

A scenic photograph of a snowy mountain landscape. In the foreground, a wooden cabin with a snow-covered roof is partially visible, framed by bare, snow-dusted tree branches. In the background, a calm lake reflects the surrounding snow-covered mountains and evergreen forests. The sky is overcast and grey.

Schaeffer  
A Unique Evangelist

March 2022  
Ordained Servant

# *Ordained Servant Online*

## *A Journal for Church Officers*

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**CURRENT ISSUE: FRANCIS SCHAEFFER—REFORMED EVANGELIST**

**March 2022**

### *From the Editor*

2022 is the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the birth of Frances Schaeffer. I recently had a surprise call from someone I had not been in contact with for fifty years. Paul Maffin was converted from Zen Buddhism at L'Abri, having lived in an ashram in Bodh Gaya, India. Shortly after living in India, he arrived at L'Abri where I was working on renovating and installing a fireplace in Dr. and Mrs. Schaeffer's bedroom. Paul and I became fast friends as he joined me in the work. Since then, Paul became a Reformed Baptist minister, so we had much to discuss as we reconnected by Zoom. Since we both eventually matured out of the hagiographic stage of having studied under Schaeffer, I thought it timely to ask Paul to provide a realistic assessment of the value of Schaeffer's ministry on our generation in "An Honest Appreciation of Francis Schaeffer."

My "Reflections on the Ministry of Francis Schaeffer" is based on excerpts from "Your Father's L'Abri: Reflections on the Ministry of Francis Schaeffer." While I understand the theoretical differences between Cornelius Van Til and Francis Schaeffer, and embrace the essential presuppositionalism of Van Til, Schaeffer was not an academic but rather an evangelist, using the tools of cultural apologetics.

Danny Olinger brings us Chapter 9, "God, Heaven, and Har Magedon" (2006) in *The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation*. This invaluable work culls from all of the late Meredith G. Kline's reflections on the book of Revelations from his many published works.

Alan Strange continues with Chapter 25 of his *Commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. I hope that church officers are reading this very helpful and insightful commentary on the first of our tertiary standards, to which each officer must vow to uphold.

David VanDrunen reviews three important books on the controversial topic of genetic editing in his review article, "Genetic Engineering, Human Nature, and Human Destiny." VanDrunen's informative and insightful review challenges officers to be aware of this burgeoning science that most often is rooted in materialism, leading to the belief that genetic engineering can solve the deepest problems of humanity. Nothing short of the nature and meaning of the human is at stake. This theoretical understanding will effect more and more lives as the field rapidly expands. While a biblical understanding of human nature in its fallen condition may not have much of an impact on popular culture, our critical understanding will equip us to make ethical judgments about having children and other issues rooted in Scripture.

Andrew Miller addresses the important exegetical topic of intra-canonical interpretation in his review of *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-By-Book Guide* by Gary Schnittjer.

Frank Smith reviews *The Cottage by the Bridge* by Ivars Fridenvalds. *The Cottage by the Bridge* is the captivating tale of a survivor's journey and trials as he transitions from a life of oppression during World War II under communist and Nazi regimes to the freedom of the USA. Along the way he discovers the ultimate liberation—from sin and death in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our poem this month, “Marred Desire,” is by Greg Huteson. He is a ruling elder in Dallas, Texas. He presently works with Overseas Missionary Fellowship International in Taichung, Taiwan. Previously, for twenty-one years he and his wife worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Asia.

The cover picture Farel House, the study center of L’Abri Fellowship, was taken by me in 1971.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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### **FROM THE ARCHIVES “SCHAEFFER”**

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

# Servant Thoughts

## Reflections on the Ministry of Francis Schaeffer

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Gregory E. Reynolds

After becoming a Christian in 1971 out of the counterculture of the 1960s, I lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and returned home to New Hampshire on weekends to attend my mother's Baptist church.<sup>1</sup> She had become a Christian just before I left for college. Still wrestling with the questions of my generation, I found little understanding for my concerns in the church, until one day a perceptive member gave me a book titled *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century* by Francis Schaeffer. Here was a Christian who understood my world and spoke my language. I rapidly devoured everything Schaeffer had written up to that point, as well as Edith Schaeffer's *The L'Abri Story*. These books equipped me to speak with the others in my cooperative living situation about my newfound faith—a Kierkegaardian existentialist, a Vietnam vet who considered himself a warlock, a high-strung cellist, an argumentative law student, a sensitive poet, and two feminist lesbians. The exclusive claims of the gospel were offensive to most, but several became Christians, recognizing the wonder, beauty, and liberating power of Jesus Christ. In August 1971, I went to L'Abri Fellowship in Huemoz, Switzerland. For someone with no theological or philosophical training this was truly a high-altitude experience.

The day after I arrived, I was treated to a taped lecture given by Os Guinness on "Christian Truth and Verification," in which I learned of the demise of Logical Positivism and the influence on Schaeffer's thinking of a theologian named Van Til. Heady stuff for a hippie. I ended up becoming the assistant host, helping Bruce Nichols greet and settle newcomers, and living in the main chalet, *Les Mélézes*, where the Schaeffers lived on the second floor. Young Franky lived with his new wife, Genie, on the lower ground floor (see my review of his 2007 memoir *Crazy for God*).<sup>2</sup> I took Os Guinness's place. And while he was away getting married in the UK, I was able to use some of his books in the bookcase next to my bed. This was a dream come true, although I had no idea who Guinness was. But I knew that living in Schaeffer's chalet would give me many opportunities to ask questions.

Apart from the breathtaking beauty of the setting, at an elevation of three thousand feet in the Swiss Alps, overlooking the Dent du Midi and the Mont Blanc Massif, three refreshing realities were present. They stood in stark contrast to my experience in the fundamentalist churches I had known briefly in America as well as my communal experience as a hippie. First, L'Abri was a genuine community where true Christian faith

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is based on excerpts from Gregory E. Reynolds, "Your Father's L'Abri: Reflections on the Ministry of Francis Schaeffer," *Ordained Servant* 17 (2008): 35–40;

<sup>2</sup> Gregory E. Reynolds, "Too Frank by Half: What Went Wrong with Frank Schaeffer," *Ordained Servant* (October 2008).

was practiced—where people worked, studied, and discussed together. Second, earnest engagement of the mind was fostered, but never in a merely academic way. There was no one like Schaeffer in our day. He filled a niche. Third, along with intellectual nurture, the Schaeffers encouraged a true appreciation for, and involvement in, creativity and the arts, which was part of my background. Edith's *Hidden Art* helped rescue my mother from the culturally suffocating influence of her fundamentalist church. It was easy to think of L'Abri as a kind of Mecca. But as my English friend Tony Morton later reminded me, "You don't have to go to L'Abri to enter the kingdom of God." L'Abri wasn't for everyone, nor was it without its faults, although it was not easy for me to see this at the time.

Living so close to the Schaeffers, I saw their imperfections—which they were usually happy to admit themselves. After leaving in early 1972, I discovered more—the dangers of celebrity and hero-worship (probably more a problem for Schaeffer's followers than for him). And, more important in my own future thinking and ministry, I discovered the superficiality of some historical and philosophical aspects of Schaeffer's published work. Anyone stimulated by Schaeffer's thought, who then dug deeper into a given discipline, soon realized this. I was shocked to observe—as I helped expand the Schaeffer bedroom by cutting through the partition into Franky's old bedroom—that the great thinker had no study and seemed to read only magazines, besides his Bible (although the stairway was lined with full bookcases). He placed a large blotter at the end of his bed, and that was his study. I realized that in order to communicate with my generation he had worked hard to understand the basic thought-forms of the postwar twentieth-century west, especially as they were manifested in popular culture, along with developing a commensurate vocabulary. Not big on primary source material, he never claimed to be a scholar, but painted in broad strokes to try to give us the big picture.

L'Abri lived up to its name for me—it was a true shelter that fortified me in the truth of historic Christianity: its intellectual heritage and its practical piety. It exhibited the reality of living before God by faith and seeking to worship and serve him as a whole person in a community of God's people. Schaeffer's evangelistic engagement of modern culture taught me to empathize with the predicament of modern man. This was an authentic element in Schaeffer's thinking, despite weaknesses in his scholarship and apologetic theory.

During my return home I had occasion to meet the painter Francis Bacon in a pub in Soho on my trip home from Switzerland. Bacon's *Head IV* appeared on the cover of Hans Rookmaaker's (close friend and colleague of Schaeffer's) *Modern Art and the Death of Culture* (1970). Reinterpreting Velasquez's portrait of the pope, Bacon distorts the once dignified head and face, which is depicted being sucked upward through the top of a translucent box in which the man is sitting—his humanity is disintegrating. The futility, horror, and despair portrayed in the painting were verified in my conversation with Bacon. Hopelessness was written all over Bacon's melancholy face. My explanation of the gospel elicited only scorn. But Schaeffer had prepared me for this encounter.

Schaeffer had a private meeting with Timothy Leary in the fall of 1971. Leary, for those who don't remember, was a Harvard professor of psychology who dropped out, advocating the therapeutic use of psychedelic drugs, and became a counterculture guru. He was in Switzerland evading drug charges. Nichols and I were privy to his visit with Schaeffer because we lived in Schaeffer's chalet (October 2, 1971 according to my

journal entry). At dinner, Leary was very self-absorbed and not a little blown out from all of the LSD he had taken. He proved to be very obnoxious company. But Schaeffer had been compassionate enough to spend an afternoon in conversation with him about the gospel, telling no one of his encounter with this famous man.

At the beginning of this editorial I referred to Schaeffer's "ministry." This was intended as a reminder that the value of Schaeffer should be assessed in terms of his entire evangelistic endeavor. This is not to minimize the theoretical weaknesses of his approach, but only to say that apologetics proper was not the centerpiece of his ministry. His bold attempt to step outside the box of his Fundamentalism and demonstrate true compassion for sinners, by working to understand their world, in the context of a true Christian community formed in grace and truth, was a visible—if imperfect—reality.

While studying under Gordon H. Clark at Covenant College in the 1970s, I began to recognize some theoretical weaknesses in Schaeffer's apologetics. It would take Cornelius Van Til to clarify this discovery as he acquainted me with a profounder analysis of man's fallen condition.

As noted above, the first time I encountered Van Til's thought was at L'Abri in the summer of 1971. The context was a heady discussion of A. J. Ayer's logical positivism, showing that this form of truth verification was self-refuting. The leader mentioned Van Til as an important influence on Schaeffer's thinking. A book list I was later given, titled "A Selective List of Christian Books to Start Your Library with," recommended Van Til's *Defense of the Faith*. At the time, I was unaware of the theoretical differences between Schaeffer and Van Til. When I studied at Westminster Theological Seminary from 1976 to 1979, I was privileged to meet informally with Van Til on several occasions.

"Would-be autonomous man" was a favorite Van Til description of the sinner. It was his penetration to the anthropological center of the apologetic enterprise that finally clarified the problem with Schaeffer's apologetic. While Schaeffer often distinguished between the use of reason, as creatures made in God's image, from rationalism, which asserts the sufficiency of reason without revelation, he also exhibited some rationalistic tendencies. As Westminster Seminary apologetics professor William Edgar points out:

There is an underlying rationalism in much of Schaeffer's thinking. His view of truth is abstract, in that it is not strictly equated with God, but is a more general idea of which God is only the "final screen." Furthermore, Schaeffer often spoke of Christianity conforming to "reality," or "what is," without clearly distinguishing between the Creator and the creature.<sup>3</sup>

For Van Til, the sinner must be challenged at the heart of his problem—his audacious quest for autonomy. According to Van Til (following Paul in Romans 1), the sinner's quest involves the continual suppression of the truth that he is a creature of God, living in God's world. Schaeffer, on the other hand, was more of an evidentialist of ideas, seeking to show the inconsistencies of the sinner on his own terms.<sup>4</sup> However, Schaeffer echoed

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<sup>3</sup> William Edgar, "Two Christian Warriors: Cornelius Van Til and Francis A. Schaeffer Compared," *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (spring 1995): 72–3.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan A. Follis, *Truth with Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 111.

many of Van Til's fundamental insights, and sometimes the differences between the two warriors have been exaggerated.<sup>5</sup> I heard Schaeffer confront sinners in their rebellion, and there is plenty in his writings that does the same, even using the term "autonomy" frequently.

The evangelical penchant is to seek to win the world on its own terms. The Pauline approach, as Van Til would insist, was to challenge the sinner on God's terms. Thus, the profundity of Van Til's theoretical analysis of the unbeliever cannot be overstated. But comparing him to Schaeffer is something of an "apples and oranges" enterprise (as I will explain in my review of Follis)<sup>6</sup> and may leave Schaeffer without the appreciation he is due in our circles. By the end of his life, Schaeffer was certainly the darling of evangelicalism, although the most important things he taught us may have been largely forgotten.

As a philosophical apologist, Van Til never saw his role to be that of a cultural critic. Schaeffer, however, was able to connect with the baby boom generation precisely because he was a cultural critic with a heart for evangelism. In the end, his apparent identification of secularism, instead of man's would-be autonomy, as the final enemy of the gospel, amplified this theoretical weakness in terms of a cultural transformationist agenda. Perhaps this is one of the dangers of cultural criticism. As Follis points out, Schaeffer is neither presuppositionalist or evidentialist, but rather a "verificationist," seeking to convince the unbeliever that his core beliefs (presuppositions), are inconsistent with reality, unlike the true presuppositions of Christianity.<sup>7</sup> William Dennison's critique of Tim Keller's *The Reason for God*<sup>8</sup> seems to place Keller in a similar mold. The vertical focus of the gospel takes a back seat to the horizontal concern.

The Reformed church awaits a cultural critic, evangelist, of Schaeffer's stature, sensibilities, and energy, who is consistently Van Tilian in his approach. Until then, cultural engagement will be aligned with relevance and transformation in the place of radical engagement with the message that turns the world upside down. Whatever else might be said about the differences between Van Til and Schaeffer, they had one very important passion in common: to see sinners won to King Jesus. I will be forever grateful for the shelter provided by L'Abri as it pointed me to the only final shelter found under the wings of the Almighty, whose Son covers our sins and has inherited glory for us. This was your father's L'Abri.

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<sup>5</sup> Edgar, "Two Christian Warriors."

<sup>6</sup> Gregory Edwards Reynolds "Francis A. Schaeffer: A Unique Evangelist," *Ordained Servant* 17 (2008): 151–56.

<sup>7</sup> Follis, *Truth with Love*, 99–122.

<sup>8</sup> William D. Dennison, "The Reason for God," *Ordained Servant* 17 (2008): 146–51.

# Servant Tribute

## An Honest Appreciation of Francis Schaeffer

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By Paul R. Maffin

The ministry of Francis Schaeffer and of L'Abri played a pivotal role in my coming to saving faith in 1971. I journeyed to India as a hippie in 1970, seeking to satisfy my spiritual hunger. Once on the ground in India, I quickly soured on Hinduism, realizing that the Hindu belief in karma was the driving philosophy behind the evils of the caste system. Even today, fifty years after my travels in India, the caste system is “outlawed, but still omnipresent,” in the words of one observer. While there, I spent substantial time with two Christian couples—one expatriate, the other Indian national—both of whom had a significant role in guiding me in the direction of the Christian faith. One of the couples, older medical missionaries from my hometown, gave me a copy of Schaeffer’s book *The God Who is There*.<sup>1</sup>

Turning from Hinduism but still fascinated by Eastern religions, I immersed myself in Zen Buddhist thought and practice, spending months in an ashram (spiritual retreat center) in Bodh Gaya, India, the place where Gautama Buddha received his insights into the nature of the universe. Zen is a rigorous form of Buddhism, a sort of fast track to enlightenment. Through intensive meditation and other spiritual practices, Zen is supposed to catapult the devotee into the state of consciousness in which he/she “sees” in an intuitive flash that the perceived world is really an illusion and that his/her nature is the same as the nature of Buddha. Once that insight is obtained, the devotee is supposedly released from the endless cycle of death and rebirth. This particular ashram had a unique rhythm of daily life. In addition to the intense, extended seasons of meditation, there were periods for rest and times set aside for work to benefit the community, such as working in the fields that supplied our food and grinding grain by hand for meals.

Like many of my generation, I was confident that there must be a way to align the teachings of Jesus with that of renowned teachers from the East, particularly Gautama Buddha. Having been raised in a fairly liberal mainline church (PCUSA and American Baptist), I had been exposed to enough of Jesus to know that I could not just jettison him. Like many of my peers, I clung to every saying of Jesus that seemed to have any flavor of the East, e.g.,

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20–21, KJV)

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<sup>1</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Chicago: Inter-varsity, 1968).

In my travels I had purchased a copy of *The Gospel according to Thomas*,<sup>2</sup> a collection of extra-canonical sayings of Jesus. In addition to reading foundational Buddhist texts, I was also reading the New Testament and working my way through *The God Who is There*.

Through a number of circumstances, I became gradually disillusioned with Eastern religions. Although I can point to several factors, I can identify the major turning point in my spiritual odyssey. One day during a conversation with Zengo, the Zen monk leading our group, I asked what he thought of Jesus Christ. He gave the fairly standard answer from an Eastern religions' perspective, "I think that he was a highly enlightened man." Either that day or the next, I opened my Bible, and my eyes lighted on John 14:6 where Jesus is recorded as saying, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This verse brought me up short. Here was Jesus, a man regarded as highly enlightened by most Hindus and Buddhists, claiming to be the only path to God. Perhaps it was the time for me to seek to learn more about this man Jesus.

It was then that I decided to leave India and go to L'Abri. I hoped to discover in that remarkable setting whether the Christian faith was true to reality and whether it proved genuine as lived out in community. Encouraged by the missionaries who gave me *The God Who Is There*, I flew from Mumbai to London where I had my head freshly shaved. I was going to L'Abri on my own terms, still confident that there must be some way to harmonize Christianity with the world's other great religions. I arrived at the doorstep of Chalet les Mélèzes (home of Francis and Edith Schaeffer in Huemoz, Switzerland) totally unannounced, sporting my "Gandhi glasses," green pajama suit from Nepal, and a huge, red backpack. Despite my outlandish appearance, I was welcomed warmly, settled in Chalet les Sapins with Udo and Debbie (Schaeffer) Middelmann, and soon after met with Os Guinness, the proctor for my studies.

The early days of the L'Abri ministry began when the Schaeffer daughters brought fellow university students home to discuss issues related to faith and culture with their parents. By the time of my arrival in April of 1971, L'Abri encompassed several chalets overseen by workers. I was one of about one hundred students. Some were Christians seeking a deeper understanding of the intersection of faith and culture, while others, like me, were seeking to know if the Christian faith was true. It was a stimulating atmosphere, with long, serious conversations around the table during meals, weekly lectures and discussions, and Sunday worship. The rhythm of life at L'Abri seemed quite similar to my experience at the ashram in India. The weekday routine involved both study, discussion, personal time, and work to benefit the community; my main assignment was working in the large community gardens.

My first study assignment was listening to tapes of Francis Schaeffer's lectures in the Book of Romans. Having grown up in a fairly liberal Protestant church, I had never heard the Bible handled with such care and proclaimed with such intense passion. I began to hear many of the now famous Schaefferisms, such as "true truth," a phrase that resonated with me, coming from an Eastern worldview in which there is no such thing as objective truth. In his preface to *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy*, James Packer gave an apt description of Francis Schaeffer that squares with my experience of his teaching and preaching style:

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<sup>2</sup> A. Guillaumont et al., *The Gospel according to Thomas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959).

[W]hat he said was arresting, however he might look or sound while saying it. It had firmness, arguing vision; gentleness, arguing strength; simple clarity, arguing mental mastery; and compassion, arguing an honest and good heart. There was no guile in it, no party narrowness, no manipulation, only the passionate persuasiveness of the prophet who hurries in to share with others what he himself sees.<sup>3</sup>

A pivotal factor while I was on the way to faith was the rare gift that Francis Schaeffer exercised in his analysis of worldviews. What I learned from him about analyzing worldviews has served me well throughout my life as a Christian. Like many then and today, I took a smorgasbord approach to religion, picking the parts that I liked of each religion and ignoring the remainder. Through Schaeffer's approach, I was led to see that worldviews have an internal coherence. One cannot take a piece of a worldview and leave the other unwanted bits behind. I began to see that the Eastern and Christian worldviews are radically different on numerous key issues. The nature of the being of God, the "mannishness of man" (another Schaefferism), the basic problem of humanity, the necessary solution to that problem, the view of history (linear or cyclical), and the central purpose of life are just a sampling of the many key issues.

Through the weekly lectures and discussions, I began to see the beating heart behind the unique community that characterized the ministry of L'Abri. Repulsed by a cold, sterile orthodoxy, Schaeffer had a deep spiritual crisis in 1951. Emerging from that crisis, he was determined to pursue a Christian faith that remained totally orthodox in belief while simultaneously demonstrating the reality of Christian love in Christian community before a watching world. L'Abri had become this kind of community by the time I arrived in 1971. This combination of truth and love was powerfully attractive to me as an unbeliever. I was able to stay at L'Abri as a student for three months, then, after coming to saving faith, to remain another four months as a helper. I am thankful for that extra time in this unique community, which prepared me for a lifetime of ministry.

My experience of Frances Schaeffer is neither that found in the number of hagiographies that have been written, which portray the man as a nearly superhuman saint and towering intellect, nor was my experience one that is found in writings that have savaged the man (most notably the books written by his son Franky). Some of the people closest to him have given us a more balanced view of Schaeffer. For example, in an interview with Jane Stewart Smith shortly before her death, she speaks glowingly about Schaeffer's role in her conversion and his deep concern for the people who came to L'Abri. When asked to comment on Schaeffer's quick temper, Jane freely shared a couple of occasions on which she witnessed flare-ups of that temper.<sup>4</sup> Because the editor of this journal and I lived and worked in such close proximity to Schaeffer at L'Abri, we experienced him "warts and all," as the expression goes.

Os Guinness spoke of his love for Fran and Edith and his continued appreciation of Schaeffer's legacy in a short interview with Justin Taylor (The Gospel Coalition) on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Schaeffer's death. In this interview, Guinness honestly conveyed what he perceived as Schaeffer's weaknesses. He went on to verbalize what, more importantly, he perceived as Fran's great strengths:

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<sup>3</sup> J.I. Packer, "Foreword," in *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton, IL: Good News, 1990), xi.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdf8isieGU4&ab\\_channel=FrancisSchaefferStudies.org](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdf8isieGU4&ab_channel=FrancisSchaefferStudies.org)

“I often say simply that I have never met anyone with such a passion for God, combined with a passion for people, combined with a passion for truth. That is an extremely rare combination, and Schaeffer embodied it. It is also why so many of his scholarly critics completely miss the heart of who he was . . .”<sup>5</sup>

Douglas Groothuis recalls an occasion when Schaeffer was asked to define his apologetic methodology: “After a talk, Schaeffer was once asked about apologetics. ‘Dr. Schaeffer: Are you a presuppositionalist or an evidentialist?’ He replied, ‘Neither. I am an evangelist.’”<sup>6</sup> Although critics might see that as an evasive answer, I believe that it was an honest expression of what motivated the man. Os Guinness agrees that it was Fran’s evangelistic heart that was his greatest strength. Guinness writes, “If you watched him one to one, within a minute or two you could see his eyes—I don’t think he was aware of it—you could see his eyes welling up with tears. He had incredible empathy and compassion for the people he was talking to.”<sup>7</sup> As I recall my interactions with Schaeffer, this description accords well with the kindness and grace he showed toward me. I am convinced that as Schaeffer looked at me and all the other weirdoes who came to L’Abri, he had full confidence that God was able to save each one, including me, and remake us into the image of his Son.

During my stay at L’Abri, I realized that Schaeffer’s combined passion for God, people, and the truth, while perhaps modeled best by him and Edith, was worked into the DNA of L’Abri as a whole. As an unbeliever, I remember lengthy conversations with the Schaeffers’s daughter, Debbie, who shared so much of her mom and dad’s intensity in one-on-one interactions. I never felt dismissed or disrespected, even though I was steeped in Eastern ideologies. During my time at L’Abri, my life was also deeply impacted by an older woman from New Zealand, Sheila Bird, affectionately called Birdie by the L’Abri community. She was a trained Christian counselor who helped me to understand many of my motivations from a biblical perspective, both before and after I came to faith in Christ.

One other aspect of L’Abri, which flowed directly from the personal convictions of the Schaeffers, was the importance of prayer in the life of the community. From the earliest years of the ministry, prayer played a central role in the life and direction of L’Abri. I learned that Mondays were set apart each week as a day of prayer. Workers would sign up for time slots during the day; they would pray for every aspect of the ministry. The Schaeffers had decided early in the life of L’Abri that they would not publicize their financial needs but would rather bring them to the Lord in prayer. In many of the Schaeffers’ books there are multiple testimonies to how the Lord supplied for the financial needs of the work. The workers prayed for God to bring the students of His choosing to L’Abri and then for God to do His transforming work in those who came. I

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<sup>5</sup> Justin Taylor, “An Interview with Os Guinness on the 25th Anniversary of Francis Schaeffer's Death,” The Gospel Coalition, accessed January 17, 2022, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/interview-with-os-guinness-on-25th/>.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Groothuis, “Francis Schaeffer: Pastor, Evangelist, Apologist, Prophet.” Christian Research Institute, accessed January 17, 2022, <https://www.equip.org/article/francis-schaeffer-pastor-evangelist-apologist-prophet/>.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Stafford, “Os Guinness: Welcome to the 'Grand Age of Apologetics,’” Christianity Today, accessed January 17, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/july-web-only/os-guinness-interview-welcome-grand-age-apologetics.html>.

am certain that I was the beneficiary of numerous prayers offered to God on my behalf. Witnessing this commitment to prayer gave me a strong sense of the need to undergird any ministry done in God's name with concerted prayer.

In 1971, when I arrived at the doorstep of L'Abri, I realized that the ministry of Francis and Edith Schaeffer was absolutely unique, which is why people traveled from all around the world to participate in that community. I could not have crafted a ministry more suited to my quest for "true truth." With all the imperfections inherent in any human endeavor, the community lived out the claims of the Christian faith in a breathtaking way. God used this remarkable ministry to bring me to see the uniqueness of his Son and his superiority to all fallible human teachers and religious leaders. My time at L'Abri prepared me for a lifetime of Gospel ministry, as essential a foundation as my years in seminary. I am forever grateful for the life and ministry of Fran and Edith Schaeffer.

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# Servant Truth

## *The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation: Chapter 9 – God, Heaven and Har Magedon (2006)*

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by Danny E. Olinger

Meredith Kline's *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* appeared in 2006.<sup>1</sup> He acknowledged in the preface that as an octogenarian this could be his last book, and there were things that he wanted to do. Specifically, Kline wanted to provide a primer in covenant theology for a wider readership than the academic crowd.

In his biographical sketch of his father, M. M. Kline testifies that the teaching of Geerhardus Vos was the biggest influence upon his father's development of covenant theology. He writes:

Dad's most significant influence for his covenant theology was Geerhardus Vos. Dad's teaching responsibilities at WTS included a course on Old Testament Biblical Theology. That course of subsequent myriad names taught at multiple seminaries ultimately blossomed as *Kingdom Prologue*, a covenant theology in the tradition of Vos, whose *Biblical Theology* was always a required text for the course.<sup>2</sup>

Meredith G. Kline himself both acknowledged his indebtedness to Vos and elaborated upon the relationship of biblical theology and covenant theology in the closing paragraphs of the introduction to *Kingdom Prologue*. There Kline maintained that “for Vos, delineating the progress of special revelation is broadly the same as expounding the contents of the several divine covenants.”<sup>3</sup> Biblical theology in the tradition of Vos processes special revelation so that it contributes directly to the church's task of theological formulation, a task undertaken in the interests of covenantal instruction, discipline, and witness. Further, the significant eras of special revelation are coordinated with the sequence of the covenant enactments in Scripture centered around God's mighty works of creation and redemption. Said Kline, “The best example of this is the Bible

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<sup>1</sup> The book's dedication, editing and art testified to Kline's love of his family. He dedicated the book “to our three sons—MEREDITH M. litterateur-theologian, STERLING architect, CALVIN musician-maestro.” He thanked his grandson Jonathan Kline for “his amanuensis assistance” in the whole editorial-publishing process. And, touchingly, he acknowledged in the closing sentence of the preface that the cover picture was a reproduction of an oil painting (53½ by 33) by Muriel G. Kline.

<sup>2</sup> M. M. Kline, “Meredith G. Kline: A Biographical Sketch,” in *Essential Writings of Meredith G. Kline* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017), xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton, MA: M. G. Kline, 1991), 4.

itself with its major divisions into Old and New Testaments, the covenantal constitutions for the old and new covenants respectively.”<sup>4</sup>

Kline then confessed that in *Kingdom Prologue* he had borrowed from Vos’s biblical-theological program and applied it to the exegesis of the book of Genesis with a slight twist. Instead of making special revelation the central theme in a broad sweep, Kline focused on the historical drama of the covenant kingdom with its epoch-making events of covenant transaction and kingdom establishment. That is, in Kline’s words, “what is in Vos’s *Biblical Theology* the infrastructure, the particular historical pattern in which the periodicity principle gets applied, becomes here the surface structure.”<sup>5</sup> In its unfolding and developing of that infrastructure, Kline believed that *Kingdom Prologue* performed a prolegomenon function for the discipline of biblical theology that at the same time contributed very directly to the formulations of covenant theology.

In *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, Kline expanded the scope of what he had done in *Kingdom Prologue*. He moved from a focus on kingdom developments recorded in Genesis to a comprehensive biblical-theological survey of kingdom developments from Eden (Genesis) to New Jerusalem (Revelation). He even suggested with this broader focus that the book could have properly been named *Kingdom Come* or *Kingdom Consummation*. He decided, however, to name the book *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*. He said that “though the covenants remain the theological foundation and heart of the matter, by its adoption as our narrative framework Har Magedon becomes the dominant surface theme.”<sup>6</sup>

In his judgment, the Har Magedon narrative revealed a covenantal tale that moved from creation to consummation and allowed for the exploration of such biblical doctrines as pneumatology, cosmology, eschatology, and common grace. Still more, Kline believed that the tracking in Scripture of the Har Magedon theme revealed an eschatological megastructure. This eschatological megastructure/Har Magedon paradigm consists in a complex of elements that includes: 1) the Lord of Har Magedon establishing a kingdom covenant; 2) the meritorious accomplishment and triumph in the Har Magedon conflict by a covenant grantee; 3) a common grace interim before the coming of the kingdom; 4) an antichrist crisis; 5) the last judgment victory of the covenant Lord in a final Har Magedon battle that results in the consummation of the Glory-Kingdom.

As Kline endeavored to show the grand biblical vision of God’s heavenly kingdom in its eschatological movement from Alpha to Omega, he repeatedly returned to the book of Revelation. By my count, he cited verses and passages from Revelation 351 times in the book’s 222 pages.

## God and Heaven

Kline believed that Revelation 1:8 and 21:6 support the view that the creation of heaven in Genesis 1 was a divine epiphany, “a beaming forth of the One who gives himself as Creator the name of Alpha.”<sup>7</sup> The king of heaven is the Lord God. His Glory-

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<sup>4</sup> Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), xiv.

<sup>7</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 13.

Presence is the supreme reality of heaven, sanctifying it as a holy heaven-temple. Heaven is also the focus of God's sabbath, the seventh day (Gen. 2:1–3). What is signified by the divine sabbath—the everlasting session of the King of Glory—is the essential reality of heaven.

The prophet Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, amid the seraphim (Isa. 6:1). This royal imagery is repeated in Revelation 4:1–2. John, “in the Spirit,” sees a throne set in heaven. The one sitting on the throne arched with emerald glory, the Creator-Lord, is acclaimed by the heavenly retinue as worthy to receive the glory, honor, and power (Rev. 4:11). The vision of heaven and the great white judgment scene of Revelation 20:11 shows the radiant divine Judge seated on a fiery chariot throne. Kline said, “Consistently, the center of the unveiled heaven is occupied by the Majesty on high, the enthroned King of creation. Hence, architecturally, heaven is a palace, a royal court.”<sup>8</sup>

Because heaven's King is the Lord God, the thrice holy one, affirmed both in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8, the royal house of heaven is at the same time a temple. In Revelation 11:19, 14:15, 14:17, 15:5–8, and 21:11, 23, John designates the heavenly site of God's judgment throne as a “temple” or the holy “tabernacle” of the covenant. Kline concluded, “The spatial-architectural nature of heaven is thus defined by its central, all-dominant feature, the God-King is resident there. By virtue of his holy Glory-Presence, heaven is a royal, sacred space, a palace-temple.”<sup>9</sup> But, the relation of the Glory-Presence to heaven goes beyond imparting a formal significance. “God, that is, the epiphanic manifestation of God, is the temple.”<sup>10</sup>

In Revelation 21:22, John affirms this identification when he declares that he saw no temple in the New Jerusalem, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple. The eschatological goal at creation was to dwell with God in the full revelation of his Glory-Presence in his heaven-temple, but Adam broke the creational covenant that God had established unto that end. Kline maintained “that the purpose of redemption is to bring to pass, in spite of the Fall, the realization of that eschatological goal of a consummate revelation of God's Glory as originally set for creation.”<sup>11</sup> For Kline, this meant that redemption is subordinate to the revelation of the divine Glory. There is an “eschatological structure of creation history” where the ultimate goal of the divine plan is to bring creation to its omega-point in the consummation of heaven and earth.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 7. Kline also identified the Glory epiphany with the Spirit. He wrote that “the Glory epiphany complex, though a fully trinitarian manifestation (see, e.g., Rev. 4:2, 5; 5:6; cf. 1:4, 5), is peculiarly identified with the Spirit. Accordingly, heaven is the Spirit realm and to enter heaven is to be in the Spirit (rev. 4:1, 2). This throws an interesting light on the atmosphere of the heaven-temple constituted by the Glory-Spirit. For the Spirit is the breath of life (Gen. 2:7; John 20:22) and hence the picture that emerges is that of heaven dwellers, those in the Spirit-atmosphere, breathing continually afresh the breath of life. That is the secret of immortality” (9).

<sup>11</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 19. Kline determined to write *God, Heaven and Har Magedon* in a popular manner without footnotes. In my judgment, if he had footnoted the book there is the great possibility that he would have appealed to Geerhardus Vos throughout this section. Kline's argument that redemption is subordinate to revelation is the same argument Vos expressed with the equivalent terminology that eschatology precedes soteriology. Both Kline and Vos believed that God created with an eschatological goal of communion with the creature in a heavenly estate that transcended the probation

Having discussed the eschatological prospect presented to Adam, Kline then addressed the issue of the structural continuity and discontinuity of the pre-consummation and post-consummation cosmos. Kline observed in Revelation 21:1 and 20:11 that, when at the consummation all things are made new, the first heaven and the first earth will pass away for there will be no place for them. In Revelation 6:14 mountains and islands are uprooted, and the heavens rolled up like a scroll. But Kline stopped short of arguing that the present physical world would be destroyed. Some elements of this world will not appear in the world to come, namely, “the products of fallen man’s history” such as “the outward technology, material paraphernalia, and all the external expressions of man’s present cultural life” (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10), but “redemption is a recovering and restoring of the original.”<sup>13</sup> The incorporation of the gloried bodies of the saints (1 Cor. 15:51, 52) of the present world into the new heavens and new earth warrants a continuation of the original creation in some form. Still, he stated, “Certainty eludes us in our inquiry into the new earth’s spatial-cosmological likeness to or difference from the present earth.”<sup>14</sup>

What he did have great confidence about was the religious “holy place” character of the new earth. This New Jerusalem, the festal gathering place of God, Jesus, and the

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state of the garden. This was put forth in the covenant of works, which if Adam had obeyed would have resulted in a glorification-consummation, although its achievement, as Kline states, would have “required a supernatural intervention of the Creator-Spirit” (18). Adam transgressed and failed to fulfill the covenant of works, but the second Adam, Jesus Christ, has succeeded in fulfillment of the terms of the covenant of grace to bring God’s creation-kingdom to consummation. See, Geerhardus Vos, “The Interaction Between Eschatology and Soteriology,” in *Pauline Eschatology* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 42–61, and “Pre-Redemptive and Redemptive Special Revelation,” in *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 22–23.

<sup>13</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 22–23.

<sup>14</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 27. In a letter to James T. Dennison, Jr., Kline commented upon continuity and discontinuity of creation to the heavenly estate in my article “Vos’s Verticalist Eschatology: A Response to Michael Williams,” which appeared in the September 1992 issue of *Kerux*. In Dennison’s December 14, 1992, letter to me, he stated that he had received Kline’s permission to forward the remarks. Kline wrote, “I was very pleased that *Kerux* didn’t let the Michael Williams attack on Vos go unchallenged. Danny Olinger (I don’t think I know him) does well to show that—contrary to Williams—Vos did recognize the material dimension of creation as a component of the heavenly estate. A more specific notion held by Williams (appealing to H. Ridderbos) is that the earth (evidently in recognizable continuity with planet earth as part of the present solar-galactic-cosmic system) will still be the focus of human existence hereafter. That is not nearly so important nor so clearly demanded by Scripture—and, to my mind, underestimates the significance of the physical glorification of God’s people. There was, therefore, no urgency for Olinger to deal with that. However, there is another element included in Williams’ position that an adequate response must deal with: He contends that the world of the eschaton will not only have a material dimension and be earth-centered but will embody the fulfillment of the cultural mandate given to men in the garden (“we carry our culture into the eschaton” - *Pro Rege* 20:4 (June 1992), p. 20). I, of course, reject the Reconstructionist way that Williams works this out in history (He fails to distinguish the holy from the common grace spheres, confuses the common cultural program with the church’s great commission, and supposes the holy cultural task given Adam before the Fall is being fulfilled by our cultural endeavors in this present semi-eschatological age.) But I do stress the idea that the New Jerusalem produced by Christ is the fulfillment, via redemption, of the cultural mandate assigned in the Covenant of Creation. If it can be shown that Vos does not have a place for this in his teaching, that would be a defect in his position. Incidentally, the errors of Reconstructionism cannot be as effectually demonstrated from the standpoint of Vos’ *Kingdom and the Church* as from the position of my *Kingdom Prologue*.”

assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven (Heb.12:22–24), which comes down to earth (Rev. 21:10–22:5), is the site of the enthroned triune Glory-Presence of God, the center of a cosmic holy of holies (Rev. 11:19; 21:16). It is the tabernacle of God where he dwells with men (Rev. 21:2–3; 22:3–4), that to which Jesus told his disciples he was going to prepare a place for them in the house of God (John 14:2, 3).

Kline’s closing sentence of the “God and Heaven” section tied this heavenly hope back to Har Magedon. He wrote, “The heavenly city of God on the high mountain, focal center of the eternal cosmic kingdom, recalls the mountain of God in Eden, focal cultic site for the projected global theocracy. Therein lies a tale—the tale of Har Magedon.”<sup>15</sup>

## Heaven and Har Magedon

In part two of the book, “Heaven and Har Magedon,” Kline showed that the motif of God’s mountain and sanctuary in Eden runs through the Scriptures in biblical symbolism. In the old covenant, Israel in Canaan recapitulates the situation of Adam in Eden, including the presumption that Zion is a restoration of the original holy mountain in Eden. “Similarly,” Kline argued, “the New Jerusalem of the new heaven and earth is portrayed as a final, consummating restoration of Eden, as a garden with its tree and river of life and as a holy site of the throne of God (cf. Rev. 22:1ff.)”<sup>16</sup>

Ezekiel 28, however, moves one beyond presumptive indicators. There, the Judge of heaven and earth casts down the king of Tyre from his imagined heights as an enthroned deity (Ezek. 28:2) to the pit of death (Ezek. 28:8). This fall is likened to what transpired in Eden, “You were in Eden, the garden of God” (Ezek. 28:13). Kline then observed that Ezekiel 28:14, “You were on the holy mount of God,” makes clear that the mountain of God stood in the midst of Eden.<sup>17</sup> Reading Genesis 2 in light of Ezekiel 28 gives a clue to the flowing of the river of Eden into the surrounding terrain and is probably connected to Ezekiel 47:1, where the river of life is said to flow from the mountain sanctuary of the Lord. And, finally, the gemstones of Ezekiel 28:13 point back to the precious stones of Genesis 2:11–12 and forward to Revelation 21:18–21 and the heavenly city of God on his holy mountain that is adorned with every kind of jewel.

The mount of God in Eden, then, shared with the land of Eden the symbolic significance as the representation of God’s celestial realm. “Like its redemptive counterpart, Mount Zion, the mountain of Eden was to be the spiritual capital, the place to which from afar prayer would be directed, to whose summit the holy throng would ascend with tribute of worship and praise (cf., e.g., Ps. 43:3, 4; Isa. 27:13; 30:29; 56:7).”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 45–46. A typo appears on page 46 where Kline wrote, “Sharpening the focus of verse 12, which stated: “You were in Eden, the garden of God.” One page earlier, Kline had correctly referenced “You were in Eden, the garden of God” as verse 13.

<sup>18</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 47.

## Sabbath, Eschatology, and Covenant

In part three, Kline noted that Genesis 1:1–2:3 reveals creation has a sabbatical form, the divine work of six days issuing into sabbath rest on the seventh day. Entry into perpetual sabbath rest was put before Adam with faithful performance of the probationary task of guardianship at Har Magedon. Kline wrote:

Diabolical evil had broken out in heaven. Satan had challenged the God of Har Magedon. And Adam was assigned the role of standing in the name of his Creator Lord and withstanding the assault of Satan at the mountain of God in Eden, the earthly projection of the heavenly mount of assembly . . . That was the probation task. It was by victory over the enemy of heaven in this battle of Har Magedon that Adam was to win the promised reward of everlasting glory.<sup>19</sup>

Satan's treasonous disobedience, according to Ezekiel 28:14–17, originated in his pride over his exalted status attending God's throne on the mountain of God. Such self-pride contradicts the praise and glory of the Creator, the prime objective of creation, and is tantamount to exchanging the creature for the Creator. In Satan's approach to Adam and Eve, he calls into question God's goodness, truthfulness, and supreme authority, which is the same as calling into question and blaspheming God's Godness.

After the fall, Adam and Eve are confronted by God in Genesis 3:8. Concerning God's appearance, Kline stated, "It was a stormy theophany, not a stroll through the garden 'in the cool of the day' (as Gen. 3:8 is traditionally rendered) but an advent 'as the (Glory-)Spirit of the (judgment) day.'"<sup>20</sup> Then in Genesis 3:14–15, God pronounces a sentence of judgment against Satan that will be fulfilled in the Messiah, the seed of the woman. In John's Gospel, when Jesus's exaltation is imminent through the cross and resurrection, Jesus declares that the time has come for the prince of this world to be driven out (John 12:31). In Revelation 12:8–10, after Jesus's exaltation, there is rejoicing in heaven for the great dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, has been thrown down and lost his place in heaven.<sup>21</sup> In fulfillment of his role as the second Adam, the true guardian of the holy mountain and champion of God, Jesus, crushes Satan's head and casts him down from the heights to Hell.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 65. In the context, Kline reaffirmed the importance of the Reformed doctrine of the covenant of works. He said, "It is then with good reason that the customary designation for God's covenant with Adam as federal representative of mankind has been Covenant of Works, "works" signifying that the inheritance of the kingdom of glory was a reward to be earned by man's probationary obedience" (64).

<sup>20</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 70.

<sup>21</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 66.

<sup>22</sup> Kline commented, "The obedience the Son must render under his commissioning as a second Adam had both active and passive dimensions. His active obedience consisted in his victorious prosecuting of the Har Magedon warfare. That was the probationary task whose accomplishment was prerequisite to gaining the eschatological blessing of consummated glory, the assignment which the first Adam failed to fulfil. It was by performing that 'one act of righteousness' (Rom. 5:18) as the second Adam that the Son would merit for the people he represented the sabbath inheritance originally offered in the creation covenant. Meeting the evil foe of the holy One of Har Magedon and overcoming him would at the same time be a redemptive act of deliverance by which the Son set his people free from their bondage to Satan, sin, and death. To this mission of redemptive judgment God the Son committed himself even though it meant he must undertake

Kline exegeted the Har Magedon themes from the rest of Genesis with sparse comment upon its fulfillment in Revelation. He did, however, comment on the nations, especially Magog, that are listed in Genesis 10:2. These nations reappear in the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39 associated with the antichrist figure of Gog in the battle of Har Magedon. There the point is that, in the final crisis, Satan is to be loosed as a deceiver of the nations, which Kline observes is foretold in Revelation 20:7–8. During that time when the thousand years are ended and Satan released, the state of affairs will be similar to that of Genesis 10 prior to Christ’s coming, “a world in which the covenant remnant was a small enclave of faith, with all the other encircling peoples of earth deceived by Satan’s deadly lie.”<sup>23</sup>

The Genesis 10 chronology also led Kline to remark that “even more distressing for God’s people than the success of Satan’s cause in the world outside the chosen family was his subtle penetration of the covenant community itself.”<sup>24</sup> For Kline, apostasy from the holy fellowship of God’s servants is a recurring theme throughout the Har Magedon warfare in both the old covenant and the new covenant. In the old covenant, nearly an entire generation of rebellious Israelites is sentenced to perish in the wilderness, and later the nation is repudiated as Lo-Ammi, “Not-My-People,” and exiled to Babylon. In the new covenant, there emerges a harlot-church, the great city Babylon, the apostate church that sheds the blood of the martyrs and prostitutes itself to the satanic Beast and the False Prophet. But Kline immediately stressed that the faithful, though persecuted by satanic powers from without and undermined by satanic deceivers within, are not forsaken by the Lord. As John declares in Revelation 1:9, the faithful find that their fellowship in the hope of the kingdom is one of patient endurance. In the midst of their suffering, they fight against the demonic powers of this world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly world (Eph. 6:12).

Continuing in his movement through the Pentateuch, Kline noted that in the book of Exodus the Lord demanded through Moses that his people be set free that they might gather at the mountain of God to serve him.<sup>25</sup> Pharaoh, exhibiting antichrist vigor, scornfully replies in Exodus 5:2, “Who is Yahweh that I should obey him?” When

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the burden of passive obedience, the ordeal of suffering unto the death of the Cross. As the prophetic declaration of Gen. 3:15 puts it, he would suffer the bruising of his heel in the trampling of the serpent’s head. He must undergo the curse that was incurred by the first Adam’s breaking of the Creator’s covenant with man in Eden. He must become a victim of death in order to become the Victor over him who had the power of death.” Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 106.

<sup>24</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 106.

<sup>25</sup> Regarding the literary structure of the book of Exodus, Kline asserted, “The opening and closing sections of the account (Exodus 1–4 and 19–40 respectively) portray the divine Glory as present in the midst of the covenant people and the middle section (Exodus 5–18) recounts the mighty acts of redemptive judgment performed by the King of Glory.” Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 113. He also stated, “The coming of the typical kingdom begins with the redemption of the chosen kingdom people by their Great King (Exodus 1–18). Our analysis of the redemptive judgments against the antichrist power brought us to the national assembly of Sinai. There the official constituting of the kingdom by covenant took place (Exodus 19–34), concluding with the enthronement of the King in the royal tabernacle, constructed for him as stipulated in the treaty (Exodus 35–40).” Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 120. In Kline’s judgment, the book of Exodus was the Gospel of Moses, a covenant witness document which pointed forward to the coming of Jesus, the new and greater Moses, who as new covenant mediator redeemed his people by going to the cross and through his shed blood ratified the covenant with God. For Kline’s extended exposition, see his *Structure of Biblical Authority* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1972), 172–203.

Pharaoh and his army pin the Israelites against the sea in Exodus 14, a gathering of antichrist's forces to besiege the community of faith, the final battle of Har Magedon is anticipated. God as divine King intervenes through his Glory-Spirit. The theophanic pillar of cloud and fire flashes fiercely (Exod. 14:20, 24) and brings judgment upon the Egyptians, representatives of the antichrist world; it also functions as a light to lead the Israelites to safety (Exod. 14:20–21).<sup>26</sup>

Then, in Exodus 15, the victory hymn Song of Moses signals the transition from the kingdom prologue of the Patriarchs to the coming of the kingdom and the occupation of the kingdom land. In Revelation 15:3, the victors over the Beast sing “the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb” as they stand by the sea of glass. Then, in Revelation 18, the taunt element is “especially pronounced in the Hallelujahs of the saints over the fall of Babylon (Rev. 18:1ff.), cast like a stone into the deep (Rev. 18:21), a judgment reminiscent of the fate of pharaoh's armies (Exod. 15:1, 4, 5, 10).”<sup>27</sup>

But the parallels with Revelation are more pronounced than the shared doxological victory hymns sung in the face of vanquished foes. The transition marks a shift from Patriarchal common grace relationships and pilgrim politics to the waging of holy war in the Mosaic era that foreshadows the eschatological judgment of the wicked. The book of Numbers particularly details Israel's mission to wage a holy war of conquest in the land of Canaan. Consequently, in Numbers, the priests perform the role as guardians of the tabernacle, an image conveyed in Numbers 2 with the situating of twelve tribes around the sacred tent.<sup>28</sup> Israel's campaign of conquest is a priestly undertaking, the priests leading the procession carrying the ark of God's Presence before them. In the final battle of Har Magedon in Revelation 19:11–14, the armies of heaven that follow the priestly-garbed Christ are a company of priests, clothed in white and clean linen. Until that last day, Har Magedon warfare for God's people in every age is “at its core a wrestling against the spirit powers of darkness, a resisting of the challenge of the evil one against our Lord, the lord of the holy mount.”<sup>29</sup>

Kline turned to the book of Daniel to transition from old covenant typology to new covenant reality. He stated that prophetic visions of Daniel set forth both the closing of the old order in the destruction of Israel's theocracy and the establishing of the new messianic order. In fact, in Kline's opinion, the seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 alone “contains almost all the major elements of the pattern from the initiation of the New Covenant to the consummation of the kingdom, including a remarkably full revelation of the Messiah, the guarantor of the covenant.”<sup>30</sup>

Kline argued that the prophetic vision of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24–27 is conveyed to Daniel by Gabriel in 539 BC, the first year of Darius/Cyrus. The prophet Jeremiah had declared that the fall of Babylon would signal the seventy-year captivity of Israel (Jer. 25:11–12), and that the Lord would bring back his people from exile to their

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<sup>26</sup> He further argued that it was “the King of Glory, the One beheld by Israel as a consuming fire on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:18; 24:15–17), who was himself the ordeal power at the Egyptian Sea.” Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 116.

<sup>27</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 129.

<sup>28</sup> Kline saw this ordering as an anticipation and type of the heavenly kingdom symbolized in Rev. 21 and 22 as the temple-city, New Jerusalem. Also in view was the holy mount of God's heavenly enthronement in Rev. 4:4 and following where the twenty-four elders surround the four living creatures.

<sup>29</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 132.

<sup>30</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 145.

homeland (Jer. 29:10). In Daniel 9:23 and again in 9:25, Gabriel assures Daniel that the restoration decree has already been issued. The fulfillment of the promissory prophecy of Jeremiah and the evidence in verses 23 and 25 that the decree has already been issued “puts it beyond question that the seventy weeks of Dan. 9:24 began in that very year, 539 BC.”<sup>31</sup> Kline deduced that since the Messiah and the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 are part of the seventy weeks, the seventy weeks are figurative. The Messiah-Ruler spoken of in the vision is the one who fulfills all the objectives of the seventy weeks—the judgment of the old order, the inauguration of the new order, and the finishing of the house of God on Har Magedon.

The prophecies of Daniel provide an entrance into the Har Magedon paradigm of the messianic age. Christ is the Har Magedon way to heaven for his people as he triumphs in warfare against Satan, the archfoe of the holy mountain. As the divine warrior locked in mortal combat with Satan, Jesus is successful in his defense of Har Magedon from his temptation forward. His victory is a dispossessing of Satan, an expropriating of the kingdom of heaven, and ultimately a crushing of the serpent’s head, a slaying of the dragon. For a sketch of this conflict, Kline turned to Revelation 12 and 20.

### **Conquest of the Dragon: Revelation 12 and 20**

The confrontation between Jesus and the devil in Revelation 12 is the decisive battle of the Har Magedon warfare. The passage opens with the satanic dragon’s unsuccessful attempt to devour the messianic child born to the glory-arrayed women. Emerging from the ordeal victorious, the child in Revelation 12:5 is exalted to the Har Magedon throne of God where he is destined to rule the nations with an iron scepter in fulfillment of Psalm 2:4–9. “The dominion Jesus refused to accept from the tempter,” said Kline, “he receives as the reward for his obedience to the Father.”<sup>32</sup>

The battle is pictured again starting in Revelation 12:7, Michael (the proper name of the messianic Angel of the Lord) and his angelic legions versus the dragon and his demonic hosts. Defeated, the devil is depicted as being thrown down to earth from the invisible heights of a celestial mountain, a mountain turned into a pseudo-Har Magedon built upon Satan’s lies (Rev. 12:9).<sup>33</sup> His casting down means the loss of his hitherto dark sway and the penetrating of the light of the gospel to the nations. This is confirmed in Revelation 12:10, where the defeat and casting down of Satan are attributed to the church’s witness to the blood of the Lamb. It is the work of the Lamb on the cross that silences Satan, the accuser of the brethren. “The crushing of the serpent’s head by the messianic seed of the woman is at the cost of the bruising of his heel. Hence the gospel that is heralded to the ends of the earth after Satan’s expulsion from on high is a message of Christ crucified, the Lamb who was slain.”<sup>34</sup>

Satan in Hebrews 2:14 is identified as the one who has the power of death. Death must be conquered, which is why the glorified Jesus reassures John in Revelation 1:18, “I

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<sup>31</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 147.

<sup>32</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 159.

<sup>33</sup> Kline added that the language of Rev. 12:9 echoed Isa. 14:12. “The Isaiah passage describes the King of Babylon’s antichrist aspirations to the heavenly throne on the Mount of Assembly and his ultimate doom, cast down to Sheol (cf. v. 15).” Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 160.

<sup>34</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 160.

am the living One; I was dead and behold I am alive for evermore. And I have the keys of death and Hades.” Kline proclaimed, “The gospel that advances across the earth as a result of the casting down of the devil is, accordingly, a preaching of Christ risen as well as Christ crucified.”<sup>35</sup> By the cross, Jesus turns aside Satan’s accusations, and by the resurrection he takes away the weapon of death from Satan. It is by way of Jesus’s double victory that Satan and his evil angels are cast down from the heights of Har Magedon.

According to Kline, Revelation 20 also presents an encounter between Christ and the devil where the messianic victory is seen as a casting down of Satan. The curtailing of Satan’s success as a deceiver of the nations is symbolized in the dragon’s binding and imprisonment in the Abyss (Rev. 20:1–3, 7). Isaiah 49 provides the background for this imagery. The Servant of the Lord will bring God’s salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:1–6), calling out of darkness the captives (49:9). He accomplishes the deliverance of the people by taking them as plunder from the adversary (49:24, 25).

### **The Three-and-a-Half-Year Symbol**

In Daniel 9, the three-and-a-half-year period (the second half of the seventieth week) is the church age from the middle of the seventieth week (the end of the new covenant’s overlapping of the old order) to the end of the seventieth week (the consummation). Daniel 7:25 indicates that the three-and-a-half-year period is that time when the saints are persecuted by the little horn. The oppressive rule of this world power continues until the divine advent of the final judgment. Then the dragon-slaying Son of Man will destroy the little horn and establish the eternal kingdom.

Revelation 11 carries forward what was prophesied by Daniel. The equivalent of Daniel’s three-and-a-half-year period is the 1,260 days of Revelation 11:3. This is the period of activity of the two witnesses, who are symbolic of the church that carries out Jesus’s Great Commission. Kline argued that Revelation 11:7–10 teaches that it is evident that the mission of the two witnesses, though successfully completed, has met with opposition from the unbelieving world devoted to the Beast. They are overpowered and killed in the antichrist crisis at the end of the interim era, but subsequently, as Revelation 11:11–12 declares, they are restored to life and raptured into heaven.

But Kline also argued that the interim era—the interval in the messianic era between Christ’s coming and the inaugural of the new covenant and his return and the consummation of the kingdom of God—in Revelation 11 is marked by the presence of an apostate church. In Revelation 11:2, the apostate covenant community is symbolized as the outer court of the temple. It is not measured off as holy, like the inner sanctuary, the true Israel. In Revelation 11:8, this apostate church is pictured as the erstwhile “holy city” of Jerusalem, the “great city” where the Lord was crucified. “No longer sanctified by God’s Presence,” said Kline, “the great city is abandoned to profanation by the heathen. Such is the significance of the trampling, the opposite of the measuring action in verse 1.”<sup>36</sup>

Accordingly, the interim is an era in which the true church and false church co-exist. Ascribed, then, to the false church is the same judgment (“to be trampled on by the

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<sup>35</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 160.

<sup>36</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 168.

Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled,” Luke 21:24) of which Jesus warned apostate Jerusalem for their rejection of him.

Revelation 12 focuses on Christ’s victory over the dragon, but Revelation 12:6 and 14 with their three-and-a-half-year symbolism also speak to the experience of the church in the interadvental period. Both contexts are concerned with the situation of the church, symbolized by the woman, after the departure of the victorious Christ to his throne in heaven. Foiled in his attempt to do away with the offspring of the woman, the child now exalted beyond his reach, Satan, directs his fury against those who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Vulnerable and threatened, the covenant community is nevertheless protected and preserved during the interim, which is the point of Revelation 12:6 and 14. Kline wrote:

Rev. 12:6 says the woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she can be sustained for 1,260 days. Rev. 12:14 says the woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she is sustained for a time, times, and half a time. Such is the interim condition of the church—a fugitive existence in the wilderness, not yet come to the rest in the glory land. As faithful witnesses to the Lamb, God’s people are overcomers (Rev. 12:11, echoing the Revelation 11 identification of the interim as the Great Commission time) and they are indeed sustained in the wilderness. Yet at the same time they are warred against by the dragon (Rev. 12:17) and face martyr-death for their martyr-witness. It is as those who loved not their lives unto death that they overcome.<sup>37</sup>

## The Millennium Symbol

The present church age interim is also pictured in Revelation 20:1–6 through the symbolism of the “thousand years.”<sup>38</sup> The millennium starts with Christ’s first advent, the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:2 launching the thousand years. The millennium ends, Revelation 20:7–10, with the return of Jesus to execute final judgment upon Satan and his forces at the battle of Har Magedon (cf. Rev. 16:12–16).

According to Kline, the key issue with respect to the nature of the millennium is the millennium’s relation to the coming of the Glory-Kingdom. In his judgment, there is no basis in Revelation 20 for the contention of the premillennialists and postmillennialists that the thousand years are a time of theocratic dominance for the people of God on earth.

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<sup>37</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 169.

<sup>38</sup> Kline stated, “Amillennialists and postmillennialists are in agreement that the millennium is the present church age interim, while the premillennialists locate it in a future age.” Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 171. He then suggested that the eschatological issues would be brought into clearer focus if these three main millennial positions were named in terms of the relation to the coming of the kingdom of God in consummation rather than in terms of the relation of the *parousia* to the millennium. One could then speak of the pre-consummation view held by postmillennialists and premillennialists, and the post-consummation view, held by the amillennialists alone. Kline also took pains to indicate that postmillennialists further fall in with the premillennialists in the erroneous view that the millennium is a time when God’s people are organized as a visible kingdom, exercising dominion over the earth. The difference between them is how they see the relation of the kingdom to the *parousia* prior to the consummation. The premillennialists regard the kingdom as post-*parousia*, which in Kline’s judgment was less objectionable than the postmillennialists, who regard it as pre-*parousia*.

Such a terrestrial kingdom is not suggested in Revelation 20:1–3 by the binding of Satan, or by the granting of judicial authority to those on the thrones in Revelation 20:4, or by the first resurrection experience in Revelation 20:5–6.

Until Christ's coming, all the world outside of Israel's limited orbit was snared in the deception of the devil. But with Jesus's binding of Satan there is deliverance from satanic deception and spiritual darkness, and consequently, God's Word goes forth to the nations. During this time, those who follow after Jesus and do not worship the Beast or his image are not the politically exalted. Rather, their status is pictured in Revelation 20:4b as those who are beheaded for their testimony to Jesus.

Whether viewed from the earthly "three-and-a-half-year" perspective of Revelation 11 and 12 or the heavenly "thousand years" perspective of Revelation 20, the interim history of the church militant is a martyr age where the church witnesses to Christ and suffers for Christ. But Revelation 20:4a also pictures the session of a tribunal given authority to judge. This judicial session in Revelation 20:4a results in the vindication of the faithful in Revelation 20:4b, who would not therefore seem to be the occupants of the thrones.

The prospect of an earthly Glory-Kingdom would confront the reader in Revelation 20:4–6 if the first resurrection spoken of there were a bodily resurrection of believers who then reigned with Christ for a thousand years. However, the interpretation of the first resurrection as bodily is contradicted in the context by the meaning of "first." "First" in Revelation 20 and 21 is not the first in the series of things of the same kind. Rather, it marks that which is of a different kind from what is called "second." In Revelation 21:1 and following, for example, "first" marks the first world as passing away. This is in contrast to the new heaven and new earth, which do not pass away.<sup>39</sup>

## **Satan and Antichrist**

Kline also took special interest in Revelation 13 and the relation between Satan and the Antichrist. Kline noted that in Genesis 3 (the serpent) and 2 Thessalonians 2 (the man of sin) Satan acts through an agent. Incarnation is not possible for Satan, but satanic embodiment in the man of sin amounts to a pseudo-incarnation. In terms of the symbolism of Revelation 13:2 and 4, the dragon gives his power, throne, and great authority to the Beast.<sup>40</sup> This transferal functions as an antichrist culmination of the Beast, the Antichrist being Satan's vicegerent.

The man of sin, however, claims a name above all, which constitutes a rival claim in conflict with the one who has delegated his throne to him in Revelation 13:1–2. It is a rival claim because, in the satanic ordering of things, there is no place on the throne of Har Magedon for two. Kline explained:

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<sup>39</sup> For Kline's detailed argumentation at his point, see "The First Resurrection," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37, no. 3 (Spring 1975): 366–75.

<sup>40</sup> In his article, "Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium," Kline clarified the use of certain terms. He stated that in the Rev. 16 Har Magedon crisis and Rev. 20 Gog crisis "antichrist" is used in the popular sense, as a designation of for the man of sin figure referred to in 2 Thess. 2:3–10. He also stated that "the antichrist identity of the dragon-like beast in the Har Magedon episode would be acknowledged by most, irrespective of their millennial preferences." See, Meredith G. Kline, "Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium," in *Essential Writings of Meredith G. Kline* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017), 267.

Satan cannot replicate the trinitarian Father-Son (Messiah) relationship, one in which the Messiah-Son together with the Father and the Spirit occupies the Glory-throne of all creation. Hence by his claim to deity above all deities the messiah figure that Satan spawns becomes in effect a rebel against his father. Such contradiction and division is to be expected in Satan's kingdom-house for he is the irrational spirit par excellence.<sup>41</sup>

Satan attempts to counterfeit Christ and his kingdom, but his attempts fail. The satanic enterprise has a pseudo-version of the biblical octave pattern with the Beast that has eight heads, the climax of seven heads. But this attempt to mimic Christ falls short in that it cannot bring to completion. Rather than the Beast ascending Har Magedon in victory, the Beast descends to perdition (Rev. 17:11). The true octave figure is Christ. His resurrection day, which the church celebrates on the Christian octave day, brings about the consummate perfecting of Har Magedon.<sup>42</sup>

## Har Magedon Gatherings

According to Kline, in the Old Testament, acts of divine gathering with Mount Magedon as the ultimate destination are prominent. As an example, the Noahic household was gathered into the ark, a sanctuary from the world-destroying divine judgment. Symbolic of the covenant community gathered out of a perishing world, the ark was bound for the Har Magedon mount of Ararat. Those outside the ark were doomed, the waters of judgment covering over them even as they sought higher ground.

With the coming of Christ, agricultural harvesting, military mustering, and the homecoming of dispersed people are among the images used in the New Testament to portray Har Magedon gatherings with dual judgments. An example of the agricultural, double harvesting motif is found in Revelation 14:14–20. The hundred forty-four thousand gathered in the grain harvest (Rev. 14:14–16) are the firstfruits of the harvest and followers of the Lamb (Rev. 14:1–5). They represent the attainment of all the servants of God promised to the martyr suppliants in Revelation 6:9–11 (cf. Rev. 14:13), the company portrayed in the double vision of the hundred forty-four thousand and the great multitude in Revelation 7 (i.e., the church depicted first in typological, then more literal fashion). Standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, they sing the new song before the throne. Conversely, those gathered in the grape harvest in Revelation 14:17–20 are the worshipers of the Beast described in Revelation 14:9–11. They drink the wine of God's wrath, and the smoke of their fiery torment goes up forever.

The great gatherer who orders and oversees the dual harvest of judgment is Jesus. Kline summarized:

Jesus himself declared in the kingdom parable of Matt. 13:24–43 that at the end of the age it is he who shall send his angels on their double harvest mission. Agreeably the dual gathering at Rev. 14:14–20 is conducted by Jesus and his angels. The passage opens with the epiphany of the Son of Man, with golden crown and seated on a white cloud, insignia of deity (cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 1:13). He proceeds to harvest the

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<sup>41</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 182.

<sup>42</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 198.

grain while an associate angel gathers the vintage of the earth destined to be crushed in the winepress of divine wrath.<sup>43</sup>

Christ is the divine warrior, the ordeal-champion over Satan, but participating with him in the crushing of the serpent's head are the saints (Rom. 16:20; cf. Rev. 2:16–17). The blood of the Lamb overcomes Satan, but the triumph is also that of the martyr witnesses (Rev. 12:11).<sup>44</sup> In Revelation 19:11, when the Faithful and True rides forth to judge and make war, those arrayed in the white linen of his righteousness follow him as the armies of heaven in Revelation 19:14. These saints are overcomers, those who share in the Messiah's prerogative in shattering evil powers like a potter's vessel (Rev. 2:16, 17; cf. Psa. 2:9).

These overcomers also are active in the final judgment as judges, which is in keeping with man's Edenic assignment as guardian of Har Magedon to judge Satan and banish him from God's holy presence. "In the Revelation 20 depiction of the resurrection-judgment a courtroom vision is juxtaposed to a battle vision."<sup>45</sup> In Revelation 20:7–10, a recapitulation of Revelation 16:12–16, the forces of Gog besieging the city of the saints are consumed by fire from heaven. Then, in Revelation 20:11–15, the great white throne has on it the Judge from whom the earth and heaven flee away. Standing before the throne are the dead. They are judged according to what is written—sentenced to the lake of fire with the devil, Beast, and False Prophet are all whose names are not found in the book of life (Rev. 20:10).

### **Consummation of the Har Magedon Kingdom**

In the last section of the book, Kline tied together once more God's creation of man in his image, the prospect of eternal communion symbolized in the river and tree of life, and the glorious realization of that hope through the redemption found in Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem where the river and tree of life reappear. The New Jerusalem is not just Christ's bride, but is the cosmic plenitude of Christ's bride, the church (Rev. 21:9–10). In filling this city, Christ, the second Adam, fulfills the commission given to Adam to fill the earth with his descendants.

But this fullness of the elect dwelling in the holy city is matched by the fullness of the Presence of the triune God in that place. Portrayed as a holy of holies in Revelation 21:16, the New Jerusalem is where God tabernacles with his people (Rev. 21:3). This holy city on the mountain has the Glory of God (Rev. 21:11), the site of his personal epiphanic Presence. Christ, the one in whom the fullness of deity dwells bodily, is also bonded with the Glory-Presence pleroma that fills the temple-city. Consequently, "the Apocalypse conjoins the Lord-Lamb with the enthroned King of Glory when identifying the latter as the temple, the fullness of the cosmos city (Rev. 21:22; cf. 22:1; John 2:19–21)."<sup>46</sup> The Lamb-Lamp then parallels the Glory-Light of God, the temple-city "having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:11, 23).

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<sup>43</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 201.

<sup>44</sup> The Scriptural reference on page 203 contains a typo as "Rev. 12:21" should be "Rev. 12:11."

<sup>45</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 207.

<sup>46</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 219.

Blessedly joined in fullness to the Lamb in the temple-city shining with the glory light of God is his bride-wife, the church. “The church pleroma, the bride-wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9) is one with him who, himself incarnational epiphany, is one with the endoxate Spirit epiphany.”<sup>47</sup> Without blurring the Creator-creature distinction, the church shares in the epiphanies of the Son and Spirit. The wife of the Lamb shares with God in his identity as the cosmic holy city (Rev. 21:9–12, 22), the two simultaneously filling the cosmos. For to the overcomer Jesus promises, “I will grant him to sit with me on my throne even as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21).

The mediator of this union between God and his church is Jesus Christ, the God-man. He is the successful covenant Probationer who accomplishes redemption for the erstwhile sons of wrath, bringing them into communion with the Holy One. In Eden prior to sin, the creational epiphany of the Spirit was to the end of revealing God’s wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and love. But, said Kline, the full disclosure of the nature of God—the prime objective of creation—is to include the manifestation of a supreme love, “a love of God that we see in the compassion, mercy, and grace of our Redeemer, ‘the lamb that was slain’ (Rev. 5:6–13; 13:8).”<sup>48</sup>

## **The Gospel of Har Magedon**

The glorious prospect of the divine and human fullness bound together in Christ comes as an invitation to an eschatological banquet on Har Magedon. In the good news of the Apocalypse, the Har Magedon banquet is the marriage supper of the Lamb. Those invited to come and enjoy without price (Rev. 22:17) are pronounced blessed (Rev. 19:9). In Christ, they will be assembled in fullness of joy before him on consummated Har Magedon, Mount of Gathering.

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<sup>47</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 219.

<sup>48</sup> Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 220.

# Servant Standards

## Commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapter 25

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by Alan D. Strange

### Chapter XXV Electing, Ordaining, and Installing Ruling Elders and Deacons

1. Every congregation shall elect ruling elders and deacons, except in extraordinary circumstances. Those elected must be male communicant members in good and regular standing in the church in which they are to exercise their office.

**Comment:** A congregation ordinarily elects and has both ruling elders and deacons. It cannot come into being as a particularized church without local elders, though it may lack deacons. In such a case, the elders assume the duties of the diaconate until a native diaconate can be cultivated. Perhaps a church becomes such that it cannot elect its own officers through attrition and other circumstances. It may have to rely on augmentation from the presbytery, but it should always labor to furnish its session and diaconate from trained men within the congregation. “Men” is not used here generically but would indicate males. These men must be communicant members in good and regular standing (not under any discipline and otherwise of good reputation) in the particular congregation in which their service is envisioned.

2. Each congregation shall determine, by vote of communicant members in good and regular standing, to choose elders or deacons for either lifetime service or limited terms of service on the session or board of deacons. In a congregation that has determined to choose ruling elders or deacons for limited terms of service a full term shall be three years. When there are three or more ruling elders or three or more deacons the session or board of deacons shall consist of three classes, one of which shall be elected each year. A person may be elected for a full term or partial term. Ruling elders, once ordained, when they are not reelected to a term of service, shall not thereby be divested of the office, but may be commissioned to higher judicatories by the session or the presbytery, and may perform other functions of the office when so appointed by an appropriate judicatory. Similarly deacons, when not elected to a term of service in the congregation, may be commissioned by an appropriate judicatory to perform specific diaconal functions.

**Comment:** Elders may serve either lifetime or for terms of three years. This commentator, who clearly holds a three-office view, also believes that the biblical pattern for ruling elders is lifetime service with allowance for occasional leaves of absence. At the very least, if a congregation chooses term eldership, it should do so, in my view,

without placing term limits of some sort in its local by-laws. The notion that a man may serve a term or two and then must take off a term (or a year) finds no biblical support in my opinion. I say this because some three-office men, even more so in the past, supported terms for ruling eldership so that the distinction might be sharp and clear between the minister who served for a lifetime and those other officers who were not in full-time ministry but only served distinct terms. Term-eldership can tend to lend to a “your turn” view of the eldership, which is common in some churches, but which, again, I find to lack biblical warrant.

Our polity, as expressed here in FG 25, clearly provides for either the lifetime or term office-bearing. In a church that has terms and has three or more officers in service in either of the offices (elder or deacon), they shall be in three classes, elected yearly. To properly populate the classes, men may be elected for shorter, but not for longer, terms. When a man is not in sessional service (he is in a “term” eldership church and is off the session for a time), he does not cease being a ruling elder (or a deacon, as the case may be). Thus, the session may commission him to serve at the presbytery or be eligible for service at the general assembly. He may serve likewise on committees of the higher judicatories. Deacons out of service also may serve in appropriate capacities, e.g., on presbytery or denominational diaconal committees.

3. In order that these sacred offices not be committed to weak or unworthy men, and that the congregations shall have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those by whom they are to be governed and served, no one shall normally be eligible for election to office until he has been a communicant member in good standing for at least one year, shall have received appropriate training under the direction of or with the approval of the session, and shall have served the church in functions requiring responsible leadership. Men of ability and piety in the congregation shall be encouraged by the session to prepare themselves for the offices of ruling elder or deacon so that their study and opportunities for service may be provided for in a systematic and orderly way.

**Comment:** We as Presbyterians believe that ministers should have character and gifting appropriate to their offices and we believe the same, *mutatis mutandis* (with the necessary changes having been made), about elders and deacons. We do not require theological training and teaching ability for those offices, but we do believe that elders and deacons should be men who have clear gifts of governance and service, demonstrated in some measure both to those who hold such office already and to the congregation at large. To ascertain such, any man considered for either office should normally be a communicant member in said congregation for at least a year. The “normally” does require some flexibility as some circumstances may warrant.

In any case, such candidates for office should receive appropriate training (certainly including but not limited to things like a survey of the secondary and tertiary standards, a survey of church history, etc.) under sessional supervision and otherwise manifest the necessary gifts. The session should always “keep its eyes open” for men who are godly and able and direct such men in study and service opportunities so that they may be evidently fitted for office. The session should provide for training and opportunities in a systematic and orderly way. Some do on-going leadership training out of which emerge men whom the session taps for further training and development not only in general office but also in special office.

4. Any member of the congregation who is entitled to vote may propose to the session nominations for these offices. The session shall certify those nominees whom, upon examination, it judges to possess the necessary qualifications for office. At least one Lord's Day preceding the date appointed for the election the session shall announce to the congregation the names of those it has certified. Election shall be from among those certified.

**Comment:** Sessions provide for the election of elders and deacons variously. They often provide a time in their by-laws (e.g., "officer nominations may be made in September") at which nominations may be made, at the end of which period they consider all the nominations of the congregation (including those of the session itself) and determine which candidates they wish to go forward with. Such candidates either enter into and complete or complete what they have previously begun by way of officer training. At the end of such preparation, the session examines and then certifies those that it determines are qualified. Such certified nominees are then presented to the congregation, with names of officer candidates disclosed at least one Lord's Day before the congregational meeting called for, at least, that purpose.

5. After a person has been elected to the office of ruling elder or deacon the session shall determine a time for his ordination. The person elected shall be put in actual possession of his office only by ordination whereby he is solemnly set apart for the labor to which he has been called.

**Comment:** Following election by the congregation of men to the offices of elder or deacon, the session shall set time(s) for the ordination of such. Elders and deacons elect become elders and deacons in office only when ordination occurs as determined by the session. Ordination always involves the setting apart of the candidate to perform the functions of the office to which he has been called. The genius of Presbyterianism, once again, is that only those are brought into office who have the approbation both of those already in governance together with the consent of those to be governed (or served, in the case of the deacon).

6. The person elected shall be ordained and installed, in the presence of the congregation, in the following manner:

a. The minister, in the following or similar language, shall state the warrant and nature of the office of ruling elder or deacon, the character to be sustained by the officer, and duties to be fulfilled:

i. In the case of a ruling elder:

The office of ruling elder is based upon the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ, who provided for his church officers who should rule in his name. Paul and Barnabas "appointed . . . elders in every church"; and Paul commanded that those who "rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching." In this passage the Scriptures distinguish between elders who labor particularly in the Word and in doctrine—usually called ministers or pastors—and elders who join with the minister in the government and discipline of the church—generally called ruling elders.

It is the duty and privilege of ruling elders, in the name and by the authority of our ascended king, to rule over particular churches, and, as servants of our great

shepherd, to care for his flock. Holy Scripture enjoins them: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." As a consequence, ruling elders must be zealous in maintaining the purity of the ministration of the Word and sacraments. They must conscientiously exercise discipline and uphold the good order and peace of the church. With love and humility they should promote faithfulness on the part of both elders and deacons in the discharge of their duties. Moreover, they should have particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word, in order that the church may be edified, and may manifest itself as the pillar and ground of the truth.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, ruling elders must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

ii. In the case of a deacon:

The office of deacon is based upon the solicitude and love of Christ for his own people. So tender is our Lord's interest in their temporal needs that he considers what is done unto one of the least of his brethren as done unto him. For he will say to those who have ministered to his little ones: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

In the beginning the apostles themselves ministered to the poor, but subsequently, in order that they might be able to devote themselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the Word, they committed that responsibility to others, having directed the people to choose men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. Since the days of the apostles the church has recognized the care of the poor as a distinct ministry of the church committed to deacons.

The duties of deacons consist of encouraging members of the church to provide for those who are in want, seeking to prevent poverty, making discreet and cheerful distribution to the needy, praying with the distressed and reminding them of the consolations of Holy Scripture.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, deacons must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

b. He shall then propose to the candidate 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 to seek the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church?

(5) Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon) in this congregation and promise, in reliance on the grace of God, faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?

c. When each of these questions has been answered in the affirmative, the minister shall address to the members of the congregation the following question:

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the constitution of this Church, entitles him?

d. When the members of the church have answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel and be ordained by prayer and with the laying on of hands to the office of ruling elder or deacon.

e. The minister shall then declare:

I now declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed a ruling elder (or deacon) in this church, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and that he is entitled to all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which his office entitles him.

f. After this the minister shall give to him and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

g. When there is an existing session, it is proper that the members of that body, in the face of the congregation, take the newly ordained elder by the hand, saying, in words to this purpose, "We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part of this office with us."

**Comment:** This section details how that one elected to the office of elder or deacon is actually ordained and installed into said office. The presiding minister (usually the pastor of the local congregation) sets forth matters relevant to the respective offices: he delineates the warrant and nature of the office(s) and enumerates the character qualities of the office-bearers and the duties that pertain to each office. This section gives a description of such for elders and then deacons. While further comment seems unnecessary here, these sections should be carefully observed in the life of the church, both as to who are qualified for office and what the office entails.

Five questions, similar in measure to those proposed to ministerial candidates, are put before the prospective officers whereby they might take the oaths and vows that properly accompany all office-bearing. The first three have to do with believing the Bible, receiving and adopting the confession and catechisms of this church, and approving the Book of Church Order. The fourth is a pledge to uphold the purity, peace, and unity of the church with the fifth being a promise to fulfill the duties of the office in reliance on the grace of God.

Upon the affirmation of these vows on the part of the ordinand, the congregation is then administered a vow, asking that they raise their right hands if affirming, that they will receive this brother in his office and accord him proper respect and obedience. Upon such congregational affirmation, the candidate, by the laying on of hands and prayer, is ordained and installed, and the presiding minister declares him to be duly elected, ordained, and installed as a ruling elder or deacon. The minister gives a fit exhortation to officer and congregation, and the members of the session extend to the newly ordained and installed elder the right hand of fellowship as one who will now take part in that office and the governance of the church.

7. A ruling elder or deacon who has been installed for a limited term of service may be elected to additional terms of service in the same or another congregation in accordance with the provisions of Section 2 of this chapter. When such a person is elected to further service he shall be publicly installed in the following manner:

a. The minister shall review before the congregation, in the following or similar language, the warrant and nature of the office of ruling elder or deacon, the character to be sustained by the officer, and the duties to be fulfilled:

i. In the case of a ruling elder:

The office of ruling elder is based upon the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ, who provided for his church officers who should rule in his name. Paul and Barnabas "appointed . . . elders in every church"; and Paul commanded that those who "rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching." In this passage the Scriptures distinguish between elders who labor particularly in the Word and in doctrine—usually called ministers or pastors—and elders who join with the minister in the government and discipline of the church—generally called ruling elders.

It is the duty and privilege of ruling elders, in the name and by the authority of our ascended king, to rule over particular churches, and, as servants of our great shepherd, to care for his flock. Holy Scripture enjoins them: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." As a consequence, ruling elders must be zealous in maintaining the purity of the ministration of the Word and sacraments. They must conscientiously exercise discipline and uphold the good order and peace of the church. With love and humility they should promote faithfulness on the part of both elders and deacons in the discharge of their duties. Moreover, they should have particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word, in order that the church may be edified, and may manifest itself as the pillar and ground of the truth.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, ruling elders must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

ii. In the case of a deacon:

The office of deacon is based upon the solicitude and love of Christ for his own people. So tender is our Lord's interest in their temporal needs that he considers what is done unto one of the least of his brethren as done unto him. For he will say to those who have ministered to his little ones: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

In the beginning the apostles themselves ministered to the poor, but subsequently, in order that they might be able to devote themselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the Word, they committed that responsibility to others, having directed the people to choose men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. Since the days of the apostles the church has recognized the care of the poor as a distinct ministry of the church committed to deacons.

The duties of deacons consist of encouraging members of the church to provide for those who are in want, seeking to prevent poverty, making discreet and cheerful

distribution to the needy, praying with the distressed and reminding them of the consolations of Holy Scripture.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, deacons must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

b. He shall then propose to the officer the following question:

Do you agree to serve as a ruling elder (or deacon) in this congregation, and promise, in reliance on the grace of God, faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?

c. When the question has been answered in the affirmative the minister shall address to the members of the congregation the following question:

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the constitution of this Church, entitles him?

d. When a majority of the members of the church who are present have answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the minister shall then declare:

I now declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected and installed a ruling elder (or deacon) in this church, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and that he is entitled to all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which his office entitles him.

e. After this the minister shall give to him and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

**Comment:** This concluding section describes the circumstance in which a ruling elder or deacon serving in a limited term of office is reelected to serve an additional term. Once again, the minister reviews that which pertains to the respective offices of ruling elder or deacon: its nature and warrant and the character and duties of its incumbents. A single question involving continued willingness to serve as ruling elder or deacon is put to the officer, and the congregation is likewise asked to affirm their continued willingness to receive this brother as an officer. Upon the affirmation of officer and congregation, the presiding minister declares that said officer has been regularly elected and installed and gives a fit exhortation to officer and congregation appropriate for the occasion.

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# ServantReading

## Genetic Engineering, Human Nature, and Human Destiny

A Review Article

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By David VanDrunen

*Altered Inheritance: CRISPR and the Ethics of Human Genome Editing*, by Françoise Baylis. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019, 304 pages, \$24.95.

*The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race*, by Walter Isaacson. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021, 560 pages, \$35.00.

*Hacking Darwin: Genetic Engineering and the Future of Humanity*, by Jamie Metzl. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2019, 352 pages, \$16.99.

The past few decades have witnessed astounding advances in understanding human physical nature. Scientists have mapped the human genome and learned how to edit human genes. This has already raised weighty and unprecedented moral issues, and more will follow. Many Christians are still only vaguely aware of all this.

The three books under consideration describe the dawning genetic revolution and grapple with the future it portends and the ethical problems it presents—although none of them from a Christian perspective. I will first introduce some historical background, then offer brief evaluation of each book, and finally reflect on some of the pertinent moral and theological issues that Reformed Christians would do well to consider as they prepare to engage these matters wisely.

### The Genetic Revolution

The (independent) work of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel in the mid-nineteenth century is probably the best place to begin the history of the genetic revolution. (It is interesting that Darwin once studied for the Anglican ministry, and Mendel was an Augustinian monk.) Darwin theorized that all life on earth developed from common ancestors through random mutations and natural selection. But he did not know how hereditary traits are passed down from generation to generation. Mendel did groundbreaking research on what would later be called “genes,” although his work remained obscure until after his death. Although Christians must reject what might be called a materialist Darwinian worldview, it is clearly true that living creatures have genes and that genetic mutations produce biological changes over time.

Another crucial step in the history was James Watson’s and Francis Crick’s monumental mid-twentieth-century discovery that the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is a double helix. DNA encodes instructions for building all sorts of cells. Watson

was also a crucial figure in the beginnings of the Human Genome Project of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, which mapped and sequenced all human genes.

Subsequent events bring us to the main concerns of the books under review. A number of researchers worldwide turned their attention to ribonucleic acid (RNA), which carries out the instructions encoded in the DNA. Their work led to the development, in 2012, of a gene-editing tool known by the acronym CRISPR (“clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats”). In this editing process, a single-strand RNA (the CRISPR) guides a Cas9 enzyme to a particular place in the genome, and this enzyme cuts the targeted strands of DNA. The DNA then seeks to repair itself, a process scientists can exploit to insert new code and change the DNA sequence. In the decade since, researchers have been applying this gene-editing technology to curing genetic diseases, developing better cancer treatments, and improving vaccines. Many people are dreaming of other ways to use it to improve human health, customize our descendants’ genetic inheritance in the process of human reproduction, and enhance human capabilities. Many also worry about the consequences. This brings us to the three books.

### **Recent Genetic-Engineering Literature**

If I had to recommend just one of these books, it would be Walter Isaacson’s *The Code Breaker*. It is primarily a biography of Jennifer Doudna, professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and co-recipient of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for her role in developing the CRISPR technology. Isaacson is one of the world’s most accomplished biographers, and he writes a clear, engaging, and informative study. Along the way, readers learn a lot of science, meet many of Doudna’s collaborators and competitors, witness battles over patents, prizes, and glory, and confront many of the pressing ethical issues. It is a good read.

Isaacson tries to keep an objective voice as he describes the exploits of Doudna and her frenemies in the international scientific community, and he largely succeeds. His book is not a hagiography, but he clearly admires Doudna. Accordingly, his moral judgments seem to track hers. Doudna is among the scientific elite who are fairly optimistic about the future and opposed to severe restrictions upon genetic-engineering research at the hands of governments or scientific ethics boards. Isaacson concurs: “I now see the promise of CRISPR more clearly than the peril. . . . All creatures large and small use whatever tricks they can to survive, and so should we” (480).

Françoise Baylis’s *Altered Inheritance* is a much slimmer volume which lacks the historical and biographical material. Baylis, a Canadian philosopher and bioethicist, provides some helpful description of the science behind gene editing but focuses primarily on the moral and public-policy issues it provokes. She aims to write an accessible book that will educate the public on this new technology and empower them to participate in coming debates about how to regulate it.

Like Isaacson, Baylis tries to maintain an objective voice. She regularly identifies the principle lines of ethical debates and describes both sides of the arguments. But her own inclinations seem to be consistently on the progressive left. She dreams of a world “where everyone matters,” without “unfair class divisions,” and with plenty of diversity, “solidarity,” and “social justice” (e.g., 8, 124, 220–21). These inclinations lead her, not necessarily predictably, to be warier of the future than Isaacson. She calls for a moratorium on germline editing (that is, edits that future generations will inherit),

something Doudna has resisted. Although she is open to it in the future, she professes to have “a number of worries about its possible use” (65).

Jamie Metzl’s *Hacking Darwin* is an eyebrow-raising volume in several respects. Metzl admires and promotes himself throughout the work. He lets us know that his first book was “important” (though largely unread) (xviii), and he frequently mentions prestigious events where he spoke, prestigious groups he belongs to, and prestigious people with whom he collaborates. He even includes an interview with himself as an appendix. Metzl is also a “futurist,” which explains why he makes many confident assertions about what coming decades hold. (Alas, they include no insight on the financial markets.) He foresees a future of virtually unstoppable advances in genetic engineering. Healthcare, human reproduction, sports, war, and many other things will be radically different from today’s versions.

If Baylis’s work has a somewhat pessimistic aura, Metzl is, as he writes, “a technology optimist to my core” (xix). Although he disagrees with libertarians and transhumanists who want genetic researchers and entrepreneurs to have an absolutely free rein, Metzl believes the genetic revolution will only gain momentum. He advocates the development of “smart international regulation” (267) and “a globally harmonized regulatory structure” (269) akin to the international regulation of nuclear weapons, which has not been perfect but has prevented mass destruction.

## **Theological and Ethical Reflections**

These books contain nearly one thousand total pages, and they raise a multitude of weighty issues. This review cannot be comprehensive, but this final section offers a few reflections on some important matters.

I first observe an interesting difference between the old theological liberalism that has challenged orthodox Christianity over the past two centuries and the ideology of the new genetic revolution. Theological liberalism is fundamentally Pelagian, rejecting the classical Christian belief that there is something deeply wrong with our human nature. Genetic revolutionists, in contrast, are motivated by the conviction that human nature is terribly flawed. They remind us of how many ways our bodies and minds fail us because of our genes and what misery this brings to so many. Reformed Christians might derive small satisfaction from this recognition that human woes are rooted in the deepest core of our being. Yet the old liberals and the genetic revolutionists are not so different in another important sense: both think that if we are persistent and careful enough, we can solve our own problems. Genetic revolutionists may think that our problem extends all the way to our genes, but human ingenuity has now found ways to edit them. It is a previously unimaginable form of neo-Pelagian self-salvation. Another similarity between the old liberalism and the genetic revolution also bears mention: both offer only an immanent, this-worldly hope. Metzl speaks of humans’ unquenchable desire for immortality (140)—also an unintentional confirmation of classical Christian belief—but the best prospect that even he sees is a considerably extended lifespan for future generations.

In short, genetic revolutionists tell us that our human problem is deeper than imagined, but now we understand not only how deep it is but also how to start fixing it—so that generations of people we will never meet will have healthier and longer lives with higher intelligence, better eyesight, and the like, provided that we do not create a dystopia

instead. It is not much consolation for miserable people here and now. Even the best-case scenario makes for a pitiful gospel.

Related to this is the whole issue of human *nature*. Metzl claims that the “genetics, biotechnology, and longevity revolutions will challenge our current conceptions of what it means to be human beings” (171). That much is surely correct. For Christianity, there is something truly at stake in the idea of human nature. For the genetic revolution, however, human nature exists in a sense, but it is merely the product of innumerable random mutations over millions of years. Human nature may be fascinating, but it is not special. And if human nature is indeed just a blip on the screen of cosmic chance, there is no principial reason not to try to make improvements to it. Evolutionary forces will change it eventually anyway, so why not take whatever control of it we can? For Christianity, in contrast, God made *humans* uniquely in his own image, God’s Son took on human nature and was resurrected with a glorified human body, and his people will be raised and glorified one day with the same human nature as Christ’s. Christianity promises a truly *human* salvation. It offers not an escape from human nature to something else a little better but a perfectly blessed eschatological human existence.

I mention these theological issues first because they put the ethical issues in perspective. As serious as many particular ethical issues are which the genetic revolution raises, the most important things for Christians to keep before them is that we cannot save ourselves and that our hope is certain, eschatological, and fully human. We, our children, and grandchildren will surely benefit from precision medicine and other benevolent products of the new genetic science, and we should have a degree of concern about its great potential for abuse, but Christians should not be *too* exercised about this uncertain future. At its best, it is a pale comparison to our glorious Christian hope. At its worst, it is one more chapter in the long human history of hubris and rebellion, which God will bring to judgment one day.

When it comes to the ethics, it is also worth noting how difficult, even impossible, it is for our three authors to develop coherent moral arguments. The problem is not just that they ignore Scripture. They also have no teleological anthropology. If humans are simply the product of random mutations over millions of years, then we have no proper functions, purpose, or destiny. And apart from these, there are no truly *moral* reasons to pursue noble goals in this world or treat each other in benevolent ways. This does not stop our authors from making many moral claims.

Baylis, for example, appeals to a number of (genuine) virtues that ought to guide bioethics (174) and to “values” such as “innovation, responsibility, and accountability” as well as the “common good” (184), but she provides no basis for such appeals.

Metzl’s ethical discussions are particularly difficult to make sense of. He wants us to act “wisely” (176) and to be “mindful” (177) as we head into our inevitable genetically-engineered future, but where such wisdom comes from or of what we are to be mindful remains unclear. He condemns “repulsive” and “pernicious social biases” which tempt us to use gene-editing powers to ensure that our children are not dark-skinned or gay (188–90). Yet given his view of humanity, it is difficult to see why choosing light-skinned, straight children is any worse than choosing taller, faster, or smarter children, which he thinks will be fine when we can do so safely and equitably. In fact, if Metzl really wanted to be bold and consistent, he should probably argue for the abolition of ethics altogether. After delighting in the deconstruction of God, the sacred, cosmic purpose, and much else, Metzl’s dabbling in moral argumentation feels like an unprincipled attempt to stave off

the worst implications of his larger philosophy—whether for his own psychological well-being or to appease his audience is not clear.

It is difficult to know how hard to push these points. Christians should remain thankful that God, through his natural law and common grace, continues to reveal his moral will and preserve the testimony of conscience among all human beings. Our authors express concern about the unanticipated harm that gene-editing might do to its recipients, about exacerbation of social inequality as the rich avail themselves of technology that the poor cannot afford, and about increasing lack of human diversity as the multitudes select all the same attractive features for their offspring. They wrestle with whether certain distinctions are morally relevant, such as that between *somatic* gene editing and *germline* editing (only the latter is inheritable) or that between *treatment/therapy* and *enhancement*. They agonize about the proper power distribution between private parties (i.e., the market) and governments. These are serious issues, and their resolution promises to have profound implications for our societies and cultures in years to come.

Christians too will have to think prudently about them, both for making their own godly decisions about participating in the genetic revolution and for engaging their unbelieving neighbors in intelligible ways. Christians also need to be cognizant of some other moral issues that are perhaps even more important than the above. One is the purpose of sex, in light of the fact that in-vitro fertilization followed by embryo selection (and embryo genetic manipulation) promises to be increasingly common in coming decades. More precisely, Christians need to consider carefully the (multiple) purposes of sex and the interrelation of these purposes.

Another issue is the mass and wanton destruction of human embryos in the development and practice of the genetic revolution, especially when it comes to reproduction. Baylis notes that “there are the thousands (if not tens of thousands) of embryos that will have been destroyed in developing the genome editing technology” (32). And Metzl refers to IVF and embryo selection as “the gateway procedures for heritable human genetic engineering.” These, of course, “nearly always entail the destruction or at least permanent freezing of unimplanted embryos” (215). Mass murder is accompanying and enabling the genetic revolution. While our authors occasionally note that some (religious) people are concerned about this, they themselves think little of it. I must admit that, although I learned many things from these books, their nonchalance about this moral travesty leaves a bitter aftertaste.

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# ServantReading

## The Old Testament Use of the Old Testament

### A Review Article

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By Andrew J. Miller

*Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide*, by Gary Edward Schnittjer. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021, 1,104 pages, \$74.99.

“Scriptural exegesis of Scripture is an engine of progressive revelation”—these words begin Gary Schnittjer’s tome *Old Testament Use of Old Testament*. The Bible is its own best interpreter (WCF 1.9) and biblical authors after Moses advanced revelation by exegesis, building upon the foundation of prior revelation. The chosen men inspired by the Holy Spirit took previous biblical truths and expanded upon them. Schnittjer’s aim is to show us precisely what they did and where they did it.

By speaking of progressive revelation, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* places itself in the popular field of biblical theology.<sup>1</sup> As J. V. Fesko explains, “biblical theology has been a part of the church’s interpretive history from the earliest years, not simply in the patristic period, but stretching back into the very formation of the Old Testament (OT) canon, evidenced in its own intra-canonical interpretation.”<sup>2</sup> Schnittjer’s work offers something new, however: *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* proceeds book by book from Genesis to Malachi (or, more accurately, from Genesis to Chronicles, as Schnittjer follows the Hebrew ordering of the books).

In this, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* surprised me. Given the title of the book, I expected it to be like Beale and Carson’s essential work *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). I gleefully anticipated an unfolding of each quotation, allusion, and echo, given that “Scripture is characterized by a rich intertextuality. On almost every page, the Bible either quotes or alludes to other biblical passages.”<sup>3</sup> However, Schnittjer’s book, though over one thousand pages, has a far narrower aim. Schnittjer limits his study to places where an Old Testament book exegetes and develops another OT passage. Jeremiah 17, for example, develops sabbath compliance by pointing out a particular application of the sabbath to a situation that was previously implicit and unspecified (275). Likewise, at the beginning of the chapter on Isaiah, Schnittjer helpfully describes how Isaiah 1:2 and 1:10 draw on

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<sup>1</sup> Schnittjer studied at Dallas Seminary but has clearly drunk from the wells of the Reformed tradition, citing Vos in his first non-scriptural footnote (xviii and xlii).

<sup>2</sup> J. V. Fesko, “On the Antiquity of Biblical Theology” in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in the Service of the Church, Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.*, eds. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 445.

<sup>3</sup> Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 124.

Deuteronomy 32:1 but does not explain what it means that Isaiah 1:10 refers to God's own people as "Sodom and Gomorrah" (221). Schnittjer does acknowledge that many "non-exegetical" allusions exist, but his declining to interact with them will surely disappoint many readers.

Purchasers should be aware, therefore, that *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* is not a companion volume to *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Nevertheless, Schnittjer's book does not have some of the weaknesses of Beale and Carson's, for here the same author with the same standards of allusion evaluates each book, whereas *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* features numerous authors.

"While anyone is welcome to read this book," Schnittjer explains in his introduction, "it is designed as a reference study for students and ministers of the word" (xliv). Before delving into the biblical books, Schnittjer helpfully introduces readers to his project and various contemporary theories about intertextuality. Similarly, the large glossary in the back of the book contains helpful definitions of key interpretive terms, including "Seidel's theory," where an author draws attention to a quotation by reversing its ordering, as when Jonah 4:2 inverts Exodus 34:6, "a gracious and compassionate God" rather than "a compassionate and gracious God" (899).

Each chapter of *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* begins with an explanation of the symbols used to summarize exegetical innovations, followed by a list of uses of prior revelation in that biblical book. Schnittjer provides a valuable "Hermeneutical Profile" at the outset of each chapter that interprets some of the data he will provide. Finally, each chapter ends with a "Filters" section where the author mentions numerous other echoes and allusions that he deems "non-exegetical" and therefore does not cover.

Because some OT books are shorter than others, some chapters are correspondingly brief. Genesis, as the beginning of biblical revelation, provides one of the shortest chapters. The chapter on Numbers was one of my favorites, as Schnittjer explains how God advanced revelation through authorized interpreters to facilitate his ongoing covenantal relationship with the people (58–59). That chapter has numerous insightful points, such as that Numbers 24:9 blends the Abrahamic promise with the blessing of Judah, hinting at the future intertwining of Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (68).

Furthermore, Schnittjer's research prompts thought about the nature of progressive revelation and biblical law. He writes,

Views of scriptural legal instruction that do not allow for the dynamics of revelatory advancement misconstrue the nature and function of biblical law. Divinely revealed law should not be treated as inert fossilized data. . . . law serves covenantal relationship, not the other way around. (71)

Thankfully, nowhere in the book does one get the sense that progressive revelation is at odds with God's immutability (see 899).

One critical challenge in evaluating scriptural exegesis of Scripture is determining dating and dependence. Typically, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* gives some suggestion as to which text came first and which text "received" and exegeted a prior "donor" passage. Dating Chronicles "after the production of the majority of biblical writings," means, for example, that "Chronicles will be regarded as the receptor context

in cases of scriptural allusion . . .” (695) This also reveals the potential value of Schnittjer’s work in making exegetes really think through the old “chicken or the egg” problem; I was challenged to think, for example, about the assertion that Job 19 uses Lamentations, and therefore, “Lamentations is the donor and Job the receptor context,” with the implication that Job was written after 586 B.C. (557–58). Scholars considering the dates of biblical books will especially be helped by *Old Testament Use of the Old Testament*.

These and many other positive attributes aside, I do have reservations about this expensive work. Most importantly, Schnittjer’s distinction of exegetical advancement from other forms of intertextuality like echo and allusion limits the usefulness of the book. Exegetes should not expect *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* to be a one stop shop for understanding how a text fits into its Old Testament context. Because the book focuses on lexical and linguistic links, many significant connotations will slip through the cracks, such as Amos 5’s references back to Bethel and Gilgal and God’s mighty presence and grace experienced there. Amos builds on Israel’s history at those places, but readers of *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* would not know it.

Therefore, I wonder if pastors and students are really the best audience for this book. For students, there are other Old Testament introductions that cover each book in survey form, and preachers may be better served with a detailed commentary. Likewise, the book’s many symbols and data make it difficult to navigate and use. References to “the Deuteronomist” (e.g., 204–5) will likely make some readers uncomfortable, and the lack of explanation about such matters suggests a more academic audience.

Furthermore, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* features a rating system that evaluates the likelihood of scriptural intertextuality (including A, “likely”; B, “probable interpretive allusion”; or C, “possible”). An “A” rating is only achieved by three shared Hebrew nouns or verbs. While three shared Hebrew roots is an objective standard, the author believes that seeing allusions is subjective: “Detecting allusions creates tension between art and science. . . . Decisions on more or less probability of allusion are necessarily subjective because of the literary artistry of the Hebrew Scriptures” (xxi, xxviii). Schnittjer would likely be more cautious than many of us in seeing intertextual links, and his method struck me as a strange mix of wanting certainty but also denying that it can be achieved.

These criticisms should not overshadow the evident hard work put into *Old Testament Use of the Old Testament*. It takes a love for the Word of God to prepare such an extensive book. Furthermore, Schnittjer has created something unique and thoughtful, a reminder that biblical authors faithfully tweaked, developed, and applied past revelation to new situations. As our Westminster Confession states, the way that the many books of the Word of God fit together (“the consent of all the parts”) is one of the “many . . . incomparable excellencies” that testifies to its divine authority (WCF 1.5). This work highlights that harmony and should make us appreciate how God, the ultimate author and shaper of the canon, artfully exegeted past Scripture and events, revealing more and more over time. Add this helpful reference work to your church library.

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# ServantReading

## The Cottage by the Bridge *by Ivars Fridenvalds*

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by Frank J. Smith

*The Cottage by the Bridge: One Latvian Family's Escape to America during WW II*, by Ivars Fridenvalds. Kindle Direct Publishing, 2021, x + 102 pages, \$5.00.

Human pathos set on the stage of World War II. Tyrannical cruelty. Displaced persons. Escape to neutral Sweden. Adventure on the high seas. Cold War intrigue. An unlikely accident. Love of liberty. Challenges of immigration. Patriotism—for both one's native nation and adopted country. Family ties and relations. Romance. A hard-work ethic. Conversion stories. What more do you want in a novel?

But, of course, this is not fiction—it is all true.

This story is a deeply personal account painted in moving colors. It was written by a humble man—a wonderful man whom I was privileged to know for three decades, having been his pastor for five years. This autobiography is set against the backdrop of world history, in which the lives of various individuals were divinely woven together into the fabric of global machinations. And overarching the tapestry was a Providence that was producing eternal blessings.

Ivars Fridenvalds (1935–2021) was born in Latvia, a small country often linked with two other Baltic states—Estonia and Lithuania—all three of which were (illegally) annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. Like the Poles, Finns, Estonians, and Lithuanians, the Latvians were caught up in the winds of war. Ivars's childhood was marked by memories of unwelcome troops and airmen wreaking harm and devastation. The Nazis utilized emaciated Jews in tattered clothing as slave labor. The Communists deported 35,000 Latvians to Siberia. And at the age of seven Ivars witnessed his mother's horror and pain when an aerial bomb caused her wounded leg to be amputated.

The opening scenes take place in and around the seaside town of Mersrags. What should have been an idyllic setting transformed in 1940 into a theatre of threats and torture, suffused with Communist propaganda seeking to brainwash a subjugated people. In 1944, the Fridenvalds were able to flee to neutral Sweden, though their safety was not guaranteed there, as the Russian overlords wanted all Latvian refugees returned. The specter of deportation was mingled with experiences of delousing and diphtheria. In 1950, the family joined others in a trans-oceanic journey aboard the *Masen*, an old Canadian minesweeper. A southerly route was chosen so as to avoid Russian submarines prowling the North Atlantic. On August 28, 1950, in a dense fog in the Georges Banks off the New England coast, a large fishing trawler collided with the emigrants' vessel. The crash resulted in the U.S. Coast Guard escorting the boat into Boston harbor. Eventually, the Fridenvalds family was taken to Ellis Island, “known as both the ‘island of tears’ and the ‘island of hope,’ and so it was. Many human tragedies were played out

on this island, for here many dreams were fulfilled, but also many dreams were dashed” (55).

In 1954, the dream almost turned to tears, as there was a real threat that the entire family would be forced to return to Sweden. However, many friends and interested parties got involved in the Fridenvalds’s plight, and a private bill was introduced in Congress to resolve the matter. (So, it literally took an act of Congress!)

Ivars gratefully accepted the duties of being an American. In 1958, having been drafted, he was inducted into the U.S. Army and served in Germany. Within a couple of years, he had returned to New Rochelle, New York, and transitioned to civilian life, taking up again his occupation of being a painter. On May 12, 1962, he married the love of his life Grace. A daughter and two sons soon followed.

But there was one more major factor, and that was the spiritual. In 1975, on a Sunday morning, he happened to hear hymn singing coming through an open window at a YMCA building in New Rochelle. He stopped and finally decided to find the room where the small congregation was meeting. That mission work was under the auspices of Franklin Square Orthodox Presbyterian Church on Long Island. The pastor was Malcolm Wright, who that day preached from Romans 12:1–2. Soon Ivars came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, came to faith in Christ, and became a member of the church. A few years later, his wife Grace, who was raised Italian Catholic, joined him in his profession. In 1985, during the time that Greg Reynolds was the pastor, Ivars was ordained as a deacon. Eight years later he and Grace became members of Affirmation Presbyterian Church (PCA), Somers, New York, and shortly thereafter he was ordained as an elder, a post he held until his death on December 15, 2021—about a month after the publication of this book. He was 86 years young.

Ivars could wax poetic. In a poem about his sister who remained in Sweden, entitled “A Candle Burning,” he wrote:

Why did you stay behind?  
We loved you.  
The years passed into eternity.  
They never saw you again.  
I saw you, but there was a gulf, a distance separating us.  
Time had removed our closeness  
which we enjoyed in our youth.  
Our leaving was a tragedy.  
It was all a tragedy that happened to us.  
Even the way your life ended.  
You were alone with a candle burning.

He could also be very reflective philosophically and theologically. In searching “for answers to [the] human tragedy” of how the Jews were treated by the Nazis, he noted that over the years he had come to understand the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity. Nevertheless, towards the end of his life he declared:

I am still searching for answers. I have reached back into the nineteenth century and read philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche, George Hegel and Karl Marx. I saw the

influence these thinkers had on the despots who would commit such crimes on fellow human beings. That one can take another man's most precious possession, his wife and his children, away from him and totally destroy them. This happens when man believes that he is God. (9)

And he could express his highest priorities:

Now, as I come closer to the end of my own life, I have reflected on my life's journey and reconsidered all that has transpired. It has been a fascinating personal journey from Latvia to America. Yet, I am most thankful for my spiritual journey and how God opened my eyes to the truths of the Gospel. My deepest prayer is that many whom I know and love will come to know these truths for themselves. (102)

Faithful. Kind. Humble. Godly. Wise. Steadfast. Loyal. Supportive. These are among the qualities I recounted when I wrote a eulogy for Elder Fridenvalds. After leaving my pastorate in New York in 1998, I would keep in touch with him from time to time. Every conversation I had with him reflected his spirit—cheerful, upbeat, encouraging. I shall miss the opportunity to pick up the phone and speak with him. However, I am grateful for this autobiography and commend it to others. For he being dead, yet speaketh.

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# ServantPoetry

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Gregory E. Huteson (1964–)

## Marred Desires

If less of mud than minerals and marl,  
Still it's true mankind was formed by God  
Of uncursed soil and neatly contoured rib.  
The disparate elements a gracious sign  
Of Deity not yet obscured by dusk.  
And there was evening, as the Good Book says.

But then there was the stark and brooding dawn.  
We are there yet, in that unsubtle place,  
Toe-teetered on the line between the light  
And viscous dark, although some still believe  
We're in the third day with its muddied earth  
And spotted fruit with its ambiguous seeds.

Averse to leave the saturated dirt  
Or set aside the slush of lust and pride,  
We daub our cheeks and nails with particles  
Of pliant clay to augment and impress,  
Our speckled features thicker and more coarse  
Than when first shaped and fired by nimble God.

Then, sweating in the piercing sun we weigh  
Our large and unassuaged desires and thirsts.  
At last to quench them, climb the outlawed tree  
To take and eat the surely pleasing fruit.  
Much later, breathless from this exercise,  
We'll scrape our skin with broken shards, ashamed.

**Gregory E. Huteson** is a ruling elder in Dallas Texas. He works with Overseas Missionary Fellowship International in Taichung, Taiwan.