



Matthew Poole

Ordained
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at 400



R. White Sculpsit

*Effigies Reverendi admodum Viri Matthaei Poli,
qui huic seculo non minus desiderabilis interijt, quam
ob scripta sua Critica et casuistica posteris charus
futurus est. Flere et meminisse relictum est.*

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From the Editor

For Reformation month, Harrison Perkins explores the significance of the life and ministry of Matthew Poole (1624–1679) in “Matthew Poole: Exemplar of Traditional Exegesis,” celebrating the 400th anniversary of his birth. He was an important theologian and minister in the post-Reformation period of the first phase of “High Orthodoxy” (1640–1685) which produced the broad, explicit exposition of Reformed tradition. Most Christians know Poole through his excellent popular four volume *Annotations upon the Holy Bible* (1683). Along with his pastoral concerns and undergirding his ministry was profound scholarship. Perkins focuses on Poole’s traditional or precritical exegesis which formed the basis of his theology, contrary to much modern scholarship which has depicted post-Reformation theologians as constructing an abstract system similar to medieval Scholasticism.

As I said in the August-September issue, “The Covenant of Works in the Theology of Meredith G. Kline” was originally written for a festschrift that was never published. It is here the second of two parts, lightly revised in the hope that it will elucidate the late Meredith G. Kline’s profound reflections on the nature of the biblical covenants, especially the importance of distinguishing the covenant of works, in its various biblical manifestations, from the covenant of grace. While not every officer will agree with everything Kline has written on this topic, or my exposition of it, my intention is to add to the conversation, which has been continuing since the Reformation.

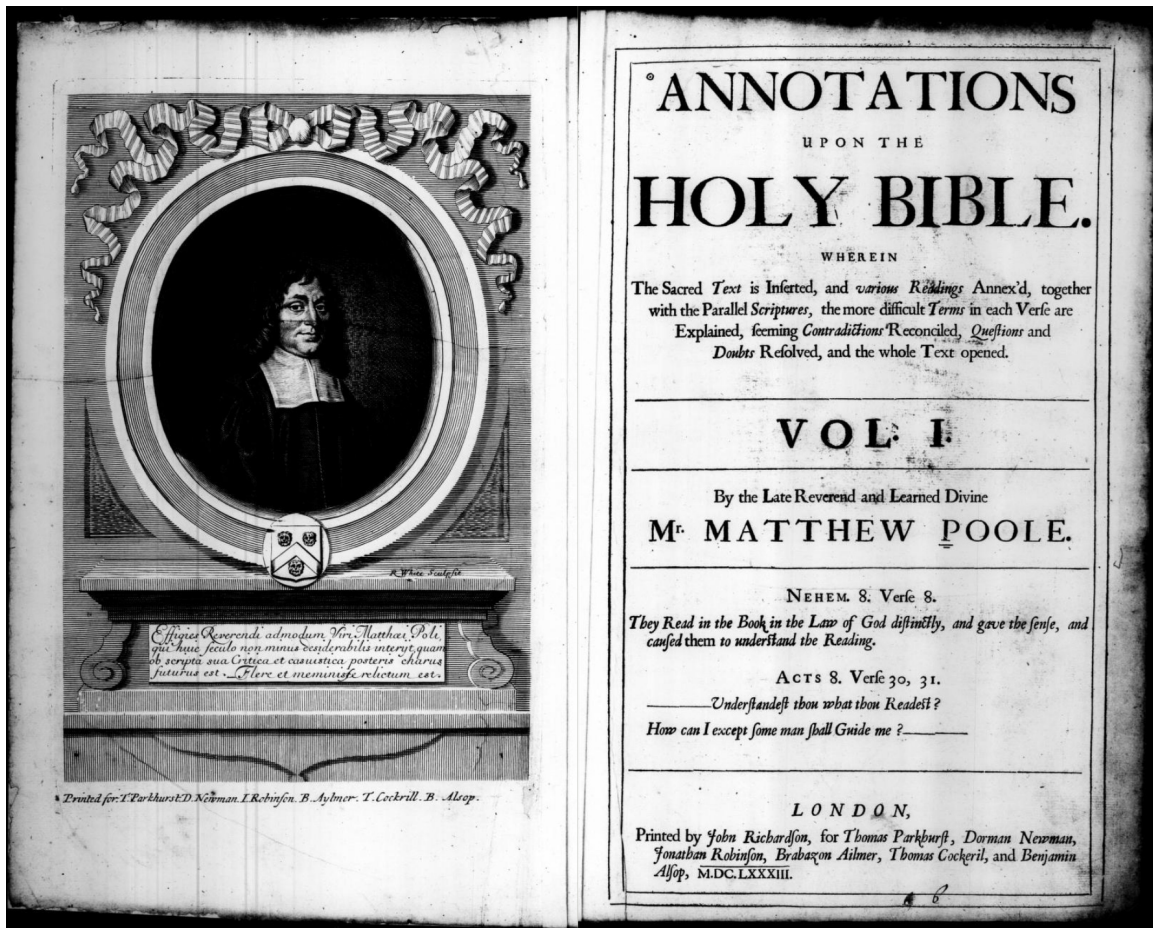
Bryan Estelle’s review article, “The Church: Not Politicized nor Ghettoized, but Spiritual,” reviews Alan Strange’s recently published *Empowered Witness: Politics, Culture, and the Spiritual Mission of the Church*. Estelle commends the book for its thorough exposition and defense of the classic Reformed doctrine of the spirituality of the church. He also adds an interesting series of areas that need further historical and theological expansion. This doctrine is the necessary remedy for the cultural transformation being promoted by many in the church today.

Stephen Michaud’s review article, “Bach against Modernity,” reviews *Bach against Modernity* by Michael Marissen. If anyone has a notion to co-opt Bach as a protomodernist, they will meet with formidable opposition in this excellent book. Marissen presents a multidimensional argument to demonstrate that Bach’s music, secular and sacred, was rooted inextricably in his orthodox Lutheran faith. Musicologists, musicians, and listeners alike will enjoy this book.

Darryl Hart reviews a controversial book: *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*, by Voddie T. Baucham, Jr. Baucham sets forth a clear warning about the dangers of CRT (critical race theory, emanating from neo-Marxism) for the church and its ministry, where this teaching has gained a hold. (By now the common idiom may be DEI rather than CRT—Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, along with ESG in the corporate world—Environmental, Social, and corporate Governance).

Our poem “Church-lock and key” by George Herbert is a tribute to the spirituality of the church. Its title was changed from “Prayer” to “Church-lock and key,” even though the word “church” is nowhere to be seen in the poem. It is simply an honest and humble prayer for forgiveness based on the shed blood of the Lamb. But Herbert realized that this is what is found in the church fulfilling its basic gospel mission of Word and sacrament. The gospel emanates from the visible church as the heart of its God-given treasures.

The cover is the frontispiece portrait of Matthew Poole next to the title of the first edition of this famous commentary on Scripture, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, published in 1683. It comes from the Internet Archive.¹



Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

¹ https://archive.org/details/bim_early-english-books-1641-1700_annotations-upon-the-hol_poole-matthew_1683/page/n1/mode/2up.

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

Servant Truth

Pictures of Heaven: The Covenant of Works in the Theology of Meredith G. Kline, Part 2

by Gregory Edward Reynolds

3. The Nature of the Covenant of Redemption: A Covenant of Works in the Work of Christ

The covenant of redemption was of primary importance in Kline's theology. The works principle has its origin in the original heavenly covenant between Father and Son. Kline insisted on using the term "works" in naming this covenant,

By continuing the use of the term "works" we preserve an important advantage that the traditional name, "Covenant of Works," has when combined with use of "Covenant of Grace" for redemptive covenant—the advantage of underscoring the fundamental law-gospel contrast. And our additional terms, "Creator's" and "with Adam," will serve to bring out the parallelism between this covenant of works and what we shall be calling "The Father's Covenant of Works with the Son" (i.e., the eternal intratrinitarian covenant), namely, the parallelism of the two Adams scheme, each of these covenants involving, as it does, an Adam figure, a federal representative under probation in a covenant of works.¹

This second covenant of works (with Christ) is the eternal covenant, which we shall call "The Father's Covenant of Works with the Son." The series of temporal administrations of redemptive grace to God's people are subsections of what we shall call "The Lord's Covenant of Grace with the Church" (or, for brevity's sake we may use the traditional 'Covenant of Grace').²

The messianic mission performed on earth began in heaven: "For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Jesus was sent forth from heaven to earth on a covenantal mission with covenantal oath-commitments from his Father. . . . the Son of God in prayer recalled the Father's commitment to him in love before the foundation of the world, a commitment to grant him as obedient messianic Servant the glory he had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5, 24). He presented his claim of merit as the faithful Servant who had met the terms of the eternal covenant of works by obediently fulfilling his mission: "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). And then he made his request that the grant of glory proposed in that covenant now be conferred: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self

¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 21.

² Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 138.

with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). Jesus, the second Adam, standing before his judgment tree could declare that he had overcome the temptation to eat the forbidden fruit and that he had accomplished the charge to judge Satan, and, therefore, he could claim his right of access to the tree of life.³

Coming as the second federal head, the Son of Man, whose origins were in heaven, would undergo probation in another covenant of works, the covenant which he made with the Father before he left heaven and for the fulfillment of which he came to earth as the seed of the woman. The covenantal commitments made in eternity in the intratrinitarian counsels must be fulfilled on earth in historical time. In the world of the generations of Adam and the woman the second Adam, as the representative of God’s elect, must gain the reward of the covenanted kingdom for himself and for them, as had been decreed in Genesis 3:15. By his obedience in the earthly probation phase of his eternal covenant of works the champion of the woman’s seed would open the way for the Covenant of Grace, whose proper purpose is to bring salvation to the rest of the woman’s seed and to bestow on them the kingdom of the Glory-Spirit won by their messianic kinsman-redeemer. Indeed, in suffering the bruising of his heel the messianic seed would ratify this new covenant.⁴

Vos explains, “The covenant of redemption is the pattern for the covenant of grace. However, it is more than that. It is also the effective cause for carrying through the latter.”⁵

4. The Nature of the Mosaic Covenant: A Republication of the Covenant of Works?⁶

The most controversial aspect of Kline’s covenant theology is his rendering of the Mosaic covenant. The range of understanding within Post-Reformation thought is nonetheless essentially unified in seeking to account for the presence of a works principle in the Sinai covenant.⁷ Geerhardus Vos puts it succinctly as he summarizes the perspective of historical theology:

The older theologians did not always clearly distinguish between the covenant of works and the Sinaitic covenant. At Sinai it was not the “bare” law that was given, but a reflection of the covenant of works revived, as it were, in the interests of the covenant of grace continued at Sinai.⁸

³ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 139–40.

⁴ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 144–5. “This covenantal commitment to the Son was renewed in the course of the historical administration of the covenant of grace.” Kline, *Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical-theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2001), 222.

⁵ Geerhardus Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 252.

⁶ Cf. the “Report of the Committee to Study Republication,” presented to the Eighty-third (2016) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

⁷ Brenton Ferry, “Works in the Mosaic Covenant: A Reformed Taxonomy,” in Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, David VanDrunen, eds., *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 76–105.

⁸ Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” 255.

Kline believed that the covenant of works in Moses was an overlay with a substratum of grace running through it. The works principle evident in the Sinai covenant functioned typologically and pedagogically as a republication of the covenant of works. The Mosaic Covenant is “governed by a principle of works.”⁹

Most familiar of the instances of the introduction of a works principle in a pre-messianic 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. . . . 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.¹⁰

The typological objective in the case of the Israelite kingdom was to teach that righteousness and prosperity will be conjoined in the consummated kingdom. For the purpose of keeping that symbolic message readable, persistent wholesale apostasy could not be allowed to accompany possession of the promised inheritance. But, on the other hand, the pedagogical point of the typological arrangement could be satisfactorily made, in a positive fashion, in spite of the inevitable imperfections of the people individually and as a nation.¹¹

By virtue then of both the filling of the land of Canaan and its characterization as a sabbath-land, this first level, Canaanite fulfillment of the land promise is seen to be an anticipatory portrayal of the consummated kingdom-land, the Metapolis kingdom-city of the new heavens and earth which the Creator covenanted to man from the beginning.¹²

Besides preparing an appropriate context for the messianic mission, a broadly pedagogical purpose was served by the typical kingdom in that it furnished spiritual instruction for the faithful in ages both before and after the advent of Christ (1 Cor. 10:11). Thus, in addition to calling attention to the probationary aspect of Jesus’ mission, the works principle that governed the Israelite kingdom acted as the schoolmaster for Israel, convicting of sin and total inability to satisfy the Lord’s

⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 320. See also Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:227. Turretin refers to the Mosaic covenant as “a rigid legal economy.”

¹⁰ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 237.

¹¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 239–40.

¹² Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 338–39.

righteous demands and thereby driving the sinner to the grace of God offered in the underlying gospel promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.¹³

Hand-in-hand with the pedagogical function of the typical kingdom went its purpose of contributing to the preservation of the covenant community on earth. . . . This end was furthered by constant reminders, as in the system of things clean and unclean, of their holy distinctiveness as God's people.¹⁴

The story of the typological kingdom of Israel was an historical parable in which mankind under the covenant of works in Adam was represented by Israel under the law. For according to Jeremiah the Torah-covenant viewed as a grant of the land of Caanan to Israel for a temporal, typical inheritance was another breakable works-arrangement, unlike the new covenant of grace to be made in the days to come (Jer. 31:31). The apostle of the new covenant, the apostle of justification by faith, proclaimed justification through Christ from all things "from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). "That no man is justified by the law before God is evident," said Paul, "for, 'The righteous shall live by faith,' and the law is not of faith, but 'He that doeth them shall live in them'" (Gal. 3:11,12). And again, "For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise" (Gal. 3:18). It is the typological story of Israel's history under its covenant of works that provides the symbolism of the prophet's gospel for mankind in Zechariah 3.¹⁵

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 the 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).¹⁶

Kline's depiction of the Mosaic Covenant displays a rich eschatological trajectory, which as a republication of the Edenic covenant, fleshs out a picture of protological Paradise, which in turn looks forward to a consummated cosmos. Accenting the legal dimension, rather than reducing the Mosaic Covenant to an arid irrelevance, or a crippling legalism, Kline has limned for us the typology of heaven, or the "Heaven Land." "What is true of Heaven is true of its divinely ordered type, the Theocracy. For though the Theocracy was in the world of common grace, as a type of Heaven it transcended its environment and anticipatively shared in the world to come."¹⁷

¹³ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 353.

¹⁴ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 353–4.

¹⁵ Kline, *Glory in Our Midst*, 105.

¹⁶ Kline, *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon*, 128.

¹⁷ Kline, "The Relevance of the Theocracy," 27.

WCF 19, by inference, identifies the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of works alongside its being also a covenant of grace. “This law [given to Adam as the covenant of works, 19.1], after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments. . . . Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned . . .” (WCF 19.2, 6). Even when referring to it as an administration of the covenant of grace, the Confession calls it the “time of the law,” implying the centrality of a works principle (WCF 7.5). It also makes clear that there can be no eschatological inheritance without fulfillment of the covenant of works, typified in the Mosaic covenant. Both Scripture and the Confession refer to the Mosaic administration as a “law” covenant. “For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). But the revival of the covenant of works in the Mosaic administration is in the interests of revealing both the need for and God’s provision of grace in the mediator, Jesus Christ. Those who were saved under the Mosaic covenant were saved the only way sinners can be saved since our first federal head failed, through the grace of the second federal head, Jesus Christ.

5. Continuity and Discontinuity in One Covenant of Grace

Kline did not consider the Mosaic covenant a separate covenant. While he used various language to describe the legal aspect of this covenant in relation to it being an administration of the covenant of grace, he most often referred to it as “overarching.” For example, as early as 1953 Kline had formulated his basic understanding of the nature of the Mosaic theocracy as part of the development of the covenant of grace forming an organic unity throughout redemptive history: “This covenant (Israel at Sinai) was pursuant of the earlier covenant promises made to Abraham.” Kline goes on to quote Vos in his *Biblical Theology* to the effect that the theocracy was unique in that it “typified nothing short of the perfected kingdom of God, the consummate state of Heaven.”¹⁸ Much later in 1991 Kline observes,

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.¹⁹

In *Kingdom Prologue* Kline notes,

Preeminently the Covenant of Grace finds expression in the new covenant, but it also includes all those earlier covenantal arrangements wherein the benefits secured by the obedience of Christ in fulfillment of God’s eternal covenant with him were in part already bestowed during premessianic times, in each case according to the particular eschatological phase of covenant history.²⁰

¹⁸ Kline, “The Relevance of the Theocracy,” 26–7.

¹⁹ Kline, “Gospel until the Law,” 434.

²⁰ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 138.

Then in his last published book, *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon*, in 2007 Kline says,

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 3:15 and the divine act of symbolic sealing recorded in Gen 3:21. . . . Carrying forward the Abrahamic Covenant as they do, both the Old and New Covenants are, like it, administrations of the Covenant of Grace.²¹

Redemptive history enters a distinctive new stage with the Abrahamic Covenant but without interrupting the underlying continuity and coherence of the Covenant of Grace.²²

Charles Hodge, whose *Systematic Theology* is considered a standard exposition of Reformed orthodoxy, expresses himself in much the same way as Kline on the discontinuity between the Mosaic and new covenants, and the essential continuity of the covenant of grace underlying both. In commentaing on 2 Corinthains 3:6 he says,

These words [*letter* and *spirit*] therefore express concisely the characteristic difference between the law and the gospel. . . . How is it that the apostle attributes to the Mosaic system this purely legal character, when he elsewhere so plainly teaches that the gospel was witnessed or taught both in the law and the prophets? . . . Every reader of the New Testament must be struck with the fact that the apostle often speaks of the Mosaic law as he does of the moral law considered as a covenant of works; that is, presenting the promise of life on the condition of perfect obedience. He represents it as saying, Do this and live; as requiring works, and not faith, as the condition of acceptance. Rom. 10:5–10. Gal. 3:10–12. He calls it a ministration of death and condemnation. . . . On the other hand, however, he teaches that the plan of salvation has been the same from the beginning; that Christ was the propitiation for the sins committed under the old covenant; that men were saved then as now by faith in Christ; that this mode of salvation was revealed to Abraham and understood by him, and taught by Moses and the prophets. . . . To reconcile these apparently conflicting representations it must be remembered that the Mosaic economy was designed to accomplish different objects, and is therefore presented in Scripture under different aspects. What, therefore, is true of it under one aspect, is not true under another. 1. The law of Moses was, in the first place, a re-enactment of the covenant of works. The covenant of works, therefore, is nothing more than the promise of life suspended on the condition of perfect obedience. The phrase is used as a concise and convenient expression of the eternal principles of justice on which God deals with rational creatures, and which underlie all dispensations, the Adamic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Christian. . . . It is this principle which is rendered so prominent in the Mosaic economy as to give it its character of law. Viewed under this aspect it is the ministration of condemnation and death. 2. The Mosaic economy was also a national covenant; that is that it presented national promises on the condition of national obedience. Under this aspect also it was purely legal. But 3, as the gospel contains a

²¹ Kline, *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon*, 75, 96.

²² Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 292.

renewed revelation of the law, so the law of Moses contained a revelation of the gospel. It presented in its priesthood and sacrifices, as types of the office and work of Christ, the gratuitous method of salvation through a Redeemer. This necessarily supposes that faith and not works was the condition of salvation. . . . As the old covenant revealed both the law and the gospel, it either killed or gave life, according to the light in which it was viewed.²³

Confessional or Innovative?

For those who question Kline's confessional orthodoxy on his doctrine of the covenants, especially on the covenant of works and its relationship to the Sinai covenant, it is my contention that they have erred in one of three ways: 1) from ignorance of Post-Reformation dogmatics, in which the doctrine of the covenants was being developed;²⁴ 2) from a misunderstanding of the taxonomy of the Post-Reformation theologians;²⁵ or 3) from a simple lack of a close reading of Kline. The central contours of Kline's theology of the covenants are classic federal theology. Then there are aspects that have historical precedent in the minority.

Genetically Kline's doctrine of the covenants, and the covenant of works in particular, can be traced through Geerhardus Vos, back to Charles Hodge, and to Francis Turretin.²⁶ Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (1679–85) was used as a textbook by Charles Hodge at Princeton Theological Seminary until he published his own from 1871–73.

Brenton Ferry developed a very helpful Reformed taxonomy of works in the Mosaic covenant. Within that taxonomy he suggests that Kline fits in the category described by Roland Ward as “the Mosaic covenant as an administration of the covenant of grace.” Ferry refers to this with his own rubric, “typological, formal republication.” “Kline believes that the Mosaic covenant is organically part of the covenant of grace, yet at the administrative level it is a typological covenant of works.”²⁷ In *By Oath Consigned*, Kline notes,

For all its difference, the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is still patterned after the Sinaitic Covenant. In fact, Jeremiah's concept of the New Covenant was a development of that already presented by Moses in the sanctions section of the Deuteronomic renewal of the Sinaitic Covenant (Deut. 30:1–10). According to Jeremiah, the New Covenant is a writing of the law on the heart rather than on tables of stone (v. 33; cf. 2 Cor. 3:3), but it is another writing of the law. It is a new law covenant. Hence, for Jeremiah, the New Covenant, though it could be sharply contrasted with the Old (v. 32), was nevertheless a renewal of the Mosaic Covenant. It belonged to the familiar administrative pattern of periodic covenant renewal (of which the cycle of sabbatical years was an expression), and renewal is the exponent of continuity. . . . But if the distinctiveness of the New Covenant is that of

²³ Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (1859, repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 54–58. See also Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (1878, repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:375.

²⁴ See D. Patrick Ramsey, “In Defense of Moses: A Confessional Critique of Kline and Karlberg,” *WTJ* 66 (2004): 373–400.

²⁵ See the critique offered by Brenton C. Ferry, “Cross-examining Moses' Defense: An Answer to Ramsey's Critique of Kline and Karlberg,” *WTJ* 67 (2005): 163–68.

²⁶ Cf. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:637.

²⁷ Ferry, “Works in the Mosaic Covenant,” 79–80, fn. 11.

consummation, if when it abrogates it consummates, then its very discontinuity is expressive of its profound, organic unity with the Old Covenant.²⁸

Organic unity was not a new concept to Kline. He had learned it well from Vos. In his 1953 article “The Intrusion and the Decalogue,” explaining the place of the judgement of the Exodus conquest of the land of Canaan by Israel, he refers to the underlying unity of the covenants, “within this temporary periphery of the Intrusion there is a permanent core. . . . Finally, this concept of Intrusion Ethics does not obscure the unity of the Covenant of Grace throughout its various administrations.”²⁹

Finally, Kline contributed to federal theology in significant ways that were helpfully innovative. He showed that the covenant relationship is inherent, not extraneous, to the Creator-creature relationship. He clarified the importance of using grace properly in defining the various biblical covenants in order to protect and elucidate biblical soteriology. More comprehensively he pursued a program of understanding classical covenant categories through biblical, theological exegesis, building on Vos’s Reformed biblical theology. A superb example of his profound exegetical skill is seen in his reinterpretation of Genesis 3:8,³⁰ in which he reinterpreted “the cool of the day” within the context of eschatological judgment. In so doing he explored the major theme of probation in its relationship to heavenly entitlement. Finally, he expounded the typology of heaven throughout covenant history. In sum, Kline’s theology of the covenant of works was thoroughly eschatological.³¹

6. Conclusion

Kline’s theology of the covenant of works is set in the context of a rich account of the continuity of the history of redemption rooted in the detailed exegesis of the text of Scripture within the framework of confessional orthodoxy. His defense of the covenant of works clearly demonstrates that by muting probationary works before the fall, one ends up undermining grace after the fall—grace based on the merits of the Second Adam, which is our only entitlement to heaven. Nothing less than the gospel is at stake. “May Machen’s heirs not let go of their commitment to covenant theology but continue to cherish it, and in particular its precious doctrine of the righteousness secured for us by the active obedience of Christ. As Machen said: No hope without it.”³²

Gregory Edward Reynolds is pastor emeritus of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire; and editor of *Ordained Servant: A Journal for Church Officers*; and author of *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age*.

²⁸ Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, 75–6. Cited in Ferry, “Works in the Mosaic Covenant,” 80 fn. 14.

²⁹ Kline, “Intrusion and the Decalogue,” 4, 13. Cf. 7.

³⁰ Cf. Bryan D. Estelle, “The Covenant of Works in Moses and Paul,” in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 115, f.n. 101.

³¹ Cf. Geerhardus Vos, “Eschatology of the Psalter,” *The Princeton Theological Review* 18 (Jan. 1920): f.n., 3. “In so far as the covenant of works posited for mankind an absolute goal and unchangeable future, the eschatological may be even said to have preceded the soteric religion.”

³² Kline, “Covenant Theology under Attack,” last sentence of electronic version cited above. Machen’s last words from a telegram sent to Professor John Murray, January 1, 1937. Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 508.

ServantHistory

Matthew Poole: Exemplar of Traditional Exegesis

By Harrison N. Perkins

Modern evangelical sentiments often suggest a sharp division between biblical faithfulness and aligning ourselves with history. Outside the church, our culture sneers about being “on the right side of history,” suggesting that the things of the past ought to be left behind. Even in the church, the cherished doctrine of *sola Scriptura* has been abused to justify hosts of doctrines that run full force against the ways that God’s people have traditionally interpreted God’s Word.

Matthew Poole (1624–1679) was an English Presbyterian during the seventeenth century whose work shows how foreign those modern sentiments would be to committed Christians of past generations. Throughout his career, he held thorough exegesis together with a commitment to the historical tradition, as well as a priority on the pastoral value for these studies.

Poole’s biography is quickly sketched, since not much scholarship has investigated his life and work beyond what is available in the main reference works and databases. He was born likely in 1624 in York to Francis and Mary Pole, although he was not baptized until December 6, 1626. He began his education at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1645. When he graduated in 1649, he succeeded Anthony Tuckey, one of the Westminster divines, in the rectory of St. Michael-le-Querne. He took an MA from Cambridge in 1652 and was incorporated as an MA at Oxford in 1657—an event overseen by Richard Cromwell, who would become the second Lord Protector in the following year when Oliver Cromwell died. Poole resigned the rectory of St. Michael-le-Querne in 1662 at the passing of the Act of Uniformity and later moved to the Netherlands after working for some time toward the re-inclusion for non-conformists in England. He died October 12, 1679, and was buried in the vault under the church belonging to English merchants in Amsterdam.¹

¹ “Matthew Poole,” *A Cambridge Alumni Database* University of Cambridge (accessed on August 23, 2024 at <https://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search-2018.pl?sur=&suro=w&fir=&firo=c&cit=&cito=c&c=all&z=all&tex=PL645M&sye=&eye=&col=all&maxcount=50>); Nicholas Keene, “Poole [Pole], Matthew (1624?–1679),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (accessed on August 23, 2024 at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22518?rskey=X5nBPG&result=2>).

Poole's earliest publication tackled the problem of Socinianism,² especially concerning the deity of the Holy Spirit.³ John Biddle (1615–62) was a primary leader of anti-trinitarian thought as it emerged in mid-seventeenth century England.⁴ Although he received a prestigious education and became a schoolmaster, he began espousing unitarian theology that prompted the fierce response of leading clergy in England.⁵ Poole was among the Presbyterian respondents.

Poole was heavy on biblical argumentation in the refutation of Biddle's position, which would foreshadow his later, more well-known works. He noted how Biddle and other Socinians prioritized human reason over Scripture.⁶ Poole added more thorough exegetical discussion in the second edition, for example in his treatment of John 1 as part of his same anti-rationalist argument.⁷ Still, even with all his logical and exegetical contentions, Poole ultimately concluded that the dividing line between orthodox trinitarians and anti-trinitarians was in their presuppositions. If they did not want to resort to legislative enforcement against unorthodoxy, he knew that the orthodox had to contend for the value of typological and figurative exegesis over against the rationalist premises of Socinian biblicism.⁸

Poole's efforts at refuting Socinianism with exegetical force were the first public notice of his commitment to stand with holy Scripture and align with the historic Christian tradition. In this instance, he used exegesis to demonstrate that the traditional position on the Spirit's deity was biblically grounded. Further, he also saw this endeavor as part of his pastoral duties, since he explained in the second edition's preface (when his role as the author of this book had become known) that, "I have employed part of that time, which I have spent among you, in endeavouring to establish you in some of those truths, that are most opposed in our dayes."⁹ Although he had not taken up the Spirit's deity directly with his congregation of St. Michael-le-Querne, he used this book as an opportunity to compensate for that lack. For Poole, history, exegesis, and pastoral care held together.

Poole's concern for good pastoral care came to the fore in his next publications. In 1658, he published a plan for funding university students who promised to go into the ministry.¹⁰ This plan received commendation from John Worthington and Anthony Tuckney, John Arrowsmith, Ralph Cudworth, William Dillingham, and Benjamin

² Socinianism was a sixteenth and seventeenth century movement that claimed allegiance to Scripture while denying the deity of Christ and consequently the doctrine of the Trinity.

³ Matthew Poole, *Βλασφημοκτονία: The Blasphemer Slaine with the Sword of the Spirit: Or, A Plea for the Godhead of the Holy Ghost. Wherein the Deity of the Spirit of God is Proved in the Demonstration of the Spirit, and vindicated from the Cavils of John Biddle* (London: John Rothwell, 1653).

⁴ Paul C. H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 17.

⁵ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 38–68.

⁶ Poole, *Βλασφημοκτονία*, 33–36.

⁷ Matthew Poole, *Βλασφημοκτονία: The Blasphemer Slaine with the Sword of the Spirit: Or, A Plea for the Godhead of the Holy Ghost. Wherein the Deity of the Spirit of God is Proved in the Demonstration of the Spirit, and vindicated from the Cavils of John Biddle*, 2nd ed. (London: John Rothwell, 1654), 40–43; see Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 158.

⁸ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 158–59.

⁹ Poole, *Βλασφημοκτονία* (2nd ed.), sig. A4r.

¹⁰ Matthew Poole, *A Model for the Maintaining of Students of Choice Abilities at the University, and Principally in order to the ministry* (London: Sa. Thomson, 1658).

Whichcote.¹¹ Continuing the trajectory of concern for a credentialed ministry, his next work defended the idea that only ordained ministers should undertake the task of preaching, thus refuting the practice of lay preaching.¹² Even his 1659 letter to Lord Fleetwood seems motivated to protect the Presbyterian cause from government overreach.¹³ So his more directly theological efforts did not crowd out Poole's concern for the proper care for the church.

That concern became more explicit in Poole's 1660 sermon before London's mayor where he pled that simplicity of worship would be upheld. Richard Cromwell had resigned as second Lord Protector in 1659. Charles II then returned to London as king in May of 1660, which precipitated the execution of nine of the fifty-nine commissioners who had called for Charles I's execution in 1649. In light of these events, Poole clearly sensed the return of Laudian policies concerning ceremonies in worship, which were contrary to the simplicity the non-conformists believed Scripture warranted. His concerns would come to fruition in the Clarendon Code, which set forth four penal laws to squelch non-conformity. The second of those laws, the 1662 Act of Uniformity, prompted Poole's resignation from St. Michael-le-Querne.

Poole published the sermon in question because he thought that interpreters had misconstrued his original delivery. It seems they took it as a direct attack on the baseline Anglican positions. Poole stated that he "intended not to meddle with Common-Prayer (of which I spake not one word, however I am traduced) nor Ceremonies considered in themselves, but only as some endeavour that they may be pressed with an Aegyptian rigour, and violently imposed upon the Consciences of their Brethren."¹⁴ This careful parsing, however, still left room for his attacks to apply to exactly what his opponents suspected.

The difference was that Poole saw the bare principle as having far more minimal application than the Laudian Episcopalians. After all, Poole emphasized in expositing John 4 that worship "*In spirit* is opposed unto a bodily or carnall worship of God." The application "respects the subject of worship, and that is opposed unto those who worship God only with their bodies, whose hearts and souls do not concur with them, who draw nigh to God with their lips, when their hearts are farre from him."¹⁵ Although a seemingly obvious prod against hypocrisy, Poole's prong stabbed at one prevailing sentiment among the High Church ceremonialists. Peter Lake summarizes that the establishment champion Richard Hooker had contended that

regular, decorous, and fervent participation in the style of public worship laid out in the Book of Common Prayer—centered as it was (at least on Hooker's rendition), on public prayer and the sacraments, rather than on the Word preached—would do nicely. Thus, Hooker concluded, ordinary believers were not wrong if they believed that, having 'virtuously . . . behaved themselves' during public worship and been

¹¹ Keene, "Poole [Pole], Matthew (1624?–1679)."

¹² Matthew Poole, *Qua Warranto; Or, A Moderate Inquiry into the Warrantableness of the Preaching of Gifted and Unordained Persons* (London, 1659).

¹³ Matthew Poole, *A Letter from a London Minister to Lord Fleetwood* (London: Sa. Thomson, 1659).

¹⁴ Matthew Poole, *Evangelical Worship is Spiritual Worship, as it was discussed in a sermon preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Maior, at Pauls Church, Aug. 26. 1660* (London: Sa. Thomson, 1660), sig. A3v.

¹⁵ Poole, *Evangelical Worship is Spiritual Worship*, 6.

“fervent” both in their “devotion and zeal in prayer” and in “their attention to the word of God” (read as well as preached), “they have performed a good duty.”

This focus on what seemed to be simply outward, if happy, conformity to external worship had irked non-conformists since Hooker’s day.¹⁶

Those concerns only increased during the Laudian period. Poole may well have targeted exactly this basic outward participation that had become the point of high contention under Laudianism. Moreover, this sermon revealed that Poole saw English Presbyterians as still part of the establishment and that he perceived that moderate Episcopalians agreed with their concerns about the direction of English worship.¹⁷

Poole’s succeeding publications focused in polemical fashion on these churchly concerns. He published a Latin tract in 1666 that was a scathing critique of the current ecclesiastical landscape.¹⁸ That he wrote this work in Latin, however, shows that he was trying not to stir public unrest as he voiced his concerns, since Latin was the language of the academy rather than the populus. He continued his polemic works in two treatises against Roman Catholicism.¹⁹ His concern for matters of good religion remained as even his final publication during his lifetime was a defense of right religion, which contained material from two sermons.²⁰

The crowning work of Poole’s career that most effectively demonstrates our thesis about his effort to hold exegetical, historical, and pastoral concerns together was his four-volume, *Synopsis of Critical and Other Commentators on Sacred Scripture*, published in Latin in 1669.²¹ Many notable figures from across the ecclesiastical spectrum—including Thomas Barlow, John Owen, and Westminster divine John Lightfoot—voiced advance support for this work’s publication.²² This work was a massive scholarly endeavor, collecting a tremendous amount of biblical commentary into a sort of early-modern compilation. Although this work brought together an incredible number of sources, including rabbinic and Roman Catholic commentators, Poole noted his use of Reformed sources.²³ Interestingly, he justified excluding John Calvin’s commentaries from this work because Calvin focused on pastoral and theological rather than critical and

¹⁶ Peter Lake, “‘Puritans’ and ‘Anglicans’ in the History of the Post-Reformation English Church,” in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume I: Reformation and Identity, c.1520–1662*, ed. Anthony Milton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 368.

¹⁷ Anthony Milton, *England Second Reformation: The Battle for the Church of England 1625–1662* (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 452.

¹⁸ Matthew Poole, *Vox Clamantis in Deserto as Ministros Angliae* (London, 1666).

¹⁹ Matthew Poole, *The Nullity of the Romish Faith, Or, A Blow at the Root of the Romish Church being an examination of that fundamentall doctrine of the Church of Rome* (Oxford: Ric. Davis, 1666); Matthew Poole, *A Dialogue between a Popish Priest and an English Protestant wherein the Principal Points and Arguments of both Religions are Truly Proposed and fully Examined* (London, 1667).

²⁰ Matthew Poole, *A Seasonable Apology for Religion Being the subject of two Sermons lately delivered in an Auditory in London* (London, 1673).

²¹ Matthew Poole, *Synopsis Criticorum Aliorumque S. Scripturae Interpretum*, 4 vols. (London, 1669).

²² Matthew Poole, *A Brief Description of a Design concerning a Synopsis of the Critical and Other Commentators* (London, 1667), 3–4. Interestingly, this support was seemingly needed to overcome the perception of what we might consider copyright issues, since Poole’s work collated the comments of previous biblical interpreters; John Maynard and William Jones, *A Just Vindication of Mr. Poole’s Designe for Printing of his Synopsis of Critical and other Commentators* (London, 1667). Poole himself addressed this criticism from printer Cornelius Bee in his published preface; Poole, *Synopsis*, II.

²³ Poole, *Synopsis*, III.

exegetical matters.²⁴ This move shows how Poole was stressing a certain academic rigor as he held exegetical and historical trajectories together. Even still, this work made it, in 1693, to the Roman index of banned books.²⁵

The more pastoral side of Poole's concerns for the issues that motivated his Latin *Synopsis* showed in how he began to prepare an English-language resource. This oft-reprinted book was a series of annotations on Scripture, seemingly aiming to be a whole-Bible commentary.²⁶ In composing this work, Poole drew upon his vast historical research of biblical interpretation to produce direct expositions of Scripture. The application of his crowning achievement was then to bring to bear his commitment to exegesis, understood in light of the tradition, so that God's people could appropriate it. Poole reached Isaiah 58 before he died, and other scholars completed and published the work after his death.²⁷

Even in his day, Poole's death resounded among his appreciators. One published poem lamented, "Our LAMP is out!" Although his death was mourned, this poem also drew attention to his published work, emphasizing explicit attention on his *Synopsis*. It closed reflecting, "for whither sure, Should Sick Men go, but to the POOL for Cure."²⁸ In his own day, Poole's work that most forcefully united historical and exegetical labors was his most prominent legacy. That mark is a testament to the Reformed commitment both to the premise of *sola Scriptura* and to reading Scripture in alignment with those who have gone before us. Poole modeled that traditional exegesis as the foundation of pastoral practice. His pattern, at least in this respect, is one worth our reflection today as an exemplar to emulate.

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²⁴ Poole, *Synopsis*, III (Calvini commentaria non tam critical sunt...quam Practica; nec tam verba & phrases enucleant...quam materias Theologicas solide tractant).

²⁵ Keene, "Poole [Pole], Matthew (1624?–1679)."

²⁶ Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible wherein the Sacred Text is inserted, and various readings annex'd, together with parallel scriptures, the more difficult terms in each verse are explained, seeming contradictions reconciled, questions and doubts resolved, and the whole text opened* (London, 1683).

²⁷ Keene, "Poole [Pole], Matthew (1624?–1679)."

²⁸ Anonymous, *On the Death of Mr. Matthew Pool. Anagram, Matthew Pool, O the Lamp Out* (London, 1679).

ServantReading

The Church: Not Politicized nor Ghettoized, but Spiritual A Review Article

by Bryan Estelle

Empowered Witness: Politics, Culture, and the Spiritual Mission of the Church, by Alan D. Strange. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024. xvi + 149 pages, \$16.99, paper.

This excellent new book on the spirituality of the church (hence SOTC), and the relationship of the church to the civil government and culture, is very timely. Why? Because currently there are pressures in the world against the church asking it to comment on all matters of social malaise in our culture and time. Amid such pressure (and confusion), Professor Strange, a friend and fellow ministerial colleague, has given us a summary of a very important ecclesiastical doctrine: the spiritual mission of the church. He situates most of his discussion during a defining moment in American history (the Civil War). Strange, to his credit, is against the ghettoizing of the church's mission. He has written elsewhere that he desires all Reformed parties at the table, even ones disagreeing with each other on the relationship of the Christian faith to the world, so that they may agree on what the role of the institutional church primarily is and what constitutes true spirituality. This irenic tone permeates his new book.

His new book is a kind of abridged edition of his dissertation. Therefore, anyone who wants to follow up on a topic for more detail may consult his dissertation, which was published in 2017 by Presbyterian and Reformed.¹ Not surprisingly, it was leading up to and during the Civil War (1861–65), and immediately afterwards, that the church was faced with clarifying and maintaining the SOTC. Early in the book, the author explains that

the task of the church is not to transform the world at large or any society in it. The task of the church is to transform lives: to proclaim the gospel as the person and work of Christ applied by the power of the Holy Spirit in the means of grace so that men and women come to Christ by faith and are justified, adopted, and sanctified—all a gift of God's grace. (3)

This thesis permeates each section of the book: chapter 1 describes the doctrine of the SOTC; chapter 2 delves into the delicate issue of slavery and the SOTC; chapter 3 discusses the SOTC just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War and during the war itself,

¹ Alan D. Strange, *The Doctrine of the Church in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2017).

including the very important debate over the Gardiner Spring Resolutions of 1861, which Hodge opposed; chapter 4 discusses how the SOTC doctrine was handled in Presbyterian General Assemblies between 1862–65; chapter 5 discusses Hodge’s desire to reunite the Southern and Northern churches after the war. Finally, chapter 6 breaks new ground as Professor Strange applies the teaching on the SOTC to the modern church, suggesting that she not ghettoize the gospel and not show apathy to the world and its needs. Meanwhile, she should not allow the church and her mission to be politicized.

The book demonstrates that the SOTC doctrine was part and parcel of the church’s confession long before the American Civil War. This book is accessible, well organized, and lucidly written. It would make an excellent textbook for a Sunday school class on the subject, whether young or old. On the other hand, some minor criticisms—or, desire for more clarity, nuance, and full description is in order—even though I suspect that Professor Strange’s desire was to produce a book that avoided getting in the weeds of the minutiae of historical detail. Even so, disagreement can be a great achievement, even among friends. At issue in the criticisms of his new book in this review are not what individual Christians may do, or collectives of individual Christians; rather, the specific issue is what is the role of the institutional and corporate mission of the church?

Strange emphasizes two leitmotifs evident from his study of Hodge, even as he had in his published dissertation: first, we must not muzzle the “prophetic” voice of the church but let her speak in a manner that has potential political implications as it speaks to the outside world. Secondly, for Hodge, when the church speaks to that which is “purely political,” she violates the principles of the SOTC. In Hodge’s view, according to Strange, the church may still engage in actions that might have some political *consequences*. This is why Hodge opposed the “Gardiner” resolutions introduced at the General Assembly in 1861, which sought to have the Assembly show some expression of devotion to the Union and loyalty to the Federal Government of the United States. For Hodge, this violated the earlier stated principle, i.e., such an action by the General Assembly would be purely political, and therefore the church should not bind the conscience of her ministers in the way proposed. Hodge did not win the day on that vote in the church’s highest court (156 *ayes*, 66 *nays*).

In Strange’s new book, the reader will find plenty of discussion about the differences between the Old School titans of the period: especially southerner James Henry Thornwell, border-state minister Stuart Robinson, and northern moderate Charles Hodge. The former two figures, Strange considers as “radical” in their teaching on the SOTC. Hodge, he considers to be the quintessential moderate. It is true that Thornwell was restrictive in what he saw as the role of the minister in the institutional church, he said:

The object of Christian ministry, the ministry that belongs to the church, is not to reform society or fix the many ills that are common among men in a fallen, yet temporal world. Rather, a minister of the church exists ‘to persuade men to be reconciled to God through Christ, to persuade them to accept of the blessed Saviour in all His offices, and to rest upon Him and Him alone for ‘wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.’²

² Thornwell (Vol. IV, 565) quoted in Christopher C. Cooper, “Binding Bodies and Liberating Souls: James Henley Thornwell’s Vision for a Spiritual Church and a Christian Confederacy,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 9 (2013): 35–47, especially at page 40.

This sounds, not surprisingly, very much like Machen.

For those who are interested in seeing how our forefathers dealt with the ever-present issues of race, slavery, and the relationship of the church to the state, the reader will find much description of the issues outlined, and in detail from a well-trained historian who writes clearly and lucidly in this new book. My concern at this point, however, is that reducing the discussion about that history and the Old School figures involved (i.e., by labelling them “radical”) obscures more than clarifies for those disagreeing with Hodge.

One question that comes up repeatedly is the issue of whether the institutional church should have a “prophetic” voice (Strange’s words) towards the world? The answer should be a qualified yes and no, as Strange says. I, however, would have appreciated seeing more clarification related to the use of this term “prophetic.” After all, this is the very term that the Social Gospel proponents appealed to (e.g., Walter Rauschenbusch) in their day (early twentieth century) and that many appeal to in our own time. The prophetic voice of the church in the New Covenant *is* spiritual. But the question, precisely, is how does the church testify (*institutionally* and *corporately*) of her Lord to the culture in which she resides? It testifies to the world as it exercises Word and sacrament, and even church discipline. Hodge himself recognized this when he was comparing the Kingdom in his Systematic Theology:

First it is spiritual. That is, it is not of this world. It is not analogous to the other kingdoms which existed, or do still exist among men. It has a different origin and a different end. . . . The Kingdom of Christ was organized immediately by God, for the promotion of religious objects. It is spiritual, or not of this world . . . all secular matters lie beyond its jurisdiction. . . . It can decide no question of politics or science which is not decided in the Bible. *The Kingdom of Christ, under the present dispensation, therefore, is not worldly even in the sense in which the ancient theocracy was of this world.* . . . The kingdom of Christ being designed to embrace all other kingdoms, can exist under all forms of civil government without interfering with any. It was especially in this view that Christ declared that his kingdom was not of this world. . . . He intended to say that his kingdom was of such a nature that it necessitated no collision with the legitimate author of any civil government. It belonged to a different sphere.³

For the “church” to address the society in the Old Covenant was expected, especially in the prophetic office of the Old Covenant, particularly in the time of the monarchy. The prophets played the role of lawyers, gathering legal briefs to indict the kings (or the people, or both) for their shortcomings in failing to live up the terms of the Mosaic covenant. But that office has ceased. The last great prophet of the Old Testament period was John the Baptist. He was the prophet of ultimatum. He called upon Israelites to repent at the inauguration of Christ’s coming.

³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (1871; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 605–06 (emphasis mine).

For the sake of argument then, how do Christians corporately primarily manifest the faith to the external world? By practicing the marks of the corporate church. Again Hodge:

As religion is essentially spiritual, an inward state, the kingdom of Christ as consisting of the truly regenerated, is not a visible body, except so far as goodness renders itself by outward manifestations . . . Christians are required to associate for public worship, for the admission and exclusion of members, for the administration of the sacraments, for the maintenance and propagation of the truth. They therefore form themselves into churches, and collectively constitute the visible kingdom of Christ on earth, consisting of all who profess the true religion, together with their children.⁴

This would seem to suggest that it is primarily when New Covenant Christians corporately exercise their sacred duties (e.g., attending worship, praying) that they testify to the world, not when they exercise their individual cultural duties that Christians manifest the KOG (kingdom of God) to a watching world. Instead of invoking a “prophetic” witness, I wish that Professor Strange had invoked these sections from Professor Hodge.⁵

Another area where the book could have been clearer was on the major area of disagreement between Hodge and Thornwell on church government. Precision is important here for the sake of further dialogue. This was at the heart of the matter in their disagreement over church boards. For Hodge, church government is *jure humano* (by human right). Its form of government should be left to the judgment of its members according to the circumstances.⁶ Hodge lumps Thornwell together with Stuart Robinson as being “radical” in their approach to the SOTC according to Professor Strange. Hodge had grown exasperated with Thornwell’s concept of Presbyterianism, even stooping to label it “hyper-hyper-hyper High church Presbyterianism.”⁷ Hodge declared that “the great principles of Presbyterianism are in the Bible; but it is preposterous to assert that our whole Book of Discipline is there.”⁸ Hodge was in favor of claiming divine authority for the “essential elements of church government, but claimed a discretionary power for matters of detail and modes of operation.”⁹ As one of Hodge’s biographers states, “Hodge argued that churches must be governed by general principles rather than hard and fast rules that apply equally to all congregations in every situation.”¹⁰

⁴ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 604.

⁵ Again, this does not preclude individual Christians, or collectives of Christians to address issues of social malaise. The issue is what the church is to do in its corporate capacity.

⁶ See James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A treatise on the nature, powers, ordinances, discipline and government of the Christian Church* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 2:202 for discussion.

⁷ See John Lloyd Vance, “The ecclesiology of James Henley Thornwell: An Old Southern Presbyterian Theologian,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Madison, NJ: Drew University, 1990), 184.

⁸ Quoted in Strange, *The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church*, 440.

⁹ Quoted in Strange, *The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church*, 440.

¹⁰ Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Thornwell was a firm proponent also of *jure divino* (divine right) ecclesiology.¹¹ This is best explained by a leading Scottish theologian of the time, James Bannerman:

Church government, according to this view, is not a product of Christian discretion, nor a development of the Christian consciousness; it has been shaped and settled, not by the wisdom of man, but by that of the church's Head. It does not rest upon a ground of human expediency but of Divine Appointment.¹²

For Thornwell, the church may not do whatever it deems wise in its polity; rather, there must be clear sanction for her worship *and* her practice. He claimed, contrary to Hodge, that he did not want to deny discretionary power, only limit, and define it.¹³ Thornwell explains, "We hold it to be the *circumstances* connected with commanded duties, and hence affirm that whatever is not enjoined is prohibited. He [Hodge] holds that it pertains to the actions themselves and maintains that whatever is not prohibited is lawful."¹⁴

A commitment to see Christ's headship articulated in terms of the *munus triplex* (Christ's threefold office, as Bannerman and border-state Pastor Stuart Robinson suggested), that is to say that the church's practice of doctrine, worship, *and* government should be influenced by Christ's prophetic, priestly, and kingly headship, might have brought about more rapprochement between these Old School giants.¹⁵ In short, more eloquent listening was in order. Church government, according to Robinson and Thornwell, its limits and powers, are a confessional matter that flow from the headship of Christ.¹⁶ In short, practices in the church, even the polity of her government, must be sanctioned by Scripture.

In conclusion, these are merely criticisms that are asking for fuller historical disclosure and detail on these complex issues. In my opinion, this would enrich even more fruitful discussion on what has become an essential ecclesial doctrine in our day and age. My friend and colleague, Professor Strange, has given us a new book that is a welcome addition to the topic. Take up and read; you will not be disappointed.

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¹¹ In my judgment, Thornwell was correct to connect his church theory with that of Calvin, with Scottish and English divines, and with Westminster.

¹² Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, 2:202.

¹³ J.H. Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henry Thornwell*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974), 4.245.

¹⁴ Thornwell, *The Collected Writings* 4.251. A discussion of the distinction between regulative principles vis-à-vis constitutive principles could have made for greater clarification of differences among these Old School Presbyterians at this point as well. See, e.g., T. W. Peck, *Notes on Ecclesiology* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee on Education, 1892), 109.

¹⁵ See, for example, Craig Troxel's discussion in "'Divine Right' Presbyterian and Church Power," (Ph.D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1998), 116, 184–85, 252.

¹⁶ See, WCF, chapter 30.

ServantReading

Bach against Modernity

A Review Article

by Stephen M. Michaud

Bach against Modernity, by Michael Marissen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023, xvi + 184 pages, \$34.95.

No less than Beethoven referred to Johann Sebastian Bach as “the Father of all harmony,”¹ and he is far from alone in his paean of the celebrated cantor of Leipzig’s Thomaskirche. Countless other composers, performers, writers, artists, and thinkers have likewise expressed wonderment at the creative power, matchless organization, and staggering poignancy of Bach’s music. Such an assessment might initially suggest that much of his body of work is beyond the reach of the masses to appreciate; on the contrary, his music has virtually permeated the musical consciousness and enjoyment of a varied strata of classes and cultures right up to the present day. This raises an interesting question: since his music has such appeal to both non-religious people and Christians alike, should one assume that his music was thus borne out of a secular, modernistic, “enlightened” worldview? Or put another way, should the universal appeal of Bach’s music be attributed to some kind of intrinsic “modernism” which enables it to “transcend” its religious themes? Although numerous scholars have answered these questions in the affirmative, the very title of this book leaves no doubt as to its author’s view; namely, that Bach’s Christian worldview was absolutely integral to his art, and this is the thesis he very ably defends here in this fascinating new collection of essays.

The concept of modernism means different things to different people, so Marissen in the first chapter wisely identifies his working understanding of the term for the reader, opting for philosopher Louis Dupre’s fivefold designation:

- “exalting reason above revelation—whatever the flaws of reason—as arbiter of truth”
- “exalting human autonomy and achievement”
- “exalting religious tolerance”
- “exalting cosmopolitanism”
- “exalting social and political progressiveness” (5)

¹ In Martin Geck, *Johann Sebastian Bach; His Life and Work* (Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: Harcourt, 2006), ix.

If Bach, on the contrary, is a pre-Enlightenment thinker and opposed to the above tenets, what accounts for his broad appeal? The author rejects the common explanation that people simply want to be entertained, and he proceeds to ally himself with the illuminating sentiment of Richard Russo (5–6), “It’s been my experience that most people don’t want to be entertained. They want to be *comforted*” (emphasis added by author).²² In the author’s experience, non-Christians pick up on a joy and hope in Bach’s music that cannot be reduced to a mere “aesthetic exaltation,” even though these same listeners stop short of assigning these emotions to the specifics of the Christian message (6). Still, many musicologists nevertheless insist that the sheer greatness and order of Bach’s music must be due to math and science rather than religion.

At this point, a more devotionally-minded admirer might be hasty to react by appealing to an alleged preponderance of the markings “J.J.” (“Jesu juva”—“Jesus, help!”) and “S.D.G.” (“Soli deo gloria”—“To God alone be glory!”) in the scores of Bach to clinch the argument singlehandedly that he was a religious composer. Some have even claimed that these markings were affixed to every single composition. Although this is an attractive and oft-claimed proposition, Marissen sets the record straight with a helpful sketch of Bach’s notations. Although there is not nearly the number of markings so frequently and carelessly asserted, they still occur plentifully enough to rebut the idea that Bach saw himself essentially as a non-religious composer. Furthermore, a chronological survey of Bach’s vocal compositions is given which clearly indicates the composer’s utter rejection of the reliability of human reason unaided by divine revelation. Lest it be said that Bach simply included such sentiments in his works publicly to appease traditionalist patrons, the author provides a lengthy and telling quote from Bach himself, inscribed in Bach’s own hand in the Calov Bible from the esteemed composer’s private collection (you will have to buy the book to read this very revealing citation!); needless to say, it powerfully supports the fact that Bach’s somber view of human reason is one he held *in private* as well as in public.

The author goes on to shatter any contention that Bach held to any of the other tenets of modernism. Regardless of Bach’s monumentally high achievements, passages from his cantatas see him falling squarely in line with the Lutheran doctrine that even the highest human works are corrupted by sin and incapable of justifying one before God. Far from modernism’s exalting of religious tolerance, Bach’s cantata 126 petitions God with these words: “Uphold us, Lord, with your word, and restrain *the murderousness of the Pope and of the Muslim . . .*” (20). Contrary to cosmopolitanism, the author provides a passage from cantata 24 which speaks of “*German* faithfulness and goodness” (25, emphasis added). The author ends chapter 1 by showing that Bach, far from being a political and social progressive, wrote vocal compositions which extol a “premodern, hierarchical social view” in which even a so-called “secular” cantata can speak of “God as the upholder of the Saxon throne” (28–29).

In chapter 2, the writer engages in a captivating discussion on the handwritten entries in Bach’s personal “Calov Bible,” named after Abraham Calov, who compiled various passages from the writings of Luther to function as commentary for a study Bible. Bach’s numerous marginalia in this Bible reveal a man thoroughly committed to Lutheran beliefs rather than being an autonomous thinker. The compelling proofs cited by the author in this regard include the care with which Bach corrected typographical errors, biographical

² Richard Russo, *Straight Man* (New York: Random House, 1997), xi.

statements of his receiving God's consolation in an antagonistic world, reflections on the divine nature of his calling, and his belief that the God devotionally "immanent" in his music is the God of the Bible who affects the hearts of believers, rather than some vague notion of "god" or "art as religion" springing from the mere psyche as opposed to Scripture (39)—a notion any good Lutheran like Bach would quickly see to be idolatry. On the contrary, an important handwritten note in Bach's Calov Bible alongside 1 Chronicles 29[28]:21 indicates that this Scripture passage was "proof" to Bach that "his eighteenth-century church music is an 'antitype' of which the ancient Jerusalem Temple music was a 'type'" (40). Similarly, a convincing argument is advanced by the author that Bach's use of the word *vorspiel* in his annotation next to Exodus 15:20, contrary to popular thought that it refers to the prelude to a composition, is actually another spelling of Luther's "furspiel"—a theological word for "type," which in the context of Exodus would indicate that this "Song of Moses" was a prefiguration of Christian singing in the New Covenant era. Marissen ends his treatment on Bach's Calov Bible entries by highlighting Bach's interest in the Book of Leviticus. The cumulative weight of Marissen's analysis greatly helps to establish Bach as a devout Lutheran who cannot be lumped into the mold of Enlightenment thinking.

The next four chapters in the book consist of various talks given by the author in which he provides concise assessment of several significant compositions of Bach, each example further cementing the central premise that Bach was operating firmly within a premodern, Lutheran framework. Far from Bach emerging as a modern individual seeking supreme satisfaction through his own human attainment of excellence, the thoughtful reader is presented with an artist humbly self-consciously functioning as a recipient of divine grace. Particularly poignant in this regard is the author's treatment of the *Christmas Oratorio*, which ends with a 50-year-old Bach contemplating, not some heritage of earthly fame after his death, but the glorious prospect of departing his present "mortal coil" to dwell in eternal and heavenly blessedness with God. All this is in keeping with the very heart of Bach's artistic orbit—an orbit in which spiritual contentment is his lifeblood, as opposed to mere aesthetic enjoyment devoid of scriptural faith. It is impossible to read these cogently argued chapters and conclude that one is reaping the full benefit of Bach's sublime music apart from personal faith in the God of Bach. I would simply add that the reader would receive even greater profit and enjoyment of the penetrating insights of these chapters by listening to recordings of the vocal compositions being treated: Cantatas 64, 23, 102, and the *Christmas Oratorio*. If a recommendation is desired, the recordings of the marvelous conductor and world-renowned Bach expert Masaaki Suzuki (himself a devout Christian referenced in this book) with the resplendent Bach Collegium Japan are the best you will find anywhere and are not to be missed.

In chapter 7, the author collaborates with Daniel Melamed in an interesting discussion of the technical issues associated with translating the librettos from Bach's church cantatas along with supplying annotations for each. Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the thorny question of anti-Judaism within Bach's art, particularly focusing on a group of choruses from the *St. John Passion*. This is followed by a treatment of the music of Bach and his sons in the Jewish salons of the mid and late eighteenth century, particularly those operated by the German Jewish *salonniere* Sara Itzig Levy of Berlin, in which

men and women, Jews and Christians, aristocrats and bourgeois, all gathered to drink tea and eat finger food; engage in convivial conversation about literature, art, philosophy, and politics; and hear performances of certain old-fashioned and newer repertoires of instrumental music whose styles we now call high baroque and pre-classical. (148)

The last two chapters cover an oft-overlooked component of Bach's oeuvre: the theological character of Bach's *secular* compositions. The author very potently dispels the common misconception that Bach's instrumental music had nothing to do with God. The *Brandenburg Concertos*, typically thought to be unmoored from any spiritual "constraints," are argued by the author rather to evince a "fluidity between the secular and liturgical" (161). Finally, Marissen turns his attention to what he calls "The Serious Nature of the Quodlibet in Bach's *Goldberg Variations*" (163). The "Quodlibet" (a musical composition utilizing several different melodies) is the final variation in this celebrated work. Often understood to be a jocular, lighthearted movement, Marissen explains that Bach combines a folk tune ("Cabbage and Turnips") with the music of a hymn, showing that Bach, rather than setting forth a sacred verses secular dichotomy in his body of work, is actually juxtaposing those spheres in an "all-embracing harmony," and that far from being "jokesome entertainment," the *Goldberg Variations* were written as "an act of premodern, Lutheran tribute to the heavenly and earthly realms of God" (172).

Marissen's exceedingly fine work has much to commend it. To analyze and elucidate the outlook of arguably the greatest composer the world has ever seen, particularly in the face of much scholarship which is sadly antithetical to the perspective of the author, is no small task. The author's undeniable scholarship, however, is so careful and extensive, the reader will be hard-pressed not to reach Marissen's well-reasoned conclusions. For those who think that the music of Bach can be fully appreciated apart from possessing the scriptural faith which informed and controlled the heart and mind of its composer, this book will powerfully challenge such an opinion. For those who share the faith of Bach, there will be many gems here to stock head and heart, setting one on an unparalleled journey to explore with even greater devotional heft this truly great and *spiritual* composer. The book can be heartily recommended without reservation!

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ServantReading

Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe *by Voddie Baucham*

by Darryl G. Hart

Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe, by Voddie T. Baucham, Jr. Washington, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021. 251 pages, \$24.99.

Voddie T. Baucham, Jr.'s book on social justice activism and evangelicals came out when the protests inspired by George Floyd's death in Minneapolis were still fresh in the minds of many. His warning—the very title of the book, *Fault Lines*—that protests over racism and police brutality had revealed a split among evangelicals was plausible in 2021 when the book was published. Baucham's argument remains relevant if you take the case of Wheaton College as a measure.

In 2023, the college's administration determined to remove the name of J. Oliver Buswell from the college's library. The president of Wheaton from 1926 until 1940, Buswell was a prominent figure among conservatives who with J. Gresham Machen contended against theological liberalism in the Presbyterian Church, USA. When the board at Wheaton decided to sever their ties with Buswell in 1940, the reasons were largely theological. Buswell was too Calvinistic for a school that included Arminians and many varieties of Holiness groups. Even so, the college was sufficiently impressed with Buswell's academic stature (he had a BD from McCormick Theological Seminary, an MA from the University of Chicago, and a PhD from New York University). He had increased the enrollment from four hundred to eleven hundred and also oversaw an increase of PhDs among college faculty (from 26 percent to 49 percent) over his tenure.

But in the wake of America's racial reckoning, prominent figures—both public and private—became fair game for activists who wanted to remove any hint of bigotry from the nation's history. Not only were statues of Confederate soldiers removed, but even Presidents of the United States (Thomas Jefferson at the New York City Public Library) needed to come down thanks to either owning slaves or exhibiting forms of racism. At colleges and universities, cancellation on racial grounds saw Woodrow Wilson's name removed from Princeton University's School of Government, Daniel C. Calhoun College (2017) renamed by Yale, and a statue honoring George Whitefield removed by the University of Pennsylvania from its campus.

Wheaton College followed this trend after students complained about parts of the institution's racist past. Administrators responded by forming a committee to study instances of racial prejudice at the college. The major finding was that Buswell had

cautioned administrators, applicants, and alumni about admitting black students to the college. Although the detailed report found primarily that Buswell had expressed worry about the signal admitting blacks would send to supporters, along with concern for black students who would have to make their way in an overwhelmingly white institution, the committee found enough dirt to conclude that Buswell was a racist. This prompted the removal of his name from the building opened in 1975. It is now simply called Wheaton College Library.

Readers of *Fault Lines* will not learn about these developments in evangelical higher education, but they will gain a sense of the assumptions that made Wheaton College's decision plausible. Baucham's 2021 book was likely a headache for librarians who catalogue new accessions. It is one part memoir, one part theological assessment, one part history, and one part exhortation. In the memoir section, Baucham describes his conversion while a student athlete who played NCAA Division 1 football for New Mexico State University and Rice University (he eventually graduated from Houston Baptist University). The author also describes briefly his study at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, becoming Calvinistic in theology, and ministering in the Southern Baptist Convention, which eventually took him to Zambia as a missionary where he is dean of the School of Divinity at African Christian University. As much as memoirs may present a flattering image of the author, Baucham's details add a human dimension to what could have been merely an attack on progressive politics (and Christianity).

Baucham's diagnosis of Critical Race Theory (CRT) may seem dated since the Left in Europe and America has moved on to other "current things," such as climate, transgender, and the rights of Palestinians. But without bogging down in intellectual precision—whether over words or authors—Baucham presents a generally fair depiction of CRT according to its chief theories or theology (especially equality and systemic racism), its most influential proponents (he calls them priests), and its most representative texts (Baucham refers to these works as a new canon). In sum, CRT is a new religion that preaches only sin and judgment to the exclusion of forgiveness and grace. As persuasive as Baucham is, his recounting the number of evangelicals (even New Calvinists) who since 2020 have championed CRT is remarkable. These changes among evangelicals, which involve associating CRT with the gospel's call to personal and social sanctity, have created the "fault lines" of Baucham's book title. CRT has exposed a theological flimsiness among evangelicals that is also responsible for much of the disarray in conservative Protestant institutions.

The book concludes with an exhortation. The book builds to Baucham's plea in the final pages:

I believe we are being duped by an ideology bent on our demise. This ideology has used our guilt and shame over America's past, our love for the brethren, and our good and godly desire for reconciliation and justice as a means through which to introduce destructive heresies. (204)

Baucham is emphatic that baptizing, modifying, or Christianizing CRT is fatal to the gospel. For that reason, he advocates identifying, resisting, and repudiating CRT. The way to do this is not through politics but through preaching and teaching. If God overcame the barriers between Jews and Gentiles through the gospel, Baucham deduces,

the antagonisms in the United States based on race are equally remedied by the good news of Jesus Christ.

Baucham's book is for the church, not for American society writ large. Because of that focus, some may still wonder what is to be done in various institutions where CRT has gained a hold. (By now the common idiom may be DEI rather than CRT—Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.) Baucham does not pretend to answer that question. For him the stakes of the church's witness and fellowship are too high to let the discontents in American society and government obscure the truths of the gospel.

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ServantPoetry

Church-lock and key

George Herbert (1593–1633)

I Know it is my sinne, which locks thine eares,
And bindes thy hands,
Out-crying my requests, drowning my tears;
Or else the chilnesse of my faint demands.

But as cold hands are angrie with the fire,
And mend it still;
So I do lay the want of my desire,
Not on my sinnes, or coldnesse, but thy will.

Yet heare, O God, onely for his blouds sake
Which pleads for me:
For though sinnes plead too, yet like stones they make
His blouds sweet current much more loud to be.