

Via Media or Tertium Quid?: A Critical Examination of Meredith G. Kline's Interpretation of *rûaḥ elōhîm* in Genesis 1:2

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1. Introduction and State of the Question

The interpretation of *rûaḥ elōhîm* in Genesis 1:2 is a matter of perennial debate among theologians and exegetes. Scholars generally interpret these words in one of two ways: (1) Some relate the phrase to God directly as in "Spirit/spirit of God," which is the traditional Christian interpretation.¹ (2) Others understand *rûaḥ elōhîm* as a reference to an inanimate force or power from God, such as a "wind from God," an interpretation prevalent in the Jewish tradition.² This scholarly ambivalence is reflected somewhat in

¹ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 60; cf. Michael DeRoche, "The *Rûaḥ Elōhîm* in Gen 1:2c: Creation or Chaos?," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical & Other Essays in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 67 (JSOT Press, 1988), 303-318; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 111-114; William H. McClellan, "The Meaning of *Rûaḥ Elōhîm* in Genesis 1, 2," *Biblica* 14, no. 40 (1934): 517-527; Léopold Sabourin, "Biblical Cloud: Terminology and Traditions," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 4, no. 3 (1974): 310-311; Edward J. Young, "Interpretation of Genesis 1:2," *Westminster Theological Journal* 23, no. 2 (May 1961): 174-178.

² Bruce Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: an Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 182-83, 213, 292, 294, 620; Note the contrast with Waltke's Genesis commentary cited above; cf. Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Plain Meaning of *RU^aH* in Gen. 1.2," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 48, no. 2, New Series (October 1957): 174-182; Robert Luyster, "Wind and Water: Cosmogonic Symbolism in the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93, no. 1 (1981): 1-10. McClellan, "The

modern English Bible translations.³ It is not my intent to cover all the arguments and rejoinders. My aim, rather, is to evaluate one scholar's unique contribution to the question, namely, Meredith G. Kline's (1922–2007) *Images of the Spirit*.⁴

In the first chapter of *Images* Kline presents a creative and nuanced interpretation of *rûaḥ elôhîm*.⁵ While he firmly follows the traditional "Spirit of God" rendering,⁶ Kline argues uniquely that "the 'Spirit of God' in the creation record is surely to be understood as a designation for the theophanic Glory-cloud."⁷ Kline's interpretation appears to integrate both the supernatural orientation of the traditional "Spirit" rendering and the mundane meteorological perspective of the inanimate "wind" translation. This unique formulation thus raises the question: Is Kline's position a *via media* between the two perennially-debated interpretations, or is his formulation better conceived as a *tertium quid*? I will argue that, viewed within the context of the exegetical debates, Kline's interpretation of *rûaḥ elôhîm* as a theophanic Glory-cloud is an orthodox, albeit idiosyncratic, *tertium quid*.

Meaning of Rûaḥ Elôhîm in Genesis 1, 2," 518-519, cites evidence to show, however, that not all Jewish interpreters prefer "wind" over "spirit"; cf. Young, "Interpretation of Genesis 1," 175.

³ Translations following the "Spirit of God" rendering include the ASV, CEV, ESV, KJV, HCSB, NET, NASB, NIV, NLT, RSV, and TNIV. Those following the "wind" rendering include the NAB, NEB, NJB, and NRSV.

⁴ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999). According to Kline the book's title may also be rendered as *Images of the Cloud-Theophany* (Kline, *Images*, 10).

⁵ Kline, *Images*, 13-34; Originally published as "Creation in the Image of the Glory-Spirit," *Westminster Theological Journal* 39, no. 2 (Spr 1977): 250-272. Kline re-capitulates this material within two other writings which we will reference along the way: Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006); *idem*, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

⁶ Kline, *Images*, 14.

⁷ Kline, *Images*, 15; cf. Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 33-36; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 30-33.

Scholarship on Meredith G. Kline's Interpretation of *Rûaḥ Elôhîm*

While Kline's scholarly contributions have not been completely unnoticed,⁸ the amount of attention given specifically to his interpretation of *rûaḥ elôhîm* in *Images of the Spirit* is limited. Jeffrey Niehaus, for example, affirms and develops Kline's formulation of a theophanic Glory-cloud in Genesis 1:2.⁹ Niehaus, however, limits his scope to Kline's shorter treatment in *Kingdom Prologue*.¹⁰ Paul Helm critiques chapter 1 of Kline's *Images*,¹¹ but he limits his critiques to systematico-theological implications,¹² whereas Kline describes *Images* as a collection of "exegetical studies of a biblico-theological character" that are "not presented here in the manner of doctrines in a volume of systematic theology."¹³ Helm, furthermore, does not analyze Kline's exegesis of the cloud theophany, nor does Helm compare *Images* with Kline's other writings. Bruce Waltke, moreover, briefly references Kline's *Images*, ch. 1, but without any elaboration.¹⁴

Images of the Spirit has received several brief reviews, and many of them mention Kline's formulation of the Glory-cloud. J. Andrew Dearman, for example, takes note of Kline's interpretation of *rûaḥ elôhîm* in Genesis 1:2,¹⁵ but Dearman does not develop this point beyond offering a general note on Kline's tendency to

⁸ See Howard Griffith and John R. Muether, eds., *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator: a festschrift for Meredith G. Kline* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007).

⁹ Jeffrey Jay Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 150-153; cf. 43-44.

¹⁰ Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 150nn21-22.

¹¹ Paul Helm, "Image of the Spirit and Image of God," in *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator: A Festschrift for Meredith G. Kline*, ed. Howard Griffith and John R. Muether (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 203-214.

¹² Helm, "Image," 203.

¹³ Kline, *Images*, 10. Kline does view his biblico-theological study as having systematico-theological implications (see pp. 10-11), but he himself only deals with these implications briefly (i.e., pp. 30-34)..

¹⁴ Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 295.

¹⁵ J. Andrew Dearman, review of *Images of the Spirit*, by Meredith G. Kline, *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* 4, no. 5 (1981): 15.

interpret OT texts via NT texts.¹⁶ Similarly, Horace D. Hummel comments that “Kline prefers to speak of the ‘Glory-Spirit,’ which he argues was present as a cloud-theophany already at the creation.”¹⁷ Hummel, however, offers no analysis beyond a general caveat on the whole book.¹⁸ Likewise, James A. Borland asserts that “Kline’s concept that the physical theophanic Glory of the Holy Spirit, who hovered over the original earth creation in Gen 1:2, served as the ‘divine model’ for man’s creation” is “[k]ey to understanding” Kline’s formulation of the *imago Dei*.¹⁹ Borland offers not only general caveats,²⁰ but also a specific criticism of Kline’s exegetical methodology:

Much that follows page 19 [of *Images of the Spirit*] is based on seeing Gen 1:2 as depicting the Spirit overarching the creation ‘as divine witness to the Covenant of Creation’ (pp. 55-56). This is apparently read back into the text after a contemplation of Gen 9:12 ff. and Rev 10:1 ff. and then used as a paradigm for the crux of the book’s interpretation regarding replication of the visible Glory-Spirit in tabernacle, priestly investiture, and so on (p. 21).²¹

¹⁶ “The success of Kline’s enterprise will be judged, in part, on how well he has illumined the intention of Old Testament writers with his frequent appeal to the New Testament for confirmation of a point” (Dearman, review of *Images of the Spirit*, 16).

¹⁷ Horace D. Hummel, review of *Images of the Spirit*, by Meredith G. Kline, *Concordia Journal* 8, no. 1 (January 1982): 34.

¹⁸ “Inevitably, one will not be equally convinced about all the exegetical judgments. . .” (Hummel, “review of *Images of the Spirit*,” 35).

¹⁹ James A. Borland, review of *Images of the Spirit*, by Meredith G. Kline, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24, no. 3 (1981): 275.

²⁰ Borland asserts the following caveats for evaluating Kline’s use of typology: “Any form of typology must exercise care to avoid (1) forcing types based on possibly coincidental identifications, (2) drawing unwarranted conclusions, (3) reading one’s own deductions into certain texts, (4) reasoning in a circle, and (5) flight into the sometimes nebulous realm of symbolism” (Borland, review of *Images of the Spirit*, 275). Borland’s ensuing elaboration, however, does not make clear whether Kline violates all or some of these principles in *Images of the Spirit*.

²¹ Borland, review of *Images of the Spirit*, 275.

As will become evident below, however, Boreland's criticism conflates a subsidiary point in Kline's first chapter (i.e., the witness character of the Spirit) with the crux of the entire book.

Several scholars have briefly noted the uniqueness of Kline's interpretation of *rûaḥ elôhîm* and the implications his view has for his formulation of the *imago Dei*. No study, however, has attempted to critically evaluate Kline's interpretation in the light of current biblical scholarship. What remains to be done, therefore, is to state Kline's view of the Glory-cloud, to compare Kline's methodology with other approaches, and to discern whether Kline's formulation is best seen as a mediating position or as a unique statement within the context of current exegetical debates.

2. Meredith G. Kline's Interpretation of *Rûaḥ Elôhîm* in Genesis 1:2

Kline asserts a twofold thesis in *Images of the Spirit*, ch. 1: First, he argues "that the theophanic Glory was present at the creation," and, second, he infers that the theophanic Glory "was the specific divine model or referent in view in the creating of man in the image of God."²² Thus Kline's argument starts with the identity of the *rûaḥ elôhîm* and then proceeds to his function.

***Rûaḥ Elôhîm* Identified as Yahweh's Theophanic "Glory-cloud"**

Kline begins his exegesis of *rûaḥ elôhîm* by analyzing its infrequent verb, *mēraḥepet*. Deuteronomy 32:11, Kline notes, is the only other place in the Pentateuch where this verb is used,²³ and in this verse *mēraḥepet* describes God's leading Israel to Canaan using the imagery of "an eagle hovering protectively over its young, spreading out its wings to support them, and so guiding them on to maturity."²⁴ Regarding this avian hovering action, Kline notes, "In Exodus 19:4 God similarly describes himself as bearing Israel on eagles' wings."²⁵ For Kline, then, *mēraḥepet* metaphorically

²² Kline, *Images*, 13. NB: Throughout *Images* Kline employs the masculine generic "man" as a synonym for *imago Dei*, a usage which includes both man and woman.

²³ The only other occurrence of this verb in the Masoretic Text is in Jeremiah 23:9; cf. Kline, *Images*, 14n2.

²⁴ Kline, *Images*, 14; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 30.

²⁵ Kline, *Images*, 14.

connotes the “overshadowing protection,” “outspread wings,” and “divine aegis” provided to Israel by Yahweh’s theophanic Glory-cloud.²⁶

In addition to its function, Kline adduces the Glory-cloud’s form as further evidence for relating the avian imagery of *mēraḥepet* to Yahweh’s Glory-cloud. “To describe the action of the Glory-cloud [in the Pentateuch] by the figure of outspread wings was natural,” Kline argues, “not simply because of the overshadowing function it performed, but because of the composition of this theophanic cloud.”²⁷ Regarding its composition Kline recalls that Ezekiel describes the sight of the Glory-cloud as full of cherubim and seraphim and the sound of the Glory-cloud as that of fluttering wings.²⁸ Kline avers, therefore, that the form and function of avian imagery and cloud theophany coalesce in the Glory-cloud.²⁹

Another infrequent biblical word in Genesis 1:2, *tōhû*, serves a pivotal role in Kline’s identification of the *rûaḥ elōhîm*.³⁰ The only other Pentateuchal usage of *tōhû* is in Deuteronomy 32:10, and therein *tōhû* describes the chaotic wilderness out of which Yahweh’s Glory-cloud rescued and protected Israel. Thus, reasons Kline, the “comparison between God’s presence as Israel’s divine aegis in the wilderness and God’s presence over creation in Genesis 1:2b is put beyond doubt.”³¹

Kline claims, moreover, that this creation-exodus comparison is confirmed by the “broad parallelism” which exists between both events:

²⁶ Kline, *Images*, 14.

²⁷ Kline, *Images*, 14. Regarding the composition of the Glory-cloud, Kline asserts elsewhere that the Glory is composed of functional (i.e., authority, dominion), formal (i.e., theophanic and incarnational glory), and ethical (i.e., holiness, righteousness, and truth) components (p. 31).

²⁸ Kline, *Images*, 14. Kline specifically references Ezekiel 1:24 and 10:5 (Kline, *Images*, 14n4; cf. 17n13).

²⁹ Regarding the Spirit’s theophanic presence in avian imagery Kline notes elsewhere that “at the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit descending over the waters in avian form, as in Genesis 1:2, was a divine testimony to the Son. . .” (Kline, *Images*, 19).

³⁰ *Tōhû* occurs 20 times in the Masoretic Text, most frequently in Isaiah: Gen. 1:2; Deut. 32:10; 1 Sam. 12:21 (twice); Job 6:18; 12:24; 26:7; Psa. 107:40; Isa. 24:10; 29:21; 34:11; 40:17; 40:23; 41:29; 44:9; 45:18, 19; 49:4; 59:4; Jer. 4:23.

³¹ Kline, *Images*, 14.

[W]e find that at the exodus reenactment of creation history the divine pillar of cloud and fire was present, like the Spirit of God at the beginning, to bring light into the darkness (and indeed to regulate the day-night sequence), to divide the waters and make dry land appear in the midst of the deep, and to lead on to the Sabbath in the holy paradise land.³²

Therefore, Kline concludes that, based on the “reuse of the unusual verbal imagery of Genesis 1:2b in Deuteronomy 32:11, the ‘Spirit of God’ in the creation record is surely to be understood as a designation for the theophanic Glory-cloud.”³³

The Glory-cloud Identified as a Multivalent Theophany

Kline identifies the Glory-cloud as not only a theophany of the Spirit, but also a theophany of the Son. Kline presents three arguments for the Spirit theophany: (1) Passages such as Nehemiah 9:19, 20; Isaiah 63:11-14; and Haggai 2:5 attribute the Glory-cloud’s activities specifically to the Spirit; (2) The Holy Spirit’s work at Pentecost parallels “the functioning of the Glory-cloud at the exodus and at the erection of the tabernacle”;³⁴ (3) Correspondences attain between the Spirit’s hovering over the primordial waters in Genesis 1:2 and the Spirit’s similar activities in two wind-related re-creation events—Noah’s Flood and the Exodus. Before looking at these two events, however, Kline first connects the Spirit’s theophanic wind to the Glory-cloud via Psalm 104. Kline correlates the cloud-chariot and wing-wind metaphors of Psalm 104:3 with the *rûah* of verse 30³⁵ and concludes that

³² Kline, *Images*, 14-15.

³³ Kline, *Images*, 15; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 30; Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magdon*, 33-35.

³⁴ Kline, *Images*, 15.

³⁵ Kline writes, “Reflecting on Genesis 1:2, Psalm 104 envisages the Creator Spirit (*rûah*) as the one who makes the clouds his chariot and moves on the wings of the wind (*rûah*), making the winds his angel-messengers and flames his servants (vv. 3f.) (Kline, *Images*, 15). Kline does not reference v. 30 specifically; rather, he simply asserts that *rûah* is “the Creator Spirit.” Out of the 4 occurrences of *rûah* in this psalm (vv. 3, 4, 29, 30), verse 30 seems the most likely referent for “the Creator Spirit.”

Psalm 104 reveals a “theophanic cloud-and-wind form of the Spirit in Genesis 1:2.”³⁶ After securing this alleged cloud-and-wind theophanic form in Psalm 104, Kline then finds correlations between Genesis 1:2, the Flood, and the Exodus. At the apex of the Noahic flood account, for example, God sends a wind (*rûah*, Gen. 8:1) to subdue the chaotic waters.³⁷ Likewise, in the exodus event God subdues the waters of the Red Sea with “a strong, east wind (Exod. 14:21) and, more poetically, as the breath (*rûah*) of God’s nostrils blown upon the waters (Exod. 15:8, 10).”³⁸ Kline understands these two wind-related re-creation events, therefore, to be recapitulations of the Spirit’s original theophanic cloud-and-wind presence in Genesis 1:2.³⁹

Kline presents one argument for the Son theophany: “What Genesis 1:2 identifies as Spirit,” writes Kline, “Hebrews 1:2, 3 identifies as Son; God is one.”⁴⁰ Key to Kline’s claim is his reasoning that the “description of the likeness of the Son to the Father” in Hebrews 1:3 “does not refer to the eternal ontological reality of God apart from creation but to the revelation of the Father by the Son in creation.”⁴¹ Since v. 3a, argues Kline, is situated between affirmations of the Son’s roles in creation (i.e., v. 2b) and in providence (i.e., v. 3b), v. 3a must refer to a “pre-incarnation theophany [of the Son], and, in particular, the Glory revelation of the Creator spoken of in Genesis 1:2b.”⁴² Kline adduces further support for this correlation between Genesis 1 and Hebrews 1 in the parallel usage of the Greek verb *pherō* in Hebrews 1:3a and Genesis 1:2 (LXX) and in the Son’s mysterious “identity with the Spirit and his personal distinctiveness and his procession from the Spirit in the figure of that Angel associated with the Glory-cloud and called ‘the Angel of the presence’ (Isa. 63:9ff; Exod. 32:2, 12-15).”⁴³ Rather than finding a one-to-one correspondence, therefore,

³⁶ Kline, *Images*, 15.

³⁷ Kline, *Images*, 15; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 219, 223-224.

³⁸ Kline, *Images*, 15-16; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 223.

³⁹ Compare Kline’s correlation of the Spirit in Gen. 1:2 with the life-giving divine breath of Gen. 2:7 (Kline, *Images*, 21-22).

⁴⁰ Kline, *Images*, 16.

⁴¹ Kline, *Images*, 16.

⁴² Kline, *Images*, 16.

⁴³ Kline, *Images*, 16-17; cf. 24, 28. On Kline’s multivalent identification of “the Angel of the presence,” see Kline, *Images*, 17n11; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 369-372.

between *rûaḥ elôhîm* and a single person of the Godhead, Kline formulates a multivalent theophany in the Glory-cloud of Genesis 1:2.⁴⁴

The Glory-cloud Functions as Yahweh's Heavenly Paradigm for his Earthly Images

"The theophanic Gory," writes Kline, "was an archetypal pattern for the cosmos and for man, the image of God."⁴⁵ However, "In order to perceive this archetypal working of the Spirit and appreciate its significance for the image-of-God idea," continues Kline, "we must have a fairly distinct apprehension of the Bible's representation of the multifaceted phenomenon of the Glory-Spirit that was present at creation."⁴⁶ Kline thus presents the general function of the Glory-Spirit before treating the Glory-cloud's twofold paradigmatic function for cosmology and anthropology.

The underlying function of the Glory-Spirit is, according to Kline, to be "a revelational modality of heaven."⁴⁷ Kline finds support for this assertion in biblical passages which describe the heavenly throne and divine council,⁴⁸ and he draws the following inferences regarding modality: (1) The Glory-cloud manifests visibly "the King of glory enthroned in the mist of myriads of heavenly beings;"⁴⁹ (2) To see the inner reality of the Glory-cloud is to gaze upon God in heaven; (3) At his resurrection Christ ascended into the heavenly/invisible dimension represented by the Glory-cloud;⁵⁰ (4) "Genesis 1:2b answers to the invisible heavens of Genesis 1:1;"⁵¹ (5) The Glory-cloud itself "is preeminently the place of God's enthronement" and may be interpreted as a "a royal palace, site of the divine council and court of judgment;"⁵² (6) The Glory-

⁴⁴ According to Kline, *Images*, 23, the Son and Spirit theophanies occur simultaneously in the single Glory-cloud. For Kline's "brief analytical review of the composition of the complex Glory theophany," see *Images*, 27-30.

⁴⁵ Kline, *Images*, 17.

⁴⁶ Kline, *Images*, 17.

⁴⁷ Kline, *Images*, 17n13.

⁴⁸ Kline, *Images*, 17n13.

⁴⁹ Kline, *Images*, 17; cf. 17n13.

⁵⁰ Kline, *Images*, 17.

⁵¹ Kline, *Images*, 17, 13n1; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 23-26.

⁵² Kline, *Images*, 17-18, 18n14; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 47-49.

cloud is a mobile throne/chariot propelled by winged beings;⁵³ (7) The Glory-cloud adapts its form to its function, appearing variously as modes of sky, firmament, canopy, whirlwind, thunderhead, and lightning;⁵⁴ etc.⁵⁵ The theophanic Glory-cloud, therefore, is a “vastly complex theophanic reality”⁵⁶ which functions as a visible, multi-faceted nexus between two dimensions—the heavenly and the earthly.⁵⁷

With the underlying function of the Glory-Spirit’s heavenly modality in mind, Kline then focuses upon the Glory-cloud’s two paradigmatic functions in Genesis 1:2, namely, that the Glory-cloud is the theophanic archetype for his cosmic and anthropological ectypes. Since, as we noted above, Kline views the Glory-cloud as God’s royal temple, both the cosmic and the anthropological ectypes are described as temples.

The cosmic temple is literally patterned after the Glory-cloud. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” argues Kline, “in the special sense that they are a copy of the archetypal Glory of God.”⁵⁸ Thus the Glory-cloud is not an accommodation to pre-existing earthly meteorological phenomena; rather, earthly clouds are a revelation of heaven’s glory-ink, so to speak, which write “in the medium of natural revelation . . . the supernatural Glory-heaven.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, Kline avers that this specific archetype-ectype imaging relationship between the Glory-cloud and the cosmic temple underlies the biblical metaphors of (1) the earth as God’s regal temple (Isa. 66:1; II Chron. 6:18; Matt. 5:34f.)⁶⁰ and (2) the heavens as “God’s royal chambers and chariot” (Psa. 11:4; 68:4(5); 93; 103:19; 104:1-3; 115:16; 148:1-4; Isa. 40:21-23).⁶¹ The cosmic temple, therefore, is an image/ectype of the heavenly

⁵³ Kline, *Images*, 18; cf. 21, 21n27.

⁵⁴ Kline, *Images*, 18; cf. 18n15.

⁵⁵ For the complete list of examples see Kline, *Images*, 17-20.

⁵⁶ Kline, *Images*, 20.

⁵⁷ Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 3-9; cf. Kline, *Images*, 17; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 22-41.

⁵⁸ Kline, *Images*, 20.

⁵⁹ Kline, *Images*, 20.

⁶⁰ Kline, *Images*, 20-21, 21n26.

⁶¹ Kline, *Images*, 21, 21n27.

original/archetype.⁶² The anthropological temple/ectype (i.e., the *imago Dei*) is also literally patterned after the Glory-cloud/archetype. “God created man,” writes Kline, “in the likeness of the Glory to be a spirit-temple of God in the Spirit.”⁶³ Strikingly, Kline asserts that just as earthly clouds are drawn in Glory-ink, so “[t]he statement in Genesis 1:27 that God created man in his own image . . . finds a concretely specific and in fact a visible point of reference in the Glory-Spirit theophany of Genesis 1:2.”⁶⁴

Kline supports the Glory-cloud’s cosmological and anthropological paradigm function by interpreting the Spirit’s inbreathing in Genesis 2:7 in terms of a fathering metaphor. In light of the Spirit’s inbreathing-related works in Genesis 1:2, 1:26, Psalm 104:29-31, Lamentations 4:20, Ezekiel 37, Luke 1:35, and John 20:22, Kline argues that “we are to understand that it was the Spirit-Glory of Genesis 1:2 who had hovered over the lifeless deep-and-darkness, sovereignly blowing where he would to bring the world into life, who was the divine breath that fathered the living man-son in Genesis 2:7.”⁶⁵ Genesis 5:1-3, moreover, serves to confirm Kline’s point, for these verses set the creation of Adam in God’s likeness in apposition to the fathering of Seth in Adam’s likeness.⁶⁶

Picking up on his earlier multivalent theophany formulation, Kline argues that the fathering metaphor applies not only to the Holy Spirit, but also to the Son. “The Glory theophany,” writes Kline, “in which God was present as *Logos-Wisdom and Spirit-Power*, stood as archetype at the creation of man as God’s image.”⁶⁷ The structure of John’s Apocalypse is Kline’s primary example of the Son’s “fathering”: Revelation opens with a vision of the archetypal Christ and closes with a prophetic glimpse of his ectypal body/church.⁶⁸ That Christ’s “fathering” extends beyond humanity to the entire cosmos is seen in the intentional recapitulation of creation themes

⁶² For further explication regarding Kline’s view of the cosmos as the ectype of the Glory-cloud archetype, see Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 30-33; Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 30-39.

⁶³ Kline, *Images*, 21.

⁶⁴ Kline, *Images*, 21; emphasis added. Cf. Helm, “Image of the Spirit and Image of God,” 203-06, 211-12.

⁶⁵ Kline, *Images*, 21-22; Quotation from p. 22.

⁶⁶ Kline, *Images*, 23, 23nn33-34; cf. 28.

⁶⁷ Kline, *Images*, 23; emphasis added.

⁶⁸ Kline, *Images*, 24-25.

in Revelation 21.⁶⁹ Kline concludes, therefore, that “the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ interprets to us the apocalypse of Elohîm in Genesis 1 and clarifies our view of the Spirit in Genesis 1 as the theophanic Glory, the divine archetype for the creation of man in the image of God.”⁷⁰

3. Analysis

Kline’s Exegetical Methodology

Perhaps the most salient feature of Kline’s exegetical method is his robust use of the *analogia Scripturae*.⁷¹ Whether performing parallel word studies (e.g., *rûaḥ elōhîm* and *mēraḥepet*) or tracing redemptive-historical motifs (e.g., re-creation and exodus), we have seen in *Images*, ch. 1, that Kline shows no qualms about interpreting Genesis 1:2 in light of a myriad of biblical texts from both the Old and New Testaments—even the whole book of Revelation.⁷² Kline boldly asserts, moreover, that *every* biblical text referring to the heavenly throne or the divine counsel explicates the Glory-cloud.⁷³ In contradistinction to scholars who resist interpreting the OT in light of the NT,⁷⁴ Kline freely employs the full

⁶⁹ Kline, *Images*, 25-26.

⁷⁰ Kline, *Images*, 26; cf. 24, 24n35.

⁷¹ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally From Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2006), s.v. *analogia Scripturae*. Kline was an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and he taught at confessionally Reformed institutions (see Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, “preface” (n.p.)). It is likely, therefore, that Kline’s methodology can be viewed as an outworking of his commitment to the *analogia Scripturae* as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, I.9.

⁷² For Kline’s own comments about his proclivity for turning frequently to the book of Revelation, see Kline, *Images*, 11; cf. 24, 26.

⁷³ Kline, *Images*, 17n13; cf. Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 33.

⁷⁴ John Goldingay, *Israel’s Gospel*, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 24, *idem*, *Israel’s Faith, Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 13-14, for example, argues that the NT is like footnotes to the OT. Accordingly, he is ardently concerned with reading the NT in light of the OT rather than vice versa.

range of biblical revelation to interpret Genesis 1:2.⁷⁵

Despite his robust use of comparative exegesis, there are at least two aspects of Kline's method that find analogs in other scholars: (1) word studies and (2) literary analysis along redemptive-historical lines. Regarding word studies, just as Kline turns to Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11 to confirm the meaning of *mēraḥpet* in Genesis 1:2, so others make similar connections.⁷⁶ Likewise, just as Kline turns to Deuteronomy 32:10 in order to confirm his rendering of *tōhû*, so other scholars turn to this and other *tōhû*-related texts.⁷⁷

Regarding literary analysis, Kline's use of redemptive-historical motifs to provide a deeper perspective on Genesis 1:2 is similar to the methodology of Sailhamer's narrative analysis in three ways: First, Kline's exegesis of *tōhû* can be identified in Sailhamer's terms as a "*thema*" word;⁷⁸ Second, Kline's connection between the Spirit's activity in the exodus event and the Spirit's role in Genesis 1:2 can be understood as an example of Sailhamer's "principle of

⁷⁵ Kline, *Images*, 9, argues that "heuristic capability" (i.e., cumulative-case exegetical argumentation) is one test of an interpretive model's validity.

⁷⁶ McClellan, "The Meaning of Rûaḥ Elōhîm in Genesis 1, 2," 525, claims that Deuteronomy 32:11 is the "best source for the true interpretation of" *mēraḥpet* in Genesis 1:2; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 87, cites Deuteronomy 32:11; and Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1961), *Genesis*, 47, references Deuteronomy 32:11 and Jeremiah 23:9.

⁷⁷ Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 86, cites Deuteronomy 32 and Jeremiah 4:23-26; Young, "Interpretation of Genesis 1," 169 refers to Isaiah 45:18; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 109, references Deuteronomy 32:10, Job 6:18; Isaiah 24:10, 29:21, 44:9, and 45:18-19; Nicolas Wyatt, "The Darkness of Genesis 1 2," *Vetus testamentum* 43, no. 4 (1993): 550-551, refers to Jeremiah 4:23, Isaiah 34:44, and Job 26:7; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 59, look to Jeremiah 4:23-27; and Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 104, cites Jeremiah 4:23, Isaiah 34:11, and 45:18.

⁷⁸ Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 29-31, defines a *thema* word as a word which the author either assumes the reader will already know or plans on unfolding the meaning in the work itself. *Thema* words present modern readers with the difficulty of knowing where to turn to find the meaning of the ancient term.

contemporization”;⁷⁹ Third, Kline’s inference that the Spirit’s creative role in Genesis 1:2 is structurally related to the Spirit’s re-creative role in the Flood (Gen. 8:1) and the Exodus (Exo. 19:4 and Deut. 32:11) is analogous with Sailhamer’s argument concerning the structural relationship between Genesis 1:2 and Exodus 31:1-5—accomplishing God’s work requires the filling of God’s Spirit.⁸⁰ Kline’s use of creation and exodus motifs, moreover, finds an analog in Waltke’s application of the creation motif to the same major events connected by Kline: (1) Creation (Gen. 1:2), (2) the Flood (Gen. 8:1b-2), (3) the Exodus (Exo. 14:21), (4) Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4), and (5) the Consummation (Rev. 21-22). The first four events, notes Waltke, involve creations by the *rûah* vis-à-vis water.⁸¹ Thus, like Kline, Waltke interprets these events as structurally related via a common creation motif.⁸² At least in general terms, therefore, Kline’s word studies and his analyses of redemptive-historical motifs find methodological analogs in related scholarship.

One difference between Kline’s method and traditional approaches to interpreting Genesis 1:2 is that Kline does not attempt to take on questions of genre, source criticism, or extra-biblical cosmogonic adumbrations. Whereas other writers consider these sorts of questions at length,⁸³ Kline only makes passing

⁷⁹ Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 31, defines the principle of contemporization as an author’s interpreting historical events with meaning relevant for the author’s own day. He adduces Genesis 1:2 and Deuteronomy 32:10—two texts important in Kline’s interpretation—as an example of this principle.

⁸⁰ Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 32-33; cf. 87. Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 60, add further warrant for seeing a similarity between Sailhamer’s and Kline’s use of structural relationships by affirming a third structural relation: Waltke connects Sailhamer’s view of Exodus 31:1-5 with Psalm 104:1-3, 30, a Psalm which played a major role in Kline’s argument concerning the wind phenomenon of the theophanic Glory-cloud.

⁸¹ Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 292-296. Kline would likely include water in the consummation event too; for, he views the *absence* of the sea as the water aspect of that event (Kline, *Images*, 26). DeRoche, “Ascribe to the Lord,” 309-315, provides a similar analysis of the first three events.

⁸² Waltke explicitly references Kline’s *Images of the Spirit*, ch. 1 (Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 295n14).

⁸³ See Young, “Interpretation of Genesis 1”; Luyster, “Wind and Water”; Orlinsky, “The Plain Meaning of RU³H in Gen. 1.2”; DeRoche,

comments about them. Kline simply dismisses, for example, alleged extra-biblical, antecedent creation accounts as perversions of the biblical original.⁸⁴

The Glory-cloud's Identity

The most outstanding, and perhaps most idiosyncratic, aspect of Kline's exegesis is his identification of the *rûaḥ elôhîm* in Genesis 1:2 as a theophanic Glory-cloud—a simultaneous theophany of the Spirit and Son, no less. Even on this point, however, there are general antecedents to aspects of Kline's formulation. He is not the only interpreter, for example, to see a theophany in Genesis 1:2. Although some scholars prefer to interpret the Sinai event as the first biblical theophany, properly speaking,⁸⁵ others allow for pre-Sinai theophanies. Jeffrey Niehaus, for example, avers three pre-Fall theophanies (i.e., Gen. 1:2; 1:27-30; 2:15-17) and three pre-Sinai theophanies (i.e., Gen. 3:8; 15; Psa. 29).⁸⁶ Therefore, although his theophany interpretation is relatively unique, it is not entirely idiosyncratic.

Likewise, Kline's connection between clouds and theophanies has at least three analogs: First, Kline himself views his arguments in *Images* as developing ancient exegetical insights into cloud theophanies;⁸⁷ Second, other modern scholars have noted various

"Ascribe to the Lord," 307-309; Gunkel, *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted*, 103-106; Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 81-141.

⁸⁴ Kline, *Images*, 14n2, 14n4, 15n6, 23n32; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 28-29.

⁸⁵ Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence*, 68-72, terms the patriarchal appearances of Yahweh "epiphanic visitations" rather than "theophanies"; for, the former lack characteristic features of the latter, properly defined. Terrien, moreover, does not treat the appearances of Yahweh in the primeval history (i.e. Gen. 1-11). He does, however, briefly refer to the effulgence of Yahweh's divine glory in Genesis 1:2 based on an allusion to this verse in Ezekiel 43:2 (pp. 211-212). Cf. Gwyneth Windsor, "Theophany: Traditions of the Old Testament," *Theology* 75, no. 626 (August 1972): 411-416.

⁸⁶ Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 142-180. At various points Niehaus explicitly builds upon Kline's exegetical arguments.

⁸⁷ Kline, *Images*, 10, 10n1, refers to the dissertation by J. Luzarraga, *Las tradiciones de la nube en la biblia y en el judaismo primitivo*, Analecta Biblica 54 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973).

cloud theophanies in biblical texts;⁸⁸ Third, several exegetes have attempted to combine the “wind” rendering of *rûaḥ elôhîm* in Genesis 1:2 with the theology of the “Spirit/spirit” translation so as to affirm Yahweh’s divine presence in the “wind.” Rashi, for example, asserts the “wind” translation; yet, he comments that “[t]he throne of *Divine* Glory was standing in space, hovering over the face of the waters by the breath of the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, and by His command, even as a dove hovers over its nest.”⁸⁹ Wenham, moreover, adopts a personified translation—“Wind of God”—in order to “express the powerful presence of God moving mysteriously over the face of the waters.”⁹⁰ Likewise, Waltke renders the phrase as “wind from God” and notes, “Since the wind is from God, it is not part of the primordial chaos, but a dynamic, creative presence.”⁹¹ Nicolas Wyatt, furthermore, argues that “We may perhaps take it [i.e. *rûaḥ elôhîm*] as ‘the wind of God,’ but the deity who is in total control of the cosmogonic process is surely present, even perhaps in the notionally neutral form of his ‘wind,’ from the beginning.”⁹² These subtle attempts to combine Yahweh’s presence with the wind clearly evince the same theological sensibility which is foregrounded in Kline’s interpretation.

These antecedents and analogs notwithstanding, Kline’s specific formulation of the Son and Spirit being simultaneously present in the theophanic Glory-cloud is without precedent. Patterson notes several Christological cloud theophanies, but none in Genesis.⁹³ Similarly, besides a few comments on Daniel 7, Sabourin’s references to Christological cloud theophanies are limited primarily to the New Testament.⁹⁴ Despite several subtle

⁸⁸ Richard D. Patterson, “The Imagery of Clouds in the Scriptures,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165, no. 657 (2008): 22-26; Sabourin, “Biblical Cloud.” (NB: Sabourin’s article is a lengthy English summary of Luzarraga’s Spanish dissertation.) Sabourin even comes close to identifying the Glory-cloud at the Exodus with the Spirit in Gen. 1:2 based on an allusion to this verse in Isa. 31:5 (“Biblical Cloud,” 310).

⁸⁹ Rashi, *Genesis*, 3.

⁹⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1987), 17.

⁹¹ Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 182.

⁹² Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis I 2,” 546-547.

⁹³ Patterson, “The Imagery of Clouds in the Scriptures,” 24.

⁹⁴ Sabourin, “Biblical Cloud,” 306-310.

attempts, moreover, to combine aspects of the “Spirit/spirit” and “wind” translations, the exegetical debate remains largely polarized. In this light Kline’s interpretation of the Glory-cloud’s identity—especially his inclusion of the Son theophany—is unique.

The Glory-cloud’s Function

Insofar as function follows essence, where Kline’s identity of the *rûah elôhîm* is idiosyncratic, so are the cosmological- and anthropological-paradigmatic functions he assigns to him. Even though some interpreters infer similar archetypal-ectypal connections as Kline, as, for example, connections between the tabernacle/temple as a microcosmos and the cosmos as a macrocosmic temple,⁹⁵ no scholars connect the archetypal-ectypal anthropological dots in such stark terms as “creative cloning of the archetypal Glory-temple.”⁹⁶

In a masterful understatement, Kline refers to his argument for the paradigmatic function of the Glory-cloud as “some breaking of fresh ground.”⁹⁷ This sentiment is appropriate in two ways: On the one hand, the paradigmatic aspect of Kline’s thesis can be seen as building on the basic principle clearly evident, for example, in the building of the tabernacle (Exo. 25:9), namely, that a heavenly antecedent undergirds Yahweh’s earthly consequents of creation, redemption, and consummation. Kline, then, can be interpreted as simply extending this principle all the way back to the Glory-cloud in Genesis 1:2 and all the way forward to Rev. 22. On the other hand, the profundity of Kline’s theophanic paradigm thesis is striking once one grasps both the pervasiveness of Yahweh’s Glory theophanies throughout Scripture and the weighty implications of claiming that the cosmos and humanity are revelational, ectypal modalities of heaven; for, in this sense *all of reality* becomes the image of God.

4. Conclusions

Viewed within the context of the perennial exegetical debates, Kline’s interpretation of *rûah elôhîm* in Genesis 1:2 evidences many

⁹⁵ Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis 1:2,” 551; Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 182; Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 87.

⁹⁶ Kline, *Images*, 21.

⁹⁷ Kline, *Images*, 10.

similarities with both the “Spirit/spirit” translation and the “wind” rendering. The comparative exegetical method, for example, employed by Kline, especially in terms of individual word studies, is commonplace for advocates of both views. Likewise, Kline’s use of creation and exodus redemptive-historical motifs is shared by advocates of both views. Kline’s combination, moreover, of the divine “Spirit’s” presence with the meteorological “wind” phenomenon lends support for interpreting his view as a possible *via media* between the debated interpretations.

Nevertheless, upon analysis Kline’s interpretation evinces striking idiosyncrasies. Although several interpreters on both sides of the debate assert some form of Yahweh’s presence in the *rûaḥ elôhîm*, Kline is virtually alone in identifying Yahweh’s presence specifically as a theophanic Glory-cloud. No other scholar, moreover, specifically identifies the simultaneous presence of the Son and the Spirit in Genesis 1:2. Furthermore, the paradigmatic function of Kline’s multivalent theophanic Glory-cloud for both cosmology and anthropology is another unique feature of Kline’s formulation. In the context of current scholarship, Kline’s intriguing view, therefore, should be classified not as a *via media*, but as an orthodox *tertium quid*.

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