

Response to *Merit and Moses: A Critique of the Klinean Doctrine of Republication*

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This document combines a series of posts originally published on my blog¹ in response to the book *Merit and Moses: A Critique of the Klinean Doctrine of Republication*, by Andrew M. Elam, Robert C. Van Kooten, and Randall A. Bergquist.²

Introduction

Merit and Moses began life in April 2013 as a “Booklet on Merit in the Doctrine of Republication” presented to the Presbytery of the Northwest of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) as part of its deliberations on the overture to the OPC General Assembly to study the issue of republication. I read it when it was a booklet in 2013. *Merit and Moses* is a more polished book form of that booklet. I’ve carefully read the book twice. If you count the original booklet version, I’ve read it three times. I have a number of reactions and responses that I want to write up.

Let me begin by saying that I know all three authors personally, although I have not been in contact with them since leaving the OPC. Two of the authors were students at Westminster Seminary California (WSC) at the same time that I was a student there. We sat together in the same classrooms. We worshiped together in chapel. In the case of one of the authors, we were pastoral interns in the same church. We studied the Scriptures together under Kline who was one of our influential professors. There was a time (though it seems so long ago now) when we were friends. Now they have decided to launch an all-out attack Kline. They now argue in this book that Kline’s particular formulation of covenant theology is an intolerable deviation from the OPC’s confessional standards.

Because of our past friendship, I have been reluctant to respond to the attacks on Kline coming from those associated with the Northwest Theological Seminary. I do not relish theological controversy. Disputes such as this are painful. But I believe it is time for me to speak out, for several reasons.

First, I must respond simply because the charges they level are so serious and so misleading. They say Kline’s covenant theology “will lead to catastrophic alterations within the system of doctrine” and “will inevitably damage the structure” of the Westminster Confession’s covenant

¹ <http://upper-register.typepad.com/blog/merit-and-moses>. See posts from 6/11/2015 through 8/7/2015. The posts are also easily accessible here: <http://www.monergism.com/merit-and-moses-response-charges-against-doctrine-republication-covenant-works>

² Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2014. I will refer to this book using the abbreviation “MM.”

theology (MM 65). It "disrupts the system of doctrine contained in our Westminster Standards" (MM 134). They charge that Kline's republication doctrine, in violation of baseline Augustinian and Reformed theology, teaches that "a group of fallen sinners can merit or extract a blessing from God" (MM 39). And, even worse, Kline's republication doctrine "serves to undermine the singular glory of Christ's meritorious obedience" (MM 116). These charges cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged.

Second, with the publication of *Merit and Moses* and the formation of the OPC Republication Study Committee, it seems their charges are beginning to get some traction. They have even managed to get respected Reformed professors, such as Robert Strimple (another former professor of mine at WSC), Cornelis Venema, and Richard Gaffin, to endorse their book attacking Kline and those of us who appreciate Kline's biblical-theological and covenantal insights. They also were able to get OPC pastor William Shishko to write the Foreword for their book, as well as an endorsement from Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) pastor Mark Jones, author of a recent book on antinomianism.³ Seeing so many take this book seriously is troubling.

Third, I feel the need to respond since I am quoted in this book, specifically my article "Redefining Merit" in the Kline Festschrift.⁴ The title of my article is even used as the title of Part 2 of the book: "Redefining Merit: The Klinean Paradigm Shift" (MM 41). They seem to have taken my article as their starting point to find a foothold to make an argument that Kline's republication doctrine is a "catastrophic" departure from orthodoxy.

No Exegetical Engagement

In due course, I will attempt to summarize and respond to the book's central argument that Klinean republication "disrupts the system of doctrine" contained in the Westminster Standards (MM 134). But before doing so, I want to articulate two criticisms about the method of MM.

My first criticism as to method is that the authors completely ignore Kline's exegetical basis for his views, particularly his exegesis of Paul's teaching on the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

- They never acknowledge Paul's striking quotations of Lev 18:5, "The one who does these things [= the statutes of the Mosaic law] shall live by them" (Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12).
- They never deal with Paul's understanding of "the curse of the law" (Gal 3:10, 13; quoting from the curses of the Mosaic covenant to be declared on Mount Ebal, Deut 27:15-26).

³ Mark Jones, *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcome Guest?* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2013).

⁴ Lee Irons, "Redefining Merit: An Examination of Medieval Presuppositions in Covenant Theology," pp. 253-69 in *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator: A Festschrift for Meredith G. Kline* (ed. Howard Griffith and John R. Muether; Greenville, SC: Reformed Academic Press/Reformed Theological Seminary, 2000). Available online at http://www.upper-register.com/papers/redefining_merit.pdf

- They fail to acknowledge the crucial, architectural importance of Gal 3:15-24 as a major source for Kline's view.⁵
- They ignore Paul's teaching that the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant are "two covenants" (Gal 4:24), with distinct and contrasting principles of inheritance (Gal 3:18).

This lack of exegetical engagement is puzzling. Others have recognized this weakness in the book as well. For example, in his *Reformation21* review, Stephen Myers noted:

Someone new to this entire debate could pick up *Kingdom Prologue*, flip through it; then pick up *Merit and Moses*, flip through it; and come to the conclusion that Kline's argument is the one more self-consciously rooted in the Scriptures.⁶

And David Murray observed:

MM is strong on systematic and confessional theology. However it makes little or no attempt to base its arguments on exegesis of Bible verses or to deal with some of the verses that seem to support RP [the republication paradigm] (e.g. Lev. 18:5 and Gal. 3:12).⁷

As David Murray admitted, there are "verses that seem to support republication." And yet they avoid exegetical engagement with these verses and focus almost exclusively on attempting to make the case that Klinean republication is ruled out by the Westminster Confession.

Kline's critics need to wrestle with Paul's teaching on the Mosaic covenant ("the law") with the same energy that they spend on the Confessional question. This is not to demean the latter question. There is a place for asking it. But to *only* ask that question without looking at the exegesis behind Kline's covenant theology produces a skewed result. It is imperative for the critics to engage Kline's exegesis of key passages like Galatians 3, because even if they don't agree at the end of the day, they would see that Kline's republication doctrine is well-grounded in the text. And that would make it harder to claim that it "disrupts the system of doctrine" contained in the Westminster Standards.

No Historical-Theological Engagement

Since the MM authors have chosen not to engage the underlying exegetical issues and have opted to focus almost exclusively on the Confessional question, one might expect their handling of the Confessional question to be well executed. But here too their method leaves something to be desired.

⁵ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 22-25; idem, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 320-21.

⁶ <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/critiquing-the-klinean-doctrine-of-republication.php>

⁷ <http://headhearhand.org/blog/2014/08/14/merit-and-moses-part-4>

This is my second criticism about method: the authors do not acknowledge or engage the variety of Reformed thought in the 17th century, and this leads them to unduly narrow the circle of orthodoxy permitted by the Confession. It is becoming increasingly well known that Reformed theology in the time of early and high orthodoxy (from the last few decades of the 16th century to the end of the 17th century) was not a monolithic entity.

Many contemporary historical theologians are making this point with increasing clarity. For example, John Fesko, in his detailed study *Beyond Calvin*, has demonstrated this diversity, focusing particularly on the topic of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*).⁸

In relation to debate over the Mosaic covenant, Brenton Ferry has shown just how thick was the underbrush of views on this topic. Ferry notes: "During the seventeenth century in England there was no shortage of debate about the Mosaic covenant."⁹

Or consider the multi-author volume, *Drawn into Controversie*, which opens with a major introductory chapter by Richard Muller titled "Diversity in the Reformed Tradition."¹⁰ The volume covers a number of 17th century Reformed debates, but most relevant here is Chapter 8, "The 'Old' Covenant," in which Mark Jones provides another taxonomy of views of Mosaic covenant, recognizing both dichotomist (covenant of works and covenant of grace) and trichotomist (covenant of works, covenant of grace, and subservient covenant) approaches within Reformed orthodoxy.

Yet the authors of MM seem unaware of this burgeoning academic discussion of Reformed diversity. They claim, without providing historical-theological evidence, that the Westminster Confession presents an airtight, single position that excludes not only Klinean republication but any version of republication. The authors claim that the Westminster Standards have "carefully," "clearly," "exactly," and in a "precise way," defined all the issues surrounding covenant theology, so that there is a "long-established consensus viewpoint" from which no deviation is allowed.

The church has in its possession a carefully crafted and long-established consensus viewpoint that has emerged from the historical discussion on the covenants. The creeds and confessions of the Reformed churches have carefully defined *exactly in what sense* a covenant may be called a covenant of works or covenant of grace, and *exactly* how merit, justice and good works are to be defined. To argue that the Reformed tradition can affirm that the Mosaic covenant is *in some undefined sense* a covenant of works belies the truth that there is already a clearly defined understanding of Scripture's teaching in our hands. To simply reiterate the "in some sense" thesis constitutes a failure to demonstrate the

⁸ J. V. Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)* (Reformed Historical Theology 20; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

⁹ Brenton Ferry, "Works in the Mosaic Covenant: A Reformed Taxonomy," pp. 76–105 in *The Law is Not of Faith* (ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen; Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009); see p. 77. Cp. Ferry's more extensive ThM thesis available at http://www.mtairyopc.org/mtairyopc.org/Library_files/Ferry'sThesis_2.pdf

¹⁰ Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones, eds., *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-century British Puritanism* (Reformed Historical Theology 17; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

precise way in which the republication view accords with the clear consensus view of the Westminster Standards (MM 81).

But is it really plausible to claim that the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) has defined covenant theology so exactly that no areas are left undefined? This is very hard to believe, given the fact that there were many areas that were left undefined by the divines so as to allow multiple orthodox positions. On many points that were controverted by the orthodox, the Westminster Assembly tended to seek formulations that would allow multiple views so as to reach consensus. And we know that in the 17th century there were multiple views of the nature of the Mosaic covenant and its relationship to the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. It is more reasonable to believe that the WCF was a consensus document that staked out the boundaries of orthodoxy widely enough to allow a variety of ways of formulating the presence of a works principle in the Mosaic economy.

Before one can conclude that the Confession has ruled out a view, one must examine the intent of the Confession, and that can only be done by means of detailed, historical spadework. One must engage the 17th century Reformed sources that would shed light on the Confession's language. I do not have the expertise or access to the sources to do that well, but all the reading I have done suggests there were a variety of ways of formulating the works principle in the Mosaic economy held among orthodox Reformed theologians of the time. It is difficult to believe all of these formulations were intentionally excluded by the Westminster divines, and the only position allowed was the one held by John Murray and the authors of MM, namely, that the Mosaic covenant is a "pure covenant of grace" that "excludes any element" (MM 99-100) of a covenant of works.

I have noted how the method of MM is lacking: the book displays a troubling lack of both exegetical and historical-theological engagement. These are not minor issues. These defects affect their whole argument, since both types of engagement are necessary if they are to be successful in making their case well. Without engaging Kline's exegesis, and without engaging the historical-theological context of the Westminster Confession, they really have no right to draw the conclusion they want to draw, namely, that Klinean republication should not be tolerated because it "disturbs the system of doctrine" contained in the Westminster Confession.

Summary of Their Argument

Having aired my two criticisms as to method of the authors of MM, I now want to take the time to accurately summarize the argument of the book. Their argument unfolds in three parts:

Part 1: Background to the Republication Paradigm (Chs. 1–4)

Part 2: Redefining Merit: The Klinean Paradigm Shift (Chs. 5–8)

Part 3: The Instability of the Republication Paradigm (Chs. 9–12)

Part 1: Background to the Republication Paradigm

In Part 1: Background to the Republication Paradigm (Chs. 1–4), they describe the origin of Kline's views of covenant theology. Their claim in this section is that Kline formulated his views

of merit and of the Mosaic covenant in the context of and in reaction to the erroneous teaching of Norman Shepherd, who taught at Westminster Theological Seminary from 1963 to 1982.

The authors of MM deploy the analogy of a pendulum that swings back and forth away from the central plumb line. The central plumb line of orthodoxy is represented by the Westminster Confession or, more accurately, their reading of the Westminster Confession. Just as Shepherd deviated from the plumb line in one direction, so Kline, in the heat of his polemical reaction to Shepherd's deviation, deviated from the plumb line of the Confession in the opposite direction.

Shepherd deviated in the direction of mono-covenantalism, making all covenants, including the pre-Fall covenant with Adam, administrations of one covenant of grace. Shepherd's error absolutely denies even a legitimate law-gospel contrast, that is, the contrast between the covenant of works before the Fall and the covenant of grace after the Fall. This denial of the contrast between the pre-Fall covenant of works and the post-Fall covenant of grace led him to deny the faith-works contrast with respect to justification.

Kline deviated in the opposite direction of republicanism, making a stark contrast between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, and then taking it a step too far by having the covenant of works republished in the Mosaic economy. If Shepherd made too little of the law-gospel contrast, basically erasing it, Kline's error makes too much of the law-gospel contrast, even introducing a works or merit principle after the Fall in the Mosaic economy.

In what follows, I will challenge this interpretation of the origin and development of Kline's view in relation to the Shepherd controversy. But for now, it must be noted that the "plumb line and pendulum" analogy sets the stage for the rest of the book by making it plausible to think that Klinean republicanism is contrary to the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession. We are all aware of the human tendency to over-react in response to an error, thus creating new errors. No evidence has yet been adduced showing that Kline's views actually do disturb the system of doctrine, but the pendulum analogy makes it plausible and creates a presumption that Kline is guilty of serious theological errors.

Part 2: Redefining Merit: The Klinean Paradigm Shift

Having established a presumption of guilt through their "plumb line and pendulum" analogy, the authors move on to Part 2: Redefining Merit: The Klinean Paradigm Shift (Chs. 5–8). It is in this section that we come to the heart of their case against Klinean republicanism. Their main argument can be stated succinctly: in his zeal to maintain the clarity of the law-gospel contrast against the errors of Shepherd, Kline overreacted and defined merit in a novel way that departed from the Reformed tradition.

Before we can understand Kline's novel definition of merit, we must understand how the Reformed tradition defined merit. In the view of the authors of MM, the traditional definition can be seen at least by implication in the Westminster Confession and the Canons of Dort, and more explicitly in Francis Turretin's five conditions for "true merit" (MM 55-57). Drawing on these sources, the authors of MM boil merit down to the following definition: for a work to be truly

meritorious it must be (1) absolutely perfect and (2) performed by one who is ontologically equal with God (MM 106).

Of course, this means that the only true merit is the merit of Christ. If Adam had not sinned, even his obedience would not have qualified as true merit, since he would have met the first condition (perfect obedience) but not the second (ontological equality with God). Therefore, the MM authors argue, we must distinguish between "improper or covenant merit" and "proper or strict merit." Adam would have been capable of the first, but not the second. Only Christ's obedience qualifies as strict merit.

Contrary to this traditional understanding of merit (with its two types, covenant merit vs. strict merit), Kline reacted against Shepherd and came up with a novel definition of merit. The authors claim that the core element in Kline's redefinition of merit is the notion that God is at liberty to define any obedient act as meritorious by his mere will or word, without requiring perfection and without ontological considerations. "Merit is whatever God says it is" (MM 67).

This new definition of merit was originally developed by Kline in reference to the question whether Adam before the Fall could have merited the reward of eschatological advancement. That is a serious enough of a departure from the Reformed tradition. But having redefined merit as whatever God says it is, Kline (they claim) took things a step further. He applied this novel definition of merit, originally developed in reference to debate whether Adam could merit eschatological advancement in the pre-Fall covenant of works, to the *post-Fall* situation. If merit is whatever God says it is, and the work need not even be perfect, then sinners can merit blessings from God according to Kline. This is the reason Kline could speak of Noah, Abraham, and Israel meriting temporal blessings, even though they were sinners.

The central error of Klinean republication has now been pinpointed in the minds of the authors of MM. Kline's "redefinition of merit ... is central and foundational to the doctrine of republication" (MM 59). "By removing all ontological considerations, this redefinition of merit permits what the traditional view has rejected, namely, the possibility of any type of meritorious accomplishment by fallen man" (MM 77). This is Kline's fundamental error in the minds of the authors of MM.

In his fifth-century debate with the heretic Pelagius, Augustine long ago refuted the idea that sinners could possibly do anything to merit God's blessing. Kline has aligned himself with Pelagius and against Augustine. Positing even the possibility of post-Fall merit is a violation of baseline Augustinian and Reformed orthodoxy. Klinean republication has now been shown guilty of gross unorthodoxy, since it affirms that a group of fallen, sinful humans (the Israelites) could merit temporal blessings from God.

Part 3: Instability of the Republication Paradigm

We come now to Part 3: The Instability of the Republication Paradigm (Chs. 9–12). In this section, the authors of MM draw out what they believe are further implications of the republication paradigm, implications they see as disturbing the system of doctrine of the

Westminster Standards. They charge Klinean republication with disturbing the Westminster Confession's system of doctrine in four main areas:

- *The covenant of works* (MM Ch. 9): Klinean republication deviates from the Confessional definition of the covenant of works.
- *The covenant of grace* (MM Ch. 10): Klinean republication implies that the Mosaic covenant is a mixed covenant that contains incompatible principles of works and grace. In this way, Klinean republication is "a clear departure from the confessional conception of the Mosaic covenant as a *pure* covenant of grace in its substance" (MM 100, emphasis added).
- *The merit of Christ* (MM Ch. 11): Klinean republication compromises the necessity of Christ's meritorious obedience and clouds the unique glory of Christ's merit.
- *The doctrine of good works* (MM Ch. 12): Klinean republication creates spiritual schizophrenia in the piety of OT and NT believers, encouraging them to a sense of entitlement, viewing God's rewards for their good works as something they merited, rather than as his gracious acceptance of their flawed works.

Finally, in their Conclusion, they summarize their critique by listing 18 ways in which the republication paradigm disrupts the Confession's system of doctrine. Most of these 18 points were already discussed at greater length in the body of the book.

To summarize:

Part 1 provides the background. They argue that Kline developed his republication paradigm in the context of the controversy over the teachings of Norman Shepherd. Kline over-reacted against Shepherd and went into a pendulum swing that deviated from the plumb line of the Westminster Confession.

Part 2 pinpoints what they perceive to be Kline's fundamental error—his redefinition of merit in non-ontological terms as whatever God says it is. But that is just the beginning. Kline really went off the rails when he applied his new definition of merit to Israel in the post-Fall Mosaic covenant. This key move stands at the heart of the republication paradigm and is what allows Kline to say that *sinners* can merit or extract blessings from God.

Part 3 examines the ramifications of Klinean republication with regard to four important theological topics. Their implicit aim is to show that Klinean republication ought not to be tolerated in a church such as the OPC that confesses the Westminster Standards.

Response to the Core Argument

I have summarized the argument of MM, surveying its development in three stages (Parts 1–3 of the book). I have tried to be as objective as possible in reporting and summarizing the book's critique of Klinean republication. Now the time has come to respond. There are so many claims

in this book, it is difficult to decide where to start. It is tempting to go through the book in order and respond to point-by-point to each chapter. Another approach might be to begin at the end and rebut each of the 18 charges in the Conclusion. But I think such shot-gun approaches would yield a diluted response. Instead, I've decided to begin by responding to their core argument.

Let's review their core argument. The authors of MM claim Kline engaged in a two-step process: first, he redefined merit as whatever God says it is; second, based on that redefinition of merit, he argued for the possibility that a group of sinners (the Israelites) could merit temporal blessings in the land. The logic of this move is as follows: if God has the liberty to stipulate that a given act of obedience is meritorious and worthy of receiving a reward, without requiring that the act be perfect or that the doer of the act be ontologically equal with God, then he has the liberty to stipulate that sinners can do imperfect works he will deem meritorious according to the terms of the covenant. Kline's notion that God can define merit in whatever way he wants to define it is the basis of Kline's thesis that the Mosaic covenant republished the covenant of works with a group of sinners (the Israelites). Because of God's freedom to ignore considerations of perfection and ontology, God was able, by his mere covenant word, to deem their imperfect and sinful works as meritorious (or at least potentially meritorious) in his sight.

This may sound persuasive to those predisposed to dislike Kline. But there is a major difficulty with it. The difficulty is that Kline never defined merit in that manner. While he would not have agreed with the authors of MM that for a work to be meritorious it must be performed by one who is ontologically equal with God, he did agree that it must be perfect, in accordance with his justice. Kline never wrote or implied that God has liberty to define merit by his mere word or will, untethered from his character as a God of perfect justice. One should be suspicious of this central claim in the book based on the simple observation that they provide hardly any quotes by Kline to support it.

They do have one lonely snippet of a quote. They quote Kline as saying: "God's covenant Word is definitive of justice" (quoted at MM 68). But they have taken that quote out of context and twisted it to mean the opposite of Kline's intent. Let's read it in context, where it is clear that God's justice (not his will) receives the emphasis:

Also involved in this radical revision of covenant theology is an assault on the justice of God, for entailed in the discounting of the merit of the act of probationary obedience is the setting up of a standard of justice above God and his judgments. To refuse to acknowledge the pure and perfect justice of God's covenantal stipulation of a heavenly reward for the performance of the mandated probation task is to fail to recognize that *God's covenant Word is definitive of justice*. It is to deny that the name of the Judge of all the earth is Just.¹¹

Kline did not claim that merit should be defined in purely voluntaristic terms as whatever God says it is. He closely tethered the concept of merit to the character of God, specifically, the justice of God. He viewed God's covenant word as the *revelation* of God's justice. God does not simply assign merit to some arbitrary deed by his mere will or word. Kline makes this crystal

¹¹ Meredith G. Kline, *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 64 (emphasis added). Hereafter cited as "GHHM."

clear (and keep in mind that this paragraph is in the context of his discussion of the Adamic covenant of works, not the Mosaic covenant):

A proper approach will hold that God is just and his justice is expressed in all his acts; in particular, it is expressed in the covenant he institutes. The terms of the covenant—the stipulated reward for the stipulated service—are a revelation of that justice. As a revelation of God's justice the terms of the covenant define justice. According to this definition, Adam's obedience would have merited the reward of eternal life and not a gram of grace would have been involved.¹²

For Kline, we as creatures do not have permission from God to evaluate the terms of the covenant of works, measure things on an ontological scale of our choosing, and decide whether the terms of that covenant are just or whether the work demanded would merit the reward offered. Rather, the terms of the covenant ("the stipulated reward for the stipulated service") reveal God's justice. As creatures created in covenant with God, we don't have secret access to the knowledge of God's justice independently of the covenant.

So the first step of the core argument of MM is based on a misrepresentation of Kline's definition of merit. It is simply not the case that Kline defined merit in a way that was based on God's will apart from his nature as the God of justice, as if "merit is whatever God says it is" (MM 67).

What about the second step of their core argument? They claim Kline's voluntaristic definition of merit undergirds and makes possible his doctrine that the Mosaic covenant is a republication of the covenant of works:

This redefinition [of merit] was first applied to the notion of Adamic merit in the original covenant of works. In the development of Kline's teaching, it also came to undergird and shape Israel's "typological merit" in the republication of the covenant of works under Moses The traditional view required that a work be perfect in order to merit before God. In the redefined view underlying the republication position, perfection is no longer absolutely necessary This redefinition of merit ... is central and foundational to the doctrine of republication (MM 41, 48, 59).

It is simply not the case that Kline's definition of merit "came to undergird" his republication doctrine. They provide no quotes where he explicitly moves from point A to point B, that is, from his view of merit (which arose in the context of debate whether *Adam* could have merited under the covenant of works) to his view that the Mosaic covenant was, at the typological layer, a republication of the covenant of the works. And they would not be able to find any quotes to that effect, since, as we have seen, Kline did not hold a voluntaristic definition of merit in which God is at liberty, by his mere will, untethered from his justice, to define imperfect deeds performed by sinners as meritorious.

The authors of MM further claim that Kline, based on his voluntaristic definition of merit, taught that sinners can "extract" a blessing from God (MM 39), that God "makes himself indebted" to

¹² Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 115. Hereafter cited as "KP."

sinful man (MM 77). They argue that, for Kline, the category of merit applies "equally" to Christ, Adam, Israel (MM 68, 112); these figures are "interchangeable" (MM 117). "The fact that Israel's works are those of fallen sinful creatures is completely irrelevant" (MM 69).

All these outlandish charges flow from their faulty starting point, but bear no relationship to reality. Kline never said or implied that sinners can "extract" a blessing from God. Kline never said or implied that the category of merit applies "equally" to Christ, Adam, and Israel. Kline certainly never said or implied that the sinfulness of Israel is "completely irrelevant." Again, they are not able to bring forward any quotes supporting these allegations—in this case, not even a lonely snippet of a quote.

Now, it is true that Kline occasionally spoke of a kind of "meritorious" obedience in the post-Fall situation, as either something that occurred (e.g., in the case of the exemplary obedience of Noah, Abraham, and David), or as something God required (e.g., in the case of Israel under the republished works principle in the Mosaic covenant). But Kline recognized that any "merit" on the part of sinners in the post-Fall situation is in a special category by itself—it is emphatically *typological* merit. After the Fall, the imperfect obedience of certain OT saints (sinners saved by grace incapable of truly meriting anything) could function typologically only if God "constituted" those individuals as typological signs of the coming Messiah and "invested" their flawed obedience with typological significance. Kline writes:

The biblical data indicate that the Lord was pleased to take the exemplary obedience of certain of his servants and to *constitute that a typological sign* of how the obedience of the coming messianic Servant of the Lord would secure the kingdom and its royal-priestly blessings for himself and for his people. Abraham and David were recipients of such covenants of grant as rewards for faithfulness. Phinehas was another (cf. Num 25:11–13). Each of these individuals had personal hope of heaven only through God's grace in Jesus Christ, only as a gift received by faith alone. But the conspicuous faithfulness of their lives in general or of certain specific acts of outstanding service they performed *was invested by the Lord with typological significance* so that they, with reference to a typological manifestation of the kingdom, pointed to Christ as one who also was under a covenant of works and received the grant of the kingdom for the obedient fulfillment of his covenantal mission (KP 237-38, emphasis added).

Here is another quote by Kline making the same point:

Within this typological structure Abraham emerges as an appointed sign of his promised messianic seed, the Servant of the Lord, whose fulfillment of his covenantal mission was the meritorious ground of the inheritance of the antitypical, eschatological kingdom by the true, elect Israel of all nations. Certainly, Abraham's works did not have that status. They were, however, *accorded by God an analogous kind of value* with respect to the typological stage represented by the old covenant *It was only a typological pointer* but the obedience of Abraham that God assessed as meritorious on these two occasions was richly symbolic of Messiah's mission (KP 325-26, emphasis added).

Whether we are talking about Noah, Abraham, David, or corporate Israel, these sinners did not themselves merit blessings in the same sense that Adam could have or that Christ did. Rather, God invested the imperfect obedience of sinful men with symbolic significance so that *within the logic of the typological picture* their obedience could function as the legal ground of blessing (which is a significant part of what Kline means when he says an act is "meritorious"). Their obedience was not, in itself, truly meritorious, since that would require their obedience to have occurred under a true covenant of works. Rather, their obedience occurred under a typological covenant of works, and so their obedience was a "typological pointer" that looked back to the obedience Adam failed to yield and forward to the obedience of the second Adam.

Additionally, Kline made it clear that God's appointment of national Israel to be a type of Christ's probation under the works principle was itself a privilege of grace:

The Old Covenant order, theirs by national election, was one of highest historical privilege. And while a works principle was operative both in the grant of the kingdom to Abraham and in the meting out of typological kingdom blessings to the nation of Israel, *the arrangement as a whole was a gracious favor to fallen sons of Adam, children of wrath deserving no blessings, temporal or eternal* (GHHM 128, emphasis added).

That last clause is particularly telling and directly contradicts the central claim of MM. Remember, the fundamental theological error of Klinean republication, in their view, is the assertion that fallen sinners can merit or extract temporal blessings from God. In the above quote, Kline explicitly rejects that. To the degree that he speaks of sinners (whether Noah, Abraham, or the Israelites) having a kind of "merit" (typological merit) in the post-Fall situation it is only because God in his grace had appointed these sinners to serve as types of Christ and accorded their sinful works a value analogous to the merit of Christ. The entire arrangement (national Israel as a typical kingdom under a typological covenant of works) "was a gracious favor to fallen sons of Adam." The Israelites were sinners "deserving no blessings, temporal or eternal." So it is simply not the case that, for Kline, "the fact that Israel's works are those of fallen sinful creatures is completely irrelevant" (MM 69).

In sum, the core argument of *Merit and Moses* against Klinean rests on two mistakes. First, they charge Kline with a voluntaristic view of merit, a view that he never held and which they are unable to document from his writings. But second, with that mistaken understanding of Kline's view of merit in place, they engage in equivocation and say that when Kline speaks of Noah's or Abraham's or Israel's "merit" after the Fall, he is using that term in the same sense as in his discussion of the merit of Adam and Christ. But Kline clearly qualifies his discussion of post-Fall merit and sets it apart as qualitatively different. He makes clear that in these post-Fall cases he is referring to imperfect obedience that has been "invested by the Lord with typological significance," an investment which is itself an act of grace. And so it is the fallacy of equivocation for the authors of MM to claim that, for Kline, the category of merit applies "equally" to Christ, Adam, Israel (MM 68, 112).

Response to the Pendulum Analogy

I've dealt with the core argument of MM. Now I want to respond to some of the lesser claims of the book. I begin with their pendulum analogy.

In Part 1, they offer their reading of recent history related to the controversy over justification at Westminster Theological Seminary that took place from 1975 to 1983. They allege that Kline developed his view of the Mosaic covenant in reaction to Norman Shepherd (MM 28-33). They use the metaphor of reactionary "pendulum swings" throughout the book, arguing that the center or plumb line is given by the Confession, and both Shepherd and Kline represent extreme deviations from the plumb line. First came Shepherd, who deviated from the plumb line by denying the covenant of works, even before the Fall. Then, along came Kline, who reacted against Shepherd's errors by going in the opposite extreme of seeing not only the covenant of works before the Fall but also seeing it as republished after the Fall in the Mosaic economy.

But is this how things unfolded? It is true that the Shepherd controversy prompted Kline to sharpen some of his formulations of covenant theology, but it is not accurate to say that he developed the republication doctrine in response to Shepherd. In the 1960s, long before the Shepherd controversy, Kline had already identified what he perceived to be an error in Murray's definition of covenant as a sovereign administration of grace and argued rather that covenant is a generic concept that includes both promise covenant and law covenant, of which the Mosaic was one.

Kline's book, *By Oath Consigned*, was published in 1968, at least seven years before the first sparks of the Shepherd controversy in 1975. In that book, he wrote:

The Sinaitic administration ... Paul interpreted as in itself a dispensation of the kingdom inheritance opposite in principle to inheritance by guaranteed promise The Sinaitic Covenant in itself, as a covenant ratified by Israel's oath, made law obedience by the Israelites themselves the way of life-inheritance.¹³

In fact, the basis of this section of *By Oath Consigned* was an earlier article titled "Law Covenant" that was published in the *Westminster Theological Journal* in 1964.¹⁴ That was eleven years before the Shepherd's controversial teaching on justification by faith and works, or by obedient faith, had broken out.

The authors of MM ignore the fact that the original pendulum swing happened long before the Shepherd controversy, when John Murray reacted against dispensationalism and argued in 1953 that historic Reformed covenant theology "needs recasting":

¹³ Kline, *By Oath Consigned* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 22, 32. Hereafter cited as "BOC."

¹⁴ Meredith G. Kline, "Law Covenant," *Westminster Theological Journal* 27 (1964/65): 1-20. Available online at <http://www.meredithkline.com/files/articles/Law-Covenant.pdf>

It appears to me that the covenant theology, notwithstanding the finesse of analysis with which it was worked out and the grandeur of its articulated systematization, needs recasting.¹⁵

What was Murray referring to when he said that covenant theology "needs recasting"? The authors of MM claim the recasting was restricted to the narrow point of seeing covenant not as a "mutual pact" but as something God sovereignly initiates and administers (MM 15). This was certainly part of the recasting, but there was more to Murray's agenda than that. It has to do with the very definition of "covenant." After surveying the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the New covenants, Murray concludes as follows:

In all this we have the covenant as a sovereign administration of grace and promise, constituting the relation of communion with God, coming to its richest and fullest expression From the beginning of God's disclosures to men in terms of covenant we find a unity of conception which is to the effect that a divine covenant is a sovereign administration of grace and of promise.¹⁶

One of the prime implications of this definition is that even the Mosaic covenant must be viewed as "a sovereign administration of grace and promise." But it may be objected, "How does the conditionality of the Mosaic covenant, with its blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, comport with the notion that it is a sovereign administration of grace?"

The answer must follow the lines which have been delineated above in connection with the keeping of the Abrahamic covenant. What needs to be emphasized now is that the Mosaic covenant in respect of the condition of obedience is not in a different category from the Abrahamic There is nothing that is principally different in the necessity of keeping the covenant and of obedience to God's voice, which proceeds from the Mosaic covenant, from that which is involved in the keeping required in the Abrahamic.¹⁷

Murray recognized that by "recasting" of covenant theology in this way, he was distancing himself from a view of the Mosaic covenant that was widely held by mainstream covenant theologians before him:

The view that in the Mosaic covenant there was a repetition of the so-called covenant of works, current among covenant theologians, is a grave misconception and involved an erroneous construction of the Mosaic covenant, as well as fails to assess the uniqueness of the Adamic administration. The Mosaic covenant was distinctly redemptive in character and was continuous with and extensive of the Abrahamic covenants.¹⁸

By defining covenant as "a sovereign administration of grace and promise," a definition that applies to *every* covenant, Murray made it impossible to affirm either that the pre-Fall covenant

¹⁵ John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace: A Biblico-Theological Study* (London: Tyndale, 1953), 5.

¹⁶ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 29, 31.

¹⁷ Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 22.

¹⁸ Murray, "The Adamic Administration," in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), vol. 2, p. 50.

was a covenant of works, or that the Mosaic covenant involved in some way a repetition of the covenant of works. He thereby made structural changes to covenant theology that impinged upon the Pauline law-gospel contrast and the heart of the gospel. Kline's 1964 article, "Law Covenant," is a response to Murray's recasting of covenant theology in which he reduced the covenant concept to guaranteed promise. In that article, Kline wrote:

Historical exegesis, therefore, contradicts any claim that might be made for the exclusive propriety of the use of "covenant" for divine dispensations of guaranteed promise. The evidence from all sides converges to demonstrate that the systematic theologian possesses ample warrant to speak of both promise covenant and, in sharp distinction from that, of law covenant Rejection of the equation of covenant with the election-guaranteed promise principle is necessary to avoid the conceptual fragmentation of the theology of the covenant.¹⁹

Why is it so important to Kline to have a definition of covenant that is broad enough to include both types of covenants? It is because he sees that if covenant is reduced to promise covenant, then there is no room for law covenant (i.e., covenants of the works variety – whether pre-Fall or Mosaic), and if there is no room for law covenant, then the obedience of Christ (and therefore the gospel) is negated. Kline says:

It is by the obedience of the one that the many are made righteous unto eternal life. Though the many inherit the blessings not by law (in the Gal. 3:18 sense) but by promise, they are not heirs at all except they are heirs in and through Christ, joint-heirs with Christ. For the promises of the covenant are yea and amen only in Christ. And therefore the promises are made secure to the many according to the principle of inheritance by law after all If it is the obedience of the one that is the ground of the promise-guarantee given to the many, then clearly the principle of law is more fundamental than that of promise The blessings of redemption are secured by the works of a federal head who must satisfy the law's demands.²⁰

Murray himself did not deny the active obedience of Christ, or confuse faith and works as the instrument of justification. But his successor, Shepherd, did. And Kline saw this as the bitter fruit of Murray's recasting of covenant theology (in reaction to dispensationalism) in a way that reduced all covenants to covenants of grace and left no room for covenants of the works variety as the foundation for the obedience of Christ. Shepherd's pendulum swing away from the plumb line was initiated by Murray, who did not want to speak of covenants of the works variety, whether pre-Fall or Mosaic. Kline returned the pendulum back to the plumb line by bringing back the notion of republication into the contemporary discussion of Reformed covenant theology, an understanding that even Murray recognized was "current among covenant theologians" prior to his recasting.

¹⁹ Kline, "Law Covenant," 8, 17.

²⁰ Kline, "Law Covenant," 12-13.

An Unstable Paradigm?

In Part 3 (Chapters 9–12), the authors of MM charge Klinean republication with being “an unstable theological paradigm” (MM 82). They analyze its alleged instability by examining how it affects four theological topics: the covenant of works (Ch. 9), the covenant of grace (Ch. 10), the merit of Christ (Ch. 11), and the doctrine of good works (Ch. 12). Initially, I considered responding to each chapter separately, but the more I reflected on their arguments in Part 3, it occurred to me that one theme ran through most of these chapters. That main theme is captured by their charge that Klinean republication is “an unstable theological paradigm” because of Kline’s two-layer cake metaphor, with the covenant of grace at the underlying level and then a superadded typological layer governed by the works principle. Here are some quotes illustrating this fundamental concern:

It is impossible for God to renew a covenant of works with fallen man This combination of substantially differing elements in the construction of the two levels of the Mosaic covenant necessarily leads to the creation of two competing “natures” within a single covenant The Abrahamic covenant “is characterized by faith” but the Mosaic covenant “is characterized by works of the law” Thus, in the Republication Paradigm, the “dual nature” of the Mosaic covenant has led to the creation of an incoherent, unstable system. Grace and works have been combined as opposing principles in a single covenant in a “tug of war” kind of tension with one another The presence of a works-merit principle for receiving God’s favor cannot coexist (by definition) in a covenant that is based on the necessity of God’s grace for fallen sinners (MM 87, 100, 101, 103).

The authors of MM are concerned about what they perceive to be the “instability” and “incoherence” of the Klinean republication doctrine, caused especially by its two-layer metaphor for the Mosaic economy. As they see it, it is not enough to keep the covenant of works and the covenant of grace distinct *spatially*. They must be kept distinct *temporally*. On their view, the covenant of works must be an exclusively pre-Fall covenant, and from the Fall onward, there can be nothing but a pure covenant of grace governing God’s relationships with fallen man. Klinean republication confuses this clear temporal bifurcation (pre-Fall vs. post-Fall) by seeing the covenant of works republished after the Fall in the Mosaic economy at the top layer. Doing so creates a “tug of war” between these two opposed principles of works and grace. Hence, the instability of the republication paradigm. This alleged instability caused by mixing a covenant of grace and a covenant of works after the Fall seems to be one of their primary concerns.

But there are problems with this charge. To begin, by insisting that the works principle must be sealed off temporally so that it exists only in the pre-Fall situation, they will need to take up their argument with Paul himself, who saw the works principle as something God reintroduced after the Fall. “The law, which came 430 years afterward [that is, after the Abrahamic covenant] ... was added because of transgressions” (Gal 3:17, 19). Many commentators agree that “because of transgressions” means “to turn existing sin into transgression.”²¹

²¹ Douglas Moo, *Galatians* (BECNT; Baker, 2013), 234.

This is reinforced by Paul's teaching in Romans. "The law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression" (Rom 4:15). In the next chapter this is explained further. Although Rom 5:12-21 is primarily about the comparison and contrast between the two Adams, the secondary issue of the Mosaic law also comes into view. Paul says, "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam" (Rom 5:14). In saying this, Paul implies that the sinning of the Israelites from the time of Moses onward was like the transgression of Adam (cp. Hosea 6:7). With the advent of the Mosaic law, they began sinning again in an Adam-like way, that is, under a law covenant. They weren't merely sinning but were transgressing a works-based covenant. To make this clear, Paul later on says that "The law came in [after Adam's Fall] to increase the trespass [of Adam]" (Rom 5:20). With the introduction of the Mosaic law, Adam's one trespass was multiplied in corporate Israel on the grand scale of human history, so that Israel's Fall becomes a reenactment and expansion of Adam's original transgression. "The law came in to increase the trespass."

The authors of MM cannot be right in their claim that the works principle can only exist in a hermetically sealed pre-Fall container, since it appears to be a significant part of Paul's analysis of the shape of covenantal redemptive history to recognize God's wisdom in fashioning it the way he did: first, giving the promise of the Messiah to come, then giving the law (post-Fall) precisely in order to shut up everyone under sin. All of this was perfectly harmonious in God's wisdom, to advance his purpose of grace. He added the law post-Fall, not to sow confusion, but that we might see even more clearly the need for Christ to be "born under the law" (Gal 4:4), bear its curse in our place (Gal 3:13), and perfectly fulfill its positive requirement so that there may be righteousness for all who believe (Rom 10:4).

Although at first it may seem that the Mosaic republication of the covenant of works is at cross-purposes with grace, the reintroduction of the covenant of works after the Fall had a gracious end in view. Paul himself recognized that the addition of the law after the Abrahamic covenant might give the impression that the introduction of the works principle would somehow be in tension with or opposed to the Abrahamic covenant. Because he recognized the law and the promise as opposed principles of inheritance, one by faith, the other by works (Gal 3:18), he was prompted to raise the question: "Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not!" (Gal 3:21). This rhetorical question paved the way for Paul to explain how the Mosaic covenant with its works principle does not work contrary to but actually promotes the Abrahamic covenant of promise. How so? Because the law was a temporary pedagogue given to imprison Israel under sin so that they might not trust in their own works but in the Messiah to come (Gal 3:22-24). The Mosaic covenant was subservient to the Abrahamic promise.

Thomas Boston made the same point, using the same Galatians passage to make it:

Wherefore I conceive the two covenants [of grace and of works] to have been both delivered on Mount Sinai to the Israelites Thus there is no confounding of the two covenants of grace and works; but the latter was added to the former as subservient to it, to turn their eyes toward the promise, or the covenant of grace ... for, says the apostle, "It was added till the seed should come."²²

²² Thomas Boston's notes, in Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity with Notes by Thomas Boston* (Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991), 56.

Any initial worry that the Mosaic covenant of works stands in tension with or is at cross-purposes with the prior Abrahamic promise is unfounded, for the law was added not as a stand-alone entity as a means of salvation but as a subservient covenant, precisely in order to prepare the way for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise.

An additional reason there is no mixing or confusion of law and gospel in Kline's republication paradigm is because of his clear distinction between the underlying layer (the covenant of grace, by which the elect obtain the eternal inheritance) and the upper typological layer (the typological covenant of works governing Israel's retention of the earthly, typological inheritance). The authors of MM simply gloss over the massive structural distinction between the type and the antitype, between long life in the land of Canaan and eternal life in heaven. If Kline did not make that distinction between the two layers, then he would indeed be guilty of mixing law and grace in the same covenant as the authors of MM charge. But because Kline clearly distinguishes the two layers, and sees them as governed by antithetical principles of inheritance (works governing Israel's retention of the typological inheritance, grace governing the elect's obtaining of the eternal inheritance) there is no mixing or confusion of works and grace in the Klinean paradigm:

Paul, perceiving the works principle in the Mosaic law economy, was able to insist that this did not entail an abrogation of the promises of grace given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob centuries earlier (Gal 3:17), precisely because the works principle applied only to the typological kingdom in Canaan and not to the inheritance of the eternal kingdom-city promised to Abraham as a gift of grace and at last to be received by Abraham and all his seed, Jew and Gentile, through faith in Christ Jesus (KP 237).

Samuel Bolton (an invited commissioner to the Westminster Assembly) made a similar distinction:

[The subservient covenant made with Israel at Sinai] was temporary, and had respect to Canaan and God's blessing there, if and as Israel obeyed. It had no relation to heaven, for that was promised by another covenant which God made before He entered upon the subservient covenant ... though under these temporal blessings spiritual blessings were shadowed and apprehended by those who were spiritual.²³

So the concern of the authors of MM that, on the Klinean paradigm, "grace and works have been combined as opposing principles in a single covenant in a 'tug of war' kind of tension with one another" is shown to be unfounded. There is no "instability" or "tug of war" or "confusion" between grace and works, since they apply to different layers (the typological layer vs. the underlying soteriological reality) and since the one was added by way of subserviency to the other—as Paul himself so clearly taught in Galatians.

On the surface the authors of MM appear to be fighting against Kline, charging his republication paradigm with instability. But in reality they are fighting against Paul himself. Does Kline reintroduce the covenant of works in some form after the Fall? So does Paul. "The law came in

²³ Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (Puritan Paperbacks; Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 99, 113-14.

to increase the trespass" (Rom 5:20). Does Kline think there is some way in which the antithetical principles of works and grace can coexist without annulling the promise? So does Paul. "The law ... does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void" (Gal 3:17). Does Kline see two layers—an underlying layer of grace that continues on into its fulfillment in Christ, and a temporary superadded layer governed by law? So does Paul. "The law was added ... until the Seed should come" (Gal 3:19). If the Kline's thought is plagued by dangerous "instability," then so is the Paul's.

A "Pure" Covenant of Grace?

We are still examining the allegation of MM concerning the instability that arises from seeing both works and grace in the Mosaic covenant. Not only does seeing a works principle in the context of the post-Fall Mosaic covenant cause a dangerous theological instability, the authors argue, but such an interpretation of the Mosaic covenant is "a clear departure from the confessional conception of the Mosaic covenant as a *pure* covenant of grace in its substance" (MM 100, emphasis added). On this reading, the WCF explicitly rules out of bounds anyone who does not agree with them that the Mosaic covenant is a "pure" covenant of grace. This is precisely what they claim:

The Standards are consistent in maintaining the gracious character and nature of the covenant of grace in every epoch, which, by definition, excludes any element of meritorious obedience (MM 99).

But by this standard, a good number of Reformed theologians, widely recognized as orthodox, would be excluded—not just Kline. I hope to demonstrate that point by means of a few quotes from representative Reformed theologians below. I am not claiming that all of these Reformed theologians held to Kline's precise formulations. Kline himself would not agree with every nuance or way of putting things. He would likely want to word things differently or introduce additional biblical-theological frameworks (especially his two-layer metaphor and his own concept of typology). I'm not claiming these theologians were Klineans before Kline. In fact, these theologians do not even agree with each other in every particular. However, they do think that the works principle originally seen in the pre-Fall covenant of works is in some way republished in the Mosaic economy. Therefore, MM's narrow interpretation of the Westminster Confession cannot be correct if it would exclude and cast out these men from the circle of Reformed orthodoxy.

Amandus Polanus would be cast out, since he thought the Mosaic covenant was a repetition of the Adamic covenant of works:

The covenant of works is that in which God promiseth everlasting life unto a man that in all respects performeth perfect obedience to the law of works, adding thereunto threatenings of eternal death, if he shall not perform perfect obedience thereto. God made this covenant in the beginning with the first man Adam, whilst he was in the first estate of

integrity: the same covenant God did repeat and make again by Moses with the people of Israel.²⁴

Samuel Bolton would be cast out, since he thought the Mosaic covenant was neither a covenant of grace nor a covenant of works but a subservient covenant:

If it be neither a covenant of works, nor a covenant of grace, then must it of necessity be a third kind of covenant: and it must needs be such a covenant as does not stand in opposition to grace, nor is inconsistent with the covenant of grace Hence it is called a subservient covenant. It was given by way of subserviency to the Gospel and a fuller revelation of the covenant of grace.²⁵

Thomas Boston would be cast out, since he thought both the covenant of grace and the covenant of works were delivered on Mount Sinai:

Wherefore I conceive the two covenants to have been both delivered on Mount Sinai to the Israelites. *First*, the covenant of grace made with Abraham, contained in the preface, repeated and promulgated there unto Israel, to be believed and embraced by faith, that they might be saved; to which were annexed the ten commandments, given by the Mediator Christ, the head of the covenant, as a rule of life to his covenant people.

Secondly, the covenant of works made with Adam, contained in the same ten commands, delivered with thunderings and lightnings, the meaning of which was afterwards cleared by Moses, describing the righteousness of the law and the sanctions thereof, repeated and promulgated to the Israelites there, as the original perfect rule of righteousness, to be obeyed.²⁶

Francis Turretin would be cast out, since he didn't believe the Mosaic covenant was a "pure" covenant of grace. He thought it was a covenant of grace, to be sure, albeit one administered under a rigid legal economy that included a new promulgation of the covenant of works:

It pleased God to administer the covenant of grace in this period under a rigid legal economy A twofold relation ought always to obtain: the one legal, more severe, through which by a new promulgation of the law and of the covenant of works ... he wished to set forth what men owed and what was to be expected by them on account of duty unperformed. In this respect, the law is called the letter that kills.²⁷

Herman Witsius would be cast out, since he didn't believe the Mosaic covenant was either a covenant of grace or a covenant of works, but a national covenant of sincere piety that supposed both:

²⁴ Quoted by Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 59.

²⁵ Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, 99.

²⁶ Boston's notes, in Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 56.

²⁷ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (trans. George Musgrave Giger; ed. James T. Dennison Jr.; Phillipsburg: P&R, 1994), vol. 2, p. 227.

What was it then? It was a national covenant between God and Israel, whereby Israel promised to God a sincere obedience to all his precepts, especially to the ten words; God, on the other hand, promised to Israel, that such an observance would be acceptable to him, nor want its reward, both in this life, and in that which is to come, both as to soul and body. This reciprocal promise supposed a covenant of grace It also supposed the doctrine of the covenant of works, the terror or which being increased by those tremendous signs that attended it, they ought to have been excited to embrace that covenant of God. This agreement therefore is a consequent both of the covenant of grace and of works; but was formally neither the one nor the other If any should ask me, of what kind, whether of works or of grace? I shall answer, it is formally neither: but a covenant of sincere piety, which supposes both.²⁸

I could go on with many more quotes from orthodox Reformed theologians who thought the works principle of the Adamic covenant was repeated in some way in the Mosaic economy, but these are sufficient to make my point. These theologians did not all agree on the precise way in which they saw the works principle in the Mosaic economy, but they surely did see it there somehow. This contradicts the claim of the authors of MM that their view of the Mosaic covenant is the only permissible view. They claim that "the blessings and the curses of the law in the Mosaic covenant do not function *in any way* as a covenant of works" (MM 95, emphasis added). But many sound, orthodox, mainstream Reformed theologians thought the blessings and curses of the Mosaic covenant did function in some way as a covenant of works. The above quotes prove that they did not agree with the position of MM that the covenant of works can only exist pre-Fall and can never be seen as republished in any way in the post-Fall Mosaic economy.

It is ironic that the extreme position advocated by MM banishes even their beloved Turretin along with Kline from the circle of orthodoxy. For even Turretin, who viewed the Sinai law covenant as, in itself, an administration of the covenant of grace (which is not something Kline would be able to say), recognized that "it pleased God to administer the covenant of grace in this period under a rigid legal economy" that included within it "a new promulgation of the law and of the covenant of works."

Spiritual Schizophrenia?

The overarching point of Part 3 of MM is that Klinean republication generates dangerous instability in a number of theological areas. Such instability is caused by the fact that the republication doctrine sees both works and grace (albeit at different layers) in a single covenant, the Mosaic covenant. One of the key areas of instability that the authors of MM detect is the potential for "spiritual schizophrenia" in the piety of OT and NT believers. The authors of MM write:

The basic problem centers on how the same obedience of an Israelite in the Republication Paradigm could function on one level to merit a reward (apart from grace) and at the same time on another level be rewarded by grace alone. This dual role of works leads to a

²⁸ Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity* (trans. William Crookshank; Escondido: The den Dulk Christian Foundation/Phillipsburg: P&R, 1990), vol. 2, p.186.

dualism in God's people—a kind of spiritual "schizophrenia" in the everyday life of the believer. By this term, we are describing the divided mindset and contradictory approach to life that would result from living according to these opposing views of obedience simultaneously—one of grace and one of works (MM 126).

They go on to spell out the nature of this supposed spiritual schizophrenia in terms of two contrasting spiritual mindsets. On the one hand, when viewing God's acceptance of their good works in the context of the covenant of grace at the lower layer, they would have had a "sense of unworthiness." On the other hand, when viewing God's rewarding of their good works with temporal blessings in the context of the covenant of works at the upper layer, they would have had a "sense of entitlement," viewing God's rewards for their good works as something they merited, rather than as his gracious acceptance of their flawed works. The authors ask, "Would this not have resulted in a life of personal and spiritual confusion and instability?" (MM 126).

My response to the "spiritual confusion" and "schizophrenia" charge is going to be two-fold. I'll begin, first, by arguing that there would have been no schizophrenia since the entire arrangement was a gift of grace. Second, I'm going to drill down and examine the piety of OT believers – first, looking at those leaders appointed by God to function as types of Christ (e.g., Abraham and David); second, looking at the piety of the Israelite who was not appointed to be a type of Christ but was an ordinary member of the covenant community. The piety of these two sub-groups of Israelites, in terms of how they related to God under the Law, is similar but not identical.

First, I want to begin by pointing out that God made it clear to the Israelites that the very arrangement in which they as a nation were appointed to function as a typical kingdom governed by the works principle was a gift of grace, granted them for no merit of their own. As Kline affirmed so clearly, Israel's "election to receive the typological kingdom in the first place was emphatically not based on any merit of theirs (cf. Deut 9:5,6)" (KP 323).

Even if God did reward their imperfect and fluctuating obedience to the Mosaic law with temporal blessings in the land, they had no reason to boast in themselves or in their own righteousness. God brought Israel into the land not because of their righteousness but in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. As they are standing on the brink of entering the land, Moses exhorts them:

"Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people" (Deut 9:4-6 ESV).

Moses goes on to rehearse the sad history proving that they were a "stubborn people." He reminds the people that they rebelled against God in the wilderness from the very outset,

immediately after being brought up out of their bondage in Egypt. Therefore, the fact that they are still God's chosen people and that he is still intent on bringing them into the land under Joshua, is proof that their ordination to be "a holy nation," a typical kingdom, is not on the basis of their merit but on the basis of God's free, electing grace in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise.

Throughout Israel's long history from the conquest of Canaan under Joshua right on down to the exile, they repeatedly rebelled and disobeyed God, and yet he continued to sustain them in his grace on the basis of the prior Abrahamic promise. Thus, any limited temporal blessings that God did bestow on them as a reward for what little obedience they did have, was not a reward in which they could rightly indulge in a "sense of entitlement" before God. Because of the continued sinfulness of the nation, both corporately and individually, they knew they needed God's grace at every point to sustain their obedience and their continued retention of the land and the temporal blessings of life in the land.

Second, I now want to drill down and examine the piety of the OT believers. I want to divide this analysis into two sub-questions: How did the special leaders of Israel experience their relationship to God under the Law? How did the average Israelite experience his relationship to God under the Law?

With regard to the first class, it is apparent that there is a sense in which they knew themselves, in their role as (typological) federal heads, to be able to obey as the basis or ground of national felicity. David was able to speak of his "merit" or "entitlement" in some sense:

"The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.
For I have kept the ways of the LORD
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all his rules were before me,
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.
I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
And the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness,
according to my cleanness in his sight" (2 Sam 22:21-25 [= Ps 18:20-24] ESV).

Does this mean David thought he was without sin? Certainly not. The Psalms contain plentiful evidence that David recognized his sinfulness (Pss 25:7, 11; 32:5; 38:1-4, 18; 51:1-19) and praised God for his forgiving grace (Ps 32:1-2; 103:3, 10). So when David speaks of his righteousness and cleanness of hands, he is not claiming sinless perfection. Commentators have pointed out that in such passages (there are many others) there is always a contest between the righteous anointed king and the wicked who assail him. The wicked are persecuting God's anointed and seeking to condemn him on false charges, but the anointed one calls out to God for vindication. Thus, when David appeals to his own righteousness and integrity as the reason for God to vindicate him, he is speaking in a relative sense in the face of the false charges brought by his enemies.

Such prayers were composed for a person who was in the right in comparison with the antagonist. They are the expressions of a good conscience before hostility and opposition The innocence claimed by the petitioner was not an absolute righteousness but a rightness with respect to the charges.²⁹

Yet, in the context of the typical sphere, his limited righteousness "with respect to the charges" had typological significance. Since he was God's anointed king, his obedience pointed ahead to the obedience of Christ. David's vindication pointed ahead to the vindication of Christ at his resurrection, when he received a God-approved righteousness. And just as David's vindication was not his vindication as a mere private person but in his public role as the anointed representative of the people, so Christ's vindication took place in his role as our federal head, so that his righteousness is now reckoned as ours in union with him.

At the same time, David recognized God's grace in being the recipient of the Davidic covenant and being appointed as a type of the Messiah to come:

Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O LORD God. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O LORD God! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O LORD God! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it" (2 Sam 7:18-21 [= 1 Chron 17:16-19] ESV).

Kline recognized that if OT leaders like King David are to be seen or regarded as having any "merit" at all in the post-Fall redemptive context, it must be *typological* merit, that is, it must be merit that is based on God's "gracious favor" (GHHM 128) by which he appointed them to function as types of the Messiah's active obedience and "invested" (KP 237) their imperfect obedience with symbolic and typological significance. Any outstanding works on the part of such leaders could have such typological merit only because they were graciously "accorded by God [as having] *an analogous kind of value* with respect to the typological stage represented by the old covenant" (KP 325).

This means that just as the Mosaic economy as a whole has two layers, so the obedience of these OT leaders who functioned as types of the Messiah's obedience can be viewed from two aspects. From the lower-layer *ordo salutis* point of view, their obedience is the obedience of faith. It is flawed and imperfect and graciously accepted by God through the covenant of grace. From the upper-layer typological, redemptive-historical point of view, their obedience has been invested with greater meaning and can be seen as symbolically "meritorious," that is, functioning as the ground of reward.

Similar considerations apply to other OT saints whose obedience was invested by God with typological significance. For example, with regard to Abraham's act of obeying God by not withholding his only son, and God's rewarding him with the future Israelite kingdom ("because you have done this," Gen 22:16-18), Kline wrote:

²⁹ James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 64, 433.

From the perspective of Abraham's personal experience of justification by faith, this act of obedience validated his faith (Jas 2:21ff.; cf. Gen 15:6). But from the redemptive-historical/eschatological perspective, Abraham's obedience had typological import. The Lord constituted it a prophetic sign of the obedience of Christ, which merits the heavenly kingdom for his people. (GHHM 102)

There is no tension or schizophrenia because Abraham and David knew that it was by God's grace that their imperfect obedience was invested with typological significance as a "prophetic sign of the obedience of Christ."

But what about the average Israelite? Here things are a little different, since it is doubtful that he would have been conscious of being a type of the Messiah. He would have been more conscious of his failure to keep the law. In that case, he would confess his sins and avail himself of the sacrificial system.

The typological covenant of works functioned as a pedagogue to lead the ordinary Israelite to Christ as he was present sacramentally in the types and shadows of the ceremonial law. The repetition of the covenant of works showed them their sin, and when the Israelites sinned, they were directed to the sacrificial system and mediation of the priests to provide atonement for the nation and for the individual, thus freeing them from the curses of the covenant. Just as there is an interlocking relationship between the law and the gospel, which meets in the provision of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ who fulfills the positive demands of the law and bears the curse of the law, so there was in the spiritual life of ancient Israel an interlocking relationship between the typological covenant of works and the sacrificial system of the temple.

The sacrificial system is the form that the underlying Abrahamic covenant of grace took during the Mosaic economy. The entire Mosaic economy (both layers taken as a whole) was like a nuclear fission reactor. The works principle at the typical layer is like the intensely hot (both thermally and radioactively) nuclear reactor core. By itself, the typological covenant of works would in itself be nothing but destructive due to the inevitable presence of sin after the Fall. But the nuclear reactor core did not exist by itself. It was shielded, contained, and held at bay by the control rods that absorb the destructive power of the neutron radiation. The whole reactor was surrounded by a massively thick vessel or container. The container is the Abrahamic covenant with its principle of substitutionary curse-bearing in the form of the sacrifices offered by the mediation of the priests, all a foreshadow of the priestly office and once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The entirety of the Mosaic economy, or old covenant, is this reactor core of the typological covenant of works contained within the absorbing vessel of the sacrificial system.

This analogy was physically displayed in the most important institution that Israel possessed—the temple. The nuclear reactor core is the holy presence of God (symbolized by the Glory-Cloud) dwelling within the container of the temple, a relationship made possible only because of the continual sacrifices offered via priestly mediation. The sacrificial system in the temple made it possible for the holy God to dwell in the midst of an unholy people:

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst Thus [the high priest] shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses (Exod 25:8; Lev 16:16 ESV).

The godly Israelite did not look to his own righteousness to absorb the curses of the covenant. He did not think that he was entitled to temporal blessings merely by his own obedience unaided by grace. Rather, in faith, he confessed his sin to the priest and received the atoning benefit of the sacrifices as they pointed ahead to the final sacrifice of the Messiah to come. In response to God's grace, he also lived a life of thankful obedience as the outflow of his faith, an evangelical obedience that was flawed and imperfect, but when viewed collectively under the federal headship of a godly Davidic king was graciously accorded typological significance pointing ahead to the heaven-earning obedience of Christ.

Thus, there was no "spiritual schizophrenia" in the piety of the average godly Israelite. The works principle at the typological layer was able to operate without causing confusion because it was imbedded within a gracious context. It had a pedagogical purpose within the old covenant order, not merely in the historical sense of preparing the nation of Israel for the coming of Christ, but in the sense of directing the elect Israelites to Christ as he was present sacramentally in the types and shadows of the sacrificial system.

The Merit of Christ

I have been evaluating Part 3 of MM, in which the authors argue that Klinean republication is "an unstable theological paradigm" (MM 82). The first major area of instability is that republication brings the works principle back after the Fall. As a result, it is contended, "grace and works have been combined as opposing principles in a single covenant in a 'tug of war' kind of tension with one another" (MM 101). The second major area of instability is that republication creates "spiritual schizophrenia" (MM 125) in the piety of the Old Testament saints. I've responded to the first two sub-charges under the general charge of theological instability.

The third major area of instability, to which we now turn, has to do with the merit of Christ. Recall that the authors of MM sought to establish that for obedience to be deemed strictly meritorious, it must have two qualities: (1) it must be perfect, and (2) it must be offered by a being who is ontologically equal with God. Since Adam could only offer perfect obedience, but was not ontologically equal with God, his obedience would have been "covenant merit" but not "strict merit." Christ's obedience is the only obedience that has "strict merit," because he satisfies both conditions by offering perfect obedience and by doing so as one who is ontologically equal with God. The authors of MM then take these two criteria for obedience and use them to raise three objections about the nature of Christ's obedience in the Republication Paradigm, arguing that by redefining merit as being "whatever God says it is," and not according to their two criteria, this creates theological problems for the Republication Paradigm in its view of Christ's merit.

The Necessity of Christ's Perfect Active Obedience

Their first charge relates to their first criterion—perfect obedience. The authors of MM claim that, in the Republication Paradigm, God is free to reward works tainted with sin as meritorious. This can be seen in the Klinean view that Israel's works, though tainted with sin, are deemed to be meritorious in God's sight, at least for the purpose of obtaining temporal rewards. Therefore, since God is free to deem sinful works as meritorious, sinless perfection is not a necessary requirement for merit. This can then be applied to the obedience of Christ. Although the Republication Paradigm affirms that Christ's obedience was perfect, it "does not require Christ's obedience to be perfect *by definition*" (MM 114, emphasis theirs). Their charge is that the Republication Paradigm can only affirm the weaker statement that Christ's obedience *was* perfect, not that it *had* to be perfect as required by the justice of God.

This charge is based on a major misunderstanding of Kline, one that I have already dealt with. It is not true that, for Kline, God is free to deem the sin-tainted, imperfect works of sinners as having true merit. (I use the phrase "true merit" to distinguish it from "typological merit.") Kline agrees with the authors of MM that the justice of God requires obedience to be perfect in order for it to be truly meritorious. This is clearly the case for Adam before the Fall and for Christ as the Second Adam. In both of these cases, their obedience must be perfect in order to be meritorious, because the justice of God demands it. In the case of the obedience of those ordained by God to be types of Christ, the obedience was not perfect, since all after the Fall are sinful (e.g., Noah, Abraham, David, Israel as a nation). But their obedience had typological merit, not true merit.

Therefore, it is simply not true that Republication Paradigm can only affirm the weaker statement that Christ's obedience *was* perfect, not that it *had* to be perfect as required by the justice of God. The Republication Paradigm affirms that Christ's obedience *had* to be perfect, just as Adam's had to be. This is because Kline has a robust understanding of the absolute perfection required by the justice of God. In fact, this is precisely why Kline affirms the necessity of Christ's active and passive obedience as the satisfaction of the law and the justice of God. God requires perfect righteousness for those who would gain a right and title to heaven. "Heaven must be earned" (KP 107). The righteousness by which we are deemed righteous and qualified to obtain the eternal inheritance is the righteousness of Christ as provided in his vicarious obedience as the Second Adam on behalf of the elect.

The Alleged Necessity (for His Merit) of Christ's Divine Nature

After applying their first criterion of merit to the merit of Christ in the Republication Paradigm, they proceed to apply their second criterion to the merit of Christ. According to their second criterion, for obedience to be meritorious (in the strict sense) it must be offered by one who is ontologically divine. Here is how they explain this:

Within an Augustinian-Reformation paradigm, merit in the "strict" or "proper" sense is possible only for Christ. In his sinless, pre-fall condition, Adam was only capable of an improper "covenant merit." This was a "lesser" category of merit because it required God's voluntary condescension. Christ's merit is "strict" and "proper" merit because it does not require such condescension, as it is intrinsically infinite in worth and value

because of Christ's divine nature Because of his divine nature, only Christ's obedience was inherently worthy of the reward of eternal life No mere creature can perform a work by which he can *inherently* obligate God—"who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" (MM 57-58).

But Kline rejects such an ontological definition of merit. He thinks the covenant, not ontological considerations, reveals God's justice and defines what obedience would be meritorious in his sight. Here is a quote by him where he addresses a related ontological argument. The particular ontological argument he is responding to here did not claim that only a being that is ontologically equal with God could attain strict merit, but it did claim something very similar, namely, that only an act of obedience that is ontologically equal with the reward could be considered as strictly meritorious:

Another form of the attack on the Covenant of Works doctrine (and thus on the classic law-gospel contrast) asserts that even if it is allowed that Adam's obedience would have earned something, the disproportion between the value of that act of service and the value of the proffered blessing forbids us to speak here of simple equity or justice. The contention is that Adam's ontological status limited the value or weight of his acts The disproportionality view's failure with respect to the doctrine of divine justice can be traced to its approach to the definition of justice. A proper approach will hold that God is just and his justice is expressed in all his acts; in particular, it is expressed in the covenant he institutes. The terms of the covenant—the stipulated reward for the stipulated service—are a revelation of that justice. As a revelation of God's justice the terms of the covenant define justice. According to this definition, Adam's obedience would have merited the reward of eternal life and not a gram of grace would have been involved. Refusing to accept God's covenant word as the definer of justice, the disproportionality view exalts above God's word a standard of justice of its own making. (KP 114-15)

The authors of MM are right, then, when they say Kline does not agree that the one offering the obedience (or that the act of obedience itself) must be ontologically equal with God in order for his obedience to be intrinsically meritorious. The authors of MM then draw out an implication from Kline's non-ontological, covenantal definition of merit that supposedly shows that Klinean Republication is guilty of serious theological error. They argue that because of his non-ontological, covenantal definition of merit Kline is unable to affirm the necessity of Christ's divine nature.

Ontological considerations have been removed from the definitions of merit and justice. The infinite, eternal character of God's being no longer play[s] any role in our understanding of justice, merit, or (by implication) sin. If God is free to "covenantally" define merit in such a way that Adam's finite obedience could be truly worthy of an infinite reward, what absolute need is there for Christ to be truly God? (MM 115).

Their charge is that the Republication Paradigm can only affirm the weaker statement that Christ's obedience *was* the obedience of a divine person, not that it *had* to be the obedience of a divine person in order for it to be meritorious.

How shall we respond? Well, to begin, let's remind ourselves of the reason why Kline didn't believe ontological equality with God is necessary for merit. The reason is fairly straightforward: if it were true that only a being that is ontologically equal with God can merit before God, that would mean Adam, by definition, could not have merited the reward of eternal life by passing the probation. (Indeed, the authors of MM admit this and say Adam, if he had obeyed, would only have achieved "covenant merit" not "strict merit.") But if that is the case, then we have a very odd situation: we must deny the merit of the first Adam and only admit the merit of the second Adam. But why was it necessary in the first place for Christ to merit as the second Adam? Because the first Adam failed to obey and merit the reward of eternal life! But if the merit of the first Adam was impossible to begin with, what need was there for the vicarious, substitutionary merit of the second Adam?

The whole point is, "Where the first Adam failed, the second Adam prevailed," as the ditty goes. But if the first Adam wasn't supposed to merit in the first place, indeed was ontologically incapable of meriting, then Christ's role as the second Adam is left hanging without a foundation or rationale. It is not clear how the first Adam could serve as "a type of the one who was to come" (Rom 5:14), or why Paul would call Christ "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45). As Kline argued:

What is true in the covenant arrangement with the second Adam will also have been true in the covenant with the first Adam, for the first was a type of the second (Rom. 5:14) precisely with respect to his role as a federal head in the divine government. Accordingly, the pre-Fall covenant was also a covenant of works and there too Adam would have fully deserved the blessings promised in the covenant, had he obediently performed the duty stipulated in the covenant The parallel which Scripture tells us exists between the two Adams would require the conclusion that if the first Adam could not earn anything, neither could the second. But, if the obedience of Jesus has no meritorious value, the foundation of the gospel is gone.³⁰

Why didn't Kline accept the ontological definition of merit, the view that strict merit requires ontological equality between the one obeying and the one obeyed, or between the value of the obedience and the value of the reward? Kline didn't accept this use of ontology rather than covenant to measure merit because in his view it leads to a dangerous asymmetry in biblical theology. It skews the two Adams structuring of federal history. For if the merit of the second Adam is the only proper and strict merit, based on ontological equality, then the merit of the first Adam is reduced to an improper merit that is only possible because of God's gracious, voluntary condescension.

One might object that seeing asymmetry between the two Adams can't be totally wrong. After all, there are a number of important differences between them. The most obvious is that the first Adam was human, but the second Adam is the God-man. Paul himself spends a good portion of his famous Rom 5:12-21 passage highlighting the differences between Adam and Christ. Twice he says "the free gift is *not* like the trespass" (vv 15-16). And twice he uses an *a fortiori* argument: if Adam's disobedience brought death, "much more" did Christ's obedience bring grace, righteousness, and life (vv 15, 17). Asymmetry indeed.

³⁰ Meredith G. Kline, "Covenant Theology Under Attack," *New Horizons* 15.2 (Feb 1994): 3-5.

As true as that may be, there is one point at which asymmetry must not be introduced, namely, at the point of merit. Introducing asymmetry between the merit of the two Adams is problematic, because it undermines the concept that the salvation of the elect is founded upon the satisfaction of the justice of God. The justice of God is not bypassed but satisfied in salvation, because the merit of Christ as the second Adam is accepted by God as a substitute, on behalf of the elect, for the merit that the first Adam should have but failed to achieve. But if the merit that the first Adam should have achieved was only an improper merit based on God's gracious voluntary condescension, then there is no necessity for the satisfaction of justice by the merit of the second Adam. There is a tension between these two things: between ontology and satisfaction, between using ontology rather than covenant to measure strict merit, and the wonderful truth that salvation is grounded in the satisfaction of justice by a substitute (Rom 3:25-26). If we value the latter (satisfaction), we need to rethink the former (ontology).

As Kline said, "heaven must be earned" (KP 107). This is based on the Lev 18:5 principle, which may be paraphrased: "Only the doers of the law are righteous before God and will be rewarded with eternal life" (combining Rom 2:13; 7:10; 10:5). Obedience to the demands of the law (as a covenant of works) is recognized by God as righteousness, and righteousness is the necessary ground of the reward of eternal life. As applied to Adam as the federal head of the human race, the reward of eschatological advancement originally held out to Adam in the pre-Fall covenant of works was conditioned upon his obedience and righteousness. This is what God demands of all of us, either in ourselves or in our federal representative, if we would go to heaven.

But the obedience required of Adam for his eschatological advancement, and which God would have deemed as meritorious as the ground of that eschatological advancement, was not the obedience of a divine person who was ontologically equal with God. The obedience required of Adam (and of us, in Adam) is human, creaturely obedience. It is the human obedience of actively obeying the positive precepts of the moral law and passing the probation of the covenant of works. Therefore, the obedience that God accepts in place of the failure of Adam is not the obedience of Christ as divine, but the obedience of Christ as fully man, as the second Adam. In this way, the justice of God is satisfied in salvation. Heaven is earned, not by ourselves, but by Christ who earned it in our place.

Christology—The Two Natures of Christ

At this point we need to delve into Christology—the doctrine of the two natures of Christ—in relation to the merit of Christ. I believe the authors of MM are operating with some questionable Christological assumptions. Consider what they say:

The traditional paradigm affirms that Adam's merit was considered to be covenant merit *in distinction from* strict merit. In other words, Adam's perfect obedience, as a creature, is being contrasted with Christ's obedience as the God-man. On the one hand, Adam's obedience was counted as meritorious on the basis of the covenant that had been established as an expression of God's voluntary condescension Adam's finite works of obedience could never be considered as valuable as the infinite gift of eternal life. On the

other hand, Christ's obedience could be counted as *strictly meritorious* since it was inherently worthy of receiving such a reward (MM 66).

The value of his merit is rooted in his divine nature. In other words, Christ's merit is determined ontologically Christ's merit is "strict" and "proper" merit because it does not require such condescension, as it is intrinsically infinite in worth and value because of Christ's divine nature Because of his divine nature, only Christ's obedience was inherently worthy of the reward of eternal life (MM 56-57).

According to the authors of MM, Adam's merit was only "counted as meritorious on the basis of the covenant that had been established as an expression of God's voluntary condescension." It is therefore only covenant merit, not strict merit. But Christ's merit, in contrast with Adam's, is strictly meritorious. What is the difference between Adam and Christ? The difference is ontology: Adam's "finite works of obedience" are performed by one who is a mere creature. Christ's merit, however, is "intrinsically infinite in worth and value" because his works of obedience are performed by one who is divine. "Because of his divine nature, only Christ's obedience was inherently worthy of the reward of eternal life." Notice how they speak of Christ's obedience as being "inherently worthy." Adam, by contrast, being a mere creature, could only have his obedience "counted as meritorious" on the basis of the covenant, which was an expression of God's gracious, voluntary condescension.

There is a questionable Christological assumption behind this argument. They seem to assume one of two things: either the obedience of Christ was performed in and by the *divine* nature of Christ, or the human nature of Christ was given the divine property of ontological infinitude. They write: "No mere creature can perform a work by which he can inherently obligate God" (MM 58). But Christ, being very God of very God, is no mere creature; therefore, he can "obligate God" by his "inherently worthy" obedience. In order for this reasoning to work, they must assume either that the divine nature of Christ is the locus of his obedience, or that he obeyed in a deified human nature.

But such assumptions are counter-intuitive at best and unorthodox at worst. Surely, the obedience of Christ (both in its active and passive aspects) is an obedience that was performed by the Son in his *human* nature. Everyone believes that about his passive obedience, unless they hold to the heresy of Patripassianism. The divine nature of Christ is impassible, i.e., incapable of suffering and death. Accordingly, the church confesses that he suffered and died in his human nature. If that's what we believe about the passive obedience, shouldn't we say the active obedience was also performed in his human nature? After all, part of his active obedience involved resisting temptation (Matt 4:1-11; Heb 2:18; 4:15; 5:7-8). But just as God cannot die, so "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13). Therefore, the active obedience of Christ was performed in his human nature, the only nature in which he could experience temptation.

This is just good old-fashioned Chalcedonian Christology. The Council of Chalcedon, following Scripture, taught us that some activities are proper to his human nature—like being born, eating, sleeping, weeping, suffering, being tempted, and dying. Other activities are proper to his divine nature—like turning water into wine, stilling the storm, healing the sick, forgiving sins, executing judgment, and receiving worship. Leo in his famous *Tome*, which was read and

approved at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), made this crystal clear (NPNF² 14.254-58). Reiterating Leo and Chalcedon, the Westminster Confession affirms that "Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself" (WCF VIII.7).

So Christ's obedience to the law is proper to his human nature, not his divine nature. Furthermore, Christ's obedience to the law was not an obedience that he owed to God prior to his assumption of a human nature. The Son assumed a human nature into personal union with himself precisely in order to obey the law, not for himself, but for the elect. Let's look at some Scriptural passages that back this up.

The author of the Hebrews reads Psalm 40 as implying that Christ's obedience to the law was voluntary and a consequence of his incarnation.

When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book'" (Heb 10:5-7 ESV).

"A body have you prepared for me" looks ahead to "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God." In other words, Christ became incarnate with a view to doing God's will as written in the scroll of the book (the law).

Something similar is taught in Phil 2:5-11, whether it was composed by Paul or was a pre-Pauline creed or hymn. He says that the pre-incarnate Son existed in the form of God from eternity, but he voluntarily emptied himself by becoming a man, and it was as a man that he became obedient.

[He] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:6-8 ESV).

In a related passage dealing with the incarnation, Paul implies that Christ's obedience was an obedience that occurred "under the law":

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal 4:4-5 KJV)

It was by being "sent forth" and "born of a woman" (ESV) that he was "made under the law." He was not "under the law" from eternity. He was "made" under the law. And he was made under the law, not to obey for himself, but "to redeem them that were under the law." John Owen made much of this passage to argue that Christ's active obedience was imputed precisely because it was voluntary. He acknowledged that Christ's obedience was

the obedience of the person of the Son of God, however the human nature was subject to the law It was not for himself, not could be for himself; because his whole person was

not obliged thereunto It was for us, and not for himself, that he assumed our nature He needed no obedience for himself Wherefore, the Lord Christ being made under the law for us, he yielded perfect obedience unto it for us; which is therefore imputed unto us.³¹

Owen's point is that the pre-incarnate Son was not under a prior obligation to yield obedience to the positive precepts of the moral law, since he was divine and "needed no obedience for himself." However, he voluntarily assumed a human nature, and became subject to the law and its requirement of obedience. But if he was voluntarily "made under the law," then he must have done so in order to obey in our place, so that his active obedience might be imputed to the elect. Christ's active obedience was only required of him by virtue of his voluntarily assuming a human nature that was subject to the law.

Thus the authors of MM are incorrect when they say "the value of his merit is rooted in his divine nature." On the contrary, it is rooted in his human nature as the second Adam. The hypostatic union brings the two natures together in an intimate union, but it does so without confusing the two natures. Each nature retains its essential properties. The union does not cause the human nature to lose its finite, creaturely status, or transform it into a divine nature. As a result, the obedience and merit of the Son in the human nature remains what it is—a fully human obedience and merit. It is not divine obedience or divine merit. Just as Jesus did not die as God but as man, so Jesus did not obey the law as God but as man. Obedience is not "proper to" the divine nature, since God is not subject to the law as if he must obey his own law in order to merit a reward from himself. The obedience of Christ is the obedience of the fully human Son of God. And it is the Son's obedience only because the Son has assumed a full human nature into union with himself which enables him, in that human nature and as the second Adam, to obey and merit the reward.

The authors of MM seem to be operating with questionable Christological assumptions. When they claim that Christ's merit is "intrinsically infinite in worth and value because of Christ's divine nature" (MM 56), they seem to assume either that the obedience of Christ was performed in his divine nature, or that his human nature was deified by virtue of union with his divine nature. Either interpretation is at odds with Chalcedonian and biblical teaching.

I said the authors of MM seem to assume either that the obedience of Christ was performed in his divine nature, or that his human nature was deified by virtue of union with his divine nature. I think I have shown that the first possibility—that the obedience of Christ was performed in his divine nature—is clearly unbiblical. Christ's obedience (both active and passive) was performed in his human nature, not his divine nature. But so far I haven't really addressed the second possibility—that his human nature was deified or somehow made ontologically infinite by virtue of the hypostatic union with his divine nature.

With regard to this second possibility, the authors of MM don't actually do this in their book, but one imagines they could borrow a page from Lutheran theology and utilize its doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* (communication of attributes). According to the Lutheran doctrine, the

³¹ John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, vol. 5 in *The Works of John Owen* (ed. William H. Goold; Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), pp. 256-58, 272-73.

hypostatic union functions as a bridge that gets the divine nature into contact with the human nature, thereby imparting divine attributes to Christ's human nature. Specifically, the authors of MM would need this doctrine of the hypostatic union to undergird the transference of the divine attribute of ontological infinity to the human nature.

Both the Reformed and the Lutherans affirm the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, but not in the same way. For example, the Westminster Confession affirms it in these terms:

Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature. (WCF VIII.7)

Reformed Christology recognizes this linguistic *communicatio idiomatum* as one of the ways Scripture speaks, e.g., "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28 NASB). This statement is not a mere figure of speech. It is a true statement, grounded in the hypostatic union. "By reason of the unity of the person" it is legitimate to speak this way, because Christ is God and Christ purchased the church with his own blood, even though we must add the qualifying statement that Christ's blood was shed in his human nature.

Lutheran Christology affirms this linguistic aspect of the *communicatio idiomatum* but goes further and holds that some divine attributes are actually transferred from the divine nature to the human nature to enable the human nature to act above its creaturely limitations. Perhaps this is just what the authors of MM need.

Remember, the authors of MM argue that the contrast between Adam's merit and Christ's merit is that Adam's merit is finite and creaturely, whereas Christ's is infinite and divine. Adam was a mere creature, and so he could only have his obedience "counted as meritorious" on the basis of God's voluntary condescension. But "because of his divine nature, only Christ's obedience was *inherently* worthy of the reward of eternal life" (MM 57). They base this reasoning on the "great ontological chasm—an 'infinite distance'—between God and man" (MM 51). They claim that Christ's merit, because of his deity, is "*inherently* worthy" (MM 57), "*intrinsically* infinite" (MM 57) and "*inherently* obligating God" (MM 58).

But there's a problem. Even Lutheran Christology would not give them enough gas to drive their car that far. According to Lutheran dogmatician Francis Pieper, Lutheran Christology limits or qualifies the *communicatio idiomatum* in two ways. First, only the operative divine attributes (such as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence), but not the quiescent divine attributes (like eternity, immensity, and spirituality), are communicated to the human nature. Second, the manner of communication is dynamic rather than static—the human nature receives operative divine attributes so that the divine Son can work through the human nature to perform certain divine actions, such as miracles.³²

Our thought-experiment of imagining how the authors of MM could utilize Lutheran Christology to get to their desired destination has failed, for even the Lutherans do not go as far as they do in

³² Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951), vol. 2, pp. 236-39.

ascribing "inherently infinite" ontological status to the human nature of Christ. It would seem, then, that the authors of MM would need to adopt full-blown monophysitism, the fifth-century error, rejected at the Council of Chalcedon, that the human nature of Christ was completely deified by the hypostatic union so that it ceased to be truly human. That might give them enough gas to get to their destination, but it comes at a hefty price—going beyond the pale of Chalcedon.

The Proper Role of Christ's Divine Nature

Christ's satisfaction of divine justice in the law as a covenant of works involves two distinct but inseparable aspects: bearing the curse of the law in our place (his passive obedience), and fulfilling the positive requirement of the law in our stead, thus earning for the elect a right and title to eternal life (his active obedience). Christ's divine nature is necessary for him to satisfy the curse of the law for us but not to satisfy the positive requirement of the law in order to merit eternal life for us.

Christ's divine nature is necessary for the first aspect, because the human nature could not have borne the wrath of God by itself. "It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God" (Westminster Larger Catechism # 38). Were it not for the divine nature undergirding the human nature via the hypostatic union, the penal sufferings of Christ would have caused the human nature to sink under the infinite wrath of God. Since wrath-bearing was not part of the original mandate given to Adam under the covenant of works, it is not surprising that this would be something unique about Christ's work. He must redeem sinners from the curse of the law, something not in view for Adam.

However, I do not see how Christ's divine nature was necessary for the second part, the fulfilling of the positive requirement of the law. The reason, as I have argued previously, is that "Christ, the second Adam, assumes the covenant [of works] in behalf of his elect just as Adam left it."³³ If the obedience demanded of Adam under the original covenant of works was human obedience, and if that human obedience, had it been rendered, would have been sufficient to earn the reward of eternal life, then the obedience Christ renders as the second Adam need not exceed Adam's.

It is true that the person of the mediator adds to the glory, worth, and dignity of his obedience. The reason it does so, is because his obedience is the obedience, not of a mere human like Adam, but of a divine person, the Son of God. This gives his obedience greater glory, worth, and dignity. The dignity of the obedience is as great as the dignity of the person performing the obedience. Since the person is a divine person who has infinite glory, worth, and dignity, his obedience also has infinite glory, worth, and dignity, far exceeding the worth and dignity of Adam's obedience.

But this added worth and dignity exceeds what was required of Adam. "The satisfaction of Christ was that of a divine Person, and hence was ... of infinite value ... of superabundant value."³⁴ This superabundant worth, value and dignity, grounded in the uniqueness of Christ as a divine person, is not necessary for the satisfaction of the law's positive requirement as the condition of eternal

³³ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983; originally 1879), 405.

³⁴ Hodge, *Outlines*, 413.

life. The divine person of the mediator enhances the dignity of his obedience but does not increase the merit of his obedience.

Merit does not permit of degrees. Merit simply means that the condition of the covenant of works has been fulfilled and the reward has been earned. Either one has earned the reward or one has not. Either one has merit or one does not. But one cannot have degrees of merit. Thus, while it is true that Christ's obedience has superabounding worth and dignity far exceeding Adam's as a mere creature, this added glory is not what enables him to fulfill the positive requirement of the covenant of works so as to earn the reward of eternal life.

Having said that, I do think it was necessary for the active obedience of Christ to be that of a divine person—just not for his merit. As we have seen, the divine person of Christ, the eternal Son of God and second person of the Trinity, had no prior obligation to perform obedience to the positive requirement of the law. When he took a human nature into personal union with himself and was "made under the law," he did so voluntarily and therefore vicariously.

The satisfaction of Christ was that of a divine Person, and hence was *superogatory* [sic; should be *supererogatory*], not due from himself, and free to be credited to others Christ, although a man, was a divine person, and therefore never personally subject to the Adamic covenant of works He was *made under the law* only as our representative, and his obedience under the *voluntarily assumed conditions of his earthly life* was purely vicarious.³⁵

Therefore, although the divine person of the mediator was not necessary to make his obedience *meritorious*, yet it was necessary to make his obedience (in its inseparable active and passive aspects) *supererogatory* and "for us."

Implications for the Doctrine of God

The authors of MM claim that, in contrast with Adam's "covenant merit," only Christ's merit qualifies as "strict merit." This is because Christ's merit is inherently infinite due to his divine nature. Here is how they put it:

For a work to be truly and properly meritorious, it must: (1) be absolutely perfect; and (2) be performed by one who is ontologically equal with God (i.e., infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being). Adam could satisfy the first condition, as he was created in original righteousness. But only Jesus Christ could satisfy the second, since he is both true man and true God, being the same in substance and equal with the Father (MM 106).

According to the authors of MM, only a divine being that is ontologically equal with God (i.e., infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being) can perform a work that is properly meritorious. By definition, the verb "to merit" is one that only God can be the subject of. Put more simply, only God can merit.

³⁵ Hodge, *Outlines*, 415.

But if only God can merit, what does that say about their doctrine of God? In a proper doctrine of God, God is not a moral creature, bound under a covenant of works, and obligated to yield obedience to his own moral standard. He *is* the standard. He does not need to proffer obedience to his own standard, pass a probationary test, be deemed righteous, and merit a reward. To say God, as God, can obey his own standard and merit a reward from himself is to compromise the aseity and utter self-sufficiency of God. The very concept of obedience to the law and its consequent reward-ability (i.e., merit) is applicable only to creatures made in God's image under the law as a covenant of works. As the Westminster Confession teaches:

God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. (WCF II.2)

The authors of MM have argued that meriting is something only God can do because only God is ontologically infinite. But this compromises the aseity and self-sufficiency of God. Thus, not only do the authors of MM seem to be operating with some questionable Christological assumptions, they also seem to have a defective doctrine of God.

This wraps up my response to their second argument under the topic of the merit of Christ. Their first argument was that the Republication Paradigm cannot affirm the necessity of Christ's *perfect obedience* for his merit. That was based on a simple misunderstanding and so it was easily dispatched. Their second argument was that the Republication Paradigm cannot affirm the necessity of Christ's *divine nature* for his merit. This was a little more challenging to respond to. Next, I'll turn to their third argument regarding the merit of Christ, namely, that the Republication Paradigm diminishes the singular glory of Christ's meritorious obedience.

The Singular Glory of Christ's Meritorious Obedience

This is their third and final argument against Klinean Republication's view of the merit of Christ. The Republication Paradigm, they say, "serves to undermine the singular glory of Christ's meritorious obedience" (MM 116). By defining merit in such a way that it applies equally to Adam, Israel and Christ, the Republication Paradigm "brings Christ down" to the level of Adam and Israel (MM 117) and makes these three figures (Adam, Israel, and Christ) "interchangeable," since "each can equally perform meritorious works" (MM 117).

By contrast, on their view, these three figures are not equally able to merit. The merit of Israel is nonexistent, the covenant merit of Adam was possible only because of God's voluntary condescension, and only the merit of Christ is strict merit. The authors claim their understanding of merit enables them to set Christ's meritorious obedience apart as "singular" and "unparalleled" and "unique" (MM 116-17):

Unlike Israel's so-called "merit" (in the Republication Paradigm), Christ's obedience is utterly flawless. Unlike Adam's "covenant merit," Christ's merit requires no voluntary condescension. It is intrinsically worthy of the reward of eternal life (MM 116).

In response, I think the authors of MM are confused in two areas.

Their first area of confusion goes back to their mistaken understanding that Kline defined merit in such a way that perfection is not required. They think Kline taught that flawed, imperfect obedience can be deemed meritorious by God on the basis of his mere will or word. But this is a misunderstanding of Kline. He never taught that, and it cannot be proved from his writings. Therefore, it is not true that the flawed, imperfect obedience of Israel is in the same category as the merit of Adam and Christ. The obedience of Israel (or of other sinful Old Testament saints, like Noah and Abraham) has merit in the typological layer only. It is not perfect and therefore not truly meritorious. There is a categorical difference between true merit and typological merit. Clearly any post-Fall individual functioning as a type of Christ, and whose imperfect obedience was invested by God with typological significance as pointing ahead to the merit of Christ, would not be interchangeable with Christ the antitype. If we are comparing the merit of Christ with that of Israel, then, we can certainly affirm the singular glory of Christ's meritorious obedience.

But what if we are comparing the merit of Christ with that of Adam? Here, we come to their second area of confusion. Since the merit of Christ is that which God accepts in place of Adam's, so that the elect might attain the reward of eternal life, this is a point where we should see the two as parallel, rather than trying to set apart Christ's merit as categorically different from Adam's. The two Adams parallel demands it. Were we to set Christ's merit apart in a category by itself (*sui generis*), we would disturb the parallel between the two Adams. Christ would not be the second Adam. Both Adam and Christ were federal heads under covenants of the works variety that involved true merit based on divine justice.

Now, does this mean that there are no differences between Adam and Christ, or that the two are "interchangeable"? Of course not. We all agree that there are both similarities and differences between Christ and Adam. The similarities include: both are fully human; both were under covenants of the works variety; both were required to obey God in order to achieve eschatological advancement; both were federal heads who represented others.

The differences include: unlike Adam, Christ is not only human but divine; unlike Adam, Christ's obedience included his becoming man by taking a true human nature into personal union with himself in the incarnation; unlike Adam, Christ had to obey to the point of death by offering himself as a sacrifice to satisfy God's wrath; unlike Adam, Christ was exalted much higher than Adam would have been, by being given the divine name and being exalted to God's right hand; unlike Adam, those whom Christ represents are his bride and he brings them into mystical union with himself.

In addition, as I argued above, the obedience of Christ has infinite glory and worth, due to the dignity of his divine person. The glory and worth of the obedience is as great as the glory and worth of the person performing the obedience. In the case of Christ, he is a divine person who assumed a human nature into personal union with himself, something that is not true of Adam. Therefore, Christ's obedience is uniquely glorious, far more than Adam's. In view of the divine dignity of the person of Christ, the obedience of Christ is unique, unparalleled, and awash in singular glory. Therefore, without undermining the parallelism of the merit of the two Adams,

Klinean Republication can affirm the singular glory of Christ's obedience in a variety of ways. It is simply not true that Klinean Republication makes Adam and Christ "interchangeable" (M 117).

Flawed Typology?

I am almost finished with my response to the book *Merit and Moses*. There is one last topic I would like to address, and that is the topic of typology.

According to the Republication Paradigm, the Adamic covenant of works was republished in a form adapted to the post-Fall situation in the land of Canaan as a type of heaven. The obedience of certain special officers of the Mosaic theocracy under this typological works arrangement typified the active obedience of Christ that earns heaven for the elect. The authors of MM think this construction involves a "flawed and confusing typology" (MM 129). They offer three arguments.

(1) Republication teaches Israel the wrong lesson

The authors of MM write:

It is unconvincing to say that this view of "typology" would actually serve to drive the Israelites away from their own works and toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The lesson of the typological level may just as easily drive them to their own works and away from Christ (as it did in the case of the Pharisees) If the typological blessings are dependent on meritorious works, why shouldn't the Israelites conclude that the reality of heaven is also obtained in the same way? (MM 129, 143).

Response: If the Israelites concluded that "heaven must be earned," they were right to conclude that. That's precisely the lesson God wanted them to learn! Of course, the only way heaven can be earned is not by our own righteousness but by a federal representative. Paul is quite clear that the law, with its works principle, was given as a pedagogue in order to imprison the people of God under sin until the coming of the Messiah so that we might attain righteousness, not by law-keeping, but by faith (Gal 3:22-24).

It is true, as the authors of MM recognize, the proud Pharisees erroneously thought they could keep the law and earn heaven by their own obedience. But they only thought that because they refused to heed the pedagogical lesson of the law. Those who were godly in Israel knew they could not keep the law perfectly. They learned this lesson, not by looking at the works principle in the Mosaic economy in the abstract, but in terms of the overall trajectory of Israel's history under the law. The story of the OT is not of Israel's success but of Israel's repeated failure to keep the law, leading to the exile. That is why the godly in Israel were "waiting for the consolation of Israel and the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:25, 38).

(2) Types must typify grace

This brings us to the second argument of MM attempting to show the "flawed typology" of Klinean Republication. They claim that all OT types were a means of grace, as part of the covenant of grace, for the people of God in that time. But the works/merit principle of a covenant of works does not communicate grace.

In order for something to be a type, it must first be a symbol. That is, it must be a real means of grace for the people of God living in the time of its use In the nature of the case, a means of grace is governed solely by grace. How can something defined by merit in contrast to grace communicate grace to the one who performs it? (MM 130-31 n23).

In other words, all types must typify grace. Therefore, they argue, the works principle or merit cannot be typified in the OT. Indeed, this would also mean that there could not be any figures with typological merit in the OT whose obedience prefigures the meritorious obedience of Christ.

Response: This principle (that all types must typify grace and cannot typify the works principle) would rule out Adam from being a type of Christ. But Paul says Adam was a type of Christ (Rom 5:14), precisely in his capacity as a federal head under a covenant of works.

And what about the types prefiguring the day of judgment throughout the OT? For example, Noah's flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues of Egypt, the conquest of the Canaanites, the expulsion of Israel from the land in the exile. These are not symbols of grace but of wrath.

This arbitrary principle that all types must typify grace and be a means of grace has no biblical basis as far as I can see. Biblical typology is not a monochromatic, one-dimensional vehicle for "communicating grace." It is much more complex and variegated than that.

(3) Types may not be imperfect

Their third argument supposedly exposing the "flawed typology" of Klinean Republicationism is based on the assumption that there must be "correspondence and harmony" between the type and the antitype (MM 130). But the obedience of the OT saints was imperfect. Not only was the obedience of the OT saints imperfect, it was "inherently demeritorious ... and thus deserving of God's judgment" (MM 87). Therefore, the flawed obedience of the OT saints cannot be typological of Christ's perfect and meritorious obedience. The difference between the Israel's obedience and Christ's is "absolute," since "the one is fatally flawed, the other is flawless" (MM 130).

Response: If a type must be perfect in order to be a type of Christ, there could not be any types of Christ at all! The OT sacrifices were flawed and imperfect. Indeed, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). Nevertheless, despite this manifest lack of correspondence, the OT sacrifices typified Christ's perfect atoning sacrifice. The OT priests were sinful and had to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could offer sacrifices for the

sins of the people (Heb 5:3). Nevertheless, despite this manifest lack of correspondence, the OT priests typified Christ's priesthood. The OT kings, such as David and Solomon, were all sinners to a man and all failed in various ways to live up to the standard of the kingly office, yet no one doubts they were types of Christ in his kingly office. Nothing could be more expected and natural than that the type be imperfect. After all, the type is not the antitype; the shadow is not the reality.

These are their three arguments attempting to show that Klinean Republication is based on "flawed typology." But the arguments are easily answered. Two of the arguments are based on highly questionable assumptions (that types can only typify grace, and that types must not be imperfect). The authors of MM have offered no credible objection to Kline's view that the imperfect obedience of certain OT saints was ordained by God to typify the active obedience of Christ.

Reformed Commentators

In contrast with the authors of MM—who deny that the imperfect obedience of OT saints can typify the perfect obedience of Christ (MM 130)—many Reformed commentators taught this very thing. I am no expert on 17th century Reformed literature, but I was able to find the following quotes just by searching Google Books.

In his dissertation on Thomas Goodwin, Mark Jones explains that

Goodwin argues that the eminent Old Testament saints were types of Jesus Christ Adam, Noah, Melchizedek, Joseph, Moses, Samson, David, and Solomon, for example, were all types of Jesus Christ.³⁶

But how could sinful OT saints be types of Christ? Goodwin explains:

The general rule which the apostles went by, and which the Jews themselves assented unto, and their teachers taught them, was, that whatever eminent and extraordinary excellency was found in any of their ancestors renowned in the Old Testament, or in the ceremonial law, that all such foresignified the Messiah to come, as the perfection and centre of them.³⁷

Or consider Thomas Taylor (1576–1633), an English Puritan who remained within the Church of England. He wrote a treatise on typology, Taylor subdivides the types of Christ into holy persons and holy things. Under holy persons, he includes the following as types of Christ: Adam, Noah, Melchizedek, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samson, Solomon, Jonah, and others.

I have not read the whole treatise, but I looked at his treatment of Noah. Taylor suggests that Noah was a type of Christ in seven ways. Relevant to our discussion here is the second way that

³⁶ Mark Jones, *Why Heaven Kissed Earth: The Christology of the Puritan Reformed Orthodox Theologian, Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680)* (Reformed Historical Theology 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 93.

³⁷ Thomas Goodwin, *Of Christ the Mediator*, in *The Works of Goodwin* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1863), vol. 5, p. 150.

Noah was a type of Christ. Quoting Gen 6:9 ("Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" [KJV]), Taylor sees this similarity between Noah and Christ: "Both are said to be just and perfect; both said to walke with God." However, there are differences between Noah's righteousness and Christ's, including the fact that "Noah was perfect but in part: Christ perfectly perfect."³⁸

Samuel Mather (1626–1671) was a Puritan of the Independent variety. He was the older brother of Increase Mather (the father of Cotton Mather). For a time he served as chaplain of Magdalen College, Oxford, under the presidency of Thomas Goodwin. Mather also wrote a book on typology, in which he wrote:

Inasmuch as the holiest had their sins, we have further to observe, that they [OT saints] were not types of Christ in regard to their sinful failings, but only in their graces and excellences.³⁹

John Brown (1784–1858), grandson of John Brown of Haddington (1722–1787), was a minister and professor of exegetical theology in the Scottish Secession church. He wrote a detailed exegesis of Psalm 18 and Isaiah 53. He argued that Psalm 18 ought to be interpreted as a Messianic Psalm right along with Psalms 2, 16, 22, 40, and 110. He believed that in Psalm 18 "a greater than David is here—that, so far as the subject of the psalm is concerned, David is not here at all, except, it may be, in the way of allusive illustration."⁴⁰ When he came to verses 20–24, he interpreted them as referring typologically to the merit of Christ:

In the fourth section of this Messianic psalm ... we find the beloved Servant of Jehovah, delivered from all his enemies and the power of the grave, representing, in his solemn thanksgiving, his deliverance and exaltation as the expression of Jehovah's entire satisfaction with his conduct, and as *the merited reward* of his having become obedient—obedient even to the death "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me ..." [Ps 18:20ff]. The words before us are an acknowledgment, on the part of the delivered and rewarded Messiah, of the righteousness of Jehovah in his deliverance and reward. The general idea is,—These wonderful works of Jehovah, which have just been commemorated, are *the merited expression* of his entire righteous approbation of, and most complacent holy delight in, his humbled and suffering Servant's person and work.⁴¹

John Brown has a footnote in which he quotes George Horne (1730–1792). Horne was a bishop in the Church of England who wrote a commentary on the Psalms that was widely influential in its time and in the subsequent century. Commenting on Psalm 18:20–24, Horne wrote:

³⁸ Thomas Taylor, *Christ Revealed, or The Old Testament explained: A treatise of the types and shadowes of our Saviour contained throughout the whole Scripture* (1635), 10–11. Early English Books Online, via the Post-Reformation Digital Library.

³⁹ Samuel Mather, *The Gospel of the Old Testament: an explanation of the types and figures by which Christ was exhibited under the legal dispensation* (Philadelphia: Alexander Towar, 1834), 82.

⁴⁰ John Brown, *The Sufferings and Glories of the Messiah* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853), 25.

⁴¹ Brown, *The Sufferings and Glories*, 97–98, emphasis added.

Commentators have been much perplexed to account for these unlimited claims to righteousness made by David But if the Psalm be prophetic, and sung by the victorious monarch in the person of king Messiah, then do the verses now before us no less exactly than beautifully delineate that all-perfect righteousness wrought by the Redeemer, in consequence of which, he obtained deliverance for himself and his people. For "his" righteousness' sake Jehovah was well pleased, and rewarded with everlasting felicity the unspotted purity of his works.⁴²

I have no doubt that further research would turn up more quotes along these lines, but these are enough to provide a general idea. Reformed commentators do not seem to have any reluctance in seeing the imperfect obedience of certain OT saints as typological of the meritorious obedience of Christ. If we readily recognize the imperfect OT sacrifices as types of Christ's passive obedience, why should there be any problem seeing the flawed obedience of certain OT saints as typological of Christ's active obedience? I am not aware of any Reformed theologians who share the restrictive view of the authors of MM that imperfect obedience cannot typify perfect obedience. To the contrary, with just a little Internet searching (in English, not even trying Latin) it was not hard to find Reformed theologians and exegetes who took the opposite view. As Samuel Mather said, the OT saints "were not types of Christ in regard to their sinful failings, but only in their graces and excellences."

Conclusion

The authors of *Merit and Moses* seriously misrepresent Kline when they claim he defined merit in voluntaristic terms, as whatever God says it is, untethered to his nature as a God of perfect justice. Taking their misrepresentation of Kline's definition of merit as their unquestioned starting point, the authors proceed to level wild and irresponsible accusations. The most egregious accusation is their claim that Kline redefined merit with regard to Adam and Christ, specifically so that he could open up the possibility of sinners (e.g., Israel, patriarchs) meriting blessings from God. But Kline never made that move. He spoke of post-Fall "merit" only as obedience invested by God with typological significance, not as true merit. Oddly, at the beginning of the book, the authors pay lip service to the architectonic role typology plays in Kline's thought. But in the course of their argument, they ignore Kline's typological two-layer construct and interpret him within their own *ordo salutis* categories. The attack missiles launched by *Merit and Moses* miss their target by a wide margin.

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⁴² George Horne, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (New York: Robert Carter, 1845), 86.