

Kline on the Works Principle in the Mosaic Economy

Compiled by Charles Lee Irons, Ph.D.

3/21/2015

In view of the recent flare-up of debate in Reformed circles concerning the topic of the “republication” of the covenant of works in the Mosaic economy, I thought it would be helpful to collect in one place Meredith G. Kline’s most important written statements on the subject. This document does not provide any commentary to guide the reader and point out important sentences and key ideas – though that would be desirable. At some point a full-scale paper describing and explaining Kline’s position should be undertaken and published to advance the scholarly discussion. But here I simply reproduce the quotes.

The four books in which Kline addresses the works principle in the Mosaic economy are *By Oath Consigned* (1968), *Kingdom Prologue* (2000, 2006), *God, Heaven and Har Magedon* (2006), and *Glory in Our Midst* (2001). In addition, he wrote two articles in which he addresses the subject – a review of Daniel Fuller’s book against the law-gospel contrast titled “Of Works and Grace” (1983) and an exegetical article titled, “The Gospel until the Law: Rom 5:13-14 and the Old Covenant” (1991). Thanks to Logos Research Systems, Inc., for digitizing Kline’s most important works, published by Wipf & Stock, and making them available in their search engine.¹ The Logos edition was released in September of 2014, thus making the production of this document a snap. The following quotes are all copied and pasted from the Logos digital collection of Kline’s primary books, with the exception of *By Oath Consigned* and the two journal articles, which are not included in the Logos digital collection of Kline’s works, but which can be found on the Meredith Kline online resource site.²

It might come as a surprise that Kline himself does not use the language of “republication.” A digital search reveals only a few places in his writings where he comes close to using the language of “republication.” At one point, he says that the Mosaic covenant, at the typological level, “recapitulated” the original covenant of works with Adam.³ He also writes that the theocratic kingdom of Israel was a “reproduction” of the pre-Fall covenantal order.⁴ And in his treatment of the Sabbath, he writes that there is a “formal republication” of the creational Sabbath in the Decalogue at Sinai.⁵ But I am not able to locate any place where he speaks of the covenant of works itself being republished in the Mosaic economy or covenant. Kline’s preferred language is to say that the works principle operated at the typological layer in the Mosaic economy. In any event, it is time to turn the floor over to Kline and let him speak for himself.

¹ <https://www.logos.com/product/42637/wipf-and-stock-works-of-meredith-kline>

² <http://www.meredithkline.com>

³ *Glory in Our Midst*, 117. For the full quote, see page 12 below.

⁴ *Kingdom Prologue*, 20, 352. For the full quotes, see pages 4 and 9 below.

⁵ *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 126.

By Oath Consigned (= BOC)⁶

Paul found the difference between two of the Old Testament covenants to be so radical that he felt obliged to defend the thesis that the one did not annul the other (Gal. 3:15ff.). The promise of God to Abraham and his seed (cf. Gen. 13:15; 17:8) was not annulled by the law which came later (Gal. 3:17). The chronological details show that Paul was contrasting the promise covenant not to some general law principle but to the particular historical administration of law mediated through Moses at Sinai after Israel's 430 years in Egypt. Incidentally, when Paul speaks of 430 years as the time between promise covenant and law (cf. Ex. 12:40ff.; Gen. 15:13), he evidently regards the entire era of the patriarchal triad as the time of the giving of the promise, a perspective found elsewhere, for example, in Psalm 105:9, 10: "The covenant which he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant" (ARV). Significant in this connection is the confirmatory promise in the final revelation of God to Jacob towards the close of the record of the patriarchal period (Gen. 46:2ff., especially v. 4).

The Sinaitic administration, called "covenant" in the Old Testament, Paul interpreted as in itself a dispensation of the kingdom inheritance quite opposite in principle to inheritance by guaranteed promise: "For if the inheritance is by law, it is no longer by promise" and "the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them" (Gal. 3:18a, RSV, and v. 12, ARV; cf. Lev. 18:5). Calvin reflects the contrast in principle brought out by Paul when he says that although promises of mercy are found in the law taken as a whole ("the whole law"), they are borrowed elements there and "are not considered as part of the law when the mere nature of the law is the subject of discussion." [Footnote 16: *Institutes* (English translation by John Allen), II, xi, 7; cf. II, ix, 4 and II, xi, 9.] But, as noted above, according to Paul's statements the concept of inheritance by law as over against promise did not find expression merely as a theoretical principle existing problematically within a formal covenant arrangement that was itself promissory, but rather as the governing principle of a particular covenant. Instead of distinguishing between "the whole law" and "the mere nature of the law," therefore, we must distinguish between the entire Mosaic economy, or the total revelation mediated through Moses and the Sinaitic Covenant as a specific legal whole. And we must recognize that, according to Paul, it was this specific covenantal entity, the Sinaitic Covenant as such, that made inheritance to be by law, not by promise – not by faith, but by works.

How did the apostle arrive at so radical an assessment of the nature of the Sinaitic Covenant as something opposite to promise and faith, an assessment that might seem to jeopardize his great theme of justification by faith alone? He obviously knew that the demands made by God's covenant upon the individual could be construed in a way consistent with the promise principle. For in the theology of Paul the demands of covenant law both as stipulations and sanctions are met and satisfied for men in their faith-identification with the Christ of promise. Indeed, that was the burden of Paul's teaching concerning the law, and he presented it in opposition to those who would construe the law's demands in such isolation from the divine promises that the entire old economy would be reduced to a way of works and so of futility and death. But though Paul as a systematic, or at least biblical, theologian did not view the Sinaitic Covenant in Judaizing isolation from the totality of God's revelation, he was able when it came to historical exegesis to view the Sinaitic Covenant as a separate entity with a character of its

⁶ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968). <http://www.meredithkline.com/klines-works/by-oath-consigned>.

own. He did not allow his systematic interests, proper as they were when their turn came, to obscure the radical opposition of the law covenant of Sinai to the principle of inheritance by promise.

But what was there about the Sinaitic Covenant that compelled Paul to identify it so exclusively in terms of law? Elements of redemptive grace were present in and around the transaction. To cite just a feature or two, the historical prologue of the Decalogue-digest of this covenant reminded Israel that the Lord of the covenant was their Redeemer, who had fulfilled ancient promise by leading them forth from bondage; and among the law's sanctions was the promise of mercy, a promise enhanced by the location assigned to the covenant tablets under the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, a place redolent of atoning grace. Yet Paul identified it as a covenant of law in opposition to promise because there was in his thought, as in that of the Old Testament, a virtual synonymy of covenant and oath, and because the Sinaitic Covenant had been ratified by human oath alone. Promise was present as well as law in this covenant but it was only the law that had been covenantally solemnized. The elements of redemptive promise were not as such formalized by a divine oath of ratification. There was only the human oath, giving covenant form to the law which Israel swore to obey.

In contrast to his classification of the Sinaitic Covenant as law, Paul placed God's covenantal dealings with Abraham in the category of promise, even though they included the ritual of an oath of allegiance sworn by Abraham and his household. For in the course of God's covenant making with Abraham there was another ceremony of covenant ratification, of which we have already taken note, this one involving a divine oath (Gen. 15). It was, moreover, by this ritual of the divine oath that God's covenant relationship to Abraham was first formally established, or (stating it more precisely from the perspective of historical exegesis), that God's relationship to Abraham was first formalized as a covenant. The Sinaitic Covenant, on the other hand, was ratified in the original instance and, indeed, exclusively by the oath of the Israelite vassal; and it was evidently by reason of this difference that Paul identified the Sinaitic Covenant, in radical contrast to the promise given earlier to the patriarchs, as law.

Whatever the explanation, however, the unquestionable fact emerges in Galatians 3 that Paul saw in the Old Testament alongside the covenant of promise another covenant which was so far from being an administration of promise as to raise the urgent question whether it did not abrogate the promise. In the Galatians 3 passage Paul calls only the revelation of promise by the name of "covenant." It would, however, be indefensible to assume that Paul repudiated the propriety of the terminology of the Old Testament according to which that administration of law which Paul here distinguishes so sharply from the covenant of promise was itself known as a "covenant." Moreover, in the following chapter of Galatians Paul himself applies the designation "covenant" to the Sinaitic administration. In Galatians 4:24 Paul says that Sarah and Hagar, according to the allegorical illustration he constructs from their history, "were two covenants." One of these is the Sinaitic Covenant and the other is the covenant of promise, as in the preceding chapter. The contrast between these "two covenants" is, if anything, even more sharply drawn in this passage. The promise covenant is characterized by freedom and the Sinaitic Covenant by bondage. And the thing we are concerned with at present is that in the vocabulary of Paul the Sinaitic administration as such, that is, the administration of law, bondage, condemnation, and death (cf. II Cor. 3:6ff.) was a "covenant."

Paul, of course, taught that the Mosaic revelation of law made its contribution within the history of redemption to the fulfillment of the promises (Gal. 3:15ff.). The law covenant did not make the promise covenant of no effect. Somehow the law was administratively compatible with

the promise. We have already had to say something about this compatibility, and it will be necessary to say more presently. But even when this compatibility has been affirmed the difference between the two covenants is not denied but rather assumed. The Sinaitic law covenant was consistent with the earlier promise, but as a covenant it did not consist in promise.

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 both of “promise covenant” and, in sharp distinction from that, of “law covenant.” (BOC 22-25)

Kingdom Prologue (= KP)⁷

However, as will be argued below, there are *berith* arrangements in the Bible that are informed by the principle of works, the opposite of grace. One of these is the original order in Eden. In postlapsarian history, where we encounter covenants both of works and grace, the identity of the party who takes the ratification oath is an indicator of which kind of covenant it is in a particular case ... More precisely, in the situation after the Fall it is the presence or absence of a human oath of ratification that provides the clue as to the governing principle, for divine oath is at least implicit in the ratification of all divine-human covenants, whether of works or grace. If the covenant is ratified by divine oath alone, it is a covenant of grace, either saving or common. But when the covenant-making includes a human oath of ratification, as in the case of Israel’s oath in the Sinaitic Covenant (Exod 24), the arrangement is informed by the works principle. (On the complex relation of works and grace in the old covenant, see further below.) Man’s ratificatory oath is a commitment to perform the obligations imposed by his Lord, while the divine oath in such a works covenant is a commitment to enforce the sanctions appropriately, rewarding obedience with the promised blessing and recompensing disobedience with the threatened curse. But our immediate concern is simply to observe that in view of the data indicating that some biblical covenants are of the works variety, the fundamental feature of divinely sanctioned commitment in our definition of covenant may not be restricted to commitment of sovereign grace and promise. (KP 5)

It is especially significant for our present thesis that in the Mosaic economy there was a reproduction of the creational order as a whole (within the limitations of the fallen situation and with the adjustments resulting from the redemptive process), including specifically the nature of the original Edenic order as a holy paradise-kingdom and as a probationary-works arrangement. The covenant identity of the reproduction points compellingly to the covenantal nature of the original. (KP 20)

Contrary to the sweeping denial of the operation of the works principle anywhere in the divine government, the biblical evidence compels us to recognize that God has in fact employed that principle. Indeed, the principle of works forms the foundation of the gospel of grace. If meritorious works could not be predicated of Jesus Christ as second Adam, then obviously there would be no meritorious achievement to be imputed to his people as the ground of their

⁷ Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2006). Bellingham, Washington: Logos Research Systems, 2014.

justification-approbation. The gospel invitation would turn out to be a mirage. We who have believed on Christ would still be under condemnation. The gospel truth, however, is that Christ has performed the one act of righteousness and by this obedience of the one the many are made righteous (Rom 5:18, 19). In his probationary obedience the Redeemer gained the merit which is transferred to the account of the elect. Underlying Christ's mediatorship of a covenant of grace for the salvation of believers is his earthly fulfillment, through meritorious obedience, of his heavenly covenant of works with the Father. (KP 108-9)

Also contradicting the contention that no divine covenants have ever been governed by the works principle is the irrefutable biblical evidence that the Mosaic economy, while an administration of grace on its fundamental level of concern with the eternal salvation of the individual, was at the same time on its temporary, typological kingdom level informed by the principle of works. Thus, for example, the apostle Paul in Romans 10:4ff. and Galatians 3:10ff. (cf. Rom 9:32) contrasts the old order of the law with the gospel order of grace and faith, identifying the old covenant as one of bondage, condemnation, and death (cf. 2 Cor 3:6-9; Gal 4:24-26). The old covenant was law, the opposite of grace-faith, and in the postlapsarian world that meant it would turn out to be an administration of condemnation as a consequence of sinful Israel's failure to maintain the necessary meritorious obedience. Had the old typological kingdom been secured by sovereign grace in Christ, Israel would not have lost her national election. A satisfactory explanation of Israel's fall demands works, not grace, as the controlling administrative principle. (KP 109)

Later in biblical history we come upon another administration of God's kingdom featuring the principle of works. In the covenant mediated through Moses at Sinai it was arranged that Israel's enjoyment of the external typological kingdom awaiting them in Canaan should be governed by the principle of law, that is, works, the opposite of the gospel principle of promise. This works principle is elaborately expounded in the book of Deuteronomy, the treaty record of the subsequent renewal of the Sinaitic Covenant, just before Israel entered the land. At the climax of that renewal ceremony, the people, reminded of the claims of Yahweh upon them and summoned to choose between good and evil, life and death, reaffirmed their allegiance to their divine Lord (Deut 29). But Israel proceeded to violate their covenant oath repeatedly throughout their generations and the books that follow Deuteronomy in the Old Testament are the documentation of that tragic history of unfaithfulness on through the days of the judges and the kings. They relate also how the curses threatened against disobedience in the Deuteronomic treaty overtook the offending nation until, as their ultimate punishment, God drove the Israelites out of their holy paradise land into exile in the east. Banishment from Canaan came as the final result of a protracted legal process which God instituted against Israel, a covenant lawsuit he conducted through his servants the prophets. Warned over and over again, Israel defied the prophets until God cut them off from the place of his sanctuary and blessing. Records of ancient international treaty administration attest to this same kind of legal process in which an overlord carries out his lawsuit against rebellious vassals through the agency of special messengers.

When we turn to the historical outcome of the covenant established at creation we find much the same story as we do in the case of the Sinaitic Covenant. Genesis 3 is also a tragic record of covenant-breaking, followed by a divine lawsuit and the execution of a curse, consisting in the expulsion of man from the sanctuary-paradise of God into a state of exile east of Eden. (KP 118)

The covenant of grant given to Noah is one of several such divine dispensations in the premessianic era of redemptive history. Wherever we encounter such a bestowal of the kingdom and its honors on the basis of the good works of the grantee, the question naturally arises as to the consistency of this with redemptive covenant's promises of grace. In all such cases the key point to observe is that the opposing principles of works and grace are operating in different spheres or at different levels from one another. For these works-arrangements all involve a situation where there is a typological representation of the messianic king and kingdom, superimposed as a second distinct level over a fundamental level that has to do with the eschatological kingdom reality itself. Now at that basic underlying level, where it is a matter of the individual's gaining entrance into the eternal heavenly kingdom, not just a symbolic prototype thereof, sovereign saving grace is ever and only the principle that governs the inheritance of kingdom blessings. It is at the other level, the level of the superimposed typological stratum, that the Lord has been pleased on occasion to make the attainment of the rewards of the kingdom dependent on man's obedient performance of his covenantal duty. Since, then, the introduction of the works principle in such covenantal arrangements affects only the typological overlay and not the underlying stratum of ultimate redemptive-eschatological reality, these works-grants assume their ancillary place harmoniously within the administrations of the Covenant of Grace. And grace thus remains at all times the constant principle of eternal salvation.

Most familiar of the instances of the introduction of a works principle in a premessianic redemptive economy is the Mosaic Covenant. According to the emphatically and repeatedly stated terms of this old covenant of the law, the Lord made Israel's continuing manifestation of cultic fidelity to him the ground of their continuing tenure in Canaan. This was not then one of the covenants of grant; it was not a matter of Israel's being given the kingdom originally in recognition of past meritorious conduct. But this case of the old covenant is relevant in the present context as another notable example of the pattern which finds the principles of works and grace operating simultaneously, yet without conflict, because the works principle is confined to a separate typological level. 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. The pedagogical purpose of the Mosaic works arrangement was to present typologically the message that felicity and godliness will be inseparably conjoined in the heavenly kingdom, or, negatively, that the disobedient are forever cut off from the kingdom of the eschaton.

In the case of the covenants of grant, the message to be conveyed through the introduction of the works principle did not so much concern the nature of the messianic kingdom, but rather the role of the messianic king. (KP 236-37)

In distinguishing the two varieties of conditionality the key question is that of the function of the response of obedience. If the obedience functions as the meritorious ground of reception or retention of the kingdom blessings, the conditionality is that of the works principle, the opposite of the principle of grace. Obedience functions that way in the eternal covenant of the Father and Son, in the Covenant of the Creator with Adam, and in the Mosaic Covenant at the level of the typological kingdom (see further below). (KP 318)

The Works Principle and the Typal Kingdom

How Abraham's obedience related to the securing of the kingdom blessings in their old covenant form is a special question within the broad topic of the role of human works under redemptive covenant. Several times previously we have had occasion to note that the old (Mosaic) covenant order, though in continuity with the Abrahamic covenant of promise and even an initial fulfillment of its kingdom promises, was nevertheless itself governed by a principle of works. Earlier in this chapter (cf. I, A, 1) when we were identifying the Abrahamic Covenant as one of grace and promise, we observed how Paul in Galatians 3:10ff. and Romans 10:4ff. contrasted the works principle which he saw operating in the Mosaic law order with the promise-grace-faith principle of the gospel. It was the apostle's perception of this opposition of the governing principles of the two covenants that obliged him to face the question whether the Abrahamic promise had been annulled by the subsequent Mosaic Covenant (Gal 3:15–17). Stated the other way around, the very fact that Paul raises this question is compelling evidence that he saw a principle operating in the law that was antithetical to promise-faith.

That Paul did indeed assess the Mosaic order in such terms is further supported by his citation of Leviticus 18:5 as an expression of the do-and-live principle of inheritance. In Galatians 3 he points to that verse as evidence from within the Mosaic Covenant itself that "the law" was "not of faith" (v. 12; cf. v. 18). Similarly in Romans 10:5 he uses that Mosaic formulation as a description of "the righteousness which is of the law," asserting this to be antithetical to "the righteousness which is of faith" (v. 6). Romans 9:32, compared with Galatians 3:12, also seems to make the same point. Also, Romans 5:13, 14 demands this view of the law.

It was only because Paul thus recognized the presence of this works principle in the law that he could identify the old covenant as an administration of bondage, condemnation, and death in contrast to the new covenant, which he characterized as one of freedom, righteousness, and life (Gal 4:24–26; 2 Cor 3:6–9). This same interpretation of the old covenant emerges in Paul's address in the synagogue at Antioch Pisidia, when, proclaiming justification through Jesus, he says that justification was not provided by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).

At the same time, Paul affirmed that the Mosaic Covenant did not annul the promise arrangement given earlier to Abraham (Gal 3:17). The explanation for this is that the old covenant order was composed of two strata and the works principle enunciated in Leviticus 18:5, and elsewhere in the law, applied only to one of these, a secondary stratum. There was a foundational stratum having to do with the personal attainment of the eternal kingdom of salvation and this underlying stratum, continuous with all preceding and succeeding administrations of the Lord's Covenant of Grace with the church, was informed by the principle of grace (cf., e.g., Rom 4:16). Because the Abrahamic covenant of promise found continuity in the Mosaic order at this underlying level, it was not abrogated by the latter. The works principle in the Mosaic order was confined to the typological sphere of the provisional earthly kingdom which was superimposed as a secondary overlay on the foundational stratum.

Leviticus 18:5, in stating that the man who performed the covenant stipulations would live in them, declared that individual Israelites must observe the requirements of the law to enjoy the blessings of the typological kingdom community. Even individuals who were elect in terms of eternal salvation would be cut off from that temporal, typological realm as the penalty for various serious infractions of the law. Likewise, the Israelite people corporately could maintain their continuing tenure as the theocratic kingdom in the promised land only as they maintained the appropriate measure of national fidelity to their heavenly King. Failure to do so would result

in the loss of the typological kingdom and their very identity as God's people in that corporate, typological sense. If they broke the covenant, they would suffer exile and the loss of their national, typological election. Such was, of course, the actual outcome. Israel became *Lo-Ammi*. The fact of this loss of the national election given to Israel in the Mosaic Covenant compels all who confess the sovereignty of God's saving grace to recognize the presence of a works principle in that covenant. Clearly, the sovereign grace of Christ's suretyship does not relate to the typological realm with its national election and blessings under the old covenant in the way it does to the individual election to the ultimate realities of salvation, which are in view in all administrations of the Covenant of Grace. At the level of the secondary, typological stratum of the Mosaic order, continuance in the election to kingdom blessings was not guaranteed by sovereign grace on the basis of Christ's meritorious accomplishments. It was rather something to be merited by the Israelites' works of obedience to the law.

Paul was resuming Jeremiah's classic analysis of the covenants when he contrasted the new covenant to the old (the old viewed in the restricted but distinctive terms of its typological dimension). In contrast to the new covenant which could not be broken, founded as it was on God's sovereign, forgiving grace in Christ, the old covenant, according to Jeremiah, was breakable (Jer 31:32). Individual members of the new covenant community might prove false and be broken off as branches from a tree while the covenant tree remained intact, pruned and flourishing. But the old covenant's typological kingdom order as such could be and was terminated. The axe of God's judgment was ultimately laid unto the roots of the tree and the tree itself was felled. Jeremiah's identification of the old covenant as breakable was the equivalent of an assertion that it lacked the guarantee afforded by the grace principle and was instead based on the principle of works.

What we have found then is that once the typological kingdom was inaugurated under the Mosaic Covenant, Israel's retention of it was governed by a principle of works applied on a national scale. The standard of judgment in this national probation was one of typological legibility, that is, the message must remain reasonably readable that enjoyment of the felicity of God's holy kingdom goes hand in hand with righteousness. Without holiness we do not see God. But if the ground of Israel's tenure in Canaan was their covenant obedience, their election to receive the typological kingdom in the first place was emphatically not based on any merit of theirs (cf. Deut 9:5, 6). Their original reception of this kingdom, as well as their restoration to it after the loss of their national election in Babylonian exile, is repeatedly attributed to God's remembrance of his promissory commitments of grace to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 2:24; 3:6ff.; 6:2ff.; 32:13; Deut 9:27; 10:15; Lev 26:42), pointing to the coming Messiah and the new covenant. (KP 320-23)

The new covenant is not a renewal of an older covenant in the sense of confirming the continuing validity of the old. If we speak of the new covenant as a renewal of the old it must be to express their continuity as two administrations of the Covenant of Grace or, more specifically, the continuity of the new covenant with the underlying, foundational stratum of the old covenant, the substratum of gospel-grace as the way to the ultimate heavenly hope in Christ. But with respect to the old covenant as a typological realization of the promised kingdom realm, the new covenant does not confirm the continuing validity of the old but rather announces its obsolescence and end.

Necessarily so. For, as the Jeremiah 31:31–34 prophecy indicated, the old covenant in its typological kingdom aspect was not a permanent order of the grace-guarantee kind but a

probationary arrangement informed by the works principle, hence breakable. And having been broken, it was perforce terminated. Thereby, as Paul observes, all, Jew as well as Gentile, were shut up together under the sentence of having failed to attain the kingdom on the ground of obedience to the law and thus all alike were put in the position of being wholly dependent on the mercy of God's grace revealed in the gospel (Rom 11:32). (KP 345)

In the past, Dispensationalism has recognized the presence of the works principle in the old covenant, even making that the identifying hallmark of its dispensation of law. In doing so, it did not comprehend the full complexity of the situation. For it did not perceive that the works principle was confined to the typological kingdom stratum of the Mosaic economy and that there was simultaneously in that economy an underlying stratum that was concerned with the eternal salvation of individuals and their inheritance of the everlasting second level kingdom, a stratum governed by the principle of grace. Law (works) was also seen by Dispensationalism as the operative principle in the millennial kingdom dispensation. That was the logical consequence of Dispensationalism's bracketing out the gospel of grace by its concept of the church dispensation of grace as a parenthesis between the two kingdom dispensations of the law and the millennium. As a result, Dispensationalism ended up teaching that there were two different and contrary ways by which fallen men secured God's eschatological blessings. (KP 346)

A variety of purposes can be discovered to explain the insertion of the old covenant order and its typical kingdom into the course of redemptive history. Of central importance was the creation of the proper historical setting for the advent of the Son of God and his earthly mission (cf. Rom 9:5). In accordance with the terms of his covenant of works with the Father he was to come as the second Adam in order to undergo a representative probation and by his obedient and triumphant accomplishment thereof to establish the legal ground for God's covenanted bestowal of the eternal kingdom of salvation on his people. It was therefore expedient, if not necessary, that Christ appear within a covenant order which, like the covenant with the first Adam, was governed by the works principle (cf. Gal 4:4). The typical kingdom of the old covenant was precisely that. Within the limitations of the fallen world and with modifications peculiar to the redemptive process, the old theocratic kingdom was a reproduction of the original covenantal order. Israel as the theocratic nation was mankind stationed once again in a paradise-sanctuary, under probation in a covenant of works. In the context of that situation, the Incarnation event was legible; apart from it the meaning of the appearing and ministry of the Son of Man would hardly have been perspicuous. Because of the congruence between Jesus' particular historical identity as the true Israel, born under the law, and his universally relevant role as the second Adam, the significance of his mission as the accomplishing of a probationary assignment in a works covenant in behalf of the elect of all ages was lucidly expressed and readily readable. (KP 352)

***God, Heaven and Har Magedon (= GHHM)*⁸**

The overarching Covenant of Grace, which was to unfold in several premessianic administrations (including the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants) and have its full, culminating expression in the New Covenant, was inaugurated by the divine declaration of Gen

⁸ Meredith G. Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2006). Bellingham, Washington: Logos Research Systems, 2014.

3:15 and the divine act of symbolic sealing recorded in Gen 3:21. In anticipation of his assured redemptive triumph over Satan in the fullness of time, the Son, as Lord of the Covenant of Grace, was administering this covenant and its salvation blessings from the Fall onwards. (GHHM 75)

Carrying forward the Abrahamic Covenant as they do, both the Old and New Covenants are, like it, administrations of the Covenant of Grace. Foundational to both these covenantal orders is the purpose and program of individual election in Christ unto salvation and the heavenly inheritance. At the same time the Scriptures indicate that in the Mosaic economy there was superimposed as a separate second tier on this foundation stratum of gospel grace a works arrangement, the Torah covenant with its “do this and live” principle (cf. Lev 18:5), the opposite of the grace-faith principle (Galatians 3 and 4; Rom 10:5, 6). The introduction of this Law arrangement centuries after the covenant of promise to Abraham did not abrogate the earlier promise of grace because its works principle did not appertain to individual, eternal salvation (cf. Gal 3:17). The works principle of the Law was rather the governing principle in the typological sphere of the national election and the possession of the first level kingdom in Canaan. It is this works principle that explains the otherwise inexplicable termination of the typological kingdom of Israel through judgment curse. (GHHM 96-97)

With the abolishing of the Mosaic order, the second level kingdom of the messianic age was initiated under the Lord’s New Covenant with the church. Jeremiah, speaking of the new covenant to be made in the coming days (Jer 31:31–34), drew a sharp contrast between it and the covenant made at Sinai (i.e., the stratum of it concerned with the typological kingdom). He described the Old Covenant as breakable and in fact as having been broken by Israel, which means that it was informed by the works principle of inheritance. And he asserted that the new covenant would be unlike the Torah covenant. It would be unbreakable; it would be an administration of gospel grace and forgiveness. While then we will want to affirm the New Covenant’s continuity with the foundational gospel stratum of the Mosaic economy and with the Abrahamic Covenant of promise, we must also acknowledge the works-grace discontinuity between the new and the old (at its typological level), the difference that Jeremiah so emphatically asserted. (GHHM 97)

We have already remarked on the law-gospel contrast between the Old and New Covenants. Another aspect of the discontinuity between them emerges when they are viewed as two stages in the fulfilling of the kingdom promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. The Old Covenant kingdom is only a temporary type, a provisional symbol, while the New Covenant kingdom is the permanent antitypical reality. Emphasizing this difference, the Book of Hebrews declares the discontinuity to be such that with the initiating of the New Covenant, the Old Covenant becomes obsolete and vanishes away (Heb 8:13). To be sure, a certain continuity is involved in the typological relationship itself, the continuity of the earlier prototype to the later antitype, the continuity of promise to fulfillment. Nevertheless, the New Covenant fulfillment entails the discontinuance of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is abrogated and replaced by the New Covenant (cf. Heb 7:18; John 1:17; Rom 10:4). At the same time, we recognize that there is solid continuity between the Old and New Covenants when the Old Covenant is viewed not at the overlay stratum to which the typological kingdom and the works principle appertain but at the

foundational gospel-grace layer. Indeed, from this perspective the New Covenant continues the Old Covenant. (GHHM 97-98)

Indicative of the kingdomization of Israel, the documentation of the Sinaitic covenant was in the form of treaties employed in the diplomacy of kingdoms in the Mosaic age. The two stone “tables of the covenant” (Deut 9:9, 11, 15; cf. Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13) reflect the customary arrangement of preparing duplicate copies of the treaty, one each for the great king and the vassal king. And the contents of the two tables follow closely the outline of the extrabiblical treaties: preamble, identifying the Great King (cf. Exod 20:2a); historical prologue, rehearsing the Great King’s previous favorable treatment of the vassal (cf. Exod 20:2b); stipulations, imposing obligations on the vassal in his service of the Great King (cf. Exod 20:3–17); sanctions, pronouncing the blessings that would attend obedience on the vassal’s part and the curses that would be visited on disobedience (cf. Exod 20:5, 6, 7, 12). (GHHM 122)

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. The Law covenant was a sub-administration of the Covenant of Grace, designed to further the purpose and program of the gospel. By exhibiting dramatically the situation of all mankind, fallen in and with Adam in the original probation in Eden, the tragic history of Israel under its covenant-of-works probation served to convict all of their sinful, hopeless estate. The Law thus drove men to Christ that they might be justified by faith. All were shut up in disobedience that God might have mercy on all (Rom 11:28–36; Gal 3:19–25). (GHHM 128-29)

Glory in Our Midst (= GOM)⁹

[On Zechariah 1:12] When the Babylonian captivity of Israel is perceived as a combination of the Lord’s indignation and of the seventy years understood as signifying the completion of divine action, it emerges as a parable of the eternal perdition of hell, as a punishment that constituted at a temporal-typological level a consummate divine retribution, a full satisfaction of divine justice. Such significance had been assigned to this ultimate covenant curse of exile by Moses in his prophetic overview of the course of old covenant history in Leviticus 26

Israel in exile received a full equivalence in penal recompense for her sins. Those sufferings were not a sacrificial atonement akin to the propitiatory achievement of the Cross. Captive Israel was not the suffering Servant heralded by Isaiah, the vicariously suffering Servant stricken of God for the transgressions of others. Her sufferings were rather the kind of reparations paid by those condemned to hell. However, unlike the doom of the lake of fire, God’s judicial response at the ultimate eschatological level of radical religious reality to reprobate individuals, the sentence of Babylonian exile dealt with Israel at the typological level of the provisional Mosaic economy. At the level of the second death retribution is unending; at the typological level a finite period of retribution, the seventy years, sufficed as a complete payment, a making good in full for national Israel’s transgressions. (GOM 37)

⁹ Meredith G. Kline, *Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2001). Bellingham, Washington: Logos Research Systems, 2014.

[On Zechariah 1:12] Why was restoration of the kingdom in its typological form so limited? In particular, why was the Davidic throne not restored and another glory age enjoyed in those postexilic centuries? For one thing, although Israel had, at the typological level, fully paid for its past offences by the seventy years exile, that payment did not earn future blessings. Israel's restoration to the land, like their original reception of it after the exodus, was a gift of grace. Moreover, in the postexilic phase of the old covenant as in the preexilic a principle of works was operating in the sense that retention of the typological kingdom blessings had to be earned by demonstrated covenant obedience, with the measure of such blessings fluctuating with Israel's erratic faithfulness (cf. Rom 10:5, 6; Gal 3:12). Further, since it was a major purpose of the Mosaic economy to prepare an appropriate historical setting for the advent of the Messiah and since he must appear in a state of humiliation to fulfill his mission as the suffering Servant, the covenant community could hardly have been in a state of glorious power with a representative of David's dynasty on the throne when Jesus Christ was born. (GOM 39)

[On Zechariah 1:13-17] Also portrayed in Israel's typological history was the fact that the eternal city would be secured as an act of gracious restoration of blessings forfeited in the Fall. Like man under the Covenant of Creation, Israel broke a covenant of works (the principle operative in the typological kingdom dimension of the Mosaic economy), lost its covenant status and was exiled as Lo-Ammi, Not-My-People, from its holy paradise. However, in a display of divine grace, Israel was regathered from Babylonian exile to the land of promise and that was, of course, the immediate historical context of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. While this typological restoration of Jerusalem, the temple, and the cities of Judah is indeed addressed in the Lord's response in Zech 1:13-17, the oracle looks beyond to a greater restoration of which the typological history becomes a figurative image. It serves as a symbolic medium in which the Lord expresses the promise of a future restoration of the kingdom of God, a restoration not realized in Old Testament times, a messianic restoration not fully realized until the end of this present world. (GOM 43)

[On Zechariah 1:18-21] Why the Mosaic economy? Why Israel? Part of the answer is that old covenant history, especially its termination in the destruction of Jerusalem, was calculated to sound an alarm in a world oblivious to the wrath to come, and so capture the attention of the Gentiles for the church's witness to Jesus Christ and the way of escape offered in the gospel. Let them know that the fall of Jerusalem is, typologically, the beginning of the end of the world. Let them be advised that the anointed prince who sent his armies and destroyed the holy city and temple (Dan 9:26) is the one by whom God will judge the world in righteousness on the day he has appointed (Acts 17:30, 31). (GOM 66)

[On Zechariah 3] Joshua's duties are expressed as conditions whose fulfillment would bring high privilege and honor. The transaction was tantamount to a covenant of grant proposal, offering special reward in recognition of faithful services to be rendered. Joshua's recommissioning took this form because the high priestly order epitomized the Torah-covenant with Israel and therefore, like it, was informed by the works principle. As previously observed, the Mosaic Covenant was indeed a covenant of works at the level of Israel's typological kingdom. In that respect it recapitulated the original covenant of works with Adam. Hence the proposal made to Joshua was also after the pattern of that covenant of creation with its proposal of a grant of

heightened blessings to be merited by Adam's obedient discharge of the stipulated services, particularly the priestly guardianship of God's sanctuary. (GOM 117)

[On Zechariah 4] When defining the function of temple building in the Davidic Covenant we must distinguish between the two levels of the kingdom covenanted to Abraham. In relation to the typological level administered through the old (Mosaic) covenant, the Davidic Covenant was a covenant of grant, rewarding David for faithfully waging the war of the Lord. This works principle, operating at the typological level of the kingdom, was further evidenced in the fact that the continuance of the typological kingdom under the Davidic dynasty was made dependent on the continuing allegiance of the Davidic kings to their heavenly Suzerain, as expressed in their compliance with the probationary stipulations of his covenant. Within this covenant of grant, the temple building commission was a covenant stipulation to be obeyed, and the obedient performance of this service would function as the meritorious ground for dynastic confirmation and continuance (cf. 1 Chr 28:5–7). (GOM 153)

[On Zechariah 5] In the light of such passages we may detect in the implicit presence of a remnant in Zechariah 5 an intimation that purgation as well as punishment was at least an indirect purpose of the mission of the volant scroll.¹⁰ However, this purifying effect of the judgment that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was not intended as a reformation of the Mosaic covenant order, with a view to its continuation. On the contrary, this judicial purge was a removing of this old order off the stage of history to make room for the true fulfillment of the kingdom covenanted unto Abraham, fulfillment at the new covenant level. The national election of Israel as the people of the provisional Mosaic kingdom was cancelled in curse and the typological order terminated in desolation and diaspora. But for the individual election of sovereign grace there was no failure of the guaranteed blessings; the Torah Covenant of works with its typological kingdom had not annulled the earlier promise-faith covenant. That covenant of grace continued and underlay the typological-works level of the Law, finding expression in the ever present elect remnant (Rom 11:1–6) and at last in that “one third” not cut off, who continued through the collapse of Israel to become the nucleus of the community of faith under the new covenant of grace. (GOM 191)

[On Zechariah 6] Zechariah casts his prophecy of Christ and the church in the prophetic idiom, employing the old typological order to depict the new covenant realities. And according to the covenantal constitution for that old order, corporate Israel must earn the continuing enjoyment of the typological kingdom inheritance by their obedience. This works principle is a conspicuous feature of the sanctions section of the Mosaic treaties. [Endnote 32: Cf. e.g., Lev 18:5; Deut 28:1, 9, 13, 15; 30:15–20. As Paul's appeal to Lev 18:5 shows (Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12), a legal principle of meritorious works was operating in the Torah covenant opposite to the gospel principle of grace.] Expressing things in old covenant terms, Zechariah therefore says that God's kingdom of glory is the reward for the probationary obedience of the elect corporately. In the light of the total Scriptural revelation, we understand, however, that this act of probationary obedience is performed not by them but by Christ their federal representative—by the one for the many. It is a righteousness of God imputed to the elect by grace through faith

The function of probationer that Christ assumed as the true Israel-Servant was more basically his in terms of his identity as second Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45–47). [Endnote 33:

¹⁰ The *volant* scroll = the *flying* scroll (Zech 5:1-2).

In Gal 4:4, “born under the law” identifies Christ as the second Israel, under the Torah covenant. “Born of a woman” brings out his humanity and so suggests his second Adam status.] ...

As advertised by his birth under the Torah covenant of works (Gal 4:4), Christ came to earth as one under the intratrinitarian covenant of works. It was by fulfilling the probation of that supernal works covenant that he became the mediator of the Covenant of Grace, the covenant in which his people become by faith joint-heirs with their Lord of the eternal kingdom of glory (Heb 9:14; Rom 8:17). Law is thus foundational to gospel; gospel-grace honors the demands of divine justice as definitively expressed in law covenant. In Rom 3:31 Paul makes this point forcefully: “Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid; nay we establish the law.” The apostle is not concerned here with the normative nature of the Mosaic laws but with the law as a covenant governed by the principle of works in contrast to the gospel with its principle of grace. And even though he is arguing that we are justified not by works but by grace through faith, he insists emphatically on the continuing validity of the works principle as foundational to the gospel order. It is by the obedience of the one that the many are made righteous (Rom 5:19). (GOM 236-37)

“Of Works and Grace”¹¹

Perhaps Fuller’s thinking would not have taken this unfortunate turn if he had distinctly discerned and taken account of the explanation of the combination of the principles of grace and works within the Mosaic economy which has held central place in the covenant theology tradition. As is properly perceived in this traditional view, under the old covenant a typological kingdom was superimposed as an overlay on the stratum that constitutes the continuity of all redemptive administrations and issues in the eternal antitypical kingdom. At the level of the underlying stratum, the level of individual attainment of the eternal kingdom in Christ, the principle of inheritance under the old covenant as under all redemptive covenants was the principle of sovereign soteric grace. But the administration of the provisional earthly kingdom, the typological overlay peculiar to the old covenant, was informed by the principle of works in that the Israelites’ compliance with the covenant stipulations was made the ground of tenure with respect to the kingdom blessings. [Footnote 2: For a comprehensive treatment of this view and especially its place within the history of covenant theology, cf. the articles by Mark W. Karlberg in *The Westminster Theological Journal* 43,1 (1980), 1-57, and 43,2 (1981), 213-246. These articles also include trenchant comment on Fuller’s book.]

Had Fuller reckoned with the additional option presented by this distinctive form of covenant theology, the exegetical possibilities would have been radically altered for him as he dealt with such key contexts as Romans 10 and Galatians 3. As it is, he makes his way by a process of tortuous exegesis to conclusions in flat contradiction of the teaching of these passages that a works principle was in effect within the Mosaic economy. Clearly it was Paul’s recognition of the presence of this works principle at the typological overlay level of the old covenant that made him raise the question whether this “law” arrangement annulled the earlier Abrahamic Covenant of promise. And it was his recognition of the simultaneous presence,

¹¹ *Presbyterion* 9.1-2 (Spring/Fall 1983): 85-92, quotes from 85-87. <http://www.meredithkline.com/klines-works/articles-and-essays/of-works-and-grace>. Review of Daniel P. Fuller’s *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

within the Mosaic economy, of the underlying stratum with its principle of grace controlling the reception of the eternal kingdom that made it possible for him to affirm that the Mosaic Covenant had not annulled God's promise to Abraham.

The contrast between the old and new covenants repeatedly drawn by the apostle Paul is the same works-grace contrast found in Jeremiah's familiar prophecy of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Identifying the old covenant as one that could be and was broken, the prophet declared that the new covenant would not be like the old covenant, a breakable covenant. It does of course happen that individuals prove false to the new covenant, but Jeremiah is referring to the kingdom order as such. The eternal antitypical kingdom of the new covenant, the kingdom of the righteous knowledge of God in the Spirit, is attained on the ground of the meritorious accomplishment of Christ, and its realization is thus made sure as a matter of guaranteed grace to Christ's people, God forgiving their iniquity and remembering their sin no more. But the prototypical kingdom immediately in view in the old covenant obviously lacked that unbreakable guarantee, for once and again, and at last irrevocably, that kingdom was taken away from the covenant people by their removal into exile. Indeed, the kingdom order as such was ultimately terminated in a devastating divine infliction of the curse of the covenant. The principle operating here was manifestly altogether different from the promise-faith principle of God's sovereign grace in Christ. Apart from a recognition of the operation of the principle of works in the old covenant it is impossible to account for Jerusalem's desolation. As Moses had solemnly warned in the constitutional documents of the old covenant, the continuance of the Israelite kingdom in Canaan was conditioned on their covenant-keeping; corporate disloyalty against the Lord of the covenant would result in the catastrophic ending of the whole kingdom order.

The experience of even the true children of God within the old covenant exemplified the operation there of the works principle at the typological level. Although they did not lose their inheritance of the eternal kingdom, guaranteed by sovereign grace in Christ, they too, along with the mass of the covenant breakers, did lose possession of Canaan when the Lord enforced the works principle of the old covenant and drove the nation into Babylonian captivity as Lo-Ammi, Not-My-People. Moreover, while the nation Israel was in the kingdom land, even true believers could individually forfeit their place in that typological kingdom by serious violations of the civil laws. In the case of the individual Israelite, including the elect, as in the history of the nation corporately, tenure with respect to the typological kingdom had obedience as its ground and even faith in the Christ of promise would not prevent the loss of the typological blessings when the works condition was not satisfied.

We must conclude that between the old covenant and the new covenant there is contrast as well as continuum. There is a continuum of sovereign soteric grace in Christ with respect to eternal salvation and the inheritance of heaven. But there is a contrast in that the old covenant involved a secondary, typological sphere in which a principle was introduced quite the opposite of the grace-promise-faith principle. By reason of the presence of this different principle of works, the old covenant was breakable – and in that respect stood in contrast to the new covenant, not in continuum with it, asserted God's prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34).

“Gospel until the Law: Rom 5:13-14 and the Old Covenant”¹²

My immediate interest here is the intriguing exegetical puzzle posed by this parenthesis [Rom 5:13-14], but I am also using it as an entrance into the question of the nature of the old covenant, particularly as debated within the Reformed camp by proponents of classic covenant theology and the revisionist tradition represented by John Murray. The basic question is obviously of wider evangelical and indeed ecumenical interest, as witnessed in the burgeoning literature on the Pauline view of the law.

As I see it, the customary interpretations of Rom 5:13-14, irrespective of theological perspective, are alike in one respect: their failure to account satisfactorily for the particular segment of history Paul selects to make his point. I hope to show that recognition of the law-gospel contrast and, more specifically, of the operation of the principle of works (as antithetical to grace) in the old covenant is the indispensable key to a satisfactory explanation of this perplexing passage. If so, then Rom 5:13-14 proves to be decisive evidence in corroboration of the classic form of covenant theology, which is distinguished by these key elements.

Before exploring the exegesis of Rom 5:13-14 it will be useful to clarify the aforementioned controversy among covenant theologians. Classic covenantalism recognizes that the old Mosaic order (at its foundation level – that is, as a program of individual salvation in Christ) was in continuity with previous and subsequent administrations of the overarching covenant of grace. But it also sees and takes at face value the massive Biblical evidence for a peculiar discontinuity present in the old covenant in the form of a principle of meritorious works, operating not as a way of eternal salvation but as the principle governing Israel’s retention of its provisional, typological inheritance.

Illustrative of the complexity is Rom 10:5-8, where Paul contrasts law and gospel by juxtaposed quotations, both from the Torah: Lev 18:5 as expressive of works, Deut 30:12-14 as proclaiming the way of faith in Christ. Classic covenantalism seeks to do full justice to this complexity by distinguishing two levels of the old covenant, as suggested above. Among other interpreters, some see the plain meaning of the contrasting strands in Paul’s teaching, judge the apostle inconsistent and let it go at that. Most, with less respect for the plain meaning of the text but more for Paul’s (or God’s) consistency, try to explain away the apostle’s identification of the law as a works arrangement.

One popular method of escaping the perceived tension has been to suppose that identification of the law as antithetical to faith does not represent Paul’s own opinion but is a Judaizing misunderstanding that he is opposing. Others, perceiving the contrived nature of this misinterpretation solution, think to relieve the tension by qualifications that in effect eliminate the law principle from the situation. Thus, according to Moises Silva, the law, though “leading to life,” could not be and was not in the divine purpose intended to be a “source of righteousness and life.” To this extent he agrees with classic covenantalism. But because the Murray position followed by Silva so minimizes the significance of the typological stratum as virtually to reduce the old covenant to the one level of its continuity with other administrations of grace, his suggestion leaves the law principle functioning merely as a hypothetical proposal of salvation by works and in no other way.

¹² *JETS* 34.4 (Dec 1991): 433-46, quotes from 434-36. <http://www.meredithkline.com/klines-works/articles-and-essays/gospel-until-the-law-romans-5-13-14>. Reading the entire article is recommended in order to grasp the significance Kline sees in the phrase “until the law” in Rom 5:13 as it relates to the question of the presence of a works principle in both the Adamic covenant and the Mosaic economy.

The total covenantal experience of Israel with all its canonical documentation shouts out against such a reductionism. The law's principle of works was not just something hypothetical. It was actually applied – and with a vengeance. It was the judicial principle that governed the corporate life of Israel as recipient of the national election and controlled Israel's tenure in the typological kingdom of Canaan. Termination of that typological order and Israel's loss of the national election in the divine execution of the covenant curse in the Babylonian exile and again in A.D. 70, exactly as threatened in the Torah treaty, emphatically contradict the notion that the law's stipulations and sanctions were mere hypothetical formulations. A strange blindness with respect to Israel has in large part happened to Biblical scholarship.

On the classic covenantal understanding, the law that came 430 years later did not disannul the promise (Gal 3:17) – not because the old covenant did not really introduce an operative works principle, but because works and faith were operating on two different levels in the Mosaic economy. What is truly remarkable is that Paul sounds often enough as though he too were reducing the Mosaic economy to one level – not, however, to the grace level but to the typological works level. If the apostle expressed himself so unguardedly today he would risk being accused of dispensationalist leanings.

Rejection of the works principle in the old covenant tends to degenerate into a more general denial of the possibility of merit in the religious relationship and thus to a rejection of the principle of works in the original creation covenant with Adam. Such a development moves away from Reformation doctrine back into something akin to Roman Catholic theology. If the gravitation toward the denial of the original covenant of works is not due to the logical outworking of an antiforensic bias already present in opposition to the traditional law-gospel contrast, it may be explained in terms of exegetical linkage – that is, the exegete's encounter with the parallelism between the old covenant and the covenant of creation found in Biblical passages like Rom 5:13-14.

Indeed, Rom 5:13-14 speaks to this entire issue. We shall discover that it speaks decisively against both the extreme of rejecting the law-gospel contrast and the compromise of denying the law really was law, or, positively stated, that it summons us back to a new appreciation of classic federal theology.