiah 59:19b, the prophet declares that when the enemy comes in like a flood, "the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him." (NKJV). This Spirit-raised standard is the theophanic cloud, for it is denoted in the first part of verse 19 as the "Name" and the "Glory." This military banner inscribed with the name of God will be a radiant gathering point drawing Zion's far-off sons and daughters from among the nations (Isa. 60:1ff.). And, in that day, Isaiah 66 declares that the Lord will come with fire and whirlwind-like chariots (Isa. 66:15) for judicial proceedings with mankind (Isa. 66:16) and will set up a standard of God's glory against the idolaters (Isa. 66:19).

In Revelation 19, the military metaphor of the standard is quite explicit in the description of the *parousia* of the Word of God. Kline wrote,

In this picture of Jesus as the incarnate Glory, leading the armies of heaven to war, he is portrayed as a veritable living name-banner, inscribed on both Glory-robe and Spirit-body with the name that belongs to him alone (Rev. 19:12): "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Rev. 19:16).²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., 123–124.

²⁶ Ibid., 124.

²⁷ Ibid., 130.

Invested with the Glory-Name, the exalted Christ comes in the day of the Lord as the Spirit of the day. He is the messianic warrior on the white horse who the heavenly armies follow to the final judgment.

Danny E. Olinger *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and serves as the General Secretary of Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.*

Servant Truth

A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John, Part 2

by Meredith G. Kline¹

TRUMPETS: The language describing what follows the sounding of the *seventh* trumpet is almost unanimously taken as depicting the close of history. “The kingdom of the world is become—*ἐγένετο* (*egeneto*)—the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ.” (11:15). “We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came—*ἤλθεν* (*ēlthen*)—and the time of the dead to be judged.” (11:17,18). “In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets” was the preliminary announcement (10:7). To be sure there have been diehards of the successive historical school who have so far lost their bearings as to refer all this to the victory of the Goths and other Arians under Narses, or to the victory of Christianity over Judaism involved in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the like. But most interpreters have acknowledged the force of the language (which—together with 12:1ff.—compels some to accept the fact of recapitulation here, if nowhere else). Swete: “With the seventh trumpet blast the Kingdom of God has come and the general judgment is at hand. Thus, this section of the Apocalypse brings the course of history down to the verge of the Parousia.”² Pieters: “This is, therefore, the triumphant consummation of the divine enterprise.”³ Even W. Scott: Chapter 11:18 “records the last historical action—the judgment of the dead. There is no history beyond it.”⁴

Düsterdieck,⁵ Charles,⁶ and Beckwith⁷ admit that the language describes the consummation but call 11:15–18 proleptic and introductory. The third woe, or contents of the seventh trumpet, we are told, are not found in this passage but in the remaining visions of the book. As the trumpets were said to evolve out of the seventh seal, now 12:1ff. evolves from the seventh trumpet, and the bowls in particular are thought of as the third woe. But for this there is not a shred of evidence:

(a) There is nothing after 11:19 which is called the third woe or seventh trumpet. The third woe is not mentioned at 11:19 because it would sound ridiculously didactic.

¹ This text is the ThM thesis of Meredith G. Kline for Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, 1946.

² Op. cit., 146.

³ Op. cit., 157.

⁴ Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 4th ed., (London: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 245.

⁵ Op. cit., 328ff.

⁶ Robert Charles, *Revelation of St. John* (International Critical Commentary), (New York: Scribner, 1920), 292.

⁷ Op. cit., 606ff.

(b) Charles vainly tries to prove that each of the three woes is properly prefaced by the prayers of the saints or a vision of the heavenly temple, which means that 11:15–19 is this preface, and the woe must follow. To do this he must identify the first woe with the first trumpet which is manifestly impossible in view of the subsequent 8:13 “woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are yet to sound.”

(c) Beckwith rightly insists that the third woe can no more be missing than one of the trumpets, but he refuses to see the third woe in 11:15–19, although he confesses that this leaves the precise calamity meant uncertain. “We should therefore expect immediately after the trumpet blast of v.15 some great calamity to be sent upon the world corresponding to the first and second woes, but this does not occur.”⁸ This is a gross underestimating of the contents of 11:15–19. Lenski well remarks, “To say that here no Woe appears is to ignore the fact that the destruction of the destroyers in the final judgment is a Woe greater than any other.”⁹ Furthermore, the vision which these verses contain consummates in the revelation of the ark of the covenant in the temple of God in heaven; this is no mere preparation for more historical events but signifies that the whole covenant is now fulfilled through the grace of our faithful God.

Thus, also we take it that in v.15–19 we have the entire seventh trumpet complete. . . . Yet this seventh trumpet and third Woe, by placing us at the final consummation, involves all that now follows in further visions. But not in such a way that these visions follow in a temporal succession—all time has ended—but so that John and we see anew and with greater fulness all that the final consummation involves.¹⁰

So Lenski aptly states the relation of the ensuing cycles to that of the trumpets as both parallel and progressive.

DEEPER CONFLICT: The closing vision of the *Deeper Conflict* division again pictures the end (14:14–20). A simple comparison of the vision with Matthew 13:39, 41; 24:30–31 is enough to settle this. [Also, in the symbolic numbers of 14:20, a thousand and six hundred are elements of absolute completion: 100, (the number of completion, 10, squared or intensified) times 16 (the number of the earth or creation, 4, squared or intensified).] “The revelations of vv.8–13 now culminate in a vision of the Parousia, represented as a time of general ingathering of the fruits of life,”¹¹ is Swete’s comment. The opponents of recapitulation still flounder about in a mess of devices though making even further concessions here than at previous climaxes. Charles indulges in amending the text (he excises 14:15–17) and calls the rest “a proleptic vision of the preliminary Messianic judgment executed by the Son of man on the heathen nations which is described in detail in 19:11–16 and further apparently in 20:7–10, and under another form in 17:14”¹² (Why he refuses to call the phenomenon of recapitulation, which he seems to recognize in these passages, by the name ‘recapitulation’ is difficult to understand.)

⁸ Ibid., 608.

⁹ Op. cit., 356.

¹⁰ Op. cit., 358.

¹¹ Op. cit., 188.

¹² Op. cit., II, 18.

Düsterdieck again expressly discounts recapitulation while he admits that the vision “brings, it is true, a preliminary representation of the final judgment.”¹³ He prefers to call this another example of the proleptical character of the structure. Similarly, Beckwith¹⁴ grants that “the universal use of the figures employed here show that the judgment here symbolized is the great judgment of the last day.” He refuses to solve the difficulty this brings to his successive arrangement of the vision as some critics do by “the supposition that the passage stood originally at the end of another apocalypse, or of an earlier form of our Apocalypse,” which is fine, but he can only say this “announces in anticipation the coming of the great catastrophe.”

At each new climax this talk of anticipations and preliminaries sounds more feeble. At previous climaxes we were told these evolved the ensuing material out of themselves; but here we must be willing to accept arbitrary statements to the effect that this full, detailed, striking vision admittedly symbolizing the Parousia is only an anticipation. There is no single vision in chapters nineteen and twenty that any more vividly depicts the final separation of the good from the evil and the punishment of the latter! Why not take the passage at face value and admit that since we are here at the end, to continue we must recapitulate?

BOWLS: The pouring out of the *seventh bowl* produces a devastating, cosmical, cataclysmic judgment with points of marked similarity to the visions of the sixth seal and seventh trumpet (16:17–21). The end of the world has come again.¹⁵ A great voice out of the temple and from the throne says, “It is done”—*γέγονεν* (*gegonen*) — the perfect tense eloquently describing God’s redemptive plan as fully executed and now followed by the predestined state of eternal blessedness accruing from that finished work of the Redeemer. (A more subtle mark of the finality of this judgment appears, as Beckwith indicates, in the seven-fold use of a form of *μέγας* (*megas*).)

The absolute finality of this judgment Swete makes relative to the course of the Roman Empire which he misinterprets Babylon to mean. However, he does show more insight into the *scope* of this symbol when he adds, “But Rome does not exhaust St. John’s conception of Babylon . . . other ages may witness the rise and fall of other mistresses of the world not less magnificent and depraved.”¹⁶ Beckwith at least places the vision properly at the close of the age for he acknowledges that it is the last form of Beastly power (Anti-Christ, to him) that destroys Babylon (Rome, to him).¹⁷ But he continues to minimize the significance of these climaxes, for he says of Rome, “she is overwhelmed in a ruin only implied here.”¹⁸ Of course, the subject of Babylon’s fall is treated more fully in the following chapters for that is their special theme, but it would take all the climax out of the progression within the judgments of the seven bowls of wrath to make the last a mere implication and not an actual description of the vengeance of Christ when he comes as a thief (16:15) to destroy the hosts of evil gathered for a last ungodly effort against God and the saints (16:16, compare 17:14; 19:19; 20:9).

¹³ Op. cit., 404.

¹⁴ Op. cit., 661–67.

¹⁵ So, Milligan, Hendriksen, Lenski (in loc.).

¹⁶ Op. cit., 226.

¹⁷ Op. cit., 159, 286.

¹⁸ Ibid., 686.

FINAL JUDGMENTS: The division on *Final Judgments* (17:1–21:8) on any reasonable evaluation of the language brings us to the end of history again. Even H. Cowles, tenacious preterist, though claiming that even chapter nineteen refers to the destruction of the city of imperial Rome, at least grants that the final judgment is foreshadowed here.¹⁹ While there is general agreement that the main theme or emphasis of these chapters is the end of the age (though a recapitulationist does not overlook the fact that the beginning of the Gospel Age is also included in the scope—17:8, 10, 18; 20:1–3), interpretations vary greatly, of course, within the more limited scope of the end of the age, with the particular view to be adopted depending on whether the judgments on Babylon, the Beasts, Satan, and men are considered synchronous with one another, successive, or some combination of the two. Charles, Düsterdieck, and Beckwith refer 17:8 to the fall of Rome and mysteriously bridge the gap to the end of time in 19:1ff.—whether by prophetic foreshortening or by supposing the prophet was just mistaken in thinking it was the Antichrist of the end-time who would destroy Rome, probably matters little to these gentlemen. Indeed, Charles in this section raves much of sources and fragments and from chapter twenty on says, “the traditional order of the text in these three chapters is intolerably disordered and hopelessly unintelligible.”²⁰ Such enlightening remarks serve well to indicate the problems that have long made these chapters the tinderbox of exegetical warfare, but they are of no value for an understanding of the text. However, all these men grant the point we desire to make here as a link in the case for recapitulation, i.e., in its climactic element this section presents the Final Judgment.

OBSERVATIONS: As for our own view of these chapters, the following observations may suffice:

1. Not without bearing on the chronological relations of these visions is the question, in connection with the fall of Babylon, of how we are to understand the fact that the Beast which courts the harlot, in its final state and in association with the ten kings, hates and destroys her. A very obvious question over which the commentators for the most part brush hastily. In answering it, exegetes fail in direct proportion as they have denied or minimized the religious significance of Babylon and have dwelt upon the seductiveness of the world—the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life.” It does no good to point out that Judas the betrayer at last was not happy with the thirty pieces of silver and hanged himself—thousands of other ungodly men have faced destruction in full pursuit of the philosophy “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die” and thus have to the very end clung with no revulsion of feelings to the seductiveness of the world. This, history’s last hour, looms large in importance in the eschatological perspective of Revelation. Satan is loosed from the abyss; the mightiest anti-Christian powers are marshalled for this last desperate conflict with God. Why should Antichrist scorn any anti-Christian agency’s help at such an hour? The only sound basis for explaining the Beast’s strange change in attitude toward Babylon is the consideration of the change in its own character which Scripture indicates. Whether we understand the Antichrist to be a personal being or the last form of world-imperial opposition to Christ, we must acknowledge that the Bible associates Antichrist with self-

¹⁹ Henry Cowles, *Revelation of John With Notes* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 9.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, II, 437.

deification and non-tolerance towards all other worship, true or false. In 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the man of sin “opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.” In Daniel the little horn of the fourth beast not only speaks words against the Most High and wears out his saints (7:25), but also, he magnifies himself above every god (11:36ff.—the basis of 2 Thess. 2), honoring only the god of fortresses—that is, physical might or war as such.²¹ In Revelation 13 again, the last form of the Beast, i.e., to whom it is given to overcome the saints (13:7), is given authority that “all that dwell on the earth shall worship him.” (13:8). During the gospel age, Satan tolerates any false-gospel or religion or apostate church pointing men to some sort of being or principle of benevolence beyond. But when the last hour of intensified conflict has come, Satan endeavors to concentrate the energies, efforts, might, and worship of the whole world in his Antichrist. Therefore, the Beast at the last not only persecutes the true followers of the Lamb but also destroys all other pretenses at religion—that is, Babylon.

Even though this interpretation of Revelation 17:16 be rejected, it is plain that there must be some succession from 17:16 to 19:19–21, for the Beast and ten horns cannot be destroyed before they themselves make the harlot desolate. A possible difficulty of harmonization presents itself in the *prima facie* impression of the sixth and seventh vials (16:14–20), for there the Beast’s forces are gathered to the battle (16:14–15) which we identify with that of 19:19–21, in the sixth vial, whereas the wrath of God is poured out on Babylon in the seventh vial. However, these bowls of wrath are not successive even though the last two go beyond the others to the end of the age. The first five are *no doubt* synchronous judgments, and we may allow for interlocking of details in the last two. Probably the meaning is that Antichrist rises to power gathering his forces, then destroys Babylon (Revelation 19:19ff. omits this since Babylon’s fall has already been disposed of in chapters seventeen and eighteen), and is presently brought to naught himself at the manifestation of the presence of Christ.

2. The careers of the harlot-Babylon, the Beast, and False Prophet were intertwined in chapter seventeen where it was revealed that the Beast would destroy Babylon; and the Lamb, the Beast. Then in chapter eighteen the separate strand of Babylon’s fall was elaborated, with the point of view now being that her fall, though executed by the Beast, was the Final Judgment of God. Then in chapter nineteen the other strand of the Final Judgment of Christ on the Beast and False Prophet is developed more fully, which involves (see 19:19–20) a recapitulation of 17:11–14. This recapitulation covers, however, only the climactic battle, not the whole New Testament age. Now in chapter twenty the Final Judgment on Satan is the theme, and since his career during the gospel age has not yet been described in this major division, by way of necessary background for a proper presentation and understanding of this final judgment, as in the cases of Babylon and the Beast in chapter seventeen, that career is covered, directly in 20:1–3 and by implication in 20:4–6. There is, therefore, another example of recapitulation of the Christian dispensation, with 20:1–6 synchronous with 17:3–6, 8a, 9, 10a. Also, Satan’s judgment (20:7–10) is thus parallel to 17:8b, 10b–14, and 19:11–21. We do not detain ourselves with a full discussion of the question of Chiliasm but would merely add that in the symmetrically synchronous structure of the entire Revelation as propounded in this

²¹ So, Carl Friedrich Keil, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. by M.G. Easton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872), 461–67.

paper a millennium understood in the premillennial school's sense would stick out like a very sore thumb.

3. The reaping of the harvest of the earth's redeemed and the gathering of the clusters of the vine for the great winepress of God's wrath (14:14–20) finds a striking parallel in the casting of the reprobate from the presence of the Great White Throne into the lake of fire and the blessing of the elect in the new heaven and new earth where "God himself shall be with them" (20:11–21:8). Why is the past career of individuals, not found written in the book of life, described as preparation for their judgment? Their lives have no meaning and their individual careers no unity apart from the great anti-Christian powers whose dupes and agents they were; but these have already been fully disposed of (17–19), and all that remains is that those who were enslaved to them and meekly followed them in life should now share their calamity and follow them in death. Also, in the case of the redeemed, to relate their earthly course were to relate them anew to their foes; but why resurrect them again since God has cast them in final judgment into the second death? The synchronism in these last two instances is therefore limited in scope to the day of final judgments as pictured in this main division and elsewhere in the "Revelation."

4. For the sake of completeness the nature of the climaxes of certain *parenthetical* visions is briefly indicated here:

(a) Before the opening of the seventh seal are two consolatory visions. The second (7:9–17) is a grave problem for all seeking strict succession in Revelation. Grotius thinks of Syrian Christians after the fall of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.! Elliott finds the fulfillment before 395 A.D. but is compelled to speak of the realization of glory by the collective body of the church of all generations. Barnes also, though arriving at 410 A.D. in 7:1–8, admits 7:9–17 is "an episode having no immediate connexion with what precedes or with what follows" and picturing the totality of the redeemed in heaven.²² Swete²³ talks as usual of mere anticipations of "the issue of the final judgment" and recognizes that "the whole of the episode . . . finds echoes in the last two chapters of the book."

Conclusive indications that this is the finale of the redemptive program of God are:

(i) The remarkably close parallel of 7:15–17 with 21:3–6, which follows the cosmic regeneration (20:1,2).

(ii) The great tribulation is past (7:14), which, on any interpretation of the phrase—comprehensive of the whole gospel age or restricted in some peculiar way to the end time—means the gospel age is completed.

(iii) The innumerable and universal multitude indicate the great commission is fulfilled and the end come.

(b) The episode of Revelation 11:1–13, immediately before the seventh trumpet, also is concluded by age-ending events. (For a detailed discussion of this, see below, "Eschatological Perspective of Revelation.")

(c) Towards the close of the section, the Deeper Conflict (12–14), is a vision (14:1–5) which is perhaps not strictly parenthetical, and yet since it is complete in itself and not the climax of this section, this may be the proper place to treat of it. It presents the Lamb

²² Compilation of views by Johann Lange, *Revelation of John* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1874), 11.

²³ *Op. cit.*, 100–106. So, also, Beckwith, *op. cit.*, 540; Düsterdieck, *op. cit.*, 252.

and one hundred forty-four thousand redeemed on Mt. Zion (compare Hebrews 12:22–24). Swete tries to make it out as an earthly scene, but Düsterdieck acknowledges,

In like manner, just as in ch. vii:9 sqq., an inspiring prospect of the heavenly glory of believers abiding faithful in the great tribulation still impending is afforded before this trouble itself is stated, so also in the first part of ch. xiv. (vv.1–5) a scene is represented in which a multitude of departed believers . . . manifests the glorious reward of the victors.²⁴

Though we do not agree with all the details of this analogy, the exegesis of 14:1–5 is essentially correct.

The number of the redeemed is certainly the symbolic number for the completed church of both testaments;²⁵ the whole church thus in heaven is a feature of the consummation. With this finality accord all the details. The redeemed are viewed as having been purchased out from—*ἀπό* (*apo*)—the earth and from men, and as having overcome spiritually (i.e., they “were not defiled—*aorist* tense—with women,” v.4), and therefore they are following—*present* tense—the Lamb “whithersoever he goeth,” v.4, (compare 1 Thess. 4:17, “so shall we ever be with the Lord.”).

Conclusions from the Exegesis of the Climaxes

The evidence has now been presented to demonstrate that the climax of each of the major formal divisions of Revelation from 4:1 to 21:8 brings the reader to the close of history. This hardly seems coincidental. At each of these points the opponents of recapitulation have sought to escape the force of the argument by claiming that these passages did not form part of the basic succession but were sidelights, interludes, anticipations, introductory summaries, and the like. Such excuses might carry some weight in those visions which are classified above as parenthetical. It seems plausible enough to consider these as anticipations of a final order of things which actually arrives only with later chapters in the Apocalypse, but as granted to John beforehand to sustain his spirit, as it were, through the visions of tribulation and woe to come. Even in these three instances, however, it should be noted that each of them occurs in immediate connection with the closing vision of their cycle (except that in chapter fourteen, a trio of angelic warnings intervene). Since the final triumph of God’s kingdom is depicted in these closing visions immediately following, it seems more likely that the assurance contained in these parenthetical visions has primarily a backward reference to the calamitous judgments described in the earlier stages of their cycle. Thus, they corroborate the interpretation of the division climaxes as being actually climaxes of what has preceded rather than anticipations of what is yet to come.

Where it is applied to all the climaxes of the major divisions, this “anticipation” evasion is altogether arbitrary. Especially since it requires an instance of exegetical violence impossible to defend in order to maintain this theory at one point—and that the very earliest climax, i.e., the sixth seal—the suspicion is hard to avoid that the preconceived notion that the end of the age cannot be presented before the end of the Apocalypse determines the interpretation of all the major climaxes. Furthermore, what is

²⁴ Op. cit., 389–90.

²⁵ See Lenski, op. cit., 249–50.

the need of so many anticipations? Is the author afraid he will lose his reader's attention unless he keeps reminding him that great things are coming? If the earlier climaxes are all mere anticipations, the reader must be disappointed when he finds that the real thing at the end has not so very much more to add to the pictures of the "anticipations"! As for those opponents of recapitulation who tone down the obvious finality of these climaxes to mean something just short of history's close, the Book of Revelation becomes grotesquely futuristic. If at 6:12–17 the day of judgment dawns and then even at 14:14–20 it is only a preliminary phase of the Judgment that has arrived, concerning what within so meager a scope of time has the author been so verbose in the intervening chapters? Can it possibly warrant so much attention?

Why not therefore accept the synchronous structure which the climaxes demand? At the climax of each cycle the universe is shaken to the foundations, or Christ returns to earth in Final Judgment, or the hosts of heaven triumphantly proclaim that God's wrath has been poured out and his kingdom consummated—but all such, *we are told*, is a letdown from what we should be expecting! It is but a little prelude. *We must realize* that the seventh seal includes all the remainder of the book, and so again with the seventh trumpet—in spite of the facts that the seventh seal, seventh trumpet, etc. are never alluded to again and that each cycle is beautifully rounded off in its seventh member, and that the succeeding cycle is always a new beginning marked by a formal introduction. That the final Judgment section of the book goes beyond the previous climaxes in intensity and fulness of treatment is quite in keeping with parallelism. For each parallel section has its own theme to deal with, and also our position is that there is a logical progress in the intensity of God's judgments as found in the successive cycle-themes.

Meredith G. Kline (1922–2007) *was a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who served as a professor Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, and Westminster Seminary California in Escondido, California.*

Servant Standards

Commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapter 22

by Alan D. Strange

Chapter XXII Calling a Minister

1. A minister or licentiate may be called to ministerial service by a congregation; he may also be called by a presbytery or the general assembly, either directly or through their agencies, for work not related to any one particular congregation. Only ministers and licentiates may be called.

Comment: One who has previously been ordained as a minister, or who is a licentiate and thus qualified to receive a call, may be called to particular ministerial service either by a congregation or other body. In the former case, such a call would be by a local congregation to serve as a pastor or teacher in that church or to serve in some outside agency, like a teacher in a seminary. In the latter case, a call may be issued by a higher judicatory (presbytery or GA) for service, perhaps as a home or foreign missionary, a seminary professor, a general secretary of a denominational program committee, etc. With respect to the latter, the call may come either through the higher judicatories themselves or its agencies (like the Committee on Foreign Missions, an agency of the General Assembly). Only a minister or licentiate is competent to receive a call.

2. All calls shall be presented to the person called only by consent of presbytery. No minister shall be transferred to other service without his consent.

Comment: Any call given to a minister or licentiate must be presented to said person only by consent of the presbytery in which the call is being issued, coordinated with the consent of any presbytery of which he may be a current member. No call issued may be effectuated without the consent of the person called. There must therefore be a dual agreement of the governing body of the regional church (the presbytery) of which a minister is a member, together with the approval of the calling presbytery, and the consent of the prospective candidate. No man may be “drafted”: called to another venue of service without his consent.

3. When a congregation desires to call a pastor it shall ordinarily choose a special committee from its own membership to assist it in selecting him. If the committee is not identical with the session, invitations to preach to the congregation shall be issued only with the approval of the session. No person shall be called by the congregation without the prior approval of the session, except that any ten members entitled to vote or one-fifth of all those entitled to vote, which ever be the larger number, may present a nomination to the congregation, such nomination having been previously submitted to the special committee for its consideration.

Comment: When a congregation wishes to call a pastor, it should, ordinarily, choose a special committee from its own membership to assist it in selecting said pastor. The first two sentences of this section, taken together, make it clear that it is common for the session to serve as pulpit search committee. Some churches, however, prefer to have this committee to be more variegated than that and to consist also of non-elder members of the congregation. Invitations to preach to the congregation, whether the session has declared a person a candidate or not, may transpire only with the approval of the session. In fact, no person shall be called by the congregation without the prior approval of the session, which must endorse any such candidates and call the congregational meeting to consider them.

Provision is then made in this section for a rather odd procedure: if the session refuses to approve someone nominated for pastor and will not thus call a congregational meeting to consider calling him as pastor, a portion of the congregation may act to present the nomination to the congregation. The portion of the congregation that may do so is either twenty percent of those entitled to vote or ten members, whichever number is larger. This unusual procedure shows how important the congregation is in the whole process of calling a pastor: it is ultimately the decision of the congregation.

It may be noted that calls to pastors in this section are assumed to be a call to be a solo pastor. For many years, OP congregations enjoyed only one pastor, not commonly being of a size to warrant more. In more recent years, larger churches have wanted more than one pastor, serving either as a co-pastor or an associate pastor. Technically, there is no provision here (or elsewhere) for an associate pastor; rather, any additional pastor would be considered simply pastors. There certainly is no provision for an assistant pastor as the PCA employs (a man not called by the congregation but serving at the pleasure of the session). The use of a pulpit search committee pertains in the case of a congregation seeking a single or senior pastor. It may not apply in the same way if the congregation calls an associate pastor, especially if one is a seminary professor, e.g., and receives no or little salary from the church.

4. When the special committee is prepared to make its report it shall inform the session and present to it a copy of its proposed report so that the session may consider such nominations as may be contemplated in the proposed report. The session shall then, if it deems it advisable, convene a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of hearing the report of the committee and acting on it; it shall, however, always be the duty of the session to convene the congregation in accordance with Chapter XVI, Section 1, and to conduct the meeting in accordance with that chapter.

Comment: The pulpit search committee, when it is prepared to make recommendation(s) of candidates, reports to the session so that the session may give due consideration to any nominations offered by the committee. The session, if it thinks it best, shall call a congregational meeting for the purpose of hearing the report of the committee and acting on it. It remains solely the responsibility of the session to call such a congregational meeting, as provided for in FG 16.1, even in the light of section 3, above.

5. When the meeting has been convened and the call of the meeting has been found in order, it is expedient that the moderator give an exhortation to the congregation suited to the purpose of its coming together. The special committee, or the session, shall then present its report, after which the congregation shall determine whether it wishes to proceed to call a pastor.

Comment: When the congregational meeting to consider the report of the pulpit search committee has been convened and the call of the meeting has been found in order, it is ordinary and helpful for the moderator to exhort the congregation in a manner that befits the occasion: the calling of a pastor is one of the most important duties of a congregation, and all present should be duly impressed with the honor and duty that is theirs. Either the session, or the special committee, as the session deems best, shall report to the congregation. The congregation shall then determine whether it wishes to proceed at that point to call a pastor.

6. If the congregation decides to vote to call a pastor the moderator shall conduct the election. The voting shall be by ballot, a majority being required for election.

If the vote is unanimous a call shall be drawn in due form. If there is a majority and a minority the moderator shall address the congregation seeking to persuade the minority to concur in the call. A ballot shall then be taken to determine the number concurring in the call. If there is still a minority unwilling to concur, the moderator shall advise the majority and the minority concerning their mutual responsibilities. A final ballot shall then be taken to determine the number desiring to prosecute the call in the circumstances. If a majority decides to prosecute the call it shall be drawn in due form and the presbytery shall be informed of the proceedings.

If at any point in the meeting the congregation decides not to call a pastor it may refer the matter back to the special committee, or to the session, as the case may be, for report to a later meeting, or take such other action as may be appropriate.

Comment: If the recommendation for a fitting pastoral candidate forwarded by the session/pulpit search committee commends itself to the congregation then meeting, a vote shall then be taken with the moderator of the meeting conducting the election. The vote is taken by secret ballot, with a simple majority required for election. If such a majority does not transpire, then there is no election. In the case of a majority, which would ordinarily be a sizeable majority in the calling of a pastor, events proceed in the meeting. If the first ballot has yielded a unanimous vote, a call to the pastor elect is to be drawn up in due form. The proper form for such is found in section 9, below, of this chapter.

If, however, the first vote is not unanimous, then a second ballot is to be taken. The purpose of this second ballot is to ask the minority to concur with the majority. It should be noted, as it is above, that if the first ballot were, say, fifty-five percent voting to call with forty-five percent voting not to call, there may be mutual agreement not to prosecute the call process any further. However, as would be more usual, say that the first ballot yields a 75–80% positive vote, then the second ballot is to secure concurrence. The moderator should make it clear to the congregation that he is not asking anyone to change their first vote; rather, he is asking all who voted not to call to consider concurring with their brothers and sisters in Christ in their desire to call this candidate. All who voted not to call the candidate on the first ballot should vote to concur on the next ballot(s) unless they have some principled reason for continuing to believe that the candidate under review would prove to be unfit for the pastoral position in that congregation.

If the second ballot still reveals those who do not wish to concur, the moderator should then “advise the majority and minority concerning their mutual responsibilities.” This means that he shall advise the majority that perhaps a rather large minority exists, and they may not wish to proceed with a call. Likewise, he may make a last plea for unity to a small minority, making it clear that his call here is not to negate previous votes but to ask the remaining holdouts if they will join their brothers and sisters in issuing the call. The results

of this third and final ballot are conclusive, and this is what will be reported to the candidate and to the presbytery as the final ballot, along with the results of the two previous ballots. The numbers for such should be included in the minutes as this is the only proper way for the presbytery and the candidate to know what the respective totals for each ballot were.

7. When the congregation has determined to issue a call it shall by vote determine the terms of the call, and shall order it subscribed either by the electors, or by the session or other representatives of its choice. The session shall then draw up the call in proper form and see to its signing by the proper signatories.

After the congregation has determined the signatories of the call it may appoint commissioners to represent it at the next meeting of the presbytery to which the congregation belongs for the purpose of having the call found in order and its terms approved. The clerk of the session shall present the call to the clerk of the presbytery, who shall present it to a meeting of the presbytery at the earliest practicable time.

Comment: When the congregation has determined to issue a call, it shall proceed by further vote to determine the terms of the call: salary, housing, vacation, insurance provision, etc. for the pastor elect. The call with all its terms is to be signed by those designated by the congregation for such a purpose, often including the session and other representatives of the congregation. It is the responsibility of the session to draw up the call in proper form (as set forth in section 9 of this chapter, below) and make sure that it is signed by the designated signatories. In addition to determining signatories, the congregation may also appoint commissioners, customarily ruling elders, sometimes joined by others (say, members of the pulpit search committee), to represent it at the next meeting of the presbytery to which the congregation belongs; the purpose of that meeting of presbytery would be to have the call found in order (e.g., the man called was eligible to receive it, and it was from a duly authorized body) and its terms approved (the salary and housing, e.g., were adequate). The clerk of the session of the calling church presents calls issued by that congregation to the clerk of the presbytery of which that session and its congregation is a part. The presbytery shall meet at the earliest practicable time to consider such a call (finding it in order, approving its terms and placing it in the hands of the candidate called to ministerial office).

8. If the congregation has chosen to subscribe its call by representatives the moderator shall certify to the presbytery that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a vote of the congregation.

The moderator shall also certify as to the validity of the meeting of the congregation and that the call as presented has been prepared in all respects as directed by vote of the congregation.

Comment: The moderator needs to be able to certify to the presbytery that the call before it is in every respect a valid call from a body authorized to extend such (a congregation of the OPC): he needs to be able to validate the meeting of the congregation to issue the call and to assert that the call presented to the presbytery is the one that has been prepared “in all respects” as directed by the vote of the congregation. He also needs to certify to the presbytery that representatives of the congregation chosen to subscribe the call were indeed chosen for that purpose by the congregation. Finally, the moderator needs to be able to assure the presbytery that in this matter the will of the congregation is being duly executed.

9. A call from a congregation shall be in the following or like form:

The congregation of _____ Church being, on sufficient grounds, well satisfied with the ministerial qualifications of you _____, and having good hopes that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation; promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly care and employment, we promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of _____ in regular _____ payments during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church, together with free use of a house and _____ vacation each year.

A call from a presbytery or the general assembly or an agency thereof shall be in appropriately similar form.

Comment: Little needs to be said by way of the form that a call from a congregation takes other than that it should track with the form provided in this section. Some presbyteries provide in the standing rules (or by-laws) of the presbytery a more detailed example of a call based on this form in section 9.¹ Such a fuller template might include specifics for hospitalization, pensions, car allowance, book allowance, etc. In recent decades, e.g., there has been a denominational insistence that hospitalization be provided, that the pension is adequate, and the like. We have now established a Committee on Ministerial Care that also addresses many of the needs of a pastor that are relevant to the process of calling and providing for (and continuing to provide for) a pastor. Resources that it provides should also be consulted.² A call may also be issued by the Committee on Foreign Missions, e.g. It should be cast in a similar form to the call template in this section, *mutatis mutandis*. Such a fuller template might include specifics for housing allowance (commonly needed today in the absence of the provision of a manse) hospitalization, pensions, car allowance, book allowance, etc.

10. When a call from a congregation has been presented to its presbytery for approval the presbytery may find the call in order, approve its terms, and determine to place it in the hands of the person called, whether or not he be of the same presbytery; may refer the call back to the congregation with recommendations either to amend or desist from the call; or may, for reasons which it shall communicate to the congregation, decline to place the call in the person's hands.

If the call is to a minister or licentiate who is under the jurisdiction of another presbytery of this Church the clerk of the presbytery which has jurisdiction over the calling congregation shall, if that presbytery approves the call, forward the call to the person called and a copy to the clerk of his presbytery. The calling congregation's presbytery may, before acting on the call, require the person called to be interviewed by the presbytery or a committee of the presbytery in order to judge of his fitness in the circumstances. If the person resides at an inconvenient distance from the presbytery's area such an interview may be arranged, if agreeable to all parties, at the time of his visiting the congregation prior to the issuance of a call.

¹ Here is one example of such from the Presbytery of the Midwest, containing a much fuller and quite helpful discussion on policies and guidelines on pastors' salaries: <https://pmwopc.org/home/standards-and-policies/policies-guidelines-on-pastors-salaries/#CallTemplate>.

² <https://opccmc.org/>.

Comment: When a congregation issues a call to a man to serve as its pastor (or one of its pastors), the call is presented to its presbytery for approval in three aspects: the presbytery needs to determine whether the call is in order (i.e., it is for legitimate service to a legitimate candidate from a legitimate body), approve its terms (ascertaining that the terms cover everything needing to be covered and that they are adequate, including the compensation), and then the presbytery may determine to place it in the hands of the candidate. At this point, the candidate customarily indicates his intention to accept or to refuse the call. All of this occurs by the presbytery processing the call, whether or not the candidate is a member of that presbytery or of another. If of another, that presbytery will have to give its permission, either before or after, granting him permission to accept the call.

11. When a call is issued by a presbytery or the general assembly, or an agency thereof, a person designated by the calling body shall sign the call, forward it to the person called, send a copy to the presbytery that has jurisdiction over him, and certify to that presbytery as to the validity of the meeting at which the call was issued and that the call has been prepared in all respects as determined at that meeting.

Comment: This section describes the issuance of a call to a candidate from a presbytery or the general assembly. A call is considered issued when the presbytery, or general assembly (or one of its agencies, like the Committee on Foreign Missions), designates a person to sign the call and to forward it to the candidate, sending a copy to the presbytery that has jurisdiction over him and certifying to that presbytery that the meeting of the calling body was a valid one and that the call issued is precisely (“in all respects”) what the calling body intended. A presbytery may issue such a call to a man to teach in a college or seminary, be a chaplain in a prison ministry, plant a church in that presbytery, etc. The general assembly may call a man to serve as executive for one of the program committees (foreign or home missions; Christian education) or one of its agencies (foreign or home missions) may call a man to serve as a home or foreign missionary.

12. The procedures to be followed in response to a call from within the Church shall be:

- a. When the call is to the pastor of a congregation, and he is disposed to accept the call, he shall inform the congregation of his desire and ask them to concur with him in requesting their presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship; such request shall be voted on by the congregation at a regularly called meeting of the congregation.

If the congregation concurs in his request the pastor shall request their presbytery to approve the call and to dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the congregation declines to concur in his request he may, if he is still disposed to accept the call, request the presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship; in such a case the congregation shall be given the opportunity to be represented at the meeting of presbytery to plead its cause.

When the presbytery has received a request to approve a call and to dissolve a pastoral relationship it may grant the request, require the pastor and congregation to give the matter further consideration, or require the continuance of the relationship.

If a pastoral relationship is dissolved, the presbytery shall declare the pulpit vacant as of a specified date and record the facts in its records. If the call is to work under the jurisdiction of another presbytery, the minister shall be dismissed to that presbytery as of a convenient date and the clerk of the dismissing presbytery shall so inform the presbytery to which the minister is being dismissed.

- b. When the call is to a minister serving a presbytery or the general assembly, or an agency thereof, a procedure parallel to that for a pastor shall be followed.
- c. When the call is to a minister without a charge, or if his charge is not under the jurisdiction of the Church, he shall, if he is disposed to accept the call, request the presbytery to approve the call and grant him permission to accept it.
- d. When the call is to a licentiate and he is disposed to accept the call he shall request his presbytery to approve the call and grant him permission to accept it. Before the presbytery considers his request it shall have determined that he has satisfactorily completed his probation for the gospel ministry.
- e. If the person called decides to decline the call he shall promptly inform the calling body and the presbytery through which the call was issued, and return the call to the calling body.
- f. No minister may leave his charge without the prior approval of the presbytery.

Comment: Various scenarios are set forth here in section 12 respecting a call to a man who is already within the OPC to be a minister in some new service in some particular situation. Under a. we see perhaps the most common scenario: a man is pastoring a church and another church calls him to be its pastor. If the candidate welcomes the call (and is intent on answering it in the affirmative), the candidate notifies both his own presbytery and the congregation he is currently serving of such a call. He asks his presbytery to dissolve his current pastoral relationship and seeks the concurrence of the congregation in his desire. The congregation has opportunity to express such concurrence in a congregational meeting called for that purpose.

If the congregation concurs, the candidate for the new position asks his current presbytery to approve the new call and to dissolve the current pastoral relationship at a date mutually agreed upon by him and the congregation. If the congregation does not concur, their pastor, who is also the candidate with a new call, may, if he still wishes to accept the call, ask the presbytery to go forward with its processing of the call, including dissolving his current pastoral relationship. The congregation of which he is pastor may send representatives to the presbytery to plead their cause as to why the pastor should not be released from his current call and enabled to accept the new call.

Upon reception of a request from one pastoring a local church to process a new call, the presbytery may do one of three things: grant the request of the candidate to dissolve his current pastoral relationship and approve the call to a new post; require him and the congregation further to consider the matter (especially if the congregation does not want their pastor to respond positively to the new call); finally, the presbytery may require the continuance of the pastor's current pastoral relationship, refusing to permit its dissolution or to approve the new call.

If the presbytery agrees to dissolve the pastoral relationship in this situation, it shall declare the pulpit vacant as of a certain date (usually a mutually agreed-upon date) and shall record such actions in the minutes. If the call is to a church under the jurisdiction of another presbytery, the minister receiving the call shall be dismissed to his new presbytery at a convenient date, with the clerk of the dismissing presbytery properly informing the clerk of the receiving presbytery of the actions of the dismissing presbytery. Section b. notes that when the call is to a minister serving a presbytery (instead of a particular congregation), as may be the case with a seminary professor or minister serving the GA or an agency of it

(like one of the program committees of the OPC), a procedure that parallels the one in the case of a call being issued to a serving pastor (as in section a.) is to be followed.

The scenario pictured by section c. is that of a minister without charge or a minister whose charge is not under the jurisdiction of the church (perhaps he is a teacher or an editor with an extra-ecclesiastical agency). In such a case as this, if he receives a call that he wishes to accept, he is to ask his current presbytery to approve the call and to grant him permission to accept it. Section d. details a call to a licentiate: if he wishes to accept it, he asks his current presbytery to approve the call and grant him permission to accept it. Since licensure involves a probationary period during which test is made of the gifts and graces of the candidate, before granting the licentiate's request to approve the call and so forth, the presbytery must have determined that he had successfully completed the test that the licensure process involves, i.e., he must have satisfactorily completed his probation for the gospel ministry.

Anyone issued a call customarily has three weeks to determine whether to accept it. A man who receives a call but does not intend to take it should notify the body that issued the call to him as soon as he concludes that he will not accept the call. This permits the body to proceed to other candidates. In any case, no minister should leave his charge without the prior approval of his presbytery. This means that a minister cannot simply up and leave a church or other charge without the explicit consent of the presbytery whose permission he must seek.

13. a. When a call to a minister of another denomination is contemplated the person presiding at the meeting of the calling body shall, before a vote is taken, inform it of the provisions of this section.
- b. When the calling body has voted to issue a call to such a minister it shall present it to the appropriate presbytery for approval; if the presbytery approves the call it shall place it in his hands contingent upon his reception into the presbytery.
- c. If the minister desires to accept the call the presbytery shall require him to give evidence of possessing the qualifications in regard to piety, faith, and learning that are required of candidates for ordination as given in Chapter XXIII. This evidence shall include written testimonials from qualified persons of his satisfactory exercise of the requisite gifts for the ministry of the Word.

In no case shall an examination on the floor of presbytery be waived. If one-fourth of the presbyters present are dissatisfied with the examination in theology the minister shall be required to undergo an examination in the subject again at a future meeting of the presbytery. If at the outset of such subsequent meeting one-fourth of the presbyters so request, a clear recording of this examination shall be made and filed with the presbytery.

The presbytery shall require him to answer affirmatively the following questions:

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- (2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
- (3) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?
- (4) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

- (5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?
 - (6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
 - (7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?
- d. Under no circumstances shall such a person be permitted to undertake any of the duties contemplated in the call nor to occupy living quarters that are to be provided by the calling body, and he shall be strongly advised not to change his residence in any case, until after the call has been approved and his reception by the presbytery has been completed.

Comment: Section 13 details how a call is to be handled with respect to a minister from another denomination, from outside the OPC. Section a. requires the one presiding at the meeting of a calling body (congregation, presbytery, general assembly, or one of its agencies) to inform those in that body of all the rest of the provisions of this section before any vote is taken. Section b. indicates that the calling body, in issuing a call, shall take it to the appropriate presbytery for approval. This means that if a church in presbytery x issued a call to a PCA minister, e.g., the call would need to go before presbytery x for its approval. If presbytery x approves the call, it shall place such in the hands of the one called, contingent upon all that follows in the succeeding sections, i.e., contingent upon his being received into the presbytery.

What follows in section 13 is what is required in the following chapter of this FG (23) that occurs in the ordination (and subsequent installation) of any ministerial candidate. The comments on that chapter at the appropriate places should be consulted, though these items may be noted here. The graces and the gifts of the ministerial candidate must be ascertained, including ministerial testimonials. Presbyterian examination is an important part of ascertaining such graces and gifts as well; in any case, whatever examinations may be waived (it may not be thought necessary to require a PCA or a URCNA minister, e.g., to sustain exams in biblical languages, English Bible, general church history, etc.), an examination on the floor of presbytery may not be waived. One quarter of presbyters voting in the negative can require further examination and request the recording of any such further exams. If one quarter persists in the negative, the ministerial candidate will not successfully sustain examination.

Section d., forbidding the candidate to move onto the field of service (e.g., into a church's manse or to otherwise take up residence) until the candidate sustains what the section addresses is here for good reason and should always be observed to avoid the undesirable situation of having a man from another denomination, in this case, move to the manse and to have the presbytery not approve him. The rest of section c., the key questions to ministerial candidates (1–7), also called ministerial vows, are of the utmost importance and are treated in the commentary on them as they occur in FG 23.

14. A person receiving a call shall respond to it ordinarily within three weeks unless otherwise agreed to by the calling body.

Comment: As noted above, a call, unless otherwise detailed, requires a response in three weeks. The calling body, in consultation with the candidate, can extend the period for his response to the call (there are reasons for wanting more time, due sometimes, e.g., to personal illness or family tragedy). Unless a call specifies more time than three weeks, no person called should take more time than that to notify the calling body.

15. The acceptance of a call shall be regarded as a request for installation in the case of a minister, and for ordination and installation in the case of a licentiate, and the presbytery shall proceed as soon as convenient to act upon the request in terms of Chapter XXIII, Sections 4ff.

Comment: When a call is accepted, this is a request on the part of the calling body and the candidate called for all that comprises ordination and installation if the man is not ordained, i.e., he is only licensed, which he must be to be eligible to receive a call. If he is already an ordained minister, the acceptance of a call is a request for installation. In any case, the presbytery shall proceed as soon as it is convenient to act upon the request in keeping with the section specified in this section (FG 23, sections 4 and following).

16. Within the terms of this chapter the phrase "find the call in order" shall mean to determine that the call has been properly drawn and issued, and that its terms conform to the constitution of the Church; and the phrase "approve its terms" or "approve the call" shall mean to sanction the terms specified in the call.

Comment: This chapter of the FG employs the phrase "find the call in order" to mean that the presbytery in which a call to one of its members or licentiates is being considered—from a church of that presbytery or from the presbytery, general assembly, or one its agencies—shall make certain determinations. Namely, a presbytery, in finding a call in order, determines that the call is properly drawn and issued by a lawful judicatory or agency of the OPC, and that the terms of the call conform to the secondary and tertiary standards. That last part means that the terms are legitimate for a minister of the gospel (who may be called as a pastor, teacher, missionary, military chaplain, religious editor, etc.). Further the phrase "approve its terms" or "approve the call" mean that the presbytery specifically approves the terms specified in the call: the salary and housing is adequate, the hospitalization meets the needs, etc. The custom tends to be that the presbytery in which the new call places the man is the one that attends most minutely to the specifics respecting the terms of the call. The presbytery from which he comes in "approving the call" does so in a more general way, relying on the presbytery whence the call is issued to be most attentive to all the specifics of the call.

Alan D. Strange is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and serves as professor of church history and theological librarian at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana, and is associate pastor of New Covenant Community Church (OPC) in Joliet, Illinois.

ServantReading

Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom

by Gerald Bray

A Review Article

by Joseph A. Tipton

Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom, Gerald Bray. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020, xii + 132 pages, \$12.99, paper.

The stated mission of Lexham Press's Lived Theology series is to trace "the way that biblical concepts and ideas are lived out in the lives of Christians" (xi); the newest addition to the series, Gerald Bray's *Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom*, accomplishes this mission quite well, bridging the often treacherous divide between *theoria* and *praxis* and showing how the former influenced the latter in Chrysostom's preaching. Thanks to this approach, the result is not just an intriguing and fascinating look at the way Chrysostom expounded the Word to his congregation. It is also an insightful glimpse into the way Chrysostom read the biblical text. As such, it is an excellent starting place for anybody wishing to familiarize himself not just with Chrysostom but with early Christian thought as well.

Bray bridges the divide between theory and practice by concentrating on a theological principle, then exploring how that principle might have informed the way Chrysostom interpreted the biblical text for his hearers. Bray focuses on four sets of homilies: those on Genesis 1–3, Matthew, John, and Romans. This gives Bray a foothold within the enormous literary output Chrysostom produced that enables him to examine the way Chrysostom handled issues that are of particular interest to us today. The theological idea that Bray sees as most formative in Chrysostom's exposition of the Bible is accommodation (16). Just as God adapted his revelation of himself to us in a way that would make sense to our finite minds, so in his preaching Chrysostom strove to meet his audience where they were in order to lead them to the higher knowledge contained in the gospel (24).

This tack allows Bray to come to terms with the sometimes unexpected ways Chrysostom expounded the Bible. For instance, when trying to understand why Chrysostom went so far beyond the biblical text in his laudatory epithets of Paul (as when he dubs him a gospel "gladiator"), he applies the principle of accommodation and understands Chrysostom to be adapting his message to terms his congregation thought in (105). Yet approaching Chrysostom through the principle of accommodation also enables Bray to elucidate the way Chrysostom read the Bible. For instance, it serves as the background to Chrysostom's non-literal reading of the creation account in Genesis (32) and of the creation of woman from the rib of man (52). While we may never know this side of heaven how exactly God did both of these things, he told us in a way that sufficiently conveys the meaning we need.

Within this framework Bray is able to broach larger issues of general interest, as when he examines Chrysostom's interpretation of the creation of man in God's image. Image, he points out, is taken by Chrysostom to refer to man's function, namely, his authority over creation, as

opposed to the way it was commonly interpreted in his time, as referring to man's form (43). Bray explores other interesting topics such as whether sex was meant to be practiced before the fall or resulted from man's sin. Pointing out that Genesis 1:28 suggests it was meant for man all along, Bray discusses ancient attitudes towards it and the general consensus in antiquity that sex was inherently sinful and a consequence of the fall (54). He also has several opportunities to discuss the way ancient Christians typically (and wrongly, he adds) mapped the Greek matter-spirit dichotomy onto the New Testament flesh-soul dichotomy, and he explores the implications involved there (50). He even manages to discuss textual issues, and in very layman-friendly terms at that.

Discussing Genesis 1:2, Bray points out how Chrysostom was not misled by the Septuagint mistranslation of *tohu wabohu* (תְּהוֹ וְבוֹהוּ) “without form and void”) as “invisible” because of the corruption of the Greek *aoristos* (ἀόριστος) into *aoratos* (ἀόρατος) (34), but he was able, despite not using the Hebrew text, to arrive at the correct meaning just by following the logic of the passage. Thus, because of these larger discussions Bray's treatment of Chrysostom serves as a good introduction to ancient Christian thought and the way ancient Christians read their Bible.

Accommodation also goes far for Bray in understanding Chrysostom's interpretation of many things Jesus said and did. The theme of Jesus as Benign Teacher is ubiquitous in Chrysostom. Jesus spoke to the woman at the well about the spiritual water because the physical water there at the well could serve as a visual aid to help her better understand the higher truth (92). This same basic exegetical orientation explains Chrysostom's interpretation of the healing of the two blind men at Jericho (78) as well as Jesus' treatment of his family (82). For Chrysostom, this accommodating behavior of Jesus was what all people, and pastors in particular, were supposed to imitate (85). Indeed, Chrysostom lays so much stress on imitating Jesus that he even runs risk of deemphasizing Christ's divinity for fear that his congregation might feel that imitating the Savior was too impossible a task (76).

Regarding this theme of Christ as example and model for imitation, Bray puts his finger on one of the most characteristic features of not only Chrysostom's, but many of the early fathers' exegesis. Reading texts in order to have models to emulate or avoid had a long history in Greco-Roman literary criticism, going back at least to the Alexandrian interpreters of Homer and finding its most famous exponent in the biographico-moral writings of Plutarch. It is no surprise then if Chrysostom read the biblical text in a similar way. Yet the overall impression this literary methodology often produced in the Greek and Roman writers who applied it was a rather exacting, fastidious, and demanding moralism. And, sad to say, this is also the impression one often gets when reading ancient Christian writers, Chrysostom in particular. His homilies are full of exhortations to his congregation to imitate Christ here or Paul there, to mind the way one behaves with the self-conscious introspection of an ascetic. Meanwhile, discussions of grace are far fewer than many modern readers would like. Bray tries to account for this by arguing that Chrysostom's ministerial bent was pastoring, not evangelizing. That people were justified by grace Chrysostom took for granted; what he cared most about was that his congregation show the fruits of that justification in their daily lives, and so he preached to that end (99, 106).

While this is an important point to bear in mind, its application is limited, and one worries that Bray might be flattening out some undeniable differences between ancient and modern Christianity, at least in its pre-Augustinian and post-Reformation forms. This is particularly an issue in Bray's treatment of the Christian's participation in his own sanctification. Interpreting *Homily 16 on Matthew*,¹ where Chrysostom says all God wants is a sincere hatred of the devil,

¹ Phillip Schaff, ed., *NPNF (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers)*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1880–1900), 1/10:115.

and if he gets this, he will do the rest, Bray takes this rather semi-Pelagian-sounding statement and explains it in more Augustinian terms by importing another statement Chrysostom makes in *Homily 55* (section 8),² where Chrysostom admits the Holy Spirit must be present for one to do anything pleasing to God (89–90). Yet the mere confession of our dependence on the Holy Spirit does not amount to an Augustinian version of sanctification whereby God commands what he will, yet gives what he commands.³ Any adherent of the medieval *via moderna* certainly acknowledged the Holy Spirit’s importance yet harped on the value of works more than the Reformers were comfortable with. And to the casual reader Chrysostom’s emphasis on works is just as pronounced as any *via moderna* writer. One would prefer a more straightforward exposition of Chrysostom’s theology on this point rather than what sometimes feels like an attempt to make him jibe with post-Reformation ideas.

One gets a similar impression when it is suggested that Chrysostom would have subscribed to Martin Luther’s doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* (at one and the same time justified and a sinner). The reasoning here seems to be that since Chrysostom equated sinlessness with immortality and sinfulness with mortality, inasmuch as we still perform “the good works of justification” in our mortal (and therefore sinful) bodies, we are “justified sinners” (112). Now, apart from the fact that the phrase “the good works of justification” is puzzling and probably requires some fleshing out, behind Luther’s doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* lies a forensic formulation of justification. Just because Chrysostom says we perform, or are to perform, good works while still sinners, it does not mean he subscribed to forensic justification. Every Christian tradition admits as much. Again, one feels that differences between ancient and modern Christianity are getting flattened out.

Yet despite this tendency to make the famous ascetic—and famously ascetic—presbyter of Antioch square with modern evangelical sensibilities, the book has many commendable qualities. Besides the one already mentioned, Bray is very balanced in his portrayal of Chrysostom. He does not indulge in hagiography but points out Chrysostom’s shortcomings (e.g., his antipathy toward the Jews in Antioch, his reading much of Scripture through the lens of Greek philosophy, his indifference to the Hebrew text, etc.). He offers his own translations of passages from Chrysostom that are a breath of fresh air to those familiar with the nineteenth-century alternative, and the text is for the most part free of errors. Besides different dates of birth on the timeline and the first page, I counted only three other typos.⁴ The reader also on occasion gets helpful synopses on the current state of scholarship regarding important issues, as when Bray mentions the obsolescence of the Antiochene/Alexandrian divide in ancient biblical exegesis (22). Thus the book is, all in all, a good starting-place for one wishing to learn something about Chrysostom. Much like Oxford’s Very Short Introduction series, the book introduces Chrysostom, explores the way he read the biblical text and expounded it to his congregation, and gives insights into ancient Christian thought. Its efforts to find common ground between Chrysostom and post-Reformation Christianity may strike readers as too simplistic and distracting, but that really does not detract from its usefulness as a very short introduction to the ill-starred bishop of Constantinople.

Joseph A. Tipton is a member of Coeur d’Alene Reformed Church OPC and a Fellow of Classical Languages at New St. Andrews College in Moscow, ID.

² *NPNF*, 1/10:344.

³ This is the famous statement made by Augustine that created so much trouble for him with the Pelagians. See *Confessions* 10.29 (*NPNF* 1/1:153).

⁴ On page 2 “charged” should read “charges,” on page 31 “hexi” should read “hex,” and on page 84 a “this” (I believe) should precede “explains.”

ServantReading

Can We Fully Separate Ecclesiology and Polity?

A Review Article

By Ryan M. McGraw

The Church: An Introduction. Short Studies in Systematic Theology, by Gregg R. Allison. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 181 pages, \$14.99, paper.

There is a difference between what constitutes the being of the church and its well-being. What the church is in relation to God, and a church's confession of the gospel, are essential to the church, while churches can still be churches while differing over things like the form of government or the administration of the sacraments. This introductory book focusses on the catholicity of the church in its local expression. Seeking to cut across denominational distinctives, Allison highlights what churches have in common in what he calls "mere ecclesiology," while introducing potential differences under the heading of "more ecclesiology." Though we must retain the vital distinction between the being and well-being of the church, it is not always possible to separate the two fully. This book is a useful primer on the doctrine of the church in the main, yet it simultaneously illustrates how underlying issues drawn from distinct denominational convictions shape our ecclesiology as a whole as well as our polity in particular.

Allison lays the foundation for the doctrine of the church in the first two chapters, both doctrinally and biblically. Grounding the church first theologically in the Trinity, he then illustrates the nature of the church in both the Old and New Testaments. From chapter three onward, each chapter follows the pattern of "mere ecclesiology" and "more ecclesiology" (51). Topics include identifying the church around "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" (via the Nicene Creed), church leadership, government, sacraments, ministries, and eschatology. Allison fills his pages with extensive Scripture citations, making the biblical text stand in the foreground as his readers follow his arguments.

Often the "more ecclesiology" sections present differing viewpoints without any attempt to resolve them, such as with respect to the cessation of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and various views on the millennium. Other times, however, he does decide issues, such as whether we should baptize infants (or rather why we should not do so) or how many offices the church should have. Strangely, the author bypasses some standard ecclesiological questions, such as the visible and invisible aspects of the church. Whether he receives, rejects, or modifies such distinctions, omitting them results in an incomplete feel to the book. Readers should note as well that the author also takes deaconesses for granted among his readers (86), later arguing for them explicitly (144–46). Overall, the book establishes a biblical doctrine of the church that should resonate with most Christians.

The being and the well-being of the church, though necessarily distinct, are not easily separable. How we frame ecclesiology shapes our understanding of church government and practice in subtle ways. Several issues in this work illustrate why and how this is the case. The author is a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As such, his ecclesiology, and not merely his polity, differs to an extent from other communions, such as Presbyterians and Episcopalians. Without blunting the force of what all true churches have in common, these differences filter into one's understanding of the nature of the church and her ordinances. For example, Allison asserts that the new covenant church, composed of Jews and Gentiles, is the "elect" people of God (29). While this point is generally correct, it can create problems with regard to practical issues like apostasy. Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8 was admitted to the church through baptism, yet Peter later concluded that he was unconverted. Was he a church member in any sense if he was unregenerate and, presumably, not elect? This is where distinguishing the visible and invisible aspects of the church bears fruit. Jesus also refers to unfruitful branches in the vine in John 15, whom the Father will cut off, and 2 Peter 2:1 refers to some who deny "the Lord who bought them." The church must encompass more than the elect. There is a corporate election and purchase by Christ resulting in an external union with his body, as well as an individual election and atonement of Christ that applies to true believers. Israel "according to the flesh" had "the adoption" (Rom. 9:4; Deut. 32:6), even though some of them were not his children (Deut. 32:5). Is this not equally true in the new covenant, where some bear the family name of the Triune God in their baptism while they prove later never to have been "of us" because they departed from us (1 John 2:19)? The focus of the church, both old covenant and new, is on the elect of God savingly united to Christ by the Spirit's power. Yet there always have been those who are in the church and not of the church. A Baptist doctrine of a pure new covenant church consisting of elect believers only picks up one key idea in ecclesiology, but it cannot say all that the New Testament says about the church. There are always people under the administration of the covenant of grace through the church's visible aspect who do not belong to its essence through its invisible aspect.

A few other issues arise in relation to Allison's accuracy in sketching the three most common forms of church polity. His depiction of Episcopalianism is relatively straightforward, but a few points require correction in his outline of Presbyterian and Congregational polity. While associating government by elders with Presbyterianism, Allison omits the issue of the keys of the kingdom being exercised beyond the local level, which is the primary point that distinguishes Presbyterianism from some forms of Congregationalism (99). In other words, all Presbyterian churches are governed by elders, but not all elder governed churches are Presbyterian. This results in a twin problem in his definition of Congregationalism, which he notes is marked by "autonomy" from other churches and "democracy" in government (101). While this may often be true, it was not always true historically, nor is it now. Congregationalism means that church government terminates at the local level, whether or not those churches are democratic or elder governed. English Congregationalists who participated in the Westminster Assembly, for example, were not democratic but were governed by elders. This stands in contrast to Allison's claim that elder ruled Congregational churches "is almost an oxymoron" (103). Moreover, Allison appears to relegate the election of officers by church members to Congregationalism alone (102). Yet this is part of what distinguishes Presbyterianism

from Episcopalianism. While not encroaching on the being of the church directly, the assumptions underlying this sketch of church polity assume that the term “church” in the New Testament can refer to local congregations only, which nearly implies that the church is inherently Congregational and possibly democratic in government.

One last illustration of the difficulty of entirely disentangling “mere ecclesiology” from “more ecclesiology” relates to the sacraments. Allison states baldly, “the nature of baptism is a human act by which faith in God’s provision of salvation is expressed” (116). However, this contradicts the nature of the sacraments as the visible word of God, which definition the author relies upon earlier (106). Irrespective of whether we baptize infants and adults, or adults only, does not treating the sacrament as “a human act” contradict the nature of the sacraments by muting the divine promises standing behind them? Instead of prioritizing personal faith in God’s promises, the Scriptures stress God’s promises, which require personal faith. This point does not decide the issue over infant baptism, but it opens the door for discussing the question. It likewise highlights the Baptist position on the nature of the sacraments by reducing the essence of baptism to one’s profession of faith. Regarding baptism, Scripture states that by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). We have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him by God’s power (Col. 2:12). We are joined to Christ in baptism and buried with him in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). These texts and others like them illustrate why baptism is God’s act rather than a human act. Sacraments are the visible word of God rather than the visible word of man. In light of the fact that Allison makes sacraments a mark of the church, this difference stretches beyond polity, encroaching on ecclesiology.

Distinguishing “mere ecclesiology” from “more ecclesiology” is important and necessary. Yet this book illustrates an equally important point; we can never fully disentangle the two. How we establish the principles of the nature and ordinances of the church affects how these principles find practical expression in church government, ministry, and ordinances. Our definition of the church affects our church polity and how we administer the sacraments. Whether we understand the church as local only, or regional and ecumenical by definition, shapes our grasp of unity and catholicity. This book simultaneously shows us a model of being broad in our affections, and why secondary matters still matter.

Ryan M. McGraw *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church serving as a professor of systematic theology at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina.*

ServantReading

A Development, Not a Departure: The Lacunae in the Debate of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Gender Roles, by Hongyi Yang

By Stuart Jones

A Development, Not a Departure: The Lacunae in the Debate of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Gender Roles, by Hongyi Yang. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2018, xxii +305 pages, \$30.00, paper.

Whether you are a veteran or a latecomer like me to the debates about eternal submission of the Son (ESS or EFS) and the Trinity, Yang's book provides a very helpful distillation and analysis of the controversy. Since the author is a convert from atheism born in mainland China, her accomplishment is noteworthy as is her sympathy for complementarianism. Her approach to the ESS issue critiques both sides of the debate, though the title of the book suggests a favoring of some version of ESS. The book is essentially her doctoral dissertation but is accessible to many readers of this journal. Basic groundwork for the dissertation predated the 2016 announcement of Bruce Ware and Wayne Grudem affirming the Nicene doctrine of eternal generation—a positive change in the eyes of most critics. Interestingly, it was their ESS teaching that gained most attention in 2016—perhaps due to the formal setting of the Evangelical Theological Society where the issue was being discussed. The book has a reasonable treatment of the early church fathers, in my inexpert opinion, and makes a helpful distinction between the issues they faced (Arianism) and the issues of today (egalitarianism). One interesting observation is the inconsistency of those who condemn the ESS position on traditionalist grounds but embrace an egalitarian gender-relation view that goes against early church tradition.

One frustrating part of the book for me is the discussion of “the Rahner Rule” (the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice-versa) and an alleged gap problem between the economic and immanent (ontological) Trinity. If we simply regard this distinction as one between the Trinity in relation to the Trinity alone versus the Trinity in relation to creatures, then the “problem” is more properly transferred to a “gap” between Creator and creature. For any revelation or relationship to exist between the Creator and creature there must be a voluntary condescension of the Creator. As such, one can argue that the Triune God accommodated himself (Matt. 3:16–17) in the sphere of his external operations (“*ad extra*”)—though clearly, the second person of the Trinity takes on a special “role” in this regard. A noteworthy article by Benedict Bird in the *Westminster Theological Journal*¹ gives John Owen's way of viewing God's *ad intra* and *ad extra*

¹ Benedict Bird, “John Owen and the Question of the Eternal Submission of the Son within the Ontological Trinity,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 80, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 299–334.

works (vis-a-vis the Covenant of Redemption) that forecloses some problems in ESS that might remain, and the article arguably illustrates a better doctrinal “development” without departure.

This leads to a concern about the exegetical treatment of 1 Corinthians 11:3. Some egalitarian treatments of the text deny that “head” implies “authority” by arguing that such an interpretation is akin to heresy by making the second person of the Trinity (Christ) subordinate to the Father (God). The simple answer to this is that the text references the economic Trinity in God and Christ. This simple and wholly adequate response would have directed the gender role debate in a better direction.

Yang’s thesis—that a doctrine may properly develop in response to new issues confronting the church—is doubtlessly true. It is sometimes argued—wrongly—that ESS was developed as a foundation for complementarianism. The evidence suggests that in answering faulty egalitarian exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:3 ESS advocates went beyond a text adequate for their position to root the economic subordination of the Son in an eternal property of divine Sonship. Grudem and Ware—initially rejecting eternal generation—had weak protection from modalism except their “property” of eternal submission.

Yang’s interaction with the Rahner Rule suggests that the question of whether any person of the Trinity might have taken on the role of Christ had a part in this development. Since contingency does not exist for God, it is natural to assume there is no accident that the Logos rather than the Father became flesh. If today’s ESS advocates confined their views of subordination to Charles Hodge’s explanation (subordinate in mode of subsistence and operation), there would be little controversy. Going further, to close gaps between the Trinitarian order and the created order risks the danger of meaningless speculation (cf. Deut. 29:29) or the idolatry of construing God in our image. That said, Yang’s book explains serious attempts of Christian scholars to grapple with the revealed mystery of the Trinity, and this is a beneficial contribution.

Stuart Jones, *is a retired minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, who has served as a pastor. He resides in Baltimore, Maryland.*

ServantPoetry

On Virtue

By Phillis Wheatley (1753?–1784)

O thou bright jewel in my aim I strive
To comprehend thee. Thine own words declare
Wisdom is higher than a fool can reach.
I cease to wonder, and no more attempt
Thine height t'explore, or fathom thy profound.
But, O my soul, sink not into despair,
Virtue is near thee, and with gentle hand
Would now embrace thee, hovers o'er thine head.
Fain would the heaven-born soul with her converse,
Then seek, then court her for her promised bliss.

Auspicious queen, thine heavenly pinions spread,
And lead celestial *Chastity* along;
Lo! now her sacred retinue descends,
Arrayed in glory from the orbs above.
Attend me, *Virtue*, thro' my youthful years!
O leave me not to the false joys of time!
But guide my steps to endless life and bliss.
Greatness, or *Goodness*, say what I shall call thee,
To give an higher appellation still,
Teach me a better strain, a nobler lay,
O Thou, enthroned with Cherubs in the realms of day!