The Theology of Thomas Boston, 1676-1732

This thesis is presented to the University of Edinburgh in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Donald Jay Bruggink 1956
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A chronological bibliography of the works of Thomas Boston

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# Chapter analysis

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the theology of Thomas Boston. Boston's life (1676-1732) spanned a period marked by many changes within the life of the Church, not the least of which was in its theology. James Walker's estimate of Boston is that his writings "exercised an influence second to none on our religious thinking and our religious life."¹ But despite the importance of the period, and the importance of the man, there has never been a thorough and complete examination of Boston's theology. Often it is described as Evangelical, or Calvinistic, or is identified with the theology of the Marrow, and with that of the Marrowmen. All of these descriptions are applicable, but none is very specific. The broader terms cover such a breadth of opinion as to leave at best a general impression—never specific information. "Marrow theology" is a hypothetical aggregate indicating only certain points of agreement, thrown into high relief by conflict; it too fails to show the structure of Boston's theology. Neither is it possible to know Boston by knowing the Marrow. That little book reveals much, but it is

¹James Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1872), p. 29.
smaller both in depth and scope than Boston's theology.

The exact content of Boston's theology remains undiscussed, and its exposition constitutes not only a proper, but a fruitful field of research. The unfolding of the total pattern of this theology will provide a clear insight into one of the most influential theological systems of a very significant period. Fortunately, Boston left not merely one or two books, from which one might be forced into a hypothetical reconstruction of his theology, but instead he left an abundance of theological literature from which his thought in its fullness can be gathered.

The task of examining Boston's theology is sufficiently broad to leave no space for the repetition of the facts concerning his life and character which have already been given so often. Also excluded must be a consideration of the Tractatus Stigmologicus (Amstelaedami, 1738). The premise on which it was written—the divine inspiration of the Hebrew accents—has been proven false, and the issue is dead. Nor does this work have any importance with regard to his theology. Boston nowhere speaks of his findings concerning the Hebrew points and accents as a key to esoteric knowledge. At no place in the entire works does he find the teachings of the Tractatus essential to the exposition of his doctrine—it is, in fact, almost never mentioned. Even in the hands of its loving creator, the principles of the Tractatus Stigmologicus were simply tools for the clarification of the Hebrew text, not a means whereby Christianity would be revolutionized. Despite exuberant (for Boston) statements in the autobiographical writings concerning
these studies, his theology could have been formulated without them.

Neither is it the purpose of this thesis to examine the theology of the Marrow controversy. Nevertheless, it is quite impossible to obtain a proper estimate of Boston's work without carefully placing it in its historical context. It is just because a lack of understanding of this context will seriously distort any estimate of Boston that it has been found necessary to engage in a somewhat long introductory chapter concerning the general theological climate of the early eighteenth century.

Similarly, to appreciate the specific construction of Boston's theology, its place in the development of federal theology must be understood. It therefore seemed necessary to outline the development and motivating causes of that system.

References to Boston's writings, wherever possible, are to the Works. Wherever the Works have been compared with early editions they have been found to be completely reliable. The capitalization and punctuation have been modernized, but otherwise the text remains the same. Since the very bulk of Boston's writings makes it virtually impossible for an occasional printer's error to influence the presentation of his theology, and since early editions and manuscripts might not be readily available for those wishing to pursue certain aspects of this study, it has seemed best to quote uniformly from the Works. When doing so, the volume, page, and date

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will be given, with the exception of four of the most important works: *The Fourfold State*, *The Covenant of Works*, *Notes on the Marrow*, and *The Covenant of Grace*, which will be cited as such, along with volume, page, and date. The date of any one work will be cited only in the first reference on each page. Although a chronological bibliography of Boston's works has been provided, the date has been included in the citation as a matter of convenience. When a question mark follows the date, it signifies that the date has not been positively established, and that there is the possibility of its being inaccurate by a year, either earlier or later. For more exact information concerning dates the Chronological Bibliography should be consulted. All references to the Marrow are to the edition to which Boston's notes have been appended, unless otherwise indicated. When the Marrow, rather than Boston's notes are quoted, the citation will simply be *The Marrow*, with volume and page number.

When reference is made to Boston's autobiographical writings, the works will not be quoted. Boston's two such pieces, the *Passages of My Life*, and *A General Account of My Life* were combined by his grandson, Michael Boston, who reduced their bulk by deleting duplicated portions. That version, known as the *Memoirs*, is contained in the works. Therefore, quotations will be made directly from the manuscript in the case of the *Passages*, and from Low's edition of the *General Account*, as it is more readily available than the
manuscript and is completely reliable.¹

All italicized words are quoted as such in the text without further mention. Only when italics have been added will it be noted in the footnote. Upon consultation with my advisors, it has been deemed expedient to depart from that strict usage of ellipses which would demand their presence whenever a quotation, no matter how brief, was begun or ended at other than the beginning or end of a sentence. The very long sentences used by Boston, coupled with the very frequent use made of short citations incorporated into the sentences of the thesis, made it seem wise to revert to principles of common sense with regard to the use of the ellipses. Whenever it seemed even remotely possible that their omission might lead to misunderstanding, they have been used.

In matters of style the following, sanctioned by the University of Chicago, have been used as guides: Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Dissertations* (Chicago, 1954), and _____, *A Manual of Style* (Chicago, 1955). American spelling has been used, and in an effort to achieve consistency, American punctuation has been used as well, the *Manual of Style* being followed implicitly in these matters.

Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt, and the Reverend James S. McEwen, my faculty advisors, deserve my deepest gratitude

¹George D. Low, editor, *A General Account of My Life by Thomas Boston, A.M.* (London, 1908). Low also provides a marginal page reference to the original MS. The MSS for both *Passages* and *A General Account* are in the New College Library. Henceforth in footnote usage these works will be referred to as *Passages* and *A General Account*. 
for their considerate counsel. Those who are in the least familiar with Scottish Church History know too of the fund of knowledge that Hugh Watt carries with him on that subject—a store of knowledge accessible to all who would but inquire. Of James S. McEwen it is impossible to say more than that no student could wish for a more considerate and helpful advisor.

Acknowledgement is made of the help rendered by Dr. J. A. Lamb, New College Librarian, and Miss E. R. Leslie, Assistant Librarian at New College. Thanks are due as well to the staff of the National Library of Scotland, whose service has always been gracious and efficient. I also wish to express my thanks to the University of Edinburgh for making available both the talents of her many eminent men, and her facilities for research.
The theological scene in Scotland during the active ministry of Thomas Boston (1699-1732) was one fraught with many seeming incongruities. Ever since its reform from popery in 1560 the land had been noted for its orthodoxy. This Reformed orthodoxy had held fast despite rapid changes of polity brought about by kings who worried that no bishop would mean no king, and by people who were just as determined to have a presbyterial form of government. While the Dutch struggled with the Arminians in their midst, the Scots seemingly emerged unaffected by Arminianism from both the first and second periods of Episcopacy despite the fact that it was the officially favored theology—the theology of promotion. With a few exceptions, the Amyrauldianism of France likewise seemed to have little lasting impression on this land of the orthodox. The violent conflict in the Netherlands between Voetians and Cocceians produced little more agitation in Scotland than warnings in the classroom. Yet in this land of
unimpeachable orthodoxy, during the ministry of Thomas Boston, the highest judiciary of the Church, the General Assembly, gave first a surprisingly solicitous hearing to a professor of divinity accused of Arminianism, then a sharp rebuke to doctrines which are generally held to be of the essence of evangelical Protestantism, and next, in distinction to this sharp rebuke, proceeded with charity against the professor as he was convicted of teaching Arianism.

To understand the factors involved in these three controversies is to understand the theological milieu in which Boston worked. Here the factors are sufficiently separated from Boston's theology that the theological background can be studied as such, while at the same time they are not so far removed as to be irrelevant.

Of course these three cases are not really separate in their implications—for they are all connected with the development known as Moderatism, which itself is but a part of a larger movement, although it also embraces many smaller interests and tendencies—but, for the purposes of convenience and clarity it will be well to first consider the history and theological implications of each case separately, and then consider the larger movements to put them in a true perspective. Because of the breadth and complexity of any such consideration, the findings in this section are always to be understood as suggestions rather than conclusions.

The first case is that of John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, accused of Arminianism. As early as 1710
rumors concerning Simson's lack of orthodoxy were abroad, but it was 1714 before judicial action was initiated by James Webster, minister of the Tolbooth Church in Edinburgh.\(^1\) The charges of the libel numbered twenty, and by the trivial nature of many of them it was obvious that Webster was hardly a fit opponent for Simson. Nevertheless, when the libel, together with the Professor's answers were handed in to the Assembly in 1715 (so late that they had to be put into the hands of a committee for consideration) it was evident that of the twenty charges there were two of a serious nature to which satisfactory answers had not been given.

The first charge involved a departure from the federal theology of the day, and in relationship to the common view and his alleged Arminianism, the accusation was not beside the point. The second serious charge revealed the implications latent in the first, for Simson affirmed that

> the souls of infants since the fall, as they come from the hands of their Creator, are as pure and holy as the souls of infants would have been created supposing man had not fallen . . . \(^2\)

Are men, therefore, free from original sin? No, for more exactly, Simson was charged with teaching that "the soul is created pure and holy as that of Adam was, but by being united to the corrupted body it contracts wicked habits and dispositions."\(^3\) One wonders just what Simson would have said to

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\(^1\)Charles G. M'Crie, "Studies in Ecclesiastical Biography: II. Professor Simson, the Glasgow Heresiarch," *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, XXXIII (1834), 256-58. Henceforth to be referred to as "Professor Simson."

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 261.

\(^3\)Ibid.
explicit questioning as to whether or not man's reason was to be considered as a part of the corrupted body. Is there not something Classically familiar (and ominous, when it creeps into Christian theology) about any relationship in which the body is made the corrupting factor? Also, is there any relationship between this doctrine, and the admonition in the Assembly's resolution that Simson should not wander into divergent courses of expression that "tend to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature ..."1

If John Flint's Examen Doctrinarum D. Johannis Simson (Edinburghi, 1717) is accepted as accurate, then there certainly was such a relationship, for he declares that the source of Simson's errors is the place he gives to reason. As another proposition, Simson held it as "inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to produce a rational creature without any dispositions to good, much more so to create such with inclinations to evil."2 Certainly in view of such pronouncements Charles G. M'Crie is extremely cautious when he observes that

if the theory of Simson be accepted, room is made for a considerable departure from the Calvinistic doctrine of the Fall, and more particularly from Calvinistic teaching regarding the want of original righteousness. . . . Such views may not be avowedly Pelagian; [but] they can hardly escape the suspicion of semi-Pelagianism, which has for its leading characteristic great indefiniteness . . . .3

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2 M'Crie, op. cit., p. 261.
3 Ibid., p. 262.
Thomas M'Crie, however, has no hesitation in stating that "it appeared in the evidence that he taught Arminian and Pelagian sentiments . . ."¹

What was the result of these charges? The matter was put in the hands of a committee, which because of the rebellion was unable to report until 1717. Even then there was no clear judgment, but merely an effort to bring the matter to some issue, which was that the Assembly "... judged that . . . he hath vented some opinions not necessary to be taught in divinity, and that have given more occasion to strife than to the promoting of edification . . ."² The Assembly prohibited and discharged Simeon from using such expressions. It also extended

... the foresaid prohibition to all professors of divinity, ministers and preachers, and all others in this Church [discharging them not to vent] such opinions as either ascribe too much to corrupt nature, or tend to encourage sloth among Christians, or slacken people's obligation unto Gospel holiness.³

Boston felt that the affair "was ended with great softness to the professor . . ."⁴ but there was also a strong pro-Simeon party which accepted this mild decision only with extreme reluctance.⁵

What is to be said about this decision? M'Crie feels

¹Thomas M'Crie, "Account of the Controversy respecting the Marrow of Modern Divinity," The Edinburgh Christian Instructor, XXX (1831), 543.
³Ibid.
⁵Charles G. M'Crie, "Professor Simson," op. cit., p. 263.
that in virtue of the poor libel and the evidence available it was both the most, and least, that the Assembly could have done. Abstractly considered, the Assembly gave a wise and judicious judgment when considering the libel and the evidence. But Simson was not tried in abstraction from events, and the true nature of the decision becomes evident when viewed in conjunction with another judgment delivered the very same year—the judgment concerning the "Auchterarder Creed".

The Presbytery of Auchterarder, worried about the corruption of its ministry by the rumored Arminianism of Simson, put its licentiates to a series of extra affirmations, one of which was "I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ, and instating us in covenant with God." Although the wording of the statement is more than unhappy—even Boston regarded it as "not well worded"—the intention behind it with regard to the exclusion of Arminianism is obvious. Any confusion that such a statement might have caused in that age can be attributed only to a lack of the very Calvinistic orthodoxy which supposedly pervaded the Church. Whereas four years had been consumed in considering the Simson case, the Auchterarder Creed was dealt with forthwith, and despite the absence of the Presbytery, the Assembly declared their "abhorrence" of the proposition "... as unsound and most detestable ..." and then demanded the appearance of the

\[1\] Ibid., p. 264.
\[2\] Acts of Assembly, p. 519.
Presbytery before the Commission in August to explain their action. The Presbytery and its creed were first chastised and condemned, then cited to appear. The difference in the tone of these two decisions speaks unmistakably. The Assembly acted with a strict fairness toward Simson which indicated leniency, but its action toward the Presbytery of Auchterarder could in no sense be interpreted as fair, much less charitable. The benefit of the doubt was given not to the Calvinistic position, but to Arminianism. What had happened to Scottish theology? An easy answer would be that, as in England, the reaction to Antinomianism had resulted in less repugnance to Arminianism. But where was such Antinomianism in Scotland? At best it could be a second-hand reaction to English Antinomianism. While perhaps a certain limited amount of validity can be given to this answer, is it not far too facile? Its acceptance as the total answer would mean that all Arminianism arises in reaction to Antinomianism, which is quite absurd.

An obvious question is whether Scotland was as orthodox as commonly supposed? Is the following true?

Theological controversy in Scotland, since the Reformation, dates only from the eighteenth century. Prior to that time there had been controversy, fierce and incessant controversy, but it had been ecclesiastical rather than theological, and had to do with the question of Church Government, whether by prelates or presbyters,

Ibid. While it was quite reasonable to forbid each Presbytery making its own creeds, the Assembly ignored its own strictures of 1717 when the Synod of Fife later formed its own questions to impose obedience to the Acts of 1722, which were directed against the Marrow.
and not with the fundamentals of the faith or any of the doctrines of Christianity.\(^1\)

As a generalization, this is quite true. The Roman Church in Scotland was sufficiently moribund to offer no serious intellectual opposition to the Reformation.\(^2\) When in 1560 the First Scottish Confession came before the Estates, the maximum opposition there put forward by the Roman Clergy was a speech by the Archbishop of St. Andrews, who

in many words said this in effect: that it was a matter he had not been accustomed with; he had had no sufficient time to examine it [the confession] and to confer with his friends; although as yet he will not utterly condemn it, he was loath to give his consent.\(^3\)

While no disturbance of the theological scene was to be expected from the Roman Church, neither was there any such disturbance among the Reformers. Knox was willing to follow the Genevan theology, and there were no men of genius inclined to dispute that theology. Thus the Reformation was actualized in Scotland with a great degree of theological agreement.

The Church polity brought in by the Reformation was not destined to give Scotland such peace. Its origins are described in a paper first printed in 1569:

> Before that there was any publick Face of the trew Religioun within this Realme. . . . Men began to exercise themselfis in reading of the Scriptures secretlie within their swin Houses, . . . after schort Preces of Time, God gathered Houses togidder in one Hous to the same Exercise,


some times in the Field, and some times in Houses by Nyght: And then began Men inspyred, no doubt by the Spirit of God, to consider that diverse Houses and Varietie of Persones could not be kept in good Obedience and honest Fame without Oversearis, Eldaris and Deaconis; ... and so they did elect some to occupy the supreme Place of Exhortation and Reading, sum to be Eldaris and Helperis to them for the Oversight of the Flok, and sum to be Deaconis for the Collection of Almis to be distributed to the Poore of their awin Bodie.¹

This broad, educated, and organized base of the Reformation, in conjunction with a weak sovereign, allowed Scotland to develop her church government along Presbyterian lines. This polity, with its popular basis, failed to find approval with King James VI of Scotland, and with the union of the crowns James became powerful; in that strength he attempted to assert his prerogative, humble the "democratic" Presbyterians, and achieve a closer uniformity of religion on his island—a uniformity built upon bishops. The tale of the indiscretion of Laud, the rebellion at the prayer book, the National Covenant of 1638, hope of a new uniformity (this time based on Presbytery), the suppression of the General Assembly by Cromwell, the Restoration with its severe devices to bring about conformity (this time to Episcopacy), and the Revolution with the final ascendance of Scotland's favorite polity, need not here be recited. The point that should be made, however, is that polity was the prime point of concern throughout this period.

It is true that during this time there were no

¹ Dunlop, A Collection of Confessions (Edinburgh, 1722), II, 636-37.
serious theological defections. Yet to describe the years between 1560 and 1647 as being spent in theological "slumber" is hardly correct. When a comparison is made of the First Scottish Confession of 1560 and the Westminster Confession, it is quite obvious that something had been taking place. A degree of scholasticizing had occurred, and federal theology had found a place in the latter confession (the development of federal theology is to be discussed in the next section). However, an exact description of what took place in theology between these two confessions is well beyond the purview of this introduction. It is sufficient for the present purpose to note that the Confession of the Westminster Assembly was accepted by the Church of Scotland in 1647, although it waited until 1690 for the official sanction of the state.1

Therefore, throughout the entire period to be examined, the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster were the accepted standards of the Church.

But what is to be said of the theological influence of the periods of Episcopacy? If the Arminianism advocated during the Episcopal periods really constituted a theological force in Scotland, then the actions surrounding the Simson case are explained. If not, it will be necessary to look farther. The influence toward Arminianism during the first period of Episcopacy came from Archbishop Laud, who "at once advanced views of Episcopacy and distinctive Arminian

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theology . . ."¹ Needless to say, Arminianism was the theology of advancement, and considering Laud's forceful policy in England, it is certainly not inconceivable that the stock charge of Arminianism brought against the bishops at the Glasgow General Assembly of 1638 had good foundations.² Bishops Sydserff and Maxwell were active in trying to have an Arminian appointed to the University of Edinburgh. William Forbes, Bishop of Edinburgh, "was the most outstanding of those who professed Arminianism . . ."³ Row accuses this same bishop "of emboldening others to put forward Arminian doctrines."⁴ That the ministers were not free from Arminian taint seems to be indicated by a petition to the King from some Members of Parliament in 1634 who complain "not only of English books of Arminian tendency but also of the 'preaching of Arminianism in this country without censure.'"⁵ At the same time many professors and ministers held out against the Arminian pressure, and when in 1638 Episcopacy was overturned by force, the country was again Calvinistic, with Arminianism an avowed heresy.

In their revulsion from the Arminianism and sacerdotalism

of the younger bishops who had been so zealously patronised by Laud, the Covenanting ministers of Scotland generally favoured a more decided Calvinism.

There were signs, however, of a certain amount of disquiet even in that time of supposedly universal Calvinism. "The General Assemblies of 1647 and 1648 showed themselves alive to the danger of contamination from England..." and when in 1651 the General Assembly issued a "Humble acknowledgment of the Sins of the Ministry of Scotland," the one defect to which they point is the "corrupt education of some in the prelatical and Arminian way."2 With the Restoration of 1660 the country was once more under heavy Episcopal and Arminian influence. Despite the severe persecutions of those staunch Presbyterians who refused to follow the Episcopal way, the latitude given in matters of theology seems to have been considerably greater. While the Recesssory Act of 1661 had officially annulled the Westminster Confession, still

In practice, the Westminster Confession was the only one with which the people were acquainted; and Gilbert Burnet says definitely, writing of the year 1681: "For these thirty years the only Confession of Faith that was read in Scotland was that which the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, anno 1648, had set out..."3

Quite naturally, when the Presbyterians returned to power in 1689, the official position was again Calvinistic, but since the Episcopalians were admitted to the establishment, did

this really represent the views of the whole clergy?

G. D. Henderson's observation is that

the Presbyterians were as a rule staunchly Calvinistic, while the Episcopalians for the most part called themselves Calvinists, but were less concerned about theology, and allowed Arminian, Platonist and other ideas to intrude themselves.¹

What influence did this mixture of ideas have when Simson was charged with heresy? It is a great temptation to attribute both the charity shown Simson and the asperity shown Auchterarder to these Arminian influences, but overt evidence would hardly seem to bear out such a straightforward solution.

Within thirty years of the Revolution the race of Episcopal parish ministers had almost died out. Even while they lived they had little influence. . . . There is no foundation for the statement frequently made by controversialists, both Roman Catholic and Presbyterian, that they swayed the counsels of the Church.²

However, with all regard for the truth of the above in respect to the active, or positive, influence of the Episcopalians, when it is considered that in 1707 there were still a hundred and sixty-five Episcopal ministers within the established Church,³ one can hardly refrain from sharing the concern of Hugh Watt that these numbers did constitute a deleterious influence within the Church. No matter how impotent they might have been, could their presence have been ineffectual in lowering the general theological tone of the Church? Negative influences, however, are exceedingly hard to measure, for

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³John Cunningham, Church History of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1882), II, 196.
neither books, pamphlets, nor Assembly speeches are the result of their presence—yet who would be so optimistic as to deny their effect? In careful evaluation of this negative factor it should also be recognized that the reaction in 1638 was initiated not by the clergy, but by the common people, and that the cause of the Covenanters at several crucial stages was forbidden compromise with the King not by the clergy, but by the nobles.1 Would not factors such as these give reason for pause when tempted to affirm too strongly the strict Calvinism of the 1638-1660 period, even though externally it seemed so powerful and uniform? It must be stressed, however, that any Arminian influences of the Episcopal periods were of a negative, rather than an overt, or positive nature.

Even when all of these negative Arminian influences are taken into account, they do not, in parallel consideration with the positive Calvinistic factors, offer an adequate solution with regard to the Simson case. However, there are other influences than those of Episcopal-Arminian infiltration into Scotland to be considered in this matter, but they will come into clearer focus in relation to the next major case brought before the Assembly, the charges concerning The Marrow of Modern Divinity.

Thomas Boston had been a member of the Assembly that found the Auchterarder Creed "unsound and most detestable." He reports that "my conscience smote me grievously; for that

1Ibid., pp. 7-8.
I could ... not speak in the public cause of truth."¹

However, Boston’s influence at that Assembly was far greater than he could ever have suspected at the time.

Meanwhile, at the same time sitting in the Assembly-house, and conversing with Mr. John Drummond, minister of Greif [sic] one of the brethren of that Presbytery above mentioned, I happened to give him my sense of the Gospel offer, Isa. lv. 1, Matt. xi. 28, with the reason thereof, and wished to tell him of the Marrow of modern divinity.²

Drummond managed to find a copy of the book, quickly passed it on to James Webster, and then on to James Hog, who not only liked the book, as had the others, but resolved on publishing it, and did so in 1716 with a preface of high recommendation. Theological opinion of the time was such that adverse criticism in influential places became so strong that in the same year Hog deemed it prudent to issue in 24 pages A Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace from the charge of Antinomianism: contained in a Letter to a Minister of the Gospel (Edinburgh, 1716). This helped not at all and another attempt was made to calm the excited brethren with An Explication of Passages excepted against in the Marrow of Modern Divinity, taken from the book itself: contained in a Letter to a Minister of the Gospel (Edinburgh, 1719). Calm was not to be purchased so cheaply (especially since neither tractate contained any basic withdrawals, nor even a frank admission of certain infelicities, but merely the reminder that these were the words of great and recognised divines), for while the second pamphlet was published

¹A General Account, p. 218.
²Ibid., pp. 218-19.
early in 1719, in April Principal Hadow of St. Andrews took
the occasion of his sermon before the Synod of Fife (the Synod
of which Hog was also a member) to issue what amounted to a
full scale declaration of war against the Marrow. From this
point on the pamphlets became many in number, 1 and the matter
was given new status by a rather obvious action of the General
Assembly. The day before the closing of the Assembly the
Commission was reminded of the decision concerning Auchterarder,
urged to see that compliance was given to it throughout the
church, and instructed as well

that they inquire into the publishing and spreading of
books and pamphlets tending to the diffusing of that
condemned proposition, and promoting a scheme of opinions
relative thereto, which are inconsistent to our Confession of Faith; and that the recommenders of such books or
pamphlets, or the errors therein contained, whether by
word or print, be called before them to answer for their
conduct in such recommendations. 2

The intention of the directive was obvious. The Commission
formed a Committee for Preserving Purity of Doctrine
("entirely one-sided in its composition" 3) which divided
itself into two subcommittees, with headquarters in
St. Andrews and Edinburgh. In April of the following year

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1 Complete bibliographies of the primary documents of
the Marrow controversy can be found in William Addison, The
Life and Writings of Thomas Boston of Ettrick (Edinburgh,
1936), pp. 185–87, or in Low, ed., A General Account,
pp. 362–65; the former listing the works in chronological
order, the latter classifying them first into "for" and
"against".


3 Charles G. M'Crie, "Studies in Scottish Ecclesi-
astical Biography: III. Rev. James Hog of Carnock and
Principal Hadow of St. Andrews," British and Foreign
Evangelical Review, XXXIII (1884), 694. Henceforth: "James
Hog and Principal Hadow."
(1720) the Edinburgh subcommittee called upon John Warden, James Brisbane of Stirling, Alexander Hamilton of Airth, and James Hog to appear. Rather than the stiff controversy expected, "the examiners declared themselves very much satisfied with the answers, and gave the brethren to understand they would make a favourable report to the Assembly, parting with them in quite a friendly spirit and manner." However, Principal Hadow was not a member of this subcommittee. When the full committee reported to the General Assembly, approval was given to the answers of the men questioned by the committee, but it declared that the Marrow contained Antinomian doctrines and expressions "exceedingly harsh and offensive."

Four days later, on May 20, 1720 the Assembly approved the Act concerning the Marrow, which found

the said passages and quotations, which relate to the five heads of doctrine above mentioned, are contrary to the Holy Scriptures, our Confession of Faith and Catechisms; . . . and, therefore, the General Assembly do hereby strictly prohibit and discharge all the ministers of this Church either by preaching, writing, or printing, to recommend the said book, or, in discourse, to say any thing in favour of it; but, on the contrary, they are hereby enjoined and required to warn and exhort their people, in whose hands the said book is, or may come, not to read or use the same.

To the advocates of the Marrow it seemed that while the Assembly had taken very slow, cordial, and limited action toward the Arminian and Pelagian Simeon, its action had been swift and complete in the banning of the Marrow, in which the gospel of grace was so clearly set forth. As they saw

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1Ibid., p. 695.
the matter, the Assembly had favored Arminianism and cast aspersions upon the doctrine of grace.

Failing in an attempt at Synodical action against the decision, Boston recorded that

Mr. Wilson moved, that a letter should be written to Mr. James Hog above designed; showing . . . our readiness to concur with others, to seek redress therein, of the Assembly itself immediately. And at their desire, I afterwards wrote a letter accordingly.¹

These were men of principle, and despite efforts to frustrate their plans,² and the smallness of their numbers, they nonetheless handed in their Representation to the General Assembly of 1721.³ What hopes the twelve might have had of obtaining popular support disappeared when the King's Commissioner was unable, due to sickness, to continue his duties, and dissolved the Assembly. The Representation,⁴ written with more honesty than tact, was then given to the Commission, which began hearings the day after the Assembly closed. After a few words from James Hog, there followed fifteen speeches in opposition,

¹General Account, p. 250.
²On the first night of the Assembly a meeting was to be held for prayer concerning the Representation. "Moreover, there came in to us a goodly company of brethren, with whose appearance I was much encouraged. But, behold, they turned our meeting designed for prayer, into a meeting for jangling, and breaking our measures . . . " Ibid., p. 253.
³In fairness to Hadow it should be recorded that on the very day the Representation was handed in he had set out for the meeting with the "intention of submitting some motion to mitigate the severity of the Condemnatory Act. He was too late." Charles G. M'Crie, "James Hog and Principal Hadow," op. cit., p. 699.
⁴The Representation is recorded in John Struthers's History of Scotland (Glasgow, 1828), I, 498-506. It can also be found (together with the other documents relative to the Marrow controversy) in John Brown of Whitburn's Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated (Glasgow, 1831), pp. 176-89.
and it was not until the next day that the Representers could state their case. Boston must have warmed to the situation, recalling that:

Particularly Mr. Williamson did, in a point in debate, fairly lay Mr. Alan Logan, minister of Culross: and I was encouraged by the success of an encountre with Principal Hadow.

After one has considered the Boston of the perplexed, timorous, melancholy introspection of the General Account and Passages, the picture of him successfully encountering the bold Principal of St. Andrews must produce both wonder and admiration.

Pamphlets, not always distinguished by their zeal for truth—unless, perhaps, the smoke of battle blinded the eyes of their authors—continued to pour forth from the press. Principal Hadow signed his preface to The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected in July of 1721. While it earned for him the appellation of the "Detector," it did little to honor his otherwise very respectable name. The book is replete with quotations (well out of context) from the Marrow, and a good deal of argumentum ad invidiam. In this same month, in quite a different tone and spirit, Boston began his Notes on the Marrow.

In August the twelve Representers were called to Edinburgh, and after being kept waiting for three days without interview, were told they might return home, but to be ready to return in November. Return they did, and this time the

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1A General Account, pp. 255-56.
2Ibid., p. 256.
Commission placed upon the twelve the responsibility for answering twelve queries that had been drawn up for the occasion—"And thus they turned the cannon directly against us."\(^1\) Answers to the Queries were given—forty pages of them—along with a protest regarding the irregular mode of procedure.\(^2\) These answers have always been understood to be synonymous with Boston's theology, but that is true only to a certain extent. He certainly agreed with all that was said, but the answers are not his, as is evident either from a reading of the answers, or his own words:

These answers were, as I remember, begun by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, but much extended and perfected by my friend Mr. Wilson: where his great compass of reading, with his great collection of books, were of singular use and successfully employed.\(^3\)

Despite the learned answers of the Representers and the force of the original Representation, the Assembly could hardly be expected to reverse its decision. On May 16th, 1722, the matter was brought before the Assembly, and then referred to a committee. There, considerable alterations to the originally intended Act were found necessary to unite the anti-Marrow party. All reference to the Queries was dropped from the Act, as was a clause which required the Representers to declare their acquiescence in the condemnation of their sentiments (which the Representers certainly would not have done).

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\(^{1}\text{Ibid.}, p. 259.}\)

\(^{2}\text{The Queries and answers can be found in volume VII of Boston's Works, pp. 466-89, in Brown, op. cit., pp. 191-239, or in various editions of the Marrow published after 1722.}\)

\(^{3}A\ General\ Account, p. 260.\)
Mitchell (the Moderator) and Principal Hadow wished to make still further alterations by leaving out the censure entirely, but they were overruled by the rest of the committee.¹

The twelve, while not adept politicians, were not so naïve as to be in doubt about the general outcome, and Boston records that

> Easily foreseeing what would be the issue, in the Assembly's determination of the affair, I drew a Protestation while I was yet at home, and carried [it] along with me.²

Thus on the 21st of May the matter came before the Assembly for a vote. Mr. Allan Logan moved that "sharply rebuke" be changed to "gravely admonish," but it was ultimately decided to drop the "sharply" and simply administer a "rebuke."³ The vote, being between "approve" and "not approve," resulted in sixteen abstentions, only five votes not to approve the rebuke, and one hundred and thirty-four votes to approve.⁴ Boston's prepared protest was given in by Mr. James Kid of Queensferry, "a man of singular boldness" who "gave gold with it." The Assembly refused either to hear or receive the protest. The protest asserted that the Representers still considered the act condemning the Marrow as contrary to the Word of God and the standards of doctrine, that they dare not comply with the Acts of the Assembly to be silent concerning them, and that

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⁴Ibid.
in accordance with God's Word and the Confessions they would continue to "profess, preach, and still bear testimony unto, the truths condemned, or otherwise injured by the said Acts of Assembly . . . ."¹

This open contempt of the jealously-guarded authority of the Assembly resulted in no action by the Assembly. Why? It might be suggested that there was a fear of discontent among the people because of the popularity of the twelve; or, perhaps some of the majority recognized that their case had been built upon shaky evidence, and did not wish to split the Church in pressing the matter to an extreme. However, there is no evidence in the subsequent years that consideration for the feelings of the people played any appreciable part in the decisions of the Assembly. A case can be made for the second suggestion, insofar as Hadow, as well as Mitchell and Logan, sought a certain amount of amelioration in the stringency of the Act. On the other hand, it is also true that the government feared a schism in the Church at a time of threatened invasion. His Majesty's letter to the Assembly of 1721 stated that

We hope you will apply yourselves with concord and unanimity to dispatch the affairs proper and necessary to be considered in this Assembly, and guard against all matter of contention; since you cannot but foresee the many unhappy consequences with which divisions among you may be attended.²

Similar sentiments were expressed in the letter of 1722.³ In

¹ Protesit, found in Brown, op. cit., p. 263.
this way the wishes of the government may have been largely instrumental in saving the Marrowmen from further discipline. Thus ended the action of the General Assembly with regard to the Marrow—but what were the doctrines so overwhelmingly condemned by the majority, and so tenaciously adhered to by Boston and his friends?

Because these doctrines will be considered in the exposition of Boston's theology, it is necessary here only to sketch the accusations contained in the "Black Act" of 1720 against the Marrow, indicate the real issues, and the source of opposition. The first condemnation leveled against the Marrow was "Concerning the Nature of Faith," where the Commission asserted that "assurance is not of the essence of faith," as taught by the Marrow. The passages quoted by the Commission from the Marrow stress that salvation is to be had in believing on Christ and accepting him as personal saviour. The Marrow certainly teaches this, and says that to believe in Christ, and to believe that he is one's personal saviour, is to have assurance. To deny that this is faith is to deny that faith itself is faith. However, woven in with the accusation is the common confusion that results when the "being convinced that one has accepted Christ" and the acceptance itself are both called assurance. While the Marrow teaches that to be saved each man must know and believe Christ has died for him, it does not teach (and it is quite specific

\[1\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. } 534-35.\]
here) that he must be convinced that he believes in order to believe. This distinction, which appears so silly, is actually a distinction (given poor force by the words used) between faith which rests on the objectiveness of Christ, and faith which rests on the subjectivity of one's own feelings. That this accusation was made by the Commission betrays a degree of discomfort with a doctrine of uninhibited or unconditioned grace.

Secondly, the Marrow was said to teach "Universal Atonement and Pardon," i.e., a "universal redemption as to purchase."¹ The real cause of this objection is found in the dissatisfaction with the Marrow teaching that "The Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind . . . ."² The Marrow taught that Christ was to be offered freely to all men. It did not teach, but explicitly denied, that Christ died for any but the elect. The Marrow, as well as the Marrowmen, were particular redemptionists. Behind this objection of the Commission lies a perversion of the Reformed doctrine of election, the result of excessive scholasticizing carried on to the exclusion of other biblical evidence.

The third alleged teaching that was rebuked was that "Holiness [is] not necessary to Salvation." Even the cited quotations are not particularly objectionable, the Commission's animus evidently being directed toward the Marrow's insistence that works are not the cause, but the result of salvation.

¹Ibid., p. 535.
²Ibid.
The source of opposition—a form of legalism—is evident from the type of objection. The Marrow teaches only that holiness is not necessary to salvation as its cause. Holiness is rather the effect of salvation.

The fourth stricture was placed upon the Marrow because it taught that fear of hell and hope of heaven are not proper motives for obedience. Was there such a terrible dread of Antinomianism, coupled with such a low estimation of the ability of the people to comprehend the Gospel, that objection to such a position was raised? Or was it legalism?

When the Act claims that the Marrow teaches "That the Believer is not under the Law as a Rule of Life,"¹ it is perverting Marrow teaching in a way that is hardly excusable. The Marrow taught that the believer was not under the law as a covenant of works (i.e., he could not earn his salvation by works), but it most certainly taught that the believer was to give obedience to the law as a rule of life. However, the Marrow uses the phrase "law of Christ" to distinguish the covenant of grace from that of works. This last accusation forms the logical tie with the next section of the Act entitled "The Six following Antinomian Paradoxes are fenced and defended by applying to them that distinction of the Law of Works, and Law of Christ."² It is also obviously in line with Hadow's determined attempt to affix the charge of Antinomianism to the Marrow irrespective of the evidence.

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 536.
While the six points listed are from the Marrow,¹ Evangelista points out that

> these points . . . have occasioned many needless and fruitless disputes; and that because men have either not understood what they have said, or else not declared whereof they have affirmed; for in one sense they may all of them be truly affirmed, and in another sense they may all of them be truly denied wherefore if we would clearly understand the truth, we must distinguish betwixt the law as it is the law of works, and as it is the law of Christ.²

When an author's intended and obvious meaning is as persistently perverted as it is in the Act of Assembly, and to an even greater extent in Hadow's Antinomianism Detected, a strong antipathy is indicated either toward the whole trend of the author's thought or toward his sponsors. To understand the hostility shown toward the Marrow³ is to understand a good deal of the theological thinking surrounding Boston.

What explanations are to be found for this antipathy within the Scottish scene? There are some who point back to the period of reversals for the Covenanting cause, when after the great successes of 1638 the tide began to turn.

First had come the Engagers, and opposed to them the Remonstrants, who virtually came to blows with the former. Some of the Remonstrants, seeking to heal the breach, became known as the Resolutioners, and against them rose the Protestors. Of this fierce controversy, James Walker said

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¹Ibid. The reference in the Acts of Assembly, is to pp. 198-99 of the copy of the Marrow being used, corresponding to the Marrow, VII, pp. 346-47.

²Ibid., p. 347.

³Perhaps the best account of the various forms taken by the anti-Marrow spirit is to be found in the article by Thomas M'Crie, op. cit., I (1832), 85-93.
that "it put ill blood into our Church life, which a century and a half did not expel." John MacLeod is of a similar opinion: "The Reformed Church never got over the bad results that can be easily traced back to this schism which rent its unity in the days of the Commonwealth." The ill will of the Cromwellian era was intensified under the persecution of the Restoration period, throughout which the groups fought with one another while the various indulgences provided fresh sources of irritation. In the era of the Revolution, with the restoration of Presbytery, the Abjuration Oath soon became a bone of contention which was vigorously chewed. The wise policy of Carstares prevailed, and by maintaining that the Oath was a matter for prosecution in the civil, rather than the ecclesiastical courts, the Jurants and Nonjurants were prevented from doing each other violence.

The Marrowmen had not only a record of refusing the Oath in the beginning, but they remained Nonjurants to the very end. However, while this stand did not make them popular with the majority, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that this was a major factor in producing such animosity toward the Marrow.

That the Prelatic curates had any direct influence with regard to the Marrow was quite impossible. In addition

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2. John MacLeod, Scottish Theology (Edinburgh, 1943), p. 84.
to the fact that they were without influence with the Presbyterian party, at "the very time the Marrow controversy was raging, the Episcopalians were under the ban for their connection with the still recent rebellion, and bitter things were everywhere said of them." ¹

A major source of the antipathy shown the Marrow is to be found in the theology of the man who headed the opposition—Principal Hadow. Hadow has been described as a narrow and hyper-Calvinist, a "Calvinier Calvin," an exponent of that type of Christianity which yields itself most easily to caricaturing ... "² The narrowness of Hadow's orthodoxy can probably be most easily attributed to the general scholasticizing of Reformed dogmatics.³ It stood in contrast to the broad Calvinism of the Marrow, a contrast sufficiently large to excite the tendency toward heresy hunting. This becomes visible in Hadow's first public attack on the Marrow, where he was uncharitable enough to declare that the Marrow view meant either universalism or that God obliged men to

¹Cunningham, op. cit., II, 255.
³Not only were there influences in this direction from the Netherlands, but it is quite conceivable that as Samuel Rutherford sought to make his own theology a fit weapon for defence and offence with respect to the Arminians, he continued the scholasticizing tendency, a tendency which those who follow often find easier to assimilate than the spiritual warmth that lies behind the system. In Hadow's time the Arminian danger was not less, but more, and it is unfortunate that he did not write at greater length so that Rutherford's influence might be more properly assessed.
promote an untruth, and then tried to press both charges at once, an indication that perhaps his zeal for orthodoxy was a bit overly keen. This is even more evident, when, after having steered the General Assembly into declaring the Marrow to be Antinomian, he seeks to prove this charge in The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected. In it he treats the Marrow material so abominably that it is difficult to judge which part of the discussion must be taken seriously, therefore making it equally hard to come to an understanding of Hadow's exact theological position. Riccalton, in the Politick Disputant, has done a really delightful job in showing the absurdities, and the injustices of the Principal's book, and it is because his criticisms are often so just—including the one that states it is better to "rather blunder a little, than prejudice your main design"—that it is so difficult to assess what the Principal's theology really is. In the fifth chapter Hadow attacks the Marrow for teaching that "Repentance goeth not before Justification." Indicative of how far hyper-Calvinists can be from the theology of Calvin, the Institutes are quite clear in stating that repentance flows from faith, while in

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1 James Hadow, The Record of God, and Duty of Faith. A Sermon . . . before The Synod of Fife At St. Andrew's April 7th, 1719 (Edinburgh, 1719), p. 32.
2 James Hadow (Edinburgh, 1721). Henceforth: Antinomianism Detected.
4 Hadow, Antinomianism Detected, pp. 36-48.
commenting on Matt. iii. 2 and Mk. i. 15 Calvin's exegesis is very much opposed to that of Hadow. In the chapter Hadow appears with two faces. On page thirty-seven he defames the Auchterarder Creed, and continues on the next page in the role of a complete legalist, but retreats a bit on the following page. On page forty he appears as a virtual Arminian, but it is again followed by a qualification.

There seems to be no doubt that Hadow was, as M'Crie describes him, a narrow hyper-Calvinist, and in this road were also such esteemed men as M'Laren of Edinburgh, Flint, and John Goldie. However, men such as these are not to be understood as composing the total opposition to the Marrow. To claim this would leave unexplained the favor shown Simeon in his last trial, when Hadow, the leader of the opposition to the Marrow, steadfastly opposed him.

Boston often speaks of "legalists" and "rationalists" within the Church of Scotland. Is it to be supposed that these terms refer to the hyper-orthodoxy of Hadow's party? C. G. M'Crie offers an explanation which contains a tremendous amount of insight and truth:

Hyper-Calvinism is not a creed for a man to grow warm and eloquent about, to be earnest in pressing home upon the acceptance of others; it is not a gospel of "good tidings

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2 Hadow, Antinomianism Detected.

of great joy to all people." And so in course of time men grew tired of preaching it; they became heartless in declaring a system of truths and a series of steps which concerned some only of their hearers, and they betook themselves to something else which applies to all, appeals to all, something broad and deep, wide as the race, lasting as the eternities. They became preachers of duty, of the moralities, of the honest, the true, the good, the beautiful. This abandoning of theology for morality was gradual. Hadow and the men of his standing continued to preach narrow Calvinism to the end. The change showed itself in the preaching of those who were their juniors, some of them having been Hadow's students. They betook themselves to a kind of preaching which became well known under one designation in their day—that of legal, and is better known under another since that time—that of moderate.¹

The truth contained in the above explanation should never be overlooked, but it perhaps tries to explain too much in terms of the theology represented by Hadow, for in that theology, with regard to the second Sismon case, Hadow stood alone among his University peers. However, consideration of the sources of opposition to the Marrow distinct from that of Hadow's type must be postponed while a more careful study is made of the influences which played upon Hadow's theology.

Since the effect was ill, it will perhaps be permissible to look in another direction for these influences—to England. Contrary to the popular statement of the case, the Marrow did not see ten editions in England without causing any stir. It certainly saw ten editions, but the third had not yet been sold out (1646) when the book was under attack by a Puritan divine, John Angel of Grantham, who charged the book with the Antinomian error of denying the necessity of "'evangelical

¹Ibid., pp. 715-16.
preparations of faith in Christ." In 1647 John Trapp published a commentary in which he referred to the Marrow's author as "that sly Antinomian." 

"Thomas Blake, a firm proponent of the conditionality of the covenant of grace . . ." expressed his dislike for the Marrow in his Vindiciae Foederis in 1653. All three of these opponents were cited by Principal Hadow, who must have been extremely well read in Puritan theology, if he is to be judged by his facile use of English authors. However, Hadow should have also known that the charge of Antinomianism was often merely a derogatory epithet. The ways of the human mind, however, are wondrous to behold, and it is possible that Hadow's predilections may have made it very easy for him to accept uncritically the charges as true. Once accepted, an idea is usually defended, rather than examined.

The most famous English opponent of the Marrow was that avowed antagonist of Antinomianism, Richard Baxter. Baxter's dislike for Antinomianism was not built upon theory. He had come in direct contact with it. The results of Antinomian teaching were often tragic, and as Baxter recollected in horror, he went so far in the other direction as to never

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1 D.M. McIntyre, "First Strictures on 'The Marrow of Modern Divinity'," The Evangelical Quarterly, X (January, 1938), 66.  
2 Ibid.  
3 Ibid., pp. 66-67.  
4 Antinomianism Detected, pp. 6-7.  
5 The suggestion has also been made that because Fraser of Brea admitted admiration for the Marrow, and was a reputed Universalist, Hadow readily concluded the Marrow taught Universalism.
completely regain his equilibrium. His *Aphorismes of Justification* (London, 1649) clearly show his intention: to preach the gospel while guarding against Antinomianism. But his guard is clumsy, and the gospel is distorted.

Baxter attempts the guard with his doctrine of justification in this manner: The distinction is made between a legal righteousness, which might be had only by keeping the law; and evangelical righteousness, which must be performed by us. Because legal righteousness is impossible to us, Christ fulfills it for us, but we ourselves must perform the conditions of this evangelical righteousness.  

Our Evangelical Righteousness is not without us in Christ, as our legal Righteousness is: but consisteth in our own actions of Faith and Gospel Obedience. Or thus: Though Christ performed the conditions of the Law, and satisfied for our non-performance; yet it is our selves that must perform the conditions of the Gospel.  

A few pages later, Baxter tries to cover himself by insisting that it is not possible to "perform these Conditions without Grace . . ." But this recognition of the part played by grace, sincere though it undoubtedly is, in effect is outweighed by the emphasis upon human action. Thus, throughout the *Aphorismes* are such passages as:

> Though Christ hath sufficiently satisfied the Law, yet it is not his Will, or the Will of the Father, that any

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man should be justified or saved thereby, who hath not some ground in himself or personall and particular right and claim thereto; nor that any should be justified by the blood only as shed or offered, except as it be also received and applied; so that no man by the meere Satisfaction made, is freed from the Law or curse of the first violated Covenant absolutely, but conditionally only. [Italicized throughout]

I am now to shew, that he doth not justify by the shedding of blood immediately, without somewhat of man intervening to give him a legall title thereto. 2

It is that "somewhat of man intervening" that puts Baxter so completely in step with the times, exalting the prowess of man. Not that it was to this end that Baxter framed his theology—it was to combat Antinomianism with a true Christian doctrine, but that doctrine partook of the spirit of the century. This doctrine, Arminian at least in effect and spirit, could not help but clash with the Marrow. 3 In contrast with the Marrow, which would apply "Do this and live" only to the covenant of works, Baxter insists that "Do this and live" is "the condition of our participation in Christ, who is our legall Righteousness, and so of all the benefits that come with him..." 4 Strong exception is also taken to the denial of the fear of hell as a valid basis of obedience (pp. 265, 277) and that the New Covenant threatens nothing but present afflictions (p. 280). In the Marrow, Evangelista declares those preachers ignorant of the mystery of faith who will not try to persuade sinners to believe

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1Ibid., p. 60.
2Ibid.
3Specific references to the Marrow are found in the above on pages 226, 262ff., and 276ff.
4Ibid., p. 263.
their sins to be pardoned until their lives are reformed.
Baxter eagerly declares himself to be such an ignorant preacher.¹

From the above it is obvious that Gabriel Wilson and Boston were quite justified in associating Baxter with Neonomanism.² In general Neonomanism takes its name from the imposition of a new law (called variously the law of grace, gospel law, law of Christ, or by its opponents, the new law of works), obedience to which by man is accepted by God for Christ's sake.³ The legal righteousness of the first covenant is impossible to us. "Man having . . . broken the first covenant. . . . It pleased the Father and the Mediator to prescribe unto him a new Law . . ."⁴ Therefore our evangelical righteousness, our obedience to this new law—which is really our own obedience, not Christ's—must be performed. It is, of course, possible only by grace; but is this a Calvinistic special grace, or an Arminian prevenient grace? The latter was obviously preferred by many in the succeeding generation.

This new law was in part an attempt to guard the gospel against an ethic-less Antinomianism, just as in part Arminianism was a protest against what it conceived to be the

¹Ibid., p. 279.
²Gabriel Wilson, "The Trust," found in Brown, op. cit., p. 433. Boston: VI, 89 (1701??). It should be noted that before these men, Rutherford had seen the danger of Baxter's teaching. Notes on the Harrow, VII, 282 (1721-22).
weakened ethic of Calvinism. However, insofar as Neonomianism, and later Arminianism partook "of the notion that Christ has lowered the demands and standard of the moral law" the attempted antidote itself fell prey to the disease it was intended to counteract. Neonomianism was an attempt to in some way fix obedience to the law (although sometimes a diluted law) upon the believer, while at the same time declaring his salvation to be of Christ. To do so it gave increased place to man's responsibility, and therefore to his ability, and as such the movement received impetus from the spirit of the age. Obviously, it is difficult to use with exactness the terms "Neonomian", "legalist", and perhaps even "Arminian", for all partake of a oneness of direction—the imposition of law, and the heightening of man's ability to keep that law. In an epithet-hurling age, it was not to be supposed that care would be taken to keep the terms separate. Since the effect of all three was to heighten the place given to individual activity before God, perhaps the epithets, despite their careless interchange, do not always hit as wide of the mark as might at first be assumed. While the historical development of Neonomianism and Arminianism is distinct, yet it can hardly be denied that the tendencies and spirit, as well as the effects, as they center in man's justification, are very much the same.

That the writings of Baxter had their effect in Scotland can hardly be doubted—"Most Scots ministers had

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1 Platt, op. cit., p. 810.
some familiarity with English theologians, particularly with Baxter and Owen."¹ But Baxter also had a powerful effect upon his own countrymen, so that his influence in Scotland continued through his English followers. In his *Catholic Theologie* Baxter attacks not only the Marrow, but also Dr. Crisp's *Christ Alone Exalted*. Fifty years after the death of Tobias Crisp, the above work was republished by his son to mark the anniversary (1690). The "Happy Union" between the Presbyterian and Independent ministers of London took place the following year (1691), but *Christ Alone Exalted* brought to the surface a deep doctrinal cleavage. This book produced the same reaction that the Marrow was later to produce in Scotland. Dr. Daniel Williams, whose theological position stands in succession to that of Baxter, immediately issued *Gospel Truth Stated and Vindicated Wherein some of Dr. Crisp's Opinions Are Considered And the Opposite Truths are Plainly Stated and Confirmed* (London, 1692). This performance is much more worthy than that of Hadow, and the cleavage between the theology of Crisp and Williams is clearly set forth without undue distortion. This volume found the signed commendation of sixteen prominent and learned Presbyterians in the first edition, and forty-eight in the second. Other prominent men, largely from the Independent party, were quick to accuse Williams "of teaching the heresy

of Justification by Works."¹ Williams' theology may best be described as Neonomian, although considerably more subtle and refined than that of Baxter. The outcome of the conflict is instructive: "By the end of the debate, the Presbyterian body was committed to Arminianism and Independency to a stricter Calvinism."² This controversy, with the ascendancy of Arminianism among a large and respected party which still considered itself very orthodox, had taken place well before the beginning of the Marrow controversy. Here, in the early Neonomianism of Baxter, and in the refined Neonomianism of Williams, are factors that cannot be overlooked when trying to arrive at an assessment of Scottish theological views and their origins. The views of both Baxter and Williams received wide publication, and it is inconceivable that they did not play a definite part in influencing Scottish opinion.

The discussion on the 'Marrow' was closely connected with the Neonomian controversy in England during the previous century. That scheme of doctrine soon became known in Scotland; and the different views which were held in regard to it were the real, although not the ostensible, cause of the 'Marrow' controversy.³

Because this party, represented first by Baxter and then by Williams, was considered as orthodox (despite a Neonomianism of the same effect as Arminianism) it could be of influence in Scotland among those who prided themselves on their

²Ibid.
³James Buchanan, The Doctrine of Justification (Edinburgh, 1867), p. 163.
orthodoxy. It must still be observed, however, that a really basic answer has not yet been given as to the source of these views—either among the Scottish or the English Presbyterians. All the force and violence of the Episcopal party could not force Arminianism on either of these parties. Despite contact with it, they steadfastly refused it. How then is this Neonomianism, or legalism, to be explained? Simply to say that part of its rise in Scotland was due to Baxter and Williams in England carries us a step nearer the answer, but as yet it fails to explain either why it was so acceptable to the followers of Baxter and Williams, or why it found acceptance in Scotland. These answers can most profitably be given in consideration of the third important case that shook the Church of Scotland during Boston’s ministry, the process against Professor John Simson for Arianism.

The mild prohibition put upon Simson by the Assembly of 1717 had little effect, either in silencing the Professor, or his opponents, and in nine years, six Presbyteries overture for action. In 1726, the General Assembly referred the matter to the Glasgow Presbytery. The evidence given there was such as to indicate clearly that Simson was heavily inclined toward, if not already in, the Arian

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1 It is not claimed that Neonomianism had been wholeheartedly embraced as a system in Scotland, but it does seem evident that its influence was being very heavily felt.
The matter was brought to the Assembly in 1727, where despite the obstructions of a pro-Simson party, the majority decided against Simson—notwithstanding his willingness to make very large concessions. The matter was given to a Committee to ripen for the future Assembly. However, because three out of the four articles in the libel against Simson had been found relevant and proven, he was suspended for the year. When the matter was brought up before the Assembly of 1728 "the temper of the Assembly had changed, and Wodrow speaks of mockers and risores, mostly young members." However, the pressure against Simson was strong, despite his willingness to retract and confess anything the Assembly should see fit, but the pro-Simson party was powerful enough to cause the orthodox party, led by Hadow, to take the course of sending the matter down to the Presbyteries. The results of this action came before the Assembly of 1729 with four Presbyteries in favor of reponing, twenty for continued suspension, and twenty-eight for outright disposition. Meanwhile, Glasgow University was still doing its best to save Simson. Principal Stirling

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1 H. M. B. Reid, *The Divinity Professors in the University of Glasgow, 1690-1905* (Glasgow, 1923), pp. 222-23. 
2 Ibid., pp. 224-25. 
3 Charles G. M'Crie, "Professor Simson," op. cit., p. 266. 
4 Reid, op. cit., p. 228. 
6 Reid, op. cit., p. 230.
in 1727 had claimed the prerogative of judging faculty members for the University, and in 1728 his successor, Neil Campbell, renewed the protest, which was again raised in 1729, and to which the University of Edinburgh lent its support. Others of the pro-Simson party suggested that he was the King's servant, and therefore the action would need his Majesty's approval, while still others insisted that Parliament was the proper body to decide the matter. The result of these pressures, plus the fact that the combination of Simson's health, family, and financial status called for sympathy, resulted in his suspension rather than deposition. Thomas Boston was at this Assembly, and like Athenæus of old, stood alone in offering his dissent from the Assembly's decision, as being "'no just testimony of this church's indignation against the dishonour done by the said Mr. Simson to our glorious Redeemer . . .'." Perhaps Boston's feelings on the matter were not completely out of place, for "... the impression made by the decision, both in Scotland and in England, was that the Assembly, though willing on occasion to declare its own orthodoxy, was disposed to deal leniently with doctrinal deflections." Of the fact that Simson was an Arian there is no question. When Wodrow first heard of some of the things

1 Ibid., pp. 225, 227, and 231.
2 Ibid., pp. 231-33.
3 Passages, p. 318.
4 A. R. MacEwen, op. cit., p. 60.
5 Cunningham, op. cit., II, 265.
claimed by Simeon he thought he must be mad,

Yet those who talked with him [John Simeon] say he is connected and sensible in everything he says, only brings in the subject of Dr. Clarke, the Fathers, and Council of Nice, in all conversation.¹

A search need not be made for the source of the heresy--Wodrow's remark makes it quite clear that Simeon had become the ardent follower of Dr. Clarke, then in vogue in England.²

While the first appearance of Socinianism in England can be traced back to 1640 or 1645,³ the Arian movement began a long and uninterrupted course in England through the work and influence of two Cambridge scholars. . . . William Whiston . . . and Samuel Clarke . . . both were determined to create a qualified primitive Christianity, especially on the subject of the Trinity.⁴

Dr. Clarke's memorable work, The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, was published in 1712. While prior to the eighteenth century, trinitarian speculation in England had been largely limited to the Established Church,⁵ within the first half of the eighteenth century, a large portion of the English

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¹ Wodrow, Correspondence, III, 238, quoted by Reid, op. cit., p. 220.
⁴ Ibid., p. 31.
⁵ Ibid., pp. 22-24. Temperley gives this description of the Church of England in the early eighteenth century: "Clergy whose opinions approached Deism were not inhibited from preaching; controversies which led to advocacy of quasi-scepticism were not openly suppressed; and the bands of ecclesiastical discipline and political control were often amenable relaxed." H. W. V. Temperley, "The Age of Walpole and the Pelhams," The Cambridge Modern History, VI, The Eighteenth Century (Cambridge, 1909), pp. 79-80.
Presbyterians went into Arianism.\(^1\) Part of the responsibility for this arianizing of the Presbyterians has been assigned to the fact that English Presbyterians at Glasgow were under the Arian influence of Simson and Hutcheson.\(^2\)

More important for the present purposes, however, what does this second Simson case indicate concerning the Scottish theological climate? It should be obvious that Scotland was not at this time the land of orthodox Calvinism it is often pictured to have been. Certainly it would not take a very brilliant theologian to sense something was seriously wrong when it was taught that

the Lord Jesus Christ is not necessarily existent, that the three persons of the Trinity are not to be spoken of as numerically one in substance or essence, and that the terms Supreme Deity, Only True God, are the property of the Father, and can only be applied to the Son in a lower sense.\(^3\)

That this was sensed is obvious from the clamor that was raised, and the fact that from the beginning of the proceedings by the Glasgow Presbytery in 1726 it was realized that Simson leaned heavily towards Arianism. But that Scotland was not of a unanimous theological mind is indicated by the transactions taking place during and after the trials. Three out of four of the Principals of the Scottish Universities took Simson's side—only Hadow, the assailant of the Narrow, being in opposition—while another

\(^1\) Griffiths, *op. cit.*, pp. 136ff.
\(^3\) Charles G. M'Crie, "Professor Simson," *op. cit.*, p. 271.
supporter of Simeon, John Gowdie, who publicly defended him by quoting (if Lord Grange is to be believed) the works of Dr. Clarke, was soon appointed Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh.\(^1\) Wodrow, who certainly can not be impugned as a heresy hunter (his father, Divinity Professor at Glasgow, while orthodox himself, had nevertheless been sufficiently broadminded to familiarize his students with Limborch\(^2\)), noticed the difference in attitude among the younger members of the Assembly during the Simeon trials, and speaks of the latitudinarian temper of the party that had really prevailed in 1729 in terms of "Theologia Indifferentifica."\(^3\) Also indicative of theological feeling were the early efforts made to lift Simeon’s suspension.\(^4\)

Following the statement of Wodrow that some of the young men examined before the Assembly in the Simeon trials "were young, raw lads" who perhaps were unable to comprehend Simeon’s Latin subtleties, some writers leave the impression that Simeon’s influence upon his students was not great. The assertion that Simeon influenced English Presbyterian students has already been cited (supra, p. 43). John Flint in 1717 claimed that Simeon’s teaching was "being eagerly welcomed by the most promising youths . . ."\(^5\) Further evidence of Simeon’s impact is found in his continuing

\(^1\) Warrick, op. cit., p. 308.
\(^2\) Griffiths, op. cit., p. 124.
\(^3\) Wodrow, Correspondence, III, 467, quoted by Reid, op. cit., p. 235.
\(^5\) Reid, op. cit., p. 217.
influence at the University through one of his pupils, Francis Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow from 1730 to 1745. Hutcheson based his theory of morality on two principles, the first borrowed from Lord Shaftesbury and his own master, the heretical Simeon, and the second from Shaftesbury alone. He agreed with Simeon that morality could not be the fulfilment of the desires of an Objective Deity, unless in obeying the Divine Decrees, man was expressing his own essential nature. Hutcheson's theory of morality rests on the presupposition that man's essential nature is in some sense basically uncorrupted—a far departure from Reformed teaching.

Simeon's influence extended not only to the chair of Moral Philosophy, but continued in his own chair of Divinity as well. The first incumbent after Simeon's death died shortly, and his successor, William Leechman, secured the "New Light", or "Augustan Age" in theology in Glasgow.

To simply say that Simeon was an Arian, following Clarke, and influencing both English and Scottish Presbyterians in that direction, is not to arrive at the basic answer as to why both he and his auditors were so susceptible to an ancient heresy. Before attempting an answer to this, and the other still unanswered problems, perhaps the larger movement within the Church of Scotland at this period should first be considered—the movement known as Moderatism.

Moderatism began under the leadership of Carstares

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1 Griffiths, op. cit., p. 71.
as a policy of moderation with regard to the relationship between church and state. For over a century, beginning in 1708, it remained the almost perpetually predominant party. Its chronological progress was marked by an increasing willingness to do the bidding of the state, especially with regard to Patronage. Already in 1731 the reactionary Act concerning the Planting of Vacant Churches was put into force, to which, in 1732, the Assembly gave its permanent approval in open defiance of the Barrier Act. In 1729 Riding Committees had been established to force unwanted presentees upon parishes when the local Presbytery refused to do the job, but with the ascendancy of Principal Robertson to a commanding position in the Assembly (1751-1771) such "preposterous lenity" was attacked, and by 1752 Robertson's forces were making the presbyteries do their own work, no matter how odious. The Assembly was no longer representative of the people, but had become largely a tool in the hands of the Moderate party.

It is not to be supposed that the Moderate Party had the theological consistency (in any direction) of the

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1 Story, op. cit., p. 304.
2 "The Act had two stings. It prohibited Presbyteries, when appointments devolved upon them, from the prevailing and popular practice of entrusting congregations with the right of election, and it conferred that right upon heritors, as heritors, though many of them were Episcopalians and 'malignants.'" A. R. MacEwen, op. cit., p. 65.
3 Dugald Stewart, Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson (Edinburgh, 1801), pp. 163-72.
W. Walker observes that in the period of the Simson trials

there were evidently now several schools of religious thought in the Church,—the men who, like M'Claren, clung in every point to the traditional, the new evangelical, the evangelical-moderate, the semi-rationalistic, all, no doubt, shading off from and into one another.

These distinctions to some degree persisted, although because of the gradual dominance within the Assembly of the latter type of Moderate, it is usually with them in mind that the term Moderatism is used.

Early signs of divergence from the orthodoxy of the past, on the part of the Moderates, were seen in the considerate treatment given Simson when accused of Arminianism. The severity with which both the Auchterarder Creed, and the Marrow and Marrowmen were dealt with may be attributed to a temporary coalition between Moderates tending toward heterodoxy, and hyper-Calvinists (who were often also of Moderate views politically). This coalition split when Simson was tried for Arianism, while the new coalition between Evangelicals and hyper-Calvinists was able to obtain and continue his suspension. Theologically, the situation at this time hung in the balances, for the strength that was shown in Simson's defence was considerable, and its prevalence, especially among younger members, was ominous. Simson's continued suspension had resulted from the union of the hyper-Calvinist and Evangelical vote, but on points where those parties diverged (such as the Marrow) the

\(^{1}\text{Walker, op. cit., p. 27.}\)
moribund hyper-Calvinism (further corrupted by Neonomianism) was no match for the rising tide of Moderatism. In 1743, however, the orthodox forces could still muster enough votes to tie temporarily the appointment to the Glasgow Chair of Divinity between M'Laurin (who in case of the appointment might have achieved a stature comparable to that later realized by Thomas Chalmers) and Leechman, representative of the New (and rather questionable) Light. The tie was broken in favor of Leechman.

The theological indifference which Wodrow had noted among the younger clergy in 1729 had evidently continued, for the General Assembly of 1735 considered complaints which had become general regarding the style of preaching common among the younger ministers, who put into their sermons 'little that might not have been found in Seneca and Plato,' . . .

Despite the fact that Assembly "asked Presbyteries to approve an overture, calling upon all ministers to give in their sermons a full and clear declaration of . . . the gospel," preaching among the Moderates seems to have become increasingly moralistic, so that at the close of the century their sermons were mainly upon the keeping of the commandments. They had a peculiar fondness for sermons upon sympathy, good-will, benevolence, honesty, and all the other cardinal virtues. But all the same, one of the great wants of the age was philanthropic earnestness.

As their preaching had departed from the distinctive message

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1Warrick, op. cit., p. 327.
2Ibid.
3John Cunningham, op. cit., II, 413.
of the Gospel, so too their interests. The great Moderate leader, William Robertson, preferred to be known as a philosopher and statesman rather than as a Christian divine.¹

The Autobiography of Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk 1722-1895 (Edinburgh, 1910)—the most striking feature of which is its general lack of interest in things specifically Christian—also gives an interesting, albeit perhaps slightly unfair, insight into the interests of the later Moderates.

Moderate theology, so equivocal with regard to Simeon, and explicit, at least, in its rejection of the Marrow, grew finally to be notable only for its absence.

On the whole, however, the Moderates were simply not interested in theology. . . . Their concerns were ethics and culture . . . their severest critic, John Motherspoon, is perfectly justified in hinting that, so far from being Arminian, few of them even knew what the Five Points were.²

The Moderates must not be depicted as a uniform group. This applies to all periods, and especially to their early history, as a reading of Warrick's Moderators will quickly show. What has been said is for directional purposes, not comprehensive coverage. Nevertheless, the movement from the orthodoxy of 1700 through Arminian, Neonomian, and Arian influences into the non-theological position of the last half of the century leaves many unanswered questions. Could the situation among the Moderates have become non-theological so rapidly if the motivating

force in their departure from orthodoxy had been either Arminian, Neonomian, or Arian?

In addition to this question what are the other problems that have to this point been left unanswered? The leniency shown the Arminianism of Simeon can be partially, but certainly not adequately, explained as a reaction against Antinomianism, and as the result of negative Arminian influences from the days of Episcopacy. In relationship to Moderatism, it should be noted that there was never any distinctly Arminian party, before, during, or after the affair. In short, Arminianism, *per se*, does not explain the Assembly's attitude toward Simeon. Some factor has not yet been stated.

With regard to the Marrow, the bitter strife of the Covenanting and Second Episcopal periods fails to offer sufficient explanation of the situation. The antipathy of Moderatism toward the Marrow is thus far without explanation. The hyper-Calvinism of Hadow's party was a major factor in the opposition to the Marrow, and is seen in even better perspective when the Neonomian influence—i.e., the "orthodoxy" of Baxter and Williams—upon Scotland is considered. In both Scotland and England orthodoxy became mended with these Neonomian tenets which were largely Arminian in spirit. But here as well, the ultimate cause of the ready acceptance of these positions has not been offered. At the same time, while Moderatism partook of a concern for morality and ethics to an extent that it becomes tempting to assume the
source was Neonomianism (and certainly this is to some extent true—M'Crie, supra, p. 30), is it not even more likely that both receive their nourishment for this attitude called "legalism" from another source common to both?

And what can be said of Simson's Arianism? The support given him cannot be explained on the basis of a strong, specifically Arian party within the Church. Nor in itself would it seem that Arianism, per se, was a motivating factor in the development of Modernism, for no distinctly Arian party ever developed. Simson's Arianism, so readily tolerated by many within the church, was largely symptomatic of a changing mood—a mood which within the church had to take non-theological directions or suffer wholesale rebellion. But what was the cause of this changing mood?

Audacious though it may seem (yet terribly prosaic when looked at from the opposite direction) perhaps a single factor will provide the answer to all of these questions. That factor is the spirit of the age, to which the terms Enlightenment, humanism and rationalism are all to some degree appropriate. It was an age which exalted man's abilities, and in particular his reason.

The renaissance assertion of the human spirit received its great impetus from the Classics. So brilliant were the Aristotelian factors of the Classical tradition that they formed a new bondage. While these bonds were loosened with the beginning of the Reformation, it remained
for Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) to engage in a frontal attack against Aristotle.

In Scotland, Andrew Melville led the revolt against Aristotle, but in the turmoil of warring polities and Episcopal subjugation there was a great deal of regression toward the old system. In England, Ramist logic was introduced and cultivated at Cambridge in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and was readily accepted by the Puritans to the degree that even in New England it constituted the approved method at Harvard College.

As traditionalism broke down in philosophy, it did so in science as well. During the last half of the seventeenth century the discoveries of Galileo and Keppler began to be appreciated, while those of Newton, Leeuwenhoek, Torricelli, and Boyle, added to the general activity of the Royal Society, made it an exciting age of scientific discovery, not the least of which was the progress made in the science of mathematics by Descartes, Newton, Napier and Oughtred. Today the continuance of scientific discovery is so much a part of life that it is almost impossible to fully appreciate the exhilaration felt in this period. Men were not merely making geographical discoveries (which had given such impetus to the two preceding centuries), but were probing into the

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very secrets of nature. The exultation of the age is expressed in the words of Alexander Pope:

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night; God said, Let Newton be! and all was light! 1

As these ego-inflating discoveries gave self confidence, especially in regard to the powers of reason, those powers received philosophical backing. Any religious group which followed the new learning in logic, was impressed by the discoveries of the new science, and acquainted with the new philosophy, could hardly help but be influenced by it. Such a group included not only many within the established church, but the Puritans as well.

The impact of reason upon religion was perhaps especially great because during this, and preceding periods, Christians had hardly conducted their affairs in a pleasing manner. Not only had such slaughters as the Thirty Years War left feelings of tired repugnance, but the sheer quantity of strife, both over doctrine and polity, tended to bring Christianity into disrepute. While every Christian must be grateful to those men who were willing to suffer for things that mattered, there were all too many others more replete with principles than a sense of proportion, who, unlike Athanasius, could not tell whether a diphthong (or anything else) was or was not of the essence of the faith. The appeal had always been to revelation, and seemingly, revelation yielded nothing but

1 Quoted by Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background (London, 1940), p. 5.
endless controversy, so that the Christian message of love bore fruits of hate. No sober Calvinist would ever be too surprised about the amount of controversy produced by religion. When Christianity is the most important thing in life it is natural that men should be concerned about it, and when men are corrupt by nature, their reason included, contention is to be expected. Among Christians, this ought not to be, but when it does exist, the Calvinist would attribute it to the participants and their sinfulness, not to any lack in the revelation. In seventeenth-and eighteenth-century England, however, men were not really inclined to doubt the capability of reason. If the theologians were not able to agree on the basis of revelation, it was undoubtedly because they failed to be reasonable.

Let us not evade the issue, says Toland, by prating about our sinful and corrupted state since the Fall. We have got reason enough if only we will take the trouble to be reasonable. And the Gospel 'affords the most illustrious Example of close and perspicuous Ratiocination conceivable'.

The breakdown of philosophic authority began with the attack of Ramus, and the Ramean logic was the logic of the Humanist, as is evident even in the Puritans of the first half of the seventeenth century. "Thus when John Cotton [1585-1652] spoke of an 'essentiall wisdome in us, namely, our Reason which is natural,' he was speaking from his Ramean training." The decisive break with the past, however, came

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2Miller and Johnson, op. cit., p. 36.
with Descartes (1596-1650). "After him it became natural to appeal to 'reason', the inner tribunal, instead, as hitherto, to external authority." ¹

The conservative cloak by which reason had reached its place of control over revelation is illustrated in fine in Locke, who held that

it was an unquestioned fact that a 'positive revelation' had been communicated by God in addition to the light of reason. . . . 'Whatever God hath revealed is certainly true; no doubt can be made of it. This is the proper object of faith: but whether it be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge.' ²

That by such a decision reason became the supreme arbiter over revelation need not be left to surmise; it is quite obvious in the period. John Smith summed up the view of the Cambridge Platonists in the phrase:

'To follow Reason is to follow God'. Reason . . . was for the Platonists the ultimate source of authority in matters of faith; and the function of Scripture was to illuminate and confirm its dictates, never to contradict them. ³

Reason, as used above, is "a 'seed of deiform nature', is 'natural revelation'." ⁴

The 'inner light' of the Quakers ranks with the 'Reason' of the Platonists, the 'clear and distinct ideas' of Descartes, or the 'common notions' of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, as another of the inward certitudes by means of which the century was testing the legacies of antiquity and declaring its spiritual independence. So potent was the change in the climate of opinion after

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² Locke, Essay, iv. 18, sect. 4, quoted by Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, pp. 261-82.
³ Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, p. 72.
⁴ Ibid., p. 73.
the middle of the century that even a Puritan like Baxter, who was prepared to endure persecution for nonconformity throughout the Restoration period, is affected by it.¹

Once reason is made the arbiter of revelation, man is the master of God. God can no longer speak, nor can he be greater in men's esteem than they will allow him. This was not the intention, it was the result. The net effect on theology was that

towards the close of the seventeenth century the prestige of Scripture, though outwardly unchanged, had actually diminished appreciably. It was not so much that men had rejected it as 'false'; it was rather that as 'natural religion' came more and more to seem all-sufficient, 'revelation' began to appear, if not superfluous, at least secondary, and perhaps even slightly inconvenient. An age which discovered God effortlessly in the starry heavens above, and in the moral law within, could not but be embarrassed by having to acknowledge dependence upon the annals and legends of an unenlightened Semitic tribe.²

In any point of dispute, reason was henceforth to be the supreme arbiter. It was Calvin's view "that the religious sentiment, delivered over to its native ignorance, is one of the most fruitful sources of error. This is one of the consequences of sin which carries with it its own punishment."³ The consequences of rationalism began already to appear at the close of the seventeenth century, and resulted in Arianism and Unitarianism in the eighteenth.

What are the implications of all this with regard to the religious situation in Scotland in the early part of the

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., pp. 74-75.
eighteenth century? While Scotland had early been introduced to Renéan logic, there had not been the opportunity for it to take root and grow.¹ The ecclesiastical situation prior to the Revolution settlement was such that the influence of the Age of Reason in Scotland among those who constituted the core of the Presbyterian establishment had been relatively small. However, once the situation became more settled, and there was the opportunity to devote attention to things other than ecclesiastical strife, it would seem that the seats of learning were heavily influenced by the rationalism of England. This is not to say that there were no evidences of the Age of Reason in the universities before the turn of the century; it is simply to say that these influences had not yet become powerful in the theological life of the church.

To take into account that impact, and its prior influence in England, is to fill in the gaps in the previous examination of the theological scene of which Boston was a part.

The consideration shown Simson, in contrast with the rigorous condemnation of the Auchterarder Creed is the sort of thing that might be expected, at least from those influenced by an Age of Reason. John Flint in his Examen Doctrinarum D. Johannis Simson (Edinburgi, 1717) found objectionable in Simson

an immense exaggeration of the natural powers of man; and . . . a sharing out of the supreme authority of Scripture with that of natural Reason. This last fault, extreme Rationalism, is the source of all the mischief;

¹Rait, op. cit., pp. 258-60.
and... is being eagerly welcomed by the most promising youths... 

It was hardly to be expected that one who saw the potenti-

alities of reason would be harshly treated by those who were 
likewise imbued with the spirit of the age. On the other 
hand, the Moderates could well agree with the hyper-Calvinists 
in condemning the Auchterarder proposition. To reasonable 
men it was not merely that such theological hair-splitting 
was exasperating, but there seemed also to be tendencies 
toward Antinomianism—at least the "Creed" was not built upon 
good solid morality, and was therefore worthy of condemnation.

It is with reference to previously discussed factors 
entering into the Marrow controversy that it becomes obvious 
how the spirit of the age was affecting theology both from 
The direction of rationalistic Moderatism, and Neonominan 
Moderatism (or, less harshly: humanistic- and hyper-
Calvinistic Moderatism). Here too is the explanation of the 
widely used charge of "legalism". Both of the above came 
under that classification. With respect to Baxter's 
influence upon Neonominan Moderatism, it is clear that even he 
had been seriously affected by the spirit of the age. The 
pressure in the direction of increased human capability, 
coupled with Baxter's abhorrence of Antinomianism, resulted 
in a form of Neonominanism (supra, pp. 34-36). How far 
Williams partook of these same influences has been noted in 

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1Quoted with evident approbation by Reid, op. cit., p. 217.
The ready identification of his doctrine with a virtual Arminianism (supra, p. 38). As these purported orthodox, but nonetheless Neonomian, tendencies reached Scotland—also by this time affected by the humanistic pressure of the age—the orthodox, especially the hyper-orthodox, whose scholasticism had already forced them into rather arid and non-biblical positions, fell ready prey to them. Because of Neonomian influences upon their doctrine they are justly charged with "legalism", and are natural opponents of the non-legal Marrow teachings.

The rationalistic Moderates are also justly termed legalists. The Cambridge Platonists, Whichcote and John Smith, are indicative of the trend of rational religion. For them,

salvation is indeed the purpose of the Gospel, but salvation is to be conceived less as an ultimate destination of the soul beyond the horizons of this life than as a present approximation towards moral purification. To be 'saved' is to be 'good'.

The essence of their message—and it was the essence of almost all rational religion—was "that conduct mattered more than creed." It was Dr. Clarke, of whom Simson was so fond, who wrote that "'Moral Virtue is the Foundation and the Summ, the Essence and the Life of all true Religion'."

That the Scottish Moderates were following this same pattern

1 Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, p. 137.
2 Ibid., p. 136.
3 Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, p. 60.

Willey also records that Bishop Gibson described Clarke to Queen Caroline "as the most learned and honest man in her dominions, but with one defect—he was not a Christian."
is indicated by the constant observations of the histories that they preached morality rather than doctrine. Thus, while the term "moralists" would perhaps have been more accurate, the term "legalists" was more often used—perhaps because it covered both the Neonomian and rationalistic groups at once. It is this legalism which runs afoul of the Marrow, and applies the name "High Flyers", to the Marrowmen, who preach a doctrine of pure grace, rather than a more "reasonable" morality.

When the basic emphasis upon reason is considered, then the doctrines of Dr. Clarke fit into the scheme of things as well. The growing confidence of the seventeenth century in man's capability accentuated the omnipresent Pelagian tendency in man, and resulted in the specific forms of Arminianism and Neonomianism. The confidence in reason had increased at least as rapidly and established itself as the arbiter of revelation. In an age of "rational religion" it was almost inevitable that an attack be made upon Christology, for in a "rational" age it was intolerable that God should come so near. As seen from the viewpoint of the age, Clarke's effort was simply to strip away some of the accretion which had so befouled religion. The attempt was to reach the core of rational truth.

In Simeon's theology the progress of reason was such that Arminianism turned rapidly to Arianism. That so many men came to his defence can probably be attributed more accurately to an interest in reason and "reasonableness",

than in Arianism as such. The Simson case also seems to have had the effect of directing others of such tendency out of the troubled channels of theology and into the safer pursuits of philosophy, history, literature, science, and politics. These fields were of equal (if not greater) interest to the man of reason, and far less likely to lead to trouble. Could it be that this was also the reason why Moderatism in Scotland became so completely non-theological?

It is, of course, wise to guard against trying to make the rationalism of the age explain everything. The prior evidence here given still retains its validity, and only by understanding this as a transitional period in Scotland can the real complexity of the situation be appreciated and understood. Brevity has necessitated that this picture of the influence of reason be drawn with strong lines, but it should not be allowed to blot out the great variety of attitudes that existed at the time. However, this rationalistic, humanistic spirit of the age constituted a basic factor without which the movements of the age are relatively unintelligible.

In this period of contention between the proponents of evangelical Christianity and a more rational religion, Boston's allegiance—as indicated by his role in the Marrow controversy—is with the former. Boston is very much aware of the growth of rationalism and frequently complains of
the rise of deism and atheism. ¹ Neonomianism is considered by Boston to be the "rational way" of looking at the matter of justification. ² About the time of the Marrow controversy he tells his people that the Reformers

... are in effect looked upon as a parcel of well-meaning simple men, whose doctrine must be reformed over again, and rendered more agreeable to reason. ³ A rational religion is like to be the plague of this day.

In the same period he writes in the General Account: "the Gospel of Christ is by this time, with many especially of the younger sort of divine, exchanged for rationalism." ⁴

Boston was not the only Scottish pastor concerned about the growth of rationalism. Wadrow complains of the number of honorary degrees conferred by the University of Edinburgh upon prominent English rationalists. ⁵ One of the men to receive the Doctor of Divinity from this university was Daniel Williams who championed the Neonomianism previously mentioned. Galamy not only received an honorary doctorate at Edinburgh (1709), but at Aberdeen and Glasgow as well, all during the same year. ⁶ While at Edinburgh Galamy noticed the friction that then existed between the orthodox and those who promoted the new learning. ⁷

It was this friction that contributed in varying degrees to the three controversies that found their way to

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¹ II, 338 (1706); II, 134 (1714); and X, 420-21 (1731).
² X, 449 (1732).
³ The Covenant of Works, XI, 268 (1721-22).
⁵ Reid, op. cit., p. 232.
⁶ Story, op. cit., p. 305.
⁷ Reid, op. cit., p. 206.
the General Assembly during Boston's ministry. The result, in Britain, of this humanistic, rationalistic tendency of the age was to draw Reformed theology further and further away from its real biblical moorings (which were already under severe strain from scholastic hardening) until the various attempts to make it conformable to the spirit of the age resulted first in Neonomianism and Arminianism—thus Reformed theology first disabled itself by subtle encroachments upon its own principles—and then, acting in full harmony with rationalistic principles, with Arianism and Unitarianism.

It is in a period that sees all but the Unitarian element of this movement that Thomas Boston perfects his theology. To what extent it was a theology that answered the needs of the age will be seen in its unfolding.
Context - personal

Thomas Boston's fame and importance were such that accounts of his life and character are already numerous. It is hardly necessary to repeat what has already been said so well and so often. No accounts furnish finer insights into Boston's life than his autobiographical writings, the Passages of My Life and A General Account of My Life, and perhaps no more accurate estimation of his personality has been given than his own self-evaluation at the end of the General Account (pp. 313-17). For a synopsis of Boston's life set within its historical context, the introduction by George D. Low in his edition of Boston's General Account is very satisfactory. The present purpose will be adequately served by noting the salient points in Boston's early life that have a bearing upon his theology.

There was nothing in Boston's experience to incline him toward Episcopacy. Born in 1676, his boyhood was spent under that system. His father was a Covenanter, one who
suffered fines and imprisonment for his failure to conform to Episcopal requirements. In addition to recording the fact that he kept his father company in the Duns Tolbooth, Boston writes

I kept the kirk punctually, where I heard those of the Episcopal way, that being then the national establishment; but I knew nothing of the matter, save to give suit and presence within the walls of the house; living without God in the world, unconcerned about the state of my soul...

Undoubtedly the most determinative factor of Boston's early life was the nature of his conversion. It took place at the age of twelve at a Presbyterian meeting. Boston states that it was by the means of "the worthy Mr. Henry Erskine...[that] it pleased the Lord to awaken me, and bring me under exercise about my soul's state..." Boston's description of the occasion from the closer vantage point of the Passages is as follows:

The toleration being granted Mr. H. Erskine preached at Newton of Whitsome; and my father took me thither and laid me in Christ's way. At first I was struck with wonder at the words proceeding out of his mouth, the like whereof I thought I had never heard. At length I was pierced to the heart at the wretched state of my poor soul laid open to me, and my cope [?] lay heavy on me by night and by day.

In the margin opposite this account is the quotation from Matthew vii. 28: "... the people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."

1A General Account, pp. xvii, 4.
2Ibid., pp. 4-5.
3Passages, p. 1. A question mark in brackets indicates a degree of uncertainty concerning a word due to the at times difficult writing in the manuscript.
The importance of this event lies primarily in that here Boston met the living God. Here it was that Christ dealt with him. Christianity from this point on was for Boston a continuous personal encounter with God. This experience of the truth was to have an important influence on Boston when in later years he was to put that truth into theological formulation in the face of a legalistic hyper-Calvinism and a rationalistically inclined Moderatism. Boston had experienced Christ breaking into his life through the power of the Word; his own experience proved the elaborate preparatory requirements of the legalists to be a lie. In his Soliloquy on the Art of Man-Fishing, under the point that as fish are taken unexpectedly by the net so men are sometimes taken unexpectedly by the gospel, Boston points to Zaccheus, Paul, and then to himself by way of illustration.

Little wast thou thinking, 0 my soul, on Christ, heaven, of thyself, when thou went to the Newton of Whitsome, to hear a preaching, when Christ first dealt with thee; there thou got an unexpected cast. 1

Consider what a sad case thou thyself wast in, when Christ concerned himself for thy good. Thou wast going on in the way to hell as blind as a mole; at last Christ opened thine eyes, and let thee see thy hazard . . . 2

In the years following his conversion, Boston's personal religious life was often one of great doubt and anguish (only the primary sources of the Passages and General Account can give an accurate picture of this state), the result not only of temperament, but also of a faulty

1 V, 11-12 (1699).
2 Ibid., p. 28.
theology—or at least the lack of a clear theology. Boston's own experience was such as to make him realize the need for a clear and accurate theological statement of the Faith. Emotion and conviction of confession were not enough for a healthy Christian life. Boston grew out of his subjective religious uncertainty as his theology developed into its mature form.

The account of Boston's education reveals relatively little positive information that has a bearing upon his later theology. He first studied with a schoolmistress who lived in his father's house. At the age of eight or nine he went to grammar school where he learned his Latin well, and also worked with Greek. The sum of his comments on his three year university course under the regent Kennedy is that

> by means thereof, I had a competent understanding of the logics, metaphysics, ethics, and general physics; always taking pains of what was before me, and pleasing the regent; but I learnt nothing else, save shorthand writing...

Unlike James Hog, who during his university studies felt himself in danger of being carried away with the "universal dubitation" of the Cartesian system, Boston gives no indication of any perturbation as the result of his university education. The only reference to it is the very neutral statement quoted above.

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1 A General Account, p. 3.
2 Ibid., p. 18.
His training in divinity, which one would likewise expect to be so formative, is also passed over with very brief comment. The school of divinity was then taught by "the great Mr. George Campbell"—a description generally agreed to by all. Unfortunately, the great Mr. Campbell, despite his learning, left absolutely nothing from his pen, thus making it quite impossible to assess his personal influence upon Boston. However, the gap that must be left in our information is not as large as it would first seem, for Boston's divinity training at the university consisted of a single session of three months duration. Thus, while Boston speaks of Campbell as "a man of great learning" the shortness of the course, if nothing else, would indicate a relatively small amount of influence.

For the same reason it is necessary to exercise caution in attributing any great degree of influence to the theological texts used by Boston during this single session.

He tells us that

A few of us, newly entered to the school of divinity, were taught for a time Riissenius's Compend, in the professor's chamber: Publicly in the hall he taught Essenius's Compend. 1

1 Alexander Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1617), I, 337.
3 Ibid., p. 21. The texts are Andrea Esseni, Compendium theologiae dogmaticae (Utrajecti, 1669); and Leonardo Rijssenio, Summa Theologiae Elencticae (Edinburgi, 1692). It should be noted with regard to the last title that Low (A General Account, op. cit., p. 21, note) is very probably in error when in reference to "Riissenius's Compend" he lists as the publication the author's Turrentini compendium Theologiae, memoriae juventae causa, conscriptum a L. Riissenio. Amstelodami, 1695. Note the date, 1695, for it...
While there will be occasion to refer to these men later, it should be here noted that insofar as the above represents Boston's total reference to these works, they do not seem to have left any great impress upon him. While Boston was later to become the most learned man in all of Scotland with regard to the Hebrew accents and vowel points, yet of his Hebrew at the divinity school he says, "I was also for a while at that time, I suppose, with Mr. Alexander Rule, Professor of Hebrew; but remember no remarkable advantage I had thereby."\(^{1}\)

In Hebrew Boston was self-taught;\(^{2}\) the same is undoubtedly true of his theology. That it would be entirely possible for this period of study, from late January until April, to be of little influence upon Boston's later theology should be obvious to all who have been students, and even more evident to those who have tried to teach them.

While Boston tells us nothing of any theological direction he may have received at home, and gives little indication of any impression left upon him by his divinity texts, he is careful to note several books which he read and

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was on January 20, 1695, that Boston entered the school of divinity and began to use "Riissenius's Compend". Now while there was a great deal of theological interchange between Scotland and the Netherlands, yet it seems somewhat more probable that the book used by Boston was the one published in Edinburgh in 1692, rather than the latter, published in Amsterdam in 1695. The *Summa Theologicae Elencticae* would also be far more suitable for those "newly entered to the school of divinity," for it represents a relatively small compend of theology.


studied. Boston mentions three from the period before his ordination at Simprin which he seems to have highly esteemed: "Pareus on Ursin's Catechism," "See's Christian Synagogue," and John Flavel's Mystery of Providence.¹

Of the first, given to him by James Ramsey, Boston records that "I read [it] over 3 or 4 times ere I went to the school of divinity."² The catechism is the famous Heidelberg Catechism, formulated in 1563, chiefly by Zacharias Ursinus.³ The ironic character of the catechism, as well as its experiential formulation, would be expected to appeal to Boston, and no doubt it did. But one goes astray if the attempt is made to prognosticate the spirit of the commentary from that of the catechism. While the latter seems far removed from scholastic arguments, the same is not true of the commentary. The tools of the syllogism are in hand to examine every objection, while such distinctions as efficient, instrumental, formal, and final causes are used with the utmost ease.

To what extent did Ursinus affect Boston? That is almost impossible to answer. The significant thing is that

¹Ibid., pp. 19, 75.
²Ibid., p. 19.
³The volume read three or four times by Boston was a commentary on the catechism by David Pareus, the particular friend and favorite disciple of Ursinus, based on the latter's yearly lectures on his catechism. Cf. Davidis Parei, Corpus Doctrinae Orthodoxae Catecheticearum Explicationum D. Zachariae Ursini (Heidelbergae, 1616), the second page (unnumbered) of the Praefatio. Philip Schaff, A History of the Creeds of Christendom (London, 1877), p. 530, gives as the first edition of this work the accepted date of 1591, but lists the second edition as 1616. The copy referred to above is from the New College Library and was printed in Heidelberg by Jonas Rhodii in 1616.
even after reading the book three or four times, Boston still had very deep and serious problems, as will shortly be considered. That these questions were not answered by Ursinus was perhaps the result of Boston's theological immaturity more than anything else. True, his questions were phrased differently, but the answers to almost all are implied in the commentary. The answers in the commentary, however, often lean heavily on rather fine scholastic distinctions—in marked contrast to the broad answers based upon the straightforward reasoning of the Harrow. However, that the book was not without influence for Boston seems obvious from the parallels in terminology between Boston's famous Four-Fold State with its four divisions, and similar terminology (with reference to the freedom of the will) found in the commentary, where Ursinus speaks of the "quatuor status hominis: videlicet nondum lapsi in peccatum, lapsi, renati & glorificati..."¹ There is much other material in the commentary that must have been congenial to Boston's spirit, and from which he must have learned much. It undoubtedly did much to build the sure foundations of his theology, but in it federal theology is not sufficiently developed so that the distinctive elements in Boston's theology can be considered to have been directly influenced by this volume.

The second book for which Boston expresses appreci—

¹Perei, op. cit., p. 60. Cf. pp. 54ff.
ation, John Weemse, *The Christian Synagogue* (London, 1637), has little direct connection with theology. The book is a mixture of hermeneutical principles, Jewish antiquities, common sense observations, and pastoral advice, all of varying degrees of merit, and similarly combined. Judging from Boston's expressed appreciation of this book, and his later interests, it can safely be assumed that it was instrumental in increasing his interests in Hebrew (especially with regard to matters of pointing), in Jewish background, and the right understanding of various forms of speech in Scripture.

Whether or not Flavel's *Mystery of Providence* (1st ed. London, 1676—read by Boston in 1699) influenced Boston is exceedingly difficult to say by virtue of the fact that both look with similar eyes on the workings of providence. The only difference is that Boston's view is found in his autobiographical accounts, while Flavel has attempted an orderly exposition of it. Since Boston's concept of providence (judging by the *Passages* and *General Account*) seems to be the same both before and after reading Flavel, one may assume that it merely affirmed what he already believed.

While much of Boston's early theology must for lack of evidence remain unknown, it can be said with certainty that up to and into the year 1700 he was still very confused.

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regarding the doctrine of grace. Coupled with this seemed to be a lack of understanding of the relationship of law and grace. Obviously, this lack of understanding represented a serious deficiency in Boston’s theology. To what extent Neonomian influences then abroad in Scotland may have added to Boston’s confusion there is no way of knowing.

Recalling the early years of his Simprin ministry

Boston says

As for the doctrine of grace, how the Lord was pleased to give my heart a set toward the preaching of Christ, and how I had several convictions of legality in my own practice, is already narrated. I had heard Mr. Mair often speak of being divorced from the law, dead to it, and the like: but I understood very little of the matter. Howbeit, my thoughts being after my settlement at Simprin turned that way that I might understand somewhat of these things, some light, new to me, seemed to break up from the doctrine of Christ: but then I could not see how to reconcile the same with other things which seemed to be truth too.

It was while these problems were troubling him that Boston found the Marrow of Modern Divinity.  

I found it to come close to the points I was in quest of; and to show the consistency of these, which I could not reconcile before; so that I rejoiced in it, as a light which the Lord had seasonably struck up to me in my darkness.

In his address to the reader, Edward Fisher makes it plain that his purpose is to show the middle path between

1Ibid., pp. 150-51.
2The material already available on the Marrow of Modern Divinity makes it unnecessary to reproduce it here. The best account of the origins of the Marrow is that of D. M. McIntyre, "First Strictures on The Marrow of Modern Divinity," The Evangelical quarterly, X (January, 1938), 61-70.
3A General Account, p. 152.
Antinomianism and legalism;¹ in other words, to state the proper relationship of law and grace—which was just the thing Boston wished. It was evidently Fisher's very plain and simple, yet forceful, exposition of the covenants of law and grace, with the particular roles of each, that gave Boston the insights he desired. In an attempt to clarify his thinking in the light of this new information, Boston wrote the first four of the Miscellaneous Questions.²

It at first strikes one as exceedingly strange that Ursinus' Commentary, or at least the lucid work of Herman Witsius, De Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum hominibus (1st ed., Leovard, 1685), did not provide the answers sought. Indeed, Boston was reading Witsius in December of 1699 and says "To that excellent book I was seasonably led by kind Providence at that time."³ However, these books both lack two things that the Marrow had: simplicity of scheme and presentation, and a force and power which resulted in no small measure from quotations from Luther. Hugh Watt has advanced the thesis that it was the warm appeal of Luther in the Marrow that made it so popular:

There were, of course, other elements that entered into the popularity of the Marrow, but one evident source of its power is that it re-established contact with the joy, vigour, and assurance of the Reformation Gospel, and, in particular, with the spiritual power that clung to the deep experimental utterances of Martin Luther.⁴

¹The Marrow, VII, 163.
²VI, 11-109 (1701?-1704?).
³A General Account, p. 113.
⁴Hugh Watt, "The Influence of Martin Luther on Scottish Religion in the 18th Century," Records of the Scottish Church History Society, VI (1937), 152.
Could it be that the combination of Fisher’s simplicity and Luther’s dynamic power was necessary to put across to Boston the message that the far clearer and more well-defined work of Witsius was unable to do? It is interesting to note that in 1702, as these doctrines were opening up to him, Boston also obtained Luther on Galatians.¹

Boston’s discovery of the Marrow, and its doctrine of grace, occurred in the year 1700.

What time precisely this happened, I cannot tell; but I am very sure, that by the latter end of the year 1700, I had not only seen that book, but digested the doctrine thereof in a tolerable measure; since by that time I was begun to preach it, as I had occasion abroad.²

However, all of Boston’s problems were not yet solved.

Mean while, after I was let into the knowledge of the doctrine of grace, as to the state and case of believers in Christ, I was still confused, indistinct, and hampered in it, as to the free, open, and unhampered access of sinners unto Him. And thus I am sure it was with me till the year 1702. How long I continued so thereafter I know not. But, thro’ the mercy of God, I was by the year 1704 let into that point also... How I was led thereto, I cannot distinctly tell; but I apprehend I had taken the hint from the Marrow; and I had no great fondness for the doctrine of the conditionality of the covenant of grace.³

It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the finding of the Marrow marks the great point of theological understanding for Boston. It began in 1700 and was completed by about 1704. This is not to suggest that thereafter Boston’s theology was immobile, or that the further growth that takes place is unimportant, but it is

¹A General Account, p. 152.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 153.
true that by 1704 almost all of the basic outlines and tendencies of Boston's theology had begun to appear. When the date 1700 or 1704 is considered in the light of the chronological bibliography of Boston's writings,¹ the impossibility of a study of Boston's pre-Marrow theology is obvious. Only the Socleagu on the Art of Man-Fishing and a personal covenant were written prior to the reading of the Marrow. Addison makes the assertion that the Fourfold State was written "sufficiently early to be particularly free from "Marrow" influence."² If this were true it would mean an important insight into Boston's pre-Marrow theology, but the claim is difficult to substantiate. True, the series of sermons which later evolved into the Fourfold State were first preached in Simprin, 1699-1702, but they were revised and preached again in Ettrick, 1708-1709. In 1712 Boston began to prepare and revise the manuscript for publication. The first edition, published in 1720, was over-edited by Wightman, and most of the manuscript was destroyed by the printer. Thus, with only the mangled publication, and part of the manuscript, Boston in 1727 again undertook to revise the Fourfold State in order to make it suitable for a second edition, which was published in 1730.³ The basic outline of the book is different from that used for

¹ A Chronological Bibliography of the writings of Thomas Boston.
³ A General Account, pp. xxi, 96, 149, 182, 189; and Passages, pp. 145-52.
The Covenant of Works and The Covenant of Grace, and therefore, of necessity, there is a difference in the handling of the material; but to suppose that the Fourfold State, being first preached when the Marrow was found, and having undergone so many revisions, could escape Marrow influence, or contain anything antithetical thereto, is, to say the least, unlikely.

The one theology which Boston proclaimed to the world is the one influenced by the Marrow, and that is the only one that can be analyzed.

Note to chapter 2 - concerning Thomas Boston's language

Something should be said concerning Boston's language, for it seems occasionally to result in misunderstanding. Boston, for example, described Christ upon consenting to the covenant, as becoming surety for the elect, and "striking hands" with his Father to pay it completely ... ."\(^1\) Addison describes this as one of the "crudities of his thinking,"\(^2\) and in all fairness to Boston this must be challenged. The phrase did not originate with Boston, nor is he guilty of plagiarism, for it is so lacking in originality as to be considered common property.

\(^1\)The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 418 (1722-24).
\(^2\)Wm. Addison, op. cit., p. 154.
Patrick Gillespie uses the almost identical phrase: "Thus did the Creditor and the Cautioner strike hands together,"¹ while Edward Fisher asserts: "Thus Christ assented, and from everlasting struck hands with God, to put upon him man’s person . . . "² George Hutcheson also uses the phrase in his commentary on Job,³ but that is really to be expected, for the ultimate source of the "crudity" is the rendering in the Authorized Version of Job XVII. 3: "Lay down now, put me in surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?"

To understand this and similar expressions as the simple-mindedness of a bye-gone age, or to conceive of it in terms of crudity of thinking, is to fail to recognize the specific declaration of each of these authors concerning the limitations of language and reason in the realm of theology. Fisher makes reference to this fact,⁴ and Gillespie is even more explicit:

All the acts of God’s will, his decrees, and eternal transaction with Christ, are in regard of God, one most simple and pure act of his will; but in regard of our conceptions of them, who cannot take up many particular acts together in one; they are distinguished . . . ⁵

Boston is also very much aware that God did not literally strike hands with Christ, or anyone else. Concerning the

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²The Marrow, VII, 184.
⁴The Marrow, VII, 183.
⁵Patrick Gillespie, op. cit., p. 54.
making of this covenant he reminds his readers—if they will but notice—that this is a manifold mystery, the several folds of which we are not able fully to discover. With God it was all one piece, if I may so phrase it; for with [him] all things are together and at once; and not one thing before and another after, as with us. Howbeit, we cannot conceive of it but in parcels; first one piece of the mystery and then another; and that because of the weakness of our capacity, as we are creatures; and much more, as we are creatures under much spiritual darkness.

Boston's language is at times quite shocking if judged by twentieth century standards. Preaching on Psalm lxxxvi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," Boston can urge his auditors, "Let the soul only, as an hungry infant, lay its mouth by faith on the breasts of Christ's consolations, and they shall flow abundantly." But one can hardly impose today's standards of pulpit nicety upon Boston and yet claim to be historically sensitive!

Addison also speaks of Boston's "simple-minded use . . . of the language of the Song of Solomon . . ."—which was essentially that of Bernard of Clairvaux. Moreover, Boston uses the Song of Solomon in such a way that one would strongly suspect that he was a student of James Durham's famous commentary on that book. If Boston is so quickly

1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 408 (1722-24).
2 IX, 483 (1711).
3 Addison, op. cit., p. 155.
4 Cf. the use of Cant. iii, 1; iii, 2-4; and v. 9 in IV, 479, 481, and 503 (1711-1712) with Durham's Clavis Cantici; or An Exposition of the Song of Solomon (Edinburgh, 1668), in loco.
declared "simple-minded," one wonders what the reaction would have been to that gentleman from Aberdeen, William Guild, who in 1658 published his commentary on the Song of Songs under the title *Love's Intercourse*! Perhaps Boston's most startling homiletical *tour de force* is "Worm Jacob Thrashing the Mountains." "Worm Jacob" serves as an appellation for Christ, the Church, or the individual Christian, while the mountains are of opposition, troubles, trials, afflictions, corruptions, indwelling sin, and death. It is really a brilliant piece of homiletical work, and if the thought of calling Christ a worm seems impious, Boston can be justified by the fact that while his text (Isaiah xli. 14, 15) refers to Israel, he also cites Psalm xxii. 6, which, understood Messianically, refers to Christ as a worm—and so it is also understood by Calvin.  

While the passage of years has made a return to the language of Boston and his contemporaries for pulpit usage quite impossible, yet it must in all fairness be recognized that these men, with their colorful language, indoctrinated their hearers with a degree of theological erudition that will find few parallels today.  

For any study of the period, this graphic language must be understood in its proper perspective so that the solid thought so often behind it can be appreciated.

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1 VI, 328-40 (1730).
3 For Luther's influence on Scottish preaching one must be referred to: Hugh Watt, *op. cit.,* pp. 147-60.
Prolegomena to federal theology

Thomas Boston was primarily a pastor. If he thought of himself as anything more than a pastor it was as a Hebrew scholar, and the author of the Tractatus Stigmologicus, "that work of my life . . ."¹ His theology was the result of his pastorate, the result of the necessity to preach the gospel in as clear and forceful a way as possible. Of the over six thousand pages of theology printed in the Works, all but three hundred and forty had their origins in sermons! Of the three hundred and forty pages two hundred and twenty compose the Miscellaneous Questions, written early in his ministry to clarify his thinking on theological issues of basic importance, while the remaining number compose his Brief Explication of the First Part of the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism.

These statistics, and a perusal of the contents of the Works, lead to the same conclusion: that the Pastor of

¹Passages, p. 265.
Ettrick was just that—a pastor. This does not imply a deficiency in Boston's theology, but it should prepare one for the fact that an outline of his thought will not resemble the table of contents of an ordinary theological text. The emphasis of his ministry, and therefore of his theology, was that men must know their need of salvation, they must know how to obtain that salvation, and what it means to have obtained it. That Boston's presentation is systematic is not to be denied, but it is a system that tries to meet the above considerations.

In approaching Boston's thought, it would be quite simple to analyze it in terms of the traditional structuring of theology. The result would be a presentation of his theology within the easy frames of reference of the customary structure. But the result must also be compared to knowing a man as dissected on the anatomy table, and knowing him as a living man.

A dissected Boston is already available in his sermons on the Shorter Catechism.¹ Because the job has been performed by his own hand, it is perhaps impossible to have a truer picture of a neatly divided Boston—but it is a Boston from whom life has largely disappeared! Even in these two volumes on the Shorter Catechism, which, because of their size should give a lifelike picture of Boston's theology, the attempt to conform to a given pattern has resulted in a Boston who is not

¹Volumes I and II.
at all true to himself.

If Boston could not be true to himself even in the relatively simple apportionment of his thought to the forms of the Shorter Catechism, then it ill behoves an "outsider" to try to present a true picture of his theology in anything other than its customary framework. This is not to imply that the bare framework of Boston's thought is everywhere visible in his other works, or that it is at all times and in all places identically the same, but it is very manifest to the reader of the works that there is a framework within which every doctrine of his theology hangs. It is quite true that there are some major doctrines that seem to hang rather awkwardly on his otherwise very symmetrical theological structure, but they do just that simply because while important to Boston's thought, they never find a really valid place within his systematic framework. It is for this reason that it is almost inevitable that Boston's theology be approached from its own perspective, for it is only in this way that one can form an accurate conclusion as to its strength and weakness, and appreciate the true place the doctrines have within it.

The total framework within which everything else hangs is the framework of federal theology. It is a federal theology based upon two covenants which embrace all men. The prior covenant is that of works, made with and broken by our federal head, Adam, in which breaking all men therefore partake. The second covenant is that of grace, made with Christ, the benefits of which are enjoyed by the elect through him. Within
the framework of these two covenants everything else—with
the exception of the decrees—finds its place.

It must also be said that this framework of federal
theology reposes on the divine decrees. However, it would be
very misleading to say that the decrees dominate this man's
theology—they do not. They do not govern, they do not con-
trol it, neither are they encompassed within the framework of
the federal structure (although providence is within that
framework), nor do they form the rationale, the motivation,
of the federal system. The best that can be said is that they
form the firm, unseen foundation, laid from all eternity, upon
which the federal structure stands. The decrees, for Boston,
provide neither ultimate answers nor a retreat to which to
flee when theologically pressed: they are simply, firmly,
there.

The examination of Boston's theology will concern
itself with the finished product, rather than its chrono-
logical development. In those cases where a major shift or
change occurs it will be duly noted. Within the federal
framework there is a significant shift of emphasis in the
middle of Boston's ministry. It is not so much a case,
however, of the essential framework being bent or twisted as
that one of the elements within the structure begins to shine
with such brightness as to obscure the framework behind it—
thus hiding much of its unsightliness. But more of this in

1A complete chronological listing of the contents of
the Works, is to be found in the chronological bibliography.
due time.

Where did Boston's federal theology originate? Upon what is it based? To the latter question Boston would certainly have answered, "The Bible." This answer is not to be lightly disregarded. Boston regarded everything he preached as being firmly grounded on biblical testimony, and present day denial of this could only be based on a difference in hermeneutics and theological background, not on a lack of scriptural "evidences." Boston's use of, and attitude toward, the Bible was that of the seventeenth century, and for the reader unfamiliar with that use and attitude, no better reference can be given than to the chapter, "The Bible in Seventeenth-Century Scotland" in G. D. Henderson's Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland.¹

But the question still remains: Where did federal theology originate? To answer this is far more difficult, for the statement of W. Adams Brown is almost as true now as when he made it: "A good monograph on the history of the covenant theology is still a desideratum."² Now it is

certainly outside the scope of this thesis to provide such an extensive monograph, or to go into an elaborate examination of the origins of the federal concept. Yet simply because relatively little has been written on the subject, and because much of the older material which has been written is, to put it kindly, somewhat misleading, it is perhaps necessary here to give a brief survey of the subject, so that Thomas Boston can be put in his proper theological perspective.

The primary misconception that pervades the subject of federal theology is that Cocceius was its founder, or at least its popularizer. This is not an idea lightly held, for Hagenbach can assert that "A peculiar theological system, in the so-called federal method, was inaugurated by J. Cocceius, . . ."1 Professor Mitchell found this misconception prevalent among respected writers in 1880,2 and Adams Brown finds the authorship of federal theology attributed to Cocceius in Strong's Systematic Theology (Philadelphia, 1907, pp. 612f.),3 and Hepp seems to be aware of a similar misconception in Germany when he writes:

Dagegen war der Ausdruck "Föderalisten" (den man in Deutschland ganz verkehrt als Synonymum von "COCCEJANER" gebraucht) nicht als Parteibeziehnung üblich. Befraucht man ihn, so meinte man damit die Föderaltheologen, die

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At the other extreme there are those who find that "The idea of the two covenants may be traced back to Calvin's *Institutes,*" wherein, it is true, one may find a covenant under two conditions, i.e., of the Old and the New, but certainly not the two covenants of works and grace!

In the very nature of the case, there is a good deal of semantic difficulty connected with any discussion of federal theology. The Latin *foedus* is used by the earliest Reformers and by the last of the federal theologians to use Latin; it is quite properly translated "covenant." At the same time the word "federal," with its roots in the Latin *foedus,* is also frequently used in English translations. However, while today the word federal does not bring to mind the same meaning as covenant (the former being largely influenced by ideas of federal government with the associated ideas of representation and delegated powers), there is also a tremendous range of meaning between *foedus* as used by Zwingli and *foedus* as used by Witsius. To speak of either Zwingli or Calvin as a federal theologian in the sense that Boston was a federal theologian would be most false. It would be something less of an outrage to call them both "covenant theologians," but this would also fail to do justice to the case. Therefore, in an attempt to avoid such misleading...
sentences as "Henry Bullinger made use of the federal scheme in his writings," the attempt will be made to use the term "covenant" when referring to the earlier and less highly developed system where it truly is "covenant theology" and not federal, and "federal" of those later, more complex systems in which more covenants than one are in evidence.

Where did the covenant idea begin? Obviously, it was bound to assert itself at the Reformation, because it is hard to conceive of a biblical theology expressing itself without the use of the covenant concept. The concept is in the Bible, and is going to appear where the Bible is put in use.

Karl Barth contends that the first use to which the covenant idea was impressed was the defense of infant baptism by Zwingli against the Anabaptists.

... in den Schriften De peccato originali (1526) und In catabaptistarum strophae elenchus (1527). 

Bund Gottes ist schon mit Adam, dann ausdrücklich mit Noah als Bund für das ganze Menschengeschlecht, dann mit Abraham für das Volk Israel geschlossen, immer als der eine, gültig von der Grundlegung der Welt bis an ihr Ende, unter Voraussicht der menschlichen Schuld mit der Bestimmung Jesu als des Heilsmittlers und Erlösers. So sind wir aus den Heiden, die an Jesus glauben, im Glauben mit Abraham eins und also mit dem Volk Israel ein Volk, eine Kirche, Erben des einen Testaments, nur dass dieses jetzt, nachdem Christus erschienen ist, seiner ursprünglichen Bestimmung entsprechend, allen Völkern verkündigt und ausgehändigt ist, die Zeremonien des Israelsbundes abgeschafft sind, das Licht, das schon den Vätern leuchtete, uns also heller leuchtet. Zwinglis Absicht ist: Waren die Kinder der Israeliten als solche, bevor sie glaubten, in den Abrahamsbund eingeschlossen, warum sollten es die unsrigen nicht sein?

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2. Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, IV/1: Die Lehre Von Der Versohnung (Zürich, 1953), p. 60.
Bullinger held a similar covenant concept, and as early as 1534 published *De Testamento seu Foedere Dei unico et aeterno*, while Heppe refers to his *Compendium religionis christianae* of 1556 as "dasjenige Lehrbuch der reformirten Kirche, worin die föderalistische Auffassung der Heilslehre zuerst hervortritt." Mitchell suggests that it was through Bullinger's *Decades* that his teaching on the subject took firm root in England, and before the end of the century began to bear fruit in the appearance of formal treatises on the subject of at least as early date as the treatise of Gomarus, *'de foedere Dei,'* in Holland.

This suggestion must be subjected to very severe limitations, for the earliest specific writer to whom Mitchell refers as evidence of this influence is Robert Rollock of Edinburgh, and between the writings of this Scot and the *Decades* of Bullinger there is a great deal of difference. The place in the *Decades* in which a doctrine of the covenant would be expected to come most specifically to the fore is in the eighth sermon of the third decade: "Of the use or effect of the Law of God, and of the fulfilling and abrogating of the same: of the Likeness and difference of both the testaments [covenants] and people, the old and the new." However, from this discussion (pp. 236-300) it is quite obvious that Bullinger still holds to a covenant *unico et aeterno*, for there is no mention whatsoever of a covenant of works with

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3 Henry Bullinger, *The Decades* (Cambridge, 1850), III, 236.
Adam. Rather the discussion is conducted on a far more biblical basis, the considerations of the chapter being largely those of Galatians and Romans. Bullinger's "covenantal" influence was probably far stronger as it was exercised indirectly, for in matters of covenant theology "his example was followed by Peter Martyr when lecturing at Oxford on the Epistle to the Romans, by Martin Bucer at Cambridge, and by John Alasceo at London."¹

And what can be said of John Calvin? He will have none of the damnable errors and heresies of "that monstrous miscreant Servetus," or "some madmen of the sect of the Anabaptists" in the separation of the Old and New Testaments; no, "the covenant made with all the fathers is so far from differing from ours in reality and substance, that it is altogether one and the same: still the administration differs."²

But to say this is to say no more than the later federal theologians (Boston among them) who hold in an even more exact fashion that the covenant of grace extended as far back as Adam. The real issue is how Calvin understands the covenant of which he speaks above, and whether or not he holds a covenant of works.

In the commentaries one finds absolutely no suggestion of a covenant of works¹. In Genesis iii. 6 there is a mild suggestion of what would later have been termed "federal headship," but it certainly goes no farther than does the Apostle

¹C. G. M'Crie, The Confessions of the Church of Scotland, p. 68.
Besides an absolute absence of any discussion of a covenant of works made with Adam in the *Commentary on Genesis*, Calvin, in discussing Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34 states that "God has never made any other covenant than that which he made formerly with Abraham, and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses." Similarly in the New Testament commentaries, we find no trace of a covenant of works in those very chapters (Galatians iii-iv; Romans iii, v-vi; I Corinthians xv; Hebrews vii) where such men as Boston return repeatedly for their evidence for the covenant of works.

But it is also instructive to note the approach of Calvin to the covenant—and Calvin usually refers to it as simply that. Whereas the Protevangelium is described by later writers as God’s declaration of the covenant of grace to Adam, Calvin’s exegesis is that both serpent and man shall be troublesome to each other; the serpent shall be vexatious towards men, and men shall be intent on the destruction of serpents. Meanwhile, we see that the Lord acts mercifully in chastising man, whom he does not suffer Satan to touch except in the heel; while he subjects the head of the serpent to be wounded by him.

Later federal theologians describe the covenant with Noah as

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3 Calvin, *Commentaries on Genesis*, I, 167-68 [iii. 15]. It is interesting to note that Bullinger in his *Decades* (1550) points out that God "did not first begin the league with Abraham but did renew to him the Covenant . . . for He did first of all make it with Adam". Cited by G. D. Henderson, "The Idea of the Covenant in Scotland," op. cit., p. 7.
a renewal of the covenant of grace, but for Calvin it is a covenant purely with reference to the promise that the earth shall not be again destroyed by flood.  

It is only when Calvin discusses Abraham that an exegesis is given of those covenant promises which find their fulfillment in the New Testament. While Witsius and Boston both consider the covenant made with Abraham to be a renewal of the covenant of grace, Calvin's exegesis runs thus:

In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. . . . the Hebrew phrase will bear the interpretation, that Abram shall be called a signal example of happiness. But I extend the meaning further; because I suppose the same thing to be promised in this place, which God afterwards repeats more clearly, (xxii. 16.) And the authority of Paul brings me to this point; . . . (Gal. iii. 17.;) . . . Therefore God (in my judgment) pronounces that all nations should be blessed in his servant Abram, because Christ was included in his loins. . . . For whereas, from the time of the first man's alienation from God, we are all born accursed, here a new remedy is offered unto us. Nor is there any thing contrary to this in the assertion, that we must by no means seek a blessing in Abram himself, inasmuch as the expression is used in reference to Christ.

But perhaps Calvin's most comprehensive statement concerning this covenant is found with regard to Genesis xvii. 11:

Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin. . . . The subject treated of, is the sacred covenant, in which righteousness, salvation, and happiness are promised; whereby the seed of Abraham is distinguished from other nations, in order that it may be holy and blessed.

For, at length, by the coming of Christ, circumcision was substantially confirmed, so that it should endure for ever, and that the covenant which God had before made, should be ratified. . . . Therefore, although the use of circumcision has ceased; yet it does not cease to be an everlasting, or perpetual covenant, if only Christ be

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1 Calvin, Commentaries on Genesis, I, 297 [ix. 9].
2 Ibid., I, 142 [xii. 3].
3 Ibid., I, 453 [xvii. 11].
regarded as the Mediator, who, though the sign be changed, has confirmed the truth.⁴

Thus no attempt to formalize or rationalize the biblical material is seen in Calvin. Rather than the finely-machined covenant of works and grace (and often of redemption as well) of the later federalists, Calvin, in contrast, speaks simply of the biblical covenant with Abraham which is perpetual in Christ.

Things were not to stay in such a closely biblical state for long, for Barth finds a foedus naturae in Ursinus' Summa theologicae of 1564, while Heppe finds a similar foedus generale in Stephan Szegedin's Theologiae sinceræ loci communes, published the following year.² With reference to any influence there might have been by Ursinus upon Boston it should be noted that the "Pareus on Ursin's Catechism" with which he was familiar, contained nothing of this foedus naturae. Within its covers the only covenant spoken of is De foedere Dei, which is Unum est substantia, only the modus administrationis admitting of difference. This covenant of God is between man and God, but because of man's inability it is made by the Mediator. Quite significantly, the covenant is discussed after the Catechism question 18: "Quis autem est ille mediator . . . ?"³

It is not possible here to enter into an examination

⁴ Ibid., I, 456 [xvii. 13].
³ Davidis Parei, Catecheticarum Expositionum D. Zacharise Ursini (Heidelbergae, 1616), p. 87. The section, "De Foedere Dei" is found on pages 93-97.
of precisely where the covenant of works, as such, first arises, but it appears clearly in its essential form as early as 1594 in the academic "Antrittsrede" of the Dutch supralapsarian, Franz Gomarus, de foedere Dei, in which he holds a complete system of federal theology, including the essential elements of a covenant of works.

However, while the system of Gomarus provided the basis for the covenants of works and grace in the Reformed dogmatics of the Netherlands, Schrenk, agreeing with what has been said, nevertheless points out that the familiar titles covenant of works and covenant of grace are not to be found in Gomarus, but rather foedus naturale and foedus supranaturale.

The earliest use of the specific terms, foedus operum and foedus gratiae, is found in the works of the first professor, and first principal of the University of Edinburgh, Robert Rollock, who published Quaesitiones et Responsiones aliquot de Foederi Dei, . . . in 1596, and just a year later, Tractatus de Efficaci Vocatione. Rollock's Treatise of

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1Heppe, op. cit., p. 213.
2Ibid., pp. 213-14.
Effectual Calling was a complete system of theology, of which section eleven, "To the subject of the Calling of man belong several sub-divisions," contained as its first: "1. Of the Word of God, or of God's two Covenants, both that of works and that of grace."¹ The pervasiveness of the covenant idea is indicated by the contention that "all the word of God appertains to some covenant; for God speaks nothing to man without the covenant. For which cause all the Scripture, both old and new, . . . bears the name of God's covenant or testament."² Rollock taught that man had originally been able to keep the covenant of works because he was created just and perfect,³ and that while promised eternal life upon condition of fulfilling the covenant of works, yet these works were not meritorious of promised life, but pledges of thankfulness to his creator.⁴ This explicit covenant of works, as well as of grace, dates to 1597!

That the words of Principal Rollock did not fall on unattentive ears, that the works of Continental and English theologians did not go unread, and that the motivation toward federal theology was not absent in Scotland—all of these in some measure are indicated by the fact that in 1638 David Dickson could expound the covenant scheme of theology in a careful address before the Glasgow Assembly.⁵ In 1637,

¹Robert Rollock, Select Works (Edinburgh, 1849), I, 25. Italics not in the original.
²Ibid., pp. 33-34.
³Ibid., p. 35.
⁴Ibid., p. 37.
⁵John Macleod, Scottish Theology (Edinburgh, 1943), p. 85.
eleven years before the publication of Cocceius's *Summa*,
David Dickson wrote his *Therapeutica Sacra*¹ (not published
until 1656), in which is expounded not two, but three covenants,
in addition to natural law which no longer enjoyed the covenant
status it had for a time in the sixteenth century.² Dickson's
covenants are those of redemption (between Father and Son in
eternity), works (between God and Adam), and grace (between
God and Man through Christ the Mediator).³ It was this same
David Dickson who co-authored with James Durham *The Sum of
Saving Knowledge*. Printed in Edinburgh in 1650, its influence
was especially great in that it was bound with the Confession
of Faith and Catechisms as though a part of them.⁴ It too
taught the triple covenants of redemption, works, and grace.

Nor was federal theology unknown across the Irish Sea.
Archbishop Ussher in 1645 published in London his *Body of
Divinitie*, containing an extended description of the covenant
between God and Adam. But antedating this by thirty years
were *The Irish Articles of Religion* (generally regarded as
having been principally authored by Ussher), adopted by the
Archbishops, Bishops, and Convocation of the Irish Episcopal

¹G. D. Henderson, "The Idea of the Covenant in
Scotland," op. cit., p. 10.
²The division was not original to Dickson, for
Henderson (ibid., p. 10) indicates the concept had previously
appeared in Musculus, Budæus, and William Cowper.
³David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra* (Edinburgh,
1697), pp. 35-188.
⁴The Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories,
Form of Church Government, Discipline, etc., Of Publick
Authority in the Church of Scotland (Glasgow, 1764), p. vii.
pp. 439-78.
Church, in which federal theology is found in an at least inchoate form. Article twenty-one reads as follows:

Man being at the beginning created according to the image of God (which consisted especially in the wisdom of his mind and the true holiness of his free will), had the covenant of the law ingrafted in his heart, whereby God did promise unto him everlasting life upon condition that he performed entire and perfect obedience unto his Commandments, according to that measure of strength wherewith he was endowed in his creation, and threatened death unto him if he did not perform the same.

The ideas of covenant, promise, and penalty are here given with sufficient clarity to enable the Irish Articles to claim to be the first among public confessions to include elements of federal theology.

However, perhaps it is because its influence has been so very much greater, and because within its compass the terms "Covenant of Works" and "Covenant of Grace" are specifically used, that The Westminster Confession of Faith is commonly known as the first public confession to teach the federal system. True, the federalism of the Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly (approved in Scotland by the General Assemblies of 1647 and 1648) was of a rather mild and unobtrusive sort, having only the by now rather conservative two covenants of works and grace; but, although lacking the "advances" of The Sum of Saving Knowledge, it marked the most explicit intrusion of federal theology into a major public confession at this date. While the influence

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of the Irish Articles upon the Westminster Confession is generally held to have been of great importance, yet that the introduction of federal theology into the Confession is not to be attributed solely to the Irish, or even to Scottish and Irish influence, will become evident in even a glance at the history of the doctrine in England.

Perry Miller, making no claims to having examined the sixteenth-century literature, finds the covenant theme as early as 1604 in John Downham's *The Christian Warfare*. For the sheer abundance of covenant literature in this period one should consult the long list of works cited by Miller. However, since the covenant idea is also found in Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin, it might be more instructive to examine the works of just a few of the English writers to see how far the idea had developed. The name of John Preston is among those of the three men cited by Miller as most influential in the early development of the idea. Preston's *The New Covenant, or the Saints Portion* was published in 1629, and while the primary exposition of the covenant is made with regard to Abraham, Preston also refers to a covenant of works with Adam, although there is no attempt at further explanation. The concern of the book is almost exclusively with

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the covenant of grace. In comparison with Witsius, or Boston, the whole exposition is still somewhat primitive.

William Ames, another of the three great early exponents of federal theology, comes next under consideration. In the Marrow of Sacred Divinity (London, 1639) the covenant concept does not appear to be explicitly woven throughout the whole fabric of his theology, and even the direct discussion of the matter is largely confined to pages 101-103 and 170-180. In the former place distinctions are clearly drawn between the covenant of grace, life, or salvation and the "old covenant". Later there is a discussion concerning the administration of the covenant of grace before the coming of Christ, and the administration after his coming. Here we find the distinctions in administration between the periods of Adam to Abraham, Abraham to Moses, and Moses to Christ. Precisely in connection with this teaching it is well to remember that one of Ames's students was Cocceius!

A much more remarkable production on the covenants is A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace by the Oxford Puritan, John Ball, completed just before his death in 1640, and first published in 1645. In it are found many of the finer distinctions of federal theology, yet some of its errors are avoided. Mitchell is perhaps justified in referring to this as "one of the fullest and most mature specimens of puritan

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teaching on the subject of the covenants . . ."¹ of the
covenant of works Ball said:

The form of this Covenant stood in the speciall Promise
of good to be received from justice as a reward for his
work, Doe this and live: and the exact and rigid exaction
of perfect obedience in his own person, without the least
spot or failing for matter or manner. The good that God
promised was in it[as] kind a perfect systems of good,
which was to be continued in the eye of creating power for
ever, we call it happiness, life, and everlasting
happinesse.²

Ball shows a considerable amount of moderation with
respect to the covenant concept. He does not teach a confir-
mation in righteousness as the reward of obedience. Still
more remarkable is his emphasis that even in the covenant of
works Adam received all he had by God's grace.³ Once broken,
the covenant of works could not be repaired, and so the
covenant of grace "was made in Christ, in and through whom we
are reconciled unto God; for since God and man were separated
by signe, no Covenant can passe betwixt them . . ."¹ This
covenant of grace was promised to Adam immediately upon his
fall, but it was made manifest to Abraham.⁵ Unfortunately,
however, the emphasis that the covenant of grace was made in
Christ, and that our reconciliation is entirely through him,
is not consistently carried out, for Ball also speaks of the
"stipulation" of repentance and belief, and even that
"repentance is the condition of faith and the qualification of

¹Mitchell, "The Theology of the Reformed Church with
Special Reference to the Westminster Standards," op. cit.,
p. 478.
²John Ball, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace
³Ibid., p. 10.
⁴Ibid., pp. 16-17, and 203ff.
⁵Ibid., pp. 27ff. and 47ff., respectively.
a person capable of Salvation . . . "1 which although later qualified, nevertheless constitutes a rather dangerous expression. In short, while in Bell there is an advance over Preston and Ames both in structure and feeling, the growth of the additional third covenant, the covenant of redemption, is avoided.

Thus it can be seen that on the eve of the Westminster Assembly the English, while not having pushed the structuring of federal theology to quite the extent done by the Scots, were nevertheless thoroughgoing federalists to such a degree that the Confession and Catechisms must be regarded as admirable examples of moderation.

Nothing has yet been said of the federal theology of that book which affected the thought of Thomas Boston far more than any of the above—Edward Fisher's *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London, 1645)—both because its thought will later be considered in more direct comparison to Boston's, and because it marks no great development in the field of federal theology. It was Fisher's simplicity and clarity, rather than any striking theological innovation, that made him so important to Boston.

And what can be said of the Dutch theologians who so greatly influenced Scottish theology? The number of Dutch names that figure prominently in federal theology prior to 1648 give ample evidence for Heppe's statement that "Die

1Ibid., p. 18.
'Bundestheologie' war in den Niederlanden in öffentlicher
Geltung und allgemeiner Uebung" when Cocceius came upon the
scene, publishing his Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento
Dei in 1648. Cocceius' actual advance in the development of
federal theology, his thoroughgoing emphasis upon the
Scriptures as the only guide of the Church, his new biblical
methods, the acrimony of the dispute between Cocceians and
Voetians, and the involvement of the Cocceians with Cartesian
philosophy, all in varying degree played their part in
making the name of Cocceius famous, and affixing to it the
system of federal theology. An evaluation of the relative
importance of these factors lies well outside the scope of
this thesis. However, the number of factors involved indicate
that it was not alone his system of federal theology
that raised the furor.

The essential points of the system advanced by
Cocceius are as follows: God created man in his image, and
established with him a covenant of works, or nature. That
is to say, God revealed his law, his will, to man directly,
that he should bear witness to him. God demanded obedience,
and upon the condition of perfect obedience promised eternal
life. As a creature man had to accept the covenant. This
covenant was unto man a thing of life, but when he broke it,

1Hepper, op. cit., p. 216.
2Ibid., pp. 219-20.
3Ibid., pp. 220-23.
he lost the ability to fulfill the law, and thus the covenant became a thing of damnation. But from eternity God the Son promised the Father that he would fulfill the law for a part of fallen humanity, and would awaken righteousness in them. The Father accepted this eternal surety of the Son and sent him into the world as redeemer. This is the basis of the covenant of grace, which unlike the covenant of works, is not grounded upon what man will do, but upon what God himself will do. The Father binds himself to give to the elect grace, and faith to believe on Christ. The successive revelations of the covenant of grace are followed by corresponding abrogations of the covenant of works, beginning with the Protevangelium. Cocceius distinguishes the three periods, ante lege, sub lege, and post lege, i.e., the times of the Patriarchs, from Moses to Christ, and of the Church, respectively. These divisions seem to be a carry-over from Musculus and St. Szegedin, rather than intrinsic elements of that which distinguishes Cocceius' thought, for the most unique aspect of his system is the use made of the abrogations of the covenant of works. The first is that of man's sin, in which he abrogates the covenant of works, thus making it a thing of damnation to himself. The second abrogation comes from God's side, and consists of the establishment of the covenant of grace. The third abrogation consists of the temporal proclamation—at first in hidden form, the Old

1 Ibid., pp. 217-18.
2 Schrenk, op. cit., p. 50.
Testament—of the covenant of grace, beginning with the
Protevangelium.¹

The fourth abrogation of the covenant of works is that
sanctification of the body which goes hand in hand with justifi-
cation. Of course in this period there is still conflict
with sin, despite the assured victory, but that victory, and
the final abrogation of the covenant of works does not take
place until the reawakening of the body in its final state of
glorification.² The eternal establishment, temporal procla-
mation, temporal action (sanctification), and final consum-
mation of the covenant of grace are all seen as an abrogation
of the covenant of works.³

The use of the concept of abrogation in this manner
is entirely foreign to Boston, as will be seen. It should be
noted that Boston at no time, in any of his writings, ever
gives Cocceius as a reference, nor is there any indication
of his having read him. Perhaps Boston had been warned
against Cocceius when taking his divinity in Edinburgh, for
the primary theological text used was that of Andreas Essenius,

¹It is in this form that the famous μέρις/μέτοχος
discussion arose, for in the Old Testament "Sie ist eine
Gestalt des Verhältnisses zwischen Gott und Mensch, der der
Gnadenbund wohl latent, da und dort auch bemerkbar, zu
Gründe liegt, in welcher es aber nach Röm. 3, 25 wohl eine
μέτοχος, ein übersehen und übergehen der menschlichen Sünde,
aber noch nicht deren μέτοχος, ihre wirkliche Vergebung und
also eine effektive Rechtfertigung der Sünden gibt" (Barth,
op. cit., p. 63). The latter comes in the New Testament,
of which the Old is the sure expectation.

²Barth, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

³For Barth's estimate of Cocceius and the federal
theologians as seen through him, see Barth, op. cit.,
pp. 64-70.
a pupil of Voetius. While Boston's professor, the "great Mr. George Campbell" never published anything, yet it is known that he was ordained shortly before the Restoration, was outspoken against Prelacy, was deprived of his office, seized, and upon liberation went to Holland, all of which indicates that he might well have been among the Covenanters who were hostile to Cocceius, "partly due to the association of his teaching with that of Descartes." As for the possibility of Boston being a Cartesian, or his thought being affected by his reading of Descartes, the reaction towards its reading will give ample evidence of the impression it left.

After reading Carte's Meditations, I saw much of book-vanity, and found myself more disposed to seek and long for Christ's teaching by His Spirit. Withal I saw myself reproved, for my slackness in pursuing after the knowledge of Christ. At the meeting for prayer, I observed how Providence ordered the reading of Mal. iv, and singing of Ps. cii. 16, giving light into what was to be the subject of discourse that night.

While Boston never refers to Cocceius, he nevertheless has words of warm appreciation for Herman Witsius, who, though a mediating influence between Voetians and Cocceians, is classed by Hoppe with the latter.

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1 A General Account, p. 21. Hoppe, op. cit., pp. 224-25. Heinrich Hoppe, Reformierte Dogmatik (London, 1950), p. 376. However, it cannot be stressed too strongly that very little of a positive nature can be assumed concerning the influence upon Boston of either of his theological textbook at the Divinity Hall (supra, pp. 68-69).

2 A General Account, p. 20, footnote.


4 Passages, p. 46.

De Geconoma Foederum Dei Boston says "To that excellent book I was seasonably led by kind Providence at that time." ¹ Nor would there be anything particularly incongruous about Boston's regarding Cocceius with suspicion, while at the same time quoting Witsius as well as from Voetians, for as G. D. Henderson points out, the strife in Holland fortunately did not create any split in Scotland, partly because the Cocceijans developed special interest in exegetical and linguistic work, while Voetians concerned themselves more definitely with dogmatics; but chiefly because of the mediating systems of Witsius and Marckius which obtained a great hold in Scotland. Witsius would be called a follower of Cocceijus while Marckius was reckoned a Voetian; but as far as Scotland was concerned they stood for the same thing.²

In its general outline, with its covenants of works and grace, Boston's federal theology is very much like that of Witsius. Because more specific points of comparison will be noted in the examination of Boston's theology it would serve little purpose to further discuss the system of Witsius at this time.

Even from this brief survey it is quite obvious that covenant theology goes back to the very heart of the Reformation. The number of major Continental theologians (with the exception of Amosius) who were prominent in this development prior to Cocceius is imposing:

¹ A General Account, p. 113.
² G. D. Henderson, Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland, p. 74. In this connection it should be noted that there is no reference to Marckius in any of Boston's writings.

Even in America books on federal theology were being written in the first half of the seventeenth century, and activity in Britain was in many respects quite abreast of that on the Continent—in producing federal confessions, ahead of it. "Man kann wohl sagen, dass sie [i.e., federal theology] in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts weithin herrschende reformierte Orthodoxie war . . . ."

Thomas Boston was born in a theological world where federal theology was orthodoxy! It was not something new, a variant, held only by a few—it was the rule, not the exception. In examining Boston’s theology the question need

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1 Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.
2 Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 504. Eight works on federal theology are listed by Miller as having been written in New England before 1650!
3 Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
not to be asked, "Why was he a federal theologian?" for that would be like asking why a Japanese child speaks Japanese. While to claim that everyone was a federalist would be an exaggeration, yet in Boston's theological land, the theology of the Covenanters, his divinity at Edinburgh, his books, his associates—all spoke the language of federal theology.

But while it is now general knowledge that this language was spoken, there seems to have been remarkably little interest in its exact grammar. When it comes to exact, specific studies of the interior relationships of the various federal theologies, the field is remarkably uncluttered by secondary sources. Thus it becomes clear that the purpose of this study must be to examine the interior relationships, the inner structure, of the federal theology of Thomas Boston. To some extent this will necessitate comparison with prior, as well as contemporaneous federal and non-federal systems, but the primary purpose of this study must be the elucidation of the interior structure of Boston's federal theology, thus attempting to provide another accurate theological touchstone for those who continue to do research in our theological heritage.

To complete the historical perspective for such a study, consideration must also be given to the motivating factors behind the remarkable growth of federal theology. To pretend that answers can here be given would be an
impertinence, but perhaps suggestions can be made which may be helpful, and at least will be suggestive.

It has already been suggested that any movement bringing men back to serious biblical exegesis must result in some discussion of the term covenant, for the term is there and must find expression in a biblical theology. The early use of the covenant concept in the defense of the doctrine of infant baptism has also been noted. But while excluding neither of the above factors, the question must be met concerning the covenants of nature and works that soon came upon the scene. What is their—or its—source? The confusion that surrounds this, or these covenants\(^1\) suggests that there may be good grounds for suspecting a dual, and even conflicting motivation.

There is a static factor influencing the development of the covenant of nature in the reintroduction of the Aristotelian concept of natural laws—"Christianized," of course, by the Schoolmen. The responsibility for the introduction of this scholastic lex naturae is placed, by Barth, upon Melanchthon, while the actual application of the principle to the covenant concept is attributed to W. Musculus and St. Szeugedin.\(^2\) On the one side, then, there is the incorporation of this static, Aristotelian factor, into the covenant theology, giving rise to a covenant of nature.

\(^1\)Many, even among the later writers, seem almost as willing to call it one as the other, giving the impression that the terms are at times regarded as synonymous. E.g., Robert Kollock, *op. cit.*., p. 34.

\(^2\)Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.
On the other hand, there is a dynamic factor also operative, and that is the Calvinistic view of man as made in the image of God. In Lutheran theology man is called into being by God as the crown of creation, the realization of the ideal humanity; he is, in brief, perfect. In the Reformed view, however, there is something lacking, something which must yet take place. Calvin can say that "the image of God was only shadowed forth in man till he should arrive at his perfection." Or, again, "the state of man was not perfected in the person of Adam . . ." and "before the fall of Adam, man's life was only earthly, seeing it had no firm and settled constancy." This must all be understood in relationship to Calvin's understanding of the imago dei, in which the image is essentially a dynamic relationship, rather than a static being or quality. The image is God's action on man by the imprint of the Truth upon his mind, and becomes man's possession only in the active response of love and obedience. Therefore the strength of the imago dei and its continued maintenance in man lies in the Word of God and not in the soul of man. In a real sense the image of God in man is the communicated Word in which God's glory shines forth.

It is because the Reformed do not view man as created in every respect perfect that the covenant of works can arise. If man is understood to be less than perfect at his creation, and if he is to strive for perfection, then there must be some way of

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2. Ibid.
3. Calvin, Commentaries on Genesis, p. 95 [i. 26].
4. Ibid., pp. 112-13 [ii. 7].
5. T. F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man (London, 1949), p. 52. For the full discussion of the image in Calvin, see pp. 35-82.
reaching that goal; this necessity provides a theological incentive to, or opening for, covenant/federal theology. However, while Calvin's concept is essentially dynamic in that it views man not as perfect, but as engaged in active response to God's love, it nevertheless is almost inevitable that it should attract speculation concerning man's goal of perfection. Federal theology answered the question concerning man's possible perfection in terms of a covenant of nature or works, which, had it been kept for a probationary period, would have resulted in man's confirmation in righteousness. But this answer, given to a question arising out of a concept of dynamic relationship, turns what was once dynamic into something static—and what could be more static than the state of "confirmed righteousness" of the common federal theologian? What once depended on the Divine Word and was subjectively grounded on the response of thankful obedience, becomes instead a confirmed state, resting upon man's fulfillment of a set of conditions. Nevertheless, while the outcome was static, the original motivating factor was this dynamic relationship, which because of the question concerning its fulfillment, offered a negative attraction which was filled by the increasingly less dynamic concepts of the covenant of works.

Another suggestion concerning the motivation of federal theology which must be considered is that of the tension between predestination and man's self-activity. Reinhold Seeberg explains Calvin's thought in terms of the
submission and dependence of man which results from knowing God's greatness and man's need. True submission, however, means obedience.

Indem nun aber jener völligen Abhängigkeit von Gott an die Seite tritt ein komplizierter Apparat göttlicher Gesetze, der in einer zusammenhängenden Kette freige- woller Handlungen verwirklicht wird, ergibt sich ein eigenartiges Gleichgewicht zwischen der religiösen Abhängigkeit des Menschen und seiner sittlichen Aktivität. ¹

A footnote then follows concerning federal theology:

In umfassenderem Masse noch als durch diese Verwertung des Gesetzes bei Calvin gelang die Tendenz, der Prä- destination gegenüber die Wirklichkeit und Eigenart des geschichtlichen und sozialen Lebens der Menschen zu erfassen, zur Durchführung in dem Föderalsystem.²

Perry Miller in his study of New England Puritanism comes to a very similar conclusion on the basis of what he finds in the religious life and thought of New England. The development of federal theology is seen as in part an attempt to hold predestination and responsibility, Antinomianism and Arminianism, in perfect balance.

Here then was a revision of Calvinism which by skillful dialectic preserved the essential tenets of piety—the absolute God, the depraved man, the redeeming and unmerited grace—and yet contrived at the same time that justification by faith should not produce a moral laxity.³

Yet as becomes clear from the later history of the movement, the dialectic was not as skillful as it seemed, and despite the devices of federal theology, the movement at its worst resulted in a denial of "the absolute God, the depraved man,

¹Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte (Erlangen, 1920), IV/2, 561-52.
²Ibid., p. 562.
³Miller, op. cit., p. 396.
the redeeming and unmerited grace"—the very foundation stones of the theology the federal forms were to protect.

This concept of the rise of federal theology has its validity as long as it is remembered that it represents only one of many motivating factors. Any adequate explanation must account not only for Arminian federal theology, but also for the federalism of such notable supralapsarians as Gomarus and Rutherford. The possibility of common motivating factors (such as a growing scholasticism and rationalism) behind both the development of federal theology, and the increased tension between predestination and responsibility, must also be kept in mind. Thus, when federal theology is set forward as a reconciling element it must be taken into account that the Calvinism depicted is usually not that of Calvin, but a later and very "naturalized" Calvinism, one that is completely amenable to reason, with the resulting flat contradiction of the two noted elements. The biblical elements which make Calvin's theology meaningful—grace, gratitude, union with Christ, eschatology—are stripped away, leaving what of necessity must be a deformed theology. Even what is said about predestination is corrupted, for while Calvin thinks in terms first of the election of Israel, and secondarily, the individual within Israel, the later "Calvinism" makes election pointedly individual, and quite without reference to Christ. But in defending Calvin against misinterpretation, it must be admitted that much of the faulty interpretation and corruption came from within the Reformed churches, so that
while Calvin's theology (containing its own safeguards) could not be said in this way to be a motivating factor toward federalism, yet there is in the later "Calvinists" much of this logical contradiction (brought on by their own logic) which sought its escape in the refinements of some types of federal theology.¹

It is to be noted that when the biblical elements of Calvin's thought have been stripped away, leaving only a bare logical caricature, it acquires a most un-biblical individualism and self-centeredness. At the same time, the more pointed individual election becomes, especially with the irritant of a double decree, the greater will be the contradiction between responsibility and the decrees, the resulting tension eventually becoming so great that it necessitates the denial of the conclusions to which its logic has carried it. The historical choice has usually been either Arminianism or Antinomianism. The former, being the more respectable, and thus more insidious, has been the predominant choice and, as in the case of many of the English Presbyterians,² the Dutch Remonstrants, and to a large extent the New England Puritans, it destroyed the grounds upon which the decision had been

¹ One such type evidently existed among the New England Puritans, for Perry Miller states that it was possible through the federal system to give "... more and more scope to the moral will and put upon men's own shoulders the responsibility for their fates." Miller, op. cit., p. 396.
² A sympathetic portrayal of the descent (the author would say development) of English Presbyterianism from a "Calvinistic" federal theology to Unitarianism is found in Olive H. Griffiths, Religion and Learning (Cambridge, 1935).
reached, resulting eventually in various forms of Unitarianism. Federal theology, by itself, proved in the above cases to be totally incapable of preserving the tension. However, driven by logic to an extreme double predestination, the alternatives to the choice of Arminianism or Antinomianism were either to retreat into a largely non-theological Pietism to which the individualism of personal covenanting with God would be quite amenable, or to somehow reduce the weight placed upon logic, and lay it instead upon a more biblically-orientated theology.

A motivating factor in very much the same key is that suggested by W. Adams Brown (who assumes far too much for it if it is seriously put forward as the sole factor): the need for assurance.

This problem was, in a word, the reconciliation of the sovereignty of God with man's assurance of salvation. The federal theologians, as they are called, were Calvinists. Their major premise was the absolute sovereignty of God. Man, in their view, had no independent right as against his Maker. . . . Perfect obedience, were such possible, carried with it no merit, and could guarantee no reward. If, then, man was to be admitted to the Divine fellowship or assured of the Divine favour, it could be only by some voluntary condescension on God's part, establishing by arbitrary enactment relations which had no necessary foundation in nature. The importance of the covenant for these theologians consisted in its assurance that such condescension had, as a matter of fact, taken place.

Perry Miller also finds the need for assurance one of the motivating factors among the New England Puritans. But as

2Miller, op. cit., particularly pp. 370-72, 385-89.
the "tension" between predestination and responsibility becomes a progressively more valid factor as Calvinism becomes more corrupted, so too does the need for assurance. While Calvin does speak of reprobation, the idea that men who wish to follow Christ are turned away and refused eternal life is utterly foreign to him. Men are not turned away by Christ, but rather men reject his offered grace.¹ For Calvin there is no uncertainty as to God's purpose that would give one reason for erecting a federal theology to prove his condescension to man. God's purpose has been made plain in Jesus Christ! God's purpose is that for the glory of his grace man is to be saved. While theoretically God's sovereignty is such that he owes man nothing, yet in Christ he makes it plain that he wishes to bring men unto himself. Thus Calvin can explain the prophecy of Zacharias concerning Christ, in the place in which he says that "we may serve him without fear":²

... it implies that we cannot worship God in a proper manner without composure of mind. ... But since God reconciles men to himself in Christ, since he has committed their salvation to his own hand and guardianship, we are justly declared by Zacharias to be delivered by his grace from fear.³

It is because God reconciles men to himself in Christ that for a true Calvinist the problem of assurance cannot be a

²Luke i. 74, Calvin's Translation.
³Calvin, Commentary on the Evangelists, I, 73-74.
real motivating factor. But true Calvinism was short lived, and as the corruptions noted in preceding pages increased, the motivation increased in like degree. Where the implications of Descartes' philosophy, with its concept of God's Will, had been accepted, there would be a real need for assurance. In any evaluation of this factor, however, it must be remembered that federal theology flourished among the strongest opponents of Descartes, as well as among his followers.

For the consideration of the next motivating factor it is necessary to change key, for while this is in a sense a more pervading factor throughout the entire background of the movement, at the same time it is more permissive, or even illustrative, than strictly motivating, although it is that as well. This factor is the changing political thought of the period. The thesis is put forcefully by Miller:

... federal theology was essentially part of a universal tendency in European thought to change social relationships from status to contract; ... it was one expression of late Renaissance speculation, which was moving in general away from the ideas of feudalism. ... There can be no doubt that these theologians inserted the federal idea into the very substance of divinity, that they changed the relation even of God to man from necessity to contract, largely because contractualism was becoming increasingly congenial to the age and in particular to Puritans.

In all fairness to Miller it should be said that he immediately begins to qualify this thesis, and finally insists that it is still impossible to tell whether the early Puritans

\[1\text{Miller, op. cit., p. 399.}\]
extended the idea from their social to their religious thinking, or vice versa. ¹

All the difficulties that arise in assessing the relationship between the political and theological uses of the covenant concept in England arise as well in a consideration of the situation in Scotland, where there was also an early political application of the idea. ² In New England, the religious theory certainly came before the actual civil polity. ³

Although it is necessary not to give this suggestion of changing social theory too large a place among the factors influencing the rise of federal theology, yet there is an interesting concomitance between the politics and theology of certain areas, notably the free Swiss states, the Netherlands, Scotland, England, and New England.

Another suggestion, again in very much the same key—the same because it is difficult to say whether it is the cause or effect of federal theology—is made by T. M. Lindsay concerning the relation of historical thinking and federalism. Lindsay’s thesis in brief, is that as the renewed interest

¹ Ibid., pp. 399 and 412.
² G. D. Henderson, Religious Life in Seventeenth Century Scotland, pp. 164-66. Equally difficult would be an attempt to fix the influence of the religious (in distinction from theological) and political use made of the term covenant in Scotland with regard to the acceptance by the people of a covenant theology. In view of the work already done in this field, it would be to little purpose to repeat these findings here, but one should certainly consult G. D. Henderson, "The Idea of the Covenant in Scotland," op. cit., pp. 2ff.
³ Miller, op. cit., p. 408.
in Aristotle resulted in a more and more abstract Reformed theology, the federal theologians returned theology to its historical moorings.

... what Federalism tried to do ... was to bring the Reformed theology back into real living connection with the historical development of God’s plan of salvation in the actual salvation of men and women and with the historical proclamation of that plan in Scripture. ... The Covenants were categories which were used to translate the timeless into the temporal, the ideal into the historical, what belonged to a past eternity into the present moment of time. ¹

This, according to Lindsay, was done when Cocceius and Witsius used the term “covenant” in the sense of contract or bargain, a term used by Hobbes, Grotius, and Puffendorf, one which was the popular “scientific” term of the period (“just as development is now”—1879):²

it was used for the purpose of showing how the present grew out of the past, and how the actual was produced from the ideal. ... The rule of the idea of covenant marks the age when men were beginning to look at things in an historical way, and yet could not do it fully and clearly. ... The Federalist took the well-known term, covenant or pact, and used it to make plain the actual and historical character of God’s work of salvation.³

However, while Cocceius’ methods of biblical interpretation may have resulted in a return to historical thinking, is it not true that the real impetus to historical thinking goes back to the Reformation with its return to a Hebraic way of thinking, as over against the non-historical thought forms of the Aristotelians? True, as Reformed thought became

² Ibid., pp. 535–36.
³ Ibid., p. 536.
Aristotelian it lost sight of the historical element, but was it not first of all the Reformation, with its Hebraic/historical thinking, that made possible the whole modern development of historical thought? It suffered setbacks through Reformed scholasticism, advanced with Ramus' assault on Aristotle, and came to the fore in Cocceius. But while Robertson Smith, "speaking of the federal theology of Cocceius, [could] say with justice that, 'with all its defects,' it 'is the most important attempt, in the older Protestant theology, to do justice to the historical development of revelation" must not this remark be directed more toward Cocceius' biblical methodology than towards its expression in federal theology? Franz Comarus plays an important part in the development of federal theology, yet no one offers him any honors for making theology more historical. The development of federal theology is sufficiently broad so that while it provides the vehicle, or possibility—and in certain aspects some encouragement— for a more historical interpretation of revelation, it also develops in the midst of strong scholasticizing elements, so that Lindsay can note that "it lent itself readily to incipient rationalism." It partakes of this rationalism even in the midst of the systems of Cocceius and Witsius, despite the important place they play in the development of a more historical theology.

2 Lindsay, op. cit., p. 337.
It is now necessary to change to a major key, to discuss perhaps the most basic and persistent factors in the motivation of federal theology. Protestantism, virtually upon its very inception was assailed with question and challenge by the Church of Rome. Simultaneously, between the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, and within each group, contention meant finer and finer distinctions, and the tools of the Schoolmen were all too rapidly brought out and once again put into use. Thus Protestants were forced to use their wits to answer not only Rome, but other Protestants. At the same time, the intellectual ferment of the Renaissance, coupled with the challenge to traditional religious authority by the Reformation, produced such questions as those propounded by Servetus and Socinus. The questions in general became increasingly secular with the progress of the Enlightenment. As the age began more and more to pride itself on its reason, Protestantism felt more and more compelled to defend itself by reason. The challenge was twofold in basis: religious and secular. The result was a scholasticizing and rationalizing of Protestantism.

The Reformers, as they were influenced by biblical thought, avoided scholastic distinctions and phraseology simply because a Latinized Aristotle was not a useful aid to biblical thinking. The less perspicacious followers of the Reformers, hard-pressed by the scholastic arguments of Rome, unwisely left biblical grounds—or more accurately, tried to bring scholastic weapons to the aid of their biblical
theology. Thus, Luther plus Aristotle became orthodoxy for
the Lutherans, while du Moulin superbly cast Calvin in
Aristotelian forms for battle with the Jesuits. ¹

However, it should be noted that federal theology was
far from being in the front ranks of this scholastic movement.
Wolleb (1626) "spoke of God as the praeipium essen\,
and
used the idea of the divine decree to explain the whole
relation of God to the universe—he used it as Aristotle used
the category of substance." Alsted (1618) "spoke of God as
the primum movens," and looked upon the decrees as "the
primary motions of the universal spirit."² In comparison,
many of the federal theologians look as if they were leading
a revolt against this very scholasticism. It is quite
possible that the intention of some of these men, e.g.,
Cocceius, was to do just that. Yet it is instructive to note
with reference to Cocceius, that despite his revolt, he was
already so heavily imbued with the results of previous schol-
asticism that his theology is not nearly so pure as that of
Calvin. Despite the revolts, federal theology in general
became increasingly scholastic, as is obvious when its span
of development from Zwingli to its seventeenth-century
representatives is considered.

An exact statement of the situation is outside of the
scope of this work, but from the general survey already made,

¹ Cf. Wm. Cunningham, Historical Theology (Edinburgh,
1870), I, 418.
Scholast. (ed. 1618), pp. 150–65, respectively, cited by
Lindsay, op. cit., pp. 533–34.
and upon the definition of covenant/federal theology as used within this survey, the following may be suggested:

Covenant/federal theology partakes of a continuous development in which, in general, the structure becomes progressively more elaborate and the definitions sharper. Perhaps because of the historical relationships of the covenant concept, this aspect of theology is less amenable to specifically Aristotelian forms than, for example, the decrees. Thus in direct comparison it may often appear less scholastic than a theological counterpart, while still having been influenced by the general scholastic trend.

At the same time, in addition to the Aristotelian influence, there is the Ramist tradition, which exerted a pressure upon its followers in the direction of reason, and "clear and distinct ideas" that was even stronger than the Aristotelian pressure. It was stronger because it was more fully in keeping with the spirit of the age. While Continental federal theology developed in the midst of both pressures (e.g. the Voetians represent those most heavily influenced by the Aristotelian tradition, while the Cocceians may be assigned to the Ramist camp), the Puritan development took place within the Ramist tradition. To draw a clear line of division between these two is impossible, for they were

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1 This survey has viewed the development of federal theology as a continuous one, beginning with the more covenantal forms of the early Reformers. If federal theology is given a specialized, arbitrary definition, as it is by Lindsay, then everything must be changed to fit that specialized definition.
not in fact that clearly divided, but the distinction should prove helpful in any exact examination of the development of federal theology. However, federal theology was motivated by both traditions, and both acted in the same direction insofar as they sought to domesticate theology to canons of Western thought—which despite the variant methods of Aristotle and Ramus, are at bottom built upon the same foundations. Therefore Miller is quite correct in observing that the development of federal theology must be viewed as a part of that seventeenth-century systematization of Calvinism. . . . It was one result of the effort to provide reformed doctrine with the 'method', the scholastical integration, which at the moment was everywhere felt to be supremely necessary, in order that theology might, in the words of Ames, 'be understood, known, and committed to memory.'

It was within this desire for a neat, orderly, systematic theology, thoroughly amenable to reason, that the Aristotelian and Ramist influences converged to give federal theology its impetus to ever sharper distinctions and more elaborate development.

But the words of William Ames should call attention to the fact that there is more to this motivating factor than the usefulness of sharp, rational distinctions for debate with friend and foe, more to it than its compliance with the desire of Western Man to have all things reasonable, comfortably amenable to familiar patterns of thought. Ames reminds one that the development of federal theology had eminently practical bearings on the pastor and his task (and

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1 Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 366.
in this practical aspect there is a direct motivating factor for Boston!). One still stands in amazement at the basic simplicity of the federal system of divinity! Out of the Hebraic thought-world of the Bible a superbly rational structure has been abstracted, one which retains certain areas of mystery, but which in the main is wonderfully comfortable to the Western touch. One cannot fail to be impressed by the ease with which the structure of the theology of Boston or Witsius can be grasped in comparison to that of Calvin. Theology had been simplified. The pastor who today struggles to help his congregation understand the Bible on its own Hebraic terms cannot help but be a bit envious when he views the Western-rationality of the federal structure. Truly, if any really comprehensive system of divinity could "be understood, known, and committed to memory" by Western Man it was this one. And yet, its very clear, distinct theology contained the seeds of its own destruction, for the price it paid for its amenity to Western thought was to a certain degree the falsification of biblical theology. The result of this falsification at its worst can be seen in the logical antagonisms which helped spur a reaction leading eventually to Unitarianism among many English Presbyterians and New England Puritans. Scotland, however, despite its very emphatic federal theology, witnessed no such movement, least of all from the strong exponents of the system. Why? Was there an element in Scottish theology that reduced the antagonism of logic, or perhaps somehow went back to a more
biblical theology? And if this was the case, what role did Boston play in the movement?

By the time Thomas Boston first mounted a pulpit covenant theology had been developing for over a century and a half, and had developed to the extent that for over a century it could be called federal theology. Over fifty years had passed since its most remembered exponent, Cocceius, had published his *Summa*. Of the motivating factors (varying greatly in duration and influence) suggested as contributing to the development of federal theology, perhaps for Boston the only one of great immediate importance was the urge for clear and distinct ideas for pastor and flock. Nevertheless, the discussion should indicate the complex background of the movement and help to give perspective to the examination of the interior structure of Boston's theology.
The covenant of works - construction

To begin with Boston's theological structure at the beginning is to begin with the covenant of works. Even the best of what he has to say about the doctrine of creation is a bit insipid, and to be found only in his sermon on Question Nine of the Shorter Catechism.¹ Nor does he ever introduce at such an early stage in his theology anything concerning the purpose of creation, the chief end of man, Scripture, or the Godhead—except in the series on the Catechism. He enters immediately into the covenant of works, a proper covenant, established in the garden between God and Adam before the fall.

Boston is quite emphatic that it was a proper covenant, but the propriety of the covenant is "proven" in its exposition, rather than by entering into a discussion of the key Hebrew and Greek terms. It is made clear, however, that this is not a covenant between equals.

¹I, 167-77 (1709-??).
None could ever dream, but there must be a manifest difference betwixt covenants between God and man, and those between men and men. There is no manner of equality betwixt God and man; God could require all duty of men without any covenant; yea, they have nothing but what is from him, and so owe it to him. But those things do not hinder, that, upon God's condescending to enter into a covenant with man, there may be a proper covenant betwixt them.

The emphasis, even in the covenant of works, is upon God's condescension in making this covenant—God's "admirable condescension," his "free condescension," yes "God condescended," "see here the great and wonderful condescension of God."  

The contention of W. Adams Brown, that federal theology is in essence the answer to man's need for assurance of his position with regard to a sovereign God, has already been mentioned. Regardless of its validity in other instances, is it also an important motivating or functional factor in Boston's theology? A sufficient number of statements could be found in Boston's writings to contend that an affirmative answer is in order. Almost every exposition of the covenant of works contains at least one statement to this effect, the strongest of which is that

This was the case of mankind, with relation to the Creator, before the covenant of works was made ... [he was as a bond-servant] who is obliged to serve his master, and is liable to punishment in case he does not, but cannot demand wages, since there is no covenant between them.  

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21, 236, 238, 239, and 240, respectively (1709-??).
4Notes on the Marrow, VII, 172 (1721-22).
However, to take this evidence as indicative of Boston's total outlook would be a mistake, for when viewed in context it becomes evident that the problem—of a sovereign God before whom man has no claim—appears only with its solution, and the two appear together not in considering the problem of God's unlimited sovereignty, but in the exposition of the covenant of works! In short, for Boston the solution seems almost to have given rise to the problem. Boston's use of the idea gives the impression that this is something he has found in others and incorporated into his own theology to be repeated upon appropriate occasions.

Within the functional perspective of Boston's theology, is it really the covenant of works that gives man assurance of God's attitude toward him? It is not. While Boston may emphasize God's condescension in that covenant, that covenant was broken, and has no good news for man with regard to his present relationship to God. It is the covenant of grace—and within that covenant the incarnate Christ—that gives assurance before God. The only assurance given in the covenant of works is that of God's initial condescension toward a sinless Adam, a purely abstract assurance with no reference to sinful men. Therefore, from the standpoint of fulfilling a religious need, the factor of assurance in the covenant of works is far from Boston so far removed from being a motivating or functional factor of the first magnitude that it could quite easily be interpreted as having no real importance whatsoever.

A divergence in initial outlook between Boston and
the general trend of Puritan exposition should be noted, for it gives ample warning that the elements of Puritan federalism should not be treated as interchangeable with the federalism of Boston; there are distinctly different tendencies in each. While Boston stresses the condescension of God in covenanting with man, Perry Miller observes that among the Puritans always the fundamental point, insisted upon ad nauseam, was the voluntaristic basis of the undertaking: "Where two Parties do stand mutually obliged one to another in a voluntary Agreement, there is a Covenant." None ever need exist unless both signatories wish it; before it, they are free as the air, but once having set their hands to it, they are no longer at liberty, they are irrevocably shackled.

This seems to be going beyond the legitimate needs of assurance and is quite alien to the spirit of Boston's theology, which is more accurately expressed by the statement that God graciously binds himself by condescending to make a covenant with man. The covenant is God's free gift. In response to that condescension man has no real alternative of accepting or rejecting the covenant (as the later Puritans thought of it), but rather, man's acceptance is left to be gathered from the proposal of it by the Lord to innocent man, who would refuse no terms that a bountiful God proposed. He objected not against the condition: he betook himself to the privilege of the covenant...

Significantly, this is in full accord with the teaching of Witsius: "Man, upon the proposal of this covenant, could not

3 T, 229, 230 (1709-11).
without guilt, refuse giving . . . acceptance." ¹ Boston can be fully as emphatic: "God's sovereign authority over man . . . [is such that his] proposals are in effect laws . . ." ²

To prove that the covenant of works is a proper covenant, Boston goes into an explanation of the parties, parts, and seals of the covenant. While the covenant of works is given by God to Adam in the garden, it must always be understood that this was the outcome of a decision made in eternity. "He from all eternity decreed the creation of man after his own image, and the making of the covenant of works with him, in time."³ As is proper to a covenant, there were two parties to it, albeit "two very unequal parties."⁴ Concerning the first party, God, Boston was certainly in accord with Witsius, that strictly speaking "God owes nothing to his creature."⁵ Nevertheless, in making the covenant God shows "his supreme authority over the creature man," "his abundant goodness," and "his admirable condescension."⁶ It is also God who "drew all the articles of it [the covenant], by himself alone . . . This was becoming the inequality of the parties . . ."⁷

³ The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 386 (1722-24).
⁴ The Covenant of Works, XI, 183.
⁵ Witsius, op. cit., I, 53 [1. 4. 11].
⁷ Ibid., p. 189.
The second party to the covenant was man, not as a sinner, but as "a righteous man, morally perfect, endued with sufficient power and abilities to believe and do whatever God should reveal to or require of him, fully able to keep the law." Man, in short, was made in the image of God. In his concept of the image Boston was hardly an innovator. The Shorter Catechism answers the tenth question, "How did God create man?" with "God created man, male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures." Boston's exposition of the image is primarily an expansion of this:

1. Man's understanding was a lamp of light. He had perfect knowledge of the law, and of his duty accordingly; he was made after God's image, and consequently could not want knowledge, which is a part thereof, Col. iii. 16. 

   (2.) His will was endowed with righteousness, Eph. iv. 24 where "the new man" is said to be "after God created in righteousness." It was, by its natural set received in creation, straight to the will of God. 

3. His affections were orderly, pure, and holy; which is a necessary part of that uprightness wherein man was created.

4. The image of God consisted consequently at least in dominion over the inferior creatures, whereby he had a right to dispose of them according to his pleasure, Gen. i. 26, 27.; which was a resemblance of the supreme
The reason for the customary entrance of the doctrine of the image into the federal scheme at this point is to indicate that man was originally so constituted as to have been capable of fulfilling the subsequent parts of the covenant.

An equally important aspect of the second party to the covenant was that Adam was party to it as a public person. Adam represented not only himself in this covenant, but the totality of mankind. "He stood for them all in that covenant, and was their federal head, that covenant being made with him as a public person representing them all." The proof for this contention is taken largely from I Cor. xv. and Romans v., while the argument, which in this instance runs from Christ to Adam, is essentially this:

Again, Christ is not the last Adam, but as the federal head of the elect, bringing salvation to them by his covenant keeping; therefore the first Adam was the federal head of those whom he brought death upon by his covenant-breaking, and these are all, [I Cor. xv.] ver. 22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

The importance of insisting upon Adam's perfection and federal headship will become evident in the consideration of the function of the covenant of works.

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1 I, 183 (1709-??). Perhaps here we have a faint shadow of the Reformed teaching of the μικρόκοσμος, see Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics (London, 1950 [First ed., in German, 1861]), p. 220. Cf. The Fourfold State, VIII, 19 (1699-1727); and The Covenant of Works, XI, 185 (1721-22).

2 The Covenant of Works, XI, 185.


[The Covenant of Works, XI, 187.]
A proper covenant, besides having parties, must also have parts, and the parts of this covenant are three: a condition, a promise, and a penalty. The condition of the covenant is obedience. But to what norm must this obedience be directed? Of course, there is the prescription of the tree in the garden, but to leave it at that would have the double defect of failing to take into account current Reformed teaching concerning natural law, and failing to put the totality of the law into such a relationship to Adam’s sin as to evince man’s total disobedience of, and opposition to, the law.

There was no reason whatsoever for Boston to be the least bit hesitant about incorporating the concept of natural law into his system. That its ancestry went back to the time of Thucydides, and that it was universally held in the Middle Ages would be of little importance to Boston. But in that it was found explicitly in Calvin’s Institutes, and in the rest of the Reformed theologians, including Witsius, there would be no questioning of its validity. It is not to

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1A proper covenant should also have sacraments to seal its validity, and to this use the trees of the garden are put. Boston limits the sacraments to a very conservative two (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life), which indicates that he is far from being a mere imitator of Witsius, who by including Paradise and the Sabbath has four sacraments. The Covenant of Works, XI, 215 (1721-22); and Witsius, op. cit., I, 81 [1. 6. 11].


Calvin, however, that one must go to find the initial linking of natural law with the covenant concept, but rather to Melanchthon, from whom it passes to Musculus, St. Zzegedin, and especially Ursinus, and finally reaches its full flowering in Cocceius, thence to Witsius and to Boston, with whom our immediate concern lies (this line of development is intended only to be indicative, not exhaustive).

It should be recognized from the start that natural law, moral law, and the ten commandments are equivalent terms for Boston, as well as for Witsius and Calvin. This natural law came to man not in the covenant of works, but "was concreated with him, engraven on his heart in his creation. For it is said, Gen. 1. 27, that 'God created man in his own image;' ..." 3 It is just because the ten commandments being the substance of the law of nature, a representation of God's image, and a beam of his holiness, behoved for ever unalterably to be a rule of life to man-kind . . . [that] their being a rule of life to Adam and his posterity, had no dependance on their becoming the

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1 Gottlob Schrenk, Gottesreich und Bund im Älteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Cocceius (Güttersloh, 1925), pp. 43ff., and Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/1: Die Lehre Von Der Versöhnung (Zürich, 1955), pp. 61-62.


3 The Covenant of Works, XI, 179. Cf., I, 237 (1709-??). The concept of the law being created with man, and "written on his heart," is found both in the Institutes (2. 8. 1) and in Melanchthon (Schrenk, op. cit., p. 49), and can thenceforth be found almost anywhere in the Reformed tradition. It is found in Cocceius (ibid., p. 85), in one of his predecessors in federal theology, Raphael Eglin (ibid., p. 66), and far more important for Boston, in The Marrow of Modern Divinity (VII, 308-09) and in Witsius (op. cit., I, 37 [1. 3. 2]).
covenant of works; but they would have been that rule, though there never had been any such covenant ... \footnote{Notes on the Marrow, VII, 309 (1721-22). Cf. The Covenant of Works, XI, 190-91 (1721-22).} \footnote{The Covenant of Works, XI, 192.} \footnote{Ibid., p. 194. For a detailed account of how the entire Decalogue was broken in the eating of the fruit see The Fourfold State, VIII, 85 (1699-1727), or its progenitor in The Marrow, VII, 178-79.}

The covenant of works does not give the law its being or validity in Boston's thought, for the law as law is anterior to the covenant of works both in existence and compulsion. The function of the covenant of works is something distinctly different.

The prohibition to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil comes under a heading other than that of natural law. It comprises the "symbolical" law, enforceable because the "natural law obliged him to the observation of it, inasmuch as it [the natural law] strictly bound him to obey his God and Creator in all things ... " But it must be noted that the forbidding of the fruit

was a compend of the law of nature. Love to God and one's neighbour was wrapt up in it; and all the ten commands were eminently comprehended therein. For in not eating thereof he would have testified his supreme love to God, and his due love to his posterity; and in eating thereof he cast off both, and so broke all the ten commandments. Therefore, to eat of the tree gives evidence of the very opposite of supreme love of God; it means the breaking of all his commands, the breaking of his entire natural law! It should be noted that Adam's obedience, due to the law of nature and to the symbolical law, was to be perfect in principle, parts, and degrees; and perpetual during the time
of trial. 1 This obedience formed the conditional part of the
covenant of works.

Were Adam to fail to fulfill the condition of the
covenant he would necessarily be liable to its penalty, a part
of the covenant more obviously contained in Genesis: "for in
the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." 2
This penalty includes Legal Death, Real Death, Spiritual
Death, Natural Death, and Eternal Death. 3

"Implied in the threatening of death in case of
sinning" was yet another part of the covenant, a promise of
life. 4 It is this promise in particular that marks God's
condescension in the covenant. Obedience to the law could
have been demanded as a matter of right, and even obedience
could assure no reward, 5 "but then God put to the natural law
a promise of eternal life, and a threatening of death, and so
it became a covenant of works." 6 As to the nature of this
promise, a broad-minded Puritan in 1645 could be a federal
theologian and still maintain that

the good that God promised was in it[s] kind a perfect
systeme of good, which was to be continued so long as he
continued obedient, which because it might be continued
in the eye of creating power for ever, we call it

1The Covenant of Works, XI, 194-95 (1721-22).
2Genesis II. 17, and Boston's text for Part I of
The Covenant of Works, XI, 176ff.
3Ibid., pp. 208-15.
4Ibid., p. 200.
5Ibid., p. 192. This was a point of view particu-
larly common among the Scholastics. Heppe, Reformed
Dogmatics, pp. 285, 296.
6The Covenant of Works, XI, 192.
happinesse, life, and everlasting happinesse. 1

However, Herman Witsius, admired so much by Boston, pointedly asks

What kind of covenant would it have been, to have added no reward to his obedience, and his faithful compliance with the conditions of the covenant, but only a continuation of those blessings which he actually enjoyed already . . .? 2

Boston takes the same point of view; a true covenant must have the promise of something greater than the receiving party already possesses.

Boston divides the benefits of the promise into three parts, the first of which is a "prosperous natural life," the essence of which is a "permanent union of soul and body" (insofar as death is always viewed as the separation of soul and body, this is merely another way of saying that Adam was to enjoy continued life). 3 As can readily be seen, this aspect of the promise is nothing more than homiletic filling, for it promises nothing more than Adam already has. The second part of the promise is a "prosperous spiritual life," consisting of the "union of the soul with God," which means that Adam continues in the image of God, in the love and favor of God, in ready access to God, and in "daily comfort in his performance," or, in short, all the things he already


2 Witsius, op. cit., I, 52 [1. 4. 8].

3 I, 233 (1709-??); cf. The Fourfold State, VIII, 17 (1699-1727); and the most lengthy discussion: The Covenant of Works, XI, 201-02 (1721-22).
The third part of the promise—and the only part to carry any real weight—is the promise of "Eternal life in heaven." Under this third part of the promise, Boston's first three subpoints can together be summarized as confirmation in righteousness. Man's soul is to be confirmed in innocence, righteousness, and holiness, "that he should be set beyond hazard of sinning." Thus the second point inevitably follows: "The setting of his body absolutely and for ever out of all hazard of death, even remote hazard." The third subpoint merely considers this in relation to God: "The setting of the love and favour of God upon him for ever, without any hazard of his falling out of it." Then follows a slight deviation of the theme to the effect that besides being confirmed in righteousness, the eventual result will be "the transporting of him soul and body to heaven, there to enjoy the perfection of blessedness through eternity." Throughout Boston's writings it is very apparent that the primary aspect of the promise is that of confirmation in righteousness. This achieves its importance in that had only Adam been confirmed, all

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1 I, 233 (1709-?). Cf. The Fourfold State, VIII, 17 (1699-1727); The Covenant of Works, XI, 202, 203 (1721-22). These weightless arguments are indicative of Boston's seeming inability to emphasize his main argument once he has a list of items to make.


3 The Covenant of Works, XI, 203.

4 Ibid., p. 204.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid. The idea of Adam's having been able to achieve eternal life is common in this period of Reformed thought, as can be seen in Heppe's Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 283, 294-96.
those who should afterwards have come into the world, would not only have had original righteousness conveyed to them from him, but [would] have been confirmed too in holiness and happiness, so that they could not have fallen. It is then argued that "to make a promise necessarily implies that a time is set for obtaining the reward promised," and thus, although "the time of this probation is not mentioned in the Bible," the idea of a "time of trial" becomes a further essential element in the structure of the covenant of works. Thus, had Adam only given obedience to the law conco-created within him, and to the symbolic law (in which the whole law inhered) for his time of trial, mankind would have been confirmed in righteousness. Sin, death, sickness, misery—all would have been impossible; man would now live in pure happiness, and would have eternal life. This was the promise of the covenant of works.

Having completed the exposition of the constituent elements of the covenant of works, its parties and its parts, the question may be posed as to whether at this point the covenant is to Boston an asset or a liability. But before this can be done, two very significant points should be noted. The first is that Boston is very much aware that from the point of view of man's happiness, those who are now saved in Christ will be far happier than they would have been had Adam successfully completed his trial. The benefits are

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1The Covenant of Works, XI, 198 (1721-22).
2I, 232 (1709-??).
carefully noted in a section entitled "The difference between Adam's and the saints' heaven" which follows immediately upon the discussion of the promise of the covenant. The second consideration is that of the decrees of God. Since "not only good things, but evil things fall within the compass of his holy decree;" since he holds "the rudder of the world in his hand, steering its course through all the floatings and tossings of causality and contingency to his own appointed ends," it must be concluded that Adam's fall was a part of the decree—although in such a way as not to interfere with his free will. Boston states that God has "a purpose in permitting man to fall," and "this permission taking place in time, was then decreed from eternity . . . " (the disregard of tense—if intended—is possible because nothing is future, but all things present with God). Now in that the covenant of works was of less benefit to man in its keeping than in its breaking, and since its keeping was not a part of God's decree, what validity does it have? What function does the covenant of works perform to justify its place within Boston's theology? Up to this point in the exposition there is no such functional justification to be found!

Not only does the covenant of works thus far fail to serve a real function, but there is a sense in which it forms an alien element within Boston's theology. The primary

1 The Covenant of Works, XI, 205-07 (1721-22).
2 ibid., 151 (1709-??).
3 ibid., p. 86.
4 [X], 436 (1732).
5 ibid.
foreign element is that of works itself, but the concept of the image, and the promise of confirmation in righteousness also play their supplementary and illustrative roles.

The idea of promising Adam, created perfect in the image of God, something more—even of confirming him in righteousness—must seem just a little strange from the present theological viewpoint. However, Boston's theology at this point is in line with a long Reformed tradition:

In der Theologie des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts stellte sich der Gegensatz lutherischer und reformirter Lehrweise weiterhin so fest, dass nach jener gelehrten, der Urmen schen sei so wie er von Gott ins Dasein gerufen ward, das letzte Ziel und Resultat der Schöpfung und das schlechthin realisierte Menschheitsideal gewesen, so dass Adam in dem, was ihm von Gott gegeben und wozu er geordnet war, nur zu beharren brauchte; wogegen das reformirte System zwar auch die volle Herrlichkeit der imago div. Adams anerkannte, aber den Gedanken betonte, dass nicht die Erschaffung des gelehrten Menschen als solche, sondern die Aufrichtung des foedus mit demselben der eigentliche Zweck Gottes war, weshalb der Mensch berufen gewesen sei, durch Perseveranz in Gehorsam seine Herrlichkeit spontan insofern noch zu erhöhen, als er die ihm verliehene sittliche Integrität persönlich bejahren und sie nicht bloss als verliehene Gottesgabe fortbestehen lassen, sondern die durch persönliche sittliche Action gewissermassen erst in sein eignes sittliches Besitztum umwandeln sollte. That this is true in Calvin as well has been noted in the previous chapter (supra, p. 110). Calvin, however, was too concerned with God's gracious action toward man in Christ to spend much time speculating about "might have beens," with the result that there can be no direct evidence concerning what Calvin would have said as to the nature of a "confirmation

1Heinrich Heppe, Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus im sechzehnten Jahrhundert (Gota, 1857), 1, 358.
in righteousness" (could he even have used that term?). However, within Calvin's thought there are two specific elements that keep the little he had to say on the subject in complete harmony with the facts of revelation—something which is not always true in Boston's system.

It is to Calvin's credit that "he broke with the traditional habits of the Schoolmen who used to think of the relations between God and man in terms of a gradation of being, and so inevitably of the imago dei in terms of a static analogy of being."¹ The imago for Calvin is not substance, not being, but rather is thought of "in terms of a spiritual relation to the gracious will of God." Torrance goes on to summarize Calvin's concept:

Within the single thought of imago dei there is included a two-sided relation, but it is a relation which has only one essential motion and rhythm. There is the grace of God, and man's answer to that grace. Such an answer partakes of and subsists in the essential motion of grace. . . .²

Man was not made with any settled constancy, but it was the intention of God that by living in this wise, in utter dependence on God's grace in a world which witnessed to him every day of how absolutely dependent he was on God's unmerited kindness, man should eventually be endowed with a more permanent imago dei and a more permanent life.³

The two primary points to be reckoned with here are that for Calvin the imago is cast in terms of dynamic relationship rather than static being, and that it is sustained solely by

²Ibid., p. 80.
³Ibid., p. 81.
grace. The element of grace is retained even as man is endowed with a more permanent *imago*: "it behoves God to stabilize that which He has once put into us, for if He maintains it not by His grace all will go to decay". There is no conflict of gracious and non-gracious elements in Calvin; at this point his theology is consistently gracious.

Unfortunately, with the renewed use of scholastic forms came the inevitable Greek ideas, so that Reformed theology was soon a mixture of Hellenic and Hebraic thought. Two of these concepts which seem to go hand in hand are the essentially Platonic notion of the immortality of the soul and the idea of the image as having real substance or being, which, of course, would be the logical conclusion if one followed the idea of the immortality of the soul into its basic assumption of man as essentially divine. Within Reformed dogmatics the idea of the immortality of the soul was cut off from this source, this assumption, by the teaching of the soul's createdness by God (an emphasis so strong that many felt it imperative to hold a doctrine of "creationism"), and by the fact that the Hebrew notion of the unity of man's being was never completely lost, for it was still possible to talk of "the substance of man, i.e.

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3 Boston was a creationist (VII, 20 [1727-28]) while also holding the immortality of the soul (II, 607 [1719-??]).
... his spirit-body personality ...”¹ However, these elements were not strong enough to overcome the tendency to substantize the image. Polanus (1624)² can speak of the image in two parts, the first in terms of "actual spiritual substance, incorporeal and immortal," the second as "endowments or attributes."³ Marcellus (1662) can refer to the image in terms of nature, endowments, essence, and state.⁴ Wollebusch (1626), A. Diest (1643), Bucan (1609), and Heidan (1686), all use the term substance to describe the image, while Maastricht (1714) can speak of it in terms of essence, nature, faculties, and gifts.⁵ Even the great Hebrew scholar of the Westminster Assembly, John Lightfoot (whose works Boston greatly admired), can speak of the image in terms of essence.⁶

Cocceius stands in opposition to this tendency, denying that the image is to be found in the "substance of the soul," and reinstating the dynamic idea of "moral reciprocity with God."⁷ Unfortunately, this is not carried on by Witsius, but the effect has nevertheless been such as to take the term substance out of his vocabulary, to be replaced with the slightly better "immortal nature of the soul," and "endowments or qualities."⁸ In view of the history of the

¹Heppe, Reform ed Dogmatics, p. 232.
²The dates indicate the date of publication of the author's work from which the information is taken by Heppe.
³Ibid., pp. 234-35.
⁴Ibid., p. 235.
⁵Ibid., pp. 235-36.
⁷Heppe, Reform ed Dogmatics, p. 232.
⁸Witsius, op. cit., 1, 34 [1. 2. 11].
doctrine of the image one suspects that even as the terms quality and nature were being used, they were steadily assuming the quantitativeness of the earlier "substance." This is true as well of Boston, where the dynamic view of Calvin or Cocceius is largely absent. However, the extreme of a completely substantival view has been avoided by the use of a more "qualitative" terminology. The parts of the image are "moral qualities," or in the restoration of the image, "new qualities." "Thus was man made originally righteous, being created in 'God's own image,' Gen. 1. 27, which consists in the positive qualities of 'knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness' ..." As the image becomes a matter of qualities in which Adam is created, so there seems to be less need to speak of a gracious sustenance of the image as man becomes a participant in the covenant of works. While Boston sees the establishment of the covenant of works as an act of condescension on the part of God, and therefore a gracious act, no mention in this context is ever made of man's being constantly dependent upon God's grace for sustenance. This is quite consistent with Boston's concept of the image, for it is never spoken of in terms of a relationship of grace, but always in terms of something that is given in creation. Adam is "endowed" with knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; he was "made" very good. The language used is such as to

1II, 60 (1713-15).
2X, 363 (1731).
3The Fourfold State, VIII, 16 (1699-1727).
4The Covenant of Works, XI, 185 (1721-22).
make one think in terms of attributes rather than in terms of
a spiritual relationship of grace, for the image is a part of
Adam's created being. Adam's original righteousness, "as it
was universal, so it was natural to him, and not supernatural
in that state . . . he was created with it, and it was
necessary to the perfection of man . . . "

Thus was man made originally righteous, being created
in 'God's own image,' Gen. i. 27, which consists in the
positive qualities of 'knowledge, righteousness, and true
holiness,' Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24. 'All that God
made was very good, according to their several natures,'
Gen. i. 31.2

"He was immortal. He would never have died if he had not
sinned . . ."3 Because Boston can so speak of the image, the
way is open (in a most inviting manner) to think of confirma-
tion in righteousness in terms of confirmed being or
existence—and this certainly seems to be the implication of
his teaching. But, were man in his confirmation to receive
a permanent existence independent of God's grace, then the
doctrine would have resulted in the epitome of sin. Boston
is not so poor a theologian as to let this happen, for
despite the consistent absence of grace in his consideration
of man as a party to the covenant of works, or in his state
of innocence, yet in a different context Boston recognizes
that to make men unchangeable by nature is to make him God.
Boston confronts the danger in the discussion on man's free
will and his mutability:

1The Fourfold State, VIII, 15 (1699-1727).
2Ibid., p. 16.
3Ibid., p. 21.
Let no man quarrel, that God made Adam liable to change in his goodness; for if he had been unchangeably holy, he behaved to be so either by nature or by free grace; if by nature, that were to make him God; if of free grace, then there was no wrong done him in withholding what was not due. And he would have got the grace of confirmation, if he had stood the time of trial. 1

While the thought of "confirming grace" can be found in several other instances, 2 any clear statements as to Adam being sustained by grace in his state of innocence are exceedingly rare. Nevertheless, they do exist, and in the above context of man's mutability Boston can state that

The Lord did not withdraw any of that strength and ability which he had bestowed upon them in their creation. There was no subtraction of any grace that was requisite for their standing. 3

But by their being left to the freedom of their own will, we are to understand God's withholding of that further grace (which he was nowise bound to give them) that would have infallibly prevented their falling into sin. 4

He gave him a power to stand if he would, and he took not away from him any grace given; but, for his trial, left him to his freedom of will, with which he was created. 5

When confronted with the thought, Boston can declare explicitly that it is God's grace that supports man, but the fact that he so infrequently finds occasion to do so indicates the small part it plays in his general exposition. Because of the exceptions, however (and perhaps on a priori

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1I, 247 (1709-??). An almost identical statement appears in The Fourfold State, VIII, 15 (1699-1727), except that there "free gift" is consistently substituted for "free grace"!

2The Covenant of Works, XI, 230 (1721-22); and I, 239, 247 (1709-??).

3I, 247.

4Ibid.

5The Covenant of Works, XI, 229.
grounds as well) it cannot be said that Boston views man as existing without God's grace, but it can be said in all fairness that his general exposition of man's status in the covenant of works is non-gracious.

This defect is such that while perhaps not a cause, it certainly stands in a relationship of reciprocal influence to the element of works in the covenant of works. Just because so very little is said about grace in this covenant, so very much can be said about works. Rather than labor the obvious, the two following examples should be sufficient to indicate the spirit of this covenant:

The first part of the condition to be performed, which was obedience to the law, fulfilling the commands God gave him, by doing what they required, Rom. x. 5, upon the doing of which he might claim the promised life in virtue of the compact. 1

The very essence of the covenant of works is that

. . . under the first covenant the work must be accepted for its conformity to the law, and then the person for the work's sake; . . . [which is in utter contrast to the second covenant]. But in the second covenant the persons of believers are first accepted for Christ's sake, Eph. i. 6; and then their works for the same Christ's sake, Heb. xi. 4. 2

Here it is said that God is honestly putting man on trial. God has created him so that he can fulfill the condition of obedience, if he will but work to obtain the promise. However, Boston is to propose in his exposition of the covenant of grace that God is working to show forth the glory of his grace.

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2 The Covenant of Works, XI, 194.
How can the covenant of works be taken seriously as a possibility of real works if the end object is a manifestation of grace? Boston does not resolve the two, instead he gives his exposition of the covenants in two separate volumes.

With the above in view it is possible to see the contrast between Boston and Calvin. Calvin's emphasis is upon the dynamic relationship in which man in his original state is constantly sustained by grace. This serves to indicate that the characteristic of man's potential "increased stability" (man's "might have been") would have been essentially the same, albeit somewhat poorer, than the nature of things as they actually occurred. Adam, living in a dynamic relationship with God, was sustained by God's grace. Had he grown to increased stability the relationship would have continued dynamic, and the sustenance would still have been by grace. Man's relationship to God in Christ is now in fact dynamic, and supported wholly by grace. With Boston, however, the "might have been"--confirmation in righteousness--and the fact are somewhat less easily joined, for the image has become sufficiently static for Boston to find no need to speak about the sustenance of that image by grace. The exposition is predominantly non-gracious. The condition of the covenant of works is explained as precisely that, a condition of works. On the other hand, Boston's theology of fact, the covenant of grace, is just that--gracious. Thus, with the same seriousness that the covenant of works is conceived as genuinely of works, apart from grace--to that same extent is it an alien element
within Boston's total theology.

This would perhaps be well and good in a theology built for a small god, one who when confronted by man's waywardness has to radically alter his plan of operations to suit the occasion. But Boston's God is one who stands outside of time controlling all things by his power. It is simply because the God of the covenant of grace is the same omniscient God, with the same intentions, as the God of the covenant of works, and because the same omnipotent God of the decrees is God of both covenants, that the non-gracious covenant of works is an alien element impossible to incorporate meaningfully into a total all-embracing theology. In the same degree of seriousness with which Boston puts forward a plan by God wherein man shall merit by his works what God promises, to that same degree will there be difficulty in reconciling under a total perspective the two disparate elements of his theology. This non-gracious element is never excised, it is simply ignored in later days as the theology of grace becomes dominant.

Now it is extremely difficult to treat the non-gracious element in Boston's theology fairly, for it is a matter of degree, rather than of absolutes. From the examples already cited it is obvious that a measure of support could be given to the contention that grace, while not frequently mentioned, is nevertheless explicitly stated as sustaining Adam even in the covenant of works, and that therefore one is free to draw the conclusion that grace is really at the bottom
of the covenant of works, thus denying any incongruity in Boston's theology. There is a sense in which this is true, but in the overwhelming bulk of the exposition the covenant of works is non-gracious, an inharmonious element in his theology. Had Boston been aware of the disparity he perhaps could have rectified it without completely abandoning the covenant of works, although a covenant of works which emphasizes its lack of serious intentions, as well as its gracious basis, is something rather difficult to imagine (thus indicating the correctness of the above analysis of Boston's doctrine). As the theological stage was set in Boston's day, there was simply no occasion to see the necessity of a thoroughly consistent theology—possible only by abandoning the seriousness of the covenant of works—but for this very reason, a consistent, total, overarching theology of grace is difficult to find. Perhaps here we have a part of the origin of the idea that God's sovereign decrees stand at the heart of Reformed theology.

Although the answer has already been implied, it would nevertheless be well to examine the relationship of Boston's covenant of works to Scripture. Can the sum of the parties (God and man) and parts (condition, promise, and penalty) as they are put together to total the covenant of works avoid the evaluation of being extra-biblical? Not to be uncritically critical it must in all fairness be stressed that it was much harder for Boston to see the difficulties in the argument than it is today, for he lived in a very different hermen-
ethical world. In Boston's time it was not considered the least bit questionable to go into a detailed examination of such matters as Adam's condition before the fall, for the respected Andreae Hyperii had in 1566 published a theology centered entirely around man's state before the fall. Even with all these very legitimate excuses, Boston is still not entirely blind to a decided paucity of biblical proof concerning certain aspects of the covenant of works. Of course it is quite easy to find the parties of the covenant, and to find the trees of the sacraments. The penalty spoken of in Genesis ii. 17 is very plain, and from it the demand for obedience justly inferred. But, is it really a covenant? As Romista protested so early in the Marrow, "But, sir, you know there is no mention made in the book of Genesis of this covenant of works..." This lack is keenly felt by Boston, for he must acknowledge that the covenant of works is "partly expressed and partly implied." That there is a condition to this covenant is argued from the commands in Genesis, chapters two and three, from the Psalms, the New Testament, and the "fact" that there is a penalty and promise. But the promise itself is based on the argument that "the threatening manifestly implies another proposition..." Almost two decades later, the evidence still lacks strength, for the promise is still "implied in the threatening of death

1The Marrow, VII, 172.
2The Covenant of Works, XI, 178 (1721-22).
3I, 229 (1709-??).
in case of sinning."¹ That this "supposed," "assumed," and "inferred" covenant was accepted by Adam "is left to be gathered."²

This is not to suggest that the exposition of the covenant is not abundantly studded with references to Scripture, but their source, and the weakness of the whole argument, is amply illustrated by Boston's own observation: "The nature of the covenant of works is most expressly in the New Testament brought in, propounded, and explained, from the Mosaical dispensation."³ Precisely here Boston has put his finger on the primary weakness of the scriptural backing used for the covenant of works, for the great bulk of "proof" comes from Paul's statements concerning the law—not from anything said of Adam.

The time of trial is purely inferential, and with regard to man's confirmation in righteousness and eternal life, assent must be given to the wise observation of John Ball:

But upon a supposition of Adam persisting in a state of obedience, to say that God would have translated him to the state of glory in Heaven, is more than any just ground will warrant; because in Scripture there is no such promise.

Boston's argument on this matter is worth relating, for it illustrates not only the type of logic constantly employed,

¹The Covenant of Works, XI, 200 (1721-22).
²I, 229 (1709-??).
³Notes on the Marrow, VII, 196, 197 (1721-22). For examples of this type of argument see those on Gal. iv. 24, I, 230; and Gal. iii. 10, Ibid., p. 232.
⁴Ball, op. cit., p. 10.
but it also indicates the way in which Scripture is used as
evidence with complete disregard for historical perspective
(i.e., the use of hell as an argument for eternal life trans-
posed into the early chapters of Genesis);

... it is evident, that by the breach of this covenant
man now falls under the sentence of eternal death in hell;
therefore, on the grounds of the goodness of God, and the
equity of his proceedings, one may conclude that eternal
life in heaven was promised.¹

While Boston sincerely believed that his entire exposition
was built upon Scripture, or justifiable inferences there-
from, and, unlike Cocceius, makes no appeal to conscience as
the proof of the covenant of works, yet Boston's covenant
must be judged essentially extra-biblical.

¹The Covenant of Works, XI, 205 (1721-22).
²Hepp, Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 285-89.
Although Boston has given in full the construction of a thus far functionless covenant of works, his exposition is far from finished. He proceeds with a rather pedestrian chapter: "Of the Breach of the Covenant of Works." The tempting was done by Satan, the breaking by Adam (on the same day he was created).\(^1\) Within this discussion the question concerning the freedom of Adam's will is reviewed. Here, as always, the material was delivered as part of a sermon, and while it is of quite ample weight as such, one will be disappointed if looking for the intricate arguments of Ursinus, or even the more modest discussion of Witsius.\(^2\)

In discussing predestination and the decrees Boston insisted upon the absolute sovereignty of God; but in the discussion on Adam's freedom of will he is equally emphatic

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\(^1\) The Covenant of Works, XI, 226, 227 (1721-22).

\(^2\) Davidis Farel, Corpus Doctrinae Orthodoxae aive Catecheticae Explicationum D. Zachariae Vrsini (Heidelbergae, 1616), pp. 54-55. Witsius, op. cit., I, 114-20 [1. 8. 10-29].
that "God left our first parents to the freedom of their own will; and was in no respect the cause of their falling." But he can also say that

by being left to the freedom of their own will, we are to understand God's with-holding of that further grace (which he was nowise bound to give them) that would have infallibly prevented their falling into sin. God only permitted this fall.\footnote{Ibid., 247 (1709-??).}

Slightly over a decade later, the tone is even more moderate:

God left man to the freedom of his own will in this matter. He was not the cause of his fall; he moved him not, nor could he move him to it. . . . He gave him a power to stand if he would, and he took not away from him any grace given . . .

Thus, Boston's view of man's freedom is quite ordinary, held firmly in the face of his doctrine of the decrees, and far less rigorous in tone than that of the strict supralapsarians. Adam had the power to stand, he did not have God's confirming grace which would keep him from falling. Therefore, as our first parents were tempted by Satan, "the cool of temptation raised to a flame, which quickly spread itself over the whole soul and body."\footnote{Ibid., pp. 224-25.} The ingredients of this sin were "horrid unbelief," "pride, ambition, bold presumption," "curiosity," "monstrous ingratitude, and discontent," "contempt of God, rebellion against him, and downright apostasy," "in one word, this sin was a breaking of the whole law of God at once."\footnote{Ibid., XI, 229 (1721-22).} Adam had fallen.
While the covenant of works serves no functional purpose in its establishment, its primary use is found as it is broken. It is just here, as Adam breaks the covenant of works, that the vital function of the covenant becomes evident, for its real function in Boston's theology is to rationalize the doctrine of original sin and its universal imputation. While the fact that Adam was "our natural or seminal head" is mentioned, the idea of imputation through our natural communion with Adam has already been specifically repudiated.

As Boston himself points out, that "which is the main thing, He was our federal head in the covenant of works, our representative in that bargain." It is precisely because Adam was a party to the covenant of works as our federal head, either for good or ill, that sin can be justly imputed to all men.

Adam was not a private, but a public person. "If he had stood, we could never have fallen." This idea of Adam's federal headship was held with such seriousness that it was maintained that if while Adam was in his period of trial his children had fallen, "the loss would have been to themselves, and to themselves only," the rest of mankind would have been

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1 Therefore the chapter "Of the Imputation of Adam's First Sin to His Posterity," (The Covenant of Works, XI, 233-50 [1721-22]) is crucial to the understanding of the purpose and function of this covenant.

2 The Covenant of Works, XI, 188, contains the denial, while the reason is put forward in a list on pp. 245-46—a further indication of how unreliable Boston's lists can be. The idea is also repudiated in I, 274 (1709-??).

3 The Covenant of Works, XI, 246.

4 I, 277.
confirmed in righteousness with their federal head, Adam. ¹

This indicates the inability of Boston to imagine any other basis for universal imputation than federal headship. Without the covenant and federal headship Adam would have been as his children, who could have fallen without affecting us. Without federal headship and the covenant the ground for imputation disappears. But since the covenant was made with Adam as the federal head of mankind, it must follow that if Adam sins, all sin.

There was a public breaking of [the covenant] by Adam, the father of all mankind, standing as the representative of his posterity. . . . And even this is our sin, and breaking of the covenant; yiz. the breaking of it is ours, and brings us under guilt.²

When the question comes as to "How Adam's sin of breaking the covenant of works is our sin, our breaking of it"? the answer is that "it is really ours in itself," for "the guilt of it is ours," "the fault of it is ours," and "the stain and blot of it is ours."³ Scripture can teach that all mankind sinned in Adam

for in the law-reckoning, as to the payment of a debt, and fulfilling of a covenant, or any the like purposes, the surety and the original debtor, the federal head or the representative, and the represented, are but one person.⁴

Adam's breaking of the covenant is in law their breaking of it; it is imputed to them by a holy God, whose judgment is according to truth, and therefore can never impute to men the sin of which they are not guilty.⁵

¹The Covenant of Works, XI, 198 (1721-22).
²Ibid., p. 237.
³Ibid., p. 240.
⁴Notes on the Marrow, VII, 244, 245 (1721-22).
⁵The Covenant of Works, XI, 187.
For Boston there is no other way to explain the fact that all men are held to have sinned in Adam than by the fact that Adam entered into the covenant of works as our federal head, and insofar as he broke that covenant, we broke it; his sins are imputed to us.

... for unless there had been some bond of union betwixt the one and many, the sin of that one could not have been imputed to the many. There was indeed a natural bond betwixt him and us: but this was not the ground of the imputation; for we have such an union with our immediate parents, whose sin is not thus imputed. It behoved then to be a moral bond, by the way of a covenant, he being the representative of many in the covenant of works.

As Boston discards the idea that we are made sinners through our natural bond of union with Adam, he rejects as well, and even more emphatically, the idea that we are made sinners by consent or approbation of Adam's sin, or "by imitation, as Pelagians would have it." As proof for his argument Boston points to infants, who are under the power of death, and yet who could not possibly have sinned by consent or imitation.

The only solution is imputation.

That the reliance upon imputation through federal headship is to the exclusion of other arguments for our participation in Adam's sin becomes obvious when Boston maintains that it was Adam's first sin only "that broke the covenant of works. Other sins of Adam are not imputed to them, more than those of any other private persons."
As for Adam's after sins, the scripture takes no notice of them that way. If our communion with him in sin and death did depend merely on his natural relation to us, the conveyance of guilt from him to us could not have ceased, till his whole guilt contracted all his life over had disburdened itself upon us; because the natural relation ceased not, but was still the same. It depended then upon some supervenient relation, the which could be no other but that he was constituted a public person, representing us in the first covenant.

Further indication of the sole use of this method of imputation is evidenced in the manner in which Christ is guarded from this imputation of sin. Although "indeed a Son of Adam," yet he was born of a virgin, and

upon this account he came not in under Adam in the covenant of works; for Christ was not born by virtue of that blessing of marriage given before the fall, Gen. i. 28, but by virtue of a covenant-promise made after the fall, Gen. iii. 15. So that Adam could represent none in that covenant, but such as were to spring from him by virtue of that blessing.

It is not because Christ is born of a virgin as such, but because by that means he is not included in the covenant of works, and thereby escapes the imputation of sin!

That imputation is the functional task of the covenant of works is seen as well in the practical outworkings of Boston's teaching. As Boston suggests a sample "personal covenant" to his people, the part played by the covenant of works is obvious: "In the first place, O my soul, do I verily believe that I was lost, ruined, and undone in Adam, by his breaking of the covenant of works; . . . " Thirteen years later, Boston's own personal covenant contained the confession.
that "I am by nature a lost and undone sinner, wholly corrupted, and laid under the curse, in Adam, through the breach of the covenant of works; . . ."\(^1\)

It is when considered in relationship to imputation that the other elements of the covenant take on real meaning. The doctrine of the image plays its part in leaving Adam inexcusable. Adam was "endued with sufficient power and abilities to believe and do whatever God should reveal to or require of him, fully able to keep the law.\(^2\) The covenant was just in its requirements, for Adam was able to keep them.

While the doctrine of the image makes man capable of keeping the law, the teaching concerning natural law makes Adam inexcusable as far as not knowing the law. The law is concreted in Adam; when he sins he does so knowing the law in its entirety, and thus for Boston Adam's sin is radical, for it puts man at odds with the entire law. In that Adam stands for us as our federal head, this thoroughgoing opposition to the law is complete and radical.

Lest it seem unduly harsh that all mankind should so fall in Adam, the elements of confirmation in righteousness and a time of trial find their use as counterfoils to the teaching of imputation. They are the palliatives to ease the acceptance of the primary teaching of imputation. True, all men are made sinners through Adam, but had he only stood during his time of trial, then all men should have been

\(^1\)II, 672 (1729).
\(^2\)The Covenant of Works, XI, 184 (1721-22).
confirmed in righteousness with no possibility of sinning. With such possibilities under the covenant, man must not complain that God is unjust, but rather see his own weakness in Adam. Thus do the concepts of confirmation in righteousness and the time of trial function as the sugar coating (although Boston saw them as the actual counterparts of the proposed penalty) for the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to all mankind. The parts of the covenant find their real purpose as they support the primary function of the covenant of works within Boston's total theology—the imputation of Adam's sin to all men.

This doctrine of imputation also has an important by-product, for besides imputing sin, it also resolves the place of the law. The role played by the law was one of the

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¹Nor was Boston the last to hold to the covenant of works largely (admittedly or otherwise) because it provided a logical rationale for the doctrine of imputation. That distinguished Reformed scholar of the last century, William Cunningham, held the covenant of works for very largely that reason (William Cunningham, The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation [Edinburgh, 1866], pp. 371-95. William Cunningham, Historical Theology [Edinburgh, 1870], I, 338, 341, 502-15). Calvin, of course, managed quite nicely without the federal theology with its covenant of works, dealing primarily in terms of corruption with regard to original sin (John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge [Edinburgh, 1869], I, 214-20 [2. 1. 5-11]). But quite contrary to popular myth, Calvin was not nearly so rigorously logical as his followers, who having once tasted the heady wine of logic in a full-blown federal theology were loath to give it up for the far less precisely logical biblical forms of thought. The essence of Cunningham's complaint against Placeus (or La Place, of the school of Saumur. His De imputatione primi peccati Adami was published in 1665) is that he repudiates the accepted federal theology, and, while admitting the moral depravity which is somehow connected with Adam, neither gives nor attempts an explanation of its existence and transmission. (William Cunningham, The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, pp. 380, 381.
primary theological issues of Boston's day, and as he fought against the legalizing of Christianity it was absolutely essential that the status of the law be clearly defined. By holding to the doctrine of natural law the law was given an initial, and a lasting validity. But what is this validity? Certainly it is a rule of life, an indication of God's will for man. But is it a means of salvation? By means of the doctrine of the covenant of works Boston could answer "Absolutely not!" The covenant of works promised life for all mankind through the federal headship of Adam if only he would fulfill the condition of the covenant. But Adam did not, and all men through him broke the covenant and received the penalty rather than the promise.

The promised life was lost, man had no more any pretensions to it; he could no more plead the reward . . . and the prospect of the reward, which before his disobedience he had in hope, was entirely cut off. Thus failing in his performance of the condition of the covenant, he rendered the promise of the covenant null and void, as if it had never been made.

It is because the promise of the covenant is now null and void for all men that the law cannot be the way of salvation. By this doctrine Boston cuts off all possible attempts to earn salvation by works.

Boston also insists that while man has failed the condition and can therefore never hope to attain the promise,

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1The concern with regard to the place of the law is obvious in the Marrow controversy, as is attested by the queries of the Commission of the General Assembly put to the Representers. Note especially queries 2-5, 7, and 11; VII, 469-78, 487 (1722).

the obligation to fulfill the law remains, despite its impossibility.

Yet man was not, and could not thereby be freed from that covenant; still he was bound to obedience, according to the command of it; and to satisfaction, according to the threatening. Only God was no more obliged to fulfill his promise, since it was conditional, and the condition was broken.

Insofar as man in Adam promised obedience, man is still bound to that obedience, and the punishment attendant upon its non-fulfillment. However, the important by-product of imputation is not so much the continued obligation imposed by the covenant, for on Boston's own terms man was obliged to obey the laws of a sovereign God regardless of the covenant; the primary by-product is the imputed breaking of the condition of obedience, so that no man can obtain the promised eternal life by works of the law.

The covenant of works attained even more importance for Boston as he drew the inevitable conclusions from the fifth chapter of Romans. If in the federal headship of Adam sin has been imputed to all men, so too in Christ, the second Adam—"as he is a public person, representing all his elect seed in the covenant of grace, being their federal head"—will righteousness be imputed to his seed.

And thus the Scripture, determining Adam to be the figure (or type) of Christ, (Rom. v. 14,) teaches upon the one hand, that all mankind sinned in Adam, (verse 12,) and died in him, (I Cor. xv. 22,) and on the other hand, that believers were crucified with Christ, (Gal. ii. 20.)

1Ibid., p. 231.
2Ibid., p. 181.
3Ibid., p. 187.
and raised up in him.¹

Boston will argue this matter from either direction, from Christ to Adam, or from Adam to Christ, as the situation demands. For him, the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and the federal headship of Adam in the covenant of works (for only thus can sin be imputed) are inseparably linked.

This doctrine [of the imputation of Adam's sin] and the doctrine of the formal imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers stand and fall together.²

Partly because of the imputation of Adam's sin, and partly because he holds the Marrow teaching of man's continued obligation to the covenant in complete seriousness,³ Boston has a chapter on "The Condition of Men when Under the Broken Covenant of Works; and Their Dreadful State Under the Curse."⁴ Naturally, this is a matter of importance in Boston's ministry, for the warning must be sounded that everyone who is not really instated in the covenant of grace still comes under this curse. Thus Boston can say of one who stays away from the Lord's Table thinking that in that way he does not obligate himself to God:

poor soul, thou art hard and fast under covenant to God, the covenant of works, by which thou art bound to perfect obedience, under the pain of God's curse; and every sin

¹Notes on the Marrow, VII, 245 (1721-22).
²Ibid.
³The Marrow, VII, 410. Boston never speaks of the "abrogation" of the covenant of works as does Cocceius. While Witsius uses the term abrogation, he does so in a sense distinct from that of Cocceius (Witsius, op. cit., I, 131-32 [1. 9. 18-21]). Witsius' criticism of Cocceius' use of the term is found in I, 133-34 [1. 9. 23].
of thine is covenant-breaking with God, laying thee under the curse of the covenant.¹

Before discussing man's condition in his "natural" or "dreadful" state, it is perhaps worth noticing how Boston's wide range of descriptive language can be derived from a doctrine of sin which is purely legal in origin and imputation. For Boston there is no discrepancy between the strictly legal doctrines of guilt and imputation and the results, for to break the covenant, means to incur its penalty. "Thus the covenant being made with the awful sanction of death, Gen. ii. 17, upon the transgressing of it, the curse is pronounced Gen. iii."² The Covenant of Works includes sections on the nature of the curse under which natural man stands (pp. 279, 280), what it is to be under the curse (pp. 280-64), the condition of natural man under the curse in this life (pp. 284-304), and in the life to come (pp. 305-20), and the application of the doctrine (pp. 320-39). In this exposition everything is discussed under the heading of the curse, but in other writings, Boston can give a far larger place to man's natural state in terms of corruption, and the loss of the image.³ However, whether the section is begun with death, the curse, corruption, or the loss of the image—and Boston can use any to head (and pervade) a discussion—the result is the same: man's disability for anything good is complete. Thus, through a legal breaking of

¹Ibid., p. 237.
²Ibid., p. 279.
³Ibid., pp. 279-92.
the covenant, the penalty is incurred, and in describing the results of that penalty Boston can play upon a full range of biblical and non-biblical language: man's soul, mind, will, affections, conscience, and memory are not only corrupted, but corruption increases; there are lusts, and more lusts; not to mention silent strokes of judicial blindness, strong delusions, hardness of heart, a reprobate sense, vile affections, tormenting plagues which include discontent, wrath, anxiety, sorrow, terror, fear, horror of conscience—including sharp, vehement, and abiding horror, confusions, and despair. While God had made man's body a "beautiful fabric," that too is ruined in the fall, with sickness and deformity as the result.

Thus the case of the man must needs be very miserable, while a sinful soul and sinful flesh remain so closely knit together, in the nearest relation, each a snare to the other; the soul disposing the body to sin, and the body and [sic] the soul on the other hand, the corruption of the whole man must make fearful advances under the curse.

Certainly there was nothing pusillanimous about Boston's doctrine of sin. While the variety of language might tend to arouse a certain amount of amusement today, nevertheless the discussion behind each word or phrase indicates that Boston's doctrine of sin was sufficiently thorough even from the true Reformed point of view. It allows no exceptions (not even reason!)—man is completely, in every respect, a sinner.

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1 Ibid., selected from pp. 285-94.
2 Ibid., pp. 294-95.
3 Ibid., p. 295.
This was no insignificant achievement, for Perry Miller finds that the Puritans were using their federal theology for the very opposite ends: "The covenant theology, with its theory of original sin by judicial imputation, fell in with the disposition, allowing greater vitality to the natural faculties . . . ." The Puritans, according to Miller, believed that "the light of reason was what remained in fallen man of the image of God." Boston insisted that reason as well was corrupted under the curse. However, while Boston showed no tendencies whatsoever toward following this Puritan lead with regard to original sin, yet the very fact that he relied so completely upon the single instrument of imputation through federal headship makes applicable to him as well Baxter's warning to "beware lest they 'bring the Doctrine of Original Sin it self into doubt, by laying all upon Covenant-Relation . . . ."

The results of the curse as thus far described are only the miseries of this life, which are but "an earnest of eternal misery in hell" for the ungodly. While Boston held that mere fear of hell was not a proper motive to seek God, he nevertheless depicted hell with great vividness. His

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2 Ibid., p. 411.
3 E.g., X, 541 (1721); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 408 (1722-24).
4 Richard Baxter, quoted without citation of source by Perry Miller, op. cit., p. 404.
5 Should the reader wish to see Boston painting with his brightest colors, the following descriptions of hell may be examined: The Covenant of Works, XI, 305-39 (1721-22); and The Fourfold State, VIII, 347-75 (1699-1727).
viewpoint was: "True, it is never right coming to Christ, which sense of misery alone produceth; but love may thus crown a work which terror begins . . ." ¹

Having surveyed Boston's exposition of the covenant of works, what is to be said in evaluation? Scripturally it has already been judged deficient, while theologically the element of works is, in the degree that it is seriously advocated, incompatible with a consistent theology of grace. But in all fairness to Boston, could he have been expected to greatly alter or drop the covenant of works in order to obtain this theological consistency? Absolutely not! Boston saw no inconsistency in the covenant of works; instead he saw it as an absolutely essential part of a truly Christian theology. For him it was the only possible way that Adam's sin could be imputed to all men. All men are children of wrath, under the curse and ruin of sin, "but they could no other way be under it, than as in Adam their federal head and representative." ² Add to this the inseparable connection that Boston saw between the imputation of Adam's sin and that of Christ's righteousness, the two doctrines standing or falling together, ³ and it is impossible to expect him to excise the covenant in which these doctrines find their validity.

But this impossibility was "brought to an even higher pitch" (if a Bostonism may be allowed) by the

¹IX, 213 (1711).
²The Covenant of Works, XI, 188 (1721-22).
³Notes on the Harrow, VII, 245 (1721-22).
contemporary circumstances described in chapter one, for the same Professor Simson that was called before the General Assembly on charges of Arminianism and Arianism had also voiced his opinion on the matter of the covenant of works to the effect:

"that there was no proper covenant made with Adam for himself and his posterity: That Adam was not a federal head to his posterity; and that if Adam was made a federal head, it must be by divine command, which is not found in the Bible."

Boston's observation concerning Simson's denial is that

The weight of this matter lies here, that if the covenant made with Adam was not a proper covenant, he could not be a proper representing head; and if he was not, then there cannot be a proper imputation of Adam's sin unto his posterity.

Because Simson denied a proper covenant of works, Boston was all the more convinced that any denial of the covenant was sure to lead to heresy, for it struck at the imputation of Adam's sin (and therefore at the imputation of Christ's righteousness as well). With the covenant of works and its doctrines of federal headship and imputation Boston firmly closed the door against any possibility of righteousness by works, thus shutting out not only the errors of Professor Simson, but those of contemporary legalism as well. The covenant of works made rational the doctrine of imputation so that all could be shown to be sinful and guilty before God. It also clarified the function of the law, for in that all broke the covenant in Adam, it is impossible for any to earn

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1 Letter of John Simson to Mr. Rowan, as quoted in a footnote by the editor of The Covenant of Works, XI, 180 (1721-22).
2 Ibid., pp. 180-81.
salvation by works of law.

While the covenant of works played its part well in buttressing the doctrine of imputation, and barring the way to a righteousness by works, it also exacted a price for its services, for insofar as it failed to be true to the scriptural evidence it betrayed the very doctrines it sought to defend, with the result that often the true elements of the doctrine were discarded along with the false. This, however, is an objective observation, one completely impossible to Boston, for whom the covenant of works was in perfect accord with Scripture, and a theological necessity.
The covenant of grace - time, parties, and temporal proclamation

God's decision to save mankind through Christ has been viewed by Reformed theologians from Calvin to Barth as taking place in eternity. Boston is no exception; the covenant of grace was established in eternity. The exact sequence of God's eternal decrees is not explained, for Boston never argues the merits of supralapsarianism per se. However, there seems to be a tendency toward supralapsarianism in his thought, although even his most explicit statements, strictly considered, would be valid in an infralapsarian system as well.

The plan of it [the covenant of grace] was drawn from all eternity, in the council of the Trinity: for it is according to the eternal purpose purposed in Jesus Christ, Eph. iii. 11. The objects of mercy, the time and place, the way and means, of conferring it on them, were designed particularly, before man was miserable, yea, before he was at all.4

The discussion concerning the eternal nature of the

4The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 360 (1722-24).
covenant of grace gives point to the difficulty in resolving the covenants of works and grace as emphasized in the previous chapter. The covenant of works was decreed in eternity. The covenant of grace was decreed and made in eternity, before the fall, before man had been created. And yet the covenant of works, with all of its carefully developed inferences, is expounded with complete seriousness! Nothing is ever done to try to reconcile the two covenants. It is almost as though Boston was so overwhelmed by his serious exposition of the covenant of works that he could never offer an explanation which would derogate from that exposition. Rutherford, however, has no such qualms, and is quite ready to offer the explanation—the same one Boston would perhaps have made had he been pressed to do so:

Adam, according to the Lords designe, finaliter & objective was created in the state of predestination to glory and grace in Christ, as touching her [his] person, but according to his inherent condition, he was created in a legal dispensation, which was a gracious inlet to Christ;... 

Boston simply states that

The special love of God to the spiritual seed took vent in the covenant of grace. And that love and that covenant are of the same eternal date: as the love was everlasting or eternal, Jer. xxxi. 3, so was the covenant...

Insofar as Boston understands the covenant of grace to be an agreement between God and Christ, he is completely at one with the rest of the Reformed in understanding it to

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be established from eternity. On that particular point there is unanimity.

Parties:

Who were the parties to this covenant? "The Party-Contractor on Heaven's Side" was God, primarily God the Father, but the Son and the Holy Ghost have their part in the covenant, on heaven's side, as the party offended by man's sin; and, in the meantime, a peculiar agency in this great work of power and authority, on that side, is attributed to the Father; as there is unto the Son, on man's side.

In this role God is to be considered as an offended God, a graciously purposing God, and as a just God providing a recompense for sin. Without giving it any especial prominence in this list of three items, Boston has noted that "God is to be considered herein as a God purposing and decreeing from eternity to manifest the glory of his free grace, love, and mercy, in the salvation of some of mankind lost." Having stated this (which certainly has interesting implications for the covenant of works), he goes on with his list, without further elucidation of the point.

The party-contractor on man's side

in the covenant of grace, is our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone managed the interests of men in this eternal bargain: For at the making of it none of them were in being; nor if they had been, would they have been capable

1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 386 (1722-24).
2 Ibid., pp. 387-88.
3 Ibid., p. 367.
of affording any help. 1

In that Christ manages our interests, his federal headship is now stressed, just as previously the federal headship of Adam had been emphasized. Boston proceeds with a discussion of typical covenants made with public persons, i.e., representative heads, followed by another describing Christ as the last Adam:

Christ is no otherwise the second man, than as he is the second federal head, or the representative in the second covenant; as Adam was the first federal head, or the representative in the first covenant. 2

Thereupon follow further considerations of the scriptural seed, the promises made to Christ, and his suretiship. 3 The covenant was made with Christ so that it might be an eternal covenant, giving early vent to God's love; a conditional covenant, for only Christ, and not dead sinners, could fulfill the conditions of a proper covenant; a covenant of pure grace, being not made with the sinner, but with Christ himself; a covenant performed in one person, and therefore, since that person was Christ, a sure covenant, one that would not fail. 4

Having described the party contractor on heaven's side, God, and the party contractor on man's side, Christ, is not to have described all the parties of this covenant, for there is also the party represented and contracted for—the elect. In the covenant the elect "were considered as sinners,

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1 Ibid., pp. 388-89.
2 Ibid., p. 391.
3 Ibid., pp. 389-93. Cf., I, 328-30 (1709-??).
lost, ruined, and undone in Adam." 1 "They were considered also as utterly unable to help themselves, in whole or in part; as being without strength, Rom. v. 6." 2 They were debtors unable to pay, criminals unable to bear punishment or satisfy justice. 3 But, "they were considered withal as the objects of eternal, sovereign, and free love, given to Christ by his Father." 4 Boston is busy building his Calvinistic, Pauline point of emphasis within the covenant framework: man is unable to help himself. That which has to be done, is done by Christ. Therefore when Boston argues that "the elect were the party represented" he does so on Christological grounds. "Christ is the head elect, Isa. xlii. 1, they are the body elect, Eph. v. 23." 5 The elect are heavenly men, for the second man, Christ, is from heaven, I Cor. xv. 47, 48. 6 It is not simply that Christ by his covenanting makes it possible for the Father to covenant with men; no, men do no covenanting with God except through Christ their head. In this covenant it is Christ who is "party contractor" for men, they are "covenanted for" in him. The importance of this to Boston's theology will be noted when it is compared with a different form of federalism then prevalent.

Although Boston maintained the two covenants of

1The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 402 (1722-24).
2Ibid., p. 403.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., p. 400.
6Ibid.
grace and works, another federal system was perhaps even more popular in Britain at the time. This was the system that consisted of three covenants: one of works, between God and Adam; one of redemption, between God and Christ; and one of grace, between God and man. Despite its popularity, Boston firmly maintained that there were two covenants, and two covenants only. At the same time he was fully aware "that many divines do express themselves otherwise in this matter; and that upon very different views, some of which are no ways injurious to the doctrine of free grace." But then why was Boston so highly suspicious of this system with its covenant of redemption? His grounds become obvious in the short history of the doctrine.

One of the earliest exponents of the three covenant system was David Dickson, Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, who in 1648 explained the system in his book, *Therapeutica Sacra*:

A divine Covenant we call, a Contract or Paction, wherein God is at least the one party Contractor. Of this sort of Covenants about the the [sic] eternal Salvation of Men (which sort chiefly belong to our purpose) there are Three. The First is, the Covenant of Redemption, past between God, and Christ God appointed Mediator, before the World was, in the Council of the Trinity. The Second is, the Covenant of Works, made between God and Men, in Adam in his Integrity. . . . The Third is, the Covenant of Grace and Reconciliation through Christ, made between God and Believers (with their Children) in Christ.  

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1Ibid., p. 396.  
2David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh, 1697), p. 35. The first edition of 1648 was written in Latin, but was later translated by the author into English.
As has been mentioned before, this system is also found in the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, and being bound with the Confessions, obtained not only a wide reading, but a rather authoritative status (albeit not quite legitimately). At this time the doctrine fairly seemed to blossom forth. Samuel Rutherford, Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews and commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, published a volume which despite its title, held to the "Covenant of Suretyship or Redemption." 1 Patrick Gillespie, held the covenant of redemption, as is obvious from the full title of his book, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened: Or, A Treatise Of the Covenant of Redemption*. 2

James Hog, eminent among the Marrowmen, in 1707 still based his discussion on the distinction between the covenants of redemption and grace, although he seemed a bit unhappy about the term covenant. 3 The preface to this little work, written by James Webster of Edinburgh (who was highly thought of by Boston for his stand against Simeon), also assumed covenants of works, redemption, and grace. 4 However, because in this triple system of covenants the covenant of grace was between God and man, the spirit of the age made it perhaps inevitable that the part played by man should become increasingly accentuated.

Make no mistake, all writers firmly insisted that the real work was done by Christ in the covenant of redemption, but it

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2 Published in London, 1677.
4 Ibid., p. 2.
nevertheless remained for man to take hold of the covenant of grace. In an earlier period, David Dickson, whose evangelical orthodoxy was never questioned, expressed the matter in these terms: "For, the Condition of the Covenant of Works, is the giving perfect Obedience to the Law; but the Condition of the Covenant of Grace, is the receiving of Christ by Faith unto Righteousness and Life . . ."¹ Rutherford can also speak in terms of condition: "... life and forgiveness is promised to us upon condition of believing in Christ . . ." or, "The condition of justifying faith, laying hold on him who justifies the ungodly, is required of us in our covenant . . ."²

Patrick Gillespie observes that

the water-cock is indeed within our own hearts: I mean Faith, by which we draw life and virtue out of Christ, and through which he conveys it unto us; but the fountain and well-head lyes on high: for by the Covenant of Redemption, God was carrying on a design of love to his elect people . . .³

He carefully notes as well that the conditions of the covenant of grace are not conditional, but consequent.⁴ The above writers, like Gillespie, were careful to guard the doctrine of free grace. Their use of the word condition with regard to faith was justified by a similar use in the Westminster Standards.

In Boston's day, however, the theological situation was such as to make it highly inadvisable to use the term condition, no matter how well guarded. The rise of

¹Dickson, op. cit., p. 126.
²Rutherford, op. cit., pp. 310 and 311 respectively.
³Gillespie, op. cit., p. 45.
⁴Ibid., p. 122.
Neonomianism and Arminianism in England, and the influence first of men like Richard Baxter, and then Daniel Williams, has already been noted (supra, pp. 32-33).

Now it is significant that Williams held firmly to a covenant of redemption. Of the covenant of redemption he could say: "Were this covenant understood, I think many well-meaning people would be undeceived ..." 1 While Williams' theology might seem at first to be secure against any serious charge of justification by works, the following gives an indication of its direction:

1. Christ doth not do all for a believer as well as in him. He doth not repent for us, nor obey the Gospel Terms for us, nor accept of, or rely on himself as a Saviour for us. He never is said to do so, we are enabled and required to do these as our own personal acts, or perish.2

Perry Miller summarizes the use of the covenant of redemption by the English Presbyterians as follows:

By asserting that the Covenant of Grace is not absolute—that it remains distinct from, although founded upon, the Covenant of Redemption—they capitalized upon what New England had come painfully to learn: the intrinsic worth of preparation and of such exertions of will as the colonial clergy demanded from the baptized.3

That Williams' theology with its covenant of redemption was if not fully Arminian, at least very close to it, is evident from the "warm approval" given by LeClerc, the successor of

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2 Ibid., p. 211.
Arminius, to Williams’ Gospel Truth.¹

The ease with which a federal theology which incorporated the covenant of redemption had become an able tool for the promotion of Neonomian and Arminian doctrine gave Boston just grounds to hold it suspect. This formulation, the covenant of redemption, which had seemed quite innocent in the hands of Dickson and Durham, had now been proven by its easy abuse to be decidedly dangerous. Boston was aware both of its right use, and of its abuse, but rather than fulminating against it, he took the positive approach with a minimum of negative rebuttal.

The covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace are not two distinct covenants, but one and the same covenant. I know some great and good men have taught otherwise, alleging the covenant of redemption to have been made with Christ, and the covenant of grace to be made with believers; though they were far from designing or approving the ill use some have made of that principle. However, the doctrine of this church, in the Larger Catechism, is in express words, 'The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.'²

The above also makes it clear why Boston was never attacked on this point; the Confessions explicitly speak of the covenants of works and grace, with no mention of the covenant of redemption.

¹ "After summarizing Williams' views on good works as factors in obtaining justification and blessings in the next world, he [LeClerc] added: 'Ces Vérités sont si constamment établies dans l'Écriture et si conformes à la droite raison qu'on ne saurait croire qu'il y ait des Espíritus assez mal faits pour les nier, si notre Auteur ne nous en positivement.' " Olive M. Griffith, Religion and Learning (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 104-05, quoting LeClerc, Bibliothèque Universelle, t. 23, p. 518.
Boston recognizes the difference in intention between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace, but insists that the covenant is one, and that the names merely give reference to it under different considerations.

So the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace are but two names of one and the same second covenant, under different considerations. By a covenant of redemption is meant a bargain of buying and selling; and such a covenant it was to Christ only; for as much as he alone engaged to pay the price of our redemption, I Pet. 1. 18, 19. By a covenant of grace, is meant a bargain whereby all is to be had freely; and such a covenant it is to us only, to whom the whole of it is of free grace.

Witsius' conclusion on the matter is remarkably similar. Using "disposition" rather than Boston's "consideration" he maintains that that disposition of the new covenant which was made to the surety (Christ), retained the proper notion of a covenant, signifying a compact between two parties of mutual faith; but that the other disposition made to us, comes nearer to the form of a testament, and is rather unilateral, or appointed by one party.

The purpose of this constant stress upon the "oneness" of the covenant of grace was that man's works might be completely excluded. This meant that there could be no conditions required of man, as was always the case when the covenants of redemption and grace were separated.

But how could an effectual conditional covenant for life be made with dead sinners, otherwise than in a representative? Dead souls cannot perform any condition for life at all which can be pleasing to God. They must needs have life before they can do anything of that

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1The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 396-97 (1722-24).
nature, be it never so small a condition: therefore a conditional covenant for life, could not be made with sinners in their own persons . . .

Boston saw that to speak of conditions (even of consequent conditions) led all too easily into Arminianism, as events south of the border evinced. But how can the elect be made partakers of this covenant in such a way as to avoid the double perils of Antinomianism and Neonomianism? The way in which Boston accomplishes this feat is the account of the total exposition of the covenant of grace. It will suffice for the present to indicate that Boston thinks in terms of a single covenant made with Christ as the head of the elect. Believers find their salvation in the "fulfilling of the promises unto him and his spiritual seed," and the promises find their fulfillment in union with Christ.

To successfully maintain the "oneness" of the covenant of grace with a theological consistency that would be satisfying both to his own concepts of proper logic and those of his more orthodox brethren, it was necessary for Boston to maintain that Christ died only for the elect. This was not a difficult position to hold in Scotland, for the universalism of Saumur was considered heresy. Therefore, since in Boston's eyes a doctrine of limited atonement was

1The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 394-95 (1722-24).
2Ibid., p. 398.
3Universalism in this context meaning simply that Christ died for all, in distinction from the particular redemptionists, the majority of the Reformed, who held that he died only for the elect.
necessary to keep out justification by works, it would seem a foregone conclusion that Boston was a particular redemptionist. However, Boston, along with the rest of the Marrowmen, was charged with Universalism.¹

Heppe, in his composite view of Reformed theology, advises one to "note the essentially universalistic basis upon which the idea of the covenant of grace rests."² However, this can not be said of Boston's covenant of grace, but only of one built upon considerably different lines. Heppe cites Cocceius, Eglin, and Grocius to illustrate his point. Schrenk agrees with Heppe concerning the universalistic tendencies in the covenant of grace, and also refers to Eglin:

³Er unterscheidet zwischen dem universalen "decretum generale" im Gnadenbund, mit Adam geschlossen, und dem "decretum electionis peculiare," das in Christo von Ewigkeit her wirksam ist. Er sucht dem Einwand zu begegnen, als ob hier ein Doppelspiel vorliege. Das erste wird allen unter der Bedingung der Basse und des Glaubens angeboten, das letzte bezieht sich nur auf die Erwählten. Das eine ist die äußere, das zweite die innere Berufung.⁴

It should be noticed, however, that the above partakes of a duality in the covenant of grace in many ways parallel to the later system which included the covenant of redemption. Boston was very much alive to the possibility of abusing

¹To be exact, only the Marrow was charged with universalism, but the charges leveled at the book were popularly considered as leveled at its advocates as well. ²Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics (London, 1950), p. 371. ³Gottlob Schrenk, Gottesreich und Bund im Älteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Cocceius (Gütersloh, 1923), p. 67.
such a duality, and recognizes that universalism

may consist with the opinion which holds the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace, to be two distinct covenants; the former made with Christ, the latter with believers; the condition of the one undertaken and performed by him, the condition of the other undertaken and performed by us. Accordingly that opinion concerning the covenant, is readily embraced by Universalists of different denominations.

Everywhere Boston stresses that the covenant is for the elect. There is no basis whatsoever for suggesting that Boston was a follower of Amyraut's system of universal atonement, or hypothetical redemption. Neither, therefore, was he a follower of Fraser of Brea. Everywhere in Boston's exposition those contracted for are the elect, the chosen. Any possibility of Amyraldianism is cut off by his explicit denial that Christ died for any but the elect.

There is no universal redemption, nor universal atonement. Jesus Christ died not for all and every individual person of mankind; but for the elect only.

... For if the covenant of grace was made with Christ as a representative, and the elect only were the party represented by him in it; then surely the conditions of the covenant, his doing and dying, were accomplished for them only; and he died for no other. ... Our Lord Jesus has fulfilled the conditions of the covenant for them whom he represented; and it would neither be suitable to the justice of God, nor to the wisdom of Christ the party contracting with him, that he should represent, contract, and fulfil the conditions, for any who shall never enjoy the benefit of the contract.

Was there any basis at all to the charge of universalistic leanings as leveled against the Marrowmen?

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1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 404 (1722-24).
2 Duncan Fraser, James Fraser of Brea (New College Ph. D. Thesis, 1944), p. 563. Duncan Fraser's conclusion is that "in all essential points" the hypothetical redemption of Saumur is the same as Fraser's theory.
3 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 404-05 (1722-24).
Beaton states that "while steering clear of Arminianism, they [the Marrowmen] managed no less successfully to steer clear of Amyraldianism." With regard to Boston, there is simply no doubt in the matter; in all of his thousands of pages of sermons, there is no trace of universalism! Any charge that Boston altered his teaching under fire during the Marrow controversy is groundless. Christ died only for the sins of the elect. In every period that teaching remains the same. Christ enters the covenant of grace only on behalf of those for whom he is to die, and those are only the elect.

Now Christ, standing in that capacity, as second Adam, head of the election, did two things, whereby he entered actually into the covenant with his Father.

1. He accepted the gift of the particular persons elected by name, from all eternity, by his Father, made to him . . .

2. Christ did in the name and stead of these particular persons elected unto life, and given unto him, consent unto the conditions and terms of the covenant, proposed by the Father for life and salvation to them.

1 Donald Beaton, "The 'Marrow of Modern Divinity' and the Marrow Controversy," Records of the Scottish Church History Society (Edinburgh, 1926), I, 129.

2 The Fourfold State, VIII, 130 (1699-1727); VI, 46 (1701??); IV, 23 (1707); IV, 365 (1707); VI, 290 (1710); IX, 172 (1711); IX, 105 (1718); X, 40 (1719); Notes on the Marrow, VII, 169-70, 240-41, 265 (1721-22); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 402-05 (1722-24); VI, 297, 299 (1724); and VI, 606 (1728).

3 I, 327 (1709-??).
**Temporal proclamation:**

As long as the covenant of grace was considered merely as made in eternity between God the Father and God the Son, it remained as abstract as the eternal decrees of which it formed a part. Abstraction had become a serious threat to Reformed theology. True, Calvin had broken the bonds of abstraction that bound the Schoolmen and had cast off the Latin and Aristotelian thought forms as his thinking became dominated by biblical patterns of thought. It had become possible to again think historically. Calvin, unlike the Schoolmen, could and did think in terms of "Heilsgeschichte." But with the return to Aristotelian forms, Reformed theology (the Lutheran return had been even earlier) lost its historical note and became increasingly metaphysical, with all of its attendant dangers. The doctrine of the decrees proved highly susceptible to metaphysical abstraction, and the covenant of grace as a part of the eternal decrees partook of that same danger, but, as the covenant found temporal proclamation it broke out of abstraction and into history.

Cocceius stands as perhaps the greatest figure in the return to a more historically grounded theology (although his teacher, Ames, may deserve somewhat more recognition than he is usually given). Witsius also gave a great deal of attention to the historical proclamation of the covenant,

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2 Schrenk, op. cit., p. ix.
identifying its historical economies (each representing a different stage in God's proclamation of the message of grace) in great detail. The primary economies were those of the Old and New Testaments. The sub-economies of the Old were divided into periods from Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham, and Abraham to Moses. While Witsius is generally considered to have developed this aspect of federal theology to its fullest form, it is interesting to note that William Ames had taught all these economies, save one (his first economy covered the period from Adam to Abraham).

Whatever the intentions of these men might have been with regard to the integration of history and salvation, it would seem that to Boston the historical aspect was simply incidental to his theological interests. This is not to say that the historical aspect could in any way be separated from his theology, or that Boston was purely a theorizer rather than a student of Scripture—nothing could be further from the truth. However, his primary interest was salvation, rather than history. And is not this also true of Cocceius and Witsius, despite the fact that their interest in salvation led them in paths of theology which now make them important primarily for their services to the formation of a Heilsgeschichte?

Despite many changes in the definition of the

\[1\] Witsius, op. cit., I, 280-90 [3. 3. 11-31]; cf., II, 116ff. [4. 1ff.].
covenant of grace, it is usually understood by federal theologians to have first received temporal proclamation to Adam and Eve as described in Genesis iii. 15. 1 This is also the understanding of the Marrow, 2 and Boston. 3 It is, of course, always understood among the Reformed that the covenant is one substance throughout the Old and New Testaments, even though it may vary in externals. 4 Therefore while the covenant may be expounded as a whole, the side issues concerning the varying "economies" of the covenant in the Old Testament are usually given a bit of attention. This attention is really not at all superfluous, for, as has already been mentioned (supra, p. 154), the scriptural proof for the covenant of works comes largely from the Mosaic covenant,

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1 Schrenk, op. cit., p. 64; James Ussher, A Body of Divinitie (London, 1647), p. 158. Perry Miller, The New England Mind - The Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 377. Miller claims quite explicitly at this point that for the Puritans the covenant of grace began with Abraham. Whatever may be meant by "began" it is quite clear that for the Puritans as well the covenant of grace was proclaimed to Adam in the Garden. John Preston—held by Miller to be one of the primary Puritan popularizers of federal theology—while preaching on Genesis xvii. 1, 2, can say of the covenant of grace: "we will proceed from the very first preaching of the Covenant to Adam" (The New Covenant, or The Saints Portion [London, 1631], p. 351). So too with John Ball, another Puritan prominent in Miller's list, the covenant of grace is promised to Adam immediately upon his fall (A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace [London, 1645], p. 27).

2 The Marrow, VII, 182-83, 191.

3 Notes on the Marrow, VII, 191 (1721-22), The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 380 (1722-24); VII, 617 (1719).

which is almost always considered as within the covenant of grace. Therefore, if the federal theologians are to both have and eat the cake of the Mosaic covenant, there is always the need for adroit explanation on this point.

The usual procedure is to approach the matter by explaining the variation in economies from Adam to Noah or Abraham, and from Abraham to Moses, and then to attack the primary problem. Boston, however, shows very little interest in these matters—giving them at best approving allusion rather than detailed explanation—and proceeds to the question of the Mosaic covenant (which is treated with exactness only in the *Notes on the Marrow*, prior references having been anything but clear). The omnipresent premise in this discussion is that "the way of salvation was the same under the Old and New Testament, and that the covenant made on Mt. Sinai, whatever it was, carried no prejudice to the promise made to Abraham . . ." At the same time, the Mosaic covenant must in some way be one of works, for from it comes the best scriptural proof for the covenant of works. The solution is to put the Israelites under both at once.

The unbelieving Israelites were under the covenant of grace made with their father Abraham externally and by profession, in respect of their visible church state; but under the covenant of works made with their father Adam internally and really, in respect of the state of their souls before the Lord. Herein there is no

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1 *I*, 318 (1709-??); *Notes on the Marrow*, VII, 191ff. (1721-22); and *X*, 418 (1731).
2 VII, 492 (1714).
3 *Notes on the Marrow*, VII, 195.
for to this day many in the visible church are thus . . .

As for the believing Israelites,

they were internally and really, as well as externally, under the covenant of grace; and only externally under the covenant of works, and that, not as a covenant co-ordinate with, but subordinate and subservient unto, the covenant of grace; and in this there is no more inconsistency than in the former.

But this is true of all post-Adamic ages, and Boston is forced to conclude (following and clarifying the teaching of the Marrow) that not only the covenant of grace, but also that of works was expressly delivered on Mt. Sinai. As Boston honestly admits:

I cannot refuse, 1. Because of the apostle's testimony, Gal. iv. 24, 'There are the two covenants; the one from Mt. Sinai, which gendereth to bondage.' . . . 2. The nature of the covenant of works is most expressly in the New Testament brought in, propounded, and explained from the Mosaical dispensation. . . . To this may be added the opposition betwixt the law and grace so frequently inculcated in the New Testament, especially in Paul's epistles.

But what was the purpose of delivering the covenant of works on Mt. Sinai (other than to patch up this exegetical difficulty)? The answer of the Marrow is Boston's as well:

God did not renew it with them now, and not before, because they were better able to keep it, but because they had more need to be made acquainted what the covenant of works is, than those before. . . . in that long course of time betwixt Adam and Moses, men had forgotten what was sin . . .

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1 Ibid., p. 196.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., pp. 196-97.
4 The Marrow, VII, 201-02. Cf. Notes on the same pages. Because of his strong doctrine of corruption Boston saw the covenant of grace as in constant need of renewed publication. The Fourfold State, VIII, 44 (1699-1727).
However, to combine the promulgation of these two covenants is no easy feat, and the clearest explanation Boston can offer is that the covenant of grace was repeated and promulgated there unto Israel, to be believed and embraced by faith, that they might be saved; to which were annexed the ten commandments, given by the Mediator Christ, the head of the covenant, as a rule of life to his covenant people. Secondly, the covenant of works made with Adam, contained in the same ten commands, delivered with thunderings and lightnings, the meaning of which was afterwards cleared by Moses, describing the righteousness of the law and sanction thereof, repeated and promulgated to the Israelites there, as the original perfect rule of righteousness, to be obeyed; and yet were they no more bound hereby to seek righteousness by the law . . .

Thus there is no confounding of the two covenants of grace and works; but the latter was added to the former as subservient unto it, to turn their eyes towards the promise, or covenant of grace.1

Obviously, Boston would have been in a much less complicated and contradictory position if instead of following Fisher he had followed Riissennius who held that the covenant of Sinai "was nothing else than a fresh administration of the covenant of grace . . ."2

After this attempt to do justice to the Reformed view of the breadth of the covenant of grace, and at the same time give foundation to his scriptural backing for the covenant of works, Boston is able to proceed to the more positive aspects of his theology, the fulfillment in Christ of the covenant of grace. This positive construction, however, is possible only because Boston has made the consistently right choices in his

1Notes on the Marrow, VII, 197 (1721-22).
basic discussions. Perhaps the greatest achievement in this area of his exposition was to eliminate the covenant of redemption, thus making possible a covenant of grace that in its entirety was made with, and depended upon, Christ.
The covenant of grace - its making

"Having considered the parties in the covenant of grace, we come now to take a view of the making of that covenant betwixt the parties contracting therein."¹ This phase of Boston's development of the covenant might be described as essentially an exposition of the person and work of Christ. However, as such it does not adequately cover even the essentials of these two subjects. Herman Witsius, who was perhaps more successful than any other theologian in comprising an entire system of theology within the scope of an exposition of the covenants,² is careful to consider "the Person of the Surety" when discussing the parties to the covenant of grace,³ but even the great Witsius fails to give anything like a full discussion of Christology. Boston fails

¹The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 408 (1722-24).
to an even greater degree to discuss the matter of the person and natures of Christ in his first section on the parties to the covenant, and while he gives the matter his attention in this section, it never receives adequate treatment. The Covenant of Grace is really concerned with soteriology to some degree from beginning to end. This section is merely the second, and perhaps most formal, part of the exposition.

Because federal theology was primarily a reorganization of an existing theology, rather than a radical new development, it was never absolutely necessary for the federal theologians to incorporate a complete discussion of every head of doctrine within their exposition. In the particular matter of Christology, for example, it is obvious that Boston assumed the foundational doctrines of the Westminster divines in his exposition of the covenant of grace. However, this does not indicate that it would have been impossible to embody a thorough discussion of Christology within the federal framework; it indicates simply that Boston did not think such detail necessary. When Boston's entire Works are considered, what he has said concerning the person and work of Christ can best be divided into three groups. The first, and most thorough discussions, are found in his exposition of the catechism. The second group comprises separate series of expositions such as "Jesus Completely Qualified for His Work," which is a discussion of the relation of Christ to the Spirit;¹

¹IX, 507-28 (1748).
or, "The Mystery of Christ in the Form of a Servant," an 
exegesis of Philippians ii. 7. The third group is that 
found in the exposition of The Covenant of Grace.

Indicative of Boston's teaching concerning the work 
of Christ is that at least four fifths of it is in terms of 
satisfaction for the debt of sin. This of course partakes of 
many variations, such as Christ the "day's man betwixt God & 
sinners," but at bottom, the thought is almost always that 
of Christ vicariously accepting the punishment and providing 
the obedience necessary to man's salvation. Christ is a 
redeemer by price, he is also a deliverer by power. While 
Christ is sometimes portrayed as the Mediator by power and 
conquest he is also set forth as the Mediator to make peace 
between God and man. Again, Christ is spoken of as the 
victor over death, the grave, and the devil. But in all of 
these instances, whether the terms are power, conquest, 
peace, or victory, the basic fact is that Christ has satis-
fied the terms of the covenant.

However, we must not think of Boston's portrayal of 
Christ's work in too narrow a fashion. Christ is to be 
portrayed as the administrator of the covenant in the

1 VII, 520-46 (1727-28).
2 IX, 524 (1718). Cf. Patrick Gillespie, The Ark of 
the Covenant Opened: Or, A Treatise Of the Covenant of 
Redemption (London, 1677), p. 120.
3 VII, 528 (1727-28).
4 IX, 97 (1718).
5 I, 379-80 (1709-??).
6 X, 72 (1709).
7 X, 250-52 (1725-26).
succeeding sections of The Covenant of Grace. In other instances Christ is put forward as the revealer. This is all the more noteworthy because in Boston's immediate personal intellectual context revelation was in no sense a problem—the Bible was simply God's Word to man. Nevertheless, Boston produces an absolutely superb passage on Christ as the revealer which ends with the statement that "all true religion begins with the knowledge of God in Christ." ¹

For the most part, Boston exhibits a healthy Christology and therefore should not be taken too seriously in two instances when he states that Mary "was the mother of Christ as man. Christ as God had no mother, and as man no father,"² and again in a much later writing, "He was without mother as he was God ..."³ The obvious difficulty in both instances is that while Boston seems to be talking of Christ's person, he is really speaking of his divine nature. In less startling ways, limiting statements concerning the natures of Christ while using terms of person are a rather frequent oversight on Boston's part, although cleared by other more exact references. Similarly, in his explanations of the natures, there is a greater tendency to sin against the Chalcedonian term, inseparabiliter, than against that of inconfuse.

On the credit side of the ledger, Boston is at one with the rest of the Reformed in teaching that Christ's total

¹ V, 628. Cf. 629 (1727).
² I, 391 (1709-??).
³ VII, 47 (1727-28).
life, from the moment of incarnation, was one of humiliation and atonement. Boston is also sure of his teaching that Christ was offered up both soul and body, and that even in death there was no separation of the divine and human natures, nor would there be any separation, for Christ retains his human nature forever.

While there is never any question of Christ's divinity and lordship, Boston does not allow the divine to swallow up the human nature. Quite the contrary, he has a somewhat Kierkegaardian sense of the hiddenness of Christ's glory while he was on earth. Repeatedly he speaks of Christ's humanity as a veil: "his outward appearance was a vail [sic] through which most of the world could not see . . . ." It is only by the aid of the Holy Spirit that men recognize him as the Christ, and even of the disciples it can be said that none of them were eye-witnesses, but ear-witnesses properly speaking. For even the apostles who saw Christ with their eyes, yet owed their knowledge of the gospel to their faith originally . . .

This emphasis is quite in line with the larger scope of Boston's theology which emphasizes Christ's mystery, and the

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1 Taught by Calvin (The Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge [Edinburgh, 1669], I, 437-39 [2. 16. 5]), Witsius (op. cit., I, 197-98 [2. 6. 36]), The Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 3 & A. 37, so commonly in fact, that it would be most wondrous if Boston didn't teach it.

2I, 440, 505 (1709-??).

3The Fourfold State, VIII, 332-33 (1699-1727).

4III, 67 (1716). Cf. IV, 241 (1706); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 522 (1722-24); X, 191 (1725-26); and IV, 266 (1726).

5X, 516 (1721?).

6X, 277 (1726).
necessary action of the Holy Spirit in every act of faith and obedience.

As should be evident from the few things that have already been said, Boston is in complete accord with the Christology of the Reformed, and there is little to be gained by further enlargement upon that agreement. However, the use that he makes of this material in his exposition of the covenant of grace should be noted. In discussing the making of this covenant, Boston selects three biblical themes and develops them for the purpose of showing who Christ is, and what he can do as the party contractor of the covenant for fallen man. The first is that of the "kinsman-redeemer." Unfamiliar as this theme is to many Reformed theologians, including Calvin, it was not a new discovery by Boston.

George Hutcheson (theologian of the "second Reformation" and author of commentaries on the Minor Prophets, Job, and John, in the Scottish commentaries series) in his commentary on Job, examines the concept of the kinsman-redeemer to the extent that Boston's exposition, while a further development, is not essentially new. Nevertheless, Boston's expansion is interesting in that it thoroughly entwines the elements of federal theology with the concept of the goal, or kinsman-redeemer. Even as the kinsman-redeemer was to marry the widow of his deceased kinsman to raise up seed to him, so our Kinsman-redeemer consented to marry the widow. Being

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to take to himself a human nature he undertook to take on
our human nature in particular, taking his flesh of
Adam's family. . . . Thus was a foundation laid for the
mystical marriage of believers with him . . .

The kinsman-redeemer might redeem the mortgaged inheritance of
a poor kinsman (Lev. xxv. 25).

Our father Adam waxing poor through the deceitful dealing
of the tempter with him, quite sold away the inheritance
of eternal life for a morsel of forbidden fruit: and his
children waxing poorer still. . . . Wherefore the second
Adam, as Kinsman-redeemer, took the burden of the
redemption on himself, and agreed to pay the price of that
purchase . . .

The kinsman-redeemer might ransom a poor kinsman from
bondage.

Being sold in the loins of our first father, we were
brought into bondage under the curse of the law. . . .
[The] ransom was stated in the covenant; to wit, that the
Kinsman-redeemer should give himself a ransom for his
poor kinsmen . . .

The Kinsman-redeemer was to avenge the blood of a slain
kinsman.

Our Kinsman-redeemer saw all his poor kindred slain men.
. . . But no avenger of their blood could be found, till
the second Adam, as their Kinsman-redeemer, did, in the
second covenant undertake the avenging of it.

The justification for this application is found in Prov.
xxiii. 11; Isa. xlvii. 4; and Job xix. 25 "I know that my
Redeemer [God] liveth, and that he shall stand at the
latter day upon the earth." Granting the hermeneutical and
theological premises with which Boston worked, and
considering his audience, one should give some praise to this

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1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 414 (1722-24).
2 Ibid., pp. 414-15.
3 Ibid., p. 415.
4 Ibid.
highly effective product.

Boston's next biblical theme is the far more common one of the surety, and accordingly it receives considerably more attention. Hebrews vii. 22 calls Christ the surety of a better covenant, and the verse did not go unused. Dickson in his exegesis of this verse comes to the unexpected conclusion, that the new covenant of which Christ is surety is that of grace.¹ Rutherford in The Covenant of Grace speaks frequently of Christ as a surety.² Patrick Gillespie uses the term so frequently that the covenant of redemption becomes synonymous with the covenant of suretiship.³ It is also used in the Marrow.⁴ However, the use of the term is so diffuse as to make it pointless to try to trace parallels, although it may be noted that Boston's use of the term does at some points coincide with that of Witsius. Both are agreed that while Christ is "surety for sinners to God," he is not "surety for God to sinners" (the latter is maintained by the Socinians).⁵ The meaning of the former statement is that Christ became surety for the sinner's debt of punishment and obedience (duty). Folleb's Compendium Christianae

⁴The Marrow, VII, 239-44.
⁵Witsius, op. cit., I, 173 [2. 5. 4]. The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 416 (1722-24).
Theologicae (Basel, 1626) notes that

the law binds us both to penalty and to obedience; to penalty because it pronounces him accursed who shall not have accomplished all the works of the law, Dt. 27. 26; to obedience, because it promises life to those only who shall have done everything . . .

Boston is obviously well within the main stream of Reformed interpretation on this point; but he has also adapted the teaching to his federal theology by the simple expedient of pointing out that the punishment for which Christ becomes surety is due man for his breaking of the covenant of works. Likewise, since man is still bound by the right of that covenant to exact obedience, it was necessary to man's salvation that Christ become surety for that obedience as well. Thus are the demands of the covenant of works guaranteed as Christ becomes surety for them to God the Father.

When the question comes as to whether Christ is also a surety to the Father that the elect should believe, repent, and give sincere obedience, Boston's answer is no:

For such a suretiship, or cautionary for the elect's performing of these things, must needs belong to the condition of the covenant, properly so called; as being a deed of the Mediator, whereby he promiseth something to God, and engageth that it shall be performed by them: and so these things performed by them accordingly, must be a part of the condition of the covenant. But that sinners themselves perform any part of the condition of the covenant, properly so called, cannot be admitted without prejudice to the grace of the covenant . . .

If Christ did in the covenant become Surety in way of

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3Ibid., pp. 420-21.
4Ibid., p. 425.
caution for his people's performing some deed; the performing of the condition of the covenant... is divided betwixt Christ and them, however unequal their shares are:... so far as their part of the performance goes, the reward is of debt to them, which obscures the grace of the covenant.

Boston makes the danger quite obvious: if it is admitted that Christ is surety for even the faith of the elect, that faith can be interpreted as a condition through which works can enter to the derogation of grace. The distinction Boston wishes to make is that while Christ is surety for punishment and obedience, he is surety for his own payment of the debt of the elect; he is not a surety that they will pay it.

Exceedingly abstruse theology? Perhaps, but mighty heresies from little words do grow, and the Arminianism and later Unitarianism of the English Presbyterians should give ample indication that Boston's worries were not entirely unfounded.  

... Now how, if Christ is not surety for the actions of the elect, can their believing, repentance, and good works be classified? To this question—which must have an answer if the above is to stand—Boston gives the momentous answer that "they are benefits promised in the covenant by God unto Christ the Surety as a reward of his fulfilling of the condition of the covenant."  

This matter will receive full attention in the following consideration of Boston's

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1Ibid., p. 426.

2Boston's method in theological controversy is here obvious. His practice is to fulminate against no one (except perhaps Socinians, who were a scarce species in early eighteenth-century Scotland), but rather to positively state his case within the context of his own federal system.

3The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 426.
Having considered Christ as kinsman-redeemer, and as surety of the covenant, Boston's third theme in his description of the making of the covenant centers around Christ as the priest of the covenant (in Boston's federal system the *munus triplex* is so divided that the offices of prophet and king fall within the administration, rather than within the making of the covenant). ¹

Here again, a venerable Reformed teaching ² is made to do service to federal theology, for Boston immediately reminds his readers that "a priest is a public person, who deals with an offended God in the name of the guilty . . ." ³ This priest, a public person (as Adam was a public person), must take away the guilt of those he represents so that a new covenant can be established. By this means Boston stresses the federal headship of Christ.

While the hypostatic union, the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies, and all their accompanying distinctions, seldom find their way into Boston's sermons, when they do appear it is obvious that Boston is on relatively familiar ground, for they are generally handled with discretion. ⁴ When, however, he comes to explain Christ's

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³ The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 427.
⁴ Th. Fourfold State, VIII, 181 (1699-1727).
role as the priest, who is at the same time the sacrifice, Boston draws the overly neat and scholastic distinction that Christ acts as priest in his person, while his human nature is the sacrificed, and his divine nature is the altar which sanctifies the sacrifice (Matt. xxiii. 29)! The source of this distinction, which appears several times in Boston's writings,¹ is certainly neither Calvin, nor Ursinus. Boston may have obtained it from one of his contemporaries, but it is just as likely that it is one of the things remembered from his divinity training at Edinburgh, for the teaching finds its full formulation in Essenius:


This section on the making of the covenant is far from Boston's best. It is loosely joined, and does not so much conclude as stop, for the exposition which considers Christ as priest of the covenant is brought to a sudden close, although appended to it are some "inferences." These "inferences," which range over the whole of federal theology, are an appeal to accept Christ. It is not that

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¹I, 347, 443-44 (1709-??); VI, 283-84 (1710); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 429 (1722-24); and VII, 56 (1727-28).
²Andrea Essenio, Compendium Theologiae Dogmatica (Rheum, 1685), p. 511.
Boston is on unfamiliar ground in this section on the "making" of the covenant; rather the fault is perhaps to be found in its familiarity. It will be noticed that the point concerning Christ as a surety for the faith and works of the elect is the only one in the section that constituted an area of controversy with regard to the encroachments of legalism or Neonomianism. It would seem that Boston, aware of the general agreement on the bulk of these matters concerning the person and work of Christ, and having already treated them thoroughly in his catechism sermons, simply covered the ground quickly and without a great deal of consideration. In this he was a sound judge of the situation, for those elements of Boston's constructive thought which were most fruitful and valuable to his age are those to be found in the following sections on the covenant of grace.
The covenant of grace - parts

Just as the covenant of works, being a proper covenant, had its parts (a condition, promise, and penalty—supra, pp. 107ff.), so too, in parallel fashion, must the covenant of grace have its parts. The covenant of grace has its conditions that must be fulfilled to obtain the promises, and because it is Christ who enters into covenant with God the Father, it is upon Christ that the obligation falls to fulfill the conditions.

The condition of the covenant of grace is "Christ's fulfilling all righteousness as second Adam . . ." ¹ This entails the fulfillment of the law's requirement of holiness, a requirement of the broken covenant of works. Therefore Christ must be born holy, and retain that holiness throughout life, acting as a public person (even as the first Adam was a public person), in his representation of the elect. ² Just as

¹The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 436 (1722-24).
²Ibid., pp. 441-43.
through Adam guilt was imputed to all men, now through Christ righteousness is imputed to the elect. All believers are "born holy in the second Adam, even as they were created holy in the first Adam."\(^1\) Having emphasized the necessary fulfillment of the condition of holiness, Boston forms a second article. Christ must also fulfill the condition of righteousness, of obedience to the law in all points. It must be fulfilled "in virtue of the bond of a covenant for life" which was never fulfilled by the first Adam, and therefore the second Adam undertakes its fulfillment.\(^2\)

Having stated in two ways that the conditions of the covenant of works (holiness and righteousness, i.e., obedience to the law) have now become the conditions accepted by Christ in the covenant of grace, Boston goes on to point out that satisfaction for sin is also required.

The former two were in the condition of Adam's covenant: but this was not in it; for while there was no sin, there was no place for satisfaction for sin. But the new covenant behoved to be settled on the condition of a satisfaction for sin; because the broken law or covenant of works, insisted for it as a condition of life to sinners in virtue of its penalty by them incurred.\(^3\)

In short, the condition of the covenant of grace is that Christ should fulfill everything required in the broken covenant of works, and satisfy for the breaking of it as well. The demands of the law are to be met.

Thus far Boston is on common ground with almost all of the exponents of federal theology. However, among those

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 442.
\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 443-45.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 445.
who held the triple system of covenants, these conditions to be fulfilled by Christ were placed within the covenant of redemption, while the covenant of grace had its separate conditions which were given to man to perform. The dangers of this conditionality have already been noted (supra, pp. 179-84). Daniel Williams held that God offered "... the saving Benefits of the Covenant upon official Terms of Duty ..." and he and the many who were of like mind with him claimed that to fail to require official terms or conditions would result in rank Antinomianism. Thus, Baxter held that the doctrine that eliminates this conditionality, "reduced to practise, will certainly be the damnation [sic] of the practiser: But I hope many Antinomians do not practise their own doctrine." Hadow's cavils against the Antinomianism of the Marrow are also directed to this point. The situation was all the more dangerous because the well-intentioned, like Hadow, could cite such soundly orthodox divines of previous generations as David Dickson, James Durham, Samuel Rutherford, and Patrick Gillespie as using the term condition, as did even the Westminster Standards. The orthodoxy of the past, however, was being put to rather heretical uses ("The supreme principle

of Arminianism is conditionalism"\(^1\), and of this Boston was very much aware. The very real problem existed, however, as to how to relate the elect to Christ. The weight of both the orthodoxy of the previous generation and the spirit of the age favored relating them by conditions, and any other solution had to be able to hold its own against this combined weight. In preparing another solution, Boston laid a firm groundwork by denying a separate covenant of redemption apart from that of grace, and thereby eliminated the almost inevitable conditions of a covenant of grace made with man. The positive task of relating this covenant of grace to the elect is accomplished in the discussion of the promisory part of the covenant.

Because the covenant of grace is made with Christ, the fulfillment of its conditions depends upon him, and as he fulfills the conditions, it is also to him that the promises are made. The elect do not covenant with God, they do not fulfill the conditions, and properly speaking, neither are the promises made to them—the promises are made to Christ. These promises are of two sorts. "Some of them have their direct and immediate effect on Christ himself, the head of the covenant . . ."\(^2\) "Others of them have their direct and immediate effect on Christ's spiritual seed, comprehended


\(^2\) The Covenant of Grace, VII, 462 (1722-24).
with him in the covenant . . ." 1 The distinction Boston is attempting to make comes into sharper focus with the following question: To whom are the promises made?

First. The promises . . . having their direct and immediate effect on the person of Christ, were made to Christ himself. Of this no doubt can be moved. And they were made to him as head of the covenant, the second Adam, the representative of his seed. 2

Secondly. The promises of the other sort, namely, those having their direct and immediate effect on the elect, are made to Christ primarily, and to them secondarily: first, to the head; then, to the members, through him . . .

God hath in the covenant promised grace and glory, all that pertains to life and godliness, unto a select company of mankind: but the promise of all these was first and chiefly made to Christ their head . . . 3

The promises of the covenant of grace are all made to him who fulfills the conditions of that covenant—Christ. Some affect him only, some concern the elect, but they are all made to Christ, and they reach the elect only through him.

. . . properly and strictly speaking, the promises were conditional to Christ, but they are absolute and free to us . . . 4

This distinction stands at the heart of Boston's exposition of the covenant of grace.

What were the promises peculiar to Christ, the head of the covenant? He was promised assistance in his work

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1 Ibid., p. 463.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 464.
4 Ibid., pp. 468-69. This distinction is very similar to the one made by Witsius and already cited (supra, p. 183).
(Luke xxii. 43). He was also promised the acceptance of that work when it was finished—including his resurrection and justification, by which he had a "full and ample discharge" that he had effectively satisfied for sin. Christ was also promised "a glorious reward," under which Boston lists "the promise of a new kind of interest in God," i.e. Christ's enjoyment of God as the head of the elect; "the promise of a glorious exaltation . . . as great administrator of the covenant;" the promise of a numerous offspring, the elect; "the promise of his inheriting all things, as primary heir;" and "the promise of victory and dominion over all his, and his people's enemies: . . . Satan, sin, and death . . . " Thus far do the promises made to Christ affect him alone. Boston then goes on to discuss the promises made to Christ which are derived secondarily by believers.

"The great and comprehensive promise to Christ's spiritual seed, in the covenant, is the promise of life eternal, made from eternity to Christ, and to them in him." 1

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1 Ibid., p. 469. Boston is certainly not the only one to use the concept of the promise. It is common to almost all of the Reformed in some form. However, Boston's use of the idea as a major structural concept puts him in marked contrast to the use made of the same term by Samuel Rutherford in similar references in The Covenant of Life Opened, Or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace (Edinburgh, 1655), pp. 350, 352. Henceforth short title. Rutherford, The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 469-70 (1722-24).
Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 349.
Ibid., p. 471; Rutherford, The Covenant of Life
Opened, p. 353.
Rutherford, The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 471.
Ibid., p. 473. Italics not in the original.
Throughout this section there is always this stress: the benefits of the covenant of grace are promises, and the promises are made to Christ, believers partaking of them in him. Boston considers this promise of eternal life to the elect under three periods: 1) before Union with Christ, 2) from union with Christ to death, and 3) from death through eternity. Within this compass stand all the traditional heads of doctrine from calling through justification and sanctification to glorification. Within his exposition of The Covenant of Grace Boston is not so much concerned with giving a full exposition of each point as to show its relationship to the covenant and the believer. Boston had already given these doctrines a full exposition in his preaching on the catechism. What was needed to avert both the Neonomian and Antinomian errors was to place these doctrines in their proper relationship, and that Boston set out to do. In this his example will be followed, except for the addition of such material as is necessary to fill out the framework of his theology.

The Period before Union with Christ: The doctrine of the preservation or perseverance, of the saints, or the fixity of the covenant of grace, is common to all the Reformed. Boston speaks not only of the perseverance of the saints after their justification, but makes the quite logical extension of the doctrine to apply to the elect before they have come to Christ.
The promise of eternal life to the elect, in the covenant, comprehends a promise of their preservation, till the happy moment of their spiritual marriage with Jesus Christ, wherein they shall be settled in a state of grace . . .

This promise includes the continuation of their natural life until such time as they come to Christ. Likewise the elect are preserved from committing the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit.

The basis of this preservation, however, rests not upon the decrees (although Boston would have no objection to such an argument), but upon the promises made to Christ.

Boston does not merely content himself with the argument that the elect were promised to Christ as his reward, so that the elect benefit through the promise made to Christ (although this is certainly a valid argument, and would be recognized by Boston as such), but Boston here ties together the promises made to Christ, and to the elect through him, in a much closer fashion.

This promise of the elect's preservation . . . seems to be grafted upon the promise of assistance made to Christ in the covenant; by which a divine support was insured to him, during all the time the sins of the elect, and the wrath of God for them, should lie upon him. And at this rate, the case of the head, and of the members, was jointly provided for in the covenant.

1Ibid., p. 475.
2Ibid., pp. 476-77.
3Patrick Gillespie states that "Christ's Suretship is a confirmation of the perseverance of the saints, and of the certainty of the Salvation of all the Elect: or if their perseverance and believing to the end be undertaken for by him, how can it be uncertain?" The Ark of the Covenant Opened: Or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption (London, 1677), p. 436. Henceforth short title.
4The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 477 (1722-24). More is said by Boston about perseverance in its more usual position, at which time it will be given further consideration.
It is now becoming evident in this exposition that when Boston speaks of union with Christ it is more than a theological cliche. The mere phrase union with Christ appears everywhere, and whether it be Tobias Crisp or Daniel Williams, James Hadow or James Hog, all use the phrase, and with good precedent, for it is found throughout the writings of the Reformed. Nevertheless, one cannot escape the impression that for many theologians of this, and the preceding period, it had become but a pious phrase with little real theological meaning. Therefore, as this section is considered, the question regarding the validity of Boston's concept of union with Christ should be kept constantly in mind.

The second promise given to the elect through Christ before their union with him, is the promise of the Spirit. Boston's handling of this section is extremely interesting in view of his understanding of effectual calling and faith. Boston does not here choose to enter into those specific areas of controversy where Crisp and Williams had previously contended, or in which Hadow had recently done his "detecting," but gives his own positive exposition without reference to them.

It is Boston's view that the elect before their union with Christ are like the rest of mankind, completely dead in

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sin through the breaking of the covenant of works. Life can
be had only by the Spirit, but the Spirit can not be had from
an unatoned God.

Wherefore, in the covenant, Christ undertook to fulfill
all righteousness in their name, thereby to purchase the
Spirit for them; upon which was made the promise of the
Spirit, the leading fruit of Christ’s purchase ... .

Through this promise of the Spirit there is the promise of
"spiritual moral life," and of faith. This first part of
the promise is especially important when considered in
relationship to the heavy emphasis upon law-work in Boston’s
time, an emphasis which was a part of his own ministry. In
an early, and picturesque passage, he compares God’s bringing
light out of darkness at the first creation with his
"illumination of the soul from mount Sinai" in the new
creation of the believer. Before the sinner will come to
Christ there must be the conviction of sin and misery, or
law-work. "The Spirit of the Lord speaks to the soul as it
were out of the midst of the fire; but there is blackness,
darkness, and tempest, mixed with this light." 2 There must
first be the conviction of sin and misery with its accompani-
ing remorse, terror, and anxiety before men can be brought
to Christ. 3 As Boston makes clear, however, this law-work
is the result of God’s activity: "When God begins to deal
with a soul, he puts the soul out of its sinful rest ... ." 4

1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 478 (1722-24).
2IV, 564 (1717-18).
3 Ibid., pp. 564-65.
4III, 446 (1710).
Thus, what Boston in *The Covenant of Grace* means by the "spiritual moral life" includes law-work.

The promise of spiritual moral life, in virtue whereof the soul morally dead in sin, is raised to life again, through the Spirit of life communicated unto it from heaven. This is the beginning, the very first of the eternal life itself promised in the covenant. But this "spiritual moral life" is also "the same with the renewing in effectual calling, whereby we are enabled to embrace Jesus Christ ..." Boston's discussions of effectual calling contain the same emphasis: it is God who takes the initiative, and law-work is an essential part of his action. Boston makes no specific requirements with regard to law-work (although he tends to be rather suspicious of those who come to Christ too easily), admitting that it is not the same in all who are converted, and requiring only "so much of it [as] necessary, as brings the soul to see an absolute need of Christ, and to despair of relief by any other way ..." Boston is very much aware of the abuse to which law-work is subject by those who give it such emphasis that the timid never feel their law-work to be sufficient.

It is true, sinners will not come to Christ, till they be deeply sensible of their sin and misery; but to require such and such qualifications in sinners before they may come to Christ, is to lay a snare before them, keeping them back from Christ, and teaching them to lay some weight upon their qualifications while they are yet under the curse.

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1. *The Covenant of Grace*, VIII, 478 (1722-24). The first sentence in this quotation, although grammatically incomplete, has been quoted in its entirety.
In a special manner to tell sinners that they must truly repent of their sins before they may believe in Christ, or before they may apprehend the remission of sin in the promise, is in effect to say, that they must be holy, and repent in a manner acceptable to God, while they are yet lying under his curse; for the curse is not removed but in justification.¹

Thus, while law-work is generally needed, it is provided as a part of the "spiritual moral life" that is promised through Christ. In no sense is it to be thought of as a condition.

As to the nature of the effectual call, Boston is at one with the rest of the Reformed in describing it as "that work of God about us, in which the Spirit works faith in us, and unites us to Christ..."² To speak of faith takes us into the second "branch" of the promise of the Spirit.

The other chief branch of the promise of the Spirit, is the promise of faith; to wit, that Christ's spiritual seed shall believe in him, come unto him, and receive him, by faith...³

In describing this operation of the quickening Spirit Boston is at his pictorial and theological best:

Christ comes into the dead soul by his Spirit: and so he is passively received; even as one, having a power to raise the dead, coming into a house, where there is none but a dead man; none to open the door to him, none to desire him to come in, nor to welcome him. But Christ being thus received, or even as the restorer of the dead man to life, would immediately be embraced by him, and receive a thousand welcomes from him, who had heard his voice and lived. ... And thus the union betwixt Christ and the soul is completed; Christ first apprehending the soul by his Spirit; and then the soul thus apprehended and quickened, apprehending him again in the promise of the gospel by faith.⁴

¹ The Covenant of Works, XI, 337 (1721-22).
² VII, 83. Cf. VI, 582 (1728).
³ The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 479 (1722-24).
⁴ Ibid.
This is representative of Boston's teaching throughout his ministry concerning the beginnings of faith. Nowhere does one find the sharp, complicated distinctions of the scholastically inclined. Faith is always understood as God's gift, something which men cannot obtain by their own power. Faith is also knowledge, believing, and trust that Christ has done this "with respect to one's self." As with the rest of the Reformed, faith is not an end in itself, but an "instrumental cause." While faith as God's gift cannot be grasped by man, yet the outward means that God has provided are to be used, and those "outward means which the Lord usually makes use of to beget faith in one's heart, is the word, the word of the gospel, preached, heard, or read ..." Prayer is also a means which God may see fit to bless with faith.

Far more important to the present purpose, however, is the way in which Boston links this promise of faith through the promise of the Spirit, to his theme of union with Christ.

Now, the promise of the Spirit, in both branches thereof, is granted upon the promise of a resurrection from the dead, made to Christ; and it is so interwoven therewith, that there is no separating them.  

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1 E.g. The Fourfold State, VIII, 130 (1699-1727); III, 95 (1716); II, 395-96 (1720-?); and X, 503 (1732).
2 E.g. IV, 541 (1711-12); Notes on the Marrow, VII, 280 (1724-22); and II, 504 (1732).
3 E.g. Notes on the Marrow, VII, 286; X, 377 (1731).
5 E.g. Notes on the Marrow, VII, 100 (1727-28); and VI, 558 (1728).
6 E.g. IV, 541 (1720-?).
7 X, 503 (1732).
8 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 480.
Even as Christ's resurrection from the dead was promised to him in the covenant, so too are the elect given the Spirit, through him, by which they are raised from their death of sin.

By emphasizing the promises, and intimately relating them to Christ—making every action of even the "pre-history" of the Christian life thoroughly Christocentric—Boston brushes aside those points vigorously contested by Antinomians, Neonomians, and hyper-Calvinists, and instead transfers the discussion to new ground, where he can set forth a doctrine of grace in clear and understandable terms.¹

The period from union with Christ to death: Having thus covered the effects of the promises made to Christ which affect the elect prior to the point of their conscious acceptance, Boston now goes on to the second division to consider "the promise of eternal life to the elect, as it is accomplished to, and hath its effect on them, from their union with Christ until death . . ."² Boston does not attempt to make a really precise distinction here. Faith is the result of union with Christ, but it is discussed under the "promise of the Spirit," the fulfilment of this promise taking one into this second division.

¹Boston covers this same ground in 1725-26, emphasizing that faith is solely the result of the working of divine power (X, 300-03), while at other times the aspect of union with Christ receives powerful emphasis. Perhaps at no time, however, have all the elements been so well combined as in the exposition of The Covenant of Grace.  
²The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 481 (1722-24).
The first promise placed in this section by Boston is that of justification. Boston would have been in wholehearted agreement with those of the Reformed who held that "faith itself is man's being justified."¹ The promise of justification is conferred upon the elect by "being united to Christ through the Spirit."² Through the promise of justification men receive the promise of pardon and acceptance. Boston's joining of federal theology with the theme of union with Christ in the fulfilment of the promise of pardon is best illustrated by his own words:

The sins of the elect being, in the eternal covenant, imputed to, and laid on Christ; who becoming legally one with them, transferred their debt on himself, and undertook to pay the same; a promise was thereupon made of pardon to them, and each one of them. Now, as soon as they are mystically and really united to him by faith, by means of that union they have communion with him in his righteousness: whereupon his perfect satisfaction is imputed to them; and, upon the account of it alone, and not any deed of theirs whatsoever the free promise is accomplished, and the pardon actually bestowed on them, according to the eternal agreement . . . ³

This pardon of sin by virtue of union with Christ means as well the "acceptance of their persons as righteous in the sight of God . . ."⁴ It means therefore eternal life, "for all sins, past, present, and to come, are pardoned, as to the guilt of eternal wrath . . ."⁵

The promise of justification to the elect is

²The Covenant of Grace, VII, 481 (1722-24).
³Ibid., p. 482.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
intimately
grafted upon the promise of justification made to Christ. The condition of the covenant being fulfilled, the head is justified, according to the promise; and then the members in him. First, the Mediator gets up his discharge for the whole debt; and then they, pleading it by faith for their own behoof, are discharged in their own persons. 1

The above is representative of the distinctive integration of Boston's teaching on justification with his federal theology and the theme of union with Christ. With reference to the Anti- and Neonomian controversies of the time, Boston's work is usually quietly positive, although upon occasion he explicitly repudiates both errors, as he does as early as 1701 in a non-sermonic writing:

I mind not here to consider the doctrine of the deluded Antinomians, who assert, that men are justified and actually pardoned from all eternity; and so not only before they believe, but before they are born . . . 2

Again, in his Notes on the Marrow, Boston repudiates this sense of justification from eternity: Fisher's answer amounts just to this, "That God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time apply Christ unto them."—Westmin. Confess. chap. 11. art. 4. 3

At the same early date that he repudiated the Antinomian

1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 463 (1722-24).
Cf. I, 527-98 (1717-18).
  2 VI, 44 (1701??).
  3 VII, 291 (1721-22). Kadow has a chapter titled "The Doctrine of the Marrow about Justification from Eternity, and in Time doth not purge it of Antinomianism" in which he never even seriously attempts to prove that the Marrow does teach justification from eternity. Antinomianism Detected, pp. 27-36.
errors, Boston also registered his dissatisfaction with the Neonomian way of handling things:

And I wish this way of speaking of faith as a mean were more generally received. If it were so, it might be of good use to bury the debates about the conditionality of the covenant of grace, and the instrumentality of faith in our justification, and might tend to give us distinct uptakings of the true nature of the second covenant. As is obvious, Boston soon went beyond this safeguard of speaking of faith as a "mean" in his efforts to combat Neonomianism.

Boston says a great deal more about justification, with perhaps the largest single treatment under that head in his sermons on the Shorter Catechism, but since it is so thoroughly in harmony with accepted Reformed teaching, there would be little value in its repetition.

As the result of justification, the elect, according to the promises made to Christ, are accorded a new covenant-relationship to God. Whereas formerly they were bound to the curse and penalties of the broken covenant of works, they are now instated into the covenant of grace. Boston describes the elect as meeting God "even in Christ the appointed meeting-place . . ." This promise of a new relationship is

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1 VI, 78 (1701?).
2 I, 581-612 (1717-18).
3 For further references to justification see VI, 11-99 (1701?); IV, 547 (1711-12); III, 115-16 (1716); II, 15 (1719-20); The Covenant of Works, XI, 337 (1721-22); XI, 162 (1726); VII, 539 (1727), VII, 91ff. (1727-28); VI, 558 (1728); VI, 319 (1729); and X, 449 (1732).
4 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 464 (1722-24).
developed by Boston under three heads: reconciliation, adoption, and "of God's being their God." In a large degree, these three are repetitions, differing only in details. Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, the variation in the biblical treatment offers Boston an opportunity to emphasize his point, while doing greater justice to the multiform character of biblical expression.

Under the broken covenant of works man stood at enmity with God—"real enmity" and "legal enmity."

But Jesus Christ having undertaken, in the covenant, to expiate their guilt, by the sacrifice of himself the Father made a promise of peace and reconciliation with them thereupon. Hence we are said to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, Rom. v. 10; inasmuch as by his death and suffering he purchased our reconciliation, which was promised on these terms.

Boston describes this same reconciliation as bringing us into a state of peace with God, and rather than separating the "Covenant of Peace" from the "Covenant of Redemption"—as did such federal theologians as Patrick Gillespie—Boston sees the covenant of grace made with Christ as also comprising the peace made with sinners:

This promise is grafted upon the promise of acceptance and justification made to Christ. For his sacrifice being accepted as well pleasing to God, and... at the discharge of the debt he became surety for the reconciliation, as well as the pardon, of those united to him by faith, natively follows thereupon...

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1 bid. Cf. II, 19-23 (1719-1720); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 562, 564; and V, 513 (1730). Boston also describes this peace as won in the struggle to overcome sin, death, and the devil: X, 263 (1725-26).

2 Ibid. Cf. II, 19-23 (1719-1720); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 562, 564; and V, 513 (1730). Boston also describes this peace as won in the struggle to overcome sin, death, and the devil: X, 263 (1725-26).

Upon the believer's union with Christ, the promise of adoption is also fulfilled. Under the covenant of works all men were as God's hired servants; and by the breach of that covenant, bond servants under the curse: ... Christ transferred that state of servitude of his spiritual seed on himself. Now, upon consideration of his taking on him the form of a bond servant for them, the promise of their adoption into the family of God was made.¹

In his exposition on the Shorter Catechism Boston ties adoption to the incarnation, through which the human nature is dignified and nobilitated, raised to a pitch of honour even above that of the angels. ... For the Son of God, to make way for this adoption, took to himself a holy human nature, into personal union with his Godhead.²

In The Covenant of Grace the relationship is presented in somewhat different fashion:

Now, this promise is grafted upon the promise made to Christ of a new kind of interest in God as his Father; according to that, John xx. 17, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father." For by the Spirit of adoption we call God our Father, in the right of Jesus Christ our elder brother, spiritual husband and head.³

Boston uses the doctrine of adoption to oppose the use made of the fear of hell as a means of imposing obedience upon Christians. This, says Boston, is not agreeable to the spirit of adoption.⁴ On the other hand, he uses the doctrine of adoption to directly demand obedience, for we are to obey as sons, out of love, not as bond-servants.⁵

¹The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 485 (1722-24).
²I, 618 (1717-18).
³The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 485.
⁴Notes on the Harrow, VII, 333 (1721-22).
⁵V, 231 (1724). For other representative references to adoption see I, 612-42 (1717-18); IX, 560-61 (1715); VII, 531, 543-44 (1727); and VII, 100-04 (1727-28).
The last branch of the promise of a new relationship to God is the promise of "God's being their God"—"their God" in the sense of Heb. viii. 10, "I will be their God." That this is the "height of the relation to God" is obvious in Boston's description of the benefits of this relationship:

Not only are all the works and creatures of God, in the heavens, earth, and seas, theirs, I Cor. iii. 23, "All are yours;" but himself is theirs: which is more than all that. . . All the attributes are theirs; his infinite wisdom to direct them, his power to afford them protection, his justice to make all the benefits purchased by Christ for them forthcoming to them, his holiness to transform them into the same image, his mercy to pity and succour them, his grace to deal bountifully with them, his faithfulness to fulfil all the promises to them in their time, and his all-sufficiency to render them completely happy. He is theirs in all their relations; their Shepherd, Provider, Protector, King, Husband, Head, and whatever may contribute to their happiness. All the persons of the glorious Trinity are theirs: the Father is theirs, the Son is theirs, and the Holy Spirit is theirs. . .

Boston is not alone in this understanding of the effects of union with Christ, for the superb Witsius also maintains that

From this communion results the communication of all the benefits of Christ, both in grace and in glory, to which we are likewise called . . .

And since Christ cannot be separated from his Father and his Spirit, we are, at the same time, called to the communion of the undivided Trinity. . . . And it is the very summit of our happiness, to exult in God as ours, and sing aloud to him, my God, while he himself calls to

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1 Or, to use an illustration from one of Boston's sermons: "however mean and low those be who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better, God is not ashamed of them, or on their part, to be called their God." X, 121 (1722).

2 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 486 (1722-24).

Cf. III, 598 (1720), for a very similar passage, also built upon communion with Christ. Cf. also IX, 460 (1715).
As for Boston,

This rich promise is grafted upon the promise made to Christ of a new kind of interest in God as his God. ... God being the Mediator's God by purchase, he becomes our God in him. Christ having performed the condition of the covenant, falls heir to the great heritage; and we fall to it also in him, being heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17.

The next promise, that of sanctification, is of especial interest with reference to the charge of Antinomianism leveled against the Marrow. That the Marrow was Antinomian was the entire burden of Principal Hadow's The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected. If the Marrow theology, by which Boston was so heavily influenced, did in fact contain Antinomian doctrines, or at least such flaws as would make Antinomianism possible, then its influence should be most strongly felt in the doctrine of sanctification. Hadow's assertion with regard to the Marrow teaching on sanctification was that it did not allow inherent Holiness and the Practice of Good Works to be necessary unto Salvation, by the Command of God, or even as a Means appointed of God, and necessary to fit the Believer for the Possession of Glory.

To what extent this was true, or to what extent Boston may have been unconcerned about morality, should be kept in mind when consideration is given to his teaching on sanctification.

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1 Herman Witsius, The Economy of the Covenants, trans. William Crookshank (London, 1837 [first published in 1694]), I, 310 [2. 5. 4-51].
2 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 486 (1722–24).
3 Hadow, Antinomianism Detected, p. 144.
Those who had given serious credence to the accusations of
Radow and the Moderates would have found in Boston's teaching
something quite unexpected.

The promised sanctification is described by Boston
in the strongest possible language. "Sanctification is the
very chief subordinate end of the covenant of grace, . . ."
being second only "to the glory of God, which is the chief
and ultimate end thereof." ¹

All the foregoing promises, the promise of preservation,
the Spirit, the first regeneration or quickening of the
dead soul, faith, justification, the new saving relation
to God, reconciliation, adoption, and enjoyment of God as
our God, do tend unto it [sanctification] as their common
centre, and stand related to it as means to their end.
They are all accomplished on sinners, on design to make
them holy. And all the subsequent promises, even the
promise of glorification itself, are but the same promise
of sanctification enlarged and extended . . .

This evaluation of sanctification, with its attendant
holiness, is also found elsewhere in Boston. In 1719 he
described the holiness of the elect as "the end of their
redemption by Christ." ³ Sanctification is also described as
the end of revealed religion, law, and gospel. ⁴ At other
times Boston took more care to subordinate it to the glory of
God: "The sanctification of sinners is the chief subordinate
end of the covenant of grace, or of the gospel, standing next
to the glory of God." ⁵

¹See The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 487 (1722-24).
²Ibid., pp. 487-88.
³X, 40 (1719).
⁴XIII, 217 (1719).
⁵IV, 43 (1723). Cf. XI, 140, 149 (1726); V, 229
(1724); and The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 571-72.
But even this elevation of sanctification might be, in Principal Hedow's thinking, merely the trick of a "sly Antinomian." Viewed in the context of his time, Hedow's suspicion was built on a certain degree of possibility, for while the Antinomians held a doctrine of sanctification, it was a sanctification by imputation. This was the quite natural result of a confusion of justification and sanctification. Hedow charged that the Narrow confused the two, and taught an imputed sanctification.\(^1\) A very cursory reading of Boston might lead one to suspect that these charges were in some sense applicable to him, but a closer analysis would reveal these suspicions to be unfounded. Boston's difficulties in keeping himself completely clear from such suspicions arise from several quarters. The first is his close adherence to biblical terminology. Then, for example, using Titus ii. 14, Romans iv. 23, and I Cor. vi. 11, where concepts of justification and sanctification stand exceedingly close, it is difficult to remain true to the biblical language, as does Boston, and yet make satisfactorily neat distinctions between the two in the same breath.\(^2\) Secondly, Boston stresses that justification and sanctification are not separable in practice,\(^3\) both on the grounds that sanctification is impossible without the former, and that

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\(^1\) Hedow, *Antinomianism Detected*, pp. 149-59. With Hedow's methods, it would have been much easier to prove Luther a rank Antinomian.

\(^2\) VI, 568 (1728).

\(^3\) I, 581 (1717-18); V, 84 (1722).
justification does not exist without the resulting sanctification. ¹ Boston is always anxious to stress that sanctification, as well as justification, is of God— in no instance is man to be given occasion to boast. ² But such an emphasis is obviously susceptible to Antinomian witch-hunting.

To Boston it seemed imperative that he not only show why sanctification was necessary, but why it could not be given except through Christ. Man had broken the covenant of works and lost the image of God; he was unable to make himself holy, he was under the curse, and separated by it from God. ³ Through the covenant of grace, Christ removed the curse by fulfilling the conditions of the law, and therefore obtained the promises, including that of sanctification, for his people. ⁴ The promise of sanctification "is indeed the chief promise of the covenant made to Christ for them; among the rest of that kind, it shines like the moon among the lesser stars." ⁵

While sanctification is one of the promised benefits obtained in fulfilment of the covenant, it is definitely not a matter of imputation. Sanctification means a "real holiness in their [i.e., the sanctified] own persons. . . . Sanctification then is not a mere change of our state, but a change of our nature . . . ." ⁶ "No man without real

¹ V, 235 (1724).
² VI, 579 (1726).
³ The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 487 (1722-24).
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ VII, 105 (1727-28).
holiness in his own person, shall ever see the Lord, Heb. XII. 14. This real holiness and change of nature is brought about through union with Christ. Like every other transformation in the sinner, it is carried through by the work of the Spirit, and his bestowment of grace, or "sanctifying influences."

The matter lies here. The sinner being by faith united to Christ through the communication of the quickening Spirit from Christ unto him, and thereupon justified, reconciled, adopted, and made an heir of God; there is a measure of every grace . . . communicated out of [the] all-fullness of grace in the man Christ the head, unto the sinner as a member of his, by the same Spirit dwelling in the head and members.

Christ, by his fulfilment of the conditions, is able to communicate to the elect of the fullness of his grace. "The sluice of grace in Christ that was quite stoped before as to the sinner, is then opened in a measure to run over him for his washing from sin." Thus it is not merely a change of state as in justification, but a real change of nature through the operation of the Spirit.

So the Spirit puts the soul to Christ, by faith it unites close with him: then Christ by his Spirit conveys of his graces to the soul, which [s] its nature into his own . . .

The result is a change in the whole man. "In sanctification we are renewed in the whole man; that is to say, in our whole person, soul and body . . ."
Hereby the man is not only a spiritually living creature, but an all-new creature, sanctified wholly or throughout, renewed in the whole man, after the image of God. For the immediate effect of that communication of grace from Christ, must be the sealing of the person with the image of Christ; forasmuch as he receives grace for grace in Christ, as the wax doth point for point in the seal.

However, while the whole man, soul and body, is sanctified, and that in every part, yet sanctification does not take place all at once, but by degrees. "It is not an act done in an instant, but a work carried on by degrees. . . . And it is never perfected in this life." Or, more picturesquely:

But although the whole man is sanctified, yet no part of the man is perfectly sanctified in this life. It is neither midnight to them as with the unregenerate, nor mid-day as with the glorified, but twilight, which is a mixture of darkness and light.

But because a "predominant measure of every grace" is

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1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 489 (1722-24). A few pages later one is startled by the apparent confusion of justification and sanctification: "... the restored image of God makes one really and personally pure and clean in the sight of God, as far as it goes: Tit. iii. 5 . . . ." (ibid., p. 492). The "as far as it goes" really puts the saving and qualifying brake on a rather dangerous sentence. However, while Boston's thought is not as well defined as it might be, its content, far more than an occasional phrase, lifts it above suspicion of Antinomian tendencies. Perhaps the reason Boston's exposition on sanctification in The Covenant of Grace (VII, 486-503 [1722-24]) lacks a certain amount of clarity is because the principal intention of this writing is to expound the relation of the believer to the covenant promises. However, because of the important place occupied by sanctification in the discussion, it has seemed advisable to draw heavily upon Boston's other sermons concerning sanctification to present his teaching with greater clarity. The most extended discussions on sanctification by Boston are in the series on the catechism, I, 653-61, II, 5-14 (1719); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 486-503 (1722-24); "A Brief Explication of the First Part of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism," VII, 105-18 (1727-28); and "The Mystery of Sanctification By Christ," VI, 561-619 (1728).


communicated, "this work of sanctification doth issue in a state of death unto sin [mortification], and a state of life unto righteousness [vivification]."¹ By the communication of grace from Christ "a reigning principle of grace is thereby set up in the believer . . ." so that "the OLD man of sin gets his deadly wound."² By this same grace "one is endued with infused habits of grace, the immediate principles of gracious actions . . ."³ The results of this dying to sin and life unto righteousness are repentance and obedience, the two branches of this promise.

Whereas Hadow would insist that repentance went both before justification and before remission of sins,⁴ to Boston this was quite preposterous, for he understood repentance as a branch of the promise of sanctification.⁵

Not that legal repentance, which goes before saving faith, being common to the elect and reprobate; but that evangelical repentance, which is described in our catechisms, the seeds of which are said, in the Larger Catechisms, to be put into the heart in sanctification; and so follows saving faith and justification in the order of nature . . .⁶

This should not be understood as a hard and fast chronological order. Boston never attempts to establish a precise temporal relation between the first workings of the Spirit,

¹ The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 492.
² Ibid.
⁴ Hadow, Antinomianism Detected, pp. 36-63.
⁵ The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 495 (1722-24).
⁶ Ibid. It should be noted that legal repentance is not that "spiritual moral life" promised before union with Christ (supra, pp. 216-18); that is evangelical repentance.
the beginnings of faith (conscious or otherwise), and justification. While he quite rightly insists that in the order of nature justification precedes sanctification, Boston is quite willing to caution that in respect of time they are "together and at once," for "in the same moment that a sinner is justified, he is also sanctified." In this regard Boston's distinction of "initial" and "progressive" sanctification should also be noted, for Boston nowhere holds that our entire sanctification is accomplished at justification. True evangelical repentance is, for Boston, possible only on the premise of sanctification, for it includes a genuine love of God and hatred of sin, something quite impossible to those not quickened by God's grace.

"The other chief branch of the promise of sanctification, is, the promise of actual grace and strength for all holy obedience; whereby one may be enabled acceptably to perform obedience . . ." Boston is very explicit on this point: there is "such a specific provision and allowance of grace" that it is possible to perform obedience.

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1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 496 (1722-24). Cf. VI, 558 (1728): "That moment one gets part with Christ, he washes him from his sins. In order of nature indeed, part with Christ goes before washing, and justification before sanctification. But in respect of time they come together, and at once."

2 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 496-97. Calvin would of course be on Boston's side of the argument, e.g., John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists (Grand Rapids, 1949), 11, 137, 139-40, 347-48.

3 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 497.

4 Ibid., p. 498.
obedience can be perfect. In the sanctified, the old man of sin has been crucified, but all life has not gone out of him, therefore throughout this life there will be the struggle between the old and new natures. Nevertheless, because real holiness is of crowning importance, Boston would have no one "weakened in the practice of holiness" by using the old nature as an excuse. The extent to which obedience can be performed by the grace received in the promise of sanctification is illustrated by Boston's exhortation to his congregation:

1. Distinguish between performing obedience, in all the parts thereof, and in all the degrees of these parts. The latter indeed no man can . . . do in this life. . . . But the former every true believer may do, yea, and actually doth . . .

2. Distinguish between performing obedience perfectly, and performing it acceptably. No man can perform obedience perfectly in this life . . . but every true believer performs obedience acceptably . . .

3. Distinguish between ability in ourselves for performing obedience in all the parts thereof acceptably, and ability for it in Christ to be fetched in by faith.

Boston gives meaning to these abstract distinctions by the following illustration:

A whole family hears so many particular pieces of work prescribed to them all by the father and master of the family. His grown children do them all exactly to his mind: the younger children, who are but learning to work, put hand to every one of them, and baulk none of the pieces; but they do none of them exactly. Refractory servants do some of them, but others of them they never notice. Just so it is with the saints in heaven, true believers on earth, and hypocrites.²

For the task of sanctification "so much of this their

² VI, 538.
It should be obvious by now that Boston's doctrine of sanctification is neither an imputed one, nor one in which God restores man's faculties and is then able to leave him to work out his own sanctification. No part of sanctification, no obedience, is possible apart from God's continued grace.

This emphasis upon grace does not mean, however, that Boston preaches a quietistic message. There are times when Boston lays great stress upon man's efforts, as he emphasizes that "The Christian life is a fighting life; 2 Tim. iv. 7. All is not done when they are converted, they must fight their way through the wilderness." The same is true of his sermon series "Christian Warfare; or, The Good Fight of Faith." Nevertheless, even when speaking within the same sentence of both man's doing and God's Boston strives to keep grace primary.

1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 508. The above is but representative of many phrases used by Boston in which there is an undeniable quantitativeness about grace. However, despite the dangers of this graphic phraseology, it never leads to the idea that grace can be retained as a personal possession. "But even when we are habitually sanctified, through the habits of grace infused into us by the Spirit; we are not of ourselves, that is to say, merely upon that stock, without communications of actual grace by the same Spirit, able to bring forth any fruit of holiness . . . ." (ibid., p. 498). "For grace is a child of heaven, which has all its nourishment and strength from the same Spirit that gave it life" (I, 659 (1719)).

2 St. 566 (1721).

This strong emphasis upon grace, combined with an unwillingness to promote obedience by threats of punishment and promises of reward, seemed to many of that day to be positively destructive to morality. To them it seemed necessary to have both the threats and promises of the law to gain obedience. While Boston overtly resists this tendency, nevertheless in a sermon on "The Sin, Folly, and Danger of Men's Calling Christ Their Lord, and Not Yielding Obedience . . ." he gives obedience very great stature, although he does so in a far more orthodox manner than the Neonomians:

... Christ is in earnest for our obedience. . . . Though we are not to lay the weight of our acceptances with God on our obedience, yet there is a weight of evidence lies on it. . . . The evidence of our belonging to Christ, in a saving relationship, lies upon it . . . .

Boston's primary emphasis concerning the motive to obedience is that it is done by the sanctified out of love for God. The "wheels of the soul are oiled with love, Heb. vi. 10; and faith and a renewed heart are the springs of obedience, and the glory of God the chief end." The whole matter can be summed up thus: "By evangelical repentance and gospel-obedience, we testify our thankfulness to God, and evidence the truth of our faith, and our being within the covenant . . . ."

While this teaching may not appear to be any more than the accepted Reformed teaching on obedience, Boston will be

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1VI, 537 (1728). More will be said about this concept in chapter ten, which concerns assurance.  
2IV, 281 (1706).  
more fully appreciated when set against the background of his own day, in which the growing, and predominating, spirit seemed to be that of Baxter:

... because the doctrine [That we must Act from Life, but not for Life; or in thankfulness to him that hath saved us, but not for the obtaining of Salvation] is of such dangerous consequence, that I would advise all men to take heed of it, that regard their Salvation. ¹

What is the basis for Boston's complete confidence that believers will lead lives of obedience without such conditionality as advocated by the Neonomians? The basis is simply his complete confidence in God's promises.

Now, the promise of sanctification, which [sic] its several branches, is grafted upon the promise of a resurrection made to Christ. For the condition of the covenant being fulfilled, he as the head was, according to the promise, brought again from the dead, and lives unto God, death having no more dominion over him: and in virtue hereof again, his members are brought to repentance from dead works, and unto newness of life. ²

For Boston there is still real power in the intangibles, in the mysteries, of religion. Grace is still real grace, it is God's power to work changes within men's lives. Grace was not a traditional theological term which had been surreptitiously vitiated by the spirit of the age, so that it was thought provident to bolster it by an appeal to man's self-interests. Thus, in Boston's thought, when God gives these promises to Christ on the basis of his fulfilling the

¹Richard Baxter, The Saints Everlasting Rest, p. 10. The brackets are Baxter's, and the statement is made in reference to the Marrow.

²The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 503 (1722–24). The discussion of the role played by union with Christ is being deferred, with difficulty, for consideration at the close of this chapter.
conditions of the covenant, those conditions, once fulfilled, make it inevitable that the promises be kept. God "hath bound himself to perform his part, as the Mediator hath already performed his."¹ Christ has risen from the dead, it is therefore inevitable that grace will be given to sinners to raise them from their spiritual death.

By alteration and adjustment in the received theological system, Boston was able to steer between both the Neonomian, and Antinomian dangers. In this instance he keeps the doctrine of sanctification free from Neonomianism by insisting that sanctification, with its repentance and obedience, is a benefit promised to Christ and infallibly received by his members through him. To obtain this promise Christ has fulfilled the conditions; for the elect they are "absolute and free". This is one of the "cluster of free promises of grace and glory to poor sinners, in which no mention is made of any condition . . ."² Because Boston pays more than lip-service to the doctrine of grace—that this was God's doing, and not man's—he has no hesitancy about affirming that believers whom God justifies will live lives of obedience (although at the same time he is quite ready to use the God-given "means" of exhortation from the Word). God does not operate without means, but for Boston sanctifying grace and obedience are inseparable.

On the other hand, Boston's doctrine of sanctification

¹Ibid., p. 461.
²Ibid., p. 460.
is also free from Antinomian flaws. At times he seems to confuse justification and sanctification, but this is the result of factors already mentioned (supra, pp. 230-31). Any real confusion would result in a doctrine of imputed sanctification. Boston expressly denies that sanctification is imputed and instead emphasizes a real holiness within the sanctified. But there are also the intrinsic relationships of his doctrine which make imputation in this context impossible. Sanctification is carried out within the believer by virtue of his union with Christ, through grace conveyed by the spirit; it is a matter of gracious action within the believer. Also, it is a matter of degrees, and carried on over an extended period of time. Such teaching can have meaning only with reference to a performed, in distinction from an imputed, sanctification. In an age prone to Necrommanism, and while himself accused of Antinomianism, Boston held the middle course even in his doctrine of sanctification.

The perseverance of the saints is again considered at this point as another of the promises of the covenant of grace to be fulfilled through Christ the head. The condition which Christ had to fulfil was obedience to the law even to death, and that perfect fulfilment "is the ground in law upon which the perseverance of the saints is infallibly secured, in virtue of the faithfulness of God in the promise." The central fact of this perseverance rests upon union with Christ.

1Ibid., p. 504.
Now, this promise begins to be performed to them, as soon as they are united unto Christ. . . . Upon their union with the second Adam, being savingly interested in his obedience which he persevered in unto the end, they are confirmed, that they can no more fall away; even as the first Adam's natural seed would have been confirmed, upon his having completed the course of his probationary obedience, and fulfilling the condition of the covenant of works.

The very neat parallels of conditions, promises, and of Adam to Christ, in the covenants of works, and grace should not be allowed to detract from the fact that the basic ground of the perseverance of the saints is declared to be union with Christ.

While not totally unique, neither was it general practice among the Reformed to give such primary emphasis to union with Christ in this connection. Under the fifth head of doctrine of The Canons of the Synod of Dort, the perseverance of the saints rests squarely upon God's "unchangeable purpose of election." In Heppe's estimation:

Indeed the deepest ground for the perseverance of believers is the activity of the Father, who has loved and elected believers from eternity,--and next, the Son's activity in dispensing salvation, since to those whom the Father has elected in him He (the Father) has promised, on condition of the redemptive work carried out by the Son, not only faith but also persistence in faith . . . .

Witsius' ordering of the grounds of perseverance is interesting in that he assigns first place to God's immutable predestination, second place to the fact that God gave the elect to Christ as an inheritance to be united to himself, and then

1Ibid.
2Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 584.
3Witsius, Or. cit., II, 70 (3. 13. 12-14).
adds the steadfastness promised the elect, and the exertion of God's power on their behalf. Boston's first contact with the idea may have been in Ursinus' commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, for in its first pages the believer is directed to Christ for perseverance:

Inst. Quid si gratia Christi excidas? Potes enim peccare & deficere: & longum atque arduum est iter in coelum. Respond. Christus sua beneficiaria mihi non tantum est meritus, & confort, sed etiam perpetuo conservat, & donat me perseverantia, ne deficiam, aut excidam a gratia. Later, in the explanation of the benefits of Christ's resurrection to his members, one finds the following, which in many respects parallels Boston's thought:

Ex eadem certi sumus, eum nunc partes Mediatoris obire applicare nobis beneficium redemptionis, conservare nos perpetuo in iustitia applicata, inchoare in nobis vitam nouam, atque ita nos de consummatione vitae aeternae confirmare, quod non poterat, nisi resurget.

However, it must be recognized that in the section on election it is stated that one of the effects of election is the "perseuerantia finalis" of the elect.

It is not true, however, that the grounding of perseverance upon election is unknown to Boston, for in his formal exposition of the Shorter Catechism he, like Witsius, puts "The unchangeable decree of God's election" in first place. But does this really represent Boston's view? His list in

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1bid., II, 72-73 [3. 13. 16-17].
2bid., II, 74 [3. 13. 16].
3Davidis Parei, Corpus Doctrinarium Sive Catecheticarum Explicationum D. Zachariae Vrsini (Heidelbergae, 1616), p. 15.
4ibid., p. 239.
5ibid., p. 299.
6ibid., p. 25 (1719).
this instance follows point for point the pattern of the statement concerning the perseverance of the saints in chapter xvii, article ii, of the Westminster Confession of Faith! Usually, however, when Boston speaks of perseverance he does so on the basis of union with Christ, or as a benefit of the covenant, which is given only through union with Christ. The pervading assertion of Boston with regard to the believer's perseverance, is that "sinners are so accepted in Christ that they shall never be cast out of God's favour again . . . ." ¹

The promise of the perseverance of the saints, seems to be grafted upon the promise of assistance made to Christ in his work. The Father promised to him, that he would uphold him, so as he should not fail, Isa. xiii. 1, 4. The which promise being made to him as a public person, carries along with it the preservation and support of his members, in all their temptations, trials, and dangers of perishing; ensuring the safe conduct, as of the head, so of the mystical members through this world, till they be out of reach of danger. ²

To the list of promises of the covenant Boston adds that of temporal benefits. By the fall man forfeited life itself; and consequently lost his covenant-right to all the means and comforts of life."³ On the ground of the removal of the curse by the second Adam, a new covenant-right is given to his seed (I Cor. iii. 22-23), the promise of "good things necessary for this life," and a "promise of protection

¹XI, 169 (1726). Cf. The Fourfold State, VIII, 180, 222 (1699-1727); VII, 503 (1714); Notes on the Marrow, VII, 246 (1721-22); XI, 165, 167 (1726); and VII, 535 (1727).
²The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 504 (1722-24).
³Ibid., p. 507.
from the evil things that concern this life." This does not mean that there will be no trials or testing, for the temporal benefits are given "in such measure, as God sees meet for his own glory and their good." "Now, this promise is grafted upon the promise made to Christ of inheriting all things. For they that are his, are joint heirs with him, Rom. viii. 17, to inherit all things too through him . . . ."

What function does this last promise play in Boston's theology? Perhaps the best suggestion that can be made concerns the Act of Assembly of 1720 which condemned the Marrow for teaching that fear of punishment and hope of reward were not acceptable motives of a believer's obedience. Boston, by making temporal benefits promises obtained by Christ and given to believers through union with him, takes these benefits out of the sphere where they can be made an inducement to obedience. This point is thoroughly in accord with the rest of Boston's theology of grace.

By the skillful emphasis upon the promises, possible through the covenant of grace made with Christ, Boston appears to dissolve many of the incendiary theological problems of the day.

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1 Ibid., p. 509.
2 Ibid., p. 507. In "The Believer's Hundredfold in this Life . . . ." (V, 375-443 [1729]) Boston points out that the believer's hundredfold, while being given in this life (although an even greater reward is given in the next life) is a reward not in material goods, but in "value," albeit persecutions may be attendant (p. 378).
3 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 508 (1722-24).
While the parts of the covenant of works and grace parallel each other with regard to conditions and promises, the parallel stops when it comes to the penalty. This, Boston says, is "no essential part of a proper covenant. It is but accidental only, arising . . . from the nature of the covenanters . . ." Therefore the covenant of grace has no penalty because it is concluded solely between Father and Son, both of whom are infallible. The parties being infallible, the covenant needs no penalty.

This point, whatever its other merits may be, does serve the purpose of allowing Boston to reiterate the essential elements of the covenant of grace with regard to the elect—elements so essential that much of Boston's claim to theological respect can rest upon them:

It is true, the parties contracted for are fallible; but then the performing of the condition of this covenant, as such, doth in no case lie upon them; Christ having taken it entirely on himself, and accordingly performed it already. While they continue in their natural state, without Christ, they are personally in the covenant of works, not in the covenant of grace. And being once become believers in Christ, the promise of the covenant of grace stands always entire to them, notwithstanding of all their failures; and must needs stand so, in virtue of the condition of the covenant already performed, and judicially sustained, as performed by Jesus Christ for them.  

Union with Christ: More must certainly be said about the meaning of being in Christ, for it is only in Christ that

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1. ibid., p. 518.
2. ibid.
the promises can be received. Boston deserves a great deal of respect for his structuring of the covenant of grace, but as is very obvious by this time, within that structure the element of union with Christ plays a conspicuous role. This is true not merely of this exposition, spanning the years 1722 to 1724, but it is indicative of an emphasis within his theology which from 1717 onwards becomes increasingly important. The importance of this doctrine for Boston is such that it deserves not simply an analysis of its expression within The Covenant of Grace, but an examination of its chronological place within Boston’s theology, as well as its functional importance.

Among Boston’s earliest theological writings there are strong traces of the doctrine of union with Christ. This is not surprising when the literature influential in Boston’s theological awakening is considered. The Marrow contains a strong implicit doctrine of union with Christ. At about the same time Boston also found union with Christ taught in works of Ferguson, Rutherford, Luther, Beza, and Zanchius. Of these, however, the works of Ferguson, Rutherford, and Beza, contain an obviously implicit doctrine of union with Christ, but not one that is explicitly taught

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1By the earliest theological writings are meant the Miscellaneous Questions (1701??, completed before Aug. 1704). Because of its history, The Fourfold State is completely unreliable as a chronological witness.

2VI, 56-57 (1701??).
(i.e., it is not given separate attention as a doctrine).

For example, Beza's most pointed statement concerning union with Christ in the section to which Boston refers is the following:

We learn to pay by him, who hath set him selfe detter and payer for us, which hath put himselfe, I say, in our place, and hath payde our debt, as the principall detter, even unto the uttermoste penny (a) in such wise that the rigour of the Law, which did before feare us, now comforteth us in Jesus Christ, forasmuch as life eternall is due to those, which have fully obeyed the Lawe, and Jesus Christ hath fulfilled the same for us: So it followeth, that according to the extremity & rigour of the Law, salvation can not fayl to those which by (b) faith be united and incorporated into Jesus Christ.  

While it is not to be expected that Boston could form a neatly structured system of federal theology from Luther, his Galatians could hardly fail to leave its own distinctive impact with such phrases as

In the mean season the old man abideth without, and is subject to the law: but as concerning justification, Christ and I must be entirely conjoined and united together, so that he may live in me and I in him. . . . Now because Christ liveth in me, therefore whatsoever of grace, righteousness, life, peace and salvation is in me, it is all his, and yet notwithstanding the same is mine also, by that inseparable union and conjunction.

Zanchius, while lacking Luther's fire, is a systematic theologian in whose theology the doctrine of union with Christ

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2 Beza, op. cit., p. 89.
is not simply implicit, but is rather an explicit teaching.

Chapter XII is titled:

**DE VERA REDPNTIONIS,**

_\textit{salutis, & vitae, quae in uno Christo posita est, dispensatione:} \textit{aque de necessaria cum Christo vnitione ac}

Zanchius lived and wrote before the rise of an explicit federal theology, and so it was impossible that Boston should find in his works a doctrine of union with Christ that would be immediately suitable for his system. Nevertheless, the following quotation indicates many basic similarities, perhaps the most notable of which is the parallel of Adam and Christ:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Credimus, sicut peccatum Adae, \& quae illud secuta est mors, non in solo Adomo permanit: sed exilio, tanquam ex capite totius humani generis, in omnes homines, que per communem generationem ex ipso nati sunt \& nascuntur, permanuit, atque permanet: sic etiam Christi iustitiam, \& quae illi debetur, vitam aeternam, non in solo Christo retineri, sed in omnes, qui cum ipso per regenerationem Spiritus sancti vnum flunt, ipsique tanquam capiti totius Ecclesiae, seu vera membra adglutinatur, deriuari: atque in hunc fines \& Christum venisse in carne, \& totem in eo, tanquam capite, salutem ac vitam positan esse: \textit{vt scilicet, omnibus electis ipsi vnitis, reipsea dispensetur ac communicetur.}\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

Zanchius gives union with Christ a far greater place in his system than do most theologians by stressing that "\textit{Ex unione cum Christo, beneficiorun mortis \& resurrectionis eius participationem in nos deriuari.}\textsuperscript{3}

But from what point of view is Boston's doctrine of

\textsuperscript{1}N. Zanchii, \textit{De Religione Christiana Fides (Neostadii Palatinorum, no date [1555]), p. 80.}
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 80-81.
\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 95.
union with Christ to be examined? To trace the history of the doctrine from the center of the Reformation through the pointed teaching of Zanchiua, and on through its decline in the midst of a theology that for a time appeared able to press vigorously on without it, would be an exceedingly informative study in the history of the scholasticizing/rationalizing of Reformed thought—but unfortunately it is well outside the scope of this thesis. Boston's early sources with respect to this doctrine have been cited, but it seems unprofitable to attempt to trace their influence in any detail. Most of them speak of union with Christ in a meaningful way, but never single it out for definite explication.\(^1\) Luther—though always a powerful influence—falls into a class quite by himself, while only in Zanchiua does the doctrine receive a systematic exposition.

Perhaps this explains the fact that while these materials were considered by Boston in connection with the writing of the *Miscellaneous Questions* (1701?), outside of those writings the appearance of union with Christ is infrequent until the years 1717 and 1718, while from the year 1720 onwards its influence grows to such proportions that it begins to change the balance of Boston's theology. One must

\(^1\)This is true as well of Craig's *Larger Catechism*, where the phrase union with Christ appears often, and meaningfully (e.g. pp. 201, 208-09, 212-13, 240, 245-47, 249, 252-53, in Horatius Bonar's *Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation* (London, 1866). But to what extent it remained meaningful for subsequent Scottish theology must remain a matter for further research.
be very careful with the evidence here; it would be untrue to suggest that union with Christ does not appear between 1701 and 1717, for it does, and is used with definite meaning and not as a pious cliche. But nevertheless, comparatively, its use is infrequent—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is infrequently stressed. In other words, while it is a part of his theology at all times, it does not become a major factor until later.

Boston's use of the doctrine of union with Christ makes an obvious impact upon his catechism sermons (1717-20?). In 1720 Boston records that he gave particular care to his study of "The Unity of the Body of Christ" (III, 591-655), while preaching in the same year a shorter, but significant sermon on "Those that Are in Christ Are Dead to the World" (III, 342-53). From 1721 to 1722 Boston's attention was primarily occupied by The Covenant of Works, which was followed by the Covenant of Grace (1722-24). The place occupied by union with Christ within the exposition of the latter has been indicated in the preceding discussion. After that time, union with Christ continues to occupy a primary place in Boston's theology. The structure of federal theology is always there as the essential framework, but quite significantly, as more is said of union with Christ, less is said about the covenant of works. After the lengthy exposition of 1721 to 1722, the covenant of works is mentioned rarely,

1E.g., I, 544-56, 597-98, 615, 618, 652 (1717-18); II, 5-14, 30, 40, 44-45 (1719-20?); II, 410, 487 (1720?).
although it does make an appearance just often enough to make it plain that while it no longer occupies the center of his attention, neither has it been repudiated.

Thus, between Boston's study of the sources indicated, and the formidable and obvious entrance of this doctrine into the front ranks of his theology, a period of over fifteen years had elapsed! When one is also aware that the most significant of these original teachers was not a federal theologian, and that certain aspects of the teachings of Zanchius fail to find their parallels in Boston, the propriety of trying to trace parallels or influences becomes very questionable. Far better service will be done in examining not the sources, but the validity and the function of Boston's concept of union with Christ.

At the root of the concept of union with Christ stands the idea of representation. Representation, however, not in a bare, logical, or legal sense, but in such a way that those represented are bound up with Christ, their head.

\[1\text{E.g., Zanchius makes a distinction of a threefold union with Christ, a distinction which though implicit in Boston's theology--in fact, in all Christian theology--is never so stated as to suggest that Zanchius might be considered its source. Zanchius makes the distinction in this way:}

"Triplicem porro Christi nobiscum, & vicissim nostri cum Christo conjunctionem agnoscamus: vnam, in nostra natura semel factam; alteram, quae fit quotidie in singulis electorum personis, sed peregrinantisibus ad Dominum: Et postremam, quae futura est itidem cum Domino, in personis nostris, sed praeaeentibus ad Dominum: cum scilicet Deus erit omnia in omnibus nobis." Zanchius, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 83.\]
In Scripture, believers are spoken of as having entered into the kingdom of Christ, as being made new, of being members of his body, of being \( \varepsilon \nu \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \) . Union with Christ means representation, but in such a manner that the represented stand in organic relationship to their head; there is to be a conformation of the membership to the head. "... by God's action, we are included in and made sharers of that which befell Christ." But to mark off this biblical representation, implicit in the doctrine of union with Christ, from a Western, forensic concept of representation, some further distinction must be made. Perhaps the term "incorporational representation" would to some extent express the representation that is a part of being \( \varepsilon \nu \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \).

This definition is not superfluous, for while representation is a part of union with Christ, it is also part of the thinking of federal theology. However, as a part of federal theology, it is often representation in a very Western, legal sense; that is to say, it is a representation with no sense of incorporation, but rather instead, of imputation. In contrast to the representation implicit in the biblical concept of union with Christ, which has here been designated incorporational representation, this legal form might well be termed "forensic representation." The very fact that it is so much easier to find a term to designate the latter (it is even more euphonious!) indicates something of the danger of

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the forensic form. Forensic representation is far more easy for the Western mind to comprehend than is the biblical concept of union with Christ, or incorporational representation, and therefore, as long as men think in Western terms and concepts, what begins as incorporational representation will always tend to become forensic representation.

It has already been observed that many theologians preceding Boston, and contemporaneous with him (and it is true as well of those who followed!) used the phrase union with Christ without giving it any content. Is it not possible that this was because the forensic representation of federal theology had become a substitute for the biblical doctrine of union with Christ? But rather than engage in the gigantic task of trying to ascertain the fate of the doctrine of union with Christ among the Reformed, it is sufficient for the present purpose to try to analyze its use in the theology of Thomas Boston.

The extreme ease with which it was possible for the biblical concept of incorporational representation to be lost in the federal structure can be seen in an abstract reconstruction of federal theology. Given a covenant of works and a covenant of grace, and forensic representation, the following can be built: In the covenant of works Adam stood as our federal head. He broke the covenant of works and sinned as a public person, and therefore all men were declared sinners. The representation is forensic, guilt is imputed. Christ covenants for the elect, and dies and rises as their federal
head. He represents them, and they are declared righteous because of his public (representational) act. His righteousness is imputed to them on the basis of a forensic representation. Now with this structure, a seemingly satisfactory account of justification can be given, but its obvious inadequacies appear when trying to work out a doctrine of sanctification on the same basis. Then what is to be done? Should sanctification be declared imputed, with a resulting Antinomianism, or should a third covenant be added, one in which God must covenant with men as well? In the Neonomian solution, the forensic structure is adequate to eliminate all imputed sin, and with the requirements of the gospel-law made less stringent, the believer can be made responsible for his own sanctification. Whether the Antinomian or Neonomian solution is taken, either will be able to supply with its distinctive tenets the wants of forensic representation.

But, to return to the subject at hand, what is the relation of this forensic element to Boston’s theology? It can at once be seen from the exposition already given that Boston’s theology contains a generous measure of forensic representation. But while the forensic element is at no

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1 Notice how forensic union with Christ appears in the following passage from Fergusson (op. cit., p. 97): "... Christ, in His resurrection and entering of heaven, did sustain a publick person, representing all the Elect, as their Head and Attorney-general, Job. 10. 15. Therefore He was judicially looked upon by God in those actions, as if all the Elect had risen when He rose ... 96-97. Hence it is, that in the close of the verse [Eph. 2. 6] it is added, in Christ, to shew we are not yet raised and glorified in our own persons, but in Christ our Head."
point foreign to Boston (excluding, of course, the aberrations that result because of its exclusive use), neither does it present the whole picture. Boston's theology is built not only upon forensic representation, but upon incorporational representation as well, that is, upon union with Christ. For a proper understanding of Boston, it must be understood that forensic and incorporational representation are not antithetical. Of the two, however, union with Christ is by far the more comprehensive. Forensic representation can almost always be read into union with Christ, but if the latter has biblical content, then it will be impossible to force it into the narrow confines of forensic interpretation. Therefore, one test of the validity of Boston's concept of union with Christ will be whether it can be equated with forensic representation, or whether it will defy such attempts, and fill the requirements of incorporational representation.

Of union with Christ, Boston makes the emphatic assertion, that it is a real union, and not a metaphorical union.¹

Some, to advance their legal scheme of doctrine, acknowledge no other union but a relative one betwixt Christ and believers, such as may be betwixt persons and things wholly separated. . . . But . . . there is a real, ²true, and proper union betwixt Christ and believers . . .

To underline the fact that this is a real union Boston insists

¹It is interesting that James Adams in his book The Snake in the Grass: or, Remarks Upon a Book, entituled, The Harrow of Modern Divinity (Edinburgh, 1719), seems to think of union with Christ in terms of metaphors (p. 35).

²1, 946 (1717-18).
that "In this union the whole man is united to a whole Christ. The believing soul is united to him, Eph. iii. 17. His body also is united to him..."¹ For Boston, the union is ontological.²

Through this emphasis upon union with Christ there becomes evident in Boston a tendency to speak of justification in terms of identification, rather than making exclusive use of concepts of imputation, although the latter are nevertheless retained:

And so a believer in Christ indeed is, and by faith pleading Christ's righteousness for his righteousness in the sight of God, he is accepted accordingly... The sinner standing before him in the Beloved pleading the Mediator's righteousness, the plea is sustained...³

For the only ground of his being pleased with them, is the Beloved in whom they are, his righteousness which is upon them; and he is infinitely pleased with the Beloved and his righteousness...⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 546-47.
²While in some instances (e.g. I, 544) Boston speaks of a "mystical body" or a "mystical union," that is not to be interpreted as implying a strain of mysticism in Boston's theology. Nothing could be more alien to Boston than the idea of a mystical experience of unity, i.e., a direct intuition or insight into God apart from ordinary noetic channels. For Boston, knowledge of God is through the reason, enlightened by the Spirit, by the means that God has provided: Scripture and the Sacraments. Nothing could be more clear upon a reading of Boston than that the unfortunate term, mystical union (which was very common among the most orthodox of the Reformed, for whom it did not mean mysticism), is an attempt to say that while this is not a corporeal union, it is more than a metaphorical-spiritual union, it is—a mystical union (it is unfortunate that Boston did not have the word "ontological" at his disposal), as it avoids the possibility of confusion with mysticism).
³XI, 158 (1726).
⁴Ibid., p. 160.
He looks on them in his own Son, and takes pleasure in them, as covered with his righteousness.

And, of course, this is also true of sanctification:

For, if he was crucified for you, your old man was nailed to the same cross with him, that sin might be destroyed in you, and you might serve him.  

The union we have with Jesus Christ by his Spirit in us, is that whereby, being joined to Christ as our head, we are made one with him spiritually: 1 Cor. vi. 17.  

Eph. v. 23, . . . Ver. 30, "We are members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones." That union is not a metaphorical, nor mere relative union, but a most real and proper union.  

Sanctification by union with Christ through faith . . . is a mysterious way of sanctification unknown to the Jewish rabbies and Greek philosophers, an imaginary sanctification in the eyes of all legalists.

All the while, the formal structure of Boston's theology is the federal system. The following is an illustration of how in the closest conjunction with strictly forensic terms Boston can also state that

this communion with Christ in his death and resurrection, is the spring of their sanctification; it is that which sets all the wheels in motion, that concur in the washing of them from their sins.

This stress upon union with Christ for sanctification continues to appear in following years.

Believers are united and married to Christ for this very purpose, "that they might bring forth fruit unto God."  

. . . Whatever other way vain man may think to arrive at a temper of spirit and course of life pleasing to God, call it holiness or virtue, which they please, this Bible acknowledges no way of sanctification of a sinner but in Christ, united to him by faith.

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1 Ibid.
2 IV, 542 (1727).
3 VII, 50 (1727-28).
4 IV, 222 (1728).
5 VI, 579 (1728).
6 IV, 215 (1731).
Vain men conceive the sanctification of a sinner to be by vigorous exercise of their rational faculties, to correct their vicious habits, and practise virtue. But sanctification by union with Christ through faith, the only way of the sanctification of a sinner, is... an imaginary sanctification in the eyes of all legalists...

From these various examples it is obvious that the very least that can be said of Boston's doctrine of union with Christ is that it is not interchangeable with that of purely legal representation. This should be even more apparent from the exposition of the promissory part of the covenant (supra, pp. 211-45). The assertions accompanying the doctrine of union with Christ are far too broad to be encompassed by the limited resources of forensic representation.

However, the validity of Boston's concept of union with Christ is indicated not only by his direct assertions, and the content of his doctrine which backs up those assertions, but also by his integration of the concept of union with Christ with the activity of the Holy Spirit. It is not through contemplation or any mystical experience that men are united with Christ—no, that is quite foreign to Boston’s thought. Men are grafted into Christ solely through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

The communication of the Spirit to us when dead in sin, is the Spirit from Christ the head entering into us dead sinners, as a Spirit of life... We are united to Christ by that communication of the Spirit from him, inasmuch as Christ thereby apprehends us, and knits with us...

The Holy Spirit is the internal original bond of the

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1X, 449 (1732).
2VII, 51 (1727-28).
For Boston, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit of Christ, or Spirit of Christ, are synonymous. They are all animated, enlivened and actuated by one Spirit, viz. the Holy Spirit of Christ. This Spirit dwells in Christ as the head, and in all the saints as his members, Rom. viii. 9, and unites them to the head, and among themselves too, so that they are one body, I Cor. xii. 3.

It is also by the operation of the Spirit that men are sanctified through their union with Christ, for which sufficient evidence has already been given (supra, pp. 231-32). In making the action of the spirit essential to the work of sanctification, Boston again stands within the Reformed tradition.

Boston's doctrine of union with Christ can therefore unhesitatingly be declared to be essentially biblical. Assertions of real union have the backing of theological content—the representation is organic, or incorporational—while the relationship of Christ and believers is solidly grounded upon the operation of the Spirit.

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1 III, 598 (1720).
2 III, 599.
3 Cf. Hepp, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 129.
4 III, 595.
5 Hepp, Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 117-18, 129.

Perhaps it should again be mentioned that in all of these discussions Boston continues to speak of grace in terms which are objectionable for their quantitiveness. The descriptions of the Spirit "conveying fresh supplies of grace" from Christ to the believer lead one to think in terms of the Spirit conveying a commodity from one place to another. But perhaps that is just what Boston intended, for these sermons were preached to the folk at Ettrick, and there can be no doubt that Boston never took fright at putting theology into graphic language. Despite the very great dangers of
However, all this should not be interpreted as a claim that Boston saw the insufficiency of a purely abstract, legal relationship, and therefore attempted to substitute a more completely biblical doctrine. Absolutely not! Boston was not, so far as one can tell, ever overtly dissatisfied with the federal system. There is never any indication of a conscious rejection of any of its elements. Rather, it is suggested that while there was a general tendency to make federal theology increasingly Western and forensic, Boston, in obedience to the biblical data, made his theology progressively more scriptural. The rather stark forms of federal headship were supplemented with the biblical fullness of union with Christ. To Boston, however, union with Christ was an integral and legitimate part of federal theology, and there is never any indication that he questions the framework of his theology as being anything less than biblical. That certain elements, such as the covenant of works, assume a less prominent place as he becomes more preoccupied with union with Christ, is not because of any conscious rejection, and is a result of which Boston may have been completely unaware.

Neither is it being suggested that this emphasis upon union with Christ righted all the accumulated wrongs of federal theology and its accompanying desire to domesticate speaking of grace in this manner, it does not lead Boston into heresy. Although spoken of in the most quantitative terms, grace is always solely at the disposal of God; it cannot be manipulated, or kept as a possession, by man. E.g. VI, 567 (1728).
the entirety of Scripture to its forensic frame of reference. Rather, what is claimed for Boston is that his doctrine of union with Christ presents much more accurately the biblical, incorporational representation, than does the purely legal and abstract representation of the federal system. In short, in his emphasis upon union with Christ Boston brought his entire theology into closer conformity with Scripture—a not inconsiderable feat.

Although this emphasis upon union with Christ did not automatically erase all the faults of the federal system, it did help to ease them. For example, one of the difficulties inherent in the system, abstractly considered, is the disparity between the federal covenant concepts, and that of the biblical concept of the new humanity, or new aeon, in Christ—or, to use Luther's familiar concept, of the two kingdoms. The Christian, in Christ (and therefore also a member of the new humanity, living in the Kingdom of Our Lord), is still on this side of the Parousia, and therefore also a citizen of the Kingdom of this world. He is a citizen of two kingdoms, and thus the duality of his behavior is explained. In contemporary exegetical language:

> The New Aeon has entered with Christ, and the Christians belong to this in principle, but they are at the same time in the Old Aeon. Thus unity is in its borderland stage, and will not be restored completely until the end of time.¹

However, in federal theology, one is either in the covenant

¹Stig Hanson, *The Unity of the Church in the New Testament, Colossians and Ephesians* (Uppsala, 1946), p. 73.
of works or grace; there is no being in both at once! The federal structure is overly rigid, and biblical concepts, which are already mirrored in their perverted form in the federal scheme, are brought in to ease the situation (although these are in turn subjected to the distorting pressure of the system). This is readily observable in this instance. The two kingdoms, the old and new man, Adam and Christ, already have their distorted likenesses in the covenant of works and grace. But the rational schematization nevertheless fails to allow a place for the fact that the believer stands on this side of the Parousia, and is still a member of two kingdoms. Or, expressed in slightly different fashion, the covenants of works and grace fail to include the eschatological tension inherent in biblical theology. With respect to the covenants, one is either in the one or the other, and thus there is no eschatological tension. However, it is only through an understanding of this element that one can give an adequate explanation of the Christian life, of Christ's rule begun, yet not manifested in its completeness.

Abstractly considered with reference to its framework, Boston's federal theology offers no possibility for the eschatological element as a part of the dual covenants of works and grace, simply because each person is wholly in one or the other. But in reality, the eschatological tension has already been brought back in conjunction with the doctrine of union with Christ, and the associated concepts of the old and new man, and corruption and grace (supra, pp. 234, 235-37).
As has been previously indicated, sanctification is carried on by an infusion of grace from Christ, but insofar as this infusion is not sufficient to wipe out all traces of corruption, the tension of the old and the new nature persists.

In Boston's words:

But although in this work of sanctification, there is communicated out of the all-fulness of grace in Christ, a measure, and that a predominant measure of every grace: yet it is not a full measure of any grace. Hence it comes to pass, that howbeit we are thereby renewed in the whole man, yet we are still unrenewed in the whole man too...

Thus two contrary principles, to wit, grace and corruption, are in the sanctified; being together in such sort, that in every particular part where the one is, the other is there also by it...

Thus is explained within the covenant system, the concepts of the old and new man. This concept is in close conjunction with union with Christ:

There are two contrary principles in believers; the flesh and spirit, the new and old man, the new nature derived to them from the second Adam, the old unrenewed nature from the first Adam: the one the old inhabitant, the other the new incomer upon it...

There is a continual combat in them, between these two contrary principles, being together side by side, as it were, in every part...

The outcome of this struggle, through union with Christ, is never in doubt, for "in so far as the believer is by faith united to Christ, his old man is nailed to the cross of Christ, to fare here as Christ fared: and that was heavy fare." It is everywhere emphasized that the believer's sanctification is not instantaneous, but is a gradual work,

\[\text{References:}\]
\[1\] The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 491 (1722-24).
\[2\] VI, 585 (1728).
\[3\] VI, 319 (1729).
being perfected only beyond death:

So believers being created again in Christ, he communicates to them of that knowledge, righteousness, etc., which image of Christ, begun now, will be perfected after in all believers.¹

Thus, the eschatological tension is made a part of federal theology, and the believer can once again understand that his sanctification is a matter of degrees, carried on in union with Christ.

Any really serious consideration of the doctrine of union with Christ will naturally produce manifold results, as has been indicated in the way it contributes to the theological incorporation of the eschatological element. Far more obvious are its effects on the doctrine of the Church (which will be considered, together with union with Christ, in chapter nine). At other times, Boston's faithfulness to the biblical data, in conjunction with union with Christ, can lead to quite surprising results. For example, the following sentence taken from Boston would serve as a remarkably good summary of Stig Hanson's The Unity of the Church in the New Testament (Uppsala, 1946):

By Adam's fall his whole posterity were broken and shattered, rent from God and from one another. To cure this, God has appointed Christ as a new head, under whom they might all meet again in unity . . . ²

Perhaps Boston's greatest attempt to place union with Christ in systematic relationship with the rest of his

¹X, 256 (1725-26).
²IV, 319 (1708).
theology is in the exposition of the promises in The Covenant of Grace. This section, which has already been described in detail (supra, pp. 211-45), shows how in close integration with federal theology the doctrine of union with Christ is given both meaning and validity. With reference to calling, justification, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and temporal benefits, the formula is always the same: Each of these promises is grafted upon a promise made to Christ, and through a real union with Christ, believers partake of these promises in him.

While hitherto other aspects of Boston's theology have been emphasized with reference to his assault on Antinomianism, the importance of the doctrine of union with Christ in this respect should not be overlooked. As is obvious in The Covenant of Grace, it has its role as an absolutely essential component in his mature theology, but it also has an individual impact. This is hardly a point that needs laboring. With a strictly forensic representation, and with an imputed sanctification, the way is open to Antinomianism. But in union with Christ the member must be conformed to the head. The actions of the body cannot be treated with an Antinomian lack of concern, for "the whole man, body as well as soul, is united to [the] whole Christ . . ."¹ To be united with Christ means that

¹VII, 81 (1727-28).
body, I Thess. v. 23 There are quite new qualities
derived from Christ, into his mind, will, and affections;
habits of grace infused into them by the Spirit from
Christ . . .

Union with Christ, with its incorporational representation,
excludes by definition all Antinomianism.

At the same time, through union with Christ the
believer is dead to the law, which should to some extent dis¬
courage Neonomianism. This receives theological formulation
in the teaching that Christ fulfills the demands of the
covenant of works in the covenant of grace, the believer
receiving the promises of the latter covenant through his
union with Christ. Thus the demands of the law are turned
to promises:

Now, the branches of the promise of sanctification are
manifest: for it spreads as wide as the commandments
of the holy law, which, in the station it hath in the
gospel-covenant, are all turned into promises. Thus
whereas the command is, "Know the Lord;" the promise
is, "They shall all know me, saith the Lord," Jer.
xxxii. 33. 2

The effect of the doctrine of union with Christ with respect
to both Antinomians and legalists is nicely summed up by
Boston:

As ye will not be libertines in your life and practice,
being dead to sin and the world with Christ; so ye will
not be legalists in your life and practice neither,
being also dead with him to the law as a covenant of
works. Your obedience will run in another channel than
it did before your union with Christ, even in the channel
of the gospel. Ye will serve in newness of spirit, in
faith and love. 3

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1VI, 583 (1728).
2The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 494 (1722-24). Italics
not in the original.
3Ibid., pp. 458-59.
If one were to think of the federal theologians of Boston's day as being divided into two groups (certainly an impossibly neat distinction), those whose theology was becoming increasingly forensic, and those whose theology was becoming more biblical, then Boston could unquestionably be assigned to the latter group. Nevertheless, the structure of his system remained that of federal theology, and even the covenant of works continues to be a part of the system until the very end. But it is also true that union with Christ shines so brightly in the latter part of his ministry that the covenant of works grows dim and unimportant by comparison, even though the forensic elements are not noticeably diminished by the stronger emphasis upon union with Christ. Everywhere one finds them in the very closest conjunction with the most incorporational representation possible.¹ But while the forensic aspect plays a greater part, proportionally, than in Scripture, this should not be allowed to detract from Boston's positive achievement in so thoroughly incorporating the doctrine of union with Christ into his theology. The validity of the doctrine is manifest in its large degree of faithfulness to the biblical teaching of union with Christ, its theological content, and the recognition of the Spirit as the integral bond between Christ and the believer. The functions of the doctrine have been seen to be many and important: its necessary position in the promises of the

¹There is really no need to make citations to illustrate this point. One need only to check the sources of previous references to union with Christ, and the chances are very great that on the same page there will be some excellent specimens of forensic theology.
covnet of grace, its importance with reference to the eschatological element, and its relation to Anti- and Neo-
omianism. To be considered in a future chapter is its importance to the doctrine of the Church. In general, it might be said that despite its imperfections, and its failure in the Herculean task of routing the non-biblical elements of federal theology, it was nevertheless, in addition to the above-mentioned attributes, perhaps the most important single element in keeping Boston's theology essentially biblical.

The idea of Christ making an agreement with the Father to fulfill the conditions of the covenant of grace, thereby receiving promises from the Father for himself and the elect, may seem far removed from present day theological thinking. But as Boston stressed that the promises were to be received by the believer through union with Christ, he grounded his theology on one of the most vital teachings of the New Testament.
The covenant of grace — administration

Rather than immediately proceed to the climax of Boston's theology in his exposition of union with Christ from death through eternity, it is well first to consider the further outworkings of his theology regarding the present life. This is Boston's concern in his fourth major section of The Covenant of Grace, entitled "The Administration of the Covenant of Grace."

By his fulfillment of the conditions of the covenant of grace, Christ is given his position as administrator of the covenant "as a reward of his work."1 "... as he had the burden of purchasing the promised benefits, so he hath the honour of distributing and conferring them on sinners."2

The object of the administration of the covenant, is, sinners of mankind indefinitely: that is to say, Christ is empowered, by commission from his Father, to administer the covenant of grace to any of all mankind, the

1The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 520 (1722-24).
2Ibid., p. 521.
sinners of the family of Adam without exception...¹

What can such a statement mean coming from one who is by the most explicit statements a particular redemptionist? It means simply that here the "free deed of gift and grant"² of Christ to all sinners is being given a place within the systematic exposition of The Covenant of Grace.³

The "free deed of gift and grant" deserves attention not only because of its prominent role in the Marrow controversy, but also because it forms an important part of Boston’s theology. Originating with Culverwell, and incorporated by Fisher into the Marrow, the phrase, "free deed of gift and grant," gained wide currency in Scotland through the Edinburgh edition of that work by James Hog.⁴ The Act of the General Assembly of 1720, which condemned the Marrow, deprecated its

¹Ibid., p. 523.
The phrase is that of Culverwell, and is cited in full by Boston: "The matter to be believed unto salvation is this, that God the Father, moved by nothing but his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant of his Son Christ Jesus unto mankind, that whosoever of all mankind shall receive this gift, by a true and lively faith, he shall not perish, but have everlasting life," Notes on the Marrow, VII, 262 (1721-22).

²In the last part of this volume, Head VI, Boston makes an extended homiletical application of this, entitled "The Way of Instating Sinners Personally and Savingly in the Covenant of Grace." For the purposes of theological examination there is no benefit to be gained in separately considering this section, and so the matter will be dealt with in its entirety at this time.

teaching “Universal Atonement and Pardon,”⁴ of which the Act of the Associate Presbytery (1739) speaks incisively when it says that

... under the misapplied title of universal redemption as to purchase, they condemn the universal and unlimited offer of Christ unto mankind-sinners as such.²

That the objection is obviously against the proclamation of the free deed of gift and grant is indicated by the sentences quoted as objectionable by the Assembly:

The Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, that whosoever of them all shall believe in his Son shall not perish, etc., ... Hence it was that Christ said to his disciples, ‘Go and preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven;’—that is, Go and tell every man, without exception, that here is good news for him; Christ is dead for him.⁵

It would be a mistake to try to assign a single reason for this opposition, for the viewpoints on the matter were many and varied. Some, like James Adams, seem to have objected more to certain explicit phrases than to the intention of universal offer:

To make a general Offer of Christ, unto Sinners upon their accepting of his Righteousness, is certainly very agreeable unto the whole Strain of the Gospel: But with what Conscience any Minister (if he be not Arminian) can assure every Man who hears him that Christ dyed for him, is what I do not see.⁴

For some of those who might be counted as Moderates the lack

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of initial exhortation to duty and performance, in the procla-
mation of the deed of gift and grant, would be enough to
condemn the formula. For many others, among whom must be
numbered Principal Hadow, the most articulate opponent of the
Marrow, the reasons were again different. To Hadow it was a
matter of the logical application of the doctrine of election
(encouraged by certain tendencies of the period). The
Marrowmen were just as strictly predestinarian as was Hadow,
for both held that Christ died only for the elect and those
elect were chosen from eternity by God. However, the line of
reasoning taken from this initial agreement led to conclusions
sufficiently different to engender controversy. Hadow's
reasoning was this: God has decreed the number of the elect.
Christ died only for the elect. Therefore to tell the non-
elect that Christ has died for them would be a lie. There-
fore, to preach the free deed of gift and grant, "to tell
every man, without exception, that here is good news for him;
Christ is dead for him," is a lie. This, it would seem, was
viewed by Hadow as so obvious that he concluded that those
who had seriously considered the matter, and persisted in
preaching the free deed of gift and grant, must hold a
doctrine of universal redemption. If Christ has died for all
men, it is possible to preach free deed of gift and grant.
If he has died only for the elect, then Marrow teaching is
false. On this basis, Hadow, in his sermon before the Synod of
Fife, can ask

Now, how can Ministers of the Gospel tell every Man, as
the Truth of God, that Christ is dead for him, without
the Supposition of an universal Redemption? 1

This Doctrine is not to be admitted, because of many Absurdities and Evils, that would follow upon it. As (1.) That Ministers would be thereby engaged to tell their Hearers, that Christ is dead for every one of them without Exception, which would be a going beyond their Commission. (2.) This Doctrine leads to an universal Redemption, nor can the Defenders of it ever satisfyingly answer the Arminian Argument, viz. What every man is bound to believe, that is true! But every one . . . is bound to believe that Christ died for him, therefore etc. (3.) This Doctrine tends to a more gross Universalism, viz. That God by absolute Promise hath given eternal Life to all who live under the Gospel. For without a Supposition of this, Ministers could have no pretext to say to every one of their Hearers, Be verily persuaded . . .

In all fairness to Hadow it must be acknowledged (as it should have been in 1719) that some of the Marrow phrases are rather unfortunate, especially if they are to be used for theological dissection. However, Hadow, fixing on the phrase, "Christ is dead for him," pushes his opponents much farther than the total evidence would warrant, just as his own position is soon given similar rough treatment by the opposition. John Williamson, for example, calls the propositions of the Principal "not only Erroneous, but indeed Nonsensical, unworthy of the meanest Smatterer in Divinity . . ." 3 But Hadow's position was certainly not, as Williamson suggests, that "no Minister of Christ could, in the name of Christ, say to any Man, He that believeth shall be saved, unless he knew him to be a Believer already." 4

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2 Ibid., p. 32.
4 Ibid., p. 29.
To proclaim to all men that "He that believeth shall be saved" was not that to which Hadow objected:

The essential Acts of saving Faith are required of all, that hear the Gospel, by that Call and Command that hath Salvation annexed to it, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved: And every one to whom the Record of God concerning the Way of Salvation through Jesus is promised, becomes thereby bound, with a direct Act of Faith to believe and betake himself unto this Way of Salvation for his Relief.¹

He did, however, object to proclaiming to every man that "Christ is dead for him," and to offering him to all without annexing to it the conditions of mourning for sins, and repentance.² In strict reference to the matter of offer, Hadow's position can be thus described: Because Christ died only for the elect it is a lie to tell people that he died for all men. Men should be told to believe on Christ and be saved. They should be told what is involved in this believing, of the conditions of the gospel, of the "principal and saving Acts of Justifying Faith."³ Only after a man can examine his life and there find real fruits of faith may he begin to have some assurance that it was perhaps for him Christ died. Taken in connection with the total tendency of Hadow's theology, even the most balanced view of the situation fails to exculpate Hadow from a short-sightedness as to the theological dangers of the period—a short-sightedness not shared by Boston. While Hadow's theology was not as bad

¹Hadow, The Record, p. 31.
²James Hadow, The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected (Edinburgh, 1721), chapters 2 and 5.
³Hadow, The Record, p. 30.
as it is often pictured by his opponents, it nevertheless tended toward legalism, for the emphasis upon "doing" to show forth fruits of salvation, before concluding that one has salvation, throws a weight upon man's works that was soon to be corrupted by the spirit of the age.

The outcome of this kind of preaching was that the eye of the hearer was directed to the hidden man of the heart to the obscuring of the call to look out and away from self to the Saviour.

In contrast to this position stands that of Boston. Like Hadow, Boston was a particular redemptionist (supra, pp. 164-87), but that did not prevent him from wholeheartedly advocating the proclamation of God's free deed of gift and grant. Rather than following the line of reason taken by Hadow, Boston stopped at the point of particular redemption, and then adjusted his reasoning to make allowance for other factors.

For clarification, perhaps an abstract division of these factors into those of necessity, warrant, and resolution, might be made. No chronological distinctions between them can be made, with any accuracy, and therefore they must be described from their mature, rather than their nascent forms.

Regarding the necessity of the doctrine of universal offer, for the present it is sufficient to say that Boston

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1 John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1943), p. 142.
desired to bring men to Christ, and therefore felt compelled to offer him to all men, to invite men to Christ in the most compelling terms.

At the same time he conceived that his warrant to make this offer was to be found in Scripture. But Boston was also convinced that Scripture taught particular redemption, and if Christ died only for the elect, how could Scripture also teach that he must be offered to all?

In the resolution of this dilemma the Marrow plays its part. Boston writes that in 1700 he was "... still confused, indistinct, and hampered ... as to the free, open, and unhampered access of sinners unto [Christ]," but by 1704 was quite clear on the matter. ¹ "How I was led thereto, I cannot distinctly tell; but I apprehend I had taken the hint from the Marrow ..."² In the Marrow, upon the assertion of the deed of gift and grant (VII, 262ff.), the immediate question of Neophitus touches Boston's dilemma, for it concerns the truth of this universal offer in the light of election and reprobation.³ Evangelista has taken his stand regarding the deed of gift and grant on the basis of the scriptural injunction to "Go and preach the gospel to every creature," but this must now be resolved with election, and Evangelista does so by an emphasis upon the hiddenness of the decrees.

I beseech you to consider, that although some men be

² Ibid.
³ The Marrow, VII, 267-68.
ordained to condemnation, yet so long as the Lord has concealed their names . . . do not you say, it may be I am not elected, and therefore I will not believe in Christ; but rather say, I do believe in Christ, and therefore I am sure I am elected. And check your own heart for meddling with God’s secrets, and prying into his hidden counsel, and go no more beyond your bounds . . . for election and reprobation is a secret; and the Scripture tells us "that secret things belong unto God, but those things that are revealed belong to us," Deut. xxix. 29.

This resolution of the problem through the hiddenness of the decrees was seemingly acceptable to Boston, and he uses it over and over again in an endless variety of illustrations.

The following example comes from a sermon on Hosea ii. 10, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

It may be, some are saying in their hearts, "O that I knew my name were in that marriage-contract, how joyfully would I then sign it; but I fear it is not to be found there." In answer to this consider there are (if I may speak so) two copies of it, the one close scaled, and the other opened. 1. There is a scaled copy thereof laid up in heaven. . . . 2. There is an open copy thereof, let down to earth, and lodged in the bride’s hand: this ye have in the Bible, which is the book of the covenant. It bears not the names of those that are to be espoused to Christ, but runs (as it were) in that form, "We, under subscribers," etc. Now, the Royal Bridegroom has signed this, and it is incumbent on you to sign it likewise, consenting to take Christ as he is offered to you in the gospel . . .

It cannot be emphasized too strongly, however, that the resolution of the tension between universal offer and particular redemption is of but subsidiary interest to Boston. In itself it is not his warrant to preach universal offer;

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1 Ibid., p. 268.
2 Ibid., VII, 498 (1714). For other examples of this argument see the following, which are a sampling, rather than an exhaustive catalogue of the instances in which Boston uses it: VI, 396 (1717); V, 46 (1722); The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 405, 523, 541 (1722-24); V, 278-80 (1727); and X, 439 (1732).
that warrant comes from Scripture. Thus the ultimate appeal on behalf of the free deed of gift and grant is not to argument, but to Scripture. The Marrow is important not because it gives Boston the warrant to preach universal offer, but because it resolved, to his satisfaction, the tension between the particular redemption of the elect and the universal offer. While the resolution of the tension is not primarily a matter of intellectual interest to Boston, neither is the biblical basis of his warrant an end in itself. For Boston, the chief importance of the free deed of gift and grant lies in its full free offer of Christ to all men, so that whosoever will may have eternal life.

As to the actual presentation of the free deed of gift and grant, it is extremely difficult to give the proper feeling of the intensity of Boston’s offer within the confines of these pages. While a few brief passages can be given for illustration, it is only by returning to Boston’s sermons that something of the emotional impact of his presentation will be felt.

Boston can urge his auditors that this “offer is really, though ministerial, Christ’s own offer, for we have his commission . . .”1 Because it is Christ’s offer, sinners are to accept this serious call: “This duty is so peremptorily commanded, that ye must come, and come presently; it admits of no delay. ’To-day if ye will hear his voice,

1 IV, 149 (1712).
harden not your hearts. ' Now is the accepted time.'

Dealing with those timid and serious souls who are convinced that their sins are too great, too heinous for Christ to forgive, so that they stand apart from the Lord's Table,

Boston urges

Come in then, thou whose case ... has no parallel; you have the advantage of an occasion to honour Christ with the cure of a case so desperate, that the like of it was never in his hands before.  

Boston never tires of emphasizing the "unrestricted freeness" of the offer of Christ:

As it is absolutely free to some, so it is absolutely free to all; John iii. 16 ... What is freer than a gift? The joint-stock of the whole world could not have purchased this gift. It is quite below the honour of the Giver and gift, for any to pretend to come with money in their hand to grace's market; ... [but] all are alike free and welcome to it ...  

Since the decrees are hidden, election is to be ignored:

Christ is given to mankind—sinners indefinitely. It is not to the elect only, but to sinners indefinitely, elect or not elect; sinners of the race of Adam without exception, whatever they have been, whatever they want. The Father, in making of this gift to us, had no eye to any qualification in us, but our misery and extreme need; and, in the view of that, he made this gift for their remedy.  

Rhetorical objections were a standard part of Boston's presentation, and the inevitable objection in the proclamation of universal offer concerned election:

OBJECT. But how is it possible for me to see Christ's good will to me, seeing I can neither look into his heart,

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1VI, 289 (1710).
2Tbid., p. 292. This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Ettrick.
3X, 193 (1725-26).
4Tbid., p. 196.
nor into the decrees of election? Ans. How do you see an honest man's good-will to you, since you cannot look into his heart, nor see what thoughts he had towards you when you were in the womb? Do you not see it in his words and carriage to you? So you may see Christ's good will to you in his word of grace and dealing with you. He declares HE CAME TO SAVE THE WORLD, John xii. 47. consequently to save you who are of that society. Is not that good-will to you?  

This universal offer is given its place in Boston's system under the title of the "Administration of the Covenant," but the question may well be asked as to whether the structure of his federal theology really demands a universal offer. Boston flatly asserts that "the extent of the administration is not founded on election, but on the sufficiency of Christ's obedience and death for the salvation of all ..." 2 Like so many other Reformed theologians, Boston has no scruples against holding that while Christ's death was sufficient for all, he nevertheless died only for the elect. The assertion of sufficiency, however, really has nothing to do with the argument at hand, for the extent of the administration is really made to rest upon the extent of the grant of Christ to sinners: "Now, the administration of the covenant being settled in pursuance of this grant ... the object of the former can be no less extensive than that of the latter." 3 If the administration of the covenant is intended to be an argument

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1 V, 276-79 (1727). Representative examples of the universal offer can be found in VI, 285-93 (1710); IX, 169-219 (1741); III, 93-117 (1746); III, 260-72 (1721); VI, 294-305 (1724); X, 189-202 (1725-26); and V, 510-25 (1730).

2 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 523 (1722-24). The formula, "sufficient for all, efficient for some," is, of course, common to Reformed dogmatics.

for the free deed of gift and grant to all mankind, then, it
must be recognized that it has its foundations upon the point
it is trying to prove. In short, the argument from adminis-
tration begs the question.

However, Boston describes this administration in this
fashion: Christ is administrator of the covenant to all men,
"any men, sons of men indefinitely."¹ Therefore, "being men,
preach the gospel to them, offer them the covenant ..."²
Because Christ is the administrator of the covenant—in fact,
because Christ is the covenant³—all are free to enter into
it. But the old problem of resolving a particular redemption
with a universal offer, or administration, cannot be hid for
long, and in this case it is resolved by a new line of argument:
by the distinction between Christ as official Saviour, and
Christ as actual Saviour. To make the distinction is virtually
to explain it. As administrator of the covenant Christ is
official Saviour to all, not in any metaphorical sense, but
really, and actually. But while he may actually be the
official Saviour of mankind, this office will be effectual
only to those who actually come to him for salvation—just as
an official physician can heal only those who actually send
for him, although all have the warrant to his services.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 525.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., pp. 520-21. But, Christ the covenant is
particular in redemption, universal only in offer.
⁴Ibid., pp. 525-26. The same distinction is again
used in VI, 297-99 (1724), and it was also used in I, 353
(1709-??).
Another facet of the argument comes into view when Boston begins his discussion of "The Nature of the Administration of the Covenant." The first head, "Christ the Trustee of the Covenant," is largely a recapitulation of earlier material, this time under the title of trusteeship. The second head, "Christ as the Testator of the Covenant," finds its origin in Heb. ix. 15-17, and gives Boston another opportunity to incorporate universal offer into the fabric of his theology, although here the argument is from the universality of administration, which in turn was from the universality of grant:

... the legatees in the testament must needs be the same as the objects of his administration of the covenant, that is to say, sinners of mankind indefinitely: for if Christ is authorized by the Father to administer the covenant to sinners indefinitely, and hath accordingly made his testament for that effect; surely none can be excepted ... 2

But what is to be said of the intrinsic necessity of the universal offer within Boston's federal system? It cannot be overemphasized that the scope of the Administration, and therefore of the role of "Testator" as well depends upon the grant, and the grant depends not upon anything within Boston's federal structure, per se, but upon biblical warrant. As has been considered earlier, while federal theology was in some instances universalistic in character (supra, pp. 185-86),

1The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 531-36 (1722-24).
2Ibid., p. 540. Of course, while all men are the legatees, only the elect ever claim the legacies; but nonetheless, the offer is in sincerity made to all (p. 541). The legacies are, in effect, the promises of the covenant (pp. 544-48).
Boston's theology is separated from this by its stress upon particular redemption. Universal offer is incorporated into the structure, but it is an addition to the structure, and not required by anything within the system. That is to say, universal offer is a biblical addition to the federal structure, it is not an intrinsically required part of it.

Boston, of course, seeing his entire system as biblical, cannot separate the federal elements from the biblical, and therefore understands and explains universal administration as if it were an integral part of the covenant. But, if the logical demands of particular redemption, and if the federal system itself does not require the universal offer, why does Boston deem it such an essential part of his theology? The answer is twofold, part of which has already been given, and neither aspect of which should be depreciated. First, a faithfulness to the biblical witness was largely responsible for Boston's proclamation of the Universal offer. In addition to this was his acute sensitivity to the theological climate, and the realization that legal preaching would have one of two effects on the sincere seeker. Either it would result in a works-righteousness, in which the person looked upon his own repentance and reformation of life as at least in part meritorious of his election, or else it would so affect the timid that they would despair of ever having a repentance adequate to allow them to take hold of the covenant. Of these dangers, Boston is very much aware and concerned, and it is in connection with the gospel offer.
that he is particularly concerned with the latter—having had many other occasions to counteract the former. As Boston sees the situation,

It is true in these days in which the doctrine of the gospel is sinking, the door is opened to some, only so far as to let in those that are so and so qualified, as if men behaved to be half cured before they may come to the physician.

As a result of these teachings,

many bar the doors of the gospel—promise with bars of their own making, and then they cry out and complain that they cannot enter in by them. Or say some, if I had so much love, repentance, and brokenness of heart, then I could believe. But I advise you to believe, that ye may get these things ...

Boston's constant view is that the requiring of such and such qualifications in sinners, to warrant them to believe in Christ, is no great help to them in their way towards him; forasmuch as it engages them in a doubtful disputation, as to the being, kind, measure, and degree of their qualifications for coming to Christ . . . to tell sinners, that none may come to Christ, or have warrant to believe, but such as have a true repentance, must needs, in a special manner, entangle distressed consciences, so as they dare not believe until they know their repentance to be true repentance.

Certainly Boston was right in this analysis, for the Bible does not require that men be convinced they are fit to

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1 Boston saw the dangers of justification by works creeping in with the withdrawal of the free gospel offer, but those who did withdraw it substituted the necessity of prior repentance, etc., and it is in counteracting these that Boston has ample opportunity to express himself on this matter. E.g., VI, 76-99 (1709?); IV, 246 (1706); and IX, 202 (1711). It is to be noted that the references given are to a period well before the Marrow controversy.

2 III, 263 (1721).

3 VI, 293 (1710). Cf. IX, 498 (1711).

believe, but only that they believe. In connection with this question, Boston is able to see clearly that it is fatal to turn men’s gaze in upon themselves for anything necessary for their salvation.

Granting that Boston’s analysis of the situation, with his resulting emphasis, was the proper one, is he to be seen as in opposition to the main stream of Reformed thought, or merely to the theology represented by Hadow? The answer shows Boston’s affirmation of universal offer to be the defence of a long-held doctrine against a recent deviation. Calvin gives some evidence of going beyond the usual “orthodox” Reformed position by holding a “universalist” position as well as a universal offer:

... though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered through God’s benignity indiscriminately to all, yet all do not receive him.¹

In the Sum of Saving Knowledge one is told that the Lord

1. Maketh open Offer of Christ and his Grace, by Proclamation of a free and gracious Market of Righteousness and Salvation, to be had through Christ, to every Soul without Exception ...

2. He inviteth all Sinners, that for any Reason stand at Distance with God, to come and take from him Riches of Grace ... ²

Even Rutherford, who is always quite willing to see reprobation as well as election, can nonetheless state that

He offereth in the Gospel life to all so they believe. ... Now the former notion of the Gospel is


² The Confessions of Faith (Glasgow, 1764), pp. 458-59.
enough to lay on the obligation of believing on all; so as though the Gospel reveal not God's purpose of Election ... yet it saith this to all, You are all to believe no less than if there were not any reprobated persons amongst you . . .

In his insistence upon offering Christ as Saviour to all men, Boston showed himself to be both in step with Reformed teaching, and an accurate analyst of the theological dangers of his day. Whereas Hadlow and the many like him who considered themselves to be of the essence of orthodoxy, were, by an obedience to logic and the trend of the times directing their theology into every more rigid, legalistic, and sterile forms, Boston followed the logic of the decrees only to particular redemption, and then switched his allegiance to the biblical testimony, and with its warrant proclaimed the full free offer of Christ to all men. While the choice of universal offer does nothing to improve Boston's reputation as a logician, or to add to the internal cohesiveness of his federal structure, it does manifest his obedience to the biblical witness and his acute sensitivity to the theological needs of the day.

The nature of the offices of trustee and testator of the covenant has already been indicated. Christ also has the office of prophet of the covenant; that is, he must reveal the covenant to men, and to this end he began in person both

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the Old and New Testament dispensations. The Old dispensation was then carried on by prophets and ordinary teachers.

Christ incarnate began the New Testament which he now doth carry on mediatey and by proxy, especially after his ascension into heaven; and that partly by his apostles and other extraordinary officers, whom he employed to write, as well as to speak, in his name; and partly by ordinary ministers of the gospel, to be continued in the church to the end of the world, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. Thus he is now administering the covenant unto us, by putting his written word of the Old and New Testament in our hands, and sending men in his name to preach the gospel unto us. By these means he speaks to sinners, intimating and offering them the covenant . . .

The content of this section is simply that Christ now fulfills his office of prophet of the covenant as he speaks by His Spirit through the written word of the Scripture, and spoken word of his ministers.

The next office of Christ as administrator of the covenant is that of King. As King of the covenant Christ rules over the Church, as well as over the world, and included in this rule is his control of providence. Boston explains Christ's kingship of the Church as a delegated one, given by virtue of his place as head of the covenant.

Now, the great design of that administration, is to gather together sinners of mankind into one body, under the bond

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1 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 550 (1722-24). Christ, "appearing in human shape, with his own mouth . . . gave the first notice of the covenant that ever there was in the world, and made the first offer of it in paradise, Gen. iii. 8, 15." (ibid.) This Genesis appearance is referred to with extreme frequency, and never in the sense of incarnation, but rather of theophany.

2 ibid., pp. 550-51.

3 Cf. I, 411-36 (1709??).
of the covenant; and to make them happy, in the enjoyment of the privileges thereof, in grace and glory, the which body, the church, is the kingdom of the covenant.

Subservient to this great design, is the government of the world, for "this headship over the world was necessary to his administration of the covenant, as head of the church; necessary for compassing the ends thereof."² It is to this end that Christ is put in control of providence:

Thus the King and Head of the church manageth all things by his providence, as well without as within the church; though in a very different manner, because in a very different relation, as to his own people, and to strangers.³

The purpose of this rule of the world is that the elect may effectually be subdued to himself, that they may be "true and lively members of the invisible kingdom of Christ."⁴

Thus is erected the visible church or kingdom of Christ in the world; a society separate from the visible kingdom of the devil, and professing faith in, and obedience to Christ, outwardly bearing his badge, and the signs of his covenant.⁵

As would be expected of one who so strongly emphasizes union with Christ, the Church is for Boston the body of Christ, and of that body Christ is the head.⁶ As the body of Christ, the Church is one, a unity. "... God has appointed Christ a new head [in distinction from the old head, Adam], under whom they might all meet again in unity; and Christ has appointed ministers adorned with a diversity of gifts, in

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¹The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 553 (1722-24).
²Ibid., p. 554.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., p. 556.
⁵Ibid., p. 557.
order to accomplish this."¹ It should be noted that it can be said of the Church visible that it "... is a communion of saints in profession, whereof Christ is the head ... ."²

Because the Church is the body of Christ, and the body of Christ is one, Boston is strongly against schism, and is extremely solicitous of the unity of the Church. In 1708 he could preach on "The Evil and Danger of Schism,"³ without explicitly mentioning that the evil should be avoided as a rending the body of Christ.⁴ In 1717 to 1718 Boston preaches on the evils of schism in this manner—in an exposition on union with Christ:

It is a thankless office to rend and divide the church of Christ, to tear Christ's seamless coat. ... They [the separatists] say, they can have no communion with them without sin. I grant, that if one leg go into a mire and be defiled, the other ought not to follow, nor one saint communicate with another in sin; ay, but no man in his wits would cut off either of the legs in that case. But the body of Christ is not so tenderly handled, though we owe more tenderness to it than to our natural bodies. Nay, but let men abhor communion with [the saints and] they shall have none with Christ, forasmuch as there are not two Christ's to head the separate bodies; and if they be both united to one Christ, they have the most intimate union and communion one with another.⁵

In 1720, schism is again deprecated on the ground that it rends the body of Christ:

Be tender of the unity of the body, Eph. v. 3, 4. ... Schisms, rents, and divisions in the church, are

¹IV, 319 (1708).
²III, 652 (1720).
³VII, 593-613 (1708).
⁴He does, however, insist that believers can have fellowship with a corrupt church, because the church requires it not to partake of its corruptions. Ibid., p. 603.
⁵I, 550-51 (1717-18).
like wounds, cuts, and breaking of bones in the natural body, which exceedingly weaken it, and mar its beauty. They are the sin and judgment of a church, bringing dishonour to the Lord Jesus, marring the success of the gospel, and ruining the church at length. ... The renting of the body of Christ has so much of horror about it, as may make it frightful to serious members.  

This emphasis upon the unity of the body of Christ can also occasionally result in a strongly ecumenical statement:

Ye are professed members of this body, whereof Christ is the head; and this body is not confined to one particular church, but is made up of all the churches of Christ, and particular saints through the world, united to Christ by his Spirit dwelling in them.  

That the Church is the body of Christ also affords Boston with the basis for his admonitions upon the duties of Christians to one another. Because Christians are "all members of Christ"  

Wo to those that maltreat, oppress, or persecute any of the saints; for what they do against them, they do against Christ, as doing it to the members of Christ's body, Acts ix. 4. . . . They are the best bestowed good turns that are done to the godly for Christ's sake. For they are done to him, they are done to Christ, since they are one with him. 

These duties are treated at far greater length in a long series of sermons on "The Unity of the Body of Christ and the Duties the Members Owe One to Another." Because they are all members of Christ, even the "simple members," "such as are not office-bearers in the body, but private Christians,"

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1 III, 620 (1720).
2 III, 618.
3 I, 550 (1717-18).
4 III, 591-655 (1720).
nonetheless owe these duties to one another:

1. Love one another affectionately and sincerely.

   To walk rightly in Christian communion, we must "walk in love," Eph. v. 2.

   The near relation in which the followers of Christ stand to one another, pleads for it. They are fellow-members of the same body, joined together under one head, are members of one heavenly family, shall dwell together for evermore in heaven, and are joint objects of the world's hatred.

2. Bear with one another's weaknesses, failures, and infirmities."1 "Is not your interest in the matter, since you are of the body with them?"2 "3. Watch over one another...

   "Look upon this duty of fraternal admonition and reproof, as an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ, appointed by him, in his visible mystical body, for the spiritual good of the body."3 This is for the sake of the head, the body, and the individual member.4 "4. Walk holily and tenderly, so as your conversation may be exemplary, and edifying to one another...

5. Bear one another's burdens of afflictions, crosses, temptations and trials...not being standing each one by himself, but in the body with other fellow-members, bearing their part of the sufferings allotted for the body, there is all reason that the afflicted's lot should be looked on as a common cause...

6. Edify one another in Christian conference...

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1 Ibid., p. 625.
2 Ibid., p. 626.
3 Ibid., p. 627.
4 Ibid., p. 628.
5 Ibid., p. 630.
6 Ibid., pp. 635-36.
7 Ibid., p. 637.
8 Ibid., p. 641.
9 Ibid., p. 642.
10 Ibid., p. 646.
"lastly, Be ready to assist the needy members, and to communicate of your worldly goods to the poor in the body."  

While the emphasis upon the Church as the body of Christ has its ecumenical aspects, makes separatism a terrible thing, and has practical implications for the Christian life as well, it also exerts strong pressure upon the question of the constituency of the Church. Or, as Boston expresses the problem:

... I despair of seeing due love among church-members restored, as long as the church among us is so mixed with, and so little separated from the world, and until the church be more distinguished from the nation, for as fond as we have been of a national church [sic].

The question is whether the Church is to be largely co-extensive with the population of the nation—what is called by James Walker the "kingdom idea of the visible Church," or by G. D. Henderson, the "multitudinous" Church—or whether it is to have some other basis of membership. The following is stated concerning the traditional Scottish view:

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1Ibid., p. 646. At the same time it should be noted that while Boston recognizes this special responsibility of Christians towards the members of the body of Christ, he is also in complete agreement with that area of modern theology and exegesis which reminds the Christian of his obligation toward all men as his fellow creatures, the work of God's creation. Thus, Boston maintains, concerning the godless poor, that "even these have a right to supply from us, because they are God's creatures." III, 646. Cf. V, 251 (1724).

2III, 625 (1720).


4G. D. Henderson, Church and Ministry (London, 1951). For the wider consideration of the problem of the Church "Multitudinous and Gathered," Chapter IV, pp. 87-110, should certainly be consulted.
On the whole, Scotland took the traditional view that external profession of faith and partaking of the sacraments was what the Church required of a member. That he was a converted person or an exemplary moral character was therefore quite definitely not demanded, though it would be hoped that, if he were not such, his Church connection might have that result.

Representative of this traditional view is Samuel Rutherford.

An essential element of his view of the Church is his concept of national, or federal holiness. In explanation of this federal holiness Rutherford states that it is not so much personal holiness... as holiness of the seed, Society, Family, or Nation.... So the external Church Covenant and Church right to the means of grace is given to a society, and made with Nations under the New Testament.... And not any are baptized in the New Testament, (except the Eumach, and Saul, Acts 8: 39.) who are baptized firstly, but they are baptized as publick men representing a seed.... The special intent of God in sending the word of the Covenant must evidence this; he sends not the Gospel unto, and for the cause of one man, to bring him in but to gather a Church and his elect ones, by a visibly and audibly Preached Covenant to a society, to a City; to Samaria Acts 8. To the Gentiles, Acts 13. To all Nations, Mat. 28. 19, 20. that they and their children may have right to salvation and to the means thereof, and to the Covenant, and therefore we are not curiously to inquire, whether the faith of the father be real or not, if the Gospel be come to the Nation, to the House, to the Society.

In conformity with this concept of national, or federal holiness, Rutherford would require of those who would be members

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2Walker, op. cit., pp. 120-21, quotes largely from Rutherford and Boston to show the changing attitude toward the constituency of the Church.
3Samuel Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, pp. 82-84. In the spelling of Rutherford, consistency has been the norm in the text, while in the footnotes accuracy has been the goal, with the spelling used in the title page of each work being followed.
of the visible church:

1. To be Baptized. 2. That they be free of grosse scandals. 3. And professe that they be willing hearers of the Doctrine of the Gospel. Such a profession, as giveth evidences to the positive certainty of the judgement of charity, of sound conversion, is not required to make and constitute a true visible Church.

Consistent with this broad base of membership in the visible Church—useful in his discussions with the Independents—and his concept of federal holiness, are the stark but logically defensible distinctions between the Church visible and invisible. The distinctions become so sharp that what is offered to the Church invisible, is no longer even the rightful claim of the visible Church:

The Church with whom the covenant is made, and to whom the promises of the covenant are made, is the Spouse of Christ, his mystical body... but this is the invisible Church of elect believers, not the visible Church of visible professors. Therefore the invisible, and not the visible Church, is the first subject of all the privileges of Christians, and all the promises of the covenant.

This means as well that

the invisible Church; and not the visible Church as it is such, hath right to the Sacraments, because those who have right to the covenant, have right to the scales of the covenant... God saith only of, and to the invisible Church, and not of the visible Church in his gracious purpose, Jer. 32. 38, And I will be their God, and they shall be my people...

The crux of the distinction between the Church visible and invisible comes when Rutherford states:

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2 Ibid., p. 246.
3 Ibid., p. 249.
That Christ is the Head of the visible Church, as visible, is not in all the Word of God, he is head of the Church catholick and invisible, by influence of the Life and Spirit of Christ ... and in a large sense may be called the Head of the church visible ... in which respect, Christ may be called the Head of Judas the Traitor ... 1

Stated from a slightly different perspective, it is only the Church invisible that is the body of Christ in any proper sense. As for the visible Church, "The Covenant externall is made with a society or visible Church that out of them God may gather heirs of glory." 2

In contrast to this view stands Boston:

Christ hath not two churches, one invisible, and another visible; but one church, that in one respect is visible, and another respect invisible: Christ is not a head with two bodies, but we are "all baptized into one body," and mystical "Christ is but one," I Cor. xii. 12, 13. 3

Boston's emphasis is upon Christ's Church as one. From the passage quoted it should be noted that the term "mystical" does not exclude its reference to the visible as well as invisible Church. Because the emphasis is upon the Church as one, Boston is not always at pains to make the distinction between visible and invisible Church, but he does use the distinction to allow for the fact that in the last analysis the elect are known to God alone.

Boston and Rutherford substantially agree upon the nature of the Church invisible, the clash concerns the

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1 Ibid., pp. 256-57.
2 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 83.
3 VI, 200-01 (1701?). By "mystical Christ" Boston means the Church. Boston's quotation mark gives the impression of a break where none is intended.
concept of the Church visible and its relationship to the body of Christ. Boston rejects the concept of federal or national holiness and the idea of an external covenant which is the visible church—an entity of which Christ is the head in a very different sense from his true headship. The Church is not the area from which the elect are to be gathered, the Church is the elect. For Boston Christ's kingship is over the whole world, providence is under his power, and from the world Christ in his kingly power can draw forth his elect. He is king over the Church as well, but the Church his body, and of it he is the head.

Because the Church is the body of Christ, and therefore necessarily one, the visible Church is to be in appearance what the invisible Church is in reality. The foundational assumption of Boston's long discourse on baptism is that the visible Church is to be composed of those who are apparently true members of it. The Church cannot look into the secret decrees of God, it can act only upon the situation as it sees

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1 Of course much could be done to reconcile the positions of Boston and Rutherford. Much of the contrast is in part more apparent than real—simply because they are arguing in different directions—but nevertheless, the contrast is made to show the tendency of the thought of each. It should be noted with regard to Boston's use of the term Church, or visible Church, that it always carries with it the understood qualification that it is not as it should be. It should be the real body of Christ as much as the Church invisible, but few were more pessimistic than Boston as to its real content. E.g. V, 24 (1723), or IX, 336 (1719), where in the parable of the tares Boston views the field as the Church in much the same spirit as does Calvin, in loco. Nevertheless, it is Boston's view that the Church visible, as it should be, is as the Church invisible, the body of Christ.
it. Thus, the Church visible is not necessarily coextensive with the Church invisible, but—and this is the crux of Boston's argument—"if none be true members of the church but the faithful or real believers, then none are visible church members but visible believers . . ." The Church visible is to conform in its appearance to the Church invisible. It is in this context that Boston delivers his opinion that "Christ hath not two churches," for the sentences already quoted, are followed with a repetition of the argument:

If then the true members of the church are only believers, it is plain that the visible members thereof are only such as are apparently believers. If we judge in these that believers only are true members of the church, when we come to judge in hypothesis as to this or that particular person, we cannot judge him a true member but as he appears to be such.

In this judgment, Boston was not in agreement with those Independents who demanded an extreme purism based upon refined soul-searching. While Boston could outline detailed self-analysis for the purposes of assurance, he never required that such meticulous inspections be made by others of the souls of those who wished to become members of the Church. His explicit dictum, given in connection with the question as to who have a right to baptism, is that

visible believers, and such as have a profession of religion, probably signifying their having a saving interest in Christ, have a right to baptism before the church. . . . This may be allowed without a scrupulous inquiry into their state before God; and men in this case ought to take the first probable profession as the ground of admission. . . . And truly, if an apparently

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1VI, 200 (1701??).
2Ibid., p. 201.
serious profession did not warrant the church to give the seals to such persons as have it, they could administer them to none without a revelation from God as to the person's state before the Lord.¹

Boston's customary formula is that "the visible body of Christ is made up of saints by profession, not openly contradicted by their habitual practice . . ."² A somewhat more specific definition is also representative of Boston's thought:

The openly wicked and profane, amongst whom must be reckoned the grossly ignorant, and all such as have no form of godliness, are not so much as visible or apparent members of the communion of saints.³

To exclude along with the wicked and profane those who are ignorant of the meaning of Christianity and those who do not exhibit at least a "form of godliness," indicates some of the difference between Boston and Rutherford, the latter maintaining that

'There is no more required to make members of the Church visible as visible but that they be within the net, hearers of the Word'; 'nothing is required but a professed willingness to receive the Gospel'.⁴

In the application of the conclusions as to the nature of the visible Church to the question of the Sacraments, or "external seals," Rutherford can urge that

The command of God is a good warrant to the Church and Ministers to confer the seals to Iahmeel, Simon Magus, Judas. . . . There is an active right in the Church to confer the seals, when there is no passive right in many visible members either to receive or to

¹Ibid., p. 133.
²III, 620 (1720).
³Ibid., p. 593.
challenge the seals. 1

Boston's doctrine is quite the opposite:

Admission to the Lord's table is a matter of the greatest weight and concern, to be managed and gone about with all solemn seriousness and caution. . . . And considering that the church is a communion of saints in profession, whereof Christ is the head, there is need to look well who be admitted thereto as complete members of the visible body.

There ought to be a due trial of those who are admitted to the Lord's table, that it may be seen, whether or not those who seek to be admitted are qualified according to the laws of the visible kingdom of Christ, lest such be brought in as may bring a stain on the society, and corrupt and defile them, instead of edifying them. 2

Applied to the sacrament of baptism, federal holiness (i.e., external national covenanting) means for Rutherford that the right to baptism is obtained not from the immediate parents, but from the federal holiness of the nation, externally covenanted to God.

I much doubt if the child have right to the seals of the Covenant, for the faith of the father, and so I deny that hee loseth right to the seals of the Covenant for the fathers scandalous crime, which is a violation of the Covenant. 3

. . . for the faith of their fathers, that is, for the Covenant of their fathers they have right to baptism, for that I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed, Galat. 3. 8. comprehendeth all the believing Gentiles. And for this cause the children of Papists and excommunicate protestants which are borne within our visible Church are baptized . . . 4

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, pp. 131–32. The last sentence of the quote is from the margin.
2 III, 652 (1720).
3 Rutherford, Due Right of Presbytery, p. 259[II]. Because of an error in pagination this reference is to the second page 259, found after the pages inexplicably go from 484 to 185.
4 Ibid. The argument for the baptism of children of excommunicates is carried on from pp. 255[II] to 267[II].
The consideration of whether open wickedness, or gross ignorance of the parents should prevent the baptism of the child is the primary concern of Boston's essay on baptism. After setting forth the arguments in favor of such baptism (pp. 140-44) Boston remains unconvincing. He will have nothing to do with Rutherford's concept of federal holiness—although Boston never mentions Rutherford when attacking the idea—and insists at length that "infants derive their visible right to baptism, from their immediate, not their remote parents . . ."\(^2\) Granting this premise, and adding to it the premise that the Church visible must in its appearance conform to the Church invisible, Boston's conclusion is inevitable:

No infants but those of visible church members have right to baptism coram ecclesia; and none but the infants of visible believers are the children of visible church members . . .\(^3\)

Or, put in slightly different fashion:

If none but visible believers have right to baptism before the church, and infants derive their visible right thereto from their immediate parents, then none but the children of visible believers have right to baptism before the church.\(^4\)

But what is the significance of baptism for Boston? The sacraments—the Lord's Supper, as well as baptism—are signs of being within the Church, within the covenant of grace. For that reason when Boston, upon sacramental occasions, pleads for an acceptance of the covenant as one's

\(^{1}\text{VI, 139 (1701??).}\)

\(^{2}\text{Ibid., pp. 152-63. This is argued on pp. 152-63.}\)

\(^{3}\text{Ibid., p. 200.}\)

\(^{4}\text{Ibid., p. 201.}\)
own, or when he makes a plea for partaking of the Supper, the
two are synonymous. To partake of the Lord’s Supper is to
signify that one accepts and is in the covenant of grace—
"... one’s partaking of the sacrament is a declaring and
avouching himself to be of that communion" (i.e., of the
saints, in the covenant of grace). Baptism (which of course
includes infant baptism) also puts one within the body of
Christ:

Consider that in your baptism ye were given up to Christ,
to lay hold on him by faith, Acts xix. 4. That therein
ye declared and avouched your putting on Christ, Gal.
iii. 27.

But while one may be baptized into the body of Christ as an
infant, Boston asserts that it is possible to repudiate that
baptism and to apostatize:

Ye who are baptized, yet openly wicked and profane, or
grossly ignorant of the fundamentals of religion, being
come to years, are apostates in effect, having by your
way visibly cut off yourselves from the communion of
saints. For in your infancy ye were baptized into that
body; but now by your unholy lives, ye openly declare
yourselves to be none of it...

While almost all of the people to whom Boston preached
had been baptized, very few partook of the Lord’s Supper.

Thus Boston complains:

They will not renew their baptismal vows in the sacra-
ment of the supper. ... They are obliged to their
parents’ care in their infancy, that got them baptized;
but if they had been yet unbaptized ... they would
refuse and slight baptism, as well as the other sacrament.

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1 III, 599 (1720).
2 Ibid., p. 605.
3 Ibid., p. 601. Earlier, in 1712, Boston’s concern
was that those who had received the sign of baptism gave no
evidence of having the things signified. See IV, 469-70 (1712).
4 IV, 469.
Eight years later the same situation continues to call for attention:

If people would seriously consider the import of their baptism, ["putting on Christ"], they who think themselves loose by their not being communicants, would see they are bound already; and that they do but cheat themselves in thinking, by the neglect of the supper, to keep off these bands, which they are already firmly under . . .

Thus, Boston insists that to be baptized is to be placed within the body of Christ, within the covenant of grace—although many apostatize from that position. However, it should be noted that Boston usually speaks of baptismal insertion in terms of being joined with the body of Christ rather than in terms of being within the covenant of grace. This would seem to indicate that this aspect of his thought owes more to the concept of the Church as the body of Christ than it does to the structure of federal theology, abstractly considered. From the latter side of his thought the pressure upon his proclamation is toward an individualistic, adult acceptance of the covenant as one's own. The biblical elements of union with Christ, and the Church as the body of Christ, are those which help Boston to formulate and hold a biblical concept of baptism. It is difficult to see where any help in this direction could be derived from the federal structure, per se.

In summation, it may be reiterated that in his

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1. III, 605-06 (1720).
2. On such subjects Boston does not usually trouble himself with questions of election and predestination.
doctrine of the Church Boston obviously represents a considerable departure from the views of Rutherford. Part of this divergence is represented in Boston's view of the constituency of the Church, which approximated that of the later Scottish Separatists. Boston can hardly be claimed as the originator of this movement, for the views had been well noised abroad more than a half century earlier when they met with Rutherford's vigorous attack. James Walker finds that even Gillespie "tended towards the moderate Independent views . . ." 1 It has already been noted that Boston disclaimed several views that are often thought of as Separatist. In attempting to attain a Church constituency of believers he does not resort to the minute soul-analysis of some of the Independents. His emphasis upon the Church as the body of Christ sets him apart from those who look upon the Church as simply a religious society. This same emphasis also led him to insist upon the unity of the visible Church, for to rend it meant to rend the body of Christ.

And what is to be said of Boston's view of the Church in relation to the rest of his theology? Perhaps the first thing by which one is struck is the relatively small attention

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1 Walker, op. cit., p. 120. Walker does not specify which Gillespie he has in mind. The context rules out Thomas Gillespie, so it must be either George or Patrick Gillespie.

2 While Rutherford could also insist with vehemence upon the unity of the visible Church, it is difficult to see how, with respect to the body of Christ, it could be as serious for Rutherford as it was for Boston.
the doctrine of the Church receives, small enough within the whole of his theology, and even smaller within The Covenant of Grace. The cause is to be found in the federal system (not to be confused with Rutherford's federal holiness). The covenant is per se invisible, its only visible form is the Church with its sacraments; yet in this context Church and sacraments are seldom brought to the fore in actual discussion. Seemingly the covenant relationship, as it is invisible, more easily becomes non-corporate than the church relationship with its visible aspect. Add to this the constant emphasis upon the personal acceptance of the covenant, of a personal "inbeing with the covenant," and the result is an individualistic stress upon personal relationship that forms perhaps the strongest link between federal theology and Pietism.

The positive elements of Boston's doctrine of the Church—which, when expressed, were not weak—receive their strength from the biblical teachings of union with Christ and the Church as the body of Christ. From this biblical emphasis comes Boston's teaching that the members of the body must exercise concern both for one another and for their head. Reverence for Christ as the head of that body also results in an ecumenical aspect, and—much more important in Boston's day—a strong abhorrence of schism as a rending of that visible body, which is the body of Christ. In short, Boston's doctrine of the Church is weakened by the federal, and strengthened by the biblical aspect of his
theology.

Also comprehended within the brief exposition of Christ as king of the covenant is his rule, or government of the covenant. Here opportunity is afforded Boston to give a formal place within his federal system to the law, for the laws of this covenant are

no other but the laws of the ten commandments . . . as the eternal rule of righteousness, whereunto they are to be conformed by the grace of the covenant; the effectuating of which is committed by the Father to Jesus Christ as administrator thereof. ¹

Within The Covenant of Grace Boston gives no large consideration to the place of the law as such, for the exposition of the covenants is the consideration of the relation of law and gospel. The main work has already been done; this is merely Boston's formal recognition that God's will for man's conduct, even as he is a new man in Christ, is contained in the law. In the covenant of works the law was to life as it was obeyed, to destruction as it was disobeyed and thus all men in Adam stand under the condemnation of the law. But in the covenant of grace, the sinner has been justified, set free from the condemnation of the law as it constitutes a part of the covenant of works. ² But if in Christ there is no condemnation, then what is to be said of the law? The law is still to be taken with absolute seriousness, for

The ten commandments being the substance of the law of nature,

¹The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 557-58 (1722-24).
²Notes on the Marrow, VII, 294 (1721-22).
a representation of God's image, and a beam of his holiness, behoved for ever unalterably to be a rule of life to mankind in all possible states, conditions, and circumstances; nothing but the utter destruction of human nature, and its ceasing to be, could divest them of that office, since God is unchanging in his image and holiness.1

The law remains, but no longer for condemnation, but as a rule of life, as the law of Christ. The "Neonomians or Baxterians, to wind in a righteousness of our own . . . do turn the gospel into a law, properly so called . . ."2 but Boston insists that the law,

as it is the law of Christ, neither justifies nor condemns men's persons in the sight of God. How can it do either the one or the other as such, since to be under it, as it is the law of Christ, is the peculiar privilege of believers, already justified by grace, and set beyond the reach of condemnation . . .3

For those in union with Christ, the law is, quite simply, a rule of life—God's will for man. How seriously that will is to be taken has been sufficiently indicated in consideration of Boston's views on sanctification.

Also a part of Christ's rule and government of the covenant is his work of discipline.

The discipline of the covenant is fatherly chastisement, which their state of imperfection in this life makes necessary to their welfare: and therefore it is secured to them in the covenant . . .4

This "medicinal" discipline is spoken of in terms of outward and spiritual "strokes."5 These chastising strokes offer an

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1Ibid., p. 309.
2Ibid., pp. 313-14.
3Ibid., p. 313.
4The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 559 (1722-24).
5Ibid.
explanation, consistent with the rest of Christ's rule of the covenant, as to the punishment and ill-fortune that befalls believers. Since all things are in the hand of God, and nothing happens by chance, it is essential to have an explanation for the ill that believers suffer. It cannot be because of punishment under the covenant of works; therefore if it be related to sin, it must be fatherly chastisement that believers are made to suffer. In short, it is not for punishment, it is rather for the well-being of the believer—it is discipline. This is a part of Christ's work of administration, as king and ruler of the covenant. Thus is fulfilled within the federal system the promise that

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.
Romans viii. 28. R.S.V.
The covenant of grace — assurance

We have now opened the doctrine of the covenant of grace, in treating of the parties in it, the making of it, the parts of it, and the administration thereof: it remains to make some practical improvement of the whole ..."

The practical improvement consists of a "Trial of a Saving Personal Inbeing in the Covenant of Grace," or in other words, the question of assurance. However, before any discussion is begun concerning assurance, it is essential to organize a specific vocabulary to avoid confusion. Had that been done when the Marrow controversy began, it would have considerably reduced the misunderstanding. Assurance as a whole will here be divided, and designated as "objective" and "subjective." Objective assurance is that which is to be had not by looking at one's own works as evidence of salvation, but rather the assurance that is founded upon the promises of God in Christ. It is assurance based not upon

\[1\text{The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 565-66 (1722-24).}\]
the evidence of the existence of faith within one, but rather upon God's faithfulness. It includes what Boston sometimes calls "the assurance which is in justifying faith." However, by objective assurance is not meant simply the certainty of God's promises apart from the personal relationship, but as the term objective assurance is to be used here, it includes the certiduo absoluta given with faith. The "objective" and "subjective" certainty that Maresius speaks of in faith are both a part of what is here designated objective assurance:

"Faith imports not only objective certainty of the things believed, but also subjective in the believer himself, who is not only persuaded that what he believes is sure and undoubted, but also that this faith of his by which he believes these things is true and sure."  

On the other hand, by subjective assurance (as it is designated for this study) is not meant the inner certainty of the personal appropriation of God's promised gifts, but rather the assurance by reflection that is produced by finding "evidences" within one's life that demonstrate the validity of one's faith. The Marrowmen called it a reflex act because it is a "believing that one believes" because of certain evidence that is seen within one's self, and is therefore appropriately called subjective assurance. It is an assurance based not upon God's promises (although it rests upon the validity of those promises), but rather upon a man's examination of his own faith and works, whereby he

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2 Ibid., p. 537, quoting Samuelis Maresius, Collegium theologicum sive Systema brevum universae Theologiae comprehensum octodecim disputationibus (Geneva, 1662), XI, 38.
tries to decide whether he has the proper "evidences" of faith, so that he may conclude he is really saved. This assurance deals not with the ultimate source of our salvation, but merely with personal evidences for participation in the objective reality of God's covenant of grace.

In the emphasis upon the free deed of gift and grant it was inevitable that the Marrowmen should stress the certainty of God's promises to the sinner, and proclaim the necessity of accepting those promises with confidence. However, because of this emphasis, many of the apologists of the time, as well as some later writers, have overlooked the fact that Boston, and the Marrowmen, acknowledged the subjective as well as the objective forms of assurance. The Marrowmen in their Representation make the distinction between the two types of assurance and quote Rutherford who refers to both types as of divine ordination.  

Further, as to the difference between these two kinds of assurance: the assurance of faith has its object and foundation without the man, but that of sense has them within him. The assurance of faith looks to Christ, the promise and covenant of God, and says, "This is all my salvation; God has spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice" but the assurance of sense looks inward at the works of God, such as the person's own graces, attainments, experiences, and the like.  

In this definition the assurance of faith corresponds to objective assurance, while the assurance of sense corresponds to the subjective. This distinction between objective and subjective assurance is also accepted by Boston. Speaking of

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1 VII, 484 (1721).
2 Ibid.
Fisher, he says:

He doth not here teach that assurance of faith whereby believers are certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, the which is founded upon the evidence of grace... but an assurance which is in faith, in the direct acts thereof, founded upon the word alenarly... and this is nothing else but a fiducial appropriating persuasion.

However, it should be noticed that despite the clarity of the distinction in the Representation, the language is not fixed, for while the "assurance of faith" (objective) is contrasted with the "assurance of sense" (subjective) in the Representation, in the Notes on the Marrow, Boston used "assurance of faith" for the subjective, while an "assurance which is in faith" refers to the objective. Also indicative of the lack of a fixed vocabulary in this area, is the following distinction:

I. I am to shew the kinds of assurance. They are two.

1. Objective assurance, whereby the special love of God to a saint, and his eternal salvation, are sure in themselves, 2 Tim. ii. 19... This is never wanting, whether the child of God know it or not...

2. Subjective assurance, whereby a child of God is assured that God loves him with a special love, and that he shall certainly partake of eternal glory... This is not a wavering hope, or conjecture, but an infallible certainty.

It becomes clear in the subsequent pages that what Boston here calls subjective assurance includes both the person's assurance of the objective promises of God, as well as the evidences within one's life. The objective, as Boston here uses the term, refers only to the objective love of God and his

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1Notes on the Marrow, VII, 257-58 (1721-22).
2II, 16 (1719-20?).
promises in Christ without any reference to the apprehension of them by the saint.

Even this brief view of the terminology of the subject assurance indicates that while there was an awareness of the problems involved, there had not been adequate time for the discussion to mature and establish a fixed vocabulary.¹ This serves not only to point to the partial source of controversy on this subject, but also to the advisability of using the terms objective and subjective assurance as defined at the outset of this chapter when discussing Boston's doctrine.

Boston certainly agrees with the Marrow teaching that "there is an assurance which rises from the exercise of faith by a direct act, and that is, when a man, by faith, directly lays hold upon Christ, and concludes assurance from thence";² but when Neophitus expresses concern, because "a man may think he has done so, when he has not," Boston is very sympathetic and adds in his notes that this is a good reason why this assurance, in or by the direct act of faith, is to be tried by marks and signs. There is certainly a persuasion that "cometh not of him that called us;" which obliges men to examining their persuasion, whether it be of the right sort or not.³

It is quite obvious that for Boston the assurance that comes

¹While it is true that the distinction of the Representers goes back to Rutherford, the doctrine of the Westminster Confession "relates to a complex assurance [i.e., both subjective and objective] resting on several distinct grounds, and capable of existing in different degrees . . ." James Buchanan, The Doctrine of Justification (Edinburgh, 1876), p. 184.

²The Marrow, VII, 363.
³Notes on the Marrow, VII, 363 (1721–22).
with justifying faith is to be supplemented by a persuasion
built upon self-examination. In short, subjective assurance
is considered a necessary addition to objective assurance. A
person is to make trial of his life, not because his conduct
can merit salvation, but because his life will give evidence
as to whether or not he is among the elect. "Though we are
not to lay the weight of our acceptance with God on our
obedience, yet there is a weight of evidence lies on it."1
It is Boston's conviction that it is quite possible to
obtain valid evidence for assurance in such subjective tests:

A believer may know that he . . . is justified,
adopted, etc. Though he cannot go up to heaven, and at
first hand read his name in the book of God's decrees;
yet by opening the Book of the word, and the Book of his
own soul, and comparing the two together, he may know
that he is called and elected.2

Now this is no more than a great many other Reformed theolo-
gians have advised, but it is the degree to which these
examinations are carried that gives them a sinister character.
This inward look appears not only in sermons on assurance,
but in other places as well. The Passages and General Account

1VI, 537 (1728).
2III, 44 (1715). In regard to others, Boston advised
"Let us carry our judgment of others no farther than that of
charity, and not pretend to a certainty, which is not compe-
tent to us in that case, but to God only." But, when it came
to self-examination: "In our own case, we may have by
rational evidence a judgment of certainty, without extra-
ordinary revelation. We may in an ordinary way, if we really
belong to God, be infallibly assured of it. The reason of
the difference is plain; we see the open actions and carriages
of others, but we cannot know the secret springs of them,
the principles, ends, and manner of them, upon which the
main stress lies; but we may know these things in ourselves." V, 308 (1728-29).
show Boston's early years to be full of melancholy self-inspection and efforts to discern the meaning of providences.\(^1\) Sermons were preached in 1707 on "Christian Watchfulness Stated, and Enforced," "Duty and Advantages of Solemn Meditation," and "Believers Communing with Their Own Hearts.\(^2\) In "Amiable Professors Falling Short of Heaven," Boston probes for the "one thing lacking" that effectually stands between the professed follower of Christ and heaven—and the search lasts for eighty-two pages\(^3\). Throughout these and other tests of the early period the individual statements are quite reasonable, but as they pile up, page after page, their weight becomes staggering.\(^4\)

One can certainly appreciate what Boston was trying to do. By his soul-searching trials he hoped to help hypocrites resting in a false sense of security to realize their need so that they might find Christ as their Saviour. He hoped also to lead his people to a greater concern for lives of more perfect obedience. At the same time he wanted those

\(^1\) Provisions were also a means by which one could find evidence of saving faith (III, 61 [1715]), and as a reading of the Passages and A General Account makes clear, Boston was overconfident of man's ability to read God's mind from such provisions, although the results in his own life were often egocentrically grotesque. But in this Boston was simply a man of his age (i.e., within his own context of evangelical orthodoxy).

\(^2\) IV, 387-94, 455-57, and 262-68 (1707).

\(^3\) III, 411-93 (1710).

\(^4\) Generally, Boston tends to put slightly more weight upon objective assurance as his ministry progresses. The decrease in emphasis upon the subjective is somewhat easier to recognize in the General Account and Passages, where as his theology begins to mature, the morbid introspection noticeably lessens.
who were Christians to have the comfort that assurance brings: "he has not only made heaven sure to his people, but he would have them to be assured of it, for their greater comfort."

But, despite these good intentions, must not the looking to one's self for evidence of salvation lead to uncertainty? Boston sees this quite clearly in many instances. He quite correctly charges the Neonomians with entangling distressed consciences "in a doubtful disputation, as to the being, kind, measure, and degree of their qualifications for coming to Christ ..." but falls into the same sort of error in his trials to achieve subjective assurance. The uncertainty that must arise from these examinations is indicated in a description of a chain of "duties and graces ... [which] do so shine after trial of them, as one may conclude assurance from them ..." in this instance, there are five links to the chain that leads to assurance. The first link to be examined is that of outward actions, which are valid as proofs only if they stem "from the inward actions of the mind; otherwise they are but pieces of gross dissimulation ... " The next test is whether or not "these actions of the mind ... [flow] from the habits of grace."

But do the habits of grace flow from justification? otherwise they are but "mere moral virtues, to be found in hypocritical professors, and sober heathens." This justification must

\[\text{Notes on the Harrow, VII, 277 (1721-22).}\]
of course flow from faith, "otherwise it is but feigned faith, which never knits the soul to Christ, but leaves the man in the case of the fruitless branch, which is to be 'taken away,' John xv. 2."¹ The primary objection to such examinations is their lack of conclusiveness. Boston seems to recognize this at least in part when on the following page he suggests that it is possible that two men might satisfy the first four out of five of these requirements, and yet the one be a hypocrite, and the other a believer.² Ultimately, the weight of the entire body of evidence must rest upon the fifth link, the source of faith. For the spiritually healthy Christian, with his eyes fixed on Christ's promises, an affirmative answer to the fifth question—of whether his faith is given by Christ, and embraces Christ—would not be too difficult. But what is to be expected from the person who takes his eyes from Christ, and occupies them with the sight of his own works?³ If he can decide that his works are good, then he must look to the inward actions of his mind, and if his works proceeded from them, he can go on to the inward actions of his mind to decide whether or not these actions are the result of habits of grace. If they are, he is still confronted with the decision as to whether what appear to be habits of grace, are really the fruit of his justification, or whether unawares,

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., pp. 320-21.
³While Boston teaches that even good works are given men only through the promises made to Christ—so that men need not rely on his own strength for good works—it can be seen that this does not eliminate the uncertainty that arises from a search for valid evidences of faith.
he has merely a show of justification. If he can decide that
his works, his actions of mind, his habits of grace, and his
justification are all in order, then it is still quite possi-
ble that he is nothing but a deluded hypocrite; he is still
confronted with the problem of whether his faith comes from
Christ, and whether it really embraces Christ—or whether it
is perhaps an imaginary faith which, although apparently sin-
cere, is nonetheless a pious joke he has been playing on
himself all the while. The dangers of such trials to the
already insecure person are too obvious to need elaboration.

Boston recognizes some lack of certainty in these
subjective examinations, and warns against possible counter-
feits. Men are urged to look at God's answers to their
prayers, but are nevertheless warned that "every answer of
prayer is not an evidence for heaven."¹ "The outlettgs of
the Lord's spirit into the heart in religious duties" is
another mark whereby men may test their evidences, but Boston
warns that "nature has its own enlargements as well as
grace."² Similarly, gracious influences which bring humility
are valid evidences—except that "there is a kind of humili-
ation, which, because it is not deep enough, becomes the
foundation of pride of heart."³ The whole situation is summed
up nicely by Boston when he says that "there is no grace but
a hypocrite may have the counterfeit of it."⁴ But if Boston

¹III, 62 (1715).
²Ibid., p. 63.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., p. 48.
recognizes that ultimately all subjective examinations are subject to doubt (and it must always be recognized that those most lacking assurance will be the ones who will be the least able to find anything within themselves upon which to base their needed assurance), and if he is willing to urge that "the weight of it [peace with God] is to lie entirely on the blood of Christ, for nothing else can shelter us from the wrath of God," then why does he persist in advocating this subjective search for assurance? Why, after recognizing the limitations of such subjective examinations, does he override his own evidence and insist upon them anyway?

It must first be observed that Boston was a man of his time in this respect. The desire for assurance that one's faith was valid was widespread. For a trial which in spirit approximates Boston's later ministry more closely than the earlier period, one may well consult Craig's Larger Catechism. William Guthrie's The Christian's Great Interest is divided into two parts: "1. The Trial of a Saving INTEREST in CHRIST. 2. The Way how to attain it." Patrick Gillespie's work on the covenant of redemption contains a "tryal" (a fairly healthy one). In Rutherford's volume on

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\[1\] Ibid., p. 54.


[2] The Works of Mr. William Guthrie (Glasgo, 1771), title page. To the question, "How shall I come to full assurance of my interest in Christ . . .?" Guthrie answers: "Learn to lay your weight upon the blood of Christ, and study purity and holiness . . ."


the covenant, chapter XVII concerns itself with "the hypocrisy of formall Covenanters. 2. Self-deceit. 3. The new Spirit. l. Revelations and Prophesies. 5. Markes of a Spirituall disposition." The examination continues in chapter XVIII which considers the "heart of the personall Covenanter." In another volume Rutherford again shows his concern for evidences:

The assurance of Christ's righteousness is a direct act of faith, apprehending imputed righteousness: the evidence of our justification we now speak of is the reflex light, not by which we are justified, but by which we know that we are justified.

This concern for evidence of salvation was really inevitable when viewed in relationship to the doctrine of reprobation. Reprobation was at this time virtually an axiom among orthodox Scottish theologians. Universalism had been decisively rejected. Although Rutherford may refer to reprobation far more frequently than does Boston, the latter also holds the doctrine. Now where reprobation is taken seriously, where people are given to understand that God has elected some to life, while others have been passed by, then it is not enough simply to know that Christ has died to save some;

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2 Ibid., pp. 145-52.
3 Ibid., pp. 145-52.
5 James Walker states that in Rutherford's work on the covenant the word reprobation is used eighty or ninety times, whereas, Boston, writing on the covenant uses it only three times. The Theology and Theologians of Scotland (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1888), pp. 91-92. Cf. 1, 154 (1709??).
to have assurance a man must know as well that he is among the elect, and not the reprobate. Part of the uncertainty created by the teaching of active reprobation was dispelled by the proclamation of the universal offer (supra, pp. 270-87), but having once accepted the Christ offered to all, the spiritual uneasiness created by the doctrine of reprobation was such as to make inevitable further queries as to the validity of that acceptance. Thus, the concern for proofs and trials to obtain evidence of the reality of faith, and to distinguish it from a hypocritical faith, was part of the theological inheritance arising to a large degree from the teaching of reprobation. The more emphasis the doctrine received, the greater the spiritual uneasiness, and the more men wanted evidence of the reality of their faith.

Besides the uneasiness created by reprobation, the efforts of ministers to stir up a real concern for holiness and to awaken self-satisfied hypocrites to their danger, often took forms that added to the doubt of already anxious Christians. Certainly men must be called to obedience, and men must be warned of the dangers of hypocrisy, but when it is done by extensive subjective trials, combined with an emphasis upon the possibilities of spiritual self-deception, the natural result is to make the earnest but doubting Christian doubt his faith all the more, thereby aggravating his need for assurance.¹

¹ A fine example of this sort of thing is found in III, 411-93 (1710).
Thus, certain types of preaching and the doctrine of reprobation constituted sources of a spiritual uneasiness which demanded evidence of true faith for assurance. The arguments by which particular redemption had been made to allow a proclamation of universal offer had not been so extended to the realm of assurance as to eliminate the expressed need for some subjective evidence for being within the covenant of grace. This need accounts for Boston's ambivalent attitude toward the certainty offered by these subjective tests. He was unwilling to face up to the implications of his own assertion that "there is no grace but a hypocrite may have the counterfeit of it."  

Fortunately, Boston's trials seem to become progressively more healthy (with occasional setbacks) until in The Covenant of Grace, the emphasis is predominantly positive, pointing the sinner not to what he is in himself, but to what God has done in the covenant.  However, there was also another factor that had an ameliorative influence even upon the subjective side of the doctrine, and that was the part played by the Spirit. In describing the nature of assurance, and "how a saint comes to be assured" Boston described it as "The Spirit shining on his own word, particularly the promises, in the promises in the Bible . . ." and "The Spirit shining on his own work of grace in the believer's heart . . . ."

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1 III, 44 (1715).  
3 II, 17 (1719-20??). Cf. IV, 128-29 (1712), and V, 309 (1728-29).
He added that "The Spirit of the Lord sometimes gives joint testimony with the spirits of the saints, to the truth of that conclusion." While the first points to objective assurance, the second indicates the place of the Spirit in witnessing to the fruits of the Christian life. In another place Boston insists that "all the saints have the Spirit of Christ, Rom. viii. 9. And it is the office of the Spirit to lead them into all truth, and particularly to shine upon his own work in the soul . . ." Within the customary exposition, however, one is led to fear that had this influence stood alone, it would have been swallowed up by the subjective element. Ultimately, the real strength of Boston's doctrine of assurance comes from the opposite side of his teaching, from what has been designated objective assurance.

In the Marrow Evangelist tells Neomista

I would have you to close with Christ in the promise, without making any question whether you are in the faith or no; for there is an assurance which rises from the exercise of faith by a direct act, and that is, when a man, by faith, directly lays hold upon Christ, and

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1Ibid. Cf. IV, 129 (1712), and V, 309 (1728-29). Of the third Boston states: "The testimony of the believer's own spirit is weak in itself, and Satan can find many ways to invalidate it; therefore the Spirit witnesses to them the truth of the conclusion, whereby they are raised to a full persuasion of it" (II, 17. This is the extent of Boston's comment on the matter). For those who take seriously the claims sometimes made for John Wesley which would make him the father of assurance, the last point would seem rather startling, were not the whole situation brought into proper perspective by the Westminster Confession, which speaks of "the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits" (chapter XVIII, art. II) and gives the favorite Wesleyan proof text, Romans viii. 15, 16. Therefore it is not surprising when men like William Guthrie (op. cit., p. 192) and later Boston, also make reference to the work of the Spirit.

2V, 309 (1728-29).
concludes assurance from thence. 1

Boston also maintains that "there is some assurance in justi-
ifying faith itself . . ." and explains that

the assurance which is in justifying faith itself, is
that whereby, in believing on Christ for salvation, the
party is persuaded, in greater or lesser measure, of
God's love of good-will to him, and that Christ will save
him from sin and wrath . . .2

Neither Fisher nor Boston go beyond accepted Reformed teaching
on this point:

Thus certainty of salvation and assurance of the
state of grace is the most essential sign of faith and
... is not a conviction based upon reflection (not a
certitudo conjecturalis, moralis), but a direct certitudo
absoluta given with faith itself. The believer is certain
not only of the truth of the object of faith, but also of
the fact that his subjective faith is real faith and that
by it he really possesses salvation and enjoyment of the
covenant of grace.3

In formal exposition Boston is always rather cautious
about placing too much weight upon "the assurance which is in
justifying faith,"4 but in urging such assurance in coming to

\footnotesize{1 The Marrow, VII, 363. Since so much of the contro-
versey on this point is completely meaningless when Boston's
teaching on subjective assurance is considered (for contrary
to accusation, he did not place all his emphasis upon the
assurance which is in justifying faith) there is no need to
again rehearse that dispute.

2 VII, 121 (1727-28).

3Neppe, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 536. Italics, other
than for the Latin, are not in the original. In their
Representation the Narrowsmen cite a tremendous quantity of
material from Reformed theologians, councils, and synods, of
which all "stand for that special fiducia, confidence, or
appropriating persuasion of faith spoken of in the condemned
passages of the Narrows, upon which this query is raised . . .
[and there] was never any judicatory of a reformed Church,
until now, denied or condemned . . . [this fiducia]." VII,
480 (1722).

4 VII, 149-22 (1727-28). In speaking of the assurance
in faith (objective), Boston states that "the ground from
whence this assurance is raised, is, the word of the gospel
alienarily, demonstrated by the Spirit in the work of saving
illumination . . ." Ibid., p. 122.}
Christ he is far less reserved. As a basis for objective assurance Boston proclaims to his flock that "God from eternity designed heaven for them," "Christ has purchased it for them," "Christ has taken possession of heaven in their name," "The saints have the hold of heaven already. They have it in the covenant," "in faith," "in hope well grounded, even hope on the word," "they have it in the first fruits of it." In another instance he can urge

draw near in the "full assurance of faith." Faith's special object is the blood of Christ. Come leaning and depending on the merit and efficacy of this blood. Cast all your weight upon it. It bears the weight of the Father's glory, and will bear the weight of your salvation. If your assurance of welcome depends on any thing in yourselves, God will cast the door of access in your face, as presumptuous insensible creatures.

Boston explains precisely what he means by the "full assurance of faith":

(1.) Taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome; (2) Claiming God in Christ as your God, without doubting of your title; (3.) Improving your interest claimed, without doubting of success.

I say, then, that to draw near to God in full assurance of faith. Stretch forth the hand of faith, that ye may join hands with an incarnate God: the more vigorous that your aim be, you will take the better hold. Do not stand at the door, disputing and doubting whether to go forward or not? if you cannot loose doubts, cut them with the sword of faith, and leap over them . . .

(1.) God, in his infinite love and mercy, has suited himself for an approach by such as you . . .

(2.) God's justice is satisfied, his honour is provided for, so that justice has nothing to object against your claim . . .

1 III, 38-41 (1715).
2 IX, 407 (1715).
3 Ibid., p. 423.
4 Ibid., p. 417.
(3.) You have his word for it. Kind invitations are breathed out to you from the throne of grace in Christ. But this is hardly more striking than Francis Turrettin’s opinion that the faithful, "so far as in serious contrition for sins they do with true faith grasp the promise of free mercy in Christ, rest in it confidently and so render their hearts carefree." This advocacy of assurance in justification does not mean that there was no room for doubt in Boston’s theology, or that a standard experience was decreed for all. In commenting upon the Marrow, Boston shows his approbation in claiming that Fisher doth not determine this assurance or persuasion to be full, or to exclude doubting ... according to him, saving faith may be without evidence. And so one may have this assurance or persuasion, and yet not know assuredly that he hath it, but need marks to discover it ... than which nothing is more ordinary among serious Christians.

But this does not mean that there can be a complete lack of assurance: There may be doubting of God’s good-will and of salvation, where this assurance of them hath place. ... And that may be, inasmuch as they are contraries capable of various degrees, the one weakened as the other gathers strength. ... But where doubts are reigning, to the

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1 Ibid., pp. 417-18.
2 Quoted from Franciscus Turrettinus, Institutio Theologica (Utrecht, 1701), XV, xvii, 6; by Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 556.
3 Addison makes the assertion that there was a tendency among the followers of the Marrow “to make this one-type experience the standard for all.” (William Addison, Thomas Boston of Ettrick (Edinburgh, 1936), p. 141) but this contradicted both in the Representation (VII, 483–84 [1722]) and by Boston.
4 Notes on the Marrow, VII, 258 (1721-22).
barring of any assurance of these things at all, true faith is barred too... *

Any evaluation of Boston's doctrine of assurance which takes into account the historical situation must judge his doctrine to be essentially a success—despite the justly hard things that have been said about the subjective aspect. In continuing to offer trials Boston simply failed to rise above the standard of the times. The type of preaching then prevalent, and, more particularly, the doctrine of reprobation, conspired to demand some form of evidence that one's personal faith was valid, but in attempting to point men to such evidence Boston's relentless probing seem far more likely to reduce assurance than encourage it, turning men far too deeply in upon themselves. When tests become so subjective that the disposition of the person can alone determine the answers, they are hardly the way to certainty. However, it must be recognized that in pointing inward, Boston never compromised his emphasis upon justification solely by grace. All that was sought from the subjective side of assurance was evidence, for good works are the effect of salvation, not its cause.

Boston's emphasis upon objective assurance received its strength from two directions within his theology. His emphasis upon the Christ who fulfills all the conditions of the covenant of grace, and bestows the promises freely upon all those who will come within that covenant—in short, his

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1VII, 122 (1727-28).
doctrine of justification by grace—constitutes the sure foundation of a salvation which in no way depends upon our feeble efforts, and upon which one may build a firm assurance. Having established the actual graciousness of the covenant of grace, the next step toward establishing Christian assurance must depend upon the warrant to accept that salvation. Thus, the second direction from which assurance receives its strength is from the "free deed of gift and grant"—the universal offer. Despite the objections that have here been leveled against Boston's subjectivism, his teaching on assurance, considered as a whole, is undoubtedly much better than that of Principal Hadow, who virtually refused the consolations of the objective promises until the sinner could see the results of his justification via subjective evidences. By means of the universal offer Boston breaks through this narrow view (which derived its support from the consideration given the doctrine of reprobation) and offers Christ to all men, and thus also offers the objective assurance of his promises of salvation to all men. If the arguments by which particular redemption had been made to accommodate universal offer had been pressed more radically into the heart of assurance, one wonders whether it might not have been possible to obviate the necessity for turning to the subjective in the attempt to find certainty. It would seem that Boston had already erected a sufficient number of safeguards against any form of Antinomianism in his doctrines of sanctification and union with Christ so that it was not
necessary to use the inward look as a means to that end. His theology did present the possibility of pointing men entirely toward the promises of God in Christ, and away from themselves in the search for certainty.

Considering his theology as it was actually presented, the doctrine of assurance must be declared—despite its shortcomings—a success. Its superiority to that of Hadow has already been noted, and it represented an even greater gain over those preachers of morality who, in search of a rational religion, dwelt entirely upon the obligations of moral goodness, without the quickening Word of the Gospel. The great area of success in Boston’s doctrine of assurance was his turning of men’s minds and hearts to the Christ who does all to save, and who offers this salvation to all who will accept it.

Now he that is within the covenant, takes Christ’s righteousness as his alone ground of confidence before the Lord: for the covenant shows not, nor allows any other: nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified... and what confidence he hath for life and salvation, he hath upon that ground alone..."
It remains that we consider the promise of eternal life to the elect, as it is accomplished to, and hath its effect upon them, from their death, all along through eternity.\(^1\)

Union with Christ affects this section of Boston's theology in a most explicit manner. The result is not merely a group of general platitudes on the certainty of heaven for those who are in Christ; the doctrine strikes at the very heart of the theological statement of even death itself. The first claim set forth is that death itself is to be

*found in the inventory of the saints' treasure . . . . Not only is life theirs by the covenant, but death is theirs too by the same tenor. And indeed as it is new-framed by the covenant, it is of excellent use to them, bringing them into a state of perfection, and everlasting rest . . . .*\(^2\)

Most theologians ground such statements upon the fact that death opens the way to freedom from sin, and full glorification. Boston would certainly be in agreement with this

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view, but for him, even the character and cause of death is transformed through union with Christ. The natural man who dies outside of Christ dies by virtue of the curse, under the sentence of the law; the man in Christ, however, dies not because of the curse, but in conformity to Christ:

Being redeemed from the curse, Gal. iii. 13, they shall never see such death, John viii. 51. But they die in conformity to Christ their head, being predestinate to be conformed to his image.3

Boston divides the material of this section into the promise of victory over death, and the promise of everlasting life.4 Included in the former is the promise "of disarming death," and therefore the elect can count death as among their treasures. The certainty of the disarming of death is based upon the promise, and

this promise is grafted upon the promise of victory made to Christ, as appears from the forecited, Isa. xxv. 8. He encountered death, armed with its sting, on purpose to disarm it to his people: he received the sting thereof into his own soul and body, that they might be delivered from it. Wherefore the promise of victory over death made to him, secures the disarming of it to them.5

The second promise included within that of victory over death, is the "promise of destroying death to the dead believer," or in other words, the resurrection of the body.

This promise is grafted upon the promise of a resurrection made to Christ, Isa. xxvi. 19. The promise of a resurrection being made to him as a public person, it must take place also on his mystical members.

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1V, 500 (1730).
3The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 514 (1722-24).
4Ibid., p. 511.
5Ibid., pp. 511-12.
whose federal head he was . . . . And indeed there is such a connection between Christ's resurrection and the happy resurrection of the saints, that they stand and fall together . . . .

The other principal promise is that of everlasting life in heaven. This promise is not all fulfilled at once, but in two periods, for the "chief branches" of the promise are "of transporting their souls into heaven at death," and of "transporting them soul and body thither at the last day." Like the rest of the Reformed, Boston will have nothing to do with the idea of soul-sleep. Of the souls of the wicked, Boston states that "the separate soul doth not sleep, nor is void of feeling, nor is it extinguished till the resurrection, as some have dreamed; no, no; it lives, but lives in misery . . . ." But for those who are united to Christ,

there is a promise of transporting their souls separate from their bodies, into heaven, there to behold and enjoy the face of God. And it is accomplished to them immediately after their death. Again, the certainty of the promise depends upon union with Christ:

This promise is grafted upon the promise of acceptance made to Christ, when he should make his soul an offering for sin. . . . For his soul was, in virtue of the covenant, so received, as a public soul, representing the souls of the whole seed . . . . Wherefore in the promise of receiving Christ's soul, was comprehended a promise of receiving the souls of all his mystical members.

1Ibid., p. 512.
2Ibid., p. 513.
3The Covenant of Works, XI, 309 (1721-22).
4The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 513 (1722-24).
5Ibid., p. 514.
After this period in which the souls of the godly are in heaven, while their bodies are in the grave—a place of rest to them, where they rest as in their bed—there comes the fulfillment of the promise of everlasting life in heaven: the resurrection of the body. In the fulfillment of this promise, "which is the last of all in performing," both Christ's resurrection and ascension constitute the pledges of the promise which belongs to the elect through him. The promise of the resurrection of the body, and eternal life in heaven is grafted upon the promise of a glorious exaltation made to Christ; by which was secured to him his ascension, in soul and body, into heaven, and entering into his glory. . . . Now, Christ ascended and entered into glory, as a public person, as a forerunner entering for us, Heb. vi. 20. And therefore the promise, in virtue of which he ascended and entered into it, comprehends the ascension and glory of all his mystical members, who are therefore said to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 6. And then, and not till then, will the promise be perfectly fulfilled to him, when all the mystical members are personally there, together with their head; when the whole seed, perfectly recovered from death, shall reign there, together with him, in life, for evermore. 3

However, union with Christ has even further implications for eternal life than its guarantee of victory over death and the grave, of the immediate communion of the soul with God, and of the resurrection of the body at the last judgment; union with Christ is necessary for the

1 The Covenant of Works, XI, 311 (1721-22).
2 The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 515 (1722-24).
3 Ibid., pp. 515-16. While the elect are raised in virtue of their union with Christ, the damned are raised for final judgment by his power. The Fourfold State, VIII, 276-80 (1699-1727); The Covenant of Works, XI, 311-13 (1721-22).
continued life of the elect in heaven! There men "will be perfectly conformed to the will of God, and be completely satisfied,"¹ there "they will have the presence and full enjoyment of God in Christ . . . "²—and this enjoyment of God will be solely in Christ. "They will enjoy God in Christ, by sight of the divine glory to the complete satisfying of their understanding . . . "³ and "they will enjoy God in Christ, by experience of the divine goodness, to the complete satisfying of their will . . . "⁴ Most important, however, is the fact that all their happiness, joy, and glory, they will have eternally through Christ, as the great means of communication betwixt God and them . . . . They will continue for ever members of Christ, and members as members must needs live by communication with the head."⁵

Boston's theology is here completely gracious. Man, even in heaven, lives in complete dependence upon God's grace; he partakes of all that heaven has to offer only in union with Christ, as a member of that body.

The "perfection of grace" is conveyed unto all believers by the Spirit at death, in such a full measure that they are perfected in the image of Christ, and so in the image of God, "yet it is not such a measure, as that they never need more . . . "⁶ This does not mean that the saints are faced with an eternity of uncertainty, for

¹V, 429 (1729).
²Ibid., p. 430.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., pp. 430-31.
⁵Ibid., p. 431.
⁶VI, 589 (1728). In the text, the "it is" has been inverted. The context demands the amended reading as cited above.
that there shall be such an eternal communication to
them from Christ by the Spirit, is evident, in that
they continue for ever members of Christ; and members
cannot act but by continued communications of
influences from their head . . . 1

Of these supplies of grace, the saints are assured that
they will always be kept full, by the Spirit's
communicating eternally to them full supplies of grace
from Christ their head: Rev. vii. 17, "For the Lamb
which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,
and shall lead them unto living fountains of
waters . . . " 2

In assessing Boston's doctrine of union with Christ,
the conclusion must be that it plays a dominant role, and
that role demands a covenant that is truly, and consistently
one of grace. But the very fact that it is so thoroughly
gracious reinforces the observation expressed in chapter
four (supra, pp. 141-52) that the covenant of works is an
essentially alien element ultimately incapable of real
integration within Boston's system. This becomes all the
more evident when a final question is considered, the
question of the ultimate end of the covenant.

In describing the end, or purpose, of the covenant,
Boston makes several distinctions. In at least one instance
he defines the "nearest end" of the covenant to be "the
salvation of the church of the elect." 3 The "chief
subordinate end" of the covenant is frequently described as
sanctification, or holiness 4—a phrase very similar to

1Ibid., p. 590.
2Ibid., pp. 589-90.
3: 440 (1732).
4The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 487, 571 (1722-24); and
IV, 43-44 (1723).
Calvin's. The chief, great, or highest end of the covenant, as of creation, is the glory of God. Boston's comments concerning the glory of God leave no doubt as to the relative roles of creation and redemption in contributing to that glory—and in his appraisal of this relationship, there is no doubt left as to the complete inappropriateness of any seriously intended covenant of works. It is Boston's opinion that

the salvation of lost sinners was a greater work than the making of the world: the powerful word commanded, and this last was done; but the former was not to be compassed, but with more ado.

God shewed his infinite wisdom in the works of creation; but the work of redemption and salvation of a lost world, was a master-piece of that wisdom.

God's work in Christ was greater than his work in creation—is not the conclusion almost inevitable that a successful covenant of works would have restricted the display of God's glory? Must one not recall here the "felix culpa" of the early Church? If Boston's statements on the purpose of the

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1"... for the glory of God is the highest end, to which our sanctification is subordinate." John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh, 1854), p. 198 [Eph. i. 4].

2The Covenant of Grace, VIII, 388 (1722-24).

3X, 433 (1732).

4Boston is in no way guilty of the "pseudo wisdom" condemned by Barth: "Ein Anderes ist die Weisheit Gottes, die diesen Zwischenfall [the Fall] zulässt, um — nicht ihn, aber seine Überwindung zum Anlass zu nehmen, seine Gnade nur noch größer zu machen, sie als seine freie Gnade in ihr — man muss wohl sagen: erst in ihr so zu betätigten und zu offenbaren, wie es seinem ewigen Sinn und Willen entspricht. Etwas ganz Anderes wäre eine menschliche Pseudo weisheit, die diesem Zwischenfall als irgendwie notwendig ausgegeben und damit den Menschen, der für ihn verantwortlich ist, entschuldigens, entlasten oder doch hinsichtlich der tiefsten Misslichkeit und Gefährlichkeit seines Tuns beschwichtigen möchte." Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, IV/1: Die Lehre Von Der Versöhnung (Zürich, 1953), p. 74.
covenant and the revelation of the glory of God are taken seriously, then one must come to the conclusion that the covenant of grace alone displays God's greatness—the greatness of his grace. Thus Boston states that this was

the great end of God's predestinating the elect to be his own children; "the praise of the glory of his grace." It was a display of his free grace that he aimed at. . . . God purposed to bring the elect out of the devil's family, and make them his own children freely; that they seeing, tasting, and feeling this glorious grace, might raise a song of praise of it here, and joining voices in heaven, might carry it on in the highest strain there for ever, praising the glorious grace appearing in their adoption; opening the various folds of it, and admiring the glories of free grace, for ever and ever.¹

The "chief and highest end" of creation and redemption is the glory of God, but "he designed to display his glory in the Son," and the Son is "the centre in which all the parts of the mystery were to meet."² In short, "there is more of the glory of God to be seen in the face of Jesus, than throughout the whole compass of the heavens and the earth, which yet were made to declare the glory of God."³ Any serious consideration of man's meriting his reward—especially one of confirmed righteousness—by his works is completely incongruous with these paeans to God's gracious action toward men in Christ. In judging Boston's theology of fact—his theology of the covenant of grace—there can be only one verdict: it is a successful theology of grace, which is consistently gracious not only through calling, justification, and sanctification, but gracious

¹XI, 149 (1726).
²X, 440-41 (1732).
³V, 629-30 (1727).
even in the existence of the saints as they live eternally with God in Christ.

Then shall the chief, last, or farthest end of man, be reached. And that is the glory of God, for which end they are made completely happy, in the full enjoyment of God . . . . So being made perfectly happy, they will answer that end in glorifying God, by loving, praising, and serving him perfectly, to all eternity . . . . Rev. vii. 9, 10. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."
Conclusion

It would obviously be desirable to complete this study of Boston's theology with a careful assessment of his influence. That he had a very substantial influence is not to be doubted, for reasons to be given below, but the nature of the situation is such as to make an exact and carefully documented account quite impossible.

The central factor which eliminates the possibility of such an examination is that Boston was not an original thinker. He himself claimed—and rightly so—that he taught only what good and orthodox divines before him had taught. Boston did not formulate new theological thought, but he chose with extreme judiciousness from that which had previously been taught, carefully weighing each factor for its suitability to his own day. To do this, to construct a theology of grace in an age in which all the tendencies were in the other direction, certainly required wisdom and courage, but the result was not the sort of theology which gives one's name to a school of
thought, or is easy to trace through later years. It is because Boston's theology is composed of elements which can be found in abundance in the older Reformed theology that it is impossible to point with certainty to his specific subsequent influence. One finds echoes of what seems to be Boston's thought in many later writers, but it might also be the thought of the Marrow, or Luther, Calvin, Zanchius, Pitius, a host of others, or simply of the Bible. Therefore, unless Boston is cited by name, it is virtually impossible to separate his influence from that of his sources. But such direct reference is seldom found, and there is little reason to expect it, for the real appeal is to Scripture as it is understood in the orthodox tradition of Reformed theology.

However, while no detailed account of Boston's influence can be given, its existence does not admit of doubt. The very fact that Boston can be counted as a leader among the Marrowmen is in itself an indication of his influence upon the Scottish theological scene. The extent of this influence is seen in even better perspective when one recalls that, of the Marrowmen, Boston alone perpetuated his influence through a sizeable number of publications.

In the last analysis, it is Boston's publications that provide perhaps the most accurate index possible of his influence. By the extent of the demand for his writings, and the breadth of their appeal, one can come to some understanding of the influence of a man who was content to point men
to Christ in terms that others had previously used.

His appeal was to a broad constituency, encompassing not only the ministry, but the laity as well—certainly a not unimportant point in a Presbyterian Church. Undoubtedly many pious souls who found little spiritual food in the rational morality proclaimed from their own pulpits eagerly sought out Boston's works to fill their need. Boston could be a staff of strength to such people, not only because of his theology, but because he was eminently readable. By the aid of graphic illustration, simile, and metaphor, his theology was made comprehensible to the masses. Compared to such writers of the previous age as, for example, Samuel Rutherford, Boston's writings are models of perspicuity. Because he could be understood by all, his influence was broad and great.

That this was in fact the case, is shown in the demand for his works. The Fourfold State went through over eighty editions.¹ Michael Boston, writing in 1784, says:

"the Fourfold State made its first appearance in 1720. Since that period it has undergone an average one complete edition every two years. Twenty thousand copies of it have been exported from one single city in Scotland, besides those that have been sent to the Continent from England and Ireland."²

The book attained such popularity that it was translated into Gaelic, Welsh, and Dutch.

Boston's most important theological work, The Covenant of Grace, saw at least sixteen editions, and underwent translation into Welsh and Dutch.¹ Many other works of Boston also achieved considerable popularity, but there is unfortunately no complete record of the total number of Boston's pamphlets and books that were published. Some were printed as single sermons, others were put together in all sorts of combinations. The British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books, 23 (London, 1938) lists some thirty-eight different works or translations, with a total of eighty-four various editions of these works (of which only fifteen are of the Fourfold State). Low presents a somewhat more comprehensive picture than the above in listing one hundred and fifty-four printings and editions of Boston's writings, and even this is obviously far from complete.²

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Boston's lasting appeal and influence is the fact that over a century after his death, there was still such a demand for his writings that a complete edition of his works, embodying twelve closely printed volumes, and altogether embracing somewhere over four million words, was prepared and printed in Aberdeen for George and Robert King (1848-52) and the London firm of William Tegg & Co. (1854). It would be absurd to depreciate the influence of a man so widely read.

¹Ibid., p. 359.
²Ibid., pp. 358-61.
In an attempt to both evaluate and indicate the direction of Boston's influence, it would perhaps be in the interests of both fairness and clarity to carry on the discussion at two levels. The first view is on the apparent, contextual, or contemporaneous level, understanding Boston as he could be understood in his own day. The second is the objective view, possible for the present day observer, but utterly impossible to Boston or his associates.

On the first level, Boston's influence must be declared to be predominantly for the good. The theological threats of the day were from the direction of hyper-Calvinism, Neonomianism, and rationalism; each of which, in an ascending degree, turned the gospel from grace to works—the hyper-Calvinists by demanding the evidence of good works before granting the comforts of the gospel, the Neonomians by their "gospel-law", and the rationalists as they exchanged the gospel for morality. Boston's theology was not a full scale apologetic against rationalism—that was hardly a threat in the parish of Ettrick—but it was well adapted for those who desired to hear the gospel proclaimed (that there were those who had such desires is suggested by the perhaps apocryphal account of one hearer who walked over fifty miles each week end to hear the preaching of the Fourfold State).

Boston's theology could, however, be called an anti-Neonomian apologetic, for within the context of federal theology it was admirably adapted to combat any entrance of
works-righteousness. In Adam, the federal head of the race, all men broke the covenant of works, and thus all men are cut off from any hope of meriting salvation through that covenant by their works. In *The Covenant of Grace* Boston rejects the covenant of redemption because it means the covenant of grace is to be transacted between men and God—leaving the door wide open to conditions, and therefore works. Boston declared the covenant of grace to be made exclusively with Christ as regards both conditions and promises, thus eliminating all conditionality on man’s part. Christ fulfills the conditions of the covenant and he receives the promises; he is surety for the conditions of the covenant, but not for the faith or deeds of the elect. To the question regarding the manner in which the elect are included within the covenant of grace, Boston’s striking answer is that they are included by way of the promises! The elect are promised to Christ, and through union with him, the elect receive the benefits promised to him. It is through these promised benefits that the elect are preserved until their calling, called, convicted of sin by the Spirit, given faith, justified, reconciled, adopted, God becomes their God, they are sanctified, preserved, and blessed with temporal benefits—all this, received as a gracious gift in union with Christ. The Neonomian introduction of works was by way of federal theology. Within these same federal forms Boston effectively countered that danger. His exposition of this system in *The Covenant of Grace* was so clear that it could hardly have failed to provide a much needed antidote to
Neoconomian tendencies. On that level Boston was certainly a success.

Boston's theology also successfully counteracted hyper-Calvinism by proclaiming God's free deed of gift and grant of Christ to mankind sinners. The universal offer was not intrinsically demanded by Boston's federal theology, nor by the proper logical extension of his views as a particular redemptionist. Universal offer was, however, demanded by Scripture, and Boston was only too happy to proclaim the good news to all men. Boston's influence can certainly be ranked high among those factors which were responsible for the subsequent emphasis upon universal offer both in and out of the Secession Church. Not so successful, however, was Boston's doctrine of assurance. As it pointed men to Christ, and stressed that all one's confidence should be placed upon Christ's promises, his strength, his person, it was a success; but as it pointed men to themselves to test their works for evidence that they were among the elect, it failed completely to give assurance.

On this first contextual level, the level at which Boston was read and understood by contemporaries, Boston's theology, with the primary exception of assurance, must be declared to be a success. In view of the fact that his books sold in large numbers, that they were intelligible to the average man, and had a content that spoke to the theological needs of the day, there can be no doubt that Thomas Boston's theology had both a great and beneficial influence upon the evangelical orthodoxy of Scotland.
But what estimate is to be given from the present vantage point? Anything that is here said is by way of observation, rather than criticism, for Boston could not have been expected to see such difficulties as were almost universally inherent in the Reformed theology of the day.

Christian theology in the early eighteenth century had long been under a distorting pressure from two directions. The older of these pressures was scholasticism, the younger stood in the Humeist tradition, and was well in evidence in the demand of the age for clear and distinct ideas. Under pressure from the two, Reformed theology had largely been moulded into federal systems, which despite their historical aspects, were nevertheless highly forensic, and very amenable to Western forms of thought. But the very clarity of these Western thought forms also created a pressure which turned union with Christ into metaphor, with all that this implies (through both direct pressure and interaction) for the doctrines of Church, sacraments, sanctification, predestination, and eschatology. All this was the almost inevitable result of the intrusion of overly forensic, and overly logical forms into the biblical thought world. This domestication of biblical thought to the Western mind led to such theological tensions as were in some degree responsible, along with other factors, for the wholesale departures from the faith among New England Puritans and English Presbyterians. These pressures had been exerted on Scotland as well, as is evidenced by her many contributions to the development of federal theology. In any broad objective
estimate of Boston's influence, it is essential to inquire into his relationship to these thought forms. Boston's theology was built within the structure of the federal forms, with all that is therein implied. In the covenant of works his thinking is so heavily forensic that the doctrine of original sin must stand or fall on a bare, legal imputation. This is the only expression Boston could find, the only pattern of thought which seemed to have meaning for him in this context. In view of this virtual strangulation by federal forms in the covenant of works one would hardly expect anything better in the rest of his theology—but nevertheless there is something better; the contribution is none other than a doctrine of union with Christ, which while thoroughly mixed with federal forms, nevertheless achieves definite biblical validity. This emphasis upon union with Christ is all the more notable in that it was the product of a theologian who worked within the context of the federal system, was thoroughly imbued with the forensic forms, and had no criticisms of them. The most simple and accurate explanation of its growth is to be attributed to Boston's constant striving to be faithful to Scripture. The distribution of biblical data is such that in faithfulness to it he could more easily overcome his exclusively forensic thought forms with reference to union with Christ, than with reference to the covenant of works. Through his understanding of union with Christ, Boston's theology gained strength in almost all areas. Through union with Christ all the benefits of the covenant of grace are given to the elect—
and this is true as well of the very important doctrine of sanctification. Through union with Christ Boston's doctrines of Church and sacraments received their biblical substance, and through union with Christ, the glory of God's grace shines not only in this life, but throughout eternity. From the present vantage point, it seems obvious that this emphasis upon the eternal display of the glory of God's grace should have condemned any serious exposition of the covenant of works—but it could not be obvious to Boston.

Not only through these doctrines, but also in offering Christ to all men, and pointing them to him for assurance, Boston did creditable service to the cause of a more biblical theology.

However, it would be highly dangerous to make any assertions as to the extent to which Boston's influence toward a more biblical theology was a factor in easing those theological tensions which caused such devastating damage in England and New England. Any positive claims on this point must await considerable intensive study of the theology of the period and groups involved. In the meantime Boston's substantial contribution to a more biblical theology should not be forgotten. His reputation need not entirely await future judgment, for the evidence available indicates his keen sensitivity to the theological needs of the day, his ability in constructing a theology of grace to fill those needs, and his success in communicating to the masses that theology of grace.
A chronological bibliography of the works of Thomas Boston

When the twelve volume edition of Boston’s works was published in 1848-52, whatever attempt there was toward systematization was in the direction of subject matter. The result is that the contents of the works, except for those sermons which were preached in series, are thoroughly jumbled with regard to chronology. Many of the sermons are dated, but there are also many that are not, and the confusion is such that two items have been printed twice, the material found in V, 586-632 and II, 672-74 being duplicated in VII, 547-92 and XII, 453-54, respectively.

Since careful study is hardly possible without an awareness of dating a chronological bibliography is almost a necessity. Such a bibliography is here provided.

Each work will be listed in chronological order insofar as possible, with the date of its inception as determinative of its position. Thus the date supplied marks the beginning of each item or series as it was written or preached, and not its publication. The publication dates of a few of the
important works have been included, and have been clearly marked as such. When it has been possible to date the conclusion of a series, that has been done.

In many instances, a certain amount of doubt remains as to the accuracy of the date, and in that case a single question mark placed after the year indicates that allowance should be made for the possible variation of a year, either earlier or later. If there is greater doubt than this, two question marks will be used. When the outward limits of a series covering several years are in doubt, either or both dates will be designated as necessary.

When the date is supplied at the head of the item in the *Works*, no reference will be made to the evidence for the date; in all other instances it will be given. Fortunately, Boston's own autobiographical writings, together with the notes of George D. Low (*A General Account of My Life by Thomas Boston* [London, 1908]), and George H. Morrison (*Memoirs of the Life, Time, and Writings of the Reverend and Learned Thomas Boston* [Edinburgh, 1899]) have supplied sufficient evidence to establish almost all of the lacking dates. Within this bibliography these works will be designated simply by the name of their authors, Low and Morrison.

Those sermons which were preached in connection with sacramental occasions have been designated with the abbreviation SO. to be found immediately after the title and text. When the place in which the sermon was preached is found in the *Works* it has also been included in the chronological biblio-
graphy. All otherwise unspecified reference to volume and page numbers are to *The Whole Works of the Late Reverend Thomas Boston of Ettrick*, edited by the Rev. Samuel M'Millan, in Twelve volumes. Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1848-1852.

In order to make the bibliography as easy to use as possible, the following arrangement has been used:

Name of sermon or writing, with Scripture text.
Source. Place. Date. Evidence for date.
A chronological bibliography of the works of Thomas Boston

1696??

**Passages in My Life.** A manuscript volume of 370 pages, to be found in the New College Library, Edinburgh.

Low, p. xlix. 1696??-1730.

1699

**A Soliloquy on the Art of Man-Fishing.**

V, 5-43. 1699.

**A Personal Covenant.**

II, 671-72. 14 August 1699.

**Human Nature in its Fourfold State; of Primitive Integrity; Entire Depravity; Began Recovery; and Consummate Happiness or Misery.**


Ettrick. 9 May 1708-16 Oct. 1709.

Preparation for publication 1712.

First published, over-edited 1720.

Revised for 2nd edition 1727.

Second edition published 1730.

Low, pp. 149, 182, 96, xxi, 189, Morrison, p. 394, and Low, p. 296, respectively.

1701??

Miscellaneous Questions:
I. "Whether or not sins of believers, while unrepented of, make them liable to eternal punishment?"
   VI, 11-43. 1701??
   Low, p. 153.

II. "Whether or not all sins, past, present, and to come, are pardoned together and at once?"
   VI, 44-76. 1701??
   Low, p. 153.

III. "Whether or not repentance be necessary in order to the obtaining of the pardon of sin?"
   VI, 76-99. 1701??
   Low, p. 153.

IV. "Where hath sin its lodging-place in the regenerate?"
   VI, 99-109. 1701??
   Low, pp. 155-56.

V. "Why the Lord suffereth sin to remain in the regenerate?"
   VI, 110-24. 1700?
   Morrison, p. 118. Low, p. 156.

VI. "Who have [the] right to baptism, and are to be baptized?"
   VI, 125-220. 1701??
   Low, pp. 155-56.
   Note: all were completed before August 1704.

1705

   IV, 435-47. 22 Dec. 1705.

A Paraphrase upon the Epistle to the Galatians.
   VI, 240-77. Simprin. 23 Dec. 1705.

1706

"Christ the Life of the Believer." Phil. i. 21. 80.
   IV, 239-47. Eyemouth. 12 July 1706.

"Mourning the Absence of Christ." Lam. iii. 49, 50. 80.
   IV, 60-67. Swinton. 28 July 1706.
   Low, p. 171.

"Infallible Antidotes Against Unbelieving Fears." Rev. i. 17, 18. S0. IX, 13-27. 6 October 1706.


"Believers Having Tribulation in the World." John xvi. 33. IV, 323-50. 10 Nov. 1706.

1707


"The Soul's Espousal to Christ." 2 Cor. xi. 2. S0. IV, 22-31. Simprin. 9 Feb. 1707.


"Believers Communing with Their Own Hearts." Psalm iv. 4. IV, 262-68. Simprin. 23 March 1707.

"The Lord's Helping His People." I Sam. vii. 12. IV, 52-60. Ettrick. 4 May 1707.


"The Danger of not Waiting on God after the Due Order."
I Chron. xv. 13.
IX, 53-61. 2 August 1707.

1708

"God Hiding His Face From Backsliders." Isaiah lxiv. 7.

"Ministers in the Church Appointed by Christ."
Eph. iv. 4, 12.
IV, 309-15. 27 May 1708.

"Ministers to Continue Till the Church be Perfect."
Eph. iv. 13.
IV, 316-23. 24 June 1708.

"The Evil and Danger of Schism." I Cor. i. 10.
Morrison, p. 225.

1709

IX, 61-65. 16 July 1709.

Communion Sermon.

"An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion
with Respect to Faith & Practice upon the plan of the
Assembly's Shorter Catechism."
I, 5-528. Ettrick. 30 Oct. 1709--??
Low, p. 237, ftnt. 2.
(Concluded well before 1713)

"The Inward Frame Should Correspond with the Outward
Profession." Deut. v. 29.
X, 56-87. 1709.

1710
Extracts from Boston's sermons of 1710 in description of the state of people at Ettrick.

XII, 457-60. 13 July 1710.
Low, p. 185.

VI, 279-93. Ettrick. 16 July 1710.
Low, p. 185, Morrison, p. 244.


"Amiable Professors Falling Short of Heaven." Mark x. 21.

"Amiable Professors Falling Short of Heaven." Mark x. 22.

1711

"Christ's Invitation to the Labouring and Heavy Laden."
Matt. xi. 28.

"A Heart Exercised Unto Godliness, Necessary to Make a Good Minister." I Tim. iv. 7.
IV, 71-81. Askirk. 7 March 1711.

"A Heart Exercised Unto Godliness Necessary to Make a Good Christian."
IV, 81-89. Yarrow. 18 March 1711.

"God's Gracious Call and Precious Promise, Considered."
Psalm lxxxi. 10. So.
IX, 482-90. Wamphray. 30 June 1711.

So.
IX, 490-99. Wamphray. 2 July 1711.

Miscellaneous Tracts:
I. "A Meditation on the day of expiation and the feast of tabernacles."
VI, 220-26. 1711?
Low, p. 188.

II. "Arguments from Scripture and reason, proving conservation to be a positive act, or a continued creation."
VI, 226-33. 1711?
Low, pp. 188-89.
III. "Of the origin, names, texture, and use of garments." VI, 233-40.
Low, pp. 189f.

The Distinguishing Characters of Real Christians. Philip.

iii. 3. IV, 466-550.

21 Oct. 1711-23 March 1712.

Low, p. 189, Morrison, p. 255.

1712

"Anger Not to be Sinfully Indulged." Eph. iv. 26, 27.
IV, 351-58.

28 Feb. 1712.

IX, 159-68.

April 1712.

"A Rich Reward to Diligence in Religion." Hosea vi. 3.

1 Sept. 1712.

"Christ Jesus Duly Prized." Phil. iii. 8.
IV, 125-56.

May-Oct. 1712.

"The Unequality of Man's Ways." Ezek. xviii. 29. 50.
IV, 203-09. Ettrick.

June 1712.

"Faithfulness Towards God Exemplified and Rewarded."
Num. xiv. 24. 50.
IX, 299-334.

July 1712.

"A Discourse on the Experimental Knowledge of Christ."
Phil. iii. 10.
II, 645-59. Ettrick?

Some time between 2 Sept. 1712 & May 1713.

IX, 368-64. Selkirk.

11 Oct. 1712

12 Oct. 1712.

"Christ Jesus Duly Prized." Phil. iii. 8, 9.
IV, 156-95

2, 9 Nov. 1712.

1713

"The Best Security Against the Day of Wrath." Heb. xi. 28.
X, 133-45. Ettrick.

7 June 1713.
"The Christian Weak, Yet Strong." II Cor. xii. 10.
IX, 138-52. 12, 13 July 1713.

"The Suitable Improvement of Saints' Former Experiences." II Kings ii. 14.
IX, 111-28. 16 Aug. 1713

IX, 152-59. 19 Aug. 1713.

Low, p. 237.

1714

"The Church's Prayer Against the Antichristian Beast, and Her Other Enemies, Explained and Enforced." Psalm lxxiv. 19.

"The Folly of Resisting, the Wisdom of Complying With the Gospel Call." Matt. xxi. 29.
IX, 37-45. 31 July 1714.

IX, 45-53. 1 Aug. 1714.


"Privileges & Duties of Christ's Spouse." Psalm xlv. 10.
IV, 89-125. Ettrick. 29 Aug. 1714.

"Jesus a Preacher of Good Tidings to the Meek." Isaiah lxi. 1.

"Jesus Binds Up the Broken-Hearted." Isaiah lxi. 1.

"Jesus Proclaims Liberty to the Captives." Isaiah lxi. 1.
1715

"Jesus Opens the Prison Doors to the Prisoners." Isaiah lxi. 1.
Cf. IX, 620.

"Rational Evidences for Heaven, Illustrated." II Cor. v. 1.

SO. IX, 399-439. May 1715
June 1715.

"The Saints God's Servants and His Property." Acts xxvii. 23.
SO. IX, 439-81. 15 June 1715.

"Christ, A Refreshful Shadow in a Weary Land." Isaiah xxxii. 2.
IX, 220-44. Aug. 1715.

Extracts taken from a sermon preached during the rebellion.
XII, 460. Ettrick. 6 Nov. 1715.

1716

"Creation's Groans Considered and Improved." Rom. viii. 22.
IX, 263-85. 22 Jan.-4 March 1716.

"Creation's Travail and Delivery." Rom. viii. 22.
Low, p. 209.

"Encouragement to Pray for the Conversion of the Jews." Zechar. xii. 12.

"A Memorial concerning Personal and Family Fasting." Zechar. xii. 12. Preached upon the occasion of a "mortality" in the parish.
XI, 343-93. Ettrick. 11 March 1716-20 May 1716.

"They that sow in tears . . ." Psalm cxxvi. 5.
"The Blessedness of Not Being Offended in Christ."
Matt. xi. 6. 20.

"Believers Looking at the Things Which Are Not Seen."
II Cor. iv. 18. 20.

"Christ Demanding Admission into Sinner's Hearts."
Psalm xxiv. 9. 20.
III, 93-117. Ettrick. 24 June 1716.

"Christ's Invitation to His Bride." Song iv. 8. 20.
III, 118-29. Ettrick. 15 July 1716.

"Cautions Against Quenching the Spirit." I Thess. v. 19. 20.
III, 129-49. Ettrick. 22 July 1716.

"The Distinguishing Privilege of God's Faithful Servants."
Exodus xxiv. 11.

"Gospel Privileges Wonders of Grace." Exodus xxiv. 11.

"Enoch's Character and Translation Explained; with a Description of Walking with God, as that in which the Life of Religion Lies."
Gen. v. 24.

1717

VI, 377-449. Ettrick. 27 Jan.-May 1717.
Cf. Low, p. 215.

"The Danger of Delaying Repentance." Prov. vi. 10, 11.
VI, 449-68. Ettrick. 1717.


"Man, Sinful Man is a Complaining Creature." Lam. iii. 39.
III, 287-305. Ettrick. 7 July 1717.

"Saints Wrestling for the Blessing and Obtaining It." Gen.
xxiii, 26. 20.
"The Pleasures of Real Religion."  Prov. iii. 17.  

"Thanksgiving for my Continuance in Ettrick."  Prov.  
xxix.  

"Sermons on the Shorter Catechism."  

1718


"Fear and Hope, Objects of the Divine Complacency."  
Psalm cxlvii. 11.  
IX, 66-95.  Ettrick.  27 July 1718.  
Morrison, p. 335.

"The Evil and Danger of Halting Betwixt Two Opinions."  
I Kings xvi. 21. 30.  
IX, 245-63.  Maxton.  2 Aug. 1718.  
3 Aug. 1718.

"Jesus Completely Qualified for his Work."  Isaiah lxi. 1.  
Low, p. 335.

"Jesus Victorious Over Death."  Isaiah xxv. 8. 30.  
IX, 95-111.  4 Oct. 1718  
5 Oct. 1718

An overture concerning admission to the Lord's Table,  
prepared in response to the task laid upon him by synod  
of revising overtures for church discipline.  
XII, 461-63.  1718?  
Morrison, p. 338.

1719

"Sermons on the Shorter Catechism."  
I, 653-61, II, 5-50 and II, 374?-496, 526-644.  
Ettrick.  15 March 1719-  
3 April 1720??  
Low, p. 237.

"The Christian Described, the Hypocrite Detected."
Rom. xi. 28, 29. IX, 334-68. March & April 1719.


"The Necessity and Foundations of a Throne of Grace for the Behoof of Poor Sinners, Pointed Out and Illustrated."


Reasons for refusing the Abjuration Oath in its latest form. 1719.

Low, p. 358.

1720

"The Right Improvement of a Time of Sickness and Mortality."
Psalm xc. 12. Two sermons preached on a congregational fast day, at Ettrick on occasion of the great sickness and mortality then prevailing.
II, 659-70. Ettrick. 27 April 1720.

"The Unity of the Body of Christ & the duties The Members Owe One to Another. Being the substance of several sermons.
I Cor. x. 17. Also called: "On Church Communion."
"Those That Are in Christ are Dead to the World." Col. iii. 3.

"Passing under the Rod, a Means of a People’s being brought into the Bond of the Covenant." Ezek. xx. 37.

The straying State A Condition of Mankind Sinners, together with the Care of the chief Shepherd in returning them; and curing their straying Disposition. I Peter ii. 25.
Galashiels. 1720.

1721

III, 260-72. Ettrick. 28 May 1721.

"Help for ruined sinners laid on the Lord Jesus Christ, the mighty One." Psalm lxxxix. 19. S0.
A View of the Covenant of Works ... To which are annexed ... Several Sermons ... Edinburgh:
Ettrick. 11 June 1721.

A View of the Covenant of Works ... To which are annexed ... Several Sermons ... Edinburgh:
Maxton. 1, 2 July 1721.

A View of the Covenant of Works ... To which are annexed ... Several Sermons ... Edinburgh:
Galashiels. 5 Aug. 1721.

Christian Life Delineated: "Christ to be Found in the Ordinances, With the Import and Happy Effects of Finding Him." Prov. viii. 35.
X, 489-520. Ettrick. 1721?
"Sinners Interested in Christ, Obtaining Favour of the Lord." Prov. viii. 35.
   X, 521-33. Ettrick. 1721?

"Unbelief the Sin Against Christ by Way of Eminence, and the Wrong Done to the Soul Thereby." Prov. viii. 36.
   X, 533-50. Ettrick. 1721?

"Believers a Mystery, with a Description of their Travels from the Wilderness of this World, to the Heavenly Canaan, Leaning Upon Christ." Song viii. 5.
   X, 550-79. Ettrick. 18 June 1721?

The Marrow of Modern Divinity, in Two Parts, with notes by the Late Rev. Thomas Boston.
   VII, 443-489. 10 July 1721-July 1722.
   Low, pp. 256, 261. First published 1726 (Low, p. 151).

"Resolute cleaving to the Lord Jesus illustrated and enforced." Acts xi. 23. 80.

A View of the Covenant of Works from the Sacred Records.
   First published (under the editorship of Michael Boston) in 1772.

"An untoward Generation characterized, with the Means to be saved from it." Acts ii. 40.

1722

"Protest." Handed in at the General Assembly, 21 May 1722.
Although subscribed by others, Boston was the author.
   John Brown, Gospel Truth (Glasgow, 1831), pp. 261-64. May 1722.
   Low, p. 260.

"The Duty of redeeming the Time in evil Days, illustrated and enforced." Eph. v. 16.
"The Duty and Advantage of Cleaving to the Lord and His Way, in a Declining Time." Gen. vi. 9.
X, 397-416. Ettrick. 14 June 1722.

A View of the Covenant of Grace from the Sacred Records.
VIII, 377-604. Ettrick. 1 July 1722-14 June 1724.

First published 1734.

Cf. XI, 176; also Low, p. 261, ftnt. 1.

"Suitable Improvement of Christ the Apple Tree." Song ii. 3.


"The Evil of Christ’s Friends Lifting up their Heel Against Him." Psalm xli. 9. So.
III, 253-60. Ettrick. 15 Aug. 1722.

The Distinguishing Characters of True Believers. Henceforth DCTB.
V, 44-298.

DCTB, "In Relation to God in Christ, as Their Refuge and Portion." Psalm cxlii. 5. So.
V, 44-54. Ettrick. 19 Aug. 1722.

DCTB, "Faith’s Recognition of Taking God for a Refuge and Portion, illustrated." Psalm cxlii. 5.

There is a typographical error in Vol. V, p. 55, as is made manifest in Morrison, p. 367.

"Christians Strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus."
II Tim. ii. 1. So.
III, 280-87. Yarrow. 9 Sept. 1722.

DCTB, "God in Christ the Believer’s Portion." Psalm cxlii. 5.

"God Not Ashamed to be Called His People’s God." Heb. xi. 16.

Queries to the Friendly Advisor, to which is prefix’d a letter . . . concerning the . . . Marrow.

1723

DCTB, II. In Relation to Their Disposition and Practice as Citizens of Zion. "The Citizen of Zion Described."
Psalm xv. 1.

DCTB, "The Citizen of Zion an Upright Walker." Psalm xv. 2.

DCTB, "The Citizen of Zion a Worker of Righteousness."
Psalm xv. 2.

DCTB, "The Citizen of Zion a Speaker of Truth in His Heart."
Psalm xv.

Tractatus Stigmologicus. A manuscript volume, in English, of 145 pages, 8½ by 13 inches, is to be found in the New College Library, Edinburgh. Attached to it is this note: "An essay on the Hebrew accents. It is supposed to have been the first draught of the work; and that he afterwards wrote a more full and perfect copy, which was probably sent to Amsterdam, where the Latin copy was printed in 1738, and never returned." Boston first became interested in the matter of accentuation in 1713, was making notable progress by 1718, and had "perfected" the English copy by 5 Sept. 1723. The Latin version was begun in 1726, and finished 17 March 1727.

See Low, pp. 187, 197, 208, 232, 264, 265, 269, 275, & 278.

"Serving the Lord in Holiness." Luke i. 74, 75.
IV, 31-44. Galashiels. 21, 22 Sept. 1723.

Commentary on Genesis. A manuscript volume of 274 pages, 8½ by 13 inches, to be found in the New College Library, Edinburgh. This volume was copied by the Schoolmaster of Ettrick. A note attached to the volume states that "The writing in the left hand column is Boston's own," but this can refer only to the writing to the left of the first page, a "Memorial", which does appear to be in Boston's own hand. The original was written between 31 Oct. 1723 and 9 Feb. 1725.

See Low, pp. 265, 269.

"The Christian Warfare; or, The Good Fight of Faith."
I Tim. vi. 12.
VI, 619-82. Ettrick. 1723.
VI, 294-305. Ettrick. 7 June 1724.


Eccles. ix. 10.

DCTB, "A Caveat Against Profane Swearing, and a Persuasive
to Plain Speaking, Without Unhallowed Additions." James
v. 12.

DCTB, "In Relation to Their Meekness, As An Evidence of
Great Understanding, And the Folly of Passionateness."
Prov. xiv. 29.

DCTB, "In Relation to Their Forgiving Injuries, in Opposition
to Revenge." Rom. xii. 19.
V, 171-80. Ettrick. 7, 8 Nov. 1724.


1725

"The Shortness of Human Life." Job xvi. 22.

DCTB, "The Character of Zion's Mourners." Ezek. ix. 4.
V, 201-09. Ettrick. 31 March 1725.

DCTB, "Advice to Zion's Mourners." Ezek. ix. 4.
V, 210-20. Ettrick. 31 March 1725.
Cr. V, 201.

"Israel's Sin and Judgement, with regard to abused
Mercies, described." Hosea ii. 8, 9.
Not in Works. A Collection of Sermons (Edin.,
1772), pp. 50-65.
Ettrick. 7 Nov. 1725.

"The Sin of People's Forsaking God and Betaking Themselves
to the Creature in His stead." Jer. ii. 13.
"The Birth, Gift, Government, and Glorious Names of Jesus Christ, as Saviour of Sinners." Isaiah ix. 6.

1726

"Believers are not under the law, but under grace; or, The difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace." Rom. vi. 14.

A View of the Covenant of Works . . . To which are annexed . . . Several Sermons . . . Edinburgh:
Eskdalemuir. 24 April 1726.

III, 379-84. 7 July 1726.


"On Acceptance with God:—the Doctrine of the Acceptance of Men's Words Explained, and a Practical Regard Thereto in all the Duties of Life Inculcated." II Cor. viii. 12.

"Jesus Christ the Beloved One, and Sinners Accepted of God Freely in Him." Eph. i. 6.
XI, 149-70. Ettrick. 1726.


Boston begins writing the Latin version in 1726 and finishes on 17 March 1727.
Low, p. 278.

1727

V, 586-632. Also found in VII, 547-92.
Ettrick. 19 Feb. 1727-21 May 1727.

Low, p. 278, Morrison, p. 386.
"The Duty of Yielding Ourselves to the Lord." II Chron. XXX. 8. 50.
   III, 397-410. Ettrick. 21 May 1727.

   V, 272-80. Ettrick. 11 June 1727.

DCTB, "In Relation to Their Entering into Rest in Christ." Heb. iv. 3. 50.
   V, 281-98. Ettrick. 18 June 1727.

"The Case of Petitioners at the Court of Heaven Considered; or, The Necessity of Praying Always, and not Fainting."
Luke xviii. 1. 50.

"Petitioners at the Court of Heaven Encouraged; or, The Happy Issue of Praying Always, and not Fainting." Luke xviii. 8. 50.
   VI, 355-64. Galashiels. 12, 13 Aug. 1727.

"On the Nature of Prayer in General; with the Import of Praying Without Ceasing." I Thess. v. 17.


Cf. Low, p. 280, Morrison, p. 393.

"The Mystery of Christ in the Form of a Servant." Philip. ii. 7. 50.
   VII, 520-46. Preached considerably prior to 16 Sept. 1727, but checked and prepared for Press at that time.

Low, p. 279, Morrison, p. 399.

A Brief Explication of the First Part of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism.


1728

"Mystery of Christ's Kingdom Known to Believers." Mark iv. 11.
"Of Praying in the Name of Jesus Christ." John xvi. 23. XI, 81-97. Ettrick. 1728.


"Walking by Faith not by Sight." II Cor. v. 7. 80. X, 465-88. Maxton. 29, 30 June 1728. 7 July 1728.


"The Inseparable Connection Between a Sinner's Having Part with Christ, and Being Washed by Him: or, the Mystery of Sanctification by Christ, Opened Up." John xiii. 8. VI, 551-61. Ettrick. 18 Aug. 1728.


The State & Character of Believers. I John v. 19. The whole of these sermons entitled The State and Character of Believers, V, 301, 586, are identical with the volume called A View of This and the Other World . . . by . . . Thomas Boston (Edinburgh, 1775), pp. 405. V, 301-49. Ettrick. 29 Sept. 1728 to beginning of 1729. Low, p. 285.
"The certain, though slow, Accomplishment of threatened Judgements." Ezek. xii. 23.

"A Caveat against seeking great Things in an evil Day."
Jer. xlv. 5.

The Divine Call to Sinners to Come out from Among the World Lying in Wickedness, Explained and Urged. I John v. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 17.
Morrison, p. 421.

The Believer's Hundredfold in this Life Considered; and A View of the Reality, Parts, Inhabitants, Passage Into, and State of Men in the World to Come. Mark x. 30.
V, 374-443. Ettrick. 22 June 1729-16 Nov. 1729.
Morrison, p. 427.

"The Old and the New Men in Believers." Rom. vi. 6. 80.
Low, p. 292, orig. MSS. 277-78.

"Mercy often interposes to prevent the Execution of Judgements." Hosea xi. 8.

The Great Care and Concern Now, That our Souls be Not Gathered with Sinners in the other World, Considered and Improved. Psalm xxvi. 19.
V, 443-60. Ettrick. 6 Nov.-Dec. 1729.
Morrison, p. 429.

A Personal Covenant.
II, 672-74. Also found in XII, 453-54.
Morrison, p. 429.

A General Account of My Life. A manuscript volume of 342 pages, to be found in the New College Library, Edinburgh.
1730

The Improvement of Life in this World to the Raising A Good Name, the Best Balance for the Present, for the Vanity and Misery of Human Life; And the Good Man's Dying-Day Better than his Birth-Day. Excl. vii. 1.
Morrison, p. 438.

Christ's Special Order for Gathering His Saints to Him At the Last Day; with Their Distinguishing Character, As Entering Into His Covenant Now, Considered. Psalm l. 5.

The Saint's Lifetime in this World a Night-Time; Their Expectation of the Day's Breaking in the Other World, and the Shadows Fleeing Away; and their Great Concern for Christ's Presence till that Happy Season Come. Song ii. 17.
V, 525-56. Ettrick. 7 June 1730.
Morrison, p. 443.

Readiness For Our Removal into the Other World Opened Up, Urged, and Enforced. Luke xii. 40.
V, 556-86. Ettrick. 1730.

The Crook in the Lot, or "The Sovereignty & Wisdom of God displayed in the Afflictions of Men ..." Eccles. vii. 13,
Prov. xvi. 19, and I Pet. v. 6.
III, 495-599. 13 Sept. 1730ff.
Low, p. 310, Morrison, orig. MS. 269.

"Worm Jacob Thrashing the Mountains." Isaiah xli. 14, 15.
SO.
Low, p. 311, Morrison, p. 448, orig. MS. 271.

Author's [Boston's] Address to his Children. [A preface to the General Account.]

1731

"Duties of Husband & Wife." Eph. v. 33.

"The Strength of Christ Illustrated in the Weakness of His People." II Cor. xii. 9. SO.
VI, 365-76. Galashiels. 31 July & 1 Aug. 1731.
A preface to The Great Sin and Chief Guiltiness of Scotland

Etterick-manse. 26 Oct. 1731.

"Perilous Times in the Last Days." II Tim. iii. 1.

"The Way to Life, and the Way to Destruction Unfolded."

1732

"The End of Time, and The Mystery of God Finished With It."
Rev. x. 6, 7.
X, 423-64. Ettrick. 2 & ff., Jan. 1732.

"The Necessity of Self-Examination Considered." II Cor.
xiii. 5.
II, 497-510. Composed of the last two short sermons
preached from the window of the manse before death.
See ftnt. pp. 497-98.
Ettrick. 2 & 9 April 1732.

Undated

"The Necessity of Self-Examination Considered." II Cor.
xiii. 5.
II, 497-510.

"The Leading Privilege of Them that know the Joyful Sound."
Psalm lxxxix. 15.
IV, 44-51. Ettrick.

"Man's Iniquities Testifying Against Him." Jer. xiv. 7.

"The Fruit of the Spirit." Eph. v. 9.


"Christ the Father's Gift to His Chosen People." Isaiah
iv. 4.
IX, 128-37.
A quantity of personal correspondence between Boston and others is also preserved in XII, 467-98. None of it is of great theological importance. Pages 467-68 contain a brief explanation of his Essay on the Hebrew text of Genesis sent to Mr. Grant at London. Three letters to Sir Richard Ellys about the Hebrew essays (475-80 [1730-31]), and twenty-two letters from Boston to his correspondent in Edinburgh, dating from 1720-32 (480-97). Also printed is a letter from Boston to James Hogg of Carnock, 24 November 1727 (497-98).
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