

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH-BRIDE:

*Meredith G. Kline's
Biblical-Theological Reading of
the Book of Revelation*

By
Danny E. Olinger



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Reformed Forum
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CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	1
<i>Preface</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	7
PART ONE: MEREDITH G. KLINE'S WRITINGS ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION	17
1 A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John	19
Outline of Revelation	20
Letters to the Seven Churches	21
Apostate Church, the World, and Satan	24
Recapitulation Defended	25
Seven Seals, Revelation 4:1–8:1	26
Seven Trumpets, Revelation 8:2–11:19	26
Deeper Conflict, Revelation 12:1–14:20	27
Seven Bowls, Revelation 15:1–16:21	27
Final Judgment, Revelation 17:1–21:8	27
Christ and His Church-Bride	28
Long Period, Short Period, Final Judgment Sequence	29
Jesus Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King	30
Historical Manifestation and Ministry of the Son of God	31
2 Premillennial Dispensationalism Critiqued and Amillennialism Defended: “The Covenant of the Seventieth Week,” “The First Resurrection,” and “The First Resurrection: A Reaffirmation”	33
“The Covenant of the Seventieth Week”	35
Covenant Lawsuit	36
The Covenant in Daniel 9:27	37
“The First Resurrection”	38
The Meaning of <i>Prōtos</i>	39
The Meaning of “The First Resurrection”	41
The Thousand Years and Millennial Views	43
Appreciation	44
“The First Resurrection: A Response”	44
“The First Resurrection: A Reaffirmation”	46

Revelation 20:4–6 and Premillennialism	48
Kant and Van Til	49
Revelation 20 and 21	51
Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, and Common Grace	52
3 Images of the Spirit	55
Theological Story in the Book of Revelation	55
A Priestly Model of the Image of God	58
A Prophetic Model of the Image of God	60
Messianic Re-creation in the Image of God	60
The Spirit-Presence and His Parousia-Day	62
The Spirit-Raised Standard	63
4 “Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1–27:1”	65
Vindication of the Martyrs	66
Subjection of the World-City	67
Invitation to the Martyrs	68
5 The Structure in the Book of Revelation Revisited	69
G. K. Beale	70
Sunday School	71
Unveiling of Heaven	73
Covenant Sanctions	74
Preludes, Visions, Interludes	75
Revelation 12 and Genesis 3	76
6 “Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium”	79
Har Magedon, The Mount of Assembly	80
Hebraisti	81
Eden and Har Magedon	81
Premillennialism	82
Preterism and Postmillennialism	83
Amillennialism	84
7 Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions	87
First Night Vision: Zechariah 1:7–17	87
Rider of the Red Horse	88

The Deep	88
The Myrtles	89
Eschatological Delay	89
Second Night Vision: Zechariah 1:18–21	90
Third Night Vision: Zechariah 2:1–13	91
Conversion of the Gentiles	92
Validation of the Messianic Commission	92
Fourth Night Vision: Zechariah 3:1–10	93
Trampling the Serpent	94
The Re-Investiture of Joshua	95
Seven Eyes	95
Fifth Night Vision: Zechariah 4:1–14	96
The Spirit of Power for the Menorah Mission	97
Sixth Night Vision: Zechariah 5:1–11	98
Mystery: The True Israel	98
Mystery: The Harlot Babylon	99
Seventh Night Vision: Zechariah 6:1–8	102
8 God, Heaven and Har Magedon	105
God and Heaven	107
Heaven and Har Magedon	110
Har Magedon Warfare	111
Ararat: Old World Type of Har Magedon	111
Prophetic Victory Hymn	113
Jesus and the Defense of Har Magedon	113
The Three-and-a-Half-Year Symbol	115
The Millennium Symbol	116
Satan and Antichrist	117
Eschatological Day of the Lord	118
Har Magedon Gatherings	118
Consummation of the Har Magedon Kingdom	119
PART TWO: MEREDITH G. KLINE’S SELECT SERMONS	
ON REVELATION AND DANIEL	121
Introduction	123
“Christ in the Midst of His Churches” (Revelation 1–3)	125

“Christ in Revelation” (Revelation 1, 5, and 12)	131
Revelation 12:1–5 and 7–10	132
Revelation 5:1–8	134
Revelation 1	134
“Alive for Evermore” (Revelation 1:17–18)	137
“Christ’s Call to Communion” (Revelation 3:20)	145
“The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” (Revelation 6)	151
First Horseman: Revelation 6:1–2	153
Second Horseman: Revelation 6:4	153
Third Horseman: Revelation 6:5–6	154
Fourth Horseman: Revelation 6:8	155
Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse	155
The Fifth Seal	156
The Sixth Seal	158
Revelation 8:1	159
“Prayers of the Saints and Trumpets of God” (Revelation 8–9)	161
Prayers of the Saints: Revelation 8:2–5	161
The Seven Trumpets	164
Open Temple and Ark of the Covenant	168
“The Testimony of Jesus—Tried and Triumphant” (Revelation 11)	169
Testimony: Revelation 11:3–6	170
Trial: Revelation 11:7–10	172
Triumph: Revelation 11:11–13	174
“A Sign in Heaven” (Revelation 12:1–5)	179
“Christ and the Arch-Enemy” (Revelation 12 and 20)	187
“Christ Caught Up—Satan Cast Down” (Revelation 12)	195
The Decisive Conflict	198
The Daily Conflict	201
“Totalitarianism Versus Christ” (Revelation 13)	203
Satanic In Origin	205
Antichrist in Character	207
Future of the Conflict	210

“Send Forth thy Sickle” (Revelation 14:14–20)	211
The Harvest of the Earth: Revelation 14:14–16	213
Addressed to Christ	214
The Vintage of the Earth	216
Salvation and Judgment Synchronized:	
Revelation 14:17–20	217
Symbol of Hell	218
“Thrust in Thy Sickle” (Revelation 14:14–20)	221
Matthew 25:31–34, 41 And 46	222
Revelation 14:14–16	222
Grapes of Wrath	224
Time of Judgment	225
“The Christian Church—Apostate and True” (Revelation 17)	229
“Satan Bound—and Loosed, or a Thousand Years and a Little Season” (Revelation 20)	235
Satan Bound: Revelation 20:1–3	235
The Martyrs Enthroned: Revelation 20:4–6	239
Satan Loosed and Doomed: Revelation 20:7–10	240
“The Kingdom That Shall Stand Forever” (Daniel 2:44)	243
Its Historical Appearance	244
Its Supernatural Dynamic	246
Its Eternal Sovereignty	248
“Seventy Weeks Are Decreed” (Daniel 9:24)	251
Priest	252
Prophet	254
King	255
“Jerusalem and Jesus” (Daniel 9:25–27)	259
Jerusalem’s Preparation for Christ	260
Jerusalem’s Rejection of Christ	261
PART THREE: A MEREDITH G. KLINE COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION	267
Introduction	269

Abbreviations	273
Revelation 1:1–20, Introduction	275
Revelation 2:1–3:22, Church in the World	285
Revelation 4:1–8:1, Judgments of Seven-Sealed Book on World	295
Revelation 8:2–11:19, Judgments of Seven Trumpets on World and Great City	313
Revelation 12:1–14:20, War of the Ages	333
Revelation 15:1–19:10, Judgments of Seven Vials on World and Great City	353
Revelation 19:11–21:8, Final Judgments on the World	375
Revelation 21:9–22:5, Church Perfect in Glory	397
Revelation 22:6–21, Conclusion	409
PART FOUR: A MEREDITH G. KLINE ANTHOLOGY: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS RELATED TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED	413
<i>A Meredith G. Kline Select Bibliography</i>	477
<i>Appendix: A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John, Parts 1–4</i>	481
<i>Name and Subject Index</i>	533
<i>Scripture Index</i>	537

FOREWORD

WHEREVER HE TAUGHT in his long and distinguished career, a staple in Meredith Kline's instruction was an introductory class that went by various names. At Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, it was called "Old Testament Biblical Theology." The same class went by "Old Testament Hermeneutics" at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and "Pentateuch" at Westminster Seminary in California. Typically, Kline alerted students on the first day that they should not expect to get past Genesis 11 and maybe even not much further than chapters 1–3. But students would quickly learn that Kline used Genesis as a window through which he would encompass the entire Old and New Testaments in a breathtaking presentation of redemptive history. Far from lingering in the first book of the Bible, his design was to point students to the last book of the Bible.

This was true also of Kline's published writings. Peter Lee, my colleague at Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, does not exaggerate when he observes about his former professor that "everything Kline writes ends in Revelation." Indeed, Kline wasted no time in *Kingdom Prologue* (1986), his *magnum opus*, in getting there. He writes that the opening pages of the Bible reveal God as the Alpha-Creator and the Omega-Consummator:

The Sabbath marks the completion of God's work of creation. As a celebration of the finishing of the world-temple, the Sabbath proclaims the name of the Creator to be Consummator. To be the builder who arrives at the seventh day of completion, to be the Sabbath attaining Creator, is to bear the name "the Last" along with the name "the First." (p. 33)

Kline himself explained, in his preface to his *Images of the Spirit* (1980, p. 11), why chapters of that book focused so often on Revelation: "My constant returning to the Apocalypse is just a natural by-product of a love for this fascinating capstone of biblical revelation that goes back to my student days." Those student days (1944–1947), where he earned his BD and ThM degrees, involved study under New Testament scholar Ned B. Stonehouse at Westminster Theological Seminary, and the influence of Stonehouse on Kline cannot be overstated. Although Kline planned to enroll at Dallas Theological Seminary before a change of mind on the eve of his graduation from Gordon

College, he embraced an amillennial interpretation of prophecy midway through his first semester at Westminster.¹ Sixteen months later, as Danny Olinger notes, Kline wrote a brilliant student paper, “A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John,” for Dr. Stonehouse as a mere twenty-three-year-old.

There were other influences at Westminster of course, especially Paul Woolley and Cornelius Van Til. But his greatest tutor was one man he never met—Geerhardus Vos, whom Kline called the “pioneer of the biblical theology way.”² Kline pursued fully the eschatological dimension of Vos’s work with penetrating insights. This drove him to Revelation with increasing attention in his publications. In his last book, *God, Heaven and Har-Magedon*, the citations to Revelation outnumber those from any other biblical book.

Still, folks might be left wondering what an Old Testament scholar can teach us about the book of Revelation. And there might be even greater skepticism about Kline as a helpful guide because, as some have quipped, much of his work needs translation into English!

Here is where Danny Olinger has served us so well. Beginning with Kline’s ThM study, Olinger summarizes Kline’s teaching on Revelation from several published works as well as eighteen sermons. Then he constructs a commentary on the book of Revelation from excerpts from Kline’s own pen, representing six decades of exegetical and theological reflection. Reformed students now have another reliable guide to a very challenging book. This will not replace the work of G. K. Beale, Dennis Johnson, or Vern Poythress, but it will complement those scholars in offering another tool for a book that is beset with so much reckless interpretation.³

Further, by surveying a wide range of Kline’s writings, including articles, book reviews, and sermons, this is a resource for more fully assessing the work of Kline himself. Here readers will find evidence that Kline’s exegetical skills extended from the Old Testament into the New Testament. And they will come to agree with Dr. Lee: “We don’t get Meredith Kline until we get to Revelation.”

John Muether

¹ In the date-book diary that he faithfully maintained, the pithy entry for 10/15/1944 read “Adopted amil view; had studied Revelation 9/21–26.”

² After he retired from Princeton Seminary in 1932, Vos moved to southern California and later to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he died in 1949.

³ G. K. Chesterton described this best: “Though St. John saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.”

PREFACE

IN THE SPRING OF 2020, I determined to read Meredith G. Kline’s “A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John.” The typographical errors in the paper, however, were so numerous that any attempt to read it straight through was mentally exhausting. But, since I had time—the COVID-19 lockdown period—I read it slowly (and repeatedly) and soon Kline’s biblical-theological genius started to show. His focus on Jesus Christ and his church, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and transformed by the Spirit from imperfect in the earth to perfect in heaven, opened my eyes wider to the message of the Apocalypse.

From that beginning, I became curious about how much Kline’s understanding of Revelation influenced his overall literary corpus. The more I read Kline’s books and articles, the more I became convinced that it undergirded much of his writing. He would move—sometimes in brief paragraphs and other times in entire chapters—from the opening of Genesis to the Apocalypse all the while pointing to Christ as fulfilling the covenantal promises of God. But what pushed me forward in particular was re-reading Kline’s *Images of the Spirit*—which deserves a place alongside of Geerhardus Vos’s *Pauline Eschatology* and *Biblical Theology*, Herman Ridderbos’s *Paul*, and Richard B. Gaffin Jr.’s *Resurrection and Redemption* as one of the foundational Reformed biblical-theological works of the twentieth century—with an eye towards his interpretation of the Apocalypse. Kline’s contention, that the book of Revelation reveals that the Lord is recreating the church in his own image unto the end of fellowship with him forever in the heavenly Jerusalem above provided a touchstone for me in drawing the material together. It was also the basis of the eventual name of the book before you, *Christ and His Church-Bride*.

Taking notes on what I read, I first developed a Kline anthology on Revelation, much like I had done with the writings of Geerhardus Vos.¹ Then, I started writing a series of articles published in *Ordained Servant* about Kline’s engagement with Revelation in his articles and books.

¹ Geerhardus Vos, *A Geerhardus Vos Anthology: Biblical and Theological Insights Alphabetically Arranged*, ed. Danny E. Olinger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005).

It was during this time that I contacted Meredith M. Kline about whether his father had preached on the book of Revelation. Meredith responded that his father had saved all his sermons and that he would be happy to share them with me. Little did I know that would lead to the incredibly kind gesture on Meredith's part to transcribe and to send to me a great number of the sermons. Then, to my further delight, Meredith, Sterling, and Calvin donated their father's archives to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

In Meredith G. Kline's papers was a treasure trove of materials on Revelation. Being able to read his additional sermons on Revelation and Daniel, numerous Sunday school lessons, camp talks, and lecture notes related to the Apocalypse gave me greater insight into Kline's thinking. This led me to revise substantially, in some cases dramatically, the series of articles ("The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation") that appeared in *Ordained Servant*, which are included here in greatly amended form.

My deep appreciation in the writing of the book extends to four close friends and Kline experts (as least in my eyes)—Lane Tipton, John Muether, Gregory Reynolds, and Camden Bucey. I am thankful for Lane's expertise in answering all my Kline-related questions. After working through the Kline material myself, I was amazed how thoroughly and accurately Lane had grasped the deepest insights of Kline's biblical-theological exegesis. I am grateful for John's passion to get Kline right historically and for his being a sounding board in regard to events that were happening in Kline's life. I am appreciative for Greg's generosity in sharing Kline material from the Granite State School of Theology and in allowing me to publish my original findings in *Ordained Servant*. And, for Camden, his belief that this project had value and his graciousness in giving me the opportunity to speak on Kline at the 2022 Reformed Forum Theology Conference were tremendous encouragements.

Dick Gaffin and Greg Beale were exceedingly kind in answering my questions regarding their awareness of Kline's "A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John," what it meant to their understanding of Revelation, and their engagement with Kline at Westminster and Gordon-Conwell. Many thanks to Peg Grimm of Reformed Forum for her graciousness and professional skill in helping to get my manuscript into shape for publication. My gratitude also extends to my daughter, Kristin, and son, David, for their help in checking the accuracy of the quotations in the commentary section.

The person, however, who helped me every step in the process was my wife, Diane. Nothing I write fails to pass through her expert editorial care. Consequently, I felt for her on this project in that I sought in writing to retain as much of Kline's voice as possible, which often meant inconsistency ruled. What Kline himself said about his use of Bible translations in the preface to *Glory in Our Midst*—"Quotations from the Bible, unless AV or otherwise noted, are my own, whether eclectic blendings or more distinctly independent renderings"—could easily be applied to his eclectic blendings and distinctly independent renderings of capitalization and grammar. She read and reread the numerous revisions that I put on her desk, trying to be true to Kline's style while still communicating in a straightforward manner. Theologically, her understanding of the Scriptures and all things Reformed, challenges me at the right places and keeps me properly grounded. I wish I had the words to say how much I love her and appreciate her help in everything I do. This book is dedicated to her.

INTRODUCTION

IN THE FALL OF 1945, during his middle year at Westminster Theological Seminary, Meredith G. Kline took Ned B. Stonehouse's class on the book of Revelation. Stonehouse's lectures were completed in December, and Kline sat for his final examination on January 10, 1946. For the next three months, under Stonehouse's supervision, Kline began work on his "student paper," the equivalent at that time in Westminster's history of a ThM thesis. The topic he chose to write on was the structure of the book of Revelation. So extensive was the research that Kline wrote Stonehouse to ask if four hours could be granted upon completion instead of the two hours in the original registration. Said Kline, "I discovered that to form any definite decisions at all on this subject required much more time than was anticipated. I put in over 150 hours of research on this subject."¹ On April 12, 1946, Kline turned in the paper, "A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John."

For many Reformed theologians in subsequent decades who became aware of the paper, it held an exalted position. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. testified that Kline's paper "more than anything else determined how I look at Revelation as a whole."² Gregory Beale, author of the *New International Greek Testament Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, commented that Kline's "Th.M. thesis on the outline of the book, of course, was the best I had seen,

¹ Undated note from Meredith G. Kline to Ned B. Stonehouse in the Meredith G. Kline Collection in Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

² Email to author, April 29, 2021. Gaffin's praise of Kline's work on Revelation can also be seen in his writing Kline after Gaffin first read the paper in early September 1973. Gaffin wrote, "A week or so ago I sat down to read through your paper on the structure of Revelation. Last spring several students made me aware of its existence and I made a copy for myself but was not able to get to it immediately. I want you to know that I ended up spending an entire day on it in what turned out to be the most stimulating and worthwhile study of the entire summer. Great! I will admit that Revelation is not the corner of the N.T. in which I feel most at home, but I know enough to recognize an unusually clear and incisive treatment of a difficult question. Really, I think it's just outstanding and you can see that my enthusiasm continues unabated! I suppose that I am wondering why you have never published it and [am] challenging you to consider doing so. Until you do so I will have to plagiarize it unreservedly." Richard B. Gaffin Jr. to Meredith G. Kline, September 13, 1973. In his letter to Kline on January 2, 1976, Gaffin added, "I would still like to see you do something with your original work on the structure of Revel. (I still cultivate it among a number of students each year with universal appreciation)." Meredith G. Kline Collection in Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

so I incorporated that into my commentary.”³ Vern Poythress, author of *The Returning King: A Guide to the Book of Revelation*, sent Kline copies of outlines that Poythress had developed on the grammatical and thematic structure of Revelation. He told Kline, “I thought that you would like to see this. The outlines owe a lot to you.”⁴

The work, which Kline himself referred to in his 1994 article “Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium” as an “unpublished paper,”⁵ for years could only be found in Westminster’s Montgomery Library.⁶ In addition to the notation at the top of the document, “class notes - - - unpublished material - - - class notes,” the Montgomery Library manuscript has multiple typos (“alreeady,” “breif”), different capitalizations (“false-prophet,” “False-Prophet”), different spellings (“AntiChrist,” “Antichrist,” “Anti-Christ”), and several open-ended brackets. This copy of the paper located in the Montgomery Library was the one that Gaffin recommended so highly from the mid-1970s forward.

In the 1980s, while teaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Kline handed out a freshly typed copy of the paper. Many of the typos were fixed, but there are tip-offs that the Montgomery Library copy had been used. These clues are the reoccurrence of such errors as “exegets” and “unwieldly” in the paper, and particularly, the repeated typing (as in the Montgomery Library copy) in consecutive lines of the words “in insisting on the symbolizing of the number of heads and horns.”

In 2021, Meredith M. Kline discovered the original manuscript that his father turned in to Stonehouse. The reasons for this conclusion are threefold. First, the manuscript was discovered in an envelope that also contained Kline’s notes from the Stonehouse course. Second, the manuscript was handwritten in cursive—Kline having never learned to type⁷—and matches other manuscripts that Kline turned in to his professors. Third, Kline’s personal copy of

³ Email to author, April 21, 2021.

⁴ Vern Poythress to Meredith G. Kline, November 30, 1977. Meredith G. Kline Collection in Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

⁵ See Meredith G. Kline, “Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1994): 497.

⁶ Kline’s “A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John” was first listed as a holding in Westminster’s library in 1960 when he served as a member of the faculty. Poythress’s awareness of Kline’s paper is seen in the fact that the 1971 copy that is currently in the holdings in the Montgomery Library has Poythress’s name stamped on the top.

⁷ This is according to Meredith M. Kline. Email to author, April 20, 2021.

the typed manuscript found in the Montgomery Library contains the following handwritten margin notes: “line missing by haplography” on page 8, “3 lines skipped by haplography” on page 17, “1/2 line missing by haplography” on page 26, and “one line skipped by haplography” on page 28. The handwritten manuscript is the only manuscript that contains the missing lines.⁸

Moving beyond the mystery of what Kline turned in on April 12, 1946, a deeper examination confirms why such esteemed Reformed theologians as Gaffin, Beale, and Poythress hold the paper in such high regard. In it, Kline proposed an advancement upon William Hendriksen’s recapitulationist outline of Revelation, as seen in his book *More Than Conquerors*.⁹ Although Kline agreed with Hendriksen’s amillennial reading of the text, Kline thought that Hendriksen, by wrongly dividing the final chapters, had shortchanged the contrast inherent in Revelation as Christ transforms his church-bride from being imperfect in the world to perfect in heaven.

That Kline, even as a student, would ruffle the feathers of an established Reformed scholar the caliber of Hendriksen gave notice of the fearlessness that would characterize Kline’s later theological writings. In groundbreaking, and sometimes controversial fashion, Kline sought to show that the covenant theology embodied in the Westminster Standards was true to Scripture, particularly how God had created man in his image and entered into covenant with him unto the end of full communion in heaven. Since Kline taught over half a century in the Old Testament departments of Westminster Seminary (1950–1965), Gordon-Conwell Seminary (1965–1993), and Westminster Seminary California (1982–2001), this led to multiple books exploring God’s covenantal establishment and work in Genesis.

Following the path of the Reformed biblical-theologian Geerhardus Vos,¹⁰

⁸ Working with Meredith M. Kline to update the capitalization, punctuation, biographical references and formatting, *Ordained Servant* editor Gregory Reynolds published what is the equivalent of a critical edition of the article in *Ordained Servant Online* (Dec. 2021). Meredith G. Kline, “A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John” (master’s thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1946), published in *Ordained Servant Online* (Dec. 2021), www.opc.org/os.html.

⁹ William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1944).

¹⁰ In his first published article in 1953, “The Relevance of the Theocracy,” in *Presbyterian Guardian* 22, no. 2 (Feb. 16, 1953), Kline appealed to Vos. Kline wrote that the family, church, and state “do not have their being in the same ‘dimensional’ sphere as the Theocracy. They exist in the sphere of common grace; but the Theocracy in the sphere of Consummation. As G. Vos points out: ‘The significance of the unique organization of Israel can be rightly measured only by re-

Kline believed that the eschatological outlook set forth at creation in the covenant of works in Genesis 2 is the mother-soil that holds the religion of the Old and New Testaments together.¹¹ In his 1953 article, “Intrusion and the Decalogue,” Kline explained the relationship between eschatology and soteriology in a way that Vos would have approved. In the opening sentence, Kline wrote, “It is by tracing the unfolding eschatology of Scripture that we can most deftly unravel the strands of Old Testament religion and discover what is essential and distinctive in it. For eschatology antedates redemption.”¹² Kline then stressed that both the covenant of works and the covenant of grace are eschatological in that they offer a way to the consummation, but the covenant of works comes first. The door through the covenant of works was never opened as Adam transgressed God’s command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God could have brought eternal perdition to Adam by his covenant-breaking repudiation. That is, the fall might have introduced at once a consummation of universal damnation, but

membering that the theocracy typified nothing short of the perfected kingdom of God, the consummate state of Heaven (*Old and New Testament Biblical Theology*, 1942, p. 80)” (26). Near the end of his academic career, Kline stated in the preface of his 1986 book, *Kingdom Prologue*, (South Hamilton, MA: M. G. Kline, 1986), that what he had done in writing on Genesis was to take “what is in Vos’s Biblical Theology the infrastructure, the particular historical pattern in which the periodicity principle gets applied” and make it the surface structure in examining Genesis (5). In 2001, he dedicated *Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press) to “Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949) pioneer of the biblical theology way.” On the back jacket cover of *Glory in Our Midst*, T. David Gordon writes that “the vision of Geerhardus Vos is never more articulately or thoroughly developed than in the writings of Meredith G. Kline.” Even Kline’s personal notes testify to his affinity to Vos. In “Hebrews, the Epistle of the Diatheke” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), Vos wrote, “The writer unites profound historical grasp of the organic development of redemption with keen theological insight into the unchanging essence of revealed religion” (231). Kline penciled in his copy, “Apt description of Vos himself.” Fittingly, Howard Griffith and John Muether borrowed from Vos when they entitled their Festschrift for Kline, *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator*, which was Vos’s dedication in his *Pauline Eschatology*. Griffith and Muether wrote, “Dr. Meredith G. Kline has in many ways carried on and built upon the insights of Dr. Vos in the field of biblical theology.” *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator: A Festschrift for Meredith G. Kline*, ed. Howard Griffith and John R. Muether (Jackson, MS: Reformed Academic Press, 2000), 10.

¹¹ Vos declared, “Insofar as the covenant of works posited for mankind an absolute goal and unchangeable future, the eschatological may be even said to have preceded the soteric religion.” Geerhardus Vos, “Eschatology of the Psalter,” in Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 325.

¹² Meredith G. Kline, “Intrusion and the Decalogue,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 16, no. 1 (1953/54): 1.

God, by the principle and purpose of divine compassion, introduced the covenant of grace, with its historical corollary common grace, as the new way of arriving at the consummation.¹³ “This change in covenants from works to grace,” Kline said, “did not change the canons of eschatology.”¹⁴ What changed after the fall is that the conditions of the covenant of grace must be performed vicariously and as a redemptive accomplishment by the God-man.¹⁵

In his 1999 review of Gerard Van Groningen’s *From Creation to Consummation*, Kline indicated that he still held to this Vosian understanding. Kline first noted that Groningen “appreciates the foundational character of creation and seeks to highlight the eschatological aspect of the historical process, emphases dear to the Vosian hearts of the *Kerux* readership.” Such praise of Van Groningen’s work, however, was short-lived as Kline argued that Van Groningen’s denial of the covenant of works had led him to misconstrue the goal set before Adam in the garden. Van Groningen asserted that Adam already had everything in relationship to God as a creational gift. Kline replied:

That assertion contradicts the obvious. Vos rightly declares that according to the apostle Paul “the only reasonable interpretation of the Genesis-account” is “that provision was made and probation was instituted for a still higher state, both ethico-religiously and physically complexed, than was at that time in the possession of man.” (*The Pauline Eschatology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 304] 1952)¹⁶

¹³ Kline, “Intrusion,” 2, and Meredith G. Kline, *Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 155.

¹⁴ Kline, “Intrusion,” 3.

¹⁵ In “Intrusion,” Kline used the terminology “covenant of works” for the Genesis 2:16–17 covenant that God established with Adam at creation and the terminology “covenant of grace” for the Genesis 3:15 promise of deliverance that God gave to fallen Adam and Eve. When Kline stylistically revised “Intrusion and the Decalogue” for inclusion in his 1972 book, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, he changed “covenant of works” to “covenant of creation” and “covenant of grace” to “covenant of redemption.” In his books *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy, Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963) and *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton, MA: M. G. Kline, 1986), he preferred the terminology “covenant of creation” and “covenant of redemption.” However, when writing journal articles or reviews, such as his review of Gerard Van Groningen’s *From Creation to Consummation* (*Kerux* 14, no. 2 [Sept. 1999]:69), Kline often reverted—perhaps through editorial influence—to the traditional Reformed terminology of “covenant of works” and “covenant of grace.”

¹⁶ Kline, Van Groningen review, 69. Kline argued along the same lines in *Kingdom Prologue*, “The eternal state itself, when it was attained, would not of course be a mere perpetuation of man’s original beatitude”, 61.

Kline then added observations that spoke just as much about Kline's biblical-theological understanding of Scripture as they did against Van Groningen's folly in denying the covenant of works and the eschatological hope it communicated. For Van Groningen to declare that Adam was in possession of everything in relation to God at creation left room for neither eschatology nor the new benefits that come to humanity through Christ and the Spirit's work. It is the Spirit who transforms man's spiritual nature that he might advance to the estate of confirmed righteousness prerequisite to the reception of the guaranteed felicity of the eternal Sabbath. It is also the Spirit who brings about physical glorification—the supernatural, consummating transfiguration that renders the cosmos a new heaven and earth for man. In Van Groningen's proposal, the eschatological acts of God that propel man towards the consummation and the consummation itself are stripped of their biblical meaning. The result is that Van Groningen did what Kline endeavored never to do when exegeting Scripture—Van Groningen missed the message of the Sabbath.

Kline saw the biblical concept of Sabbath rest permeating the Scripture. Old Testament texts such as Genesis 2 and Isaiah 66 present Sabbath rest in terms of enthronement after the completion of labors by which royal dominion is manifested or secured. The biblical identification of Jesus as the second Adam in the New Testament guarantees that his redemptive achievement fits into both the eschatological structure that informed the covenant of works and the Sabbath rest that was promised therein. Kline said, "Indeed, Christ's work is explicitly expounded by the Scriptures as a re-creation and perfecting of the *imago Dei* and as a bringing of his people into their Sabbath rest in the land of access to the tree of life."¹⁷ Further, the Sabbath rest of the risen Christ is his kingly session at God's right hand. For believers to live and reign with Christ in the new heavens and new earth is to participate in his royal Sabbath rest.

No book in the New Testament caught Kline's attention concerning the fulfillment of the covenantal promises through the person and work of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit like Revelation did. He wrote articles, such as "The First Resurrection" and "The First Resurrection: A Reaffirmation,"

¹⁷ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 61.

that focused directly on the proper interpretation of Revelation 20. He wrote other articles like “Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1–27:1,” “The Covenant of the Seventieth Week,” and “Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium” where the exegesis of Revelation was central to the arguments being made. In three of his major books, *Images of the Spirit*, *Glory in Our Midst*, and *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, Kline exegeted and referenced Revelation more than any other New Testament book.

This might have been expected given Kline’s covenantal hermeneutic that led him to trace the line of redemptive-historical development from creation to consummation. Revelation with its declaration that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10) and its picture of the church’s heavenly life with God often provided the capstone for Kline’s explorations.

But, there was more to why Kline in his writings cited Revelation so often. He also understood it to be a microcosm of the Bible as a whole, a covenant witness document of Jesus. He declared,

The Apocalypse is a covenant witness document of Jesus, the faithful witness, presenting his claims as the covenant Lord, testifying that he is the mighty messianic Angel, who was sent, who came and conquered, and is now invested with the Glory-Spirit, all authority in heaven and earth his. In demonstration thereof the Apocalypse confronts us with an overwhelming assemblage of images of his mighty acts as victor over the dragon and the beasts, judge of the nations, possessor of the keys of death and Hades, divine priest-king *who redeems a countless multitude out of all to enjoy and serve God in the heavenly Zion forever*.¹⁸

As the last portion of the above quotation testifies, Kline did not see Christ alone in Revelation. He also saw the church that Christ had redeemed and was refashioning in his image to be his bride for all eternity. This transformation of the church from pilgrims below to dwellers in the Father’s glorious mansion above through union with Christ and the down payment of the Spirit is a theme that Kline reinforced when talking about the message of Revelation. In *Kingdom Prologue*, he stated, “The Book of Revelation unveils the transforming work of the Spirit as he brings the church from its creation as candle-like image of the Glory-light of Christ (Rev. 1) to the

¹⁸ Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 88 (emphasis added).

perfecting of this Glory-image in the church at its ultimate merging with the heavenly Glory-community in the eternal temple-city (Rev. 21).¹⁹ In *Images of the Spirit*, Kline expressed it this way, “The church as portrayed in Revelation 21 and 22 is a church recreated in the likeness of Christ, the Glory-robed priest of Revelation 1. Coupled in this portrait with the symbol of the temple-city, New Jerusalem, is the symbol of the ‘bride adorned for her husband’ (Rev. 21:2).”²⁰ In *Glory in Our Midst*, he said, “It is Christ, the Son of Man who has decisively overcome the satanic dragon and has been established in supreme heavenly authority with cosmic dominion (cf. Rev. 1:12ff.; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14, 12:1ff.; 20:1–3), who then proceeds to fashion the seven menorah-churches, the true temple-city, by his authoritative, creative word through the power of the Spirit (cf. Revelation 2 and 3).”²¹

In his last book, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, Kline labeled this eschatological movement from Alpha to Omega and Christ’s gathering of his church-bride as the “Har Magedon paradigm.”²² Adam’s probation assignment in the covenant of works concerned Har Magedon, the mount of assembly, the heavenly city of God’s royal court. After Adam failed to stand in the name of the Creator and withstand the assault of the Satan at the mountain of God in Eden, the Creator issued the promise of the messianic Son, the seed of the woman, who would mark a turning point in the conflict. Unlike the first Adam, this second Adam would perfectly obey the will of God the Father, repulse the would-be usurper of God’s throne, and bring God’s holy war against Satan to a triumphant conclusion. The conclusion of the Har Magedon paradigm is revealed in the Apocalypse. In Revelation 21:9, the angel who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues says to John, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of Lamb.” John then in verses 10–11a writes, “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.” Blessed, indeed, are those who filthy garments have been washed in the blood of the Lamb “so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates” (22:14).

¹⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 232.

²⁰ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 49.

²¹ Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 162.

²² Meredith G. Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), xv.

Kline's passion was to show from Genesis to Revelation how this blessed covenantal reality came to be—the risen Christ dwelling with his Spirit-forged church-bride in his holy temple-city on the mountain of God, the heavenly Zion. The Apocalypse unveils the underlying meaning of the ultimate realities brought about in the triumph of Jesus Christ over Satan in the great conflict. Consequently, the realization of the hope of believers is found only in appeal to the merits of their Redeemer's work in history and the Spirit's application of the sanctifying efficacy of the perfected priesthood and sacrifice permanently embodied in the risen and divine Savior.²³

Kline's biblical-theological mentor, Geerhardus Vos, rarely commented on the Apocalypse, but one place that Vos did was at the conclusion of his sermon on Hebrews 11:9–10, "Heavenly-Mindedness." In it, he argued that the thirst for the heavenly city that Abraham exhibited, and the writer to the Hebrews commends, was a thirst for communion with God in full. God put himself into his work as builder and maker of the city so that those who enter into that city are in God. According to Vos, this matches what John proclaims in Revelation 22:3–4, "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. And that city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the throne of God and the Lamb are therein: and his servants shall do him service, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads" (KJV).²⁴ Vos, however, did not fill out the indispensable accompaniment of the Glory-Spirit in Christ's construction work in Revelation. Kline fills that void and enriches our redemptive-historical understanding of Scripture. Kline declared, "The Book of Revelation pictures the consummation of creation history as involving a reappearance of the Glory-Spirit in Genesis 1:2, now enveloping the incarnate Son, his hand lifted in oath to heaven as he swears by himself, the Creator, that the mystery of God was to be completed (Rev. 10:1; 5–7; cf. Rev. 1:15; 2:18)."²⁵

Consequently, Kline believed that Revelation puts forth what should be the church's perspective and priorities in its pilgrimage to be with the Lord

²³ Meredith G. Kline, review of *The Unity of the Bible* by H. H. Rowley, *Westminster Theological Journal* 18, no. 1 (1956): 18.

²⁴ Geerhardus Vos, *Grace and Glory* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994), 122–123.

²⁵ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 91.

in heaven; not social-economic programs, but witness, even in suffering and death, to the gospel of Christ. The movement of redemptive history towards completion of the covenantal promises in Christ—the martyr-church carrying out Christ’s Great Commission—finds its capstone in Revelation, making it in Kline’s judgment “the fairest gem in Scripture.”²⁶

Part 1 unpacks these and other themes from his published writings that Kline saw in this New Testament “covenant witness document of Jesus.” Part 2 presents sermons that Kline preached on Revelation and Daniel. Part 3 puts forth a brief commentary on Revelation from Kline’s books, articles, and sermons. Part 4 is an anthology of Kline’s biblical and theological insights from or related to Revelation.

²⁶ Kline, “Structure of Revelation,” 2.